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RECREATING MAIN STREET:

MIDCENTURY U.S. EXPATRIATE SOFT POWER

IN THE HEART OF MEXICO, 1930-1980

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COURTNEY B. KENNEDY

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RECREATING MAIN STREET:
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IN THE HEART OF MEXICO, 1930-1980

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
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BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Raphael Folsom, Chair

Dr. David Wrobel

Dr. Jane Cane-Carrasco

Dr. Charles Kenney

Dr. José Juan Colín

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Dedication

To dad.

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Abstract

The American Colonists of Mexico City were used as conduits of and representatives for U.S. foreign policy and U.S. corporate influence in post WWII Mexico in a reconfiguration of the Good Neighbor policy. By using soft power to attract and persuade, privileged American colonists engaged in charity work, participated in grass roots cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people exchange to shape Mexican's perceptions of what the United States represented in opposition to the Soviet Union. U.S. American organizations such as the American Society of Mexico touted members of the American Colony as good consumers, strong cold warriors, and a group of people who readily absorbed and disseminated a brand of U.S. culture that reinforced unity and conformity to western democratic values. Likewise, the American colonists viewed themselves as having a moral obligation as U.S. Americans to spread U.S. values and influence Mexicans against communism. They believed their mission as moral secular saviors in Mexico involved "redeeming" poor Mexicans and enveloping Mexico into the economic and diplomatic orbit of the United States. Overall, this study sheds light on issues such as the nature of expatriates in mid-twentieth century Mexico, one that is not always black and white, but is more nuanced and complicated, and incorporates topics related to transnationalism, cross-cultural exchange, Cold War rhetoric, soft power, public and cultural diplomacy, and U.S. post and neo-colonialism.

Introduction

Cold War Goodwill Colonists

On a soccer field in Ciudad Satélite on June 30, 1962, several thousand members of the American Colony gathered to hear President John F. Kennedy speak to them on a warm and sunny Saturday afternoon. When Kennedy addressed the American Colony in Mexico City on his presidential visit, he challenged the community to set an example for their country of birth and act as an extension of the diplomatic corps while living and working abroad. Upon receiving a felicitous welcome from the Mexican people, he applauded the U.S. expatriates in the crowd, saying, “I believe that part of this hospitality and friendship has been due to your efforts. When they see you, those of you who are Americans, they see the United States. And this is true of people all around the world; they make an impression, one way or the other, about our country and what we stand for and what we believe, and where we have been, and where we are going.”¹ Kennedy made his visit for several reasons, chiefly to resolve the Chamizal dispute between the two nations. Most importantly, he sought support in Mexico for the Alliance for Progress.

The American Colony had been an enduring link between the two countries since the days of the Good Neighbor policy (1933-1945) and beyond. Kennedy’s statement that U.S. citizens living and working in Mexico represented what it meant “to be American” abroad signaled to the American community in Mexico City that they were intimately tied together in rallying support for U.S. foreign and economic policies abroad. Grassroots diplomacy, whether knowingly or unknowingly acted upon by U.S. citizens, played a critical purpose in

¹ John F. Kennedy, Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration With the American Community in Mexico City, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/236134>

portraying the United States not as an imperialist power, but as a benevolent neighbor with a vested interest in Mexico and Latin America's future.

In his study of U.S. domestic and foreign humanitarianism, Stephen S. Porter examines the labels "benevolent" and "empire." He notes that, unlike war hawks or others motivated by pure territorial expansion, U.S. citizens who participated in benevolent empire building "often implicitly conceptualized their country's dramatic new extensions of global power through an imperial prism that partially but significantly justified America's influence over foreign populations by its benevolent intentions for the most vulnerable and needy among them."² The American colonists involved in charity work in Mexico City viewed themselves as motivated by various, often personal, goals and desires. According to Geir Lundestad, if the United States had an empire following WWII, it would be an "empire by invitation." The relationship between the United States and its "colonial" powers was not an

² Stephen R. Porter, *Benevolent Empire: U.S. Power, Humanitarianism, and the World's Dispossessed* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 1. For examinations of the United States as an empire, see Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish American and Philippine American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation in the American Century," *Diplomatic History* 23.2 (1999) 189–217; Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001); Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 3-21; Melani McAllister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. interests in the United States since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Paul A. Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 136 (December 2011) 1374-1376.

empire in the traditional sense but was more of a two-way process that was mutually beneficial, most notably during the Cold War.³

U.S. citizens living abroad are often considered mere tourists living comfortably and completely removed from the host country around them. However, presidents from Roosevelt to Reagan needed the American Colony's support in Mexico City to foster grassroots relations between the United States government, U.S. corporate interests, and the ordinary Mexicans who American community members met in their daily lives. The goals of the American colonists in relation to the wider Mexican community were adapted from a Good Neighbor policy relationship during WWII into a soft power relationship from the mid-1940s onward. Whether they knew it or not, U.S. citizens in Mexico City operated in a symbiotic relationship with the U.S. Embassy and U.S. multinational interests to further the political, economic, and cultural goals of the United States. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. multinational corporations operating in Mexico recognized the need to make concessions to Mexican nationalism and minimize any actions that could be perceived as imperialistic. The U.S. government needed to play up the rhetoric of the "good neighborhood" to further hemispheric and global goals of protecting the region from Soviet interference. By placing a softer, friendlier, more neighborly façade before U.S. foreign policy, the U.S. government hoped the Mexican people would be less likely to adopt anti-American beliefs and be less inclined to support leftist governments.⁴

³ Lundestad, Geir. "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952," *Journal of Peace Research* 23, no. 3 (1986): 263-77.

⁴ Much like the studies in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrande, and Ricardo Salvatore (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!: Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-*

Similarly, U.S. businesses posed as educators and social reformers using private programs to reinvent the image of the U.S. corporation as compassionate and not exploitative. Mexicans would become good consumers of U.S. products and good cold warriors on the side of their neighbor and friend, the United States of America. For their part, U.S. citizens in Mexico transformed their duty into one of grass roots good neighbor who acted as a charitable benefactor to disadvantaged Mexicans. Through their presence and actions, U.S. expatriates helped multinational corporations acquire a reputation for humanitarianism that softened the appearance of U.S. imperialism that in the end benefited U.S. interests.

Nearly all the American citizens involved sold the image of the United States and the support of U.S. values and ideals as beneficial for the progress, development, and modernization of Mexico. The means of acting as unofficial ambassadors and conduits of U.S. American culture and democracy shifted over the course of the twentieth century. The affable hemispheric rapport that the U.S. government promoted during the Good Neighbor policy (1933-1945) shifted following WWII to the promotion of U.S. opposition to communism and the triumph of American ingenuity and democracy during the Cold War. Every event that the U.S. American community held supported the ideals of the United States abroad from dinners and luncheons for the elites of Mexico City to charity drives for the poorest Mexicans. Not only did community members reinforce their U.S. values within the

1950 (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), and Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth Century Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), this study adds to and complicates the traditional narrative of Mexico as a prey to U.S. economic and cultural imposition. Some of the most vulnerable residents of Mexico City received assistance and support from the American Colony, and the Mexican government was all too willing to allow colonists to fill the void (as will be discussed in chapter three).

community, but they showcased these Cold War values for the Mexican public. The ways in which the American colony recreated life within their orbit to reflect the culture they left behind—however temporary or permanent—symbolized the challenge that Kennedy put forth to the community in the Cold War context. The community had the moral and patriotic obligation throughout the period to act as a neocolonialist group influencing Mexicans as Cold War warriors.

The United States government sought to portray a multilateral, friendly relationship with its southern neighbors in the implementation of the Good Neighbor policy. The U.S. public was instrumental in reaching across the border and shaking hands with their Mexican neighbors. This era of friendliness began with the impetus of the Roosevelt administration's Good Neighbor policy. World War II forced ordinary people of the U.S. to delve into a culture and nation formerly never explored in such a thorough way. WWII shifted the focus of the U.S. public toward a region of the world that had previously lacked attention. The Good Neighbor policy was couched in the rhetoric of two respectful, cooperating neighbors. This sentiment was in fact taken up with zeal and implemented into the everyday lives of segments of the U.S. public. The same people who moved to Mexico and actively engaged in the efforts of the U.S. American colony lived through the application of the Good Neighbor policy as a foreign policy initiative before they left home. Mexico existed in the imaginations of U.S. citizens as a place that needed the influence of a good neighbor to blossom into a democratic and friendly neighbor.⁵

⁵ For a discussion of the Good Neighbor policy, see Fredrick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Darlene J. Sadlier, *Americans All: Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012); Carol A. Hess, *Representing the Good Neighbor:*

Christina Klein argues that U.S. policymakers tried to convince U.S. citizens to support international economic and political expansion by framing the issue as one of collective security that would require the average U.S. American to participate as a member of a global community protecting the world against Soviet aggression.⁶ Policymakers conveyed the superficial idea that foreign nationals belonged to an extended U.S. American family, or in the case of Latin Americans, good neighbors. Klein's study examines how U.S. citizens were told to make good on their moral and social global obligations to underprivileged children and to the poor through adoption and monthly child sponsorship programs.⁷

This study argues that the engagement and outreach efforts of U.S. citizens from the 1930s until the 1980s focused on instilling a positive image of the United States government and U.S. business interests abroad, especially during WWII and following the Cuban Revolution. It examines and complicates our understanding of the functions of U.S. cultural diplomacy, soft power, and multinational influence in twentieth century Mexico. The period

Music, Difference, and the Pan American Dream (Oxford University Press, 2013); Bryce Wood, *The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Antonio Pedro Tota, *The Seduction of Brazil: The Americanization of Brazil during World War II* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Jorrit van den Berk, *Becoming a Good Neighbor among Dictators: The U.S. Foreign Service in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras* (Springer, 2017); Mary E. Stuckey, *The Good Neighbor: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Rhetoric of American Power* (MSU Press, 2013); Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998)

⁶ Christina Klein, "Adoption and the Cold War Commitment to Asia" in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966* Edited by Christian G. Appy, 37

⁷ Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-50* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans have loved, hated, and transformed American culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

leading up to and during the Good Neighbor policy set the tone for how relations would be perceived, at least superficially. U.S. citizens and their families were touted as the examples for Mexicans—good consumers, good patriots, and readily absorbing and disseminating a particular brand of U.S. culture that reinforced unity and conformity. The spirit of good neighborliness continued in a new approach through expatriates and U.S. citizens living abroad. Instead of consuming Mexican culture and acting as visitors abroad, members of the American Colony operated as grassroots diplomats and spread their version of good neighborliness and soft power to a Mexican audience. The soft power wielded by the State Department and by extension members of the American Colony in Mexico City reached its zenith in the 1950s and 1960s, and by the 1980s had paved the way for Mexico's envelopment into the U.S. sphere of influence. By the 1980s and early 1990s, with wars in Central America and the end of the Soviet Union, soft power became less of a diplomatic focus.

Though U.S. citizens from all walks of life lived in Mexico City, expatriate institutions are the focus of this study.⁸ Institutions such as the family unit, U.S.-businesses, colony organizations, have been understudied or ignored entirely in the scholarship of foreigners in Mexico. The expatriate nuclear family unit supported the idealized version of the family that was so important in postwar U.S. society. Accordingly, expatriates are not a

⁸ The exact numbers of U.S. citizens living in Mexico varied over time. By the early 1930s, Brigit Nielsen claims that around 4,000 people composed the official American Colony in Mexico City, Brigit Nielsen, "The American Business Community in Mexico City During the Lázaro Cárdenas Administration: An American Island in Mexico City," (PhD diss, Simon Fraser University, 1978), 3. NACLA claims almost 10,000 people as official American Colony residents by 1938. NACLA claims that by 1950 83,391 North Americans lived throughout Mexico "as result of post-war investments," and that in 1970, the number of U.S. citizens in Mexico reached 97, 246. An estimated 60,000 U.S. citizens lived in Mexico City in 1970, North American Congress on Latin America, "Introduction," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 8, no. 1 (1974): 2

homogenous group with the same views on the host country, its citizens, and their place within that nation. However, expatriate families served a purpose and were of interest to U.S. governmental and corporate agents precisely due to their overwhelmingly homogenous socioeconomic background and desire to conform to midcentury rules and norms. Expatriates and their histories are inherently transnational in nature and cannot be examined without focusing on the political and social climate of both the host country and the nation from which the expatriates in question moved from. Many of the transnational connections center on business. This study thus sheds light on the expatriate community in twentieth-century Mexico, underscoring its complexity and ambiguity, and exposing connections to larger questions of transnationalism, cross-cultural exchange, the Cold War, soft power, public diplomacy, and U.S. neo-colonialism.⁹

While this dissertation is a study of expatriates and the community they formed in Mexico, this is also a study of the use of charity as a tool of foreign and corporate power. In their work *Against Charity*, Daniel Raventós and Julie Wark argue that charity, as it has developed from the nineteenth century to the present, serves to maintain rigid class structures and the status quo. Charity creates an unequal power relationship that relies on the

⁹ Studies on expatriates in Mexico generally fit within how-to guide books or fictionalized leisure reading. For academic titles on historical, sociological, anthropological, and memoir analyses of expatriates, see: Diana Anhalt, *A Gathering of Fugitives: American Political Expatriates in Mexico, 1948-1965* (Archer Books, 2001); Sheila Croucher, *The Other Side of the Fence: American Migrants in Mexico* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Lisa Pinley Covert, *San Miguel de Allende: Mexicans, Foreigners, and the Making of a World Heritage Site* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017); John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (The University of California Press, 2002); Mark Wasserman, *Pesos and Politics: Business, Elites, Foreigners, and Government in Mexico, 1854-1940* (Stanford University Press, 2015); William Schell, *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

continuation of the idea of the “righteous redeemer” aiding the poor and downtrodden. Institutionalized charity, whether through groups or corporations, removes the very meaning of charitable individual acts of kindness. In its place is a system that draws attention to a social issue, but quickly covers up the problem with hurried solutions that do not solve the underlying issue of why poverty, inequality, and social injustice exist. The institutionalized philanthropic charity system exists to sustain the neoliberal system that relies on class inequality.¹⁰

On his observations of western charity work on the African continent, Nigerian novelist and poet Chinua Achebe notes that “charity ... is the opium of the privileged; from the good citizen who habitually drops ten kobo from his loose change and from a safe height above the bowl of the leper outside the supermarket . . . While we do our good works let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become

¹⁰ For other studies of charity and philanthropy, see Peter Dobkin Hall, *“Inventing the Nonprofit Sector” and Other Essays on Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations* (John Hopkins University Press, 2002); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York: Knopf, 1991); McCarthy, Kathleen D. *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700–1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Robert Arnove, ed., *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad* (Boston: GK Hall, 1980); Lawrence Levine, *High Culture: Low Culture: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Arthur C. Brooks, ed., *Gifts of time and money: the role of charity in America's communities* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Angela M. Eikenberry, *Giving Circles: Philanthropy, Voluntary Association, and Democracy* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2009); Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good? American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Brent Brunswick, *Almost Worthy: The Poor, Paupers, and the Science of Charity in America, 1877-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Lawrence Freedman and Mark McGarvie Cambridge eds., *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

unnecessary.”¹¹ It does not matter whether philanthropy or charity is given in Latin America, Africa, or the American South, the same sentiment rings true: while the poor are lulled into a state of complacent misery and are told to remain content if they receive charity from the privileged, the “opium” also affects the elites who become high off their own self-absorbed “good deeds” that allows them to be absolved of their sins of maintaining the oppressive system that locks the charity receiver in place. In the case of the American colonists in Mexico City, they did engage in good deeds and created charities and institutions that impacted thousands of lives, but often they did so at the behest of members of the State Department or from members of their own community who worked for multinational corporations. They did not set out to eliminate inequality or eradicate poverty by setting up charities or donating their time. Their efforts set up a hierarchical system of giver and receiver.

The members of the American Colony of Mexico City saw themselves as the stewards and embodiment of American values and moral redeemers of lower-class Mexican society and models for middle class and elite Mexicans. The civic and corporate charitable programs they established and upheld benefited imperialist pursuits because their actions supported the kindhearted veneer of U.S. economic and political imperialism. U.S. business interests in Mexico needed U.S. American and elite Mexican allies—both were united in AMSOC and other colony organizations to intensify U.S. political and economic cooperation. To successfully win over all segments of Mexican society, the U.S. government and U.S. corporate interests needed to promote, with the help of the American Colony, a

¹¹ Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (Heinemann: Johannesburg, South Africa, 1987), 155.

dependence of elite and middle class Mexicans of the objectives of U.S. corporations. As Mexicans became dependent on U.S. corporations for employment, business and societal connections, and new consumer items, they became more entangled in the sphere of influence of both the U.S. government and the U.S. corporate structure. Likewise, disadvantaged Mexicans needed the support of charitable U.S. citizens and U.S. corporations because the Mexican government did not have the funding to support every disadvantaged child living in poverty or have the means to send every illiterate factory worker to night school. Mexicans did not cower to U.S. pressure while they were absorbed into the economic and cultural sphere of the U.S.; the U.S. neo-imperialist system relied on the support of Mexicans through cultural transmission and negotiation and persuaded acceptance, and the U.S. received that support willingly.¹²

Terminology

The term expatriate has several connotations. In the present context oftentimes, one imagines a wealthy senior retiring abroad; for others perhaps it conjures up an image of an upwardly mobile middle class businessperson or a bohemian who wishes to escape the consumerism and move to the beach. The idea of leaving one's nation and becoming an "ex" and settling into a new environment adds a potential new level to this issue. How do these people bring with them or deny their nationalism for their country of birth? How is the act of nationalism in an expatriate setting a way of reinforcing ones ties to the home country? Global capitalism accounts for some motivations that pushed U.S. expatriates abroad at

¹² Gilbert Joseph, "Close Encounters: Towards a New Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*.

midcentury. Generally, families traveled abroad for, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the husband's occupation. Other expatriates sought to escape midcentury U.S. society and the weight of consumerism, the weight of the Vietnam War, and other events.¹³

An expatriate has the luxury of calling themselves something other than an “economic migrant.” Anthropologists Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh argue that the term expatriate is controversial and privileged for a certain segment of white middle to upper class society. Privileged migration, as they call the experience of expatriates, contrasts sharply to standard migration, which is usually forced by economic necessity or civil or ethnic strife.¹⁴ Fechter and Walsh examine privileged migration mostly in a Eurocentric sphere in countries located in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Such European expatriates lived in a postcolonial world whereas it could be argued that after WWII, U.S. neocolonialism continued to expand socially, economically, and influentially, and U.S. expatriates played a role in disseminating U.S. culture in Latin America for political, diplomatic, and business motivations. The same can be said of the U.S. expatriate community in Mexico at

¹³ Literature on travel and tourism in Mexico and Latin America is vast and very relevant. See: Jürgen Buchenau, ed., *Mexico Otherwise: Modern Mexico in the Eyes of Foreign Observers* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Alexis McCrossen ed., *Land of Necessity: Consumer Culture in the United States-Mexican Borderlands* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009); Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth Century Latin America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Dina Berger, *The Development of Mexico's Tourism Industry: Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Dagen Bloom, *Adventures into Mexico: American Tourism Beyond the Border* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006); Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Jennifer Jolly, *Creating Pátzcuaro, Creating Mexico: Art, Tourism, and Nation Building under Lázaro Cárdenas* (University of Texas Press, 2018); Claire Lindsay, *Magazines, Tourism, and Nation-Building in Mexico* (Springer, Jan 1, 2018)

¹⁴ Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh. *The New Expatriates: Postcolonial Approaches to Mobile Professionals* (Routledge, 2013), 11-13.

midcentury: the act of spreading good neighborly ideas and values went hand in hand with creating a healthy and stable social and cultural climate that would then provide a safe economic climate for U.S.-owned multinational corporations to make inroads in Latin American markets.

Historiography

This study fits within the context of the broader multidisciplinary historiography of migration and travel studies. Several scholars have analyzed the influence of capitalist-driven U.S. elites in the American Colony in Mexico City and the role they played in cultivating a relationship with influential Mexican elites. Most studies related to foreigners in Mexico focus on urban environments where large concentrations of foreign nationals resided, and few examine the post WWII period. William Schell Jr. examines the American Colony in Mexico City from 1876-1911. He argues that American expatriates in Mexico City played a role in Porfirio Díaz's grand plan of modernization and economic development.¹⁵ Schell places urban U.S. American expatriates in the role of empire builders that oftentimes spread U.S. influence better than any effort attempted by U.S. diplomats. John Mason Hart examines the influence and intrusion of U.S. industrialists and financiers who developed the Mexican nation in the late nineteenth century.¹⁶ Jason Ruiz explores how U.S. tourism to Mexico contributed to the formation of U.S. cultural and economic imperialism that depicted Mexico as a nation in need of rescuing through modernization. Other scholars have examined smaller religious colonies of Mexico and Latin America, most notably the Mormon polygamous colonies in Sonora and Chihuahua, and the Mennonites in Durango and Chihuahua.

¹⁵ William Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders*, 2011.

¹⁶ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 2006.

Although both groups settled in Mexico partly out of a necessity to find safe haven from what they believed was religious persecution, and in the case of the Mormons after the 1890 Manifesto which ended official Mormon polygamy, Mexico still represented a pioneer environment where skilled whites could make the desert bloom and bring “modernization” to far-flung areas sparsely populated by Mexicans.¹⁷ Lisa Pinley Covert’s study explores the history of the expatriate and artist community of San Miguel de Allende. Locals and newcomers fought over the framing of the city’s past and future trajectory of the city as an influx of tourists and U.S. American retirees and artists dramatically altered the city for local Mexicans.¹⁸

The Mexican Revolution altered the relationship between the state and people.¹⁹ For many Mexican reformers in the post-revolutionary period, American colonists differed little

¹⁷ See Jason Dormandy, *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands* (University of New Mexico Press, 2015); Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (University of Utah Press, 2005); Royden Loewen, *Village Among Nations: “Canadian” Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006* (University of Toronto Press, 2013); Kathy Denman *la elita norteamericana en la ciudad de México* (México: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del INAH, 1980). On other American expatriate experience, see Carmen Icazuriaga, *El enclave sociocultural norteamericano y el papel de los empresarios norteamericanos en México*, Cuaderno de la Casa Chata, no. 35 (México: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del INAH, 1980); Mark Wasserman, “Foreign Investment in Mexico, 1876-1910: A Case Study of the Role of Regional Elites,” *The Americas* 36 (July 1979): 3-21); Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014). Michael E. Neagle examines the short-lived Cuban-American colony in *America’s Forgotten Colony: Cuba’s Isle of Pines* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Lisa Pinley Covert, *San Miguel de Allende: Mexicans, Foreigners, and the Making of a World Heritage Site* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

¹⁹ Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). For more information on how the Revolution altered the Mexican nation, see Benjamin Thomas, *La Revolución: Mexico’s Great Revolution As Memory, Myth & History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000) and Gilbert Joseph, *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

from large corporations and industries that exploited Mexicans while amassing enormous profits. Martin Austin Nesvig argues that oftentimes colonists recreated neocolonial hacienda patron-client relationships that relied on or exploited local Mexican labor. The struggle of the American hacienda owner Rosalie Evans epitomizes the story of the ruthless foreigner exploiting the land and the people. U.S. colonists and business owners pressured the Mexican and U.S. governments to halt expropriation of their lands. John Dwyer examines the tense negotiations between Mexican and U.S. officials regarding expropriation of U.S. corporation's holdings and settler communities. Alan Knight argues that unofficial, nongovernmental actors influenced the response of Mexican society against U.S. interests more than U.S. governmental policies.²⁰

Chapter Overview

While cities such as Monterrey, San Miguel de Allende, and Guadalajara had sizeable expatriate communities during the timeframe of my study, the focus of this study will be on the American Colony in Mexico City. Expatriates considered the capital city to be the heart of U.S. expatriate life in the nation. Mexico City represented the financial and cultural hub of

²⁰ John J. Dwyer, *The Agrarian Dispute: The Expropriation of American-Owned Rural Land in Postrevolutionary Mexico*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Timothy Henderson Jr., *The Worm in the Wheat: Rosalie Evans and Agrarian Struggle in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley of Mexico, 1906-1927* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Alan Knight, "The United States and the Mexican Peasantry, circa 1880-1940," in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*, ed. Daniel Nugent (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).; Martin Austin Nesvig, "Old Colony Mennonites and Mexico's Transition to Free Market," in *Religious Culture in Modern Mexico* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007). Timothy Henderson Jr., *The Worm in the Wheat: Rosalie Evans and Agrarian Struggle in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley of Mexico, 1906-1927* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Julia Sloan, "Carnivalizing the Cold War: Mexico, the Mexican Revolution, and the Events of 1968," *European Journal of American Studies* 4, no. 1 (2009):

Mexico. Likewise, U.S. corporations viewed Mexico and Mexico City as the laboratory for how to implement marketing and how to successfully introduce U.S. products in Latin American markets.

This study has five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the community background and history of the American colony and its relationship to Mexico City and Mexicans in general. Because of the influence of U.S. culture on the American colony, the trends and values of the Good Neighbor policy and midcentury U.S. culture are examined in depth.

In chapter two, the role of the U.S. Embassy is examined in how diplomatic connecting U.S. citizens living in Mexico with each other and in guiding the American colonists in how to conduct themselves as agents of soft power and grassroots U.S. diplomats. Ambassadors such as Robert C. Hill were instrumental in uniting colonist's ideas on their internal colony duties and their external obligations to the wider Mexican community.

In chapter three, I examine how expatriates from the United States replicated the same types of civic and religious organizations that they had in the United States. The American Society of Mexico (AMSOC), a civic association with strong ties to the embassy, functioned as a conduit for expatriates, and organized events ranging from religious and national holiday celebrations, cultural exchange opportunities, educational events, mutual aid society, and supported a multitude of charities that benefited underprivileged Mexican citizens. Civic and religious celebrations common in the United States such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Fourth of July provided way for the residents of the American colony to maintain traditions as well as spread those same traditions to the wider Mexican community. AMSOC's mission statement claimed the organization strove to "increase the understanding

and cultural ties between U.S. citizens and Mexicans living in Mexico, and especially Mexico City.” The Society took this statement seriously. I argue that the community engaged in a grass roots diplomatic relationship fostered relations with the Mexican government and Mexican citizens. Were the members of the U.S. colony tools of U.S. diplomacy, an arm of the embassy that acted as agents of empire? Were there efforts to improve the lives of Mexicans authentic, or was it a result of their economic and social standing, as well as their privileged migration? How did the Embassy, and therefore the U.S. government, engage in this interplay between expatriates and Mexican citizens?

Chapter 4 investigates how the U.S. business community in Mexico City used good neighbor rhetoric to promote the image of multinational corporations as compassionate social and moral reformers. American colony groups such as Operation Amigos promoted travel to Mexico and stronger inter-American business connections as another step toward achieving good neighborliness. These groups brought together members of the business community from both countries and united U.S. foreign policy objectives with corporate ambitions. U.S. corporations used marketing and public relations to win over the support for their products and the U.S. consumer model. Corporate philanthropic programs that included the creation of adult literacy schools, donations to nurseries and hospitals, and the technical training of local businessmen were used to impress Mexicans with what U.S. corporations offered Mexico in the form of training, industry, employment, and the image of “modernity.” Oftentimes the economic department of the U.S. Embassy and the United States Information Agency (USIA) supported such ventures, partnering with U.S. corporations in sponsoring cultural events to propagandize to elites and promote U.S.-style consumerism.

Chapter 5 views the ways in which women provided support for various charitable organizations and transplanted Victorian and Progressive Era ideas found in the slums of New York and Chicago into the economically depressed areas of Mexico City. They believed that they represented the feminized, soft-hearted, and less threatening façade of U.S. political and economic imperialism.

Despite the attempts at cultivating goodwill, under the surface the ways in which U.S. citizens depicted and represented Mexicans, mainly poorer Mexicans, took on an exoticized “Other” that hinted at the need for redemption, whether economic, religious (conversion to Protestantism), or social. What was the motivating factor behind holding free language classes, lectures, and other cultural events? James Stanton, one of the earliest boosters of the American Society of Mexico, hinted that tension had been building between the U.S. community and Mexicans when he said that “no major foreign community in a foreign country has the moral right to allow itself to be unexplained, misunderstood, or publicly distrusted, for by its unpopularity it poisons the ‘pond’ in which we all must live.”²¹ Business, community, and government leaders understood that for U.S. corporations and U.S. foreign policy objectives-- which were sometimes intertwined-- to achieve success in Mexico in Cold War, a sense of good neighborliness needed to be reinvigorated, or else the entire relationship could be “poisoned” for all involved.

For a variety of reasons, the primary sources I use are majority printed, comprising books, newspapers, magazines, and memoirs, though I do draw on the personal papers of U.S. Ambassador Robert C. Hill, author Anita Brenner, and activist Mary L. Elmendorf. I

²¹ American Society of Mexico, *Constitution and by-laws of the American Society of Mexico* (Mexico, D.F., 1946).

examine the messages colonists received about being good neighbors and the ways in which colonists viewed themselves as agents of goodwill, and how they brought those messages into fruition. Members of the American Colony are not often found in traditional archive spaces and must be examined through their personal writings, the writings from their community leaders, State Department officials, and other members. They were men of the boardroom and society women. There is no expatriate archive or convenient cache of documents. This type of research lends itself to sleuthing—digging into every possible nook and cranny trying to locate any nuggets of information on organizations and actors—thus making this dissertation interdisciplinary in nature. Publications allow me to deeply analyze the language used to spur colonists into action. Magazines such as *Bulletin*, the official magazine of the American Society of Mexico, and *Modern Mexico*, reached thousands of people for decades while in circulation. The personal papers of a man like Robert C. Hill allows me to examine how he used his position as ambassador to rally support from the American Colony in Mexico City for inter-American good neighbor relations.

My approach differs from other historians and researchers because I examine holistically the interplay between differing groups of people and the ways in which the groups impacted the spaces and people around them. Expatriates are and were not merely wealthy pensioners on extended holidays abroad. The time period I examine magnifies the significance of the necessity of the U.S. government and U.S. corporate influence to use U.S. citizens living abroad as conduits for soft diplomacy, and for expatriates to see each other and themselves as having a moral obligation to extend benevolent U.S. influence abroad. U.S. citizens in Mexico City were not passive elites simply relaxing under the snow-capped volcano Popocatepetl; men, women, and children of the American Colony were actively

engaged in promoting the United States abroad and fostering relations with the Mexican people. The American Colony, then, became a front line of U.S. imperialism in its very public attempts at spreading and maintaining U.S. influence.

Chapter 1

Recreating Main Street

In 1959, Mexico City College honored Samuel Bolling Wright (known as S. Bolling Wright) with the Fraternitas Award for his contribution to the “American effort” in Mexico. He was hailed by the American Colony, leaders of Mexico City College, and influential Mexican and U.S. businessmen as being “a symbol of the American way of life in Mexico.” His impact on the American Colony was so lasting, the Mexico City College student newspaper, *The Collegian*, stated that “the community may never again see a single individual who will leave upon it the solid impress which must ever be connected with the name of S. Bolling Wright.” The Fraternitas Award was given annually to two men who, in the judgement of the Board of Trustees of Mexico City College, did the most to promote good relations and further “the U.S. cause” in Mexico.²²

By the time he received the Fraternitas Award, S. Bolling Wright had lived in Mexico for 57 years. He arrived in Mexico in 1902 as a 16 year old whose job required him to find scrap metal to ship back to a Cincinnati-based smelting company. When his employer filed for bankruptcy, he remained in Mexico and opened his own scrap metal business, La Consolidada Steel. He launched another business refurbishing equipment that Mexican companies threw away as scrap instead of repairing. He then sold the refurbished machines back to Mexican companies for profit. Shortly before WWII ended, he sold his scrap metal business back to his former employer in Cincinnati for \$7 million. Samuel’s brother Harry

²² “Fraternitas Award Goes to Ambassador, Wright” *Mexico City Collegian* 13, no. 1 (1959), 1.

later joined him in Mexico. Together the Wright brothers amassed considerable fortunes and altered the landscape of Mexico City and the American Colony's role in Mexico.²³

S. Bolling Wright became so famous for his philanthropy that he was profiled in *Reader's Digest* for his contributions in Mexico that improved U.S.-Mexican relations. The *Reader's Digest* article examined Wright's impact on the Mexican people and painted him as a benevolent U.S. American with a heart of gold. Upon the completion of his summer house in Cuernavaca, Wright asked the architect for the bill, but the young man said he could not charge his benefactor for his time and effort because the steel industrialist paid his way through architecture school years prior through one of the many charities Wright supported. Money, Wright said, "is the least important thing you can give people." His rule in life was: "spend more time on other people's problems than your own, and, once you've done somebody a favor, forget it." With his fortune and his zeal for philanthropy, he set an example for American colony over the course of the twentieth century. He was a former president of the American School Foundation, helped found the American British Cowdray Hospital, sat on the board of several community organizations, funded organizations and

²³ There are conflicting accounts in the historical records of which brother arrived in Mexico first, Harry or Samuel. Regardless, the Wright brothers built La Consolidada Steel into a multimillion dollar business. S. Bolling Wright acted as manager while Harry tended to spend the company funds on side ventures and travel. Both Samuel and Harry Wright were cinephiles, shooting, collecting, and preserving over 2,000 films shot and produced in Mexico. Harry funded movie theaters and film studios in Mexico City, including Churubusco Studios. Nielsen claims that the Wright brothers helped to fund some of the films created during the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, Birgit Nielsen, "The American Business Community in Mexico City During the Lázaro Cárdenas Administration: An American Island in Mexico City," (PhD diss, Simon Fraser University, 1978), 103. The brothers also funded documentarian Edwin Forgan Myers to travel throughout indigenous Mexico to record local customs and histories in his film "Indian Tribes of Unknown Mexico" in 1939, Magdalena Acosta Urquidi, "The Amateur Films of the Wright Brothers," *Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia 2010*, 248-249.

charities, and donated his personal properties for the expansion of American Colony institutions.

This image of a selfless industrialist-philanthropist encompasses the roles that American colonists viewed themselves in as U.S. Americans in Mexico.²⁴ S. Bolling Wright symbolized the “American” that all members of the American colony should emulate, with U.S. Ambassador Robert C. Hill noting that Wright’s “name will ever be remembered and respected as one who gave time, effort, and financial support to every good cause that could possibly further bettering understanding between two great neighboring countries.”²⁵ No one could truly rival his zeal and generosity, but for the thousands of U.S. citizens engaged in charity work, his example solidified how future colonists would engage in benevolent works. In the 70 years he lived in Mexico (his children, grandchildren, and the children and grandchildren of his brother Harry continued living in Mexico into the present), Wright helped craft how his fellow U.S. Americans operated in tandem with business, charitable organizations, and the U.S. Embassy. The mission of the colony was to place a friendly face on U.S.-Mexican relations, of securing business connections and entrenching U.S. companies firmly in Mexican markets, and of absorbing the Mexican people into the sphere of U.S. influence.

Expatriates helped set the path for acculturation to U.S. modes of consumerism and capitalism and paved the way for the expansion of neoliberalism in Mexico. Being a good consumer equaled being a good Cold Warrior, and the American Colony was the living embodiment of midcentury U.S. culture. They represented the idealized notion of U.S.

²⁴ Don Romero, “The Wright Way in Mexico,” *Reader's Digest*, November 1952, 99.

²⁵ “Fraternitas Award Goes to Ambassador, Wright” *Mexico City Collegian*, 1.

citizens: patriotic, good consumers, anticommunist, and “friendly” toward Mexicans. The lifestyle of the colonists became rooted in the expression of the power, prestige, and aims of the collective goals of the United States, be it economic, political, or cultural.

The presence of U.S. American residents abroad during the Cold War reflected expansion of the United States in a new era of Manifest Destiny that manifested in many spheres, from economic to ideological.²⁶ These new self-styled pioneers justified migration into foreign lands on the pretext of helping to “better” the way of life of foreign peoples around the world in what Carmen Icazuriaga calls “a patriotic missionary ideology.”²⁷ Anthropologist George M. Foster examines the impact donor cultures have on contacted cultures. He focuses on Spanish donor culture in the indigenous Americas. He calls this new culture “conquest culture” because it has morphed over time into a hybrid culture that is different from either culture but retains aspects of both the donor and the contact.

Acculturation fuels what Foster calls “cultural crystallization.” Foster posits that because of

²⁶ See Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York, 1982); Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge, 2005); Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, Conn., 1998); Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2001); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, 2002); Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York, 2000); Christian G. Appy, ed., *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966* (Amherst, 2000); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, Calif., 2003); Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

²⁷ Carmen Icazuriaga, “El Enclave Sociocultural norteamericano y el Papel de los Empresarios norteamericanos en México,” Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del INAH, 1980, 7.

acculturation, one can go from any area of the Spanish-speaking Americas and encounter cultures that have incredibly similar environments: from architecture, to food, dress, city and town planning, animal husbandry, and more. However, contact cultures do not always accept the donor's cultural introductions and retain their local behaviors and traditions. The American Colony reflected the same examples Foster gives in his examination of Spanish colonial expansion into the Americas. Foster argues that patterns of influence moved from the top of the social hierarchy and downward and outward, from the urban-elite to lower classes and peasants. The American Colony used a similar model of influencing elite Mexicans in hopes of garnering support for political and economic relationships. Elites could then curry favors for U.S. business interests with influential Mexican political leaders.

Background

Researcher Ethelyn Clara Davis stated in her 1942 doctoral dissertation that “in twenty-five or thirty years the American Colony in Mexico City will have disappeared.”²⁸ Davis had spent most of her childhood during the 1920s in Mexico City, and later returned as a university student conducting dissertation research. The community she was a part of in the 1940s had dwindled during WWII and would not rebound until almost twenty years later. Davis's dissertation is a sociological study of the American Colony at the precise period when U.S. American economic and cultural institutions began deeply infiltrating into almost all facets of Mexican society. Members of what would become the American Society of Mexico were ruminating on how to unite colonists under a common cause, and this would

²⁸ Ethelyn Clara Davis, “The American Colony in Mexico City” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1942), 296.

only become a more pressing issue with the dawn of the Cold War a few years in the future. Her dissertation provides a solid foundation of the everyday institutions, behaviors, and mindsets of the American colonists. While it is a dissertation, it has been treated here as a primary source due to the sociological and anthropological ways in which she examines the community.

The era of the Cold War signaled a resurgence for the U.S. Americans in Mexico City. As U.S. businesses strengthened hold on Latin American markets during and after WWII, more U.S. Americans arrived in Mexico. Many of the foreigners had business connections to Coca-Cola, Sears, Good Year, and other major burgeoning global corporations. Mexico City, the nation's capital, became the hub of U.S. business and political life. Other colony members came to Mexico City for official U.S. governmental work. What united colonists in this time period and during the Cold War period was a desire to promote the wonders of the United States abroad while simultaneously fighting communism and reinforcing ties between the United States of America and the United States of Mexico. This period marked a transformation in how U.S. citizens living and working in Mexico engaged with the Mexican world around them.²⁹

²⁹ Gilbert M. Joseph, "What we Now Know and Should Know; Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies." In *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser (Dunham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 3-46 and *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2012); Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America*; Christopher Darnton, *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Greg Grandon, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Michael Grow, *U.S.*

The term colonist is rife with meaning. The U.S. Americans and Mexicans alike referred to foreigners living in clusters throughout Mexico as living in colonies. The most famous colonies in Mexico are those of the Mennonites and polygamous Mormons. Both groups removed themselves from the surrounding Mexican culture, mostly since they desired-- and continue to desire-- to live separately from the Mexican community for religious and cultural reasons. However, over the past fifty years, there has been significant interweaving of local Mexicans with the polygamous Mormon communities resulting in intermarriage and conversions. Other foreign colonies included Germans, Italians, and Spaniards fleeing the Spanish Civil War. In the case of U.S. Americans who did not fall into fringe groups, the use of the term colonist connotes a pioneer of sorts settling an outpost of the metropole and claiming the land for the motherland. They settle an area yet retain their ties to their homeland. Colonists often transplant the customs and ideals of the homeland into the area where they settle. The late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries marked the pinnacle of U.S. imperialism. American exceptionalism filled people's imaginations with the idea that they were active agents in the spreading of freedom and democracy. These people acted as secular missionaries for "America."

Eric T.L. Love examines how ideas of race and hierarchy were not fixed notions of being.³⁰ Instead, such ideas were reorganized by individuals and changed over times due to forces of industrialization, urbanization, mobility, shifting dynamics of class and gender, expansion

Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Tanya Hamer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

³⁰ Eric T.L. Love, *In Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

and contraction of rights for racial and ethnic minorities, and imperialism. Love argues that the presence of too many foreign aliens in possibly annexed territories deterred imperialists from taking the territory, as was the case with Mexico following the Mexican-American War. Many wanted to take all Mexican territory, not only that within the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but territory that was sparsely inhabited by Mexicans. The sentiment felt during Mexican American War and the theories on race and whiteness carried over into the views that the expatriates carried with them. They lived in a time and environment that viewed Mexicans as inferior, dangerous, and morally degenerate. The history of Mexican-U.S. relations shaped how colonists viewed and interacted with Mexicans while in Mexico.³¹

U.S.-Mexican Relations

Relations between the countries have been characterized by conflict at the worst of times and tension at the best. Much of the antagonism that besets the two countries comes from a long history of intervention and meddling by the United States. The Mexican people and the Mexican government remain highly critical and suspicious of United States positions. Hateful and bigoted stereotypes of Mexicans that perpetuate throughout the decades create more animosity and engender ill feelings. The events of the Mexican-American War and the

³¹ In *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (Yale University Press, 2009), Brian DeLay examines how westward expansion of Anglo Americans pushed Native American peoples into more violent conflict with Mexicans that decimated north Mexican communities and paved the way for the later invasion of U.S. troops during the Mexican-American War; Peter Guardino claims that no single event led to the defeat of Mexico and the U.S. victory was never guaranteed. In fact, Mexicans had a sense of Mexican Destiny that countered Manifest Destiny and viewed the Protestant U.S. Americans as barbarous outcasts, Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Harvard University Press, 2017)

aftermath of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 laid the foundation of the relationship between the United States and Mexico from the mid-nineteenth century until the present.

Because of hawkish pro-slavery U.S. politicians and a U.S. public eager to claim land in the name of Manifest Destiny, Mexico lost half its national territory. It also left a lasting impression on Mexicans of their neighbor's imperialistic and interventionist leanings.³²

Relations improved under the regime of dictator Porfirio Díaz who saw a need to open Mexico to foreign investment and technology. U.S. Americans purchased large landholdings, funded mining operations, and invested in banking and railroads. Many did not live permanently in Mexico but periodically visited their holdings, while others, such as large landowners, transplanted their lives.³³ Toward the end of Díaz's 35 year rule, U.S. companies owned over 70% of the mines and other industries.³⁴ Many members of the nascent Mexican

³² For more on Manifest Destiny, Mexican-American War, and U.S.-Mexican Relations, see: David M. Wrobel, *Global West, American Frontier: Travel, Empire and Exceptionalism from Manifest Destiny to the Great Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013); Thomas R. Hietala, "The Myths of Manifest Density," in *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire* (Cornell University Press, 2003); Steven E. Woodworth, *Manifest Destinies: America's Westward Expansion and the Road to the Civil War* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011); Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (Vintage Books, 2013); Zachary Deibel, *Manifest Destiny and the Mexican American War* (New York : Cavendish Square Publishing, 2018); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); *Myths, Misdeeds, and Misunderstandings: The Roots of Conflict in U.S.-Mexican Relations*. Eds. Jamie E. Rodriguez O. and Kathryn Vincent (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1997.); Frederick C. Turner, "Anti-Americanism in Mexico, 1910-1913." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 47 (1967): 502-18; Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (University of Alabama Press, 1995).

³³ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 73.

³⁴ Robert M. Buffington and William E. French, "The Culture of Modernity," in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, eds. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley (New York: Oxford University Press), 397–432, 419; John Foran, "Reinventing the Mexican Revolution: The

middle class and even some elite Mexicans who did not have the favor of Díaz could not gain entry into lucrative business and industrial operations dominated by foreign companies. John Mason Hart claims that 20,000 U.S. citizens owned land in Mexico totaling 90,000,000 acres of land throughout Mexico.³⁵ Working class Mexicans employed by U.S. companies received less in compensation than their U.S. counterparts and were oftentimes completely exploited. These grievances contributed to the Mexican Revolution and the nationalism that grew out of the conflict.³⁶

The U.S. Government took different approaches to the events of the Mexican Revolution depending on who held power of the movement at the time. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson opposed the newly elected president Francisco Madero and what he perceived as threats to U.S. business interests. Madero faced opposition from revolutionary contenders who revolted against him and brought an all-out war to Mexico City. Ambassador Wilson pushed for U.S. intervention to establish calm and ensure that pro-U.S. General Huerta assumed the presidency. Madero and his vice president were assassinated. President Woodrow Wilson viewed the revolution and civil war in Mexico as a way to intervene in

Competing Paradigms of Alan Knight and John Mason Hart.” *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 4 (1996):115-131.

³⁵ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 260.

³⁶Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014); John H. Coatsworth,

Growth against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico

(Debalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1982); Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of*

Díaz (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey*

Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004);

more ways and set in motions his attempt to “save” Latin America from barbarism and help democracy as he saw fit flourish. In 1914 U.S. troops occupied the port of Veracruz after the events of a questionable dispute over arrested U.S. sailors and the refusal of the Mexican government to apologize and raise the U.S. flag on Mexican soil, U.S. marines entered the city and occupied it for nearly 8 months.

Anti-Americanism flourished as many Mexicans saw U.S. citizens as contributing to inequality in Mexico and as an invader. The United States government and U.S. business interests needed a stable and agreeable government in Mexico City. The possibility of a hostile president could ruin the fortunes of thousands of U.S. landowners, industrialists, and mine owners.³⁷ U.S. Ambassador Henry P. Fletcher notified the Secretary of State that by August 1918, 17 U.S. citizens had been killed in Mexico because of land disputes and anti-American sentiment.³⁸

For the United States, the Constitution of 1917 sent shockwaves through U.S. industrialists and business elites, who criticized it as too radical and in opposition to foreign investment. The emphasis placed on labor and land reform also threatened the bottom lines of foreign companies and the holdings of landed elites. Article 27 reorganized property rights and restricted where foreigners could own land, how much land they could own, and expropriated and nationalized many of the largest landowners private land, Mexican and

³⁷ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 260 and 321.

³⁸ “The Ambassador in Mexico (Fletcher) to the Secretary of State No. 1291 Mexico, August 6, 1918,” *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918*, ed. Joseph V. Fuller (United States Government Printing Office Washington 1930), Document 616. For an examination of anti-Americanism in Latin America, see Alan L. McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

foreign-owned.³⁹ President Harding refused to recognize the new Mexican president Álvaro Obregón, nor anything related to the new Constitution. The issue was not resolved until 1923 when U.S. officials and the Mexican government agreed that foreign property holders could retain their land and holdings as long as foreign companies engaged in the “doctrine of positive acts” before the Constitution went into effect 6 years prior.⁴⁰ Diplomatic recognition was reinstated, U.S. businesses and landowners received compensation for any expropriated holdings, and relations returned to a somewhat normal tension.

After power struggles, assassinations, and the rise of the caudillo Plutarco Elías Calles, U.S.-Mexican relations returned to a sense of uneasy normalcy. Ambassador Dwight Morrow attempted to distance himself from partisan and corporate politics. He successfully negotiated a peace treaty between the Roman Catholic Church and Calles that ended the Cristero Revolt.⁴¹ Calles remained in control behind the scenes as a succession of presidents held office and did his bidding. Expropriations continued, but the threat of violence greatly subsided. Once in office, a young northern politician with grand nationalistic goals would reignite Mexican-U.S. relations in the 1930s during an era of supposed good neighborliness and hemispheric solidarity.

³⁹ John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (University of California Press, 1997), 330.

⁴⁰ Mark T. Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S. Latin American Relations since 1889* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 64. For more on the Mexican Revolution, see Benjamin Thomas, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution As Memory, Myth & History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000);

⁴¹ Clint E. Smith, *Inevitable Partnership: Understanding Mexico-U.S. Relations* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000, 49).

The Good Neighbor Policy

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy represented an attempt to bring a fresh orientation to U.S. foreign policy and move away from interventionist policies toward a more conciliatory approach to inter-American affairs. Lars Schoultz illustrates that the attitude of the United States toward its Latin American neighbors was tainted by a sense of racial and cultural superiority that manifested in imperialistic and interventionist policies.⁴² The Roosevelt administration genuinely tried to maintain a good neighbor relationship and adhere to a policy of nonintervention. For the United States, being a "good neighbor" meant that the U.S. government would institute reciprocal trade agreements and U.S. businesses would have access to growing markets in Latin America. The theme of hemispheric unity and openness between all the nations of the Americas attempted to unite disparate peoples under the banner of good neighbors while spreading U.S. consumerist ideas and foreign policy agendas.

The first test for the Good Neighbor policy in Mexico came when President Lázaro Cárdenas, committed to fulfilling the nationalist tenets of the Mexican Revolution, expropriated all foreign oil operations in 1938 and nationalized the oil industry, *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX). Workers demanded better pay and better working conditions in U.S.-owned companies. The Mexican government compensated companies based on undervalued accounting reports that U.S. companies claimed to pay less taxes. Nationalization raised Mexican morale and signified a victory over the United States. In 1941 the two governments settled the oil expropriation dispute and existing land expropriation disputes remaining from

⁴² Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

the Mexican Revolution shortly before the United States entered WWII.⁴³ In a letter to Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho, president Roosevelt thanked him for his cooperation regarding the expropriation settlement, telling his Mexican counterpart that “the agreements establish for future generations an anniversary which they may celebrate with pride in the demonstration of what may be accomplished by two friendly nations in seeking mutually beneficial resolution of problems which have perplexed them for many years.”⁴⁴ Nonintervention succeeded thanks to the skilled guidance of U.S. Ambassador Josephus Daniels who convinced Roosevelt to pressure oil company executives to reach settlements instead of intervening in Mexican national affairs. Good neighborliness prevailed.

By the early 1940s, most railroads, extractive mining, power and other formerly U.S.-controlled industries were now in the hands of Mexican nationals or the Mexican State. The events of the 1940s would rewind some of the nationalist achievements of the Mexican Revolution that made “Mexico for the Mexicans” and momentarily side-lined U.S. interests.

⁴³ “The Chargé in Mexico (McGurk) to the Secretary of State Mexico, November 21, 1941,” *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers*, 1941, The American Republics, Volume VII, eds. William M. Franklin E. R. Perkins (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), Document 317. For other studies of expropriations in Mexico, see John J. Dwyer, *The Agrarian Dispute: The Expropriation of American-Owned Rural Land in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Timothy J. Henderson, *The Worm in the Wheat: Rosalie Evans and Agrarian Struggle in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley of Mexico, 1906-1927* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Alan Knight, *U.S.-Mexican Relations 1910-1940: An Interpretation* (San Diego, CA: University of California at San Diego, Center for US-Mexican Studies, 1987); Clayton R. Koppes, “The Good Neighbor Policy and the Nationalization of Mexican Oil: A Reinterpretation,” *Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (1982):62-81; Jonathan Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1983); Frank Tannenbaum, *Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1968 [1929]).

⁴⁴ “President Roosevelt to the President of Mexico (Avila Camacho) November 26, 1941,” *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers*, 1941, The American Republics, Volume VII, eds. eds. William M. Franklin E. R. Perkins (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), Document 319.

Everyday Forms of Good Neighborliness

In addition to Roosevelt's pledge of nonintervention in Mexican affairs, the Good Neighbor policy focused on uniting the Americas through media, exchange, tourism, education, trade, and eventually business. Latin America-- but Mexico in particular— fascinated many U.S. Americans. Mexico as the exotic proliferated in the imaginations of U.S. citizens impart because of how different entities sold Mexico as a land of wonder and as the ultimate good neighbor. An American Airlines advertisement from 1944 pictured Uncle Sam, a Mexican charro, and a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer locked arm in arm standing guard over a map of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The caption to the advertisements reads: "As we use the indivisible air, effectively we shrink the space that separates us and erase the barriers of language, customs and understanding. Nothing is more symptomatic of our changing world than the closer union of these great nations. What is now a war-time necessity will grow and ripen to a rich hemispherical solidarity."⁴⁵ WWII provided the people of the United States with a way to come into contact and gain a better understanding of Mexico and Mexicans. Just as the American Airlines advertisement stated that the use of air travel minimized the gap between the countries, so too did the efforts of ordinary citizens of the United States in forging a personal link with Mexico through the implementation of a grassroots Good Neighbor Policy.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ American Airlines. *Make Friends With Mexico*. New York, American Airlines, 1943.

⁴⁶ For Mexican-U.S. relations during WWII, see Halbert Jones, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico: World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-revolutionary State* (University of New Mexico Press, 2014); Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign Against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Monica Rankin, *Mexico, la patria: Propaganda and Production during World War II* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010); María Emilia Paz Salinas, *Strategy, Security, and Spies: Mexico and the U.S. as Allies in World War II* (Penn State Press, 2010).

Once the war cut off Europe to U.S. American citizens, the only other viable option for travel lay in the Western hemisphere. Closer to the U.S., cheaper than Europe, and yet still holding onto the feel of the “Old World,” Mexico was presented to the U.S. tourist as a country of excitement and untapped liveliness. Ordinary U.S. Americans embraced Mexico as “The Faraway Land Nearby,” and, as Dina Berger states, to identify a vacation there with the larger, almost spiritual purpose, namely to foster good relations.⁴⁷ Tourism during this time period linked consumerism, U.S. business expansion into Latin American markets, and the Good Neighbor policy.

Educational excursions to Mexico fostered a sense of connection to the Mexican people and represented the pinnacle of cultural exchange at the grassroots level of society. Good neighborliness for some meant absorbing the language, customs, and history of the good neighbor to the south. A group of young women from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, “took the capital by storm” on their trip to Mexico City.⁴⁸ Five-hundred and thirteen students, one-third of the student body of the university, spent their days at luncheons, receptions, and events organized by the Mexican government and Ambassador Josephus Daniels. The young women traveled to Mexico not merely to be tourists, their chaperone insisted to *The Dallas Morning News* staff reporter; the young women traveled to Mexico for educational purposes, to impart a friendly goodwill to their neighboring country, and to gain a better understanding of Mexico.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Dina Berger, *The Development of Mexico's Tourism Industry: Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 71.

⁴⁸ Curtis Vinson, “513 Coeds Witnessing Wonders of Ancient Land of Aztecs,” *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, TX), Mar. 29, 1940.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Members of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce of the United States (not to be confused with the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico) created a monthly magazine, *Modern Mexico*, in 1930 to highlight the improving relations between the two nations following the expropriations and general anti-Americanism during and after the Mexican Revolution. *Modern Mexico* advocated for Pan Americanism and a reinforcement of the Good Neighbor policy, especially during WWII.⁵⁰ Active members of Mexican Chamber of Commerce of the United States included American Smelting and Refining Co., American Airlines, Anheuser-Busch, Chase National Bank & Trust Co., United Fruit Co., Sears, Roebuck & Co., and Mexican companies included Banco Nacional de Mexico and Cia. Fundidora de Fierro y Acero de Monterrey.⁵¹ Despite the expropriations of U.S. landholdings and the contentious battle over oil expropriation in 1938, U.S. businesses did not shy away from gaining entry into Mexican markets once again, often with the backing of influential Mexican businessmen who opposed the more nationalistic tendencies of the Cárdenas administration.

In monthly features in 1942, *Modern Mexico* readers met the Mexican and U.S. citizens who made the Good Neighbor policy successful. U.S. banker William B. Richardson was recognized for his contribution to “greasing the wheels of good neighborliness” and

⁵⁰ For an examination of Pan Americanism, see Ernst Schwarz, “The Pan-American Good Neighbor Forums: A New Type of Pan-American Work Among the Masses,” *World Affairs* 102, No. 1 (1939): 49-51; Richard Candida Smith, *Improvised Continent: Pan-Americanism and Cultural Exchange* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Megan Threlkeld, *Pan American Women: U.S. Internationalists and Revolutionary Mexico* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Claire F. Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013)

⁵¹ “Activities of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce” *Modern Mexico* 16, no. 1 (1943): 13-15.

working to facilitate relationships between U.S. industries and the Mexican government. In 1942 Richardson claimed that he worked tirelessly to build up Mexico's industrial power because "it is time for Mexico to become an industrialized nation for her own better future as well as to help efficiently in the Pan American Defense Program." Therefore, Richardson and those like him couched U.S. business interests in Mexico as improving the quality of life and preparing Mexico for a modern future.⁵² Mexican villagers from Oaxaca to Sonora were shown learning military drills, building roads, and winning the fight against tropical diseases by participating in federal health campaigns that immunized thousands of *campesinos*.⁵³ From the banker to the campesino, every good neighbor had a duty to perform to secure the hemisphere for democracy.

James H. Frier, the owner of a 7-Up bottling facility in Mexico City, related a story he heard while at lunch with business associates. An associate in their group wanted to invest abroad. Frier suggested Mexico. Another companion interjected and related how the "communist" Mexican Revolution destroyed his family's business and left them destitute. Others at the table worried about future expropriations like what had occurred in 1938. Frier told his friends not to worry. If U.S. companies invested in Mexico, and if business "is undertaken with understanding and a sincere and wholehearted program of building Mexican industries operated by Mexicans and shared in by Mexicans" Freier claimed that no one had any reason to fear expropriations or hostility. In fact, Frier argued that sincerity would "develop an increasingly genuine friendship, trust, and respect between the Mexican and American people." But, he warned that if U.S. companies repeated the same mistakes that led

⁵² "All Together for Democracy!" *Modern Mexico* 15, no. 1 (1942): 13.

⁵³ "Mexico Unites!" *Modern Mexico* 15, no. 8 (1943): 21.

to anti-Americanism—what he called “colonial development” of Mexico—would once again reignite all the old troubles.⁵⁴ U.S. investors, according to Frier, should remain cautious of investment, but if they engaged in good neighbor behavior, they would have nothing to fear. In fact, U.S. economic investment was portrayed as a positive for Mexico, with *Modern Mexico* telling its readers that “Mexico today enjoys an extraordinary economic stimulation a direct result of collaboration between the United States and Mexico.” U.S. investment indirectly and directly rebuilt railroads, constructed a hydroelectric plant, and created a stable investment environment.⁵⁵

Despite Frier’s optimism, columnist John Higgins claimed that before Pearl Harbor, 80% of Mexico City residents supported the Axis, and figures ran even higher in rural areas. Recent U.S. actions by the Roosevelt administration cajoled the Mexican government into sending foodstuffs across the border created more anti-American sentiment in Mexico. He argued that far from being a good neighbor, the United States had much to atone for stretching back to the Mexican-American War, stating that “Mexicans did not like us and do not like us. We invaded their country several times! We took half of it! Now we are eating their food.” He worried that with the United States consuming so many Mexican products like wheat, beef, and other foodstuffs used for the war effort, Mexicans might revolt against the Mexican government and the U.S. in retaliation, noting that a “well-fed U.S. is eating thanks to an undernourished Mexico.” Higgins warned that the arrogant actions of the United States could “boomerang” back and do more harm to U.S.-Mexican relations that had been

⁵⁴ James H. Frier, “A Business Man Writes About Business” *Modern Mexico* 15, no. 5 (1942), 12-15.

⁵⁵ “United States-Mexican Collaboration Stimulates Industry” *Modern Mexico* vol 15, no. 10 (1943): 25.

slightly improving until the U.S. entry into WWII. Higgins's solution to rising Mexican inflation and potentially upset Mexicans was to encourage U.S. tourism and support of Mexican and U.S. industries in Mexico to spur economic growth and to foster cross-cultural interactions.⁵⁶

U.S. citizens at home continued to view Mexico as a vacation paradise and a land of milk and honey. The biggest U.S.-Mexican cultural event in the state of Texas occurred in October 1940 at the State Fair. The State Fair of 1940 had an exceptional Mexican theme to the entire month-long event. In January of 1940 *The Dallas Morning News* called the effort to bring Mexico to Dallas a "happy meeting ground for the variant but harmonious types of culture that exist on the two banks of the Rio Grande."⁵⁷ Musical and dance routines composed the main attractions of the State Fair that year. Organizers chose as the headlining musical act the Mexican Mariachi Orchestra, composed of the best mariachis, singers, and dancers in Mexico, numbering fifty people in all. The Mexican Mariachi Orchestra performed twice daily for the entire duration of the Fair, playing folk songs, regional dances, and showcasing traditional Mexican customs. The Dallas Museum of Art attained permission to host pieces of the Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art on exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City for the duration of the State Fair of Texas. Items at the exhibit at the State Fair included the Monte Alban jewels, paintings by Diego Rivera, and other archeological artifacts from various regions of Mexico.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ John Higgins, "How Good A Neighbor Are We?" *Modern Mexico* 16, no. 6 (1943): 5; 31.

⁵⁷ "At This Year's Fair," *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, TX), Jan. 24, 1940.

⁵⁸ Dallas Morning News, "Fair Ready For Record Inaugural," *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, TX), Oct. 5, 1940.

The Mexican government held its own exhibit at the State Fair. Items in the Mexican government's pavilion included the world's largest serape measuring 13 x 23 feet weaved in Oaxaca, regional costumes, a photograph collection, agricultural maps, and a collection of Mexican handicrafts. For Texans, as well as other Americans unable to travel to Mexico, the State Fair of 1940 afforded a chance to experience Mexico without having to leave home. Fairgoers could attend a show on traditional Mexican dance, practice their newly learned Spanish skills with tourism promoters in the Mexican pavilion, view handicrafts and art pieces from various regions of Mexico, and female fairgoers could examine, and possibly recreate, the costumes worn by female dancers and singers of the Mexican Mariachi Orchestra. The fact that the State Fair of Texas, which had a Klan Day in 1923 that welcomed Klu Klux Klan members and their families throughout the nation, should have an overt Mexican theme of unity and hemispheric cooperation nearly 20 years later is surprising. However, in the era of good neighborliness, a sanitized version of Mexico and the borderlands was transported to Dallas and reconstructed for a mostly white audience deep in the heart of Texas. The media crafted a relationship of cooperation that unfolded at the 1940 Fair and reinforced the notion that under the right conditions, the United States and Mexico could forge a lasting diplomatic bond based on mutual understanding and cultural interaction.⁵⁹

Lansburgh's, a department store in Washington D.C., ran a full-page advertisement for its Pan-American Exhibits at its flagship downtown department store. The headline on the page read: "Salud a Las Modelas Pan Americanas," along with a map of Latin America

⁵⁹ Dallas morning News Staff Writer, "Mexican Dance Trio to Give Fair Program," *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, TX), Oct. 8, 1940.

complete with beautiful ladies in Latin American costumes and dress. Advertisers formed a connection between fashion and good neighbor relations, selling the idea of being cultural exchange through fashion: “Long may we have this inspiration from our sister republics. Fashion itself has taken a hand in extending the ‘Good Neighbor Policy.’”⁶⁰ At street level onlookers peered at Latin American fashions on display in the windowfronts. Through Latin American and Mexican inspired fashion and accessories, women from the United States formed an attachment to Latin America and Mexico by dressing up as their sisters to the south in peasant clothing and stereotypical blouses.

Where once cultural barriers or apathy dissuaded ordinary middle-class U.S. citizens from getting to know their neighbors, the war forced attention to Mexico and the remainder of Latin America, as the Western Hemisphere became a hidden treasure of untapped adventures and unknown worlds. Citizens of the United States took the initiative espoused by the Roosevelt Administration to foster better relations with Mexico, and made a concerted effort to visit, learn, and incorporate the culture of Mexico centered on the tenets of the Good Neighbor policy. The effort, begun by the U.S. government, for the most part remained at the grassroots level, with actors on the ground creating and carrying out ways in which interaction could be fostered. Although at times there appeared to be a veneer of U.S. racism and superiority, for the most part the Good Neighbor policy on the ground seemed a successful and beneficial experiment in strengthening relations between the two nations at the ground level, a feat not always achieved by the Roosevelt Administration itself. Many

⁶⁰ “Salud a Las Modelas Pan Americanas,” *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 20, 1941.

U.S. Americans would have formed a highly stereotypical image of what they believed Mexico to look, sound, taste, and feel like, sometimes without ever having visited.⁶¹

The Mexican government encouraged “patriotic” U.S. citizens to make short term and long term vacations and permanent residencies. During WWII, the Mexican Chamber of Commerce in the United States, in partnership with the Mexican Tourism Board, created an advertisement and recruitment campaign aimed at U.S. tourists, families, and retirees. The campaign encouraged people to vacation for weeks or extended to permanent stays in Mexico to ease the burden of the war effort in the United States, as well as to fill Mexican resort hotels which had sat empty for years following rising tensions after the 1938 oil expropriation. The theory went that U.S. citizens consumed too many products while living in the U.S. that should go toward the war effort. They also contributed to overcrowding and housing shortages in states with heavy wartime factory work, such as in California and in cities like Chicago and New York. Instead, U.S. citizens could move to Mexico, relieve the war shortages in the U.S., and boost the Mexican economy. And, best of all, patriotic U.S. citizens could continue participating in the war effort through volunteering in the Red Cross first aid and motor corps brigades in Mexico, or by sewing uniforms for Allied troops.⁶² The same sentiment was present in another advertisement that challenged readers of *Modern Mexico*: “Be a Good Neighbor! Do your bit for your country! Come to Mexico!”⁶³ Tourism

⁶¹ Dina Berger and Andrew Grant Wood, eds., *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Also see, Lisa Pinley Covert, *San Miguel de Allende: Mexicans, Foreigners, and the Making of a World Heritage Site* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017) and Andrew Sackett, “Fun in Acapulco?: The Politics of Development on the Mexican Riviera” in *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* by Berger, Dina Duke University Press, 2009.

⁶² “Good News for Good Neighbors” *Modern Mexico* 14, no. 12 (1942): 5.

⁶³ “Be A Good Neighbor!” *Modern Mexico* 14, no. 5 (1942): back cover

and the physical act of moving to Mexico was sold as the ultimate step of becoming a truly good neighbor while working together to bring victory and security to the hemisphere.

For the U.S. government and U.S. business interests, more U.S. tourism to Mexico, more U.S. citizens living in Mexico, and more emphasis placed on the good neighborly attributes of the United States could potentially mean less fear of a repeat of 1938 and a good chance at returning to the type of relationship the U.S. and Mexico had before the Mexican Revolution. The North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) calls the years 1945-1961 “the age of imperialism” and U.S. hegemony in Latin America.⁶⁴ Policies such as the rise of U.S.-Soviet tensions, the Truman Doctrine and his Four Point Program, the coup against democratically-elected reformer Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, the Cuban Revolution, and the Alliance for Progress channeled U.S. involvement in Latin America, particularly in U.S. investments in Latin America to stem the tide of communist influence. The U.S. government crafted favorable economic climates for U.S. multinational corporations to invest in Latin America, spurring companies to expand operations in Mexico and thus contribute to the growth of the American Colony as a community and as agents of economic and political influence in Mexico.

The American Colony in Mexico City

The history of the established American Colony in Mexico City dates to the late-19th century. Previous groups of U.S. citizens settled in Mexico, either after the U.S.-Mexican

⁶⁴ North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), “‘Age of Imperialism’; U.S. Hegemony: 1945-1961,” in *Yanqui Dollar: The Contribution of U.S. Investment to Underdevelopment in Latin America*, 11.

War or with Confederates leaving the United States after the Civil War. It was not until the rise of Mexican dictator-president Porfirio Díaz that large numbers of U.S. businessmen and their families arrived in the heart of Mexico during the 1880s.⁶⁵ The first English daily newspaper came into print in 1890, and the core civic and religious institutions for U.S. Americans in the city opened in the last ten years of the nineteenth century—the American School, the American Hospital, Union Evangelical Church, and other organizations. The growing U.S. American community comprised people from all walks of life; however, as time went on, the colony appeared to cater and welcome only middle to upper class U.S. Americans from prestigious backgrounds, or families who held important occupations within the community, such as occupations tied into the United States Embassy. In the 1895 Mexican census, U.S. Americans ranked second, with Spaniards first as the largest group of foreigners residing in Mexico. In 1910 U.S. Americans ranked second, but the censuses from 1910, 1920, and 1930 had U.S. Americans ranked fourth due to the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath.⁶⁶

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) diminished the numbers of the American Colony drastically. Although other communities of U.S. Americans were directly targeted further north along the U.S.-Mexico border, most of the American Colony in Mexico City chose to leave due to a perceived possible threat of violence, not an actual threat. It took almost a decade for the number of U.S. citizens in Mexico to increase toward the pre-

⁶⁵ The two most comprehensive studies on the American Colony are John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (The University of California Press, 2002) and William Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2001.)

⁶⁶ Ethelyn Clara Davis, “The American Colony,” 59.

Revolution numbers. The 1930 census placed 12,396 people of U.S. American nationality in Mexico compared to 20,639 in 1910. As of December 31, 1940, 3,166 people were confirmed as living permanently in Mexico City.⁶⁷ However, it should be noted that registration numbers could in fact be higher because the U.S. Embassy did not require citizens to register when in the country, so the only statistics available are Mexican census data.

As Davis points out, the average member of the American Colony at the time of her study arrived in Mexico with an assured position in society because they held a United States passport. Furthermore, the typical expatriate male (I use gendered language here because most heads of households were male and the sole breadwinners for the heteronormative families I examine) also arrived in Mexico with a secured middle to upper class occupation in hand. Colony members were by and large not unskilled laborers teetering on the break of poverty. For the first forty years of the American Colony, most adult males found employment as lawyers, doctors, engineers, and businessmen, while occasionally some women worked outside of the home as secretaries, nurses, and teachers. One of the largest employers of U.S. Americans was the U.S. Embassy, with this form of employment seen as the most prestigious.⁶⁸ By their own making, colonists always led a privileged existence.

There were economic advantages of being a U.S. American in Mexico. U.S. Americans earned, by happenstance of being foreigners, higher incomes and thus had access to better housing, better quality food, and had disposable income to purchase new technological innovations. Foreigners also had the economic freedom to dine out frequently

⁶⁷ Ethelyn Clara Davis, "The American Colony," 60.

⁶⁸ Ethelyn Clara Davis, "The American Colony," 76.

to Sanborns or other fine dining establishments such as the Lady Baltimore, a restaurant owned and operated by a U.S. American. Likewise, they had the ability to buy foreign or readymade articles of clothing, which oftentimes meant travel to the United States for purchase. Perhaps the highest note of class for anyone living in Mexico was the standing in society to be able to afford to employ servants which would have been unheard of for the mostly middle-class demographics in the United States.

Colony members settled predominantly in middle class neighborhoods until the 1960s. Colonia Roma, the old immigrant area of the city that provided refuge to Jews and Eastern Europeans for decades, came into favor with the American colonists as first and second-generation European immigrant families moved out of the area and made space available for the incoming *gringos*. The settlement patterns shifted from the center of city in the late nineteenth century southward with each decade of the twentieth century, so that in the present, most colonists choose to live entirely outside of the city in the safer and more spacious suburbs to the south and west of the Federal District. By the 1940s, members of the American Colony began moving out of Roma, Colonia Juárez, del Valle and into the wealthier neighborhoods found in Lomas de Chapultepec and Condesa. A description of the colonias in the Federal District helps to gauge the types of people moving into and out of certain areas based on income and perceived class status. The lack of self-segregation by colonists helped facilitate a form of assimilation that usually does not occur in communities of expatriates.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Barbara Franco, Executive Director at American Benevolent Society, noted in a conversation with me that the type of expatriate who lived in Mexico City from the 1980s onward self-segregated compared to the expatriate who lived in the American Colony when she first moved to Mexico in the early 1960s. Barbara Franco, Executive Director at

Families who could afford to move west and south into newer and more expensive *colonias* often could afford staff to maintain the house, cook, and take care of children. The largest drawback to living away from the center of the city was that no reliable bus or metro service toward the outskirts existed until the mid to late 1960s. Therefore, every family needed a car or a driver to traverse the ever-expanding city, which also gave an air of privilege to colonists. In 1942, rents ranged from \$150-200 pesos a month for apartments in Colonia Juárez, and 300-400 for apartments in Colonia Roma. Many U.S. Americans were not accustomed to living in apartments. This also contributed to the rush toward the more affluent areas of Lomas de Chapultepec and Polanco where wealthy Mexicans built modern spacious homes in the 1920s and 1930s. Rent in these upper middle class to wealthy areas ranged from \$500-700+ pesos a month. Even for well-off U.S. Americans, few could afford to live in the poshest areas of Mexico City while also paying for school fees, servants, and other weekly expenses.⁷⁰

Organizations and Community Cornerstones

While the American Colony was composed mostly of middle to elite U.S. Americans, they did not form a cohesive community until after WWII. The members came from all walks of life. The threads that wove the members together were the organizations that grew

American Benevolent Society, interviewed by Courtney Kennedy at American Benevolent Society, June 2017. I argue that the roles of the State Department and organizations such as AMSOC to push colonists into civic engagement helped unite them around a common theme of unity, democracy, and expanding the reach of the U.S. economic empire. The end of the Cold War saw a decline in expatriate involvement in AMSOC and other organizations because the need to unite against a common enemy—the Soviet Union—had dissolved, and Mexico by the 1990s had become fully enveloped into the U.S. economic and social sphere of influence.

⁷⁰ Ethelyn Clara Davis, “The American Colony,” 115.

in importance during WWII and the Cold War era. Membership and attendance in the various community organizations was not mandatory; however, during the Cold War, many colony members did participate in varying degrees. As good patriots and cold warriors, many felt obligated to perform their Americanness and secularly evangelize to the Mexicans around them about the benefits of the “American” way of life. Davis argues that if the entire Colony in 1942 “could be transplanted back to the United States, they would not form a representative community.”⁷¹ It would take, I argue, the dawn of the Cold War for the community to band together under a common cause of providing an example of what it means to be democratic and morally righteous in the face of Soviet aggression and dominance on the world stage. The lived experience of the Cold War forced the community to take on this role of “moral defender” of U.S. and Western values. Members, while not homogenous, felt pressure from within the community to conform to certain cultural standards. In 1942, Davis warned that “the American who takes over lower-class Mexican mores slips into the status of the Mexican whom he imitates. When this is true, such a person may not keep his position and is lost to the activities of the American Colony.”⁷² Therefore, community members had a self-imposed duty to uphold what they perceived as their natural birth right status, as well as to avoid corruption by what community members alleged as “lowly” Mexican values. The Cold War further compounded this sentiment within the colony.

The most important institutions of the American Colony were the American School and the various mutual aid societies and charitable and community organizations. The

⁷¹ Davis, “The American Colony,” 84.

⁷² Davis, “The American Colony,” 81.

majority of U.S. Americans living in Mexico City during the postwar and Cold War periods participated and interacted with institutions that spread the values and traditions associated with them. Nationalist organizations developed to allow people the ability to remain entrenched in one's culture of birth. In the case of immigrant organizations in the United States—the Irish, Spanish, Russian, etc.—such organizations helped newly arrived immigrants adjust to life in a new country, while also inculcating in second and third generation members the culture of their parents and grandparents. In the case of U.S. Americans in Mexico, the same can be said, especially in the Cold War era. Although U.S. Americans are not viewed as immigrants in the traditional sense, they still denote a group of people living in a foreign country in which they attempted to locate their community. Several institutions remained vital links for community members and their Mexican-raised or Mexican-born U.S. American children: the American School; the American Benevolent Society; women's and men's clubs and fraternal organizations; religious congregations; and secular community groups. Culture defined and united most of the people of U.S. American diaspora in Mexico City. Whether or not they consciously and outwardly defined themselves as members of the American colony, almost all U.S. Americans in Mexico regardless of status found a commonality with their fellow citizens and peers centered on the themes of U.S. culture and nationalism.

The American School Foundation

For parents with school-aged children, the American School, later renamed as the American School Foundation (AFS), represented the space within the community where their children could absorb true “Americanness” outside of the nuclear family. AFS educated

students from kindergarten to twelfth grade. In 1888, the American School began with a few dozen students from the United States, Mexico, and Great Britain. By 1912 the school moved to a larger building to accommodate over 500 pupils ranging from kindergarten to high school. The events of the Mexican Revolution stymied the growth of the school until the mid-1920s when people began returning to Mexico City from abroad. The organization of the school changed to that of a stock company to raise funds for the day to day operations. Tuition was not excessive and was affordable for nearly all colony members as well as many other international pupils and upper-class Mexican students.⁷³ In 1941, the tuition for kindergarten to high school ranged from 300 to 400 pesos annually.⁷⁴

In 1922 there 113 U.S. American families with children enrolled in the American School, while in 1939 266 students enrolled.⁷⁵ The American School was located in Colonia Roma until 1946 and could be one reason why so many families initially settled there before the 1940s when there was no access to mass transport. In 1946 the school moved to a larger building located to the west in Colonia Tacubaya, an upper-class area located near Lomas and Condesa, two areas that saw increased U.S. American migration post WWII.

The school was required to conform to Mexican educational regulations as well as regulations in the United States considering that many pupils graduated and attended U.S. public schools and universities. All subjects were taught in English, although students were required to take daily Spanish, Mexican history, and civics classes in a bilingual setting.

According the enrollment files of the American School from 1940, 423 Mexican students,

⁷³ Davis, "The American Colony," 181.

⁷⁴ Tuition now costs more than \$24,000 USD a year for high school, <https://www.asf.edu.mx/admission-financial-aid/tuition-and-fees>

⁷⁵ Davis, "The American Colony," 102.

320 American students, and roughly 200 students from other nationalities were rolled in the school that calendar year.

Class and Social Hierarchy

Class played a significant role in the American Colony's internal and external goings on. Davis gives an example of a "new money" family, who having moved up the socioeconomic ladder upon their arrival in Mexico due to the husband's salary increase, could afford to join the elite Mexico City Country Club. Founded in 1905 by U.S. Americans, the Mexico City Country Club was the most prominent institution within the American Colony.⁷⁶ In 1942, annual dues cost \$300 pesos with an initiation fee of \$500 pesos. People wishing to join the Country Club needed three letters of recommendation from other members, as well as a lengthy personal background questionnaire. Despite the rigorous background process, the "new money" family was accepted into the Country Club, much to the chagrin of the other members. The wife of the "new money" family attempted to join activities of the established women's groups at the Country Club, only to find that her background barred her from the clique. The members frowned upon the educational backgrounds of the husband and wife—both only finished eighth grade. Angry members told Davis that the "uncouth and uneducated" woman spoke crassly and did not understand the more refined topics the other women discussed during their women's club activities.⁷⁷ Most of the men of the Colony attended universities such as the University of Texas, the

⁷⁶ In 1945 the Mexico City Country Club was renamed El Club Campestre de la Ciudad de México. From *Weekend: The Art of Good Living in Mexico*, November 1948, Hemeroteca Nacional de México.

⁷⁷ Davis, "The American Colony," 211.

University of Southern California, Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania. Likewise, almost every female member graduated from university or college.⁷⁸ By and large, colonists came from upper middle class to upper class backgrounds, and once transposed to Mexico, their socioeconomic standing further rose.

The importance placed on social standing in wealthy families in the United States was compounded in the American Colony since everyone knew everyone's business and gossip traveled fast. Colony members threw massive parties for any occasion, and weekend gatherings at the fanciest nightclubs and restaurants brought people together to socialize. Colonists believed that clubs not only ensured that the colony maintained its "Americanness," but also set examples for the Mexican community on how to conduct proper behavior. Lower class Mexicans could emulate the Americans by "pulling themselves up by their bootstraps," while Mexican elites had a similar model upon which to prosper.

Unlike the Mexico City Country Club, the American Club did not require extensive background checks and a blue blood pedigree to join. U.S. citizenship was the only requirement other than the paltry \$20 peso quarterly dues.⁷⁹ Within the American Club, members joined several sub organizations such as the Junior League, the Pan American Roundtable, and The Old-Timers Club. The only time an African-American graced the pages of an American colony-produced news source was when *Week-End: The Art of Good Living in Mexico* profiled the doorman at the American Club, Joseph J. Joyner, in 1948. The article in the short-lived magazine included an interview with Joe where he was quoted in a derogatory manner as saying, "Ah'm awfully lazy now, but some day when Ah can find

⁷⁸ Biographies of Board members of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico in special edition of *Business/Mexico*, August 1968.

⁷⁹ Davis, "The American Colony," 225.

more time, Ah hope to get stahted on writing my ‘xperiences.” To members of the American Club, Joe the African-American doorman acted like a live-action minstrel to entertain and bring “jovial warmth” to the members. The piece stated that Joe had been married several times and did not know how many children he had, bringing in another pervasive racist stereotype regarding African-American men.⁸⁰ To the members of the American Club, Joe transposed the racial and social hierarchy they were familiar with in the United States into the confines of the American Colony.

The American Benevolent Society (ABS) aided the less fortunate of colony members. Out of work U.S. Americans could use the services of the ABS to find work in Mexico, obtain a small loan, find medical care, and furnish burial expenses for indigent U.S. Americans. Funding came from individual donations, as well as after 1942, funds raised through the American Society of Mexico. Most of the destitute U.S. Americans the Society helped came from the “old-timers” who arrived in Mexico in the 1890s and 1900s. They fell on hard times after an illness or a lack of retirement funds. The ABS grew out of favor as the older generation of colonists passed away and the newer generation remained comfortably protected from needing its services. The American Hospital, founded in 1895, treated U.S. Americans and Mexicans. The hospital merged with the British Hospital in the 1940s to form The American-British Cowdray Hospital (ABC). It remains a private, state-of-the-art hospital that used the first iron lung for use in Mexico, of which the American Society of Mexico and other U.S. American organizations raised money to fund for sick children struggling with the effects of polio.

⁸⁰“Another Guy Named Joe,” in *Week-end: The Art of Good Living in Mexico*, November 1948.

English-Language Media

English-language newspapers remained scarce throughout much of the first half of the twentieth century. Smaller English dailies existed in other parts of Mexico where U.S. influence in mining occurred. Colony members in Mexico City had few options prior to 1950: the English sections of *El Universal* and *Excélsior* provided the most relevant English-language news sources. *The News*, a conservative paper, and *The Mexico City Times*, whose tagline was “Dedicated to Truth and Good Will,” provided the English-speaking residents of Mexico City with a lifeline to the lives they had in the United States and brought unity to the community. *This Week in Mexico*, a weekly tourist magazine, mostly concerned temporary residents. *Week-End: The Art of Good Living in Mexico* reported on resident U.S. Americans and U.S. tourist news and community activities. AMSOC produced a monthly magazine *Bulletin* (later changed to *Amistad*) that united the community’s events and provided members with news and articles on life in Mexico. *Bulletin/Amistad* ran from 1942 until the mid-1990s. The main purpose of the magazine was to instill a sense of unity and collective purpose for the American colonists by actively advocating for the colonists to act as representatives of U.S. interests. Other than *The News*, *Bulletin* was the most widely consumed English-language media in the American colony, with every AMSOC member receiving a monthly copy and returnees to the United States paying a subscription to receive the magazine sent to their new addresses.

The newspaper *The News* provided the American colony with a strictly U.S. interpretation of culture, economics, politics, and worldview, and its detractors referred to it

as attacking anything that challenged U.S. capitalist interest in Mexico.⁸¹ Mexican media empresario Romulo O’Farrill Jr. started the paper. His family had a long history of courting the American colonists and businessmen. The O’Farrill family brought the first televisions to Mexico. They founded the conservative dailies *Novedades* and *Diario da la Tarde*. The elder Romulo O’Farrill established the first Chrysler Corporation in Mexico.⁸² Both father and son sat on various boards of companies such as Chrysler, RCA, and Sears Roebuck de México. The O’Farrill families were fully entrenched with U.S. business interests in Mexico. For its U.S. and Mexican readers, *The News* supported the collective vision and purpose of the American Colony and U.S. foreign and economic policies in Mexico. It remained the mouthpiece of colony elites and their Mexican supporters. It focused less on charitable actions and more on U.S. business and political news.

AMSOC: The American Society of Mexico

S. Bolling Wright, the most influential American colonist during WWII, gathered U.S. Americans together to form the American Society of Mexico (AMSOC) to channel U.S. American support for the war effort. Another intended goal was to influence Mexican elites into joining the war effort. After WWII, the goals remained the same during an era of supposed communist attacks on democratic principles. Instead of projecting the image of a friendly United States against fascism, colonists switched their target to combat anti-Americanism and communist support in Mexico. AMSOC’s main function was one of a

⁸¹ North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), “Dollars and Sense of Community: The American Society,” *NACLA’s Latin America and Empire Report* 8, no.1 (1974): 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*

grass roots public relations agency that reinforced and coordinated the actions of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. economic interests.

As more people arrived from the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, colony members noticed a need for a non-political organization to bring members together and give direction and purpose for American colonist activities. Not until the emergence of AMSOC did the American colony begin to make serious good neighbor inroads. Its tagline, “Fostering friendship through understanding and support,” directly told U.S. Americans that the duty of every citizen of the United States was to band together for the sake of the United States and Mexico. Colony leaders founded AMSOC with four goals in mind:⁸³

1. To keep alive the patriotic spirit toward our country, the United States, and to promote its interests.
2. To foster friendly relations between Mexicans and Americans.
3. To assist in developing cultural relations between the two countries.
4. To promote acquaintanceship among its members.⁸⁴

Davis states that in 1942 no structure existed that bound the entire colony together to help members assimilate and learn Mexican customs and culture. AMSOC was founded in 1942 while Davis wrote her dissertation, so she had no way of knowing that such an organization was in its infancy. People participated in one organization or another but did not have a cohesive identity other than being tied into the American Colony by citizenship. Before AMSOC came into existence, if colony members wished to learn Spanish, they did so on their own. While AMSOC initially provided support for people to learn Spanish and

⁸³ American Society of Mexico, “Inaugural Issue,” *Bulletin 1, no. 1* (1942): 1.

⁸⁴ NACLA, “Dollars and Sense of Community,” 5.

Mexican customs, it also fostered cross-cultural relationships between Mexicans and U.S. Americans through a focus on charity. The organization united under an umbrella organization called the United Community Fund (UCF) that pooled together most of the dozens of American Colony's beloved groups and organizations from the Junior League to the ABC Hospital Board into one charitable foundation that divided up annual donations between the participating charities and organizations.⁸⁵

AMSOC administrators enticed new members by selling the organization as a way for patriotic U.S. Americans to help craft Mexico in the image of the United States. AMSOC members, they were told, set the example of what "responsible, civic-minded citizens can do to promote basic social programs without which no civilized community can exist."⁸⁶ Through their participation in AMSOC, American colonists brought "civilization" to Mexico, members were told. AMSOC administrators also told current and potential new members that the organization relied on the support of the American community in Mexico because "the importance of the projects sponsored or coordinated by such a civic agency is greatly enhanced when it is understood that, unlike similar programs in the U.S., these do not receive the moral or material support of municipal or state government."⁸⁷ As shall be examined, AMSOC programs received funding and support from the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Ambassadors, as well as the generous support from U.S. multinational corporations in Mexico. While AMSOC painted itself as standing alone in the fight to improve Mexican-

⁸⁵ North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), "Dollars and Sense of Community: The American Society," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 8, no.1 (1974): 5.

⁸⁶ American Society of Mexico, "Volunteer Service," *Bulletin* 15, no. 11 (1957): 14.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

American relations, it relied on the organs of U.S. empire and its foot soldiers to carry out its charitable and propagandistic efforts.⁸⁸

AMSOC maintained the nationalistic ties between Colony members and their homeland, especially if they had children born and raised in Mexico who had no concept of what it meant to be American other than occasional visits to the United States or by modeling their parent's actions and customs. Every generation of parents worried that their Mexican-born children would be "too Mexican" and not understand the need for espousing their parent's patriotism. AMSOC reinforced what it meant "to be American," and displayed "Americanness" by lived example for colony members and for the wider Mexican community by supporting holiday dinners for Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, sponsoring patriotic essay writing contests for children, holding informational sessions on current events in foreign policy, and more.

Ties that Bind

Segregation rarely leads to cultural and social exchange, and in the era of the Cold War, that meant that the American Colony would appear haughty and standoffish unless the members worked to integrate themselves into the larger Mexican community. As representatives of the United States, the people of the American Colony felt a responsibility to exhibit their friendliness and American values in the struggle to win hearts and minds for the sake of the United States government and for U.S. business interests. At the annual Fourth of July celebration held on the American School grounds, the event brought together U.S. Americans and any Mexican who wanted to eat hot dogs and baked beans, ride Ferris wheels,

⁸⁸ This will be addressed in chapters 2 and 4.

and square dance. Every year booths lined the festival space with company representatives giving away samples and trinkets of U.S. products from Quaker Oats, Kodak, and Goodyear. Patriotism went hand in glove with U.S. corporate interests. Community rituals bonded people together and ingrained the image of the United States as a land of plenty and its citizens as wholesome family-orientated consumers.⁸⁹

The United States ambassador and his wife officially led the UCF Drive every year. The ambassador united the interests of the U.S. government with those of the Colony and the Mexican community. For an organization that claimed no affiliation with any political party nor any connections to the U.S. government, plenty of connections clearly existed between AMSOC and the U.S. government, and the U.S. Embassy was intimately tied to the colony and its outreach efforts. Ambassador Josephus Daniels described colony members as “well-to-do, conservatives, who wished to preserve the status quo.” He admitted that some were “simple, hard-working people.” Daniels waxed fondly, saying that he “always found them, as individuals if not as political and economic philosophers, men and women given to friendliness, hospitality, and kindness.”⁹⁰

The United States government and its representatives viewed the American Colony as a crucial ally in creating a favorable bond with the Mexican people and the needs. The history of the American Colony in Mexico City cannot be disconnected from U.S. corporate and government history. Operation Amigos, which will be discussed in length in chapter four, took on the role of spreading the potential of Mexico in the United States. The businessmen

⁸⁹ North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), “Dollars and Sense of Community,”: 6.

⁹⁰ Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat*, page 380

who created Operation Amigos sought to unite U.S. and Mexican business together under the banner of good neighborliness, and to do so meant to break down the social and racial barriers that had propped up the American colony for decades.⁹¹ Companies such as Coca-Cola, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Gillette, and National City Bank of New York, all pledged to give support “for the cause” of inter-American cooperation and peace.⁹² The success of Operation Amigos rested on the shoulders of the American residents and U.S. financial and business interests in Mexico who strove “to work together toward growing goodwill, better business relations, and greater friendship between the United States and Mexico.”⁹³ All three seemingly different institutions were locked in the same struggle with similar. The rationales of why U.S. Americans in Mexico City acted and reacted to Mexicans is rooted in the mindset of a Cold War United States populous that viewed every citizen engaged in a struggle for the continuation of humanity and the victory of U.S. capitalism over Soviet communism. Following the Cuban Revolution, AMSOC viewed a strong American colony as “crucial to the protection of American interests in other volatile areas.”⁹⁴

The local U.S. American manager of a U.S. multinational corporation, AMSOC president McNeil Stringer argued, had to come to terms with the economic, political, and social changes in Mexico. More Mexicans had purchasing power to buy the “Mexican dream” which meant increased sales in automobiles, homes, kitchen appliances, and other items that

⁹¹ Anita Brenner, “Person to Person,” *Mexico This Month* 1, no. 3 (1955): 11, Hemeroteca Nacional de México, Mexico City.

⁹² Statement of purpose, *Mexico this Month* 1, no. 4 (1955): 1, Hemeroteca Nacional de México, Mexico City.

⁹³ Margaet Levenson, “Retreat,” *Mexico This Month*, 1, no. 5 (1955): 11, Hemeroteca Nacional de México, Mexico City.

⁹⁴ AMSOC, “Community Statement,” 5

signaled a growing middle class. The U.S. manager had to realize that the Mexican government would have some say in how U.S. corporations operated in Mexico. Stringer theorized that the U.S. manager would begin to realize that “if he doesn’t make an effort to know more of the top Mexican and business government leaders, it will be his own company that loses.”⁹⁵ The manager had to woo the public and win their confidence in his company’s product to “improve the corporate image in the eyes of the people” and “contribute to a better public understanding of our political and economic system.”⁹⁶ The average U.S. manager did not fully comprehend that the company, the American Colony, and the United States all were “largely judge upon what *he* does” as a business leader of a foreign corporation.

Stringer criticized the home offices of multinational corporations for focusing too much attention on doing the bare minimum in Mexico as far as public outreach and charity were concerned. He believed that the home offices of major corporations should show Mexicans how the way modern capitalism properly functioned for good, not bad. U.S. business had a challenge before it: spend equal amounts on good will projects and outreach in Mexico to make it “a strong, friendly neighbor” and convince the Mexican people of the positives of the free enterprise system. If U.S. business modified the way Mexicans figured into the system, closer ties could be formed for business associates and the United States would build a strong ally in Mexico and garner major support in the free world.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Speech given by McNeil Stringer at the Dallas Rotary Club, “The New Role of American Business in Mexico,” *Mexican American Review* 33, no. 10 (1964): 31.

⁹⁶ Stringer, “The New Role of American Business in Mexico,” 33.

⁹⁷ Stringer, “The New Role of American Business in Mexico,” 34.

Twentieth Century Mexico

Porfirian policies (1876-1911) openly encouraged foreign investment that transformed late nineteenth century Mexico. This rapid transformation also resulted in the dispossession of communal indigenous lands for the expansion of rail lines and the growth of massive haciendas owned by Mexican and foreign elites. This led to thousands of people displaced from the land and without access to a living which forced peasants and rural workers into sharecropping and forced migration to urban centers and to the United States.

According to scholar Susan M. Gauss, the Mexican Revolution ushered in new ideas of social welfare that merged over the course of the twentieth century to pacify different interest groups to firmly consolidate different iterations of what would become the PRI.⁹⁸ Land redistribution and labor rights empowered urban and rural groups who had been ignored during the Porfiriato. By the 1930s, the ruling party began to coopt popular groups such as rural peasants and urban workers into the government-sanctioned state-building process. Revolutionary redistribution helped to placate differing groups under the umbrella of the PRI.

During his 6 years in office (1934-1940), president Lázaro Cárdenas directed a sweeping land reform plan, nationalized the oil industry, and initiated educational and cultural programs. Communal land reform mythologized the PRI as being the party of the people, namely the party and champions of rural peasants. This mythology contributed to the PRI's

⁹⁸ Susan M. Gauss, "Welfare Capitalism (Mexico)," in *Encyclopedia of Social Welfare History in North America*, eds. John M. Herrick & Paul H. Stuart (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2005).

nearly 70 year grip on political power.⁹⁹ Cardenismo, while ambitious, was ineffectual at the state level, and even more disastrous at the local level. Revolutionary government reforms were oftentimes dismantled or stymied by state factions that opposed federal reforms to local issues. Cárdenas pinned his hopes on land reform, capitulating to oppositional desires, and he sacrificed social programs to gain small concessions with rivals. While Cardenismo was defeated, the spirit of the movement was co-opted by succeeding presidents who altered the tenets of the Revolution but maintained a revolutionary appearance of change centered around Cardenismo.¹⁰⁰

In a departure from the failures of the Cárdenas administration, Alan Knight notes that “*democracy* came to be used by both Avilacamachistas and Alemnistas as a code for conservatism . . .”¹⁰¹ In order to support industrialization, Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) spent 779 million pesos on roads and 168 million pesos on railroads in Mexico. He spent an

⁹⁹ Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith argue that the PRI was not as all encompassing and in control of local, daily life as twentieth century Mexican historiography has previously argued. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, “The Paradoxes of Revolution,” In *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 21).

¹⁰⁰ For more examinations of Cárdenas, see Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), Adrian A. Bantjes' *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (University of California Press, 1996); Jennifer Jolly, *Creating Pátzcuaro, Creating Mexico: Art, Tourism, and Nation Building under Lázaro Cárdenas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018); Amelia M. Kiddle and María L. O Muñoz eds., *Populism in twentieth century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010).

¹⁰¹ Alan Knight, “The End of the Mexican Revolution?” From Cárdenas to Avila Camacho, 1937-1941.” In *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 48).

additional 361 million pesos to electrify rural areas generation.¹⁰² Social programs such as education and healthcare received less funding than under Cárdenas. What is known as the “Alemán counterrevolution” under the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) continued to reverse many of the leftist policies of the Lázaro Cárdenas administration. Social and economic nationalism defined much of the twentieth century in Mexico.

The era known as the Mexican Miracle (1940-1975 ca.) came into being in part due to Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). In Mexico it began in earnest during the final years of the Cárdenas administration to hasten industrialization, in what Gauss claims allowed the PRI to unite regional and Mexico City elites under a common goal.¹⁰³ ISI rose to new levels under Alemán as the PRI tied the nation’s future to industrialization instead of fostering social policies. As an alternative to imported manufactured goods, Mexican economists and businessmen pushed for domestically-produced goods to propel the Mexican economy during and after WWII. The foundation of ISI was the role of government control over key industries, such as oil and mining. An additional outgrowth of ISI was the expansion of infrastructure throughout the country with new highway and rail line construction. Alemán also placed less importance on the ejido and land distribution because he believed that the future of Mexico lay in industrialism, not in rural development.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² John Tutino, *The Mexican Heartland: How Communities Shaped Capitalism, a Nation, and World History, 1500-2000* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2018, 336).

¹⁰³ Susan M. Gauss, “Made in Mexico: The Rise of Mexican Industrialism, 1938–1952,” (PhD Diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2002).

¹⁰⁴ Gauss, “Made in Mexico,” 147. For more on ISI in Latin America, see Victor Bulmer-Thomas, “Globalization and the New Economic Model in Latin America,” *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, eds. Victor Bulmer-Thomas, John Coatsworth, Roberto Cortes-Conde (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Successive PRI administrations allocated credit, provided tax exemptions, and placed protective tariffs on goods to encourage industrial support for ISI. Foreign investment was encouraged but restrictions limited foreign investments in certain industries and Mexican investors had majority control of any joint ventures, known as Mexicanization.¹⁰⁵ Different administrations placed restrictions on foreign investments (Ávila Camacho and Alemán) while others opened up foreign investment more so than their predecessors like Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958), who encouraged and subsidized foreign investment in Mexico and moved ISI toward producing automobiles and machinery, oftentimes with the help of foreign industries such as Ford.¹⁰⁶

López Mateos used nationalist rhetoric to take over key industries—electric, power, and petroleum-- to combat the conservative business elites who profited from looser restrictions on foreign companies. He tightened Mexicanization and set limitations on the number of foreign firms operating in Mexico and required owners of firms to be Mexican.¹⁰⁷ His decisions caused \$250 million from the Mexican private sector to flee abroad.¹⁰⁸ Gustavo

¹⁰⁵ Don M. Coerver, Suzanne B. Pasztor, Robert Buffington eds, “Import Substitution Industrialization,” *Mexico: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Culture and History*, ABC-CLIO, 2004, 231.

¹⁰⁶ Van R. Whiting, Jr., *The Political Economy of Foreign Investment in Mexico: Nationalism, Liberalism, and Constraints on Choice* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 73. For other works on Mexico in the 1940s, see Stephen Niblio, *Mexico in the 1940's: Modernity Politics and Corruption* (New York: SR Books, 1999) and Arthur Schmidt, “Making It Real Compared to What? Reconceptualizing Mexican History since 1940,” In Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov, eds. *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico since 1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁷ Peter H. Smith, “Mexico Since 1946: Dynamics of an Authoritarian Regime” in *Mexico Since Independence*, Leslie Bethell, ed. New York: Cambridge University Press 1991, 321, 324–25.

¹⁰⁸ Van R. Whiting, Jr., *The Political Economy of Foreign Investment in Mexico*, 74.

Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) continued many of the restrictive policies of his predecessor but also reversed course and ended restrictions on basic food stuffs, fertilizers, chemicals, and insecticides.¹⁰⁹ To get around restrictions, many foreign investors simply opened up subsidiary companies in Mexico to escape trade barriers.¹¹⁰ Foreign direct investment flowed from the United States into Mexico in ever increasing numbers.¹¹¹ Domestic demand for ISI goods was never a large enough consumer base to support a system, and the goods Mexican companies produced were not competitive on international markets to make up the difference.¹¹²

Cracks began forming in the Mexican Miracle in the mid-1950s with the 1954 peso devaluation. As discontent among the lower class and students erupted in violence and protests, teachers, railroad workers, and nurses and doctors protested unfair working conditions and treatment.¹¹³ Many believed that the PRI had not made enough gains over the forty year history of the Revolution in the areas of education, health care, income, and housing. The people no longer seemed under the revolutionary spell and did not have faith in

¹⁰⁹ Van R. Whiting, Jr., *The Political Economy of Foreign Investment in Mexico*, 76.

¹¹⁰ Susan M. Gauss, *Made in Mexico: Regions, Nation, and the State in the Rise of Mexican Industrialism, 1920s-1940s* (Penn State Press, 2011), 247.

¹¹¹ Smith, "Mexico Since 1946," 326.

¹¹² Louise Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968* (Stanford University Press, 2013),

¹¹³ Robert F. Alegre, *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico: Gender, Class, and Memory* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

the promises enshrined in the Constitution.¹¹⁴ Social and civil unrest came to a head with the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre the 1971 Corpus Christi Massacre.¹¹⁵

To rectify the issues of his predecessors, populist Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–76) attempted to polish the image of the PRI by funding—at least superficially—traditional tenets of the Mexican Revolution, like rural education and public workers programs. However, fiscal mismanagement and a skyrocketing national debt caused the economy to falter. Investments in some social programs diverted to support state-owned industries like PEMEX and to fund rural education campaigns.¹¹⁶ He also initiated a large land distribution program. In 1970 the government decided to nationalize other industries like steel, glass, cement, fertilizers, and aluminum.

Mexico by the early 1980s was dominated by the PRI and its policies that favored State repression and ever-increasing neoliberal ties with U.S. multinationals. The rhetoric of the Mexican Revolution was simply rhetoric— extolling Mexican “nationalism” was an easy way to paper over the endemic problems of poverty, repression, and the full-on alignment

¹¹⁴ Telegram From the Embassy in Mexico to the Department of State, August 29, 1958, eds. N. Stephen Kane and Paul Claussen, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics, Volume V*, Document 316.

¹¹⁵ Kate Doyle, “Human Rights and the Dirty War in Mexico.” In the National Security Archive Project, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB99/>, accessed October 5, 2019. See also Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁶ David M. Gould, “Mexico’s Crisis: Looking Back To Assess the Future,” in *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Economic Review* (Second Quarter), 3; Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (Mexico City: Era, 1971).; Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, & Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.)

with U.S. interests that culminated in “La Década Perdida,” or the Lost Decade of the 1980s that witnessed debt crises, peso devaluations, and catastrophic earthquake in 1985.¹¹⁷

The “America” of the U.S. Expatriates of Mexico City at Midcentury

Historian John Fousek argues that the United States typically sought to play two roles in the new postwar world order: redeemer or exemplar.¹¹⁸ He claims that the dominant Protestant ideology of the upper classes and U.S. bureaucracy shaped public discourse on how the United States’ Cold War ideology developed. What Fousek calls “American nationalist globalism” is a combined set of ideas centered on mission and destiny. Manifest Destiny as carried through the decades spoke to the senses of U.S. Americans as being a chosen people imbued with a sense of mission to play global policemen and spread U.S. values of democracy and freedom throughout the world.¹¹⁹ U.S. global responsibility after the defeat of fascism of WWII turned toward safeguarding the world against communism. Because much of the Anglo and Euromerican public believed in this postwar ideology, largely the U.S. public did not need convincing on the heels of a global victory over fascism in WWII. The economic victory that resulted from the wartime economy convinced policymakers and the public alike of the need to spread the wealth of democracy and its trappings and allow the world to have the same advantages and technologies by making inroads into foreign markets. American nationalism shaped Cold War midcentury U.S.

¹¹⁷ Gilbert M. Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau, *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule Since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Duke University Press, 2013), 175.

¹¹⁸ John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000,) 83.

¹¹⁹Fousek, *To Lead the Free World*, 7.

ideology for the expatriates of the American Colony. The shared ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, and images they held as the foundations of the American nation stretching back to the Revolutionary War. To U.S. corporate interests and the U.S. public, people across the globe wanted the same material wants and held the same values as people in Nebraska or California. If non-U.S. Americans did not have everything the average U.S. American supposedly had, the U.S. public via the U.S. government would fight to ensure they did. The “typical” U.S. American became the face of U.S. government and corporate international propaganda.

Anna Creadick notes in *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America* that social scientists became obsessed with figuring out postwar national American character. This homogenous national character excluded the poor, minorities, and most people who did not fall solidly within the middleclass white Anglo-Saxon protestant, or at least Christian, mainstream. As the title suggests, normalcy, and therefore conformity, became the national character. Conformity to overt patriotism, obedience to authority, preserving and spreading mass consumerism, and preservation of strict heteronormative gender and social norms. The safe ideal of normalcy-- whiteness, physical fitness, youth, and middle-class monotony symbolized the ideal of the average American because of the ability of the message of normalcy to unite the powerful emerging middle class that benefited from the fruits of WWII and the postwar period. However, some social scientists and scholars viewed too much conformity as potentially dangerous because individualism was the bedrock of U.S. national ideology that the United States people projected onto the global stage.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Anna Creadick, *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2010). See also Andrew Dunar, *America in the Fifties*

National character, then, I argue, was (and remains) a perpetual struggle for chasing a contradictory impossibility. People in the postwar decades wanted to be “normal,” yet the consumerism and social norms fueled by media and mass consumption told them to be unique, while the myth of American exceptionalism told them that they were destined for greatness (therefore not average) simply due to their place of birth.¹²¹

Notions of gender and sexuality are themes that are interwoven throughout this study. Such notions appear in official government documents, in the lived experiences of U.S. Americans, and in the performance of Americanness colony members displayed to Mexican audiences. It is important to lay a foundation of postwar ideas on gender and morality to understand why the people of the American colony acted as such. In many ways, the fact that U.S. Americans lived in a foreign environment and existed under a microscope of community pressure compounded postwar and Cold War gender roles. The postwar period refashioned gender norms once again as men returned home, attended college, married, and women left the war effort to become wives and mothers in a heightened era of gender conformity. The baby boom redirected U.S. women from the floors of the factories during WWII and back into the home as caretakers. Men’s salaries-- boosted from postwar economic prosperity-- provided all that middle class families supposedly needed: homes, cars, vacations, and other material goods to help them keep up with the Joneses. If most middle class women did work, they only did so before the arrival of their first child, and then promptly followed their mothers into the cult of domesticity. For women with too much free time on their hands and school-aged children, volunteerism was a safe and healthy way for

(Syracuse University Press, 2006). Dunar examines the work of sociologist David Riesman and his concern for conformity and the loss of social freedom in postwar U.S. culture.

¹²¹ Creadick, *Perfectly Average*, 88.

middle class women to channel their energy into something positive and productive for their communities.

The December 24, 1956 a special edition of *Life*, entitled “The American Woman: Her Achievements and Troubles,” focused on how women in the United States fared at midcentury. The special issue was described by the editors as highlighting the successes of U.S. women. They not only represented the modern woman, they were actively preoccupied with “keeping themselves healthy and good-looking, producing more and healthier babies than any woman in the nation’s history.”¹²² The editors of *Life* shied away from the prickly topic of women’s rights and changing gender norms when they asked readers “to ask any thoughtful, honest woman what the most satisfying moments of her life have been, and she will never mention the day she got her first job or the day she outwitted her boss on his ground.” Instead, they argued, any woman would look fondly back on her first formal dance and her first love, and “the moment when she held her first baby in her arms. It was not just releasing, it was completely fulfilling.”¹²³ Ten images of “beauties” graced the first few pages of the magazine. These “All-American girls” all came from middle to upper class families. They all were white, with athletic builds, most had blond hair, and were described as representing “what most women in the U.S. want to be.” The younger women attended college, and all the women over 25 married and started families, except for one unwed 26 year old woman in San Francisco who lived with a roommate.¹²⁴ “The modern woman” was reminded that her goal and her entire image was of wife and mother.

¹²² “An Introduction,” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Margaret Mead, “She has Strength Based on a Pioneer Past” *Life*, December 24, 1956.

Another article by cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead titled “She has Strength Based on a Pioneer Past” glorified the romanticized white American woman who trekked across the continental United States. Mead praised this historical woman as a “good manager” and claimed she was not frail and timid like women in Europe of days gone by. In the United States of America, women had the choice to marry whomever they wished—arranged marriages from the old country did not apply here. Mead attributed American women as a civilizing force, and a group that “raised standards of manners and morals.” Mead used this woman as a example of the perfect woman, affirming that “all over the world, in the harem, in the hut, in the peasant cottage, other women, who have never envied their husbands’ positions, now envy and desire to emulate the American woman.”¹²⁵ Journalist Emily Kimbrough took a slightly more egalitarian view of U.S. women than Mead, arguing instead that the ingenuity and greatness of the U.S. woman allowed her the “flexibility and imagination to contribute to all the worlds, including and especially the world of the home.” When U.S. women did take jobs (Kimbrough does not explicitly state that the women in question are single, but it is implied), they were successful due to their “adaptability” and “warm perceptiveness in human relations.”¹²⁶ They were allowed “some years of grace” to have their fun time working before they return to the cult of domesticity.

In another article, Los Angeles mother Marjorie Sutton is pictured in her home dressed in a ball gown, phone cradled between her ear and shoulder, while she undresses her youngest son, and her tween daughters talk in the background. Marjorie, “a home manager, mother, hostess, and useful civic worker” reported that she lived the good life. She described

¹²⁵ Mead, “She Has the Strength Based on a Pioneer Past,” 26.

¹²⁶ Emily Kimbrough, “She Needs Some Years of Grace” *Life*, December 24, 1956, 29.

herself as pretty and popular. Her husband earned \$25,000 a year (the equivalent of \$229,202 in 2019). She lived in a spacious home with a large backyard. She had a full-time servant to relieve her of any daily duties. And, she worked for her community as a Girls Scout leader, PTA board member, and raised funds for local hospitals. At 32, she had four children between 6-14 years. She lived the very atypical but aspirational American life that U.S. consumerism sold as what women could achieve both domestically and internationally. She was a good Cold Warrior in the sense that she was the antithesis of the Soviet woman who worked long hours in a state factory, relied on state nurseries to care for her neglected children, and was expected to do the same physical duties as men regardless of differences in gender.

In a survey of thousands of 20 year old women across the United States, respondents expressed what they looked for in a potential spouse. Women wanted a husband of at least 6 feet; to be sincere and honest; to have a job with a future; not to be possessive; to want a large family; to take part in civic affairs; not to be egotistical; help around the house; be well read; and if possible, be Perry Como.¹²⁷ The dreams of future wedded bliss for unmarried 20 year old women in 1956 included all of the driving forces of postwar nationalistic and capitalistic propaganda.

Interspersed between the *Life* articles and pictorials of the “average” American woman (white, middle to upper class) were advertisements for automobiles, General Electric kitchen appliances, vacations, recipes from food companies like Comstock, home furniture, and other consumer goods. The idealized representation of the “good” woman in advertisements was intricately tied to purchasing the latest and most fashionable clothes,

¹²⁷ “20 year old ideals,” *Life*, 43.

home appliances, and living out the postwar American Dream. The “good” American man was always depicted as provider and protector. In an advertisement for life insurance, the tag line declared, “big dreams for your boy come true with Equitable Life Insurance: Right now you can make sure that nothing will interfere with the future you plan for him.” The short story that accompanied the ad stated that “when a dad looks into his boy’s face, he has a special kind of vision. He sees before him the man of tomorrow as he wants him to be—a man who is tall in life, a big man in all ways.”¹²⁸ Men raised future leaders who would have the tools necessary to grow up into the man of tomorrow. Gender for men and women centered on consumption of goods and services that drove the postwar economy and fueled the engine of U.S. American economic and cultural expansion domestically and abroad.

White citizens of the United States emerged from WWII in a completely different economic space. For many, the American Dream had died on the vine during the Great Depression. The war reconstituted that dream into a new reality for millions of ordinary people. Clifford E. Clark makes the point that postwar America “saw affluence as the core of a new order.”¹²⁹ The carefully imagined and unsullied world of middle-class suburban America depicted the spoils of war and the antithesis of Soviet communism. People freely decided which items to buy, how to furnish their homes, where to vacation, and how to be

¹²⁸ Equitable Life Insurance ad, *Life*, December 24, 1956.

¹²⁹ Clifford E. Clark, Jr. “Ranch-House Suburbia: Ideals and Realities” in *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War*, Ed. Larry May (University of Chicago Press, 1988), 171; Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Nation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); Stuart A. Kallen: *The 1950s* (San Diego, Calif.: Lucent Books, 1999); Lisle A. Rose, *The Cold War comes to Main Street: America in 1950* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999)

their “normal” American selves. Choice, or what advertising agencies sold as choice, separated “us” from “them.”¹³⁰

If U.S. democracy and values acted as the antidote for the world against fascism and communism, then the character of the U.S. American needed to be exported abroad as a model for how to act as a good steward of democracy, however contradictory. Historian Laura A. Belmonte notes that “many foreigners, especially in developing nations, believed Americans were immoral, had little family life, and condoned loose living.”¹³¹ Advertisers and policymakers needed to sell the idea that U.S. society provided more advantages to global citizens than Soviet communism. Dwight Eisenhower’s U.S. President’s Committee on International Information Activities (the Jackson Committee) pointed out key facets of U.S. culture that could be used in propaganda campaigns. The Committee claimed that the United States shared the same basic beliefs and values of individual freedom, religious freedom, the belief that the family is sacred, belief in a better future for all, and belief in a peaceful world. If these values and beliefs presented abroad in public relations and propaganda campaigns reached target audiences, then the average person would have a favorable image of the United States in comparison to the Soviet Union.¹³²

Typical, “normal” families were safe illusions that sold the ideas of modernity and postwar consumerism, the promotion of free enterprise, and capitalism. United States Information Agency (USIA) information campaign guidelines emphasized portraying

¹³⁰ For other studies on midcentury U.S. American life, see Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2009)

¹³¹ Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 141.

¹³² Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 58.

feminine, hardworking, average women as wives and mothers, not Hollywood bombshells.¹³³ Countries most likely to fall into the orbit of U.S. cultural influence would also be more inclined to purchase modern U.S.-produced technology and other consumer items. As Belmonte says, “American propaganda on economic issues, therefore, protected commerce as well as national security.”¹³⁴ By the end of the 1940s and throughout the Cold War, selling modernity and the trappings of American life-- tangible or intangible—forced U.S. officials to unite “their notions of national identity to the imperatives of national security.”¹³⁵

U.S. propaganda and its agents, whether U.S. government officials or members of the American Colony, carried ingrained ideas of patriotism, democracy, consumerism, and anti-communism with them at home and abroad. Gender norms reinforced the idea that women held the family together by providing stability and instilling values into their children, while at the same time spending her free time to help the less fortunate or improve the community. Self-reliant men provided the economic foundation for successful postwar consumerist families. Children represented the vanguards for the next generation and its safeguarding of the “American” way of life. Altogether, the Cold War nuclear family bolstered a commitment to freedom, “traditional American” values, and the struggle to conquer Soviet communism.

Conclusion

Social organizations and institutions provided structure and supported the continuation of American identity and nationalism within the American Colony in Mexico

¹³³ Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 156.

¹³⁴ Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 118.

¹³⁵ Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 135.

City. Dominant postwar U.S. social and cultural ideologies shaped how ordinary U.S. citizens viewed themselves, their place in the world, and their relationship to foreigners. The U.S. Embassy represented the bridge between the American Colony and the Mexican public. The U.S. Ambassador gave the community guidance and support to foster cross culture relations and made themselves as representatives of U.S. foreign power and U.S. values visible to the Mexican public, while business interests also courted the U.S. Ambassador and attempted to curry favor and also lead by example.

The Mexican government sought to walk a fine line between allowing U.S. corporations into Mexico while maintaining its revolutionary and nationalistic messaging to the Mexican people. U.S. corporations and U.S. citizens in Mexico had to come to terms with currying favor with Mexican nationalism while recreating their version of the all-American main street that dominated mainstream U.S. culture and was intended to be exported abroad by agents such as the American colonists.

The NSC 68 policy report from April 1950, section VI “U.S. Intentions and Capabilities—Actual and Potential” gives a blueprint on how the U.S. government planned to carry out victory against the Soviet Union. The United States rejected isolation and understood “the necessity of our positive participation in the world community. It is of course the principal reason for our long continuing endeavors to create and now develop the Inter-American system.” The American public was seen as prospective agents in this struggle, with NSC68-author Paul Nitze, claiming that “the vast majority of Americans are confident that the system of values which animates our society -- the principles of freedom, tolerance, the importance of the individual, and the supremacy of reason over will -- are valid and more vital than the ideology which is the fuel of Soviet dynamism.” Much depended on

the United States upholding certain values and cultivating a polished image on the world stage. The document urges that the people of the United States had to live by example and “demonstrate power, confidence, and a sense of moral and political direction, so those same qualities will be evoked in Western Europe.”¹³⁶ The American system depended on the strength of the United States to rally support from allies and win over the support from vulnerable nations in the shadow of the Soviet Union. Although the focus of NSC 68 remained on European nations, the fact remained clear that a global populous engaged and on the side of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. business interests meant a lessened threat of Soviet control in those nations.

In the June 1961 issue of *Mexican-American Review*, editor Jane McCabe examined how the USIA was consistently being outspent and out performed by Soviet and Cuban propaganda machines in Mexico.¹³⁷ With the help of the American Colony, however, the Mexico City center targeted influential Mexicans in business, law, higher education, government leaders, and other professionals. Civic groups in the American Colony requested U.S.-produced documentaries and films to play at functions where Mexicans would be in attendance, such as a film depicting the plight of Cuban refugees in Miami and John F. Kennedy’s inauguration.¹³⁸ Due to the lack of increased funding on the part of Congress, the colonists were instructed to fill in the void and work in tandem with business and governmental departments.

¹³⁶ National Security Council, “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security: VI. U.S. Intentions and Capabilities--Actual and Potential April 14, 1950,” *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950*, Volume I.

¹³⁷ Jane McCabe, “America’s Voice Grows Clearer,” *Mexican-American Review* 31, no. 6 (1961): 13.

¹³⁸ McCabe, “America’s Voice Grows Clearer,” 16.

Logan Jones, the president of the Mexican company PROMESA, a metalworking company, wrote an opinion piece on how he believed the business community, the American residents of Mexico City, and the U.S. government should unite to actively engage in countering what he believed were communist successes in Mexico. Capitalism, he believed, did not make it possible for upwardly mobile Mexicans to attain a higher standard of living on par with the lower and middle classes in the United States. U.S. powers in Mexico had the duty “to fight the mental state on which Communism thrives” which was “resentment and despair that comes from economic stagnation.” The solution he offered involved giving the industrial classes more technical assistance and introducing more U.S. industry into Mexico to create more jobs.¹³⁹ According to the messages disseminated by U.S. officials to American colonists, it would take a united effort to protect the world against communist intrusion and safeguard U.S. economic expansion. It would take an entity as powerful and all-encompassing as the U.S. State Department to pull all these actors and interests together to move forward with recreating main street in the Mexican context.

¹³⁹ Logan Jones, “Hammer and Sickle: Weapons Against Communism,” in *Mexican American Review* 31, no. 7 (1961): 37.

Chapter 2

“You are all ambassadors of friendliness and goodwill”:

The U.S. Embassy and the American Colony

Before Ambassador Josephus Daniels (1933-1941) departed for Mexico City in 1933, he was given two pieces of advice: do not “cultivate” the American Colony by becoming friendly with the colonists because they were too close to U.S. business and they had no interest in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policy. Relatedly, the Mexican government did not favor ambassadors who had positive connections to U.S. companies. The second piece of advice he received suggested that he should not alienate the colony, but instead become friendly with his fellow Americans.¹⁴⁰ The contradictory position Daniels found himself in highlights how interwoven the U.S. Embassy, the American Colony, and U.S. corporate interests became during the Cold War. Though Daniels found the U.S. citizens in Mexico City to be charitable and generous, for the most part, he also noted that the long standing members of the community were conservative and wished to maintain the status quo. He once recounted a conversation with an older U.S. businessman who wished more than anything to annex Mexico as a U.S. territory.¹⁴¹ Many old guard American colonists during Daniels’s time in Mexico felt that the U.S. government had an obligation to protect U.S. businesses from Mexican governmental interference because of the expropriations that grew out of the Mexican Revolution. The old guard did not believe in Pan Americanism, and they certainly did not support FDR’s conciliatory approach to U.S.-Mexican relations

¹⁴⁰ Josephus Daniels, *Shirt-sleeved Diplomat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 379.

¹⁴¹ Daniels, *Short-Sleeve Diplomat*, 381.

embodied in the Good Neighbor policy. This old guard, however, faded into the background after WWII as more U.S. citizens entered Mexico with the onslaught of U.S. companies entering Mexican markets. The newer guard, often younger and with no previous ties to pre-Revolutionary and pre-1938 Mexico, did believe in Pan Americanism and the Good Neighbor policy, at least superficially. Ambassadors from Messersmith (1942-1946) on used the ideals of the Good Neighbor policy to control and motivate the colonists to further the foreign policy objectives of the embassy and U.S. corporate interests.

The Ambassador to Mexico never has an easy posting. He must appease the individuals of the U.S. bureaucratic state, the Mexican government and people, U.S. business interests in the United States and Mexico, and the ever-present American Colony. By the end of WWII, the stage was set for any future U.S. Ambassadors to form a tight connection with the American Colony and its business partners in Mexico. Colonists proved useful during the pre-war phase of the Good Neighbor policy, but the dawning of the Cold War and the necessity to sell the image of the United States and its citizens as diametrically opposed to Soviet communism drew ambassadors closer to members of the American Colony, especially during the tenure of Ambassador Robert C. Hill. The colonists and Ambassador Hill depended on one another. The era of Ambassador Hill saw a reconciliation between American business interests in Mexico and the government's Good Neighbor policy.

The position of Ambassador to Mexico is one of the most essential and coveted appointments in the State Department. An ambassador must be an expert negotiator, peacemaker, communicator, and representative. Relations between Mexico and the United States are often tense even during periods of cordial relations between the two countries. The ambassador is the mediator who sets the agenda and tone of discussions and disagreements

the two nations might face. In the case of Mexico, the geographical proximity of the two nations has resulted in more historical, political, social, and cultural ties than any other country the United States has diplomatic relations with to date, other than perhaps Great Britain.¹⁴² The United States government also has nearly a dozen consulate offices in Mexico, as well as dozens of federal departments with offices located in Mexico.¹⁴³ The U.S. ambassador, especially in the case of Mexico, is rarely a mere a figurehead.

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and the American Colony entered a symbiotic relationship that benefited both interests groups. The U.S. Embassy replicates the institutions and tools of control that the U.S. elite created domestically (propaganda, education, health and welfare, scientific management, promotion of U.S. culture) to safeguard elite domination and should be examined as being “an instrument through which the U.S. bourgeoisie wages class war internationally.”¹⁴⁴ The State Department and Foreign Service expanded rapidly following the end of WWII as the United States government became a major figure in international relations and Foreign Service Officers became the agents that aided in the spread of U.S. empire.

Eliot Gibbons, frequent contributor to American Colony publications, wrote in *Mexico This Month* that the “official hub of the American Colony is the Embassy, although there is a traditional aloofness between the old-timers, who feel that there are too many employees using up their tax dollars, and that these employees don’t know what they’re

¹⁴² Dolia Estévez, *U.S. Ambassadors to Mexico: The Relationship through Their Eyes* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012), 3.

¹⁴³“U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Mexico,” U.S. Department of State, accessed August 31, 2019, <https://mx.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/>

¹⁴⁴ No Author, “The Embassy: Imperial Outpost,” *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report*, 8:6, no. 21 (1974): 21.

doing anyway; and the Ambassador himself whose top job is making friends and influencing people, and often wishes that all Americans living here would please understand.”¹⁴⁵ The relationship between the governments of the United States and Mexico has experienced good and bad times over the course of two hundred years. U.S. officials often dismissed Latin America “as an aberrant, benighted area inhabited by helpless, essentially childish peoples.”¹⁴⁶ For many policymakers in the United States, Mexico represented a land of unruly people who were stuck in a perpetual cycle of dictatorship and war. Government officials and regular U.S. citizens alike were not oblivious to the treatment of Mexico as a country plundered for its wealth and Mexicans as a people depicted as ignorant peons.¹⁴⁷

In a letter to then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Roy Rubottom acknowledged that the United States had an uphill battle on improving relations with Mexico, saying, “I would be inclined to say that it [the chief issue between the two countries] is that of obtaining Mexico’s confidence in our good faith. Perhaps this is understandable in view of our long and complex history and Mexico’s injuries at the hands of the U.S., both real and fancied. Nevertheless, we should never relent in our effort to overcome this feeling and win her over completely to our side.”¹⁴⁸ The significance of maintaining and improving relations with countries depends on the president in office, the

¹⁴⁵ Elliot Gibbons, “The American Colony” *Mexico This Month*, v. 6 no. 4 (1960): 25

¹⁴⁶ Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World United States Foreign Policy 1945-1980* (Pantheon Books, 1988), 29.

¹⁴⁷ See: John J. Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (University of Texas Press, 1980).

¹⁴⁸ “Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics, Volume V*, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 319.

Secretary of State, the interest of individual ambassadors, and even the U.S. citizens on the ground in host countries.

It is important to understand the official foreign policy culture of the United States government to see how closely the U.S. American Colony recreated and mimicked official public diplomacy and soft power efforts of official diplomatic channels. As defined by Hans Tuch, public diplomacy is a “government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and cultures, as well as its national goals and current policies.”¹⁴⁹ Public diplomacy in practice includes media programs and outreach, cultural activities, and cultural and educational exchanges between nations, and at its essence is a series of government-supported public relation information campaigns that focus on a nation’s citizens, rather than directly reaching a nation’s political figures. The goal is to influence and change the habits, perceptions, and opinions of target communities. Those engaged in the promotion of public diplomacy must maintain the image of whatever they promote-- in this case the image of the United States in Mexico-- using official and unofficial ambassadors of the United States performing Americanness, even if the image might not always live up to the reality behind the façade. According to Robert S. Fortner, “public diplomacy aims to affect the policies of other nations by appeals to its citizens through means of public communication.”¹⁵⁰ A successful public diplomacy campaign influences both the citizens of the target nation, and thus eventually the elected leaders of the target nation.

¹⁴⁹ Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St. Martin's Press).

¹⁵⁰ Robert S. Fortner, *International Communications: History, Conflict, and Control of the Global Metropolis* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993), 178.

USIA acted as the communication wing of the United States government abroad helping to showcase the nation's "benevolence" and the advantages of the free enterprise system. USIA was created in 1953 to combat the spread of Soviet propaganda. USIA employed the same techniques as advertising agencies to generate interest in the nebulous idea of what the United States represented to foreign observers. Much as advertising sells consumers a product, USIA sold the nation to foreign audiences (much like businesses to consumers). Policymakers believed that by influencing foreign target audiences to the supposed attractions of U.S. culture, the world would not only be free of communism, but the people of the world would be active consumers of the U.S. lifestyle in the form of products sold by U.S. corporations. Quality public diplomacy rests on strong connections experienced through people-to-people interaction. As USIA Director Edward R. Murrow stated, "it has always seemed to me the real art in this business is not so much moving information or guidance or policy five or ten thousand miles. [. . .] The real art is to move it the last three feet in face-to-face conversation."¹⁵¹ Public diplomacy fails if the actors involved never interact because public diplomacy rests on building relationships and finding a common cultural understanding and fostering exchange.¹⁵²

Public diplomacy includes a plethora of activities, all with the goal of favorably influencing the opinion of foreign audiences in the influencer's favor. Experts on public

¹⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, "Edward R. Murrow, Transcript of Issues and Answers, ABC, 4 August 1963," in *Edward R. Murrow: Journalism at Its Best*, 2006.

¹⁵² For more on USIA and its role in public diplomacy, see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: Macmillan 1997); Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1 950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Alvin A. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War* (New York: Arcade, 1995); Nancy Snow, *Propaganda Inc: Selling Americas Culture to the World* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998).

diplomacy, and even diplomats themselves, shy away from using the word propaganda to describe the ways that audiences are influenced. Addressing an audience at the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1950, President Truman declared that “we must pool our efforts with those of the other free peoples in a sustained, intensified program to promote the cause of freedom against the propaganda of slavery. We must make ourselves heard around the world in a great campaign of truth.”¹⁵³ For those in the U.S. government, propaganda, with its negative connotations, is what authoritarian governments used to oppress. The United States government and its citizens did not partake in brainwashing vulnerable people, according to Truman. Propaganda supposedly led people down a path toward enslavement and communism. “Truth” as defined along U.S. Cold War lines, however, had the power to lead people toward the promised land built in the image of the United States. The Campaign of Truth that Truman sought to spread around the globe would, he hoped, create a world “in which men and nations live not as enemies but as friends and brothers.”¹⁵⁴ This campaign did not only pertain to newspapermen. It fell to every U.S. citizen to engage in a strategic campaign of public diplomacy to inform the uninformed and demonstrate through actions that freedom and the elevation of “truth” to gospel ensured independence and peace. If ordinary U.S. citizens engage in diplomacy, the charge of propaganda cannot be levied against the U.S. government. Still, cultural diplomacy supports the influencer’s policy agenda, and in the case of the United States during the Cold War, that meant polishing the image of the nation as a beacon of hope, stability, and modernity.

¹⁵³ Harry Truman, Address to American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 21, 1950, Truman Library.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Liam Kennedy and Scott Lucas argue that public diplomacy during the Cold War was integral to the formation of the national security state. The state-private network of U.S. government agencies and private groups and individuals collaborated on political, economic, and cultural programs to sway an audience's opinion on everything related to the United States, namely to support of U.S. foreign policy objectives.¹⁵⁵ As a multifaceted tool to sway opinions, public diplomacy distorts the ideas of what encapsulates information, culture, and propaganda, and the relationship of governments to private business abroad.¹⁵⁶

Whereas public diplomacy has an explicit goal of informing and influencing audiences, successful cultural diplomacy seeks to establish shared cultural knowledge that may not immediately generate tangible success. Cultural diplomacy, a subset of public diplomacy, is defined as “the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.”¹⁵⁷ The idea of fostering a shared understanding does not necessarily exist to generate propaganda, but it can be used to spread misinformation or bend the truth, and it has been described as a tool to “reveal the soul” of the United States to non-citizens.¹⁵⁸ In theory, cultural diplomacy affirms that the people of the United States uphold certain domestic and international values and seek to cooperate to form lasting bonds with people from other nations and cultural backgrounds.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Liam Kennedy and Scott Lucas, “Enduring Freedom: Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Policy” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Jun., 2005): 312.

¹⁵⁶ Kennedy and Lucas, *Enduring Freedom*,” 314.

¹⁵⁷ Milton C. Cummings, Jr. *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey* (Washington, D.C: Center for Arts and Culture), 2003, 1.

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Cultural Diplomacy The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy,” Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, September 2005, 4.

¹⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Cultural Diplomacy The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy,” 16.

The Division of Cultural Relations within the Department of State was established in 1938 to oppose the spread of fascism leading up to WWII during the Good Neighbor Policy era. Private sector organizations acted as bridges between governmental departments. Exchange programs for artists and students flourished as a means for people-to-people exchanges to break down cultural barriers while touting the ideals of democracy. Nelson Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA, 1940-1945) represented the first U.S. government agency to engage in large-scale cultural diplomacy. During and after the war, the Department of State used U.S. expatriates in Mexico City in people-to-people interactions through the Benjamin Franklin Library and the El Instituto Mexicano-Norte Americano de Relaciones Culturales (also called simply the Institute, which will be covered in chapter three). Members of the American Colony could interact and display their Americanness for Mexican audiences through cultural programming.

Imperial Agents in Action: Foreign Service Officers in Mexico City

During the Cold War, the most important U.S. policy initiative for any ambassador to Mexico focused on ensuring that Mexico maintained a stable and non-communist government that welcomed U.S. capital and economic exchange. The U.S. government ignored the human rights abuses and corruption of the ruling party of Mexico, el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). The nearly seven-decade one-party domination by the PRI guaranteed a stable country in which U.S. corporations could safely conduct business and U.S. citizens could spend vacations enjoying the sights, sounds, and tastes of Mexico. For the U.S. government, stability assuaged fears of a communist threat bordering the homeland. Nevertheless, anti-Americanism did exist in Mexico, and it concerned

policymakers enough that the U.S. Embassy employed hundreds of people to produce and disseminate pro-U.S. materials and use members of the American Colony as surrogate diplomats.

The U.S. American company DuPont published a guide for its personnel working and living abroad on how to combat anti-Americanism. The report became so popular that it was circulated in the English-language press in Mexico in 1958. Despite U.S. citizens who were accustomed to believing that everything the United States did was positive and beneficial, the guide suggested to expatriates that they follow steps in combating any negative feelings towards the United States. First, good communication provided the best tool to clear up any confusion about the nation and its role in the world. The guide urged U.S. citizens to not argue with people holding anti-American views; instead, colonists were instructed to lay out a fact-based framework against any negative views of the United States. As representatives of corporations and a country at large, it would be foolish to argue and shout to “win” a discussion. Instead, corporate expatriates were told that their “manner will be remembered long after your words or discussion points.” Second, readers were advised to not rely on broad generalizations and to bring the conversation to the level of personal and lived experiences. Third, disarm the critic with flattery by applauding certain positive points found in his country. If the U.S. citizen did not have enough information to give flattery, they were instructed to visit the USIS office or U.S. embassy to study up on local customs and culture to have enough information to make solid counterclaims. According to the guide, embassy personnel were willing and able to provide the counterclaims to any anti-American

propaganda.¹⁶⁰ In this case, DuPont had a working relationship with the Department of State to instruct its corporate employees on how best to conduct citizen and cultural diplomacy.

The United States Department of State maintains that “the mission of a U.S. diplomat in the Foreign Service is to promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad.”¹⁶¹ American foreign policy is carried out daily by Foreign Service Officers (FSO) across the world in embassies, consulates, and in other diplomatic missions. There are five Foreign Service Officer career tracks: Consular, Economic, Management, Political, and Public Diplomacy. Public Diplomacy Officers promote U.S. interests abroad, such as educating a foreign audience on American history, values, and customs. Additionally, FSOs direct cultural and informational programs and coordinate exchange programs to the United States to foster cross cultural political relationships. Most FSOs have backgrounds in the country or geographic area where they are posted.

John J. Ewing served as an FSO in Mexico City from 1945-1950. Ewing worked as a contractor at the Bi-National Center-- which operated the Benjamin Franklin Library—and received funding from the Department of State. He taught English-language courses to Mexican students of all ages. He recalled that on the first day of enrollment for the Bi-National Center, people lined up for three blocks hoping to register for courses. Staff enrolled three hundred students in 1947; by 1950, 3,000 people enrolled annually in English courses. Eventually the Center moved to a larger building and rebranded itself as El Instituto Mexicano-Norte Americano de Relaciones Culturales. The Institute held lectures by visiting

¹⁶⁰ AMSOC, “Answering the U.S. Critics Abroad” *Bulletin* 16, no. 10 (1958): 17.

¹⁶¹ Department of State. www.careers.state.gov 2019

U.S. American professors, held concerts by American musicians, and created exhibits of life and culture in the United States. The programs were available to anyone, whether Mexican or U.S. American. Ewing notes that the American Colony was encouraged to take part in the cultural and social activities of the center. He claims that the Institute remained popular with members of the American Colony, “not only to become a registered member of the center, but many became students of Spanish, which we taught using the same successful methods we had learned to us in the English Language Institute.”¹⁶² The Bi-National Center and the Benjamin Franklin Library remained cornerstones of the community for Mexicans and U.S. citizens alike, and will be examined in later chapters.

As a Junior FSO, Dorothy Jester frequently coordinated student exchange programs. Later in her diplomatic career, she reunited with a man at a cocktail party who she sent abroad to study medicine. He was then a doctor and head of the national mental health hospital in Mexico City. He thanked her for allowing him to attend Johns Hopkins. Always the diplomat, Dorothy recalled, “I think I was diplomatic enough to say, ‘No, doctor, you sent yourself. I only took care of the paper work!’ I met others who had become bank presidents or were being sent out as ambassadors to Japan and other important countries. It really was a program with impact.”¹⁶³ The State Department programs for students had the explicit goal of promoting the values of the United States, in this case its advanced medical system, and always of ensuring that the young doctor returned to Mexico steeped in devotion

¹⁶² John J. Ewing, “Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Foreign Affairs Series,” interview by G. Lewis Schmidt. Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training adst.org, August 9, 1988.

¹⁶³ Dorothy Jester, “Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Foreign Affairs Series,” interview by Laurin Askew, adst.org, July 21, 1998.

to the United States and its principles, and that the nation was viewed as a friend and not an imperialistic foe.

Information Officer Earl Wilson (1957-1960) wrote informational pamphlets and articles for magazines that were distributed throughout Mexico and Latin America. He and others believed that communists targeted Mexican schoolteachers because of their influence on Mexican children as educators and pillars of their communities. The USIA post in Mexico created a magazine for schoolteachers called *Saber* during Wilson's time at the U.S. Embassy. The stories in the magazine reflected the desire to promote the United States and the American educational system, American premises of liberty, and the promotion of a cross cultural relationship with the United States.¹⁶⁴ A few years later, Wilson moved to a new medium, television, and created English-language instruction programs people could watch directly from their living rooms. The first 30 minute lesson went live on September 1, 1958. At the time, the program received the highest rating for its slot in Mexican TV history.¹⁶⁵ Television sets remained too expensive for all but the wealthiest Mexicans, so while Wilson's plan seemed progressive, the program reached a select elite viewership who most likely already favored U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Peter M. Cody Office of Technical Assistance Program Officer for USAID (1954-1957) noted the ups and downs of selling the United States abroad. His department spent \$500,000 on brochures and other promotional materials extolling the virtues of U.S. and Mexican government-supported agriculture, health, and industrial programs. He recalled one program which focused on the eradication of malaria in the Division of Experimental Studies

¹⁶⁴ Earl Wilson, "Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Foreign Affairs Series," interview by Lewis Schmidt, October 14, 1988.

¹⁶⁵ Wilson, "Association."

in the Health Ministry of Mexico. The experimental program fused anthropological studies and public health services. Field officers, both FSO and their Mexican counterparts, went out into the Mexican countryside to interview Mexican farmers on how they managed to eradicate mosquitos. Initially, entire villages were sprayed with DDT: homes, roofs, schools, stores, and grain silos. The FSO team discovered that the reason why so many farmers refused to use DDT was because the chemical brought out scorpions that terrorized entire villages. Eventually the program ceased operation because the Mexican authorities believed the U.S. presence was too involved in what was on paper a Mexican program.¹⁶⁶

Ambassador Robert S. Pastorino began his diplomatic career as Economic and Political Officer in Mexico (1969-1971). Pastorino knew the intimate ties formed between U.S. companies and the Mexican oligarchy. Many U.S. businesses developed ties to the oligarchy because the boards of companies were composed of Mexican political and financial leaders. He claimed that influential dealings have always existed in U.S.-Mexican relations. The American Chamber of Commerce, he believed, was one of the largest influences in Mexico. He served as an Honorary Vice President of the Chamber and helped to craft the organization's policy. Far from being negative, Pastorino rebuffed any claims that the embassy's connections to U.S. and Mexican business interests was anything but above abroad, claiming that the long-standing connections between business and the U.S. government was not improper, but that the relationship supported the growth of American business.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Peter M. Cody, "Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Foreign Affairs Series," interview by Melbourne Spector, November 1991.

¹⁶⁷ Robert S. Pastorino, "Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project," interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy and David Fischer, March 6, 1998.

In his capacity as Deputy Director for USAID (1954-1959), Melbourne L. Spector encouraged the Mexican government and Mexican companies to allow U.S. companies to operate in Mexico as competitors. He claimed that Mexican businessmen became concerned with the intrusion of U.S. companies like Sears. Mexican businessmen thwarted Sears and other U.S. stores from expanding in the Mexican marketplace. USAID's Productivity Centers attempted to persuade businessmen to become competitive with U.S. companies by teaching Mexican businessmen marketing strategies and provided executive management training programs in the United States. Oftentimes the USAID executive development programs received funding from Alliance for Progress, the Ford Foundation, and the Harvard Business School. These entities—the U.S. business community, U.S. philanthropic organizations, and the U.S. government—worked together to advance the establishment of U.S. subsidiaries in Mexico while creating programs for Mexicans to draw them into the U.S. sphere of influence regarding the free enterprise system, as will be elaborated on in chapter four.¹⁶⁸

These same FSOs lived and worked in the American Colony. As agents of empire they furthered the goals of the U.S. government for education, health, business, and diplomacy. As members of the American Colony, they interacted with civilian colonists who themselves acted as agents of the U.S. informal empire. They enrolled their children in the American High school, attended the same American Society of Mexico functions, and celebrated the Fourth of July with their fellow U.S. citizens. They represented the image of the official U.S. government Good Neighbor policy and informally acted as role models for their fellow American Colonists.

¹⁶⁸ Melbourne L. Spector, "Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project," interviewed by W. Haven North, 1996.

The Official Face U.S. Citizen Abroad: The Ambassador as Model American

The rhetoric of the Good Neighbor policy lingered long after the end of WWII. The efforts of the U.S. Embassy and the American Colony during WWII—the rhetoric and emphasis placed on cooperation and respect through reciprocal exchange—would frame the relationship of the two nations for the next forty years as they supposedly fought a common enemy in a bifurcated world. Ambassador George S. Messersmith (1942-1946) addressed the American Club of Mexico days after the end of WWII. He told the American colonists that the Good Neighbor policy was no longer simply a policy of the U.S. government, but it was a policy that became “part and parcel of the thinking and actuation of all of the governments and all the peoples of this hemisphere.” He went on to thank the American Colony for their participation in carrying out their duties as good neighbors during the war. It was, he clarified, a united effort of all “extraordinarily fine attitudes of the Americans residing in Mexico” from the loyalty of embassy personnel, to the devotion of the women of the U.S. colony to aid in the U.S. war effort, and of course U.S. businessmen who contributed in their own ways by spreading U.S. democracy through private enterprise in Latin America. He specifically thanked AMSOC for creating “usefulness in the American community in this country and as a means of promoting our ever increasingly friendly and understanding contact with the people of this country among whom we live.”¹⁶⁹ Messersmith warned the community that their work did not cease after the end of the war. The expectations had been laid for relations between the American Colony, the U.S. Embassy, and the Mexican nation.

¹⁶⁹ George Messersmith. “Speech before American Society at University Club, Mexico City.” August 31, 1945. George Messersmith papers, University of Delaware Library <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/7691>

The ambassador emphasized his stand on inter-American unity, telling his audience that he thought that “all of us resident here in Mexico, whether it is in this beautiful capital or whether it is in other parts of the Republic, have a definite consciousness that the Mexican people will form their judgments of our people largely through us.”¹⁷⁰ The continued “unity” of the peoples of the hemisphere remained of utmost importance for the next phase of global peace and American hemispheric cooperation, he insisted.

Messersmith offered the colonists himself as the prime example for how all U.S. citizens should conduct themselves for the sake of hemispheric unity. He assured them of his personal duty to the cause of peace, stating, “my cooperation in any constructive plans and effort in this direction, I am sure I need not tell you, can always be counted upon.”¹⁷¹

Ambassadors carried out the Good Neighbor policy through their interactions with Mexican officials and ordinary citizens. Messersmith’s reminder to the colonists of their duties to their nation did not go unnoticed and became a cornerstone of the relationship between the ambassador and other embassy personnel and the American Colony.

Unlike the jovial Messersmith, Ambassador Francis White (1953-1957) did not leave a favorable impression on the Mexican people. The *Christian Science Monitor* Latin American section lamented that “Mr. White severely avoided any publicity about himself and he was notably reluctant about posing for photos. He hewed closely to old time diplomacy, maintaining strong contacts in strategic places. He seemed unconcerned about public opinion

¹⁷⁰ George Messersmith, “Address at American Colony” (April 22, 1942) George Messersmith papers, University of Delaware Library <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/7459>

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

and justly or not, acquired a reputation for being somewhat standoffish.”¹⁷² White hardly ever ventured outside of Mexico City and never attended public functions. The Mexican people bide him a contemptuous farewell, with an article in *Exegesis* stating: “White did not bring nor did he create during his stay among us any affective tie towards Mexico. He is a man formed in the cold and rigid discipline of traditional diplomatic service and in the exercise of business, which is bare, objective, inspired in direct buying and profit purposes.” The article lambasted White for not taking any initiative to understand the Mexican people. Harkening back to the advice Messersmith received, the unnamed *Exegesis* author referred to White as acting as if he were “a debt collector” whose only job was to side with U.S. business.¹⁷³ White did not take the diplomatic approach and court all sides; instead, he simply took the easy way out and sided with corporate interests at the expense of true diplomacy.

For all his faults, White did try to intervene to assuage hostilities between the two nations. Despite referring to Mexican workers in the United States as “wetbacks,” White pleaded with the Secretary of State to not use Federal and National Guard troops along the border to stop braceros from crossing the border in California in 1953. Stationing troops at the border who could fire on Mexican nationals would give anti-American actors in Mexico the ammunition they needed, which he likened to the U.S. sending Marines into Nicaragua, a hallmark of U.S. diplomacy from the period 1912-1933. White advised caution, arguing that diplomatic relations with “Mexico is so much more important and is the keystone of all our relations with Latin America. The effect of such action on our relations would be disastrous.”

¹⁷² Marion Wilhelm, “Mexicans Pin Hope to New U.S. Envoy,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 18, 1957.

¹⁷³ No author, “New Ambassador—Farewell to Pancho Blanco,” *Exegesis*, April 9, 1957.

White, a Republican, feared that this could be used for U.S. domestic political purposes, noting that “the Democrats would be provided with a wonderful issue that the good-neighbor policy had been jettisoned and we were back to the use of troops and force.”¹⁷⁴ In regard to Mexican workers who were threatened by U.S. soldiers at border crossings, White seemed less concerned with basic dignity and human rights than he was over the optics of such a plan that could cause anti-Americanism which would negatively impact U.S. business interests in Mexico.

White’s main concern in the notes, memorandums, and plans he exchanged with State Department and other U.S. government officials document his concerns with U.S. business in Mexico above all. He courted the support of the Comité Norteamericano pro-México, a group of U.S. businessmen who actively supported trade with Mexico and the Mexican tourist industry, assuring President Eisenhower that “the American businessmen in Mexico are most cooperative and have the friendliest relations with the Mexicans.”¹⁷⁵ In his farewell address before a party thrown in his honor by the American Colony, White focused his attention on what he called “the greatest importance” of his time in Mexico: U.S. corporate investment in Mexico. He applauded U.S. corporations for investing in Mexican industries to develop Mexico’s natural resources, providing technical know-how to Mexicans, and “stimulating the development by Mexicans of more and new enterprises to supply the needs

¹⁷⁴ “The Ambassador in Mexico (White) to the Secretary of State Mexico City, August 14, 1953,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, The American Republics, Volume IV*, eds. N. Stephen Kane and William F. Sanford, Jr. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), Document 582.

¹⁷⁵ “Letter From the Ambassador in Mexico (White) to the President August 29, 1955,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, Volume VI*, eds. N. Stephen Kane Joan M. Lee Delia Pitts Sherrill B. Wells, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 213.

of these American industries with new products.” He continued his praise of U.S. investment with a congratulatory salute to U.S. firms that he claimed, “raised the standard of living of Mexicans” and introduced new consumer goods to the Mexican people. White stated that the record of U.S. corporations reinvesting in the Mexican economy was one that “we can be justly proud of.”¹⁷⁶ The “we” White referred to was the U.S. government, U.S. corporations, and the American Colony. His decision to involve all three groups under the common banner of U.S. objectives was no accident.

Ambassador Robert C. Hill

In August 1957, U.S. Ambassador Robert Charles Hill delivered a letter to the American Colony in Mexico City on behalf of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Entitled “Dear Fellow Citizen,” Eisenhower spoke to U.S. citizens living and traveling abroad. Although Eisenhower claimed that most of the people of the world understood the goodwill that the United States stood for, the “bearer of an American passport represents the United States of America” and it was the duty of such holders to represent the interests and image of the United States. When going abroad, the president told his fellow American citizen to be mindful of their actions because “your speech and manner help to mold the reputation of our country.”¹⁷⁷ Interactions between the U.S. community abroad and the host people they met were the best form of public and citizen diplomacy the United States could hope to achieve. Much like Messersmith’s speech years earlier, presidents, State Department officials, and other influencers understood the importance of people-to-people contact. Eisenhower ended

¹⁷⁶ “Ambassador’s Farewell” in *Bulletin*, July 14-16, 28-30.

¹⁷⁷ American Society of Mexico meeting, Mexico City, Letter, August 1957, Box 28 Folder 6, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

the letter by stating emphatically that U.S. citizens abroad “represent us all in bringing assurance to the people you meet that the United States is a friendly nation and one dedicated to the search for world peace and to the promotion of the well-being and security of the community of nations.”¹⁷⁸

The fact that the ambassador delivered the message sent an implicit signal to the members of the American Colony: Hill took on the part of role model to colonists wherein he instructed them on how to be good neighbors and good Americans abroad on behalf of the U.S. government. His image set the tone for how U.S. citizens living in Mexico acted during their time abroad. By using diplomacy—whether traditional, public, cultural, citizen, or economic—every colony member and the ambassador had the duty to project the best image of the United States.

U.S. citizens living in Mexico frequently interacted with embassy staff. Throughout the years the American Colony implored ambassadors, their family members, and other State Department staff to appear at community functions. Likewise, ambassadors asked to speak to groups within the community to publicize statements and policies on behalf of the U.S. government. Members of the American Colony used the information they received from Hill and others to carry on events and charity functions within the American Colony and for public relations initiatives for the Mexican public. The personal papers of Robert Charles Hill show the relationship between the ambassador (and the government) and the American Colony while highlighting the interconnectedness of the U.S. government and people on the ground. To say that the only time the embassy ever met U.S. citizens came in times of crisis

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

or diplomatic mishaps would be a mistake. By design, the ambassador and the colonists were as interwoven as possible.

Robert Charles Hill, Ambassador to Mexico from 1957-1960, served as a career diplomat for over thirty years, including ambassadorships to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Spain, and Argentina. While serving in Argentina, Hill famously disregarded Henry Kissinger's decisions to support General Pinochet's coup against Salvador Allende in Chile. Hill also reported on the Dirty War occurring in Argentina, much to the chagrin of the State Department.¹⁷⁹ Hill had a dynamic personality that radiated charm and affability. He kept detailed records and saved newspaper clippings from U.S. and Mexican newspapers of the Mexican and U.S. public's perception of him as ambassador. Because of his meticulous record keeping and desire to present himself in a favorable light, his personal papers provide a view into his motivations and actions as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. He recognized the value of cultivating a pristine public image, which he used to further diplomatic goals, as well as his personal diplomatic and political career ambitions. He famously took on an unprecedented nearly three-year intermittent tour of every Mexican state and territory during his tenure as Ambassador to Mexico. He shook the hands of factory workers, met farmers in small communities, trekked through the jungles of Chiapas, and thoroughly enjoyed receiving a live turkey as a gift during a visit to the Guelaguetza festival in Oaxaca. In an age of ambassador appointment based on nepotism and political campaign contributions, Hill lived the title of ambassador as a man dedicated to his country. The fact that he spoke

¹⁷⁹ Harry Shlaudeman, "Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Foreign Affairs Series," interview by William E. Knight, adst.org, May 24, 1993.

Spanish, a skill that most ambassadors in his position in Mexico did not have, endeared him to the Mexican people from the moment he arrived.

After graduating from Dartmouth in 1941, Hill entered the Foreign Service and started as Vice Consul for the State Department in Calcutta, India (1943-1945). After leaving India, he attended and graduated from Boston University Law School and worked on Capitol Hill as a Clerk. In 1949, he became a representative for the company W.R. Grace and Co., during which he traveled extensively throughout Latin America. After 4 years he quit business at the age of 35 and became U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica (1953-1954) and then Ambassador to El Salvador (1954-1955). While in Costa Rica, he played a crucial role in negotiating a contract between the Costa Rican government and the United Fruit Company. He spent a brief time in Washington D.C. with the State Department.¹⁸⁰ He took the personal diplomatic approach of cultivating friendships with Latin American people and politicians who tended to be leery of U.S. foreigners, especially in countries with histories of domineering U.S. companies meddling in domestic affairs.¹⁸¹

The 1957 Department of State National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) for Mexico documented the situation that Hill entered into as ambassador upon his arrival in the summer of 1957.¹⁸² The NIE noted that the one-party system of governance for Mexico had by the

¹⁸⁰ “Biographical information,” The Papers of Robert C. Hill at Dartmouth College, <https://ead.dartmouth.edu/html/ml38.html>

¹⁸¹ Daniel James, “Ambassador Hill—A Man to Watch,” *The Evening Bulletin*, February 24, 1959.

¹⁸² National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) are national security reports are documents that examine myriad security situations in foreign countries. The reports are created by officers from different government departments, including the Central Intelligence Agency and circulated to the President, cabinet members, and the National Security Council. “National Intelligence Estimate, August 13, 1957,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, Volume VI*, eds. N. Stephen Kane,

1950s resulted in a stable economic and security situation. The growing Mexican middle class began to exert considerable political influence over the federal government. Mexican exports of cotton, coffee, and minerals helped stabilize the economy, along with the support of labor, which had been co-opted by the Mexican State.¹⁸³

Far from being alarmed at any nationalistic rhetoric, the NIE report noted that revolutionary ideals were by the 1950s little more than rhetoric. The social welfare and agrarian programs of the Cárdenas administration had been curtailed in favor of the expansion of industrialization. The PRI courted domestic and foreign enterprises to spur the economy and reduce inflation, the upside of which, turned into “increasingly receptive” policies toward the United States and a lessening of anti-Yankee sentiment. As the business community grew in importance, the report surmised that business would “persist in seeking to transform its growing economic power into political power, and probably will press for formal recognition as a sector in the PRI.” Therefore, if the United States government continued to win over the support of the business community in Mexico, both domestic and foreign, it would have a sizable bloc of support on its side in the coming decades.¹⁸⁴

Communism remained an ever-present threat, the report warned, due to its ability to operate “in a climate of toleration” that grew out of Marxist socialist dogma “inherited” from the Mexican Revolution. The concerns expressed in the NIE detailed potential social upheaval should Mexican export markets shrink: a growing middle class promised a successful economic outlook, but a single economic downturn would threaten the millions of

Joan M. Lee, Delia Pitts, and Sherrill B. Wells, (United States Government Printing Office Washington 1987), Document 245.

¹⁸³ National Intelligence Estimate, August 13, 1957, Document 245.

¹⁸⁴ National Intelligence Estimate, August 13, 1957, Document 245.

disadvantaged Mexicans to possibly turn toward communism. The report went on to stress the potential issues with unchecked rising population increases occurring in rural areas, and the rise of urbanization that led to a sharp delineation between the middle class and the masses, both rural and urban. The “communist” issue was not as pressing as it would become after the Cuban Revolution in 1959.¹⁸⁵

Regarding Mexican-U.S. relations, the report noted that Mexico “suffered from decades of foreign influence and intervention” that made the Mexican people suspicious of outsiders. Relations under the Ruiz Cortines administration had improved, although several issues kept tensions high between the neighboring nations, such as the mistreatment of bracero workers in the United States, territorial water disputes, U.S. import duties, and the continued mild acceptance of Bloc activities in Latin America.¹⁸⁶

The news of Hill’s impending arrival in Mexico City in July 1957 sent the Mexican press into a frenzy. The newspaper *El Universal* reported that when he left his posting in Costa Rica, he drove his family from San José, Costa Rica to Washington D.C., and used the newly constructed Pan American Highway, in effect linking all the nations of the Americas together figuratively and literally through his love of the Americas.¹⁸⁷ An editorial in the Mexican dual English-Spanish magazine *ABC Magazine* stated that Hill was “qualified to greatly contribute in promoting good relations between the two countries and to solve the problems that arise between our governments and our peoples, within a spirit of justice that will bring us closer as neighbors and as allied defenders of democracy.”¹⁸⁸ Before he had

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

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¹⁸⁸ “‘Ambassador Hill’s Formula,’ *ABC Magazine*,” Box 28, Folder 1, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

even arrived, Hill's good neighbor fame preceded him and piqued the interests of the Mexican public and Mexican politicians considering past ambassadors from the United States did not always act as interested good neighbors.

The cover of the August 1957 edition of the Mexican magazine *Paralelo 20* depicted a cartoon showing Ambassador Hill sulking down a path flanked by Josephus Daniels on one side and Henry Lane Wilson on the other. The caption reads: "Dos caminos, dos actitudes. Usted dirá cuál, Mr. Robert C. Hill!" (Two paths, two attitudes. Your decision, Mr. Robert C. Hill).¹⁸⁹ Daniels looks down at Hill as he holds a sombrero with the words "Good Neighbor" stitched into the top band in Spanish, while a businessman holding a proclamation that references oil expropriation waves him on. Wilson holds out U.S. dollars as a nefarious revolutionary leader Victoriano Huerta reaches out to grab the money clutching a knife.¹⁹⁰ The illustrator, Alberto Beltrán, and the magazine's editors made a conscious choice to place this as the cover for the issue that was printed the month after Hill's arrival. Hill had a choice to make—he could be like his predecessors or chart his own path.

¹⁸⁹ *Paralelo 20* magazine cover August 1957, Box 39, Folder 15, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

¹⁹⁰ Henry Lane Wilson sided with Victoriano Huerta and Félix Díaz to stage a coup against the democratically elected president Francisco I. Madero which resulted in Madero's death during *La decena trágica* (The Ten Tragic Days). See Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U. S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 240-242.



Illustration 1. *Paralelo 20* cover, August 1957, Box 39, Folder 15, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

The Mexican press praised Hill for his respectful and optimistic friendliness. Unlike his predecessors, Hill seemed to Mexican journalists like a man who cared about Mexicans and Mexico's place in the world order. The Good Neighbor policy was regarded fondly by many in Mexico. Press reports from the early days of his tenure, which Hill saved in his personal papers, expressed the hope that the sentiments of friendliness and mutual understanding that came with the Good Neighbor policy would continue with the new ambassador. Although Ambassador White left much to be desired, the Mexican press and public wished to wipe the slate clean and start fresh with Hill. The editorial staff at the *Zócalo* newspaper told readers to maintain "optimism and hope in the capacity, quality, and purposes of the new ambassador." The reporter continued, wishing that Hill would not turn out to be just another businessman "with ties of material and economic interests with any of

the enterprises with investments set in our country. Rather, we wish him to be a man of political ideals, sensible to the lasting kindness of friendship between democratic nations.” Above all, the editors hoped that he would not view Mexico as “a despicable nation of few values, but rather a nation loving its possessions and respectful of those abroad, aspiring to surpass its achievements in order to become more useful to itself and to others, its friends.”¹⁹¹ An article in *Excelsior* praised the efforts of the United States in stabilizing Latin America, and especially Mexico, which the paper claimed was due to the Good Neighbor policy that was not just a theory, but a practice that had to be implemented because the maintenance of friendly relations would “lead us to unreservedly trust that the neighbor will act always as a good partner.” The mainstream Mexican press, usually censored by the Mexican government, viewed Hill as a hopeful change in comparison to the drab and unfriendly White, at least in its rhetoric.¹⁹² Hill represented a youthful, energetic, and outgoing ambassador who could bring U.S.-Mexican relations into the next decade. With the press already on his side before he arrived, he was assured good publicity.

In May 1958, Hill visited the offices of *Hoy* magazine, and his visit in turn was highlighted in a three page spread. He told the journalists and staff at *Hoy* that an ambassador should “be a friend, an appreciative, good friend, and this is what I have been solicited to do in my 10 months representing my country in Mexico.” He went on to say that person-to-person friendships were “the necessary lubricant that keeps the international relations machine functioning free of impediments.” The photos that accompanied the article showed Hill and the *Hoy* staff drinking beer and looking through copies of the magazine. One photo

¹⁹¹ “New Ambassador—Farewell to Pancho Blanco,” Box 28, Folder 1, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

¹⁹² No author, “Favorable Opinions” *Excelsior*, December 1957.

in particular depicts Hill laughing in what *Hoy* described as a laugh “con toda su alma y todo su corazón.” To *Hoy* readers, the magazine told them to trust Hill, claiming that Hill was also a defender of Mexico and an “ambassador that reasons with his heart and loves Mexico in its human beauty, full of life and men who strive for the progress of the nation.”¹⁹³ The magazine editors gave their blessing and support for Ambassador Hill to carry on his people-to-people friendly relations campaign, and in so doing told the magazine’s readership that Hill was a man to be trusted and admired for his deep devotion to Mexico.

Inter-American Relations

Hill spent a significant amount of time as ambassador engaging with businessmen, politicians, and other influential Mexicans and U.S. citizens in Mexico. Unlike White, Hill had the ability to navigate the tricky topic of supporting U.S. business in Mexico without undermining his diplomatic efforts. His solution was to reach out to the Mexican state and people because with a pitch to sell “America” that was positive, friendly, and nonthreatening. Although he had deep business connections in his past and actively sought out the support of U.S. corporate interests as ambassador, he did not receive the same backlash as White had for cultivating the same connections, precisely because he ventured out into Mexico and met people on a human level. He knew how to engage in public relations, and this ability carried over into his relationships with Mexican political figures.

Immediately upon arrival in Mexico in July 1957, Hill began fostering a relationship with Mexican president Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958). At a meeting between the two

¹⁹³ “Un Embajador: Robert C. Hill visita a la revista *Hoy*,” Box 30, Folder 15, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

men in November 1957, Ruiz Cortines praised Hill's visit to the heavily indigenous State of Taxacala. Embassy staff visited pueblos and ate lunch with rural farmers, which Ruiz Cortines remarked was "particularly impressive to the people of Mexico." On the matter of United States investments, Hill noted that Ruiz Cortines remarked "that the basis of good relations must be mutual respect; all foreign interests in Mexico are treated fairly if they respect the laws and traditions of the country." The Mexican president referred to William Richardson, president of National City Bank in Mexico, as an example of a U.S. American who understood how to conduct business in Mexico. Regarding the upcoming Mexican presidential elections, Ruiz Cortines assured Hill that his handpicked successor Adolfo López Mateos was exactly like himself and he would handle the Communists in Mexico in the same way as he would. Ruiz Cortines expressed confidently that López Mateos "knows and understands the United States and is gifted in working harmoniously with others."¹⁹⁴

Regardless of Ruiz Cortines's promotions of his successor's competences, in an embassy dispatch to the Department of State in 1958, Hill related the meetings he had with the presiding Mexican president Ruiz Cortines and president-elect Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964). After meeting with López Mateos twice and finding him to be disinterested, overly "cautious," and "limited in his views on international relations," Hill worried that the reserved in-coming president might need cajoling to enter a good neighbor relationship with him. During his campaign for office, López Mateos had taken a decidedly more leftist and nationalistic turn, according to Hill. He told his superiors in Washington D.C. that "a great

¹⁹⁴ "Memorandum for the Files, by the Ambassador in Mexico (Hill)," November 29, 1957, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, Volume VI*, Document 249.

deal of careful cultivation on our part will be needed to assure his understanding of the United States, and his effective cooperation.”¹⁹⁵ Hill seemed to imply that López Mateos was uneasy in his meeting with Ruiz Cortines and himself, as if López Mateos did not appreciate or want to be president-elect.

At another meeting in the home of former Mexican president Miguel Alemán a few days after his initial meeting with Ruiz Cortines and López Mateos, the ambassador and the president-elect reiterated their desire to continue warm relations between their respective nations. On the topic of U.S. investment in Mexico, Hill told López Mateos that the United States “admired the great progress” Mexico achieved since the Mexican Revolution and trumpeted the role of foreign investments in Mexico’s success. López Mateos agreed with Hill and added that U.S. business would be welcomed into Mexico “but on terms of fair treatment and conformity to its [Mexican] laws.” Hill reassured López Mateos that if he and the president had any issues arise, they should use diplomacy and solve the problems themselves. Hill noted that López Mateos replied in Spanish: “hablando se entiende la gente,” or, “it is through talking that people understand each other.”¹⁹⁶ The ambassador and the president-elect agreed in that moment to forge ahead with their Good Neighbor relationship and continued cooperation. Hill noted to his superiors that he believed López Mateos only wanted to meet with him because “of the reports reaching him of my demonstrated friendship for Mexico,” implying that López Mateos needed to appear friendly

¹⁹⁵ “Despatch From the Embassy in Mexico to the Department of State, No. 119, August 18, 1958,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics, Volume V*, eds. N. Stephen Kane and Paul Claussen (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1991), Document 315.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

with the U.S. government for economic or political reasonings, something that Hill would seize on as a man who believed in developing good optics above all else.¹⁹⁷

Word began circulating in the State Department that the Mexican president-elect was veering too far to the left. Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Roy Rubottom Jr. sent a letter to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson cautioning that it was too early to contemplate “Mexico’s seeming tolerance of excessive Communist activity” and advised that López Mateos be afforded the opportunity to chart his own path regarding leftist influence in Mexican politics and society.¹⁹⁸ However, following the inauguration of López Mateos in December 1958, former ambassador George Messersmith sent a letter to the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in January 1959. Messersmith told Dulles that as a former ambassador to Mexico, he worried about the growing leftist turn of the López Mateos administration. He suggested the State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City court the new president at all costs. He stated that if intervention of some sort was not successful in steering the administration to the center-right, he feared that “our interests are

¹⁹⁷ 3 weeks before López Mateos met Hill, he had a meeting with Eugene Black, President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Black relayed his concern regarding Mexico’s nationalization of industries. Black told López Mateos that the Bank would cease lending to Mexico if nationalists continued to take control of industries. This could have caused López Mateos to worry that his image to the international community remained too far to the left, thus he needed to court Hill as an ally. “Despatch From the Embassy in Mexico to the Department of State, No. 58 Mexico City, July 21, 1958,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics*, Volume V, eds. N. Stephen Kane and Paul Claussen (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1991), Document 314.

¹⁹⁸ “Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson,” November 11, 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics, Volume V*, Document 319.

really threatened, and the prestige of our country is really in danger.”¹⁹⁹ Messersmith, it appeared, had reasons to be concerned. In September 1959, Hill wrote to Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Roy R. Rubottom Jr. to update him on the regarding López Mateos. Hill explained that he found López Mateos to be uncooperative and less friendly than his predecessor, and he blamed the influence of former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas on López Mateos’s cool reception of Hill and embassy personnel. Furthermore, he feared that the land rights of U.S. citizens in the state of Chihuahua would be impacted by expropriations being considered by the López Mateos administration.²⁰⁰

On the issue of anti-Americanism, Hill voiced his concern over what he called “anti-U.S. lectures” at the National University. He claimed that several U.S. students studying there had told him they were leaving Mexico after encountering rabidly anti-U.S. professors and students who made studying abroad impossible. He recounted a meeting he had with a U.S. expatriate who had lived in Mexico for 13 years. The man in question told Hill that he had “never seen nationalism at such a height as presently is the case in Mexico under the Administration of López Mateos.” Hill also hinted that the Soviet Ambassador to Mexico had the ear of the Mexican president and of Cárdenas.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ “Letter From the Secretary of State to George S. Messersmith1 Washington, January 7, 1959,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics*, Volume V, eds. N. Stephen Kane and Paul Claussen (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1991), Document, 324.

²⁰⁰ “Letter From the Ambassador in Mexico (Hill) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) Mexico City, September 3, 1959,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, American Republics*, Volume V, eds. N. Stephen Kane and Paul Claussen (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1991), Document, 334.

²⁰¹ For discussions on how Mexican presidents benefited from forming dual relationships with Cuba and the United States simultaneously, see Renata Keller, *Mexico’s Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Christopher M. White, *Creating a Third World: Mexico, Cuba, and the United States During the Castro Era* (UNM Press, 2007).

Securing Mexican-American Business Support

Despite Hill's concerns with the current Mexican administration, Hill told Rubottom that U.S. Embassy staff were confident that the goodwill work they engaged in helped to form strong bonds with "responsible Mexicans and will serve as a bulwark against any open manifestation of hostility toward the U.S. I am continually received with genuine warmth and friendliness by the Mexicans wherever I travel." He ended his letter by reaffirming his commitment to the policies of hemispheric good neighbor relations by proclaiming: "we shall continue to follow a consistent policy of patience and good will" Responsible Mexicans, to Hill and the State Department, were the conservative U.S. and Mexican businessmen who stood in sharp contrast to the leftist supporters of land reform, nationalization, and the Soviet Union, and soon, socialist Cuba.²⁰²

Hill spent considerable time nurturing relationships with the Mexican and U.S. business communities in Mexico. At a Sales Executive Club dinner, Hill praised the work of the American Legion and the Mexican and U.S. American business communities in promoting cordial Mexican-American relations in a brief talk he delivered at the American Club. He expressed appreciation for all American members of the Sales Executive Club in Mexico City for their efforts toward fostering friendship between the United States and Mexico and the role of private enterprise and private organizations in creating people to people programs. Hill noted that inter-American business was "a practical demonstration of working together for mutual advancement, based upon a common understanding of one another's problems." He stressed the importance of unity and understanding in an era of

²⁰² "Letter From the Ambassador in Mexico (Hill) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) Mexico City, September 3, 1959," Document, 334.

communist intrusion in global affairs. Ominously, he told the crowd of businessmen: “it is my firmest conviction that this task is not a choice—it is a must.”

Every citizen of the hemisphere had a duty to come together and find common ground, according to Hill. He related a speech given to new Foreign Service Officers from his early days in the State Department. He encouraged the men and women in the room to step outside of the familiarity around them in the American Colony—their food, customs, and English language, and venture out into the unknown while living in Mexico. He admitted that stepping outside of one’s comfort zone was a daunting and unfamiliar request, he framed this exercise as crucial for hemispheric security, saying, “let’s have even more concentration on ways and means of making this the kind of world that God meant for us to have, to bring about the international understanding that is so necessary if we are to survive the challenge of our time.”²⁰³ For Robert Charles Hill the businessman and Robert Charles Hill the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, business and international cooperation went hand in glove for the sake of the security of the United States and for the protection of the world against the threat of communism.

Hill believed the United States and Mexico had a duty to unite to fight communism, and he implored the business community to take on the mantle of spreading democratic ideals. In various speeches, he painted a terrifying picture of an undemocratic world, explaining to the audience that under communism the individual does not matter, and personal freedom slowly dies. Together with Mexico, a country that had a long history of struggles for freedom and independence from foreign powers, Hill argued that the

²⁰³ Speech to Sales Executive Club of Mexico, September 1957, Box 31- Folder 7, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

hemisphere could be a bastion against Soviet influence if the region placed importance on democracy and freedom. He related the warm welcome he received upon his arrival in July 1957, saying that it could not have been manufactured in its sincerity because “it indicated to me the basically friendly feeling that Mexico, as a nation, has for us and other nations in the world. Like members of the same family, we two nations have seen the worst, and the best of each other. We have, in my opinion, ended up with a deep bond born of common understanding, even more than of common interest.”²⁰⁴ Even though the official Good Neighbor policy ended years prior, Hill took the same approach that viewed Mexico not as a threat or as inferior, but as a business partner and friend.

Hill spoke at the honorary dinner of Comité Norteamericano Pro-Mexico to honor the first year of Hill’s ambassadorship with guests representing U.S. and Mexican government and industry. When introducing Hill, his embassy advisor wanted the Comité to highlight the active embassy representation and participation in American community organizations, including American Society, Benevolent Society, American School Foundation, American Legion.²⁰⁵ Hill’s strategy rested on securing the support of the Mexican and U.S. business communities in Mexico City and then slowly winning over the support of the Mexican president and his more leftist supporters. By surrounding himself with conservative businessmen, Hill hoped that a large segment of Mexican middleclass and elite society would firmly stand against leftist intrusion into Mexico and encourage more support for U.S. corporations in Mexico.

²⁰⁴ Speech before the Washington Board of Trade, December 13, 1957, Box 29, Folder 11, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

²⁰⁵ Amigo Stag Luncheon speech, July 18, 1958, Box 31, Folder 11, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.



Illustration 2. Robert C. Hill—"meeting the people—and enjoying it!"—during his many goodwill tours throughout Mexico. *Mexican-American Review* vol. 28, .no. 4 (1960): 12.

Hill and the American Colony Intertwined

As the relationship between the ambassador and the colonists continued to deepen, Hill made a direct appeal to the members of the American Colony. He explained the duty the colonists had in creating friendly relations with the United States and Mexico, and above all, of upholding and spreading democratic ideals. Hill often told his audience to not listen to communist propaganda that guilted people into believing capitalism was evil and that it corrupted men. Instead, he told his audience at an American Chamber of Commerce function to reflect on what capitalism had given them as they took stock of their cars, their house, and their future. Be proud of what capitalism has given you, he said, and remember “the fact that your father, that your grandfathers, that you yourself and your sons believe in this system that has made you the envy of the world.”²⁰⁶ Hill believed that the material successes of U.S. businessman and their families in Mexico reflected the benefits of free enterprise and demonstrated to Mexicans how they too could emulate U.S. Americans. The benefits of free enterprise helped all the citizens of the Americas. Almost as a kind of aid package, he framed the introduction of U.S. goods into the Mexican marketplace as akin to U.S. citizens spontaneously providing aid and funds to people in distress.²⁰⁷ In effect, he encouraged American colonists and U.S. businessmen to not forget that their financial support and business success helped the less fortunate in Mexico and benefited all parties.

²⁰⁶ Speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico, August 7, 1958, Box 38, Folder 9, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

²⁰⁷ Address of Consul General C. W. Gray at the celebration of Independence Day Celebration, July 4 1957, Box 31, Folder 4, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

When Hill was not meeting with businessmen or politicians, he spent significant time cultivating relationships with the wider Mexican community and other members of the American Colony. The Fourth of July was the largest celebration for the colony. Past ambassadors had attended the annual celebrations planned by the American Society of Mexico. Other ambassadors, like White, eschewed contact with the public at all costs. However, every year of his posting in Mexico, Hill opened the doors to the U.S. Embassy residence and welcomed colonists and influential Mexicans to a pancake breakfast. This action further endeared him to the community. In 1958 Hill and his wife welcomed over 1,000 residents of the city to an open-house. Mrs. Hill served doughnuts and soft drinks for breakfast and the Hills paid for music performed by the Dominguez Brothers who played patriotic songs and Dixieland. Later that night, official diplomatic and esteemed guests attended a dinner reception sponsored by the American Club.²⁰⁸

Hill focused much time and effort at improving good neighbor relations, not only focusing on persuading Mexicans to trust Americans, but also why U.S. citizens in the United States should reach out to their Mexican neighbors. Speaking to *ABC Magazine* on the importance of Mexico City College, he stated that “it is important for Latin Americans to visit the U.S. but it is also very important that North Americans visit the countries of Latin America, so that knowing them and each day understanding them better, a perfect understanding maybe be required.”²⁰⁹ During one of his many speaking engagements in the United States, Hill spoke at San Jose State College on Pan American Day in 1958. He

²⁰⁸ “Embassy Residence Opened to Welcome U.S. Families” *The News*, July 5, 1958, 8.

²⁰⁹ “Mexico City College interview,” *ABC magazine*, April 12 1958, Box 32, Folder 1, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

explained why he worried that nefarious interests sought to dismantle the achievements and bonds the United States and Mexico had improved upon over the past three decades. He intended to reinforce that foundation. But, he understood that the United States still largely disregarded the unique attributes of Latin American nations and discounted the necessity of forging solid inter-American bonds. He quoted Richard Nixon as saying that the people of the United States only hear of Latin America when there is a flood, earthquake, or social upheaval. For Hill, this was detrimental to diplomatic relations. The tendency of U.S. citizens to lump Mexico in with the rest of Latin America insulted Mexicans because, compared to other Latin American nations, Mexico was “progressive and a democratic equal.” He ended by arguing that for the hemisphere to achieve true unity, there must be a common project for the future which unites all the peoples of the Americas with a common destiny. Even though cultural and linguistic differences seemed insurmountable, he believed that “the essence of a community is the respect for differences.”²¹⁰ The task of overcoming what set people apart would be the united fight for democracy and the future of the Americas, in his opinion. The only way to achieve this was to meet each other face-to-face and come to a mutual understanding.

The rapport Hill had cultivated with the Mexican press after his arrival in Mexico paid dividends throughout his time in Mexico. An *ABC Magazine* editorial lavished praise on Hill, proclaiming that he was “qualified to greatly contribute in promoting good relations between the two countries and to solve the problems that arise between our governments and our peoples, within a spirit of justice that will bring us closer as neighbors, as allied

²¹⁰ Modern Mexico and American Attitudes Pan American Day speech at San Jose State College, April 16, 1958, Box 28, Folder 3, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

defenders of democracy, and as parties in commercial interchange imposed on us by proximity and by circumstances. Let us take care then, on both sides, to maintain such conduct as will lead us to unreservedly trust that the neighbor will act always as a good partner.”²¹¹ Hill’s good-humored attitude and good neighbor spirit demonstrated to Mexicans that they had nothing to fear by engaging with U.S. citizens. Once again, he led by example and expected others to follow suit.

The people he most expected to follow in his good neighbor footsteps happened to be his neighbors, the same people who sat next to him in the church pew, who he saw at the American Club on a Friday night, and whose sons went on Boy Scout camping trips with his children. If Hill was the mad scientist, and Mexico City was the petri dish, then the members of the American Colony were the test subjects in Hill’s experiment of public and cultural diplomacy uniting for the betterment of U.S. foreign relations and U.S. business interests. He cultivated personal relationships with members of the American community precisely because he viewed himself as the man capable of bringing different interests and stakeholders together. During his myriad meetings, dinners, speeches, and other community functions, Hill stressed the need for a united community to act as agents of a renewed good neighbor policy.

In an address during an AMSOC meeting, Hill praised the engagement of AMSOC members in fostering good relations with their Mexican neighbors. He encouraged them to not become lax in their friendly efforts, reminding them that “your membership in the Society and your continuing support thereof will do much to insure an active and effective

²¹¹ “Ambassador Hill’s Formula” press clipping from *ABC magazine*, Box 28, Folder 1, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

American community life.”²¹² The active community life he referred to revolved around charitable organizations and outreach to the Mexican community. The ambassador advocated for U.S. citizens who were not affiliated with AMSOC to join the organization so that more people involved themselves in person-to-person outreach. He attended meetings, luncheons, knocked on people’s doors, and raised funds to ensure AMSOC programs received the financial support to carry out soft power goals. In an advertisement for the United Community Fund (UCF), he told readers, “each of us in his own particular way represents our country in Mexico. I strongly urge your membership.”²¹³

During Hill’s tenure as ambassador, he instructed colonists to support the UCF by contributing and volunteering. The UCF had no official connection to the embassy and reportedly received no State Department funding; however, Hill implored the community to participate and donate whatever they could spare. Hill saw the potential public relations bonanza that could come from bolstering the UCF as a major component of American Colony and U.S. Embassy outreach. Every year the UCF Drive brought in thousands of pesos for various charitable organizations the colony oversaw. In monthly *Bulletin* messages to AMSOC members, Hill encouraged colonists to donate more funds to continue the goals of the organization. It was, he argued once again, a moral obligation to one’s nation and to the host nation of Mexico to participate.²¹⁴ He made several radio broadcasts on English-language stations, gave multiple speeches, and printed letters in English-language

²¹² Ambassador Hill endorses Society’s activities November 1957, Box 29, Folder 7, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

²¹³ American Society of Mexico meeting, Mexico City, 1957 August, Box 28, Folder 6, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

²¹⁴ Meeting at United Community Fund drive, April 10, 1958, Box 30, Folder 3, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

newspapers throughout his time in Mexico on the issue of fundraising for the UCF. He spoke directly to people's sense of good neighborliness when he said on the Anglo-American Hour radio broadcast in 1958 that the American colonists "in Mexico City have upheld the tradition of our people to respond wholeheartedly in a community spirit to community interests."²¹⁵ Those interests, he claimed, were to improve the lives of disadvantaged Mexicans. He praised the ability of U.S. colonists to listen to the needs of the unfortunate, saying, "you have ably carried out your roles as ambassadors of goodwill in furthering the friendly and harmonious relations so happily existing between our own country and Mexico City. Let us each of us assume his personal responsibility."²¹⁶ The willingness of the colonists to spread democratic ideals through charity work held untold power to influence ordinary Mexicans, and it relieved the State Department of shouldering the full burden of engaging in public diplomacy.

A statement published in *The News* highlighted how Hill envisioned the role of U.S. citizens in building up a trustworthy reputation for the United States abroad. The UCF, Hill said, "is an excellent example of the constructive and responsible role played by Americans in foreign communities around the world." Traditional diplomacy served a purpose, he agreed, but he stressed that "there is much that can be done by individual Americans, as well as U.S. nationals living abroad, to enhance the reputation of the United States abroad."²¹⁷ The efforts of colony residents for many years maintained U.S. American prestige abroad and furthered the understanding and goodwill between the people of Mexico and the United

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Meeting at United Community Fund drive, Box 30-3 April 10, 1958, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

States. Charitable organizations like those associated with AMSOC were, in his opinion, “the most effective instrument to local Americans in this unofficial international public relations operation.”²¹⁸ Hill added that the UCF was a major factor in promoting better relations with the greater Mexican community, because “65% of the money collected through the organization directly benefits sick, orphaned, and destitute Mexicans.” The UCF fundraising campaign benefited the prestige of the American Colony, but Hill stressed that “the many Americans who live in the Mexican capital provide an immeasurable boost to their government’s official foreign aid program. Additionally, a significant example shows how communities of U.S. nationals living abroad can help to create an atmosphere of understanding and good-neighborliness.” Therefore, his fellow citizens had a moral and Christian obligation to make friends, “not only for yourselves but also for the United States of America, for which you are all ambassadors of friendliness and goodwill.”²¹⁹ The residents of the American Colony were not merely passive agents of midcentury globalism; they were being told to actively participate as goodwill ambassadors to improve relations with the Mexican community around them. Whether or not the UCF and AMSOC received funding from the U.S. Embassy, AMSOC and its charitable wing had the blessing and ear of the U.S. Ambassador to go forth and cultivate good relations through charity work and civic engagement, showing that U.S. government entities could not disentangle from supposedly non-governmental groups.

To be a good neighbor, Hill encouraged his fellow citizens to learn Spanish, familiarize themselves with Mexican customs, and understand the ideals and values the

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

United States stood for in the world. In his speeches, Hill often applied themes of duty, identity, unity, and patriotism when urging U.S. citizens into good neighborly action. At an AMSOC meeting, Hill gave a speech titled “In Defense of Freedom.” U.S. citizens had specific roles to play while living overseas, he argued, and the freedom of the United States and the world depended on their participation as representatives of their homeland abroad. The duty of U.S. citizens to be well informed on their country’s ideals and principles was crucial to the success of U.S. foreign policy so that U.S. citizens could properly defend U.S. values while living abroad.²²⁰ He encouraged his fellow Americans to participate in events at the Bi-National Cultural Center, volunteer at the Benjamin Franklin Library, and other places where U.S. citizens would not only be visible to Mexicans, but where they would impart their values and expand their viewpoints on Mexican and Latin American culture.

The American Colony and the U.S. Embassy frequently collaborated on community events that highlighted U.S. American values. Hill organized an event at the American High School for the colonists to watch a CBS television program of Nixon visiting the Soviet Union and Eisenhower’s press conference behind the Iron Curtain. The U.S. Embassy strongly encouraged all U.S. citizens in Mexico City to attend with their families. Hill gave opening remarks before the crowd of more than 500 people. After the event, colonists sent letters to Hill thanking him for screening the short films. One colonist expressed his appreciation to Hill for “enlightening us Americans residing in Mexico on recent events in foreign affairs.”²²¹ Hill responded by letter to the man stating that he was pleased so many

²²⁰ In Defense of Freedom speech to the American Society of Mexico meeting, Mexico City, 1960, Box 38, Folder 19, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

²²¹ American Society of Mexico film showing, September 1959, Box 35, Folder 16, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

Americans attended the screening and showed an interest in global affairs, and that this type of event would continue in the future to bring the colony together along with the embassy. Another woman said that the lively question and answer period with Hill showed conclusively that “our American principle of exchange of opinions is invaluable. I have never known a diplomat who could have inspired such meetings. Three or six thousand pamphlets will never have the same effect as one Sunday meeting.” A mother of U.S.-Mexican children sent in a letter to Hill and applauded him for showing the films because her twelve year old daughter could see, hear, and “feel” something pertaining to “home,” meaning the United States. The girl was born in Cuba to U.S. American parents and raised in Mexico. Her mother felt the need to educate U.S. children living abroad who had few or no roots in the United States. Events like the film screening brought the U.S. to these children through a screen and inculcated them into the midcentury mindset of Cold War geopolitics.²²² These types of events were used by the ambassador and other embassy personnel to propagandize the colonists into absorbing anticommunist ideas and encouraging them to disseminate anticommunist and pro-democracy ideas into the colony and to Mexicans.

A deeply religious man, Hill attended the Union Evangelical Church where he frequently spoke in his official capacity as ambassador. Additionally, he spoke at the Beth Israel Community center (a conservative synagogue) and with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), also known as the Quakers. He occasionally met with the Quakers to understand the outreach initiatives they did in the Mexican community and how the American Colony could incorporate Quaker ideas into diplomacy. In Mexico City the Quakers ran a popular (and still functioning) hostel called Casa de Amigos for students, and

²²² Ibid.

an orphanage for boys. After visiting the Mexico City and Puebla Quaker meetinghouses, Hill returned to give a presentation to the AFSC luncheon. He told the audience that he was impressed by the efforts of good neighborliness and charitable contributions to the Mexican communities the Quakers strove to accomplish through peaceful means. Likewise, Edwin L. Duckles, AFSC Field Commissioner in Mexico, praised Hill and his wife for their efforts to build friendship with locals, both Mexican and U.S. American. Duckles stated that “it has seemed to me that this has been a much neglected, as well as greatly needed, aspect of diplomatic service in Mexico in recent years. Please count me as one of your friends and an admirer of the fine work you are doing.”²²³

A Person-to-Person Ambassador

For his hard work furthering U.S.-Mexican diplomacy, and for his efforts within the American colony, Ambassador Hill was awarded the Fraternitas Award along with S. Bolling Wright. In his acceptance speech, Hill declared that he strove to be “an exponent of the new type of diplomacy” which emphasized the person-to-person approach that helped him to make “a truly outstanding contribution to the warm and cordial relations which now exist between Mexico and the United States.”²²⁴ Without the aid and support of such men as Bolling Wright, he claimed his purpose in Mexico as U.S. Ambassador would be a much more difficult one to accomplish.²²⁵ He needed the support of the U.S. citizens residing in

²²³ American Friends Service Committee Letter from Duckles to Hill, July 12, 1958, Box 29, Folder 14, 1958, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

²²⁴ “Fraternitas Award Goes to Ambassador, Wright” *Mexico City Collegian*, Vol. 13 No. 1 October 29, 1959, 1.

²²⁵ Fraternitas Award ceremony, Mexico City College, speech, Box 35, Folder 23, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

Mexico, and he thanked them again as ambassador, saying that he had “to depend on the help of all of you, the United States citizens who live and work here in Mexico. Our countries are friendly neighbors. We share the same ideals of freedom and justice. We share the same convictions of importance of education and knowledge. I can think of no better symbol of this sharing of ideals and convictions than the Fraternitas Award.”²²⁶ For Hill, it took the entire American Colony to help him succeed, something few politicians and businessmen would admit.

Hill’s personality and good nature helped him promote a good relationship with the press. He understood that to win the public relations game, he needed to cultivate a friendly public image and win over the support of the press. The PRI controlled or at least influenced many newspapers to refrain from printing news that reflected poorly on the government.²²⁷ *ABC Magazine*’s editorial writer Antonio Uroz wrote a fawning piece on Hill in which he gushed over Hill and his impact on U.S.-Mexican relations: “I am a Mexican. I never thought I would write an editorial in any paper lauding the work of a United States Ambassador in Mexico. But with Ambassador Hill, it’s another thing.”²²⁸ The press often acted as mouthpieces of the PRI, and many newspapers and other media outlets told how the Mexican government responded to Hill’s actions and goals in Mexico. *Hoy* referred to Hill as “a traveling goodwill salesman in Mexico.”²²⁹ Hill was described as “a big Viking” who made Mexicans a little apprehensive due to his imposing figure with his extra-large suits he wore.

²²⁶ “MCC Honors Hill, Wright” *Bulletin* 17, no. 12 (1959): 58.

²²⁷ Michael B. Salwen and Bruce Garrison, *Latin American Journalism* (Routledge, 2013,) 22.

²²⁸ Antonio Uroz, “El Mundo de Robert C. Hill: Comprensivo y Humano,” *ABC magazine*, November 18, 1959.

²²⁹ *Hoy* Feb 29 1959, Hemeroteca Nacional de México

But, after winning over the Mexican people, *Hoy* Magazine declared that “in one of the big pockets of his big suit, are the people of Mexico, who recognize that Hill’s task really has been one of achieving closer relations with his democratic and sincerely friendly ways . . .”²³⁰ *Revista Mexicana* applauded Hill’s work ethic in repairing Mexican-U.S. relations, with the author of an article wondering how Hill had enough hours in the day to work as hard as he did. No one could explain his superhuman work ethic, “but he is probably the most active man in our country,” the article maintained.²³¹ *Zócalo* magazine applauded the work the U.S. Ambassador did to motivate his fellow citizens into good neighbor action, claiming that he practiced what he preached and worked hard to make friends with presidents, housewives, and shoeshine boys.²³²

As his departure arrived in the spring of 1959, the Mexican press lamented his departure, with one newspaper headline stating, “whenever we have a good U.S. Ambassador in Mexico, they take him away.”²³³ A political cartoon in the widely read daily *Excélsior* depicted a Mexican man in a serape and large sombrero helped up a flight of stairs by Robert C. Hill, who stands at the top of the staircase, grasping the man’s hand and pulling him up toward the top. The caption reads in Spanish, “Mr. Hill puts into practice the formula for good partnership with Mexico.”²³⁴ Although the major Mexican news outlets were highly regulated and controlled by the PRI, the media largely supported Hill, which meant that the PRI supported Hill’s person-to-person diplomacy and friendly relations. Hill represented a

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ “Ambassador Hill” *Revista Mexicana*, December 1958, Hemeroteca Nacional de México.

²³² “The Popularity of Bob,” *Zócalo magazine*, February 15, 1959. Robert C. Hill personal papers, Stanford University.

²³³ “Political Mart—Senor Robert, the Quiet North American” *Hoy*, March 7, 1959.

²³⁴ Political cartoon in *Excélsior*, February 25, 1960, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada.

new kind of diplomat who was willing to meet Mexicans on a personal level. He epitomized the person-to-person connection with Mexicans he advocated the American colony engage in. He placed a friendly, outgoing face on U.S. diplomacy and U.S. economic interests.



Illustration 3. "Obras son Amores," *Excelsior*, February 25, 1960, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada.

Conclusion

If Bolling Wright symbolized the perfect American colonist, then Robert C. Hill perfected the art of being ambassador to a nation that did not always approve of U.S. foreign

policy. What garnered Hill the support he needed from inside the colony, as well as from outside with Mexicans, was his ability to realize that perfecting a good image had the possibly of securing better relations. But image was not everything, and Hill believed that active participation in Mexican society by U.S. citizens along with the U.S. Embassy personnel would right previous wrongs, if people genuinely participated and believed in his goals of good neighborliness.

In 1961, after leaving the State Department to run for political office in New Hampshire, Robert C. Hill testified before a U.S. Senate Subcommittee on the rise of communism in Cuba during his tenure in Mexico as U.S. Ambassador. Hill testified that he was aware of the threat Cuba posed to weakening U.S.-Mexican relations if communism gained a foothold in Mexico. He told the subcommittee that those in the U.S. Embassy “wanted to do our part in Mexico to prevent such a thing happening without intervening in the affairs of the Mexican people.”²³⁵ The part that the U.S. Embassy played involved providing guidance on how to be a good neighbor and show the Mexican people what the United States had to offer if they joined the American colonists on a path toward friendship.

The U.S. Embassy system represents the driving force of U.S. imperialism abroad. Embassies provide area specialists who network with local political and business leaders. Everyone involved with the embassy attempts to inculcate the foreign host country audience into viewing the United States in a positive light. In Mexico City, the embassy represented American diplomacy writ large. The ambassador acted as figurehead whose function and manner of operation rested on securing Mexican support and winning the proverbial hearts

²³⁵ Robert Charles Hill testifying before U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, *Communist Threat to the U.S. Through the Caribbean*, Part 1, 796.

and minds. After WWII, the relationship between the American Colony and any given U.S. ambassador revolved around securing and growing business interests in Mexico and fighting anticommunism with soft power. Hill achieved this duality because he chose to take the position of “good neighbor” instead of imperialist interloper. In his dealing with Mexicans, he chose to cultivate a positive benevolent image so that the Mexican public and the Mexican government did not view the U.S. diplomatic and corporate presence in Mexico as a threat. Skilled U.S. ambassadors understood that to win over the support for U.S. foreign policy objectives and U.S. corporate influence in Mexico, the image that the State Department cultivated to succeed had to be one of friendship, at least appear to be reciprocal in nature, and involve the American Colony as grassroots agents of soft power.

Chapter 3

Charity and Influence: The American Colony's Benevolent Informal Empire

The September 1949 edition of the *Bulletin: The American Society of Mexico Magazine*, the official magazine of the AMSOC, included a heart-wrenching article begging the community to raise funds for disadvantaged residents of Mexico City. The article entitled “Will YOU Help Make a Xmas for Them?” included pictures of disheveled barefoot Mexican children gnawing on bread and disabled and blind adults waiting in line for food in front of Lucerna 71, the headquarters of AMSOC. The “Do Something About It Group” claimed that the previous fundraising drive helped more than 2,800 children and adults with food, clothing, toys, and other necessities.²³⁶ Charity work and community relations remained a decades-long rallying point for American Colony members. Members of AMSOC and other groups under the umbrella of the UCF conceived colony charities and organizations in good neighbor rhetoric. UCF advertisements used moving images of crying children in threadbare clothing with phrases that pulled at the heartstrings to open people’s purses and wallets to motivate them to donate to community charities, with phrases such as “people can be victims of fate—but don’t let them be victims of your neglect or indifference!”²³⁷ Charity and outreach were the driving forces behind community involvement for the American colonists to live up to good neighbor expectations.

²³⁶ American society of Mexico, “Will YOU Help Make a Xmas for Them?” *Bulletin: The American Society of Mexico Magazine*, September 1949,13.

²³⁷ AMSOC, “United Community Fund advertisement,” *Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (1967): 14.

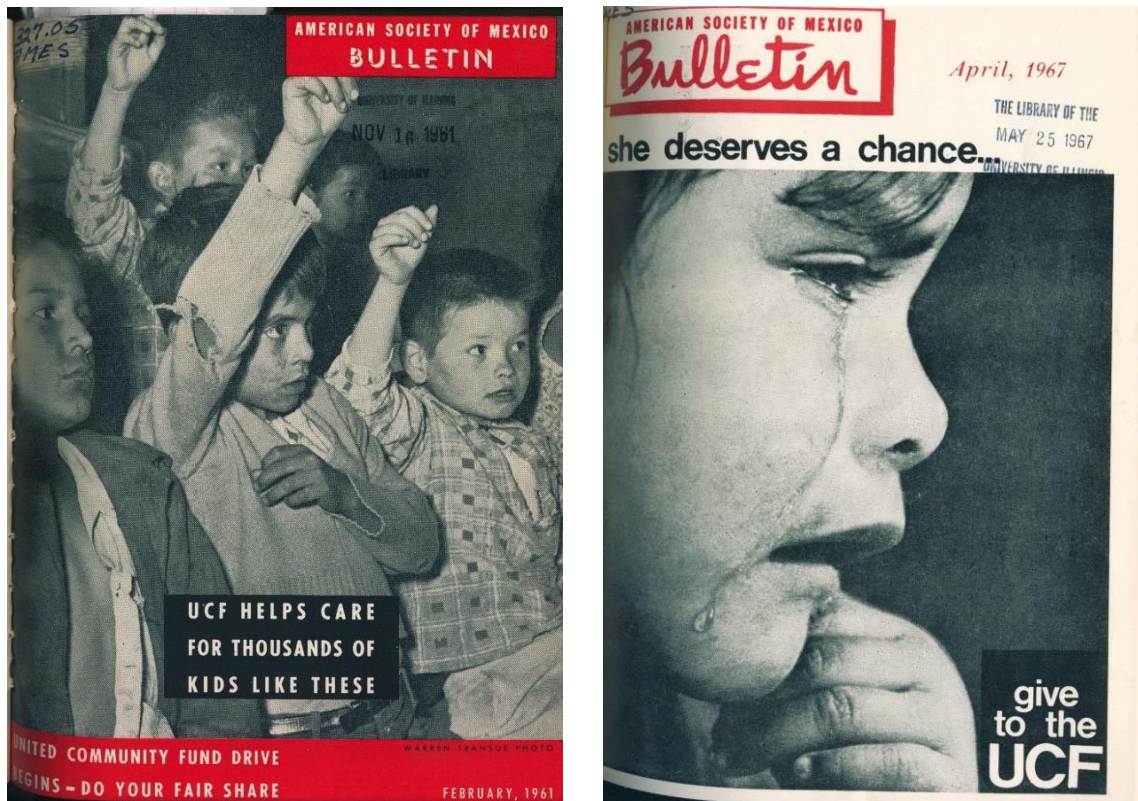


Illustration 4. AMSOC Bulletin covers promoting the United Community Fund drive covers using images from previous Bulletin articles. November 1961 and May 1967.

This chapter encompasses disparate activities of the colonists that were part of a comprehensive set of soft power policies. It will examine how and why U.S. American charities and philanthropic organizations, community outreach, educational exchanges, and cultural institutes were used as tools of charitable soft power to earn the goodwill of Mexicans. Apart from fund raising for a new American High School and ABC Hospital, almost all the charities that the community worked with benefited Mexicans, most of whom were deemed “disadvantaged” by AMSOC and UCF. In participating in these activities, colonists took part in grassroots efforts to improve and strengthen the image of the United States in Mexico through benevolent means. Members sought to spread democratic values through their outreach with middle class Mexicans seeking higher education and technical

training in the United States. Many of the charities had direct ties to U.S. multinational corporations which operated in Mexico and whose executives composed most of the American colony and its community leaders. Military might can win battles, but diplomacy-- and public diplomacy in the form of soft power-- can win hearts and a larger consumer base. The motives of the American expatriate community were complicated. Many them sincerely wanted to help needy Mexicans while at the same time relishing the power and privilege associated with being in a position to help. At the same time many American expatriates, either consciously or not, wanted to promote U.S. political and economic interests and export U.S. values as part of a cultural campaign against communism. This desire to promote the United States of America contributed to the spread of U.S. multinational corporate influence in developing nations and new foreign markets, a topic I will take up in chapter four.

People are motivated to donate time and money for a variety of reasons. They are guided by self-interest and by a sense of duty, sometimes doing either or both unknowingly. People give most readily to causes that have a personal or emotional meaning to them.²³⁸ Emotionally-related and obligatory commitments such as groups targeting disadvantaged children and community chests propel the donor to give because of the guilt associated with not helping either the less fortunate or those from one's own community. People support groups to which they belong, so they have a feeling of prestige in contributing to organizations that the community centers its identity around. Likewise, corporations have a sense of prestige in proving to consumers and other corporations that multinationals, if we can describe them as "American citizens"— as they are often referred to as in public

²³⁸ Dr. Sidney J. Levy, "Humanized Appeals in Fund Raising," *Public Relations Journal* 16, no. 7 (1960): 17.

relations and business publications— have civic responsibility toward their consumers and community welfare.²³⁹

The lines between charity and philanthropy oftentimes blur, and the two terms are used interchangeably in many writings. Scholars who study philanthropy argue that it is a uniquely U.S. American concept tied to “American” savior identity that grew out of the Progressive Era. Philanthropic organizations tend to be privately-run, reliant on ties to corporations and wealthy donors, and have long-term goals to fix systemic problems. Charity, however, tends to involve solving an immediate problem in a moment of crisis, relying on striking an emotional chord with the giver, and tends to be short-term in scope. Because of the deeply intertwined connections between many organizations in the American Colony and U.S. corporate influence and money, the terms charity and philanthropy are at times indistinguishable. Some groups which appeared to be strictly charities in nature received funding from U.S. multinational corporations. All parties involved sought to influence and win over support for their cause, be it a larger consumer base or support for U.S. policies, for reasons of self-interest and duty.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Robert F. Arnove, ed. *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad* (Bloomington, Ind., 1982).

²⁴⁰ For studies on charity and philanthropic works, refer to Hall, “*Inventing the Nonprofit Sector*” and *Other Essays on Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations*; Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*; McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700–1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Arnove, ed., *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad*; Levine, *High Culture: Low Culture: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*; Eikenberry, *Giving Circles: Philanthropy, Voluntary Association, and Democracy*; Kaufman, *For the Common Good? American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity*; Friedman and McGarvie eds., *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*.

Soft Power as Charitable Giving

Joseph S. Nye argues that “public diplomacy involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies.”²⁴¹ Nye defines soft power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment.”²⁴² Nye claims that soft power functions with the help of three resources: its culture; its political values; and its foreign policies.²⁴³ Good public diplomacy rests on creating and maintaining long-lasting relationships that lay the groundwork for positive government policies.²⁴⁴ Words often ring hollow, but actions which follow rhetoric help create a solid foundation of an image. As Nye says, actions speak louder than words, and that could not be truer in the case of U.S. expatriates in the American colony in Mexico City. A component of public diplomacy includes the promotion of public opinion of the host sponsor, in this case the United States government and U.S. corporate interests. Nye claims that in some respects, public diplomacy could be defined as propaganda in the service of a nation’s foreign policy.²⁴⁵ Public diplomacy is one component of a nation’s “soft power,” its ability to persuade.²⁴⁶ It is not solely a state-sponsored activity, and individuals and non-governmental organizations can engage in it. The turn toward using soft power to analyze interactions between groups with power differences is controversial. Russell

²⁴¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs 2004), 8.

²⁴² Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *Annals, AAPSS* 616 (March 2008), 94.

²⁴³ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 96.

²⁴⁴ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 101

²⁴⁵ Kenneth Osgood and Brian Etheridge (eds), *The United States and Public Diplomacy: New Directions in Cultural and International History* (Brill, 2010), 12.

²⁴⁶ Osgood and Etheridge, *The United States and Public Diplomacy*, 13

Smandych argues that the use of the term soft power diminishes the negative impact of U.S. cultural domination abroad. He favors the usage of the term U.S. cultural imperialism, and calls those who use the term soft power as “apologists.”²⁴⁷ I use both terms to describe the efforts and outcomes of the U.S. expatriates in Mexico City. Soft power works in tandem with cultural and corporate imperialism to ensure the promotion of U.S. cultural and corporate interests in foreign settings.

Walter L. Hixson argues that national identity shapes U.S foreign policy abroad and reaffirms the United States as manly, racially superior, and the bastion of global liberty.²⁴⁸ While adult expatriates upheld their engrained sense of Americanness, the very fact that they played out their national identities abroad reinforced their sense of self during the Cold War era of ‘us versus them’ while they lived as an ‘other’ in Mexico. National identity thus becomes relegated to a form of public diplomacy and soft power. Hixson argues that “foreign policy plays a profoundly significant role in the process of creating, affirming, and disciplining conceptions of national identity.”²⁴⁹ Writing in favor of the cultural turn in diplomatic history, Hixson challenges the detractors who claim that examining U.S. diplomatic history as being a detour, stating that he believes that cultural analysis aids in the holistic examination of U.S. engagement abroad.²⁵⁰ As expatriates acted out their already formed national identity as U.S. citizens, they projected what it meant “to be American” onto their Mexican community and onto the Mexicans they encountered daily. In the American

²⁴⁷ Russell Smandych, “Cultural Imperialism and Its Critics: Rethinking Cultural Domination and Resistance” in *Cultural Imperialism and Its Critics: Rethinking Cultural Domination and Resistance* (Bernd Hamm & Russell Smandych eds., 2005), 6-8.

²⁴⁸ Walter L. Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Yale University Press, 2008), 1.

²⁴⁹ Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy*, 8.

²⁵⁰ Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy*, 5.

Colony, the notion of “being American” meant being charitable to those deemed less fortunate and extending assistance and benevolence that reinforced U.S. identity as the moral and charitable redeemer.

Expatriates in the American community, whether they realized it or not, acted as agents of U.S. public diplomacy and soft power. Their everyday interactions and reinforcements of U.S. American identity abroad had the purpose of converting people to an ‘American’ way of living, what historian Justin Hart claims is “the holy grail of U.S. foreign policy from the 1940s forward” because that influence “held the promise of extending the influence of the United States while avoiding costly, atavistic exercises in military conquest.”²⁵¹ But, Hart also claims that image became the most crucial tool for foreign policy during the Cold War. The U.S. citizen’s public participation in crafting a well-defined and polished image therefore was critical for foreign policy and corporate domination. Hart writes that “ordinary people played the defining role in creating the image of ‘America’ projected to the world, and policymakers could only do so much to massage or mold that image.”²⁵² The role of U.S. governmental organizations in ensuring that the image of the United States abroad and the U.S. citizens’ living abroad enacted a positive image was achievable in relatively small settings such as that of the expatriate community in Mexico City. The efforts of the expatriate community, the State Department, and other organizations in crafting such an image had repercussions not just for Mexico City, but for potentially all of Mexico and even Latin America.

²⁵¹ Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U. S. Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 9.

²⁵² Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 10.

Following the end of WWII, the State Department sensed that the ways in which the United States government engaged in foreign relations must be overhauled to incorporate a new idea of what diplomacy meant in a postwar world.²⁵³ Public diplomacy grew out of a need to highlight the positive aspect of U.S. culture that blended traditional diplomatic efforts with new ideas of communications and technologies. While officials grappled over what type of culture to export—highbrow? Middlebrow?—I argue that expatriates did more on the ground exporting of U.S. culture in their daily interactions with Mexicans, from U.S. and Mexican homemakers meeting for high tea at women’s events, the American High School’s football games which included boys from both countries, to the Boy Scouts repairing a retired woman’s stove in a *vecindad* in Mexico City, expatriates of all ages were in fact projecting America’s image abroad as one of highbrow, healthy, and helpful. This projection was being acted out subconsciously and consciously with the help of the State Department and other U.S. governmental organizations, and through U.S. corporations with stakes in Mexican and Latin American markets. Hart argues that the attempts to successfully disseminate the image of the U.S. abroad was an uphill battle. Since there was no universal or agreed upon idea of what public diplomacy should look like, I argue it fell to, in this case, people on the ground to demonstrate a beneficial image of “America” abroad. Various groups used expatriates as conduits of soft power and public diplomacy simply because it remained the easiest and most logical form of influence. American colonists came to Mexico ready to extoll the virtues of the “American dream” they were apart of before moving to Mexico.

Eliot Gibbons, contributor for *Mexico/This Month*, wrote that “colony is a dirty word in Mexico, which suffered for three centuries from being such. Innocently, foreign residents

²⁵³ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 12.

use it to describe their community walls—now happily, crumbling.” The monthly magazine catered to U.S. tourists and U.S. citizens living in Mexico. Inside its pages people read stories on the latest travel destinations, gossip about famous residents in Mexico, and short stories and historical essays on Mexico. When Gibbons came to Mexico several years prior, he became a member of the American Colony without having to do anything: “it was just that simple—inevitable and unavoidable—but just what that definition has made of me I haven’t the vaguest idea.” While he might not have had an idea exactly of what the term colonist meant for himself, he did sense that a change percolated in the air regarding what it meant for others. Whereas U.S. citizens residing in Mexico before WWII tended to only socialize with each other and other similarly classed Mexicans, Gibbons examined the “new” type of colonist. The older generation of colonists were too “snobby” and would never engage in polite conversation with a “lower-class” Mexican, much less sit down to dinner with a person of that social class. Gibbons blamed British imperialism for such snobbery, arguing that many U.S. citizens took their cues from the British “and found themselves too much above it all.” He also pointed out the issues of “narrow prejudice” and “the tradition of special privilege.”²⁵⁴

Gibbons claimed that the new generation of expatriate in the American Colony instead should “seek out knowledge of the new country, learns the language, and does a splendid job of attempting to become integrated.” However, Gibbons noted that while a few things changed, the snobbism of decades past remained in many ways. The prejudices found in the south and throughout the Midwest were reflected in the mindsets of the typical colonist. U.S. citizens still referred to indigenous peoples as “natives,” the housewives

²⁵⁴ Elliot Gibbons, “The American Colony,” 26.

gossiped about “lazy, dark-skinned” servants, and the opinions of U.S. citizens on race were alive and well transplanted in Mexico. U.S. companies paid Mexicans in pesos and U.S. workers in dollars, contributing to the unfairness that marked U.S. corporate and industrial life before the Mexican Revolution. If any animosity arose between U.S. citizens and Mexicans due to racism, bigotry, and unfair labor practices, the U.S. citizen often asked, “Why don’t they like us?” Gibbons remarked that more U.S. citizen started to realize why this question remained a wedge between the communities. He gave advice on how the American Colony could remedy the situation as the new generation struggled to change attitudes. Gibbons applauded the Colony for taking great strides in attempting to change their ways for the modern era, but he commented that “although Americans, both ‘old’ and ‘new,’ have shown in recent years a far greater tendency to adjust themselves to Mexico than before, the idea of a set-apart colony is still both stigma and enigma to non-racist Mexico.”²⁵⁵

When Gibbons advocated for more American colonists to become involved in charitable organizations as a way for the walls between U.S. citizens and Mexicans to erode, he tapped into a long history of ideas of charity and philanthropy that shaped the mindsets of upper class U.S. citizens. By the time of his article in 1960, several dozen charitable organizations existed in the American Colony and in the fabric of U.S. society. Charity had been ingrained in U.S. culture since the first colonizers arrived in what is today New England in the seventeenth century Matthew S. Holland examines the writings of John Winthrop, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln and analyzes how their opinions of Christian charity shaped U.S. American political and civic culture. Holland argues that most of their writings had religious overtones, and the writers by and large advocated for a concept of

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

charity that was civic in nature and not entirely religious. Civic charity would, in their minds, bring cohesion to the world around them and unite their fellow men for the improvement of society.²⁵⁶ Scholar Aileen Ross argues that philanthropic and charitable organizations depend on class differences to maintain the status quo. Wealthy patrons donate time and money, not always necessarily out of the kindness of their hearts, but almost subconsciously because “by alleviating distress, they have secured their own positions against those who might displace them and thus have avoided revolt.”²⁵⁷ Ross’s argument echoes that of Marx: “economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organizers of charity, members of society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics” so-called “reformers” have the main concern of safeguarding bourgeois society from the impoverished masses and the threat of revolt.²⁵⁸ The intended goal is not to solve poverty and economic disparities, but to ensure that the less fortunate do not reach the tipping point of insurrection against the privileged classes.

In the case of the U.S. expatriates in Mexico City, charitable benevolence also had the intended goal of lifting the poor up just enough to enable them to become consumers of the U.S. products the U.S. businessmen were in Mexico to promote and sell. Likewise, the impact of easing oppressive poverty also had the objective of dissuading any major revolutions or sudden changes in government in the twentieth century like in Cuba, Guatemala, and elsewhere. The use of upper middle class and elite U.S. citizens, not so

²⁵⁶ Matthew S. Holland, *Bonds of Affection. Civic Charity and the Making of America—Winthrop, Jefferson, and Lincoln*, (Washington D.C., Georgetown Press, 2007), 5.

²⁵⁷ Aileen Ross, “Philanthropy,” in David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan and The Free press, 1968), 78.

²⁵⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Translated and edited by L.M. Findlay, *The Communist Manifesto* (Broadview Press, 2004), 89.

fondly known as members of the “cocktail circuit,” served as a function of diplomacy because the group of privileged foreigners can be part of “an elaborate and often quite conscious plan to weld the Americans at each post into a closely-knit unit.”²⁵⁹ This was relevant for foreign service families, military families, business families, missionaries, and others. Organizations and social groups united people from different occupations and in some instance different social strata into one cohesive group of U.S. citizens whose common identity and duty revolved around reforming and bettering the lives of “the other.”

A Moral Obligation: Charity and the U.S. Expatriate Community

McNeil S. Stringer, American Society President in 1957, had the task of rallying more U.S. citizens in Mexico City to participate in the charities associated with the American Colony. After meeting or exceeding the annual donations and contributions to the UCF for almost a decade, the 1956 goal of \$1,218,000 pesos fell \$110,000 short. Stringer stressed in a letter to AMSOC members that this was not only a loss for the U.S. citizens in Mexico City, but it impacted the fight against communism and the goodwill the United States carried out in Mexico. In his letter he reminded the community that “the objective of fostering friendly relations between Mexicans and Americans has been carried out largely in an indirect manner through our affiliated organizations. Today the world has divided itself into two opposing camps. It is essential that the free nations of the world build a greater understanding and cooperation between themselves.”²⁶⁰ Stringer arrived in Mexico in 1946, first having worked for Durex Abrasives, and later as general manager of the 3M subsidiary in Mexico.

²⁵⁹ Harlan Cleveland, Gerard J. Mangone, and John Clarke Adams, *The Overseas Americans: The Work, the Life, and the Education of 1,600,000 of Our Citizens* (McGraw-Hill, 1960), 61.

²⁶⁰ McNeil Stringer, “A House Divided,” *Bulletin* 16, no. 10 (1957): 12.

In 1962 he formed his own public relations consulting firm that sought to take a lead in the promotion of public relations in Mexico. Like many high-profile U.S. businessmen in Mexico, he had the knowledge and expertise to examine Mexican-U.S. relations from a unique position, and then motivate the colonists into action.

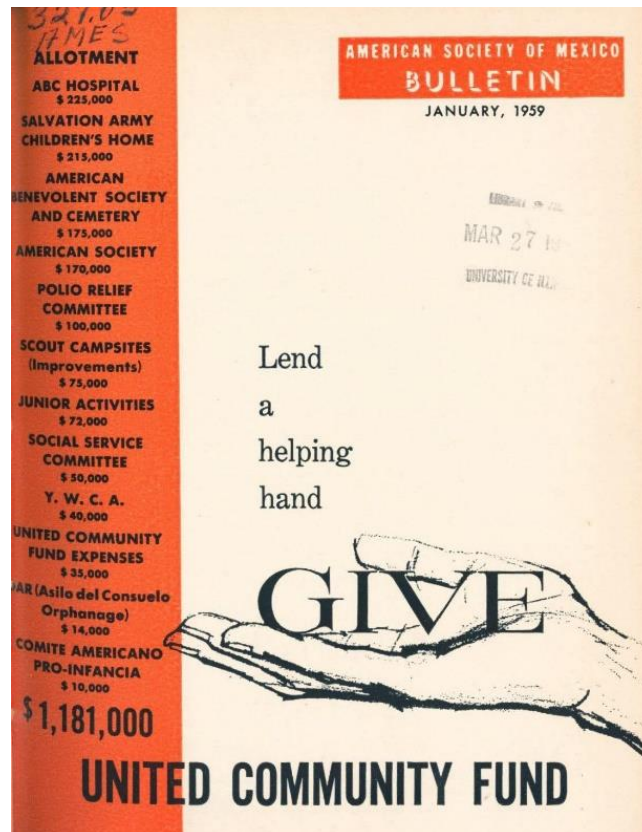


Illustration 5. “Lend a helping hand” United Community Fund drive poster on the cover of *Bulletin*. January 1959.

Stringer affirmed, as Ambassador Hill and others stated before him, that the colonists had a duty to perform: “each of us, in a sense, is a real ambassador of our country,” he told his fellow citizens, reiterating messages past, present, and future of the role of the American

Colony in Mexico City as agents of grass roots soft diplomacy.²⁶¹ He expressed that while true diplomacy worked for presidents and politicians, winning the trust and admiration of an average citizen of a foreign country did not only rest with the American Embassy, but “upon each and every American citizen who resides in Mexico.” The average Mexican, he claimed, based their opinions of the United States of America on their daily interactions with members of the American Colony. He likened Mexican-American relations to a well-oiled and highly functioning machine, saying, “your new car will not run efficiently or effectively with only half of its cylinders doing the work. The American Society likewise cannot accomplish these essential aims and objectives with only a 50 percent support.” Therefore, this monumental task of spreading goodwill and improving relations needed the support of *all* the U.S. citizens in Mexico City. Stringer guilted readers one last time by adding that it was “very little to ask all non-Society members to join those of us who are already carrying out this work, so that our activities during this crucial era can be of eventual benefit not only to those of us who reside in Mexico, but, in a larger sense, to the Mexican and American peoples.”²⁶² The guilt trip worked: the following month over 70 new adult members joined and more than 50 youth members signed up as new members of the American Society of Mexico. This membership drive secured more funds for future donations, generated more support for colony objectives, and created a larger collective power as a foreign coalition in Mexico City.

Two years later, Stringer stepped down from AMSOC. However, he remained as motivated as a member of the American Colony to goad his fellow U.S. citizens into engagement in their community. In a lecture he titled “You and I in Service” given to the 20-

²⁶¹ Stringer, “A House Divided,” 13.

²⁶²Stringer, “A House Divided,” 14.

30 Club, a club focused on helping children, Stringer once again called the American community to action. Stringer told the audience that simply being a member in a civic organization did not equate to saving the world. He reminded them that their moral obligation had a bigger purpose than the confines of the American Colony, asking his friends and colony members, “are you doing anything at all toward making this a better world for our children to live in?” He called on the “moral responsibility of the individual” to create a better future for children in an era of rising juvenile delinquency and apathetic young people the world over. He compared humans to teabags and said that “humans do not know their own strength until they’re in hot water. Today the whole world is in hot water, and so it is imperative that everyone display what strength he has.” He commanded that people actively engage with the charities they belonged to because they had a burden to do as much as possible to improve their community since “one individual atom alone cannot do much. But when harnessed together, there is no limit to what they can accomplish.”²⁶³ The type of soft power Stringer used as AMSOC president and as a civilian urged the colonists to do what was right for themselves, the Mexican community, and the world. He appealed to their sense of midcentury U.S. morality that branded them as the world’s saviors because of their U.S. citizenship. The individual had a duty as well as the entire collective community, and for Stringer, it took a village community to live up to the collective moral duty of the American colony.

The label “community” had a dual meaning depending on one’s outlook. For people who simply joined charities or groups to fill time, it meant entertainment and escapism

²⁶³ McNeil S. Stringer, “You and I in Service” lecture to the 20-30 Club, *Bulletin* 19, no. 4 (1959): 8.

through U.S. American created outlets where they could surround themselves with other U.S. citizens and live in the colony bubble. For men like Stringer and other community leaders, community meant the American Colony and all it embodied in values and outlook. More importantly, community included Mexican society that the colonists had a responsibility to join as well. If the members of the American community avoided their responsibility to reach out as good neighbors, then the very objectives of the colony—patriotism, promotion of the spirit of the United States in Mexico, cultivating friendly relations with Mexicans—and idea of U.S. citizens as agents of empire bringing civilization to barbarous Mexico, fell by the wayside. A community disengaged from service threatened the very identity of the community as a collective group of saviors. Charity work represented the physical and literal outcome of the goals of the members.

The charities and many of the organizations and groups that the colonists focused on were in the most economically and socially depressed areas of the city. Language matters, and the way we describe people and places now differs drastically from the way in which the privileged members of the expatriate world of the mid twentieth century observed and described those who were less fortunate. Journalist Jake Blumgart notes that for people of privileged backgrounds who engaged in modern day slum tourism, “a slum is a place to be ministered to, a place to be cleaned up, a place to be cleared out.”²⁶⁴ The term slum feels sorely out of place in how we view the economically less fortunate in the present. But, for the U.S. community in midcentury Mexico City, “slums” represented just what they represented in the United States fifty years before: hotbeds of vice and pressure cookers that threatened to burst out and overtake the free world with radicalism and poverty, and in many places around

²⁶⁴ Jake Blumgart, “Should we Retire the World ‘Slum’?” CityLab October 12, 2017.

the world, recruitment areas for communist support. While many colonists did not interact with those seen as “the Other,” many of the charities and organizations they participated in did offer interactions with the recipients of charity. The idea of venturing through, much less into, whole blocks of tenements and the growing urban sprawl of midcentury Mexico City shocked the upper middle-class senses. However, as agents of goodwill and what they perceived of as U.S. “civilization,” these privileged people believed they had the obligation to venture into the areas they never dreamed of entering to “cleanse” the residents of their poverty.

An article in *Bulletin* discussed the rapid industrialization of Mexico City over the previous 15 years, saying that the “slum” areas of the city continued to grow and expand monthly. The people living in these unincorporated areas, described as “penniless, ill-fed, ill-housed, and ill-clothed” did not benefit from Mexico’s post-revolutionary miracle. The social welfare programs did not reach the poorest urban areas.²⁶⁵ To address this problem, the Cosmopolitan Club of Mexico City (also known as the Cosmo Committee) targeted children who did not have access to school resources and healthcare services. The civic service group composed of U.S. citizens and a few upper-class Mexicans declared its goals to be “devoted to the cause of good citizenship among the youth of the world.”²⁶⁶ Ray Eberstadt, head of the Cosmo Committee, chose to form a new day nursery for “street waifs” located near the infamous Lecumberri penitentiary. The Cosmos chose an existing nursery—which they renamed la Guardería la Michoacana—because they believed it to be the neediest facility they encountered in one of the poorest areas of the city. The nursery had no running water

²⁶⁵ AMSOC, “Cosmos Go to Aid of Children of Slums,” *Bulletin* 8, no. 9 (1951): 15.

²⁶⁶ AMSOC, “Cosmos Go to Aid of Children of Slums,” 16.

and children drank out of an old horse trough. The public dining patio area was a frequent meeting place for “neighborhood bums.” The food reportedly given to the children was unsanitary and of poor quality. The Cosmos planned with the Mexican Welfare Secretariat, la Secretaría de Bienestar, to take over the nursery and convert it into a modern childcare facility. For seven weeks, hired workers along with Cosmos members refurbished the building from floor to ceiling. They employed qualified teachers and cooks. A contracted plumber installed pipes for running water and installed toilets, sinks, and a bath-shower. Cosmos members cleared the area of trash and debris and removed unwanted vagrants from the area. A full-time nurse provided daily care and a doctor visited every other day. All children received vaccinations against whooping cough, diphtheria, small-pox, and typhoid fever. The children also received dental and vision care. It cost the Cosmos around \$2,000 U.S. dollars in funds that were donated by Club members and sympathizers, who also gifted a refrigerator, vitamins, clothing, and playground equipment, most of which came from U.S. corporations operating in Mexico. Except for the government-provided teachers and medical professionals, the Cosmos paid the remaining salaries for the other staff. The wives of the Cosmopolitan Club members, known as the Cosmo Pals, visited the nursery daily on rotating shifts to play with the children.

La Secretaría de Bienestar, now suddenly invested in the success of the refurbished nursery, sent a daily assortment of fruits and hot meals to the facility it once neglected. The Cosmos had the full blessing of the Mexican government to improve the facility and others, with one Mexican government official telling the Cosmos that the Secretariat “would like to see more civic groups offering to take over such establishments. There is great, unsatisfied

need.”²⁶⁷ In this instance, Mexican government officials wanted the aid and financial support of U.S. citizens just as much as the American community wanted to demonstrate its willingness to help as good neighbors. The sheer overwhelming need of thousands of people arriving in Mexico City annually proved that the Revolutionary rhetoric of education, housing, health, and freedom did not reach every level of society. Foreigners willing and able to fill the void stepped in to aid the most vulnerable, sometimes out of the kindness of their hearts, but also to clean up an area that if left unsupervised, could become a hotbed of dangerous activity.

Images that accompanied the *la Guardería la Michoacana* article pictured preschoolers sitting at tiny desks playing with modeling clay while members of the Cosmo Club watched on. The caption praised the Cosmos for sewing the curtains in the rooms and supplying and painting the child-sized chairs and desks. In another image, three young boys wrapped in white towels gaze in a puzzled manner at the camera after a shower. The caption praised the newly installed shower trough that allowed the children to wash up but did not require the nursemaids to get wet when bathing children. Children not only cleansed their minds through education and health, but they also cleansed themselves of the filth of their environment.²⁶⁸ The classification of poor children endangered by their surroundings was a common theme used by American colonists to justify the entrance of U.S. and American colony-supported charities into lower-class areas of the city. American colonists, therefore, acted as white saviors rescuing poor Mexican children from their hostile and dangerous surroundings.

²⁶⁷ AMSOC, “Cosmos Go to Aid,” 18.

²⁶⁸ AMSOC, “Cosmos Go to Aid,” *Bulletin*, 19.

In 1956, members of the American colony helped the children living in *colonia* Vista Alegre, an economically blighted area of the city, reminiscent of the area depicted in the famous ethnography *Children of Sanchez* by Oscar Lewis. Porfirio “Popi” Guerrero, a taxi driver and former seminarian, opened a small school for over 500 local children, many of them homeless or lacking adult supervision. While on a mission to find other charities to bring into the UCF umbrella, someone from the American colony met Popi and a relationship between Popi, his “kids,” and the colony developed. Over the course of 1956, American colonists donated 3,000 pesos and clothing and food for the children. The following year, the Cosmopolitan Club moved the children from the small dilapidated tenement Popi rented into a small house nearby and converted three rooms into a schoolhouse, functional kitchen, clinic, and recreation space. AMSOC’s *Bulletin* praised the generous and quick response from the colonists, telling them that their kindness “should bring happy smiles, scrubbed faces, and clean clothing to Popi’s children-- and relief to Popi.”²⁶⁹ Members of the Social Service Committee baked cookies and provided decorations for the Mother’s Day party thrown by Popi to celebrate the working mothers of Vista Alegre. In 1959, the Cosmopolitan Club suddenly withdrew its support from Popi’s school without reason given as to why it abandoned the children. Popi appealed to the colonists to find new funding, saying he needed around 600 pesos a month to support the operation. Once again, AMSOC appealed to the sympathy and generosity of readers and members to send whatever they could spare. AMSOC suggested people hold fundraising parties or benefits to ensure

²⁶⁹ AMSOC, “Helps Arrives for Popi’s Children,” *Bulletin*, 14, no. 4 (1956): 16

a continuous flow of monetary support for “Popi's kids.”²⁷⁰ AMSOC continued its working relationship with Popi and the neighborhood children into the 1970s.

While community charities wanted to help children, the ways in which they were described and displayed in pictures in *Bulletin* and *The News* points to the idea that American colonists viewed the poor as less than themselves. Month after month, Popi’s kids were referred to as “street waifs,” “pitifully poor,” “urchins,” and other derogatory and dehumanizing terms. The children lived in deplorable conditions and came from single parent households or from families with substance abuse problems. They lived on the margins of Mexico City society. Popi’s kids, shown in images to *Bulletin* readers, were always dirty and barefoot, barely dressed in tattered clothing, and expressionless as if already worn down by the harsh realities of their surroundings. The images present a jarringly sharp contrast to the images of the prim and proper white colony children participating in Boy Scout and Girl Guide activities and attending ballroom dance nights in the same magazine. Perhaps this was a strategic ploy by the editors of *Bulletin* to shock the reader into donating more as they viewed their smiling children on one page and children in need of a bath and new clothing on the next page. Purposeful or not, the images and descriptions present glimpses into two very different worlds inhabited by very different people with different needs and wants who resided in the same city.

²⁷⁰ AMSOC, “New Group Takes Up Cause of Slum Waifs,” *Bulletin* 16, no. 7 (1958) :8.

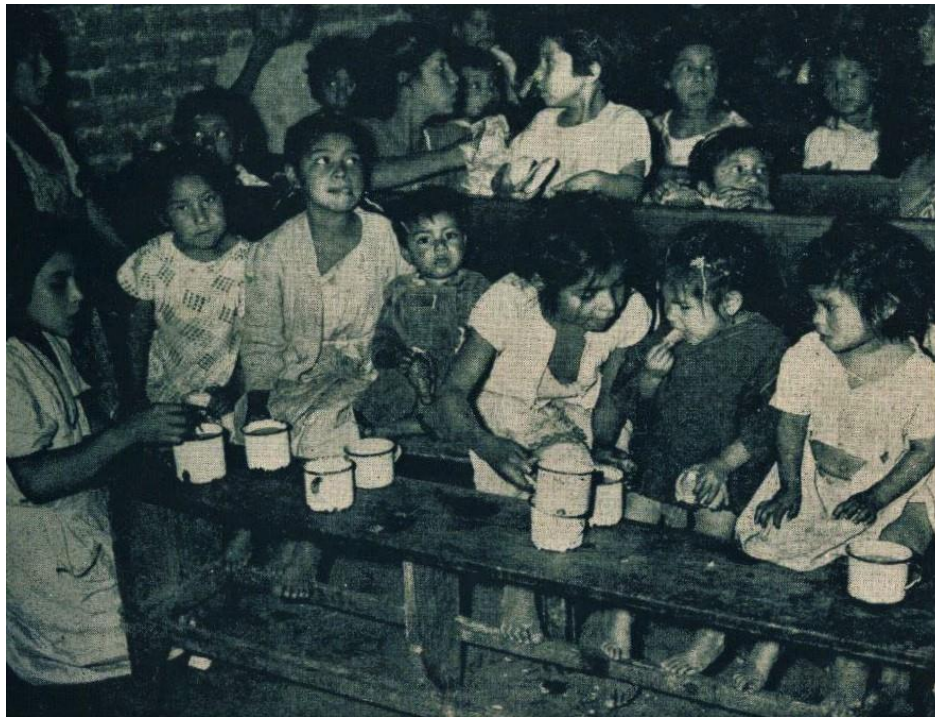


Illustration 6. Top: The building where Popi's Kids ate, attended school, and stayed for after-school programs. The children were often referred to as "ragged street urchins" in AMSOC articles. Bottom: Barefoot children eating a breakfast of pan dulce and hot chocolate.

The growing middle class and entrenched upper-class viewed the growing number of children living in squalid conditions in urbanizing Mexico City as threatening to the residents of the metropolis who only wanted to live their daily lives in peace. American colonists

supported a school called La Granja del Niño, a farm school for abandoned boys, which was described as “a farm for ragged street waifs, where the primary interest is not the growing of crops but of the raising of boys.”²⁷¹ A wealthy Mexican businessman opened the school in 1930 in Xochimilco. Through the monetary support of the school, the colonists participated in another form of social control that transported boys, depicted as potential future criminals, into the countryside where they would learn the error of their ways of simply being born poor and in turn be redeemed into upstanding members of society.

Unlike the hands-on aspect of the day nurseries and schools, not all charities offered a face-to-face interaction that promoted cross-cultural and cross-class interaction. At a Christmas cocktail party at the home of an American colonist, instead of food or a hostess gift, guests were instructed to bring a tool. The party, thrown by Mr. and Mrs. Giles Sicotte on behalf of Dr. David Glusker (the estranged husband of famed journalist and Mexican cultural critic Anita Brenner), attempted to raise funds and tools for the construction of a workshop and other improvements to the Zoquiapan Leprosarium, 32 kilometers from Mexico City, and the only institution of its kind in Mexico. Party attendees arrived bedazzled and dapper in their cocktail dresses and suits, each carrying a chisel, hammer, or another tool. Dr. Glusker collected the tools and presented them to the Mexican Boy Scout troop at the leper colony who needed to start their renovation projects that would benefit the more than 700 people at the institution, around 100 of them children. In addition to the fundraising for the Scouts of the leprosarium, colony women had a separate fund to help the girls interned there. Dr. Glusker noted that the donation of tools could not be a one-time event; the needs of

²⁷¹ AMSOC, “La Granja del Niño,” *Bulletin*, 16, no. 10 (1958): 7-19.

the patients lasted indefinitely, and he pledged that the colonists would help in the future with more projects.²⁷² Other fundraising for the leprosarium included a clothing and medicine drive. The absurdity of the cocktail-tool party underscores the eccentric ways colony members used their privileged social circles to help groups of people they would never dream of entertaining at the same exclusive parties. The tool drive was, for the privileged expatriates, a safe and distanced way of offering help without having to interact with the patients at the leper colony and become figuratively “contaminated” by being in the presence of actual lepers who society deemed unfit and shut away from public view.

Aside from day nurseries and fundraising for a leper colony, colonists gave attention on health and healthcare for all residents of the capital. By the 1950s, polio became a common occurrence for children in the United States. Likewise, in Mexico, polio wreaked havoc on children and young adults of all backgrounds. Colonists purchased polio equipment like iron lungs, provided financial assistance to train Mexican doctors and nurses in the U.S., and funded treatment for polio-stricken patients paralyzed by the disease. The Polio Relief Committee pleaded with colonists to “look into your heart” and reminded them that as good members of the community, “you will do the best you can to help the community and –very possibly, though we hope not—you and yours” by donating time and funds to aid the fight against polio.²⁷³ The disease did not discriminate against Mexican or foreign national, and once again the fundraising for polio was used in terms of being beneficial for the entire community, not only for disadvantaged Mexicans. In this rare case, the American colonists

²⁷² AMSOC, “American Colonists help children at Leprosarium,” *Bulletin*, 7, no. 10 (1949): 28.

²⁷³ AMSOC, “Make Community-Wide Appeal in Fight Against Polio,” *Bulletin* 8, no. 7 (1950): 16.

viewed themselves as members of the Mexican community at large since disease, unlike poverty, did not discriminate based on one's social standing.

Even the voiceless members of the community received support. Colonists joined wealthy Mexicans, including the Mexican president's wife, to establish the first Humane Society of Mexico to curb the number of wild dogs and cats in the city in 1953. People donated funds, dog food, and building supplies to erect a no-kill animal shelter on land donated by the president's wife, señora Ruiz Cortines. At social events like the Fourth of July celebration, the Humane Society held a large adoption day for the dogs and cats. The Humane Society successfully pressed the federal government to enact a law that forbade medical students from operating on live animals without the aid of anesthesia. By attempting to tame the problem of wild dogs and cats in the city, the colonists further attempted to exert social and urban control of spaces they deemed unruly and unkempt.²⁷⁴

Natural disasters also caused the community to band together and rally around the common theme of friendly neighbors. The colony gathered 117 crates of supplies and money to benefit the victims of hurricane Hilda and the aftermath flooding which struck the port city of Tampico in 1964. Men belonging to Operation Amigos organized relief efforts, along with the U.S. Embassy, the American Red Cross, and the U.S. Navy stationed in Panama. AMSOC gathered donations and volunteers packed crates and bags with items for the Red Cross to drive to Tampico. The American colonists were noted as having done "more to win the sympathy and good will of the Mexican nation than had ever been achieved in the long history of Mexican-American relations."²⁷⁵ Secretary Dulles noted that the efforts of private

²⁷⁴ Emma Gutiérrez Suárez, "Humane Society," *Bulletin* 12, no. 8 (1954): 13.

²⁷⁵ AMSOC, "Saves Lives and Wins Hearts of Mexicans," *Bulletin* 13, no. 10 (1955): 12-15.

U.S. donors contributed to the improvement in Mexican-U.S. relations, saying that “It is safe to say that at no period in the history of the United States-Mexican relations has the United States been held in such high regard by both the Mexican Government and people.”²⁷⁶ In times of crisis, the American Colony was used to rally support for U.S. diplomatic efforts and to project a helpful and friendly neighbor.

The language used in the AMSOC magazine phrased the support of members as friendly neighbors engaging in the normal activities of any community, be it in the United States or Mexico. However, oftentimes the apparent difference between the privileged expatriates and the people they helped showed a significant power imbalance. Expatriate organizations that engaged in charity work sought to draw connections between themselves and the wider Mexican community, with one organization arguing that “the affirmation of the so-called ‘American way of life,’ a way in which the individual, working with and for his friends and neighbors, can exert a benevolent influence on the social environment within which we all must dwell.”²⁷⁷ Regarding the annual UCF drive, Ambassador Hill remarked to a group of colony members at a function, saying, “if you have any difficulty near the end of the drive, come back and knock on the door, because here in the embassy we believe it’s better to give than to receive.” While the drive used the phrase of a “united community” of all who lived in Mexico City-- including the American colony—the idea of one harmonious community of diverse people from starkly different backgrounds coming together for the

²⁷⁶ Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, Volume VI, eds. John P. Glennon, N. Stephen Kane, Joan M. Lee, Delia Pitts, Sherrill B. Wells, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987), Document 214.

²⁷⁷ No author, “UCF Drive Goals,” *The News*, September 1954.

sake of humanity was more fiction than truth.²⁷⁸ The people who held the power to transform the day nurseries and provide the life-saving medical equipment were white, privileged, and foreign. They made the decisions on who to help and who to turn away from their charitable services. Nevertheless, the UCF and AMSOC readily employed such rhetoric reminiscent of good neighbor relations to unite this fictitious community around a common bond of benevolence and charity. It provided the appearance of relief for those impacted, and it fulfilled the desires of expatriates to “do their duty,” bring honor to the American Colony, and to perform Americanness.

Holidays and Community Image as Soft Power Reinforcements

Certain identifying characteristics reinforce community and assimilate newcomers into the fold. Holidays unite members of the same group while also enticing or bringing in new members from outside the group. The celebration of U.S. American holidays were used to reinforce charity and access to ordinary Mexicans while instilling U.S. values in the recipients. Special occasions and the celebration of holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and the Fourth of July united the U.S. expatriate community around common shared ideas of what it meant “to be American” and allowed Americanness to be put on display for Mexicans and other non-U.S. American observers. Given the highly warlike context of the Cold War era, holidays were depicted as voluntary expressions of freedom and unity. In a review of the 1949 Fourth of July celebration, attendees of the annual celebration were deemed “lovers of freedom” who recognized that the American Colony was “a colony

²⁷⁸ AMSOC, “The United Community Fund,” *Bulletin*, 17, no. 2 (1959): 10-11.

of mankind whose homeland is the world.”²⁷⁹ No matter the holiday, American Colony friendliness was placed front and center for all to view. Hixson argues that the myth of American identity rests on the use of rituals, celebrations, and honoring past collective national actions that reinforce, consciously and unconsciously, allegiance to pervasive nationalist discourse. This all-encompassing unity marginalizes critics and strengthens the collective national identity of the adherents.²⁸⁰ For American colonists, holidays and pledging allegiance to the United States reinforced their ties to the homeland. Moreover, public displays of U.S. nationalism allowed Mexicans to view U.S. patriotism and nationalism as inclusive and nonthreatening. The “friendly” face they placed on holidays was an attempt to sanitize the rocky history of U.S.-Mexican relations that at times witnessed a jingoistic power asserting its negative views on a foreign country.

Christmas and Thanksgiving for the American colony were both private family affairs and community events that brought in the Mexican community through acts of charity and participation. The public affair consisted of opening AMSOC’s headquarters to needy Mexican families at Christmastime. Children received the Christmas baskets the Social Service Committee women assembled, parents and adults received their own baskets of clothing and tools, and the patio of AMSOC headquarters was turned into a party with piñatas and food for colony members and the Mexican community. There was also a yearly posada event for the community to learn about Mexican customs. At the annual Thanksgiving feast in 1953, planned by AMSOC and held at its headquarters, 600 attendees ate what was termed a “traditional” Thanksgiving meal. 75 pumpkin and sweet potato pies,

²⁷⁹ AMSOC, “Independence Day Celebration,” *Bulletin*, 6, no. 8 (1949): 15.

²⁸⁰ Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy*, 9.

an assortment of dressing and side dishes, and alcoholic drinks were served. Even though turkeys are plentiful in Mexico, AMSOC chose to import 20 twenty-two-pound turkeys from the United States for its traditional “American” holiday. This was not a one-off patriotic turkey import; every single year well into the 1970s, AMSOC only served U.S. turkeys at its Thanksgiving meal. Whether this can be attributed to the aversion many U.S. citizens had to Mexican meats, or because the U.S. citizen sensibilities could not stand eating “un-American” turkeys, one may never know. Music and dancing followed the dinner late into the night after children returned home with their nannies and the adults stayed to have their own fun, which included door prizes like bicycles, and typewriters, and sets of tires. Unlike the Fourth of July celebration, the Thanksgiving celebration was not open to the public, and only a select group of elite and well-connected Mexicans attended the event.

The largest and most far-reaching display of Americanness held every year occurred on the Fourth of July. From the mid-1940s to the 1980s, the average number of attendees at the Fourth of July celebration remained steady at 25,000, which included U.S. citizens and Mexican nationals. Much like World Fairs showcased a nation’s perceived modernity, the Fourth of July celebration exhibited U.S. American “modernity” in the form of patriotism, democracy, and an abundance of advertising and corporate sponsorship by U.S. multinational corporations that promoted and equated freedom with consumerism and the latest goods and services available on the Mexican market. Events included speeches by leaders of the American colony, a parade, musical and dance performances, and a presentation of awards for dedicated colonists. Special guests included members of AMSOC, AmCham, the Foreign

Legion, representatives of major U.S. multinational corporations who sponsored events at the festival, and Mexican government representatives.²⁸¹

Speakers used the occasion to highlight the connections between the two nations and how a united effort could thwart anti-democratic threats in the hemisphere. Ambassador Hill told the celebrants in 1960 that the United States paid tribute not only to U.S. independence leaders on the Fourth of July, but U.S. citizens also celebrated Mexican independence leaders because they fought and died for the same ideals. American foreign policy likewise had “always been guided by a philosophy of kindness and cooperation for the mutual benefit of all freedom-loving peoples.”²⁸² Therefore, the rhetoric of the U.S. government and of the American Colony viewed Mexicans and U.S. citizens as brothers in arms willing and able to lead the world toward peace and democracy. Leonard Klein, AMSOC president, stressed how every U.S. citizen in Mexico should “carry the torch of liberty” in such perilous times as the 1960s. Klein told the crowd that as citizens of the United States, they were heirs to the “American” way of life, and in order to truly pay tribute to the history of independence and American national heritage, Americans (meaning all the peoples of the hemisphere) everywhere “must continue to face up to the daily challenges of strengthening and preserving our form of democratic living so that the people of foreign lands can only form one impression, one way of thinking about our country and what we stand for and what we believe in.” To that end, Klein added that the founders of the United States of America did not only create the Declaration of Independence for “Americans” but for “the people of any

²⁸¹ AMSOC, “Fourth For the Family,” *Bulletin* 37, no. 6 (1973): 16.

²⁸² AMSOC, “Forbearance is Not Faintheartedness,” *Bulletin*, 16, no. 7 (1960): 36. This was a common theme in speeches given at the event throughout the 1960s.

foreign land in the world.”²⁸³ Therefore, Klein told the crowd that U.S. democracy had the duty of reforming other nations and protect the world against threats to “American” liberty and freedom. It was up to the American Colony to live by example and demonstrate democracy and freedom.

The annual U.S. Independence Day celebration held an even greater importance in 1962 because of president John F. Kennedy’s appearance. Normally the Fourth of July festivities were held at the American High School. Due to anticipated larger crowds, organizers chose a go-kart track in Ciudad Satélite, an upper middle-class suburb located northwest of downtown. 22 participating organizations contributed to the event. The American Elementary PTA sold American-style BBQ. The Asociación Humanitaria had a petting zoo with ponies and free dog food. The Boy and Girl Scouts sold hot dogs, hamburgers, soft drinks, and ran bingo games. The Comité Americano Pro-Infancia sold tamales. Cosmopolitan Club sold tickets for carnival rides and a wheel of fortune. And the all-American women of the Daughters of the American Revolution sold Boston baked beans.

Kennedy addressed the teeming crowd from a platform several feet above the fairgoers. He began his speech by thanking AMSOC chairman Willard D. Andrews, U.S. Ambassador Thomas C. Mann, and Mexican government representatives for putting on the large and welcoming display of independence. For the American colonists in attendance, this was a recognition like none other to have a U.S. president not only visit their city, but to attend the Fourth of July celebrations with them. He addressed the colonists by calling them “the most prosperous looking Peace Corps contingent which I have reviewed.”²⁸⁴ He

²⁸³ AMSOC,” It Was a Glorious Fourth!,” *Bulletin* 22, no. 7 (1964), 12-14.

²⁸⁴ John F. Kennedy, Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration With the American Community in Mexico City. June 30, 1962, JFK Presidential Archive digital recording, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1962/JFKWHA-111-002/JFKWHA-111-002>

recognized the hard work of the American Colony in organizing the display of U.S. American patriotic spirit for their fellow Mexican residents of Mexico City, saying that “part of this hospitality and friendship has been due to your efforts.”²⁸⁵ The president reiterated how crucial the American colonists were in creating good neighborly relations and sharpening the image of the United States abroad. In effect, Kennedy applauded the colonists for the work that they had already done in imparting U.S. American values abroad, stating that “when they see you, those of you who are Americans, they see the United States. And this is true of people all around the world; they make an impression, one way or the other, about our country and what we stand for and what we believe, and where we have been, and where we are going.”²⁸⁶ He further encouraged them to continue bettering relations between both nations, telling them that improved relations were due to their hard work and that they could “take satisfaction in it [improving relations] . . . because you represent the long hand of the United States day in and day out . . . working among them and giving an impression of what kind of a people we are.”²⁸⁷ The American colony had the blessing and encouragement of the John F. Kennedy to continue in their soft power duties as U.S. citizens to better relations with Mexican and cultivate a friendly public image of U.S. intrusion in midcentury Mexico. they represented, according to Kennedy, the perfect representation of U.S. economic and foreign power.

Changing topics, Kennedy then compared U.S. presidents to Latin American revolutionary leaders. He claimed the writers of the Declaration of Independence “were not

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962* (Best Books, 1963), 270.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

advancing a theory of government merely for the people of the United States, but for the people around the world.” Latin American independence leaders, he claimed, used the Declaration of Independence for inspiration to create their own nations and write their own Constitutions. Therefore, the peoples of the Americas came from a common desire to spread independence and freedom throughout the Western Hemisphere. It was crucial for Kennedy to unite the Americas behind a common trope of friendly revolutionary (but not communist) independence fighters united against oppression and struggling for democracy and for the common good. With a group of friendly and “helpful” U.S. citizens living in Mexico City willing and able to present themselves as continuing in the tradition of uniting the Americas, he had a several thousand strong united effort to defend American values and traditions.²⁸⁸

Lastly, in the spirit of unity and community, he thanked the Mexicans in attendance for celebrating the U.S. holiday with the American Colony, “just as U.S. Americans celebrated Mexican holidays,” and together both nations could celebrate “other holidays of freedom all around the globe.” He continued his theme of unity by declaring that the Mexicans in the crowd were “part of us, and we part of you, and I appreciate this opportunity to reaffirm the solidarity which binds all of us together.”²⁸⁹ Kennedy reiterated to the crowd at the Fourth of July celebration the importance of their spirit and their united community action and engagement. Although he did not mention it directly, he was referring to the importance of soft power to influence and sway public opinion.

Kennedy’s visit and his words to the colony were used by AMSOC to reinforce the commitment of its members to the overall goals of the organization. In its coverage of the

²⁸⁸ John F. Kennedy, Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration.

²⁸⁹ John F. Kennedy, Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration, JFK Archive online.

visit, *Bulletin* viewed the visit as a badge of honor for the colonists. Kennedy did not have to speak to the colonists at the Fourth of July celebration. He chose to speak because his visit was “set as a means of pointing up U.S. friendliness for the countries to the south, of highlighting American concern with Latin American.”²⁹⁰ Colonists felt that their actions of charity, good neighborliness, and promotion of U.S. interests had received the blessing and encouragement by the president, with one article proudly stating that “Jack Kennedy imparted an awareness of the American community’s responsibility to the United States and Mexico, particularly in light of the Alliance for Progress, and his reference to the most prosperous looking Peace Corps contingent.”²⁹¹ This signal of approval reinforced the sense of obligation and duty the American colonists felt in carrying out soft power and grassroots diplomacy.

Education, Exchange, and Cultural Relations

A key component of U.S. governmental soft diplomacy focused on the resources used in people-to-people cultural interaction and educational exchange programs. Various entities engaged with Mexican and U.S. audiences to bring people together under the banner of education and cultural exchange in Mexico City. All shared varying degrees of support from the United States government and from the American colony. The Benjamin Franklin Library (affectionately called *la Franklin*), the Mexican-American Cultural Relations Institute, Mexico City College (MCC), and various educational exchange programs catered to different

²⁹⁰ AMSOC “U.S. Presidential Visitors in Mexico: Serious Overtones in Kennedy-ALM Meeting,” *Bulletin* 20, no. 6 (1962): 29;62.

²⁹¹ AMSOC “President Kennedy’s Message to Mexico: Bold Approach to Challenge of the Age Kindles Enthusiasm,” *Bulletin* 20, no. 7 (1962): 12.

groups of Mexicans and U.S. national. Every institution and program had the explicit goal of drawing people together and inculcating goodwill and good neighbor ideals into those who walked through the doors. Such efforts have been called the fourth dimension of U.S. foreign policy by Philip Coombs.²⁹² Liping Bu argues that educational exchange during the Cold War in particular “created an environment where cultural expansion became a vital weapon to fight the propaganda war with the Soviet Union. Educational exchange facilitated the exportation of American ideas, values, ideology technology, commerce, military defense, and our way of life.”²⁹³ A rise in educational exchange programs, both U.S.-government sponsored and private and corporate initiatives, grew out of the Good Neighbor Policy and the need to combat German influence in Latin American nations. The post-WWII period simply exchanged German for Soviet influence. From the beginning, cultural and educational exchanges facilitated through the State Department had direct ties to the private sector. The State Department had little knowledge of how to recruit, organize, and successfully engage in exchange programs, and enlisted the help of the private sector. Thus, a relationship developed between state and private departments and organizations to collaborate on cultural and educational exchanges.²⁹⁴

George Kennan stressed the importance of cultural contact in shaping the perceptions of host nations when he stated: “I personally attach high importance to cultural contact as a means of combating the negative impressions about this country that mark so much of world

²⁹² Phillip Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy, Council on Foreign Relations: Educational and Cultural Affairs* (Harper and Row, 1964).

²⁹³ Liping Bu, *Making the World Like Us: Education, Cultural Expansion and the American Century*,” (Praeger, 2003), 10.

²⁹⁴ Bu, 147.

opinion. What we have to do, of course, is to show the outside world both that we have cultural life and that we care something about it-- that we care enough about it, in fact, to give it encouragement and support at home, and to see that it is enriched by acquaintance with similar activity elsewhere.”²⁹⁵ The members of the American Colony supported through their charities and business contributions the exchange of several Mexican college and high school aged young adults and students to the United States. In many cases, the American Colony took the lead from the U.S. government in sponsoring Mexican students. U.S. Ambassador Thurston spoke at a dinner honoring Mexican exchange students who were supported by the Mexican-American Cultural Institute. Thurston acknowledged the contributions U.S.-educated Mexicans had on Mexican life, stating, “There is clearly no group which could make a greater contribution to Mexican-American understanding.” Many Mexican university graduates attended school due to scholarships awarded by the U.S. Embassy or various U.S. nongovernmental agencies, such as AMSOC. Ambassador Thurston noted that the creation of a permanent organization linking returned students to Mexico would give rise to a close-knit group which would help find the best candidates in Mexico for further training abroad and continue the cycle of replenishing Mexico with an educated workforce.²⁹⁶

Director of the Council for Inter-American Cooperation Raymond T. Rich argued that U.S. cultural and educational centers created during WWII in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin

²⁹⁵ George F. Kennan, *International Exchange in the Arts International Council* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956).

²⁹⁶ AMSOC, “Mexican-American Cultural Interchange,” *Bulletin* 6, no. 10 (1949): 14-15. For an examination of the use of exchange programs as a tool of soft power, see Paul A. Kramer, “Is the World Our Campus? International Students and U.S. Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 5 (2009): 775–806.

America had the intended purpose of promoting industrialization, raising standards of living, and creating a lasting inter-American understanding for hemispheric collaboration and peace.²⁹⁷ For Rich, the Good Neighbor policy was intended to be a permanent policy, and in order for the goodwill to continue, U.S. centers had the duty to maintain friendly relations for the sake of the Americas. Emphasis went to devoting attention to the importance of inter-American trade and business, increasing the purchasing power and raising the standard of living in Latin America, and championing “why the development of [U.S. American] industries in Latin America not only enhances the well-being of our neighbors but also gains long-term advantages for this country.”²⁹⁸ For the programs to be successful in the long-term, Rich suggested independent, non-governmental organizations fill the void that would be left when Nelson Rockefeller’s OCIAA ended. While independent organizations did not take responsibility for running educational and cultural exchange centers, multiple entities collaborated to form centers, such as the Mexican-American Cultural Institute and various American Colony organizations. The power of U.S. business and governmental influence was too dominant to allow such crucial issues to be left to independent groups.

By 1949, U.S. veterans studied in Mexico under the GI bill in massive numbers, from art schools in San Miguel de Allende to MCC. The United States benefited by this exchange, and Thurston claimed that Mexico should benefit from the exchange of its citizens to the United States, supported and funded by the American Colony and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

²⁹⁷ Raymond T. Rich, “U.S. Inter-American Centers,” *Mexican-American Review* 13, no. 6 (1945): 19.

²⁹⁸ Rich. “U.S. Inter-American Centers,” 20.

The American Society cooperated with several entities to facilitate exchange programs for Mexican students. Proyecto Mañana funded an exchange program for students at the National Teacher's School, the National Polytechnic Institute, and the National University to foment cultural exchange. The members of the Cosmopolitan Club and the U.S. Embassy supported the exchange monetarily and logistically.²⁹⁹ The Experiment in International Living and sent Ariadna Olivera and 8 other Mexican youth to the United States on an exchange program in 1958. The Experiment in International Living, a nongovernmental exchange program, was founded in 1932 and emphasized experimental approaches to intercultural education, exchange, and training. It was the first organization of its kind to introduce the idea of home-stays with local families to create close bonds between the host student and the host family. Ariadna stayed with the Mitchell family of Milford, New Hampshire. The Mitchells reported to AMSOC president McNeil S. Stringer that “we do not hesitate in saying it would be difficult to find a finer person to send as your first community ambassador when so much depends on first impressions.”³⁰⁰ Ariadna and the eight other Mexican girls—who were all interested in becoming primary school teachers in Mexico-- stayed with Milford families and attended month-long classes on education and teaching instruction at Keene Teachers' College. They participated in U.S. college experiences and cultural interactions. The Mexican girls also put on a posada pageant for their host families.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ “Proyecto Mañana,” *Mexico City Times*, January 18, 1964, Hemeroteca Nacional, UNAM.

³⁰⁰ AMSOC, “American Society’s Ambassadors Makes Big Hit in New England,” *Bulletin* 16, no. 1 (1958): 10.

³⁰¹ AMSOC, “American Society’s Ambassadors Makes Big Hit in New England,” 11.

The idealistic program was deemed such a success that the American Colony sponsored dozens more Mexican high school and college-aged students to the United States through The Experiment in International Living throughout the 1960s. Middle to upper class Mexican students from good family backgrounds applied to the program through AMSOC, and colony members then chose which students would study abroad. The students had the duty to absorb as much information about the United States and its educational and professional life as possible in order to be able to return to Mexico and introduce what they learned into their Mexican surroundings. Young adult women in the program mostly entered education and nursing fields, and the men almost always had an eye for business or law. Even though the exchange program was depicted as a friendly exchange of ideas and cultural interaction, AMSOC used the program with the intent of using Mexican exchange students to return as ambassadors of U.S. cultural superiority and reorganize Mexican occupational fields through the students. Ariadna gushed that living in the United States was “a dream come true” and that she “felt like Cinderella.” She was deemed “our Society’s ambadress,” who not only displayed her Mexicanness (which was described as being “alert, intelligent, and cute”) to a New England audience, but she also represented AMSOC because the organization sponsored her abroad. She represented the “good Mexican” who was “redeemed” through association with AMSOC and the American Colony.³⁰² As a girl, she attended English classes at the Mexican-American Cultural Institute and formed friendships with members of the American colony. AMSOC president Stringer told members that “the Society’s role in the happy story of Ariadna Olivera may be a tangible link in building world understanding and

³⁰² AMSOC, “Society Sends Ambadress to the U.S,” *Bulletin* 15, no. 10 (1957): 27.

appreciation.”³⁰³ While quite the burden to put on the shoulders of young students, the American colony viewed such programs as other tools in reforming Mexican society into the image of midcentury United States society.

The Benjamin Franklin Library

Ambassador George Messersmith inaugurated the Benjamin Franklin Library in 1942 before a crowd of U.S. and Mexican officials and civilians. Speaking at the opening, Messersmith stated that "the establishment of this library represents, I believe, one of the most important and significant forward steps in the long history of the relations between our two countries." Messersmith hoped that the Library would help Mexicans understand the United States and its views on the world and continue the friendship the nations had forged over the Good Neighbor era. He viewed the Library as a center for cultural exchange and knowledge, where highbrow culture mixed with popular culture and presented an accurate picture of the United States to a foreign audience.³⁰⁴ But the goals of the Library were simply not cultural interaction-- the United States Information Service ran the operated *la Franklin* and it was supported by U.S. government funds, and received support and guidance from the American Library Association (ALA) and the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA). It did not exist separate from U.S. government propaganda, and it was a product of its time. Julie Prieto argues that the Library survived postwar because the ALA views on education

³⁰³ AMSOC, "American Society's Ambassadors Makes Big Hit in New England," 34.

³⁰⁴ George Messersmith, Address on opening of Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City, April 13, 1942, George Messersmith Papers Collection MSS 109 Item ID 1492-00, University of Delaware Library. <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/7454>

and partnership won over the narrowly focused dissemination of wartime propaganda and U.S. foreign policy.³⁰⁵

After the end of WWII, the Library passed from OIAA control to USIA control where it came to be a powerful tool in the fight against radicalism while still offering educational opportunities and outreach for Mexican nationals. Prieto argues that by the 1960s, governmental officials viewed diplomatic libraries as “places where foreign citizens could be exposed to positive, propagandistic U.S. materials” and as a result, the Library fell out of favor with younger Mexicans who no longer saw it as a place for learning, but as another agent in U.S. imperialism.³⁰⁶ The goals of the Library became less about interaction and exchange, and entirely focused on one-side domineering propaganda, a concern that ALA leaders feared would happen in the 1940s.

Even before the shift in direction toward outright propaganda in the 1960s, the direction the Library headed toward veered toward a soft diplomacy public relations campaign with familiar faces from the American Colony at the helm. Bertha Harris, the longtime director of the Benjamin Franklin Library, died suddenly in 1949. She was described as “one of the strongest links in the chain of good will being forged between Mexico and the United States.” Miss Harris, as she was fondly called by Colony members, was born in Parral, Chihuahua to a U.S. mining executive father. She spent the first 18 years of her life in Mexico, received her teaching degree at California State Teachers’ College, and returned to the American Colony to work. In 1940 she obtained her Master of Arts degree from the National University in Mexico City, and later finished her library science studies at

³⁰⁵ Julie Irene Prieto, “The Sword and the Book”: The Benjamin Franklin Library and U.S.-Mexican Relations, 1936–1962.” *Book History* 16, 2013, 295.

³⁰⁶ Prieto, “The Sword and the Book,” 296.

Columbia University. Hundreds attended her funeral at Christ Church Episcopal, with people of “varying interests and nationality united in their sorrow and affection they had known for one of the finest and most effective of the good neighbors in Mexico.”³⁰⁷ Bertha Harris represented the familiar and friendly face of U.S. cultural diplomacy and soft power that greeted Mexican patrons and encouraged American colonists to volunteer their time in the pursuit of spreading good neighborly kindness.

Mauda Sandvig, library director in 1957, explained that “our purpose is to interpret the United States to many Mexican people. But, the Benjamin Franklin Library does more for the people than does the average library. Ours is a public relations job as well as an out-and-out library service.”³⁰⁸ Regardless of the Library disseminating propaganda or education, the Mexican public willingly listened to the U.S. interpretation the Library broadcasted. In 1961 221,501 people entered the doors of the Library. 28,471, or 13%, were children under 18. Average daily attendance was 799. The information desk handled an average 3,500 reference questions a month. 51% of registered users were adults or university students. 22% identified as professionals, 12% as teachers, and 15% as other, most commonly as housewives or businessmen.³⁰⁹ University students had access to the newest textbooks on subjects that were not always available at their home institution libraries. Patrons could borrow books through interlibrary loan, a concept completely new to Mexicans. In fact, the Library was the first institution of its kind in Mexico to allow patrons to lend books. Mexico’s foreign minister told USIA director George Allen that “the United States has done many fine things for

³⁰⁷ AMSOC, “Colony laments death of Miss Bertha Harris,” *Bulletin* 7, no. 10 (1949): 16.

³⁰⁸ AMSOC, “La Franklin,” *Bulletin* 15, no. 4 (1957): 30.

³⁰⁹ AMSOC “Reading with an American Accent,” *Bulletin* 20, no. 2 (1962): 17.

Mexico like eradicate disease and expand trade, “but the finest single thing you have ever done for us, in my opinion, was the establishment of the Benjamin Franklin Library.”³¹⁰ For Mexicans hungry for knowledge and access to hard to find resources, the Library offered a new world in which to explore. Few Mexican patrons probably realized that they were actively being persuaded to support U.S. foreign policy while attending lectures at the Library or reading the latest Nancy Drew book.

AMSOC members were encouraged to volunteer at *la Franklin* by reading to Mexican schoolchildren, helping with reference questions, or donating old books.³¹¹ Readers of *Bulletin* were inundated with stories on the importance of the Library, with one story telling readers about the generosity of Library staff and volunteers. The story recounted a young churro vendor who had her days profits stolen in front of the Library, where she was heard crying on the steps. A Librarian started a collection, and soon the staff had amassed extra pesos for the girl. The generosity of the colonists working at the Library ensured that the girl could return home to her family with a pocket full of coins instead of “being beaten by her parents for coming home emptyhanded.”³¹² In this story, whether true or not, Mexicans are depicted as either thieves or vulnerable children, and colonists are the heroes who arrive to remedy the situation and rescue the downtrodden.

Another way the American Colony used the Library to improve the image of the United States was through the Benjamin Franklin Book Mobile Program and the book locker initiative. The U.S. Embassy provided trucks and drivers, the Library provided books, and

³¹⁰ Gary E. Kraske. *Missionaries of the Book: The American Library Profession and the Origins of United States Cultural Diplomacy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 246.

³¹¹ AMSOC, “The Benjamin Franklin Library,” *Bulletin* 14, no. 12 (1957): 18-19; 28.

³¹² *Ibid.*

colonists donated time shelving the 200 books that lined the walls of the book mobile. The U.S. Embassy, the Pan American Roundtable, the Junior League, and the International Women's Club donated books and funds for the operation of the bookmobile into villages on the outskirts of the growing metropolis. The book mobile arrived once a month to enroll students, reclaim books, and allow patrons to check out more reading material. Colonists paid to have classic books translated into Spanish and placed in the book mobile. According to AMSOC, in the evenings, children reportedly read books aloud in town plazas so that their friends and neighbors would be entertained.³¹³ The book locker program sent lockers of 100 books to Mexican public schools, agricultural technical schools, and sanitoriums and hospitals. Patrons received the lockers as far away as Baja California and Yucatan. The lockers were touted as another line in the "multitude of other ways the Benjamin Franklin Library is giving true service to Mexico and making hosts of friends for the U.S."³¹⁴

While the Benjamin Franklin Library was a U.S.-government supported entity, it relied on American colonist support for fundraising, donations, and volunteers. Its budget was not large. *La Franklin* gave American colonists another way to exert influence and impart U.S. cultural dominance over Mexicans who used its resources. They viewed themselves as cold warriors in a fight against ignorance and misinformation propagated by communists and Soviet agitators.

Mexican-U.S. Cultural Relations Institute

³¹³ AMSOC, "Books For Mexican Children," *Bulletin* 8, no. 8 (1950): 10-12.

³¹⁴ Edith Dietz, "Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin" *Modern Mexico* 19, no. 1 (1946): 25.

Initially maintained by the U.S. government, the Mexican-U.S. Cultural Relations Institute received funding and support from the American colony in carrying out the Institute's goals to "develop sound, intelligent understanding between peoples of the two neighboring countries."³¹⁵ The Institute began in the Benjamin Franklin Library in 1942. When the *La Franklin* was incorporated by the Department of State, a group of Mexicans and U.S. Americans turned the Institute into an independent non-profit association. Although it acted independently of the U.S. government, it still had very close ties to the embassy. Starting in 1947, the Board of Directors, composed of 10 members each from both nations, formed relationships with the U.S. Embassy and the Mexican Ministry of Education. The civilian goals remained the same as under the U.S. government: the purpose of the Institute was "to draw the people of Mexico and the United States into closer friendship, through increased mutual understanding, in a program of activities which reflect the social, cultural, and intellectual life of both countries."³¹⁶

The language classes in English and Spanish generated the most interest among people who visited the Institute. Annual sign-up days resulted in hundreds of people lining up outside of the Institute. Lectures, concerts, art exhibits, commemoration of national holidays, and other events occurred within the confines of the Institute. By 1953, the Institute reported that 18,000 people enrolled in language classes and 80,000 people had attended cultural events since its founding in 1942.³¹⁷ AMSOC's *Bulletin* reported that 75,000 people

³¹⁵ AMSOC, "Cultural Relations Institute: Guardian of Democracy," *Bulletin* 8, no. 1 (1950): 20-22.

³¹⁶ Instituto Mexicano-Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales, "Pamphlet," 1953, George S. Messersmith papers University of Delaware Repository

http://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/9371/mss0109_dh1306-00.pdf

³¹⁷ Ibid.

came to the Institute in 1955 which set a record for visitation and attendance.³¹⁸ Classes were marketed as tools to improve one's life for both Mexicans and U.S. Americans.

For American colonists, the Institute represented pride in one's nation because of the work the U.S. Americans did for the Mexican community. AMSOC members were praised for volunteering their time and effort, not only for enrolling in Spanish classes themselves, but for teaching English classes and participating in English conversation clubs with Mexicans. At the request of AMSOC, AmCham, and Operation Amigos, the Institute established short seminars and orientations for American colonists and U.S. tourists to acquaint them with their new life in Mexico.³¹⁹ The participation of U.S. Americans residing in Mexico, they were told, helped hundreds of Mexicans hold "good jobs and hundreds more have better positions and outlooks on life because of the English they learned in the Institute."³²⁰

The Institute Board of Directors argued that participation and support helped "Mexican and American industry and business in that it is doing valuable public relations work for them-- for Mexico among American tourists and visitors, and for American business among Mexicans." The Board implicitly stated that business and cultural relations went hand in hand, and improving cultural relations directly benefited U.S. and Mexican businesses. The overarching goal of the Institute was of forming a positive image of the United States, and the Board of Directors sold the idea of participation for the American

³¹⁸ AMSOC, "Mexican-American Cultural Institute," *Bulletin* 14, no. 7 (1956): 12; 32.

³¹⁹ Timothy King, Director of Information, "Americans in Mexico," Mexican-American Cultural Institute booklet, 1956, 3.

³²⁰ AMSOC, "Cultural Relations Institute: Guardian of Democracy" *Bulletin* 8, no. 1 (1950): 20-22.

colony as a patriotic public relations campaign.³²¹ The success of the Institute in Mexico City prompted other Mexican-American cultural institutes to open in Guadalajara and Monterrey.



Illustration 7. People lined up in front of Hamburgo 115, Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales to be enrolled in English classes – 1960s.

Mexico City College

In a small boardinghouse in Colonia Roma in Mexico City, a group of colonists founded Mexico City College (MCC) in 1940. Originally founded as a junior college for U.S. students who graduated from the American High School, in six short years MCC became a four-year liberal arts U.S.-accredited institution of higher education that had its own spacious campus on the outskirts of Mexico City along the highway going toward Toluca on land donated by S. Bolling Wright. Students from around the world sought out MCC for short summer programs, bachelor's degrees, and eventually graduate programs. The school was popular with American GIs who could live grander lifestyles on their stipends than they could in the United States, as well as with bohemian artists and middle-class U.S. American

³²¹ Instituto Mexicano-Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales pamphlet
http://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/9371/mss0109_dh1306-00.pdf

and Mexican graduates from the American High School who did not want to leave Mexico for university in the United States. In 1963 it became University of the Americas (Universidad de las Américas), and in 1970 it moved to the city of Cholula near Puebla. In a 20 year celebration pamphlet of MCC's achievements, the president of the university noted that "in a modest way, the College has been forging links of friendship and understanding between the people of Mexico and the United States of America," and through such programs offered at MCC, students from both countries had "intimate looks into the lives and cultures of their neighbors and have emerged better men and better world citizens."³²² The men and women who created and molded MCC into what it became by 1960 sold the institution as a bastion of intellectual freedom and sound liberal arts education where students "find here what they seek—a whole view of man as a creature of body and soul who can help shape his own destiny."³²³

American colonists and U.S. businessmen supported the vision of the university which claimed that "Mexico City College wants men and women who are modest patriots, but internationally-minded ones, who will look for the likeness which link them to their fellow men rather than for the apparent unlikeness-- race and nationality, color and creed, which tend to separate them from one another."³²⁴ Supporters, donors, faculty, staff, and students viewed themselves as standing on the frontlines between communism and the free

³²² "Forward," *Mexico City College: The First 20 Years, 1940-1960* (Mexico City College, Mexico, D.F.) held online at http://catarina.udlap.mx/u_dl_a/acervos/mcc/mcc_1940_1960.pdf, Acervos Digitales Colección del Mexico City College, La Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP).

³²³ 1949-1950 Catalogue Mexico City College, Hemeroteca Nacional de México, UNAM, 39.

³²⁴ Ibid.

world. Whatever their capacity, they believed that by exposing young men and women to another culture, they would win the ideological fight for the souls of mankind in a “living laboratory of learning.”³²⁵

The original founders, afraid that their newly graduated U.S. citizen children would move to the United States and never return to them in Mexico, created MCC to keep their offspring close to them while war raged in Europe and the Pacific. Many of the graduates of the American High School chose to attend MCC-University of the Americas well into the 1970s. It offered the convenience of a quality higher education with the benefit of living at home or close to home for those who did not want to return to a country they might have lost ties to as young adults. For those who did stay, the decision to attend university in Mexico rather than the United States demonstrates that many children had more connections to Mexico than to their country of birth or that of their parents.³²⁶

In 1946, a group of students arrived from the Ohio State University. The success of that winter program brought more exchange students to Mexico from universities such as Michigan State University, Notre Dame, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, and University of Arizona. Study abroad supported the university for decades. The U.S. Veterans Administration named MCC as a quality school for veterans looking to study abroad. Short term and long term students chose from a wide variety of classes ranging from home economics to Nahuatl. The most popular majors were anthropology, history, Spanish, and business.

³²⁵ Mexico City College, *Mexico City College*, 2.

³²⁶ Mexico City College Catalogue 1949-1950, Hemeroteca Nacional, UNAM.

For people interested in Latin American and Mexican culture, MCC offered intense study in a familiar U.S.-style setting with renowned Mexican professors who also taught at UNAM. Undergraduate courses included Peoples and Cultures of Latin America, Mexican Folkways, Mayan Hieroglyphs, Maya Language, Roots of Mexican Culture, Nahua Philosophy. Advanced graduate studies in anthropology included courses in ancient Mesoamerica, applied anthropology, advanced linguistics, paleoanthropology, and Mesoamerican archeology.³²⁷ Undergraduate and graduate students participated in an archeological excavation in 1953 in the state of Tabasco where they investigated an Olmec site.³²⁸ Other excavations occurred in Oaxaca in 1960.³²⁹

For Mexican students, MCC offered immersion in a U.S.-style campus that provided courses on subjects usually unavailable at Mexican universities and colleges, especially regarding international business. MCC trained dozens of Mexican professional librarians who then went on to train others. MCC also afforded young Mexican professionals to gain access to and network with international companies and businessmen who they otherwise would not have met if not affiliated with the school.

Far from being the haven for sheltered U.S. young adults, MCC flourished into a raucous beatnik scene where GIs, midwestern co-eds, and hippies mingled together on a vibrant midcentury Mexican campus. Richard W. Wilkie, MCC graduate, recounted that a sociology professor took the class to Lecumberri prison to interview thieves and murders,

³²⁷ John Paddock, "Anthropology at Mexico City College." *B.B.A.A. Boletín Bibliográfico De Antropología Americana* 21/22, no. 1 (1958): 94.

³²⁸ "First Season of Olmec Work Almost Finished," *Mexico City Collegian* May 21, 1953, UDLAP Colección del Mexico City College, 3.

³²⁹ "Oaxaca Past Reborn: MCCers Find More Ruins" *Mexico City Collegian* November 23, 1960, 4.

most notably Leon Trotsky's assassin Ramón Mercader.³³⁰ Novelist Margaret Shedd founded the Centro Mexicano de Escritores in 1951 which was housed on the second MCC campus. The writer's workshop was partially funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and covertly by the CIA. It attempted to bring Mexican and U.S. writers together to discover *lo mexicano* and *mexicanidad* while creating a sense of Pan-Americanism for writers from both nations that would develop "Americanness" and dilute any radical or leftist beliefs of anti-Americanism.³³¹

The U.S. students who studied business at MCC not only earned degrees, they also immersed themselves in a foreign business culture. This kind of total immersion was the wave of the future for business culture.³³² Business classes taught U.S. students how to interact in foreign settings and with foreign co-workers. Students at MCC learned Spanish, Mexican and Latin American history and culture, and potentially broke down prejudices about Latin Americans. Most importantly they learned cultural empathy in real world settings through their coursework, internships, and interactions with Mexican students, teachers, and businesspeople. The authors of the *Overseas Americans* describe the hands-on foreign business training experience as crucial for future business people because programs like MCC prepared workers for real life. MCC graduates had the ability to affect "foreign societies from the inside, rather than as dealing with them from the outside."³³³ This in turn,

³³⁰ Richard W. Wilkie "Dangerous Journeys: Mexico City College Students and the Mexican Landscape, 1954-1962," in *Adventures into Mexico: American Tourism Beyond the Border*, Nicholas Dagen Bloom ed. (Rowman & Litchfield Publishers, 2006), 99.

³³¹ Patrick Iber, "The Cold War Politics of Literature and the Centro Mexicano de Escritores," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 48(2), 247-272.

³³² *Overseas Americans*, 295.

³³³ *Overseas Americans*, 291.

made for better businesspeople and stronger and healthier corporations. The professional business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi started a chapter at MCC in 1958 in order to “foster excellent relations between students and the Mexican business community.”³³⁴ The American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico and the Sales Executive Club had formal ties to the fraternity.³³⁵ Students toured U.S. subsidiaries in Mexico City and attended luncheons and became acquainted with company men. This connection not only ensured connections once the students graduated, it also strengthened the role of U.S. business in Latin America by forming bonds of future businessmen to host countries. Many MCC business graduates went on to work for the Latin American offices of Coca-Cola, United Fruit, and Pan American Airlines.³³⁶

In addition to coursework, students at MCC were required to engage in community service. In partnership with members of the U.S. business community, students and American colonists interested in business mentored Mexican businessmen to help them learn English and teach them ways to become better businessmen. Board members belonged to the most well-known companies in the United States and Mexico: Woolworth de Mexico, Cummins Diesel Engines, Du Pont, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Hulera Euzkadi, and many others. American colonists were also encouraged to enroll in MCC for courses on anthropology, Mexican history, and Spanish to become better citizens so that they could mentor their own Mexican student.³³⁷ A group of students, three U.S. and one Mexican, held

³³⁴ Delta Sigma Pi, A Petition to the International Fraternity of Delta Sigma Pi, deltasigmapi.org/docs, 46.

³³⁵ Professional Business Administration Fraternity, “Delta Sigma Pi Enters Latin American with Delta Mu Chapter Installation” in *Delta Sig of Delta Sigma Pi*, May 1958, 109.

³³⁶ Richard W. Wilkie, “Dangerous Journeys,” 100.

³³⁷ “Community service,” *Mexico City College*.

a raffle to raise funds for needy families in the village of Palo Alto near the MCC Campus. They raised enough resources to donate sports equipment, a radio, games for the children, pay for catechism instruction, provide medical care, and donate their time to teaching women how to sew.³³⁸

MCC also had adult classes for American Colony members. Night courses led by Dr. James Shields and others in the Department of Extension Services broached subjects on culture, current events, history and art in Mexico, Spanish, economics, and philosophy. Shields sold the adult night classes as self-improvement and ways for established professionals to deepen their thinking on their native culture and that of Mexico and the world. Selective adult education, Shields believed, opened “a world of unrealized wonders that real pleasure is to be gained by utilizing and disciplining the mind.”³³⁹ In particular, Shields singled out businessmen and lawyers who he viewed as living compartmentalized lives. His classes, he claimed, offered black and white thinkers the tools necessary to open their minds to new possibilities of thinking to learn once again how to enjoy and use their newly acquired knowledge.³⁴⁰

MCC and its image changed in 1962 after a series of negative events. Former New Mexico Governor, Congressman, and Ambassador to the United Nations William “Bill” Richardson briefly attended MCC. His father, William B. Richardson, Sr., was the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The elder William Richardson arrived in Mexico in 1929 as the manager of the Mexico City branch of First National City Bank (now Citibank) where

³³⁸ Dale Young, “Living Conditions Spark Charity Drive” *Mexico City Collegian*, August 15, 1957, 1,

³³⁹ “MCC Adult Classes,” *Mexico City Collegian*, December 1959, 14,

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

he worked for 42 years. His affinity for the Spanish language, his marriage to a Mexican woman, and his pugnacious attitude created good relations between the elder Bill Richardson and Mexican businessmen and bankers. He skillfully negotiated loan contracts for the Calles government, the Catholic Church in Mexico, and other influential Mexican businessmen.

Over his forty years in Mexico, William Richardson Sr. had woven himself into the fabric of the community networking and making deals with colony and Mexico City elites. However, in 1961 Bill Sr. was removed from the Board of Trustees at MCC after it was discovered that he had embezzled several thousand dollars from the college. After the embezzlement scandal, the new university president removed the tarnish of the scandal by moving the university to near Puebla and cleansing the school of its image as a party beatnik school. The new Board of Trustees decided that to repair the image of the newly rechristened University of the Americas—Puebla (UDLAP), at least half of the student body should be Mexican. As a result, students from the United States and Europe were not encouraged to attend except for short term summer study abroad programs. MCC and later UDLAP received large sums of money annually from USAID, the U.S. Embassy, and several philanthropic organizations operated by U.S. businesses and capitalist William O. Jenkins. MCC presidents continued to form connections to AMSOC, AmCham, and major multinational corporations operating in Mexico.

Dr. Richard W. Wilkie attended MCC in 1959. He describes the atmosphere of the university as “a dynamic setting for intellectual and personal growth, and it was a place that offered unimaginable opportunities for exploration, discovery, adventure and creativity.”³⁴¹

³⁴¹ Richard W. Wilkie, “Dangerous Journeys: Mexico City College Students and the Mexican Landscape, 1954-1962,” in *Adventures Into Mexico: American Tourism Beyond the Border*, ed. Nicholas D. Bloom (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 92.

Dr. Wilkie expressed how the experience of MCC altered the student's viewpoints of the world and helped them "develop a feeling for diversity and a belief that because of it life can be richer and more meaningful." MCC represented a laboratory of U.S.-Mexican relations in a collegiate setting. MCC president Dr. Paul V. Murray hoped that president elect Kennedy's ideas for the future Peace Corps would use MCC as a guide in how to conduct relations abroad. He hoped MCC alumni would "lend to their country whatever knowledge and training we have been able to give, united to their own spirit of service and self-sacrifice."³⁴²

In his Commencement Address in 1959, U.S. Senator Wayne Morse told the graduating MCC class that every student "who graduates from the College is bound to be an enlightened source of good will and intelligent understanding of many of the problems of our Western Hemisphere."³⁴³ The American Colony supported MCC until its move to the Puebla area. The college symbolized another neocolonialist moment in the history of the American Colony's activities in Mexico. The U.S.-style higher education institution had the goal of inculcating not only U.S. students, but of spreading U.S. pedagogy and ideas of business, political science, and history to middle and upper class Mexicans. The school was a tool for the dissemination of U.S. propaganda and values, oftentimes secretly funded by U.S. government agencies and U.S. foundations, and its students and graduates were what Ambassador Hill described as "individual ambassadors."³⁴⁴

³⁴² "Dr. Murray Proposes More MCC-Type Schools," *Mexico City Collegian* November 23, 1960, 2.

³⁴³ Mexico City College, *Mexico City College: The First 20 Years, 1940-1960*.

³⁴⁴ "Ambassador Hill Addresses Student Body," *Mexico City Collegian*, October 24, 1957, 1.

Conclusion

Colony member Ted Kirby wrote an opinion piece in *Bulletin* explaining to AMSOC members why it was crucial to the wellbeing of the community for all U.S. citizens to do what they could for the effort of community improvement.³⁴⁵ Kirby agreed that the designations of “American” or “Mexican” were at times necessary for the sake of understanding people and situations. However, this national and international division between residents of the capital impeded the improvement of the community. The only solution to the predicament for Kirby rested with joining together all nationalities and social classes to strive for a better society through a “communal” support of schools, hospitals, welfare programs, and organizations. He believed that a united challenge to society’s problem would help residents of the capital live in an improved physical world. Kirby’s vision of a communal utopia seemed almost socialistic in nature, but the irony was most likely lost on him. He challenged his fellow members of the American Colony to do their part to improve their surroundings, telling them that “it is our obligation to improve the entire human situation in which we find ourselves. We are all one community.” He continued the theme of unity and communal action by acknowledging that some within the American Colony did not realize the great need of their fellow community members around them—not U.S. citizens, but Mexicans-- telling them that “the awareness of this community is defined and limited by our consciousness and depends upon the nature of that consciousness. This is the intellectual and moral world within us.”³⁴⁶ Kirby’s vision of community solidarity rested

³⁴⁵ Ted Kirby, “UCF Meets Our Obligation to Mexico” in *Bulletin* 17, no. 4 (1959): 12.

³⁴⁶ Kirby, “UCF Meets Our Obligation to Mexico,” 13.

on the action of the American Colony to remove their privileged blinders and wake up to the realities they passed by every day. More than likely they did not view such problems as directly *theirs*, other than the time they used when volunteering or visiting orphanages and classrooms.

Kirby's criticism of some colony member's' attitude toward the world around them represented the most pointed questioning of colony attitudes on Mexicans and the moral obligation of U.S. citizens in Mexican society printed in *Bulletin*. While many members of the American Colony actively participated in charity drives and donated their time and money to worthy causes, Kirby viewed that as secondary to the colonists viewing themselves not as separate from the Mexican world around them, but united together in a true diverse community. Mexican citizens relied on colony support and donations, and U.S. citizens willingly gave it. The children of Vista Alegre had a safe nursery to attend, Popi's kids received food and healthcare on a regular basis, and middle-class Mexicans had access to business and educational opportunities through colony-supported programs. However, by segregating themselves off into "colonies," foreign nationals did exactly what Kirby opposed— after all, they chose themselves over the health and wellbeing of the community. The paternalistic way U.S. citizens viewed Mexicans reinforced stereotypes of hapless Mexican peasants at the mercy of benevolent white elites. Without real changes to the socioeconomic problems in Mexican society, millions of Mexicans could not miraculously lift themselves out of poverty with the charitably assistance of U.S. citizens.

The charity and influence of the American Colony did not aim to shake the foundations of Mexican society and rebuild an egalitarian society in its place; the goal was to create more consumers that supported the North American informal empire. The

philanthropic institutions created and upheld by the American colonists pursued that goal in their own unique way through the colony's connections to business interests in Mexico and Latin America. In the world of the American Colony, people and institutions were intimately connected and fused together. Business did not act separately from charity, and charitable organizations needed the support of business to carry out their programs.

Chapter 4

Missionaries of the Boardroom:

U.S. Multinational Corporate Citizenship in Mexico

In speech to a group of colony businessmen, AMSOC president McNeil Stringer recited a verse from the Gospel according to St. Matthew: “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.”³⁴⁷ The verse encapsulated the values of not only the president and AMSOC, but the wider goals of the U.S. American business community at large. Stringer continued to address his audience and told them that “the real ambassadors abroad are the American citizens.” The people of Mexico formed their opinions of the United States and what it represented thanks to contact between Mexicans and U.S. citizens. U.S. industries, similarly, contributed to friendly relations. Stringer related U.S. industries to a “progressive” good neighbor that influenced to the good fortune of Mexico, understood the Mexican people’s problems, and made “a sincere effort to contribute to the progress of the country.”³⁴⁸ The goodwill efforts of U.S. business interests in Mexico also helped the United States “move up a notch in public opinion.” But, if people and companies did not actively support goodwill, Stringer warned that the prestige of the United States “goes back down, not just one step, but we fall back down the whole staircase.” Do not become a “bad apple,” he cautioned, and “spoil the whole barrel.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ McNeil Stringer, “The New Role of American Business in Mexico,” *Bulletin* 16, no. 4, (1958): 35.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Leaders of the business community like Stringer represented what Julio Moreno calls the commercial diplomats of U.S. commercial interests. These commercial diplomats and goodwill ambassadors had the task of ensuring in the American Colony that their friends, co-workers, neighbors, and family members remained “good” and did not spoil the efforts so many people had cultivated for decades of conducting business and grassroots diplomacy in Mexico.³⁵⁰

Roland Marchand argues that corporate leaders and advertising executives at the turn of the twentieth century had the problem of perfecting the image of corporations as almost human-like entities with distinct personalities that complimented rather than destroyed the social fabric of society.³⁵¹ Whereas the church in the past had been the focal point for society, the corporation would become the societal mainstay that directed the people on how to eat, dress, play, think, and purchase. Corporations sold the idea of the role of businesses in bringing “modernity” into the lives of everyday people. Over time the corporation as monolith became a parental figure that wrapped society up in its corporate consciousness into one single corporate family. Advertisements for corporations like General Motors and General Electric used terms such as “neighbor” and “family” to replace what was perceived of as the cold term “corporation.”³⁵² These same themes merged perfectly during the official Good Neighbor policy era to unite the Americas as an hemispheric American family, and

³⁵⁰Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!*, 172.

³⁵¹ Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Centennial Book. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001), 9. See also, Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Cornell University Press, 1997).

³⁵² Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 139.

after the end of the official policy, to continue portraying U.S. corporations as good neighbors willing to bring Mexicans into the corporate and foreign policy “families” that promoted charity, unity, and civic virtues.

If the corporation represented a benevolent idealized parental figure, then corporate employees were its foot-soldiers ready at a moment’s notice to envelop more people into the family structure. *The Overseas Americans*, a how-to guide written in 1960, was intended for businessmen who worked and lived abroad. The guide theorized that image is everything. The authors claimed that overseas Americans carry with them a responsibility for their behavior and that of their country of birth.³⁵³ Everything U.S. citizens did while abroad reflected on the image and reputation of the United States, and everything the United States government did was reflected on citizens of the United States. Events such as the Little Rock Nine at Central High, epitomized the problem of race in the United States, showed to the world that what the United States projected outwardly was not always what went on in reality.³⁵⁴ Like it or not, U.S. Americans living and working abroad were “surrogates for the United State Secretary of State” and well as the corporation they represented.³⁵⁵ These American representatives abroad had a duty to depict the United States as a shining beacon of democracy, hope, and consumer satisfaction.

³⁵³ Cleveland, *The Overseas Americans*, vi.

³⁵⁴ Mary L. Dudziak examines how the United States government was forced to change its stance on civil rights and race relations after the Soviets began exploiting events such as the Little Rock Nine that hurt the international image of the nation, especially in developing nations. Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2002).

³⁵⁵ Cleveland, *The Overseas Americans*, x.

The authors guide readers interested in working and living abroad to have a good working knowledge of what it means to be “American.” The book told readers that overseas Americans should “learn to take delight in its [U.S. American] pluralism and savor the contradictions in its heritage.”³⁵⁶ Unless you do not know yourself first, the authors argue, you cannot know the other, and cultural empathy and a sense for politics is vital to being successful in business abroad. Any U.S. American’s most important occupation while living abroad was to be a successful goodwill ambassador, especially if their occupation involved the business community.³⁵⁷ To conclude, the authors contend that “the overseas Americans are an important new element in American foreign policy. The soldiers and civil servants, businessmen and missionaries, scholars and students share with the diplomats the power to affect international relations and the responsibility of representing the United States.”³⁵⁸ Business afforded another point of contact between members of the American Colony and Mexicans, namely Mexican business leaders and future business leaders. By using soft power, American colonists involved in business had the ability to influence foreign audiences and sell a carefully crafted image of U.S. consumerism and culture. The overseas executive was viewed not only as a representative of the parent company, but also as an ambassador for his nation and people. The representational role the business expatriate played increased his responsibilities and constrained his behavior because of the fishbowl-like environment he worked and lived in.

Julio Moreno notes in his study on Sears, Roebuck & Company that Mexican nationalism before 1950 prohibited large scale growth of U.S. multinational corporate

³⁵⁶ ³⁵⁶ Cleveland, *The Overseas Americans*, 299.

³⁵⁷ Cleveland, *The Overseas Americans*, 299.

³⁵⁸ Cleveland, *The Overseas Americans*, 304.

penetration of Mexican consumer markets. The rightward shift of Mexican politics during and after WWII opened Mexican markets to foreign investment. Far from the anti-U.S. sentiments of the 1920s and 1930s, “Mexicans welcomed American businesses that supported industrial and commercial growth.”³⁵⁹ Mexican politicians and elites sought to reconfigure post WWII Mexico as a modern, consumer-focused country, a set of political and economic changes that amounted, in Moreno’s analysis to a “revolution.” Mexican elites willingly sided with U.S. business interests in Mexico to introduce U.S. subsidiaries and affiliates into Mexican industry to spur key economic sectors. The American Colony served as the link between various interest groups who all had the objective of stimulating the consumerist revolution of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In many cases, U.S. businessmen viewed themselves as corporate civilizer-citizens who brought technical and managerial knowhow to Mexican industries, as if they were missionaries of the boardroom.

Professor Albert Croissant, in an editorial in *Modern Mexico* in 1948, posed the question, “Why is it that this country, the home of the world’s most talented writers of advertising copy and of magazine stuff which multitudes find irresistibly attractive, is bungling its public relations job in nearly every foreign country?”³⁶⁰ Croissant decided that instead of blaming the U.S. government for bungling the public relations of the United States of America, it fell to individuals to espouse free enterprise and not be so dependent on “Uncle Sam” for foreign relations. He singled out businessmen in particular, saying, “in the

³⁵⁹ Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!*, 2.

See also, Halbert Jones, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico: World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-Revolutionary State* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014).

³⁶⁰ Albert Croissant, “A Professor of Free Enterprise: The Great Corporation of the United States, by a Far-Sighted View of True Good Neighborliness, Can Do Much To Foster U.S. Prestige Abroad,” *Modern Mexico* 21, no. 7 (1948): 20.

long run, American corporations and businessmen in any foreign country can do a lot more to raise or lower American prestige than the State Department or Congress.

If American business showed in Mexico, Latin America, and all countries the same intelligence and long vision in public relations which it exhibits at home, immensely gratifying results would ensue.³⁶¹ Croissant called on businessmen to support altruistic efforts and support person-to-person programs and interactions. Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Chamber of Commerce, teachers, writers, labor unions, financial and religious leaders should, Croissant argued, send old copies of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Scientific American*, *Better Homes*, and other magazines and journals to schools, hospitals, trade schools, and elsewhere in Mexico and Latin America to impress upon Latin Americans that the pictures and advertisements they viewed in magazines represented what they could achieve if they participated in the American way of life, i.e., consume U.S.-made products and conform to a U.S. lifestyle.³⁶² In his mind, it would be an inexpensive way to combat communism and inculcate future customers to American consumerism since “American businessmen with an eye to patriotism and a peaceful, prosperous future should direct a flood of our books and magazines southward!”³⁶³ Businessmen as diplomats would be key to the kind of cross cultural diplomacy Croissant advocated for. Nelson Rockefeller had advocated for the use of advertising as a safe way to inculcate Mexican audiences, so the logical step was to use businessmen living and working abroad as agents of commercial empire.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Croissant, “A Professor of Free Enterprise,” 21.

³⁶³ Croissant, “A Professor of Free Enterprise,” 22.

³⁶⁴ “U.S. Business Looks to Latin American Advertising,” in *Mexican-American Review* 13, no. 4 (1945): 8.

Corporate Citizenship

Part of boardroom missionizing involved the concept of corporate citizenship. Corporate citizenship is focused on the welfare and philanthropy of local communities and how businesses engage and interact with communities to build positive relationships and brand recognition. The term corporate social responsibility, which is related to corporate citizenship, was first coined in 1953 by Howard R. Bowen in his seminal work *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. Bowen argues that businessmen have obligations and social responsibilities because of the social and economic standing multinational corporations have in the communities they operate in. The businessman, Bowen claims, “often fails to apprehend full the connection between his private decisions and the public welfare.”³⁶⁵ Men engaged in business dealings have obligations to do no harm and to provide a positive engagement with communities, according to Bowen. Their social obligation comes from what Bowen calls “the protestant viewpoint of business” that influences businessmen to serve society as “stewards” rather than strictly work to exploit profits. This stewardship includes working toward the elimination of poverty, extolling the doctrine of human dignity that eschews discrimination, and providing a safe, secure, and wholesome environment for employees and consumers alike.³⁶⁶

The social responsibility Bowen argues for relates to educating the public on the benefits of the free market and crafting the idea of consumers and corporations as good neighbors living in harmony. The promotion of the free market through public relations quite literally sold the public on the virtues of capitalism. U.S. businessmen needed to persuaded

³⁶⁵ Howard R. Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (Harper Publishers, 1953), 4.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 39.

not only domestic consumers, but also foreign peoples of the advantages of capitalism. Therefore, businessmen promoted a positive image centered on social responsibility and corporate citizenship during the Cold War in hopes of preventing government control of industries, opposing the spread of socialism, and counteracting negative publicity and anti-Americanism. Bowen posits that corporations were, and still are, “regarded as a citizen and neighbor in the local community or communities in which its establishments are located; hence, it has the obligations and duties of a good citizen and a good neighbor.”³⁶⁷ The idea of corporations as good neighbors aligned with the rhetoric that grew out of the Good Neighbor policy. For U.S. corporations operating in Mexico, good neighbor rhetoric was deployed to connect what corporations did in local communities as an outgrowth of good neighbor relations. Corporate social responsibility is mandatory; not engaging in it could negatively impact the public’s perception of a corporation. Many of the terms overlap and the theories behind them have the same end goals, especially when involved with foreign policy aims and objections.

In the March 1978 special issue of *Mexican-American Review* titled “Social Responsibility Through Public Service,” Mexico City-based business experts noted that public relations had the power to win over the support and purchasing power of foreign consumers. The experts argued that multinational corporations had a duty to sell the image of the free market as providing freedom and choice to the consumer. The experts argued, “it is important to demonstrate that multinationals and their executives do care about people and the society in which they operate. But it is equally important for that society and those people

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 63.

to understand that corporate responsibility, whether embodied in mandatory or voluntary activities, can exist only as long as the free market system itself exists.”³⁶⁸ By protecting the free market system, corporations won the support of foreign consumers. Corporate public service had the most immediate impact on public relations.

In her study of the U.S. American businessman abroad, Mira Wilkins examines how businessmen provide a representational image of “America” abroad. Regardless of his station in the community and within the corporate structure, the businessman as an individual provides an image of America to a foreign business and public audience.³⁶⁹ Although the businessmen Wilkins examined were far from homogenous, they shared many commonalities. Their affluence was and is “conspicuous.” In many ways they tried their hardest to self-alienate, or if not possible, only associate with wealthy and well-connected locals.³⁷⁰ Their behavior could result in a nation and its people being pro or anti-American. Crucially, good or bad conduct by corporate affiliated or subsidiary businessmen had the potential of securing the very survival or demise of American enterprises abroad.³⁷¹ They were and are “image-makers.” Various groups with deep connections to the American Colony helped facilitate the integration of the U.S. business community into the Mexican social and economic landscape. Unlike the businessmen in Wilkins study, the American colonist businessmen viewed self-alienation as a hindrance to their corporate missionizing efforts. From the earliest days of the twentieth century, U.S. businessmen understood how

³⁶⁸ *Mexican-American Review* special issue 1978, 3.

³⁶⁹ Mira Wilkins “The Businessman Abroad,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368 (1966): 84.

³⁷⁰ Wilkins, “The Businessman Abroad,” 90.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

crucial corporate citizenship was to laying the foundation for U.S. economic influence in Mexico.

The American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico and the Growth of U.S.

Investment in Mexico

Found in 1917, the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico (AmCham Mexico) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to the representation, promotion, and development of business between Mexico and the United States. It held an important position within the American Colony during the years of this study, and it remains a key cross border and transnational business association to this day.³⁷² AmCham Mexico remains the largest business group in Mexico. The founding of AmCham Mexico represented the union of the most influential businessmen in Mexico at the time. At first, membership was limited to U.S. citizens and U.S. American-owned firms. In later decades, membership was opened to all nationalities, although it took well into the 1980s for Mexican members to gain placements in administration. Josephus Daniels referred to the Chamber as “a clearing house, promoter of good will between the two countries, a Good Neighbor in advancing the exchange of commodities, and an integral part of international cooperation,” showing the intricate ways that the U.S. Embassy intertwined with local business organizations.³⁷³ Honorary members include the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, and during its heyday, the Director of the Pan American Union, thus establishing connections between the U.S. government and inter-American organizations.

³⁷² American Chamber Of Commerce Of Mexico <https://www.amcham.org.mx/>

³⁷³ Josephus Daniels, *Shirt-sleeved Diplomat*, 386.

AmCham Mexico weathered the end of the Mexican Revolution, political infighting and assassinations between Mexican presidents, the Cristero Revolt, and the effects of the Great Depression on the Mexican economy. By the early 1930s, the organization allowed Mexican-owned companies to request membership due to falling U.S. investment and the stagnant numbers of U.S. American engaged in business who remained in Mexico. AmCham started publicity campaigns to attract more U.S. tourists in the mid-1930s to offset the economic downturn in industries. It also survived the 1938 oil expropriation crisis unscathed.³⁷⁴

World War II helped AmCham grow more than any single event in its existence. The goals of the organization, which included the promotion of Mexico and Mexican industry, aligned perfectly with the goals of the Good Neighbor policy. AmCham rose to be a significant linkage between U.S. business interest in Mexico and the war effort in the United States. The Mexican government needed help in restoring the nation's image as a secure and stable field for investment and a cooperative good neighbor.³⁷⁵ AmCham negotiated and advised both the Mexican and U.S. governments on the Douglas Agreement, which declared that Mexico would sell to the United States all available surplus wartime materials. In return, the Mexican government received machinery and raw materials to ensure the Mexican economy remained stable and productive. Nelson Rockefeller used the expertise and knowledge of AmCham members in forming a local advisory committee that monitored local affairs. Rockefeller used loyal AmCham members to compile a blacklist of 181 businesses

³⁷⁴ American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, *The Annual Report of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, A.C.* (Mexico City, Mexico, 1980), 3.

³⁷⁵ No Author, "A Half Century of Service: War and Post-War Years" in *Mexican-American Review* 35, no. 11 (1967): 51.

that members deemed to be acting on behalf of the Axis powers in Mexico. During the war years, AmCham acted as an extension of the U.S. government in Mexico as it secured agreements with Mexican industries and acted as a go-between with governments. The war effectively elevated the organization to a position of bi-national fame.³⁷⁶

When the war ended, Mexico had large accumulations of dollar reserves. However, postwar inflation meant that the dollar reserves Mexico intended to use to purchase new machinery could buy less than what was initially projected. The wartime economic high that Mexico rode thanks to U.S. purchasing would backfire on the Mexican nation in the form of a sharp economic downturn starting in 1947 as the United States purchased less foodstuffs that year, and the nation experienced a severe drought, coupled with power shortages that impacted urban areas.

Another blow hit when the U.S. government turned its back on its ally and good neighbor after Secretary of State George Marshall refused to include Latin America in the Marshall Plan.³⁷⁷ President Truman noted at the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1947 that instead of a Marshall Plan for Latin America, the private sector would lead the Americas toward economic expansion.³⁷⁸ Instead of receiving aid from U.S.-backed grants and loans, Stephen Niblo claims that “Washington told Mexico to look to the private investor for the capital and expertise it needed to pursue its goal of industrialization.”³⁷⁹ In order to move

³⁷⁶ John Higgins, “How Good A Neighbor Are We?” *Modern Mexico* 16, no. 6 (1943): 5.

³⁷⁷ Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940's: Modernity Politics and Corruption* (New York: SR Books, 1999), 220.

³⁷⁸ President Harry S. Trumann, “Address before Rio de Janeiro Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Continental Peace and Security,” September, 2, 1947, The American Presidency Project. Available online: www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12749

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

toward industrialization, Mexico would have to turn toward private investment, a direct departure from the hallmarks of the Mexican Revolution that championed Mexico first.

By the end of the 1940s, “U.S. business had come to an accommodation with Mexican nationalism” and worked with the Mexican government to gear up for what would become Import Substitution Industrialization.³⁸⁰ Alemán declared anti-communism to be official policy of postwar Mexico, as it “was incompatible with *mexicanidad*.”³⁸¹ By siding with the United States in the postwar bipolar world, the PRI had situated itself for the time being as reasonably friendly toward U.S. investment and an anticommunist ally, although it also contributed to a heightened sense of anti-Americanism by Mexican citizens, especially Mexican industrialists who believed that the Alemán administration favored foreign capital over domestic industry.³⁸² By the 1950s, U.S. multinational corporations operated with relative freedom, and laws restricting direct foreign ownership were not always enforced, much to the chagrin of Mexican industrialists who pressed the government for more restrictions and enforcement.³⁸³

During the Ruiz Cortines administration the Mexican peso nosedived in 1954 and AmCham members fought hard to sell the image of Mexico as an up-in-coming industrial powerhouse. In order to attract industry and investment, AmCham would rely on strengthening the tourist industry to portray Mexico as a stable business environment. Thanks

³⁸⁰ Van R. Whiting, *The Political Economy of Foreign Investment in Mexico: Nationalism, Liberalism, and Constraints on Choice* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 62.

³⁸¹ Gilbert M. Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau, *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 151.

³⁸² Gauss, “Made in Mexico,” 156.

³⁸³ David Aviel and JoAnn B. Aviel, “American Investments in Mexico,” *Management International Review* 22, no.1 (1982): 84.

in part to renewed U.S. investment, the years following 1954 saw the beginning of what would be called the Mexican Miracle. AmCham Mexico intensified its promotion of industrial development and tourism in Mexico by forging more contacts and enlarging its outreach efforts in the United States. Andrew Sackett examines how and why the Mexican state came to rely on the tourism industry in Acapulco as a significant economic driver in the postwar years, and how the tourism industry at times clashed with the revolutionary goals the Mexican government espoused.³⁸⁴

By 1978, U.S. investments in Mexico reached \$3.7 billion.³⁸⁵ The stability of the Mexican nation following the Revolution created a safe climate for foreign investment. Although the Mexican economy suffered from bouts of inflation and recessions, investors still chose to work in Mexico throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The rate of return of investment for U.S. corporations in Mexico reached 18% over and 19% for the manufacturing sector.³⁸⁶

Members of the American Colony played crucial roles in solidifying the growth of the Mexican Miracle and the way in which Mexico's industries changed and shifted over the course of 1950-1980. In the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA)'s *Latin America and Empire Report*, researchers examined the function of the American Colony in Mexico in relation to business. In the report, AmCham Mexico is referred to as an "outpost of American business." This was an apt comparison. Part of AmCham Mexico's duty was to

³⁸⁴ Andrew Sackett, "Fun in Acapulco?: The Politics of Development on the Mexican Riviera" in *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* by Berger, Dina Duke University Press, 2009.

³⁸⁵ Business International Corporation, *Business Latin America: Weekly report to managers of Latin America*, October 24, 1979, 337.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

“organize and strengthen its efforts to ‘correct’ the image of American business in Mexico.” The business organization used public relations campaigns to sway the opinions of Mexicans on the role and influence of U.S. businesses in Mexican daily life. AmCham Mexico’s publication *Mexican-American Review* (the largest and most widely read business magazine in Latin America) kept members of all American Chambers up-to-date on business trends and changes in Mexico and Latin America. By the mid-1970s, AmCham Mexico had grown to constitute over 2,100 Mexican and U.S. American corporations actively conducting business in Mexico.³⁸⁷

AmCham President Stinyard addressed his members on the topic of Inter-American relations in 1960, noting that the issues of braceros in the United States and in Mexico should be of utmost importance to members. AmCham Mexico partnered with the AmCham Lubbock chapter to advocate for better treatment for braceros in the Lubbock area. The local project included educational opportunities, cultural programs, and entertainment for the Mexican men engaged in Bracero work. The advertisement program was so important, Stinyard and others involved convinced the President of the American Chamber of Commerce to fully fund and support similar programs in other Chambers wherever braceros lived and worked. The idea behind this was not only to provide safety and security for Mexican foreign nationals in the United States, but it seems that the motivation also came from a public relations standpoint. Stinyard noted that thousands of Braceros returned to Mexico annually. If they returned with negative opinions of the United States and U.S. citizens, it could be problematic for Mexican-U.S. relations. If these men returned to Mexico

³⁸⁷ North American Congress on Latin America, “Outpost of American Business: The AMCHAM,” *NACLA’s Latin America and Empire Report* 8, no.1 (1974): 14.

full of ideas of how to positively impact their local communities through training learned in the United States, that would pay off in dividends for the Mexican economy and society. They would also more than likely reflect positively on the United States and purchase U.S. brand items they had access to while in the United States as such items became available in Mexico.³⁸⁸

At the 48th Annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States in Washington D.C. in May 1960, Chamber leaders gave rousing speeches on the agenda and purpose of Chambers around the world with the theme being “Developing America’s Strength Through Voluntary Action.” President of the American Chamber of Commerce of the United States Erwin D. Canham gave a speech in which he warned the values that the United States represented and advocated for were in jeopardy following the events in Cuba the previous year. Canham stated that it was up to citizens of the United States and their allies to use the principles and technologies of the United States to “snatch from this nettlesome danger the greatest unfolding fulfillment mankind has ever known.” With the threats of China and the Soviet Union spreading globally, Canham told the Chamber representatives before him that they had a duty to show the world “that the free system in its various forms is better able to meet the people’s real needs than the police state can possibly be.” He expressed the need of civic and business leaders to demonstrate and lead the people of the world toward democracy and away from communism, telling the men of the Chamber that collectively they “need to show how and to help the emerging multitudes of underprivileged fellow men, who so greatly outnumber us, to help themselves.”³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Ellsworth L. Stinyard, “Report to Members of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico” in *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 12 (1960): 83.

³⁸⁹ Erwin D. Canham, “Keynote Speech,” *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 7 (1960): 80-81.

Likewise, Dr. Dr. Edward Litchfield, Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh and board member of the company Smith-Corona Marchant, spoke on voluntary action and the modern corporation, during which he argued that “the corporation has a role to play in educating America about foreign cultures and in helping other parts of the world to understand the United States.” Litchfield challenged people’s perceptions of a corporation as simply a money-making enterprise, and instead supported the idea to reconfigure how a corporation engages with the world as a “living, thinking, decision-making organization which must assume responsibilities for citizenship which are as broad as community of which it is a citizen.”³⁹⁰ Social responsibility, civic service, and the promotion of free enterprise were the moral values that Chamber men should spread far and wide, according to the leaders and their government supporters, such as Richard Nixon, and Dwight Eisenhower, who both gave speeches before the meeting extolling the virtues of the organization in combating communism and the importance of expanding international trade.³⁹¹ Henry Kearns, former Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, U.S. Department of Commerce, told attendees that U.S. American investment insured security both domestically and abroad which improved U.S. prosperity and growth. He encouraged more U.S. Chamber members to go abroad and launch foreign-based operations. He also urged every foreign-based or affiliated company to become “friendly” with the local U.S. Embassy so as to maintain “communication with the responsible departments here in Washington.”³⁹²

³⁹⁰Henry A. Shute, “Report of the Manager,” *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 7 (1960): 70-71.

³⁹¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, “The President’s Address,” *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 7 (1960): 76.

³⁹²Henry Kearns, “An Address by Kearns,” *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 7 (1960): 85-87.

The interplay between business and government was never far removed from the everyday dealings of the corporate man.

Allan Shivers, president of the American Chamber of Commerce of the United States, spoke at a banquet in Mexico City to honor the 50th anniversary of AmCham Mexico in 1967. He addressed members, saying that they represented “both leadership and cooperation among the business interests of two great countries” and together the men could work toward attaining the same goals all free men strive for to make “this a friendlier and more abundant world.” The policies of economic growth and social progress represented the national goals of both nations, he argued. Shivers applauded Mexicans for enacting the goals of the Mexican Revolution to fight poverty, illiteracy, and disease, but added that the new goals of the revolutionary party included economic development through industrialization. For that growth to continue, he called on Mexican and U.S. corporations to provide good business climates, spread a better public understanding of the roles played by management, and advocate for basic principles of good economic conduct. He also supported more international cooperation models through the promotion of economic and cultural activities that attracted business to Mexico, models which Shivers said should be used in other nations to develop international investment. He ended his speech with a warning: if the business community did not view the ever shrinking and interconnected world as one large neighborhood, then they [businessmen] would lose to the communists and socialists. Every man and woman from Mexico City to New York City “have the same two goals of material and social progress. We are all trying to help the people of our own lands. We can make it an

easier and friendly journey by helping each other as free men.”³⁹³ Shivers, then, advocated for businesses and businessmen to reach out to their “neighbors” and form a bond over shared goals and aspirations and to prove that democracy and capitalism had more to offer than communism.

In 1968, AmCham Mexico produced *Business/Mexico*, an edited volume of articles written by AmCham Mexico leaders. Each of the 32 articles gave detailed descriptions of Mexican culture, industrial business environments, economic outlooks, and more. The authors offered facts and considerations for future U.S. development in Mexico. Ambassador Fulton Freeman wrote the foreword to the volume, once again giving U.S. governmental blessing and authority to AmCham Mexico and its connections throughout Mexico and the United States. Editor George Blake called the articles “pro-Mexico, demonstrating that Mexico has been good to business—and vice versa,” although the authors did not shy away from writing articles on controversial topics or bringing up issues on doing business in Mexico.³⁹⁴

William J. Underwood, Senior Vice President of Anderson, Clayton & Co., discussed the role of foreign (United States) investment in Mexico and the outlook for 1969. Underwood had lived in Mexico since 1951, making him an authority on business and industrial development in the local context. He served as the president of AMSOC and the American School Foundation, acted as the director of the Comité Norteamericano Pro-México, and served as director of the Consejo Nacional de Turismo. Underwood weighed the

³⁹³ Address by Allan Shivers, president of the American Chamber of Commerce of the United States, at the 50th anniversary Banquet of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, in *Mexican-American Review* 35, no. 12 (1967): 32-34.

³⁹⁴ George Blake, “Preface,” in *Business/Mexico*, August 1968, v.

advantages and disadvantages of conducting business in Mexico. He warned U.S. corporate leaders to conduct themselves accordingly when in Mexico. He insisted that business leaders and their wives learn Spanish, Mexican history, and local customs. Underwood understood how important businessmen's wives were in making the transition to a foreign environment run smoothly, and they had a role to play in his eyes for the success of the corporation. Finally, he advocated for assimilation into the local community and told readers to "blend into the new foreign environment" and to "keep a low silhouette."³⁹⁵ His underlying premise for U.S. businessmen was that investment in Mexico "is not a matter of 'come and get it'—the foreign investor had better think in terms of 'come and share it'."³⁹⁶ Far from being a strictly imperialistic endeavor, Underwood championed goodwill through cooperation and the shared benefits of American-style consumerism.

U.S. business experts often advocated for the training of Mexican workers to improve local moral, boost the economy, and turn Mexican workers into professionals in their respective industries. In his article in *Business/Mexico*, L. Stephen Savoldelli, President and General Manager of Pepsi-Cola Mexico, argued that the main job of the U.S. manager in Mexico was to teach Mexican workers how to conduct themselves in a corporate setting. He took a patronizing attitude toward Mexican workers, stating that the rapid development of Mexican professionals, which he accredited to U.S. corporate influence, was "a tribute to the Mexicans, and to the management, that workers who only six years ago were working with primitive farm tools are now handling complicated production machines."³⁹⁷ Savoldelli

³⁹⁵ William J. Underwood, "The Debated Role of Foreign Investment in Mexico," *Business/Mexico*, August 1968, 47.

³⁹⁶ Underwood, "The Debated Role of Foreign Investment in Mexico," *Mexican American Review* 38, no. 4 (1970): 42.

³⁹⁷ L. Stephen Savoldelli, "Employee Training," *Business/Mexico*, August 1968, 189.

defended U.S.-style business training as a civilizing force that brought Mexican workers of all levels into his concept of modernity. U.S. business training programs sought to homogenize Mexican corporate workers into the U.S. business model, from the forklift drivers to the men in the boardroom.

Al R. Wichtrich, AmCham Vice President (eventual President in 1976) and General Manager of Royal Crown Cola, rebuffed any claims in 1968 that AmCham Mexico was an extension of the United States government, calling it “completely independent and deriving its entire direction and economic support from its members.”³⁹⁸ This assertion was patently false given the obvious connections between the U.S. government and the organization that had a fifty year history of acting as intermediary between both governments, and Mexican and U.S. business interests, as well as Wichtrich’s own ties to the CIA and the U.S. Embassy.³⁹⁹ Organizations, corporations, and governments were intimately tied together and worked toward common goals and objectives that sought to build stronger economic ties to U.S. multinational corporations. U.S. American businessmen floated in the same circles as

³⁹⁸ Al R. Wichtrich, “Business Organizations in Mexico,” *Business/Mexico*, August 1968, 193.

³⁹⁹This is something I suspect many U.S. business leaders did while in Mexico due to the close connections between business and the U.S. Embassy and the anti-communist nature of the American Colony in general. Wichtrich testified at the House Select Committee on Assassinations during the investigation into the JFK assassination. Wichtrich has an interesting and intriguing background as a CIA informant who used his business connections to report to the U.S. Embassy on any growing communist infiltrations of businesses, government agencies, and student groups in Mexico. He also worked with conservative Mexican businessmen and politicians to combat the spread of communism and advocated for the free enterprise and private initiative. NARA Record Number: 104-10175-10061 Agency JFK Agency File Number 80T01357A ALL WITH AGENCY FILENO: 80T01357A Originator CIA ALL WITH ORIGINATOR: CIA From MEXICO CITY ALL FROM: MEXICO CITY To DIRECTOR ALL TO: DIRECTOR Title LIHUFF/2 IS ANTI-COMMUNIST, PRO-USA Date 01/18/62 ALL WITH DATE: 01/18/62 Pages 2 ALL WITH PAGES: 2 Subjects LIHUFF/1

CIA agents, U.S. Embassy personnel, Mexican political elites, and other high-ranking members of Mexican society. Mexican-American high society was an incestuous mix of business, politics, and civic organizations.

Detractors of U.S. corporate influence abroad likened AmCham Mexico to a “pressure-group” that functioned “as a complement to the multinational corporations” that “works to integrate the Mexican economy ever further into the U.S.-dominated sphere.”⁴⁰⁰ Most often, high-ranking U.S. Embassy personnel were honorary officers of the Mexican chapter. AmCham Mexico also curried favor with Mexican media and received positive coverage for decades from Mexican pro-government newspapers and other media outlets whose owners cultivated close ties to U.S. business interests, including from *The News*, which was read by the American Colony and the English-speaking Mexican business community. NACLA’s report claimed that at least 60% of the memberships of AmCham Mexico represented Mexican businessmen who used business-oriented lobbying group to further their business connections in Mexico and in the United States. Some of the most influential Mexican political and business leaders—former president Miguel Alemán, businessman Manuel Espinosa Yglesias, and media mogul Rómulo O’Farrill-- supported AmCham Mexico either directly by joining the group, or by publicly giving approval of its dealings in strengthening North American trade and business. Max Healey, General Manager of Mexicana Airlines and AmCham Mexico board member, said that the organization worked “for the development and progress of Mexico” and the union of U.S. American and Mexicans in business epitomized “an ideal amalgamation of American technology and

⁴⁰⁰ North American Congress on Latin America, “The Gilded Guilt Corps: The Junior League,” *NACLA’s Latin America and Empire Report* 8, no.1 (1974): 12.

capital with skilled Mexican productive forces to meet the demands of new or existing markets.”⁴⁰¹ Healey’s benevolent views on U.S. corporate-capitalist influence in Mexico was expressed in positive, yet patronizing terms. The men of AmCham Mexico did not only wish to succeed in business for personal reasons, but they did so, in their own words, to supposedly develop Mexico in the model of the United States. Progress, for Healey and his AmCham Mexico comrades, depended on United States technical assistance and capitalist intervention to Americanize Mexico in its image. Americanization could only occur if Mexican elites and entire industries, and thus the Mexican economy, were drawn into the United States sphere of influence.

The function of AmCham then, was and remains, the duty to incorporate as many influential, wealthy, and connected Mexican elites and middle class people into endorsing what the NACLA authors call “the counterrevolution” that since the 1940s had pushed for an abandonment of Mexican revolutionary goals of the early twentieth century (land expropriation and agrarian reform, education campaigns, government support of labor unions). Instead, these Mexican elites chose to side with United States capitalist affiliates and subsidiaries over drastic social and political change. Furthermore, the American Colony was a “tool kit” that provided the connections through lawyers, managers, and other experts, and laid out the frameworks for how elite Mexicans and U.S. business interests worked in tandem for the sake of the Mexican consumer revolution.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ AMSOC, “Working for Mexico” *Bulletin* 30, no. 6 (1967): 30.

⁴⁰² NACLA, “The Gilded Guilt Corps,” 12-18.

American Corporate Missionaries

The backgrounds of the influential members of the American Colony reveal just how interconnected U.S. corporate interests were within the American Colony and how pervasive U.S. corporate investment had become in Mexico through the 1950s, 1960s, and beyond. In 1974, NACLA reported that in the 57-year history of AmCham Mexico, no Mexican had led the organization. Likewise, until 1968, only men ran for position of director and auditors for the AMSOC board. All the men who ran for office within AMSOC had connections to the most well-known and influential U.S. corporations: Price Waterhouse & Co., DuPont, Kraft, American Airlines, General Mills, Mobil Oil, Ford Motor Company, Sears, Roebuck and Company, American Viscose, Colgate Palmolive, American Smelting and Refining Co, and more. Almost all the administration candidates for AMSOC and AmCham Mexico attended the most prestigious universities and MBA programs in the United States. By the end of 1964, 103 U.S. firms established companies in Mexico that year alone, with an average of \$835,000 pesos per company invested in the local economy. 85 of the 103 set up operations within the Federal District. Companies included Purex, U.S. Plywood Corporation, Tropicana, Heinz, Firestone Steel Products, and Frick Refrigeration.⁴⁰³ By the late 1960s, U.S. corporate investment in Mexico was as varied and entrenched as it had ever been in Mexico since before the Mexican Revolution.

Understanding how U.S. corporations gained a foothold in a formerly nationalistic market is crucial to understanding the relationship of the American Colony and its outpost in Mexico City. U.S. business executives understood that to be successful in Mexican markets, companies had to walk a fine line or risk being perceived as imperialistic. Before a group of

⁴⁰³ No Author, "New Firms in Mexico Total 103 So Far This Year" *The News*, Sept. 8, 1964.

AmCham Mexico members, Jack J. Valenti, President of the Motion Picture Association and the Motion Picture Export Association, spoke on the issue of good neighbor relations and hemispheric unity. As a Texan and a friend and aide to President Lyndon B. Johnson, Valenti believed the unstable relations between the nations of the Americas remained problematic. He blamed a lack of understanding between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking peoples, arguing that “a cultural gap in this Hemisphere and a failure in communication of cultural ideas hobbles the relationships among each of the nations of the South and the North.”⁴⁰⁴

Valenti laid out a plan for improving relations, which he hoped AmCham Mexico would willingly take up as its own. He stressed uniting people through cultural activities and finding common ground on national achievements that could bring disparate peoples together under a common banner of “American” success. He blamed the language barriers as reasons why the Americas were not fully united, but explained, overcoming a language barrier was not an insurmountable task. He also called for a dismantling of prejudice and the end to apathy and nationalism. Harkening back to commonly used themes of like-minded independence struggles and revolutions, Valenti argued that the two hemispheres had a responsibility to combine as one North American democratic alliance because “in this hemisphere we were born of revolutions. Our aim is to improve the lot of man, and this influences the whole of man. Let this be our goal: To bring forth from dark confusions a new neighborliness born out of the creative mind of the Western Hemispheric man. There is, for

⁴⁰⁴ AMSOC, “Ideas and Idealism: Remarks by Jack J. Valenti, President of the Motion Picture Association and the Motion Picture Export Association, at a recent forum luncheon of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico,” *Bulletin* 30, no. 1 (1967): 30-33.

each of us, a part to play in making this ideal come true.”⁴⁰⁵ Valenti spoke to the businessmen of AmCham Mexico precisely because of the influence they held on Mexican business and political life. Lyndon B. Johnson’s approach toward Latin America meant that his administration would not tolerate outside influences in the Western Hemisphere, and Valenti paternalistically noted that “Latin Americans could not always be trusted to preserve regional security.”⁴⁰⁶ The Johnson Administration therefore needed total support of powerful Mexican leaders to ensure a communist-free nation and hemisphere, outside of already “red” Cuba. By developing a positive business image, the U.S. government would help Mexicans purchase products sold not by an invader but by a good neighbor.

U.S. businessmen in Mexico idealized what their products did for Mexicans. The Houston-based seed distributor and cotton trading firm Anderson, Clayton, and Company (AACO) used advertising to sell the idea to Mexican companies and small farmers that AACO seeds would bring progress and development to the corporate farmer as well as to the small family farmer. AACO claimed that over 40 years of business in Latin America had contributed to significant economic growth in the region that supported the progress of every country of Latin American where it operated.⁴⁰⁷ The advertisement for “Semillas de Crecimiento” used an image of corn—originally first cultivated in Mexico from wild seeds over thousands of years and the staple grain of the Mexican diet—to highlight the genetic engineering that AACO had achieved to produce “diverse” new seeds that changed the Mexican farming landscape.

⁴⁰⁵ AMSOC, “Ideas and Idealism,” 33.

⁴⁰⁶ Stephen G. Rabe, “The Johnson Doctrine.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006), 55.

⁴⁰⁷ Anderson, Clayton, and Co. advertisement for “Semillas de Crecimiento” *Mexican-American Review* 34, no. 1 (1966): 1.

Similarly, Coca-Cola Export also highlighted its contribution to the Mexican economy by running several advertisements that depicted how Coca-Cola used Mexican-produced raw materials for export. Advertisements for Mexican sugar, citrus, and coffee claimed to “sweeten” the palates of United States consumers when they bought Coca-Cola drinks, Minute Maid orange juice, or coffee products from Coca-Cola divisions that used Mexican-grown raw materials. The advertisements incorporated Mexican history, patriotism, and consumerism into the selling points, arguing that thanks to the Spanish who introduced sugar, oranges, and coffee to Mexico, Coca-Cola could harvest those raw materials and contribute to “Mexico’s economic progress.”⁴⁰⁸ One advertisement connected citrus production to the industrial and economic success of Mexico, noting that “Four hundred and six years ago, the illustrious soldier and chronicler Bernal Diaz del Castillo, sowed on Veracruz soil the first orange seeds, the fruits of which gave birth to the cultivation of this citrus product in other regions of Mexico.” Coca-Cola Company bought citrus products and other Mexican raw materials worth 277 million pesos in 1966, according to the advertisement, which allowed the Coca-Cola company to contribute to “further economic development of Mexico”⁴⁰⁹ Thus, Coca-Cola openly advocated for a new wave of extractive agricultural imperialism built on previous colonial extractive imperialism. However, Coca-Cola won the public relations and brand recognition battle in the twentieth century with its logo appearing everywhere from small villages to the chairs at the American Colony Fourth of July celebration.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Coca-Cola ads *Mexican-American Review* February, April, July 1966.

⁴⁰⁹ AMSOC Coca-Cola ad “Made in the USA with Mexican citrus products!” May 1966 page 47.

⁴¹⁰ For more on how Coca-Cola and other U.S. beverage companies operated in Mexico, see NACLA Report on the Americas, “Soft Drinks & Hard Profits,” 12:1 (1978): 9-14.

Good Neighbor Corporate Citizenship in Action

Many of the U.S. corporations operating in midcentury Mexico practiced corporate philanthropy that was used in public relations campaigns. Mexican public relations was in its infancy in the 1950s and 1960s. U.S. corporate affiliates and subsidiaries understood the need to train Mexican advertising men who knew local viewpoints better than foreign public relations agents. McNeil S. Stringer argued that if U.S. corporations wanted to increase business, the Mexican public must have confidence and respect for the foreign company. One way to instill confidence was for corporations to venture out into the spaces where their consumers lived, worked, and played. Moreover, the Mexican government favored foreign corporations which had a positive relationship with the Mexican public.

U.S. multinationals sought to establish good public images through corporate philanthropy, technical training and exchange programs, and community education. Of the 600 U.S. affiliated companies operating in Mexico in 1968, 30% had formal public or community affairs programs.⁴¹¹ AmCham Mexico created an annual Pochteca Awards to encourage and recognize U.S. affiliate companies that engaged in community works and social responsibility projects. Ford created rural training programs to teach subsistence farmers on ejidos how to use new technology to yield larger crops in planting crops, raising cattle, cultivating bees, and growing grapes. Coca-Cola established at least 100 literacy centers throughout Mexico for adults and children by 1968.⁴¹² The centers reached an estimated 5,000 students. Coca-Cola provided the building, paid the teachers, and donated

⁴¹¹ McNeil S. Stringer, "Public Relations Shift into Second Gear," in *Business/Mexico* August 1968, 205.

⁴¹² McNeil S. Stringer, "Public Relations Shift into Second Gear," 206. It appears that the centers began opening in the late 1950s or early 1960s. By 1963, 55 centers had opened throughout the nation., *Inter-American Library Relations* no. 34: 12.

the supplies and textbooks. A promotional photograph of one center printed in *Business/Mexico* shows a teacher standing in front of a class with a red Coca-Cola bottle cap promotional sign separating two pictures of Mexican independence leader José María Morelos and Mexican revolutionary leader Francisco Madero. The text on the posters states that literacy helped Morelos and Madero transform Mexico. Although the Coca-Cola literacy center campaign was costly, Stringer argued that over time this kind of positive public image association would pay back in dividends for Coca-Cola with Mexican consumers because it projected the company's "social responsibility over and above basic money-making enterprise."⁴¹³ Coca-Cola's use of education and free literacy classes, and a healthy dose of subliminal messaging, integrated Mexican patriotism and nationalism to the imagery of Coca-Cola and linked the corporation's marketability to its perceived benevolence to the Mexican consumer.



Illustration 8. A Coca-Cola literacy center for children and adults. Location unknown. *Business/Mexico*, August 1968.

⁴¹³ McNeil S. Stringer, "Public Relations Shift into Second Gear," 207.

U.S. businessmen solicited funds from their home corporations to donate for local charities such as orphanages and day nurseries supported by the American Colony. U.S. corporations operating in Mexico gave large and small donations that persuaded local communities to equate a U.S.-owned brand with positive impacts on Mexican society, a ploy that blended welfare capitalism and corporate paternalism that manifested in charitable and philanthropic activities. Instead of benefiting workers directly, the corporate philanthropy benefited entire communities. In their language and outlook, high-ranking businessmen viewed themselves as commercial secular boardroom missionaries. For AmCham members around the world from Paris to China, men described themselves and their peers as “an army of missionaries who have blazed the way” in China, to U.S. businessmen in Paris who believed that they performed “highly important commercial missionary work.”⁴¹⁴ Their secular religion was business and their gospel was capitalism and “modernity.” According to historian Sharon Beder, U.S. corporations over the course of the twentieth century have used advertising, mass media, and education to replace values of truth, justice, and civil rights with corporate values of consumption, obedience, subordination to authority, and loyalty (to either nation and/or brand loyalty).⁴¹⁵ Beder argues that corporate public relations

⁴¹⁴ A Visit to China: Being the Report of the Commercial Commissioners from the Associated Chambers of Commerce of the Pacific Coast, Invited to China by Chambers of Commerce of that Country, September-October, 1910 Front Cover Associated Chambers of Commerce of the Pacific Coast Associated Chambers of Commerce of the Pacific Coast, 1911, 27.

Trade and Transportation: A Monthly Journal of American Trade in Its Relation to Transportation, Volumes 13-14 Front Cover Freight, the Shippers' Forum, Incorporated, 1912, 11.

⁴¹⁵ Sharon Beder, *Free Market Missionaries: The Corporate Manipulation of Community Values* (Routledge, 2012), 229.

manipulated public opinion to give “the corporation the appearance of a soul and a mission.” Instead of providing goods to the public, corporate leaders view themselves as philanthropists and their industries as providing an altruistic, benevolent service to consumers.⁴¹⁶

Aside from Coca-Cola’s literacy schools, Ford Motor Company participated in perhaps the most apparent form of corporate philanthropy in Mexico that utilized Beder’s model of corporate manipulation. By 1980, the Ford School Construction Program built 198 grammar schools throughout Mexico beginning in 1963. Ford called this program “unique” because the company promised to continue maintenance “forever” on the schools, both externally and internally. In 1962, Ford looked to purchase a tract of land to build a new engine and foundry plant. The ejidatarios (communal landowners) in Cuautitlán in the state of Mexico offered a large area for a lower price in hopes of enticing the multinational corporation to build in their community and stimulate the local economy. Ford accepted and offered to refurbish the local school as a thank you for the favorable land deal.⁴¹⁷ This established the beginning of Ford’s school building program. The Mexican government, the surrounding communities where the schools were located, and private enterprise all had interests in the Ford schools. Under the guidelines for the program, local Ford dealers and the community provided 50% of the costs to build and staff the school. The other 50% came from Ford México, which also supplied the company architect and engineer to design and build the school. The cost to build one school totaled \$300,000 pesos, or \$24,000 USD in 1969. Each school was then donated to the Mexican government; however, Ford supplied the

⁴¹⁶ Beder, *Free market Missionaries*, 3.

⁴¹⁷ Ejido lands were not available for sale until 1994, so perhaps the Mexican government willingly sold the land to entice Ford to build.

furnishings, supplies, and promised to fund the school “in perpetuity.” The school in Cuautitlán was an example of welfare capitalism that directly benefited what eventually became (and remains) a company town for Ford.⁴¹⁸

Ford’s decision to use the dealership-school model diverged from a strict welfare capitalistic model. Not every town where Ford built a school had a Ford plant, but every location of a Ford school had a local dealership. According to American Colony member Helen Laehr-- who wrote on Ford’s program in *Bulletin*-- the Ford schools influenced the neighborhoods and towns around them. People started urban and rural renewal projects which consisted of painting houses, tidying up lawns, removing trash, and planting flower gardens. The reaction of the residents where the dealerships and schools were located recalls Ford company towns in Michigan and Fordlândia in Brazil.⁴¹⁹ Local residents became indebted to Ford and its welfare capital model for the education of their children and the economic and social success of their communities. In return for his hard work in negotiating the contract, the local Ford dealer found “himself a well-known and prominent figure in his community. This adds to his own sense of personal pride and accomplishment, as assuredly as it adds sales growth to this dealership.” The most unique school was built in the Mixe highlands in Oaxaca that served an entirely indigenous community. A 14-year-old Mixe indigenous boy spoke at the school’s dedication, saying in his purportedly newly-learned

⁴¹⁸ The plant in Cuautitlán has assembled dozens of Ford car and truck models since 1964, with over 2.2 million cars manufactured from 1964 to 2019, Ford Media “Ford Begins All-New Fiesta Production at Transformed Cuautitlan Plant Complex,” Ford Media, May 11, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20100805063652/http://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=32629. “Ford Begins All-New Fiesta Production at Transformed Cuautitlán plant complex” Ford Media, May 11th, 2010.

⁴¹⁹ Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford’s Forgotten Jungle City* (Metropolitan Books, 2010).

Spanish: “with this beautiful new school, we will start learning, and we will learn fast.”

Helen concluded that “no wonder the attending Ford dealers were touched! Helping one’s fellow man to help himself provides a warm, inner glow not easily explainable to others.”

The Mixe school reportedly served as the only school within 12,500 square kilometers. Most of the students did not speak Spanish and would have to learn their second language at the new school, thanks to the U.S. car manufacture. Ford México General Manager Siffrein Voss recounted his pride in Ford’s program, stating that “each new school dedication is a tremendous emotional experience. We are all very proud of what our company is doing. One of Mexico’s most critical problems is the provision of free public education for all its millions of grammar school children . . . we feel that Ford is helping, in a small way, to alleviate the situation, and we hope our experience may spur other business firms to get involved in helping others around them, quite aside from a purely commercial outlook.”⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ Helen Laehr, “Ford Goes to School,” *Bulletin* 32, no 2 (1969): 12-14 and 26-27.



Illustration 9. Mixe girl giving a Ford México representative a present on behalf of her classmates. “Ford Goes to School,” *Bulletin*, 1968.

Upon learning about the Ford schools in *Bulletin*, members of the American Colony would have had a renewed sense of community purpose and zeal. Whether or not they worked for Ford, the fact that they were U.S. Americans meant that they felt a sense of compassion that not only boosted the image of the companies they worked for in Mexico, but also improved the image of the United States as a benevolent caretaker of the assumed disadvantaged Mexican peasants. Tangible corporate benevolence such as the Coca-Cola and Ford schools assuaged any fears in U.S. American minds and hearts that they were corporate imperial interlopers—they built schools, how could they act in bad faith? For Helen Laehr and her fellow AMSOC members and American colonists, the Ford school program

“provided something of permanent value for Mexico’s future” regardless of whether the average person living in the highlands of Oaxaca could afford a brand-new Ford automobile. The arrival of a Ford dealership and later a Ford school signaled to colonists that “modernity” had arrived in Mexico, even in distant communities. Ford México had no choice but to continue to fund and maintain its Ford schools because as one executive said, “you can’t let a school deteriorate if it has the Ford name on it.” By 1978, 80,000 Mexican students attended Ford schools.⁴²¹

Where Ford went, so too did the corporate and U.S. American perception of progress. While the Ford schools were not imposed upon the local communities since half of the funding came from the residents and the local Ford dealer, the tone of such laudatory praise that remote areas now suddenly had access to foreign-branded cars (and in many cases public education through the Ford schools) did touch upon preconceptions of civilizing foreign forces that redeem allegedly backward people through technology and ideas of modernity. Ford schools did help local communities gain access to free and open schooling; however, the price came attached to being drawn into the corporate capitalist orbit that equated consumption with progress, patriotism, and conformity.

Other industries beside Ford had operations in Cuautitlán. Monsanto, R.C.A.-subcontractors, and Mexican companies had factories and plants that utilized the local labor force. More men found employment in industry and raised the standard of living significantly, a contrast from the traditional agricultural economy that relied on good alfalfa harvests. Local women, however did not find as many employment opportunities other than as maids and cooks. In 1958, the Mexican company Dispositivos Electrónicos, a company

⁴²¹ Joe Harmes Jr, “Who’s Doing What,” *Mexican-American Review* 46, no. 4 (1978): 14.

that built components for RCA, sent ten representatives to study for four months at the U.S. R.C.A. headquarters to learn how to manufacture electronic tubes and other electrical devices. The company hired 320 new workers, 75% of whom were women. The influx of female workers into previously male-dominated manufacturing industries was hailed as revolutionary for an area in which the women of Cuautitlán, “most of whom never even wore shoes two years ago,” had access to skilled work and “ideal working conditions.”⁴²²

In the same fashion as Ford and Coca-Cola, Gerber Products Company and Singer Corporation started primary and secondary level education programs. At its main plant in Querétaro, 150 miles north of Mexico City, Gerber created schools to “correct work errors, a low educational level, low morale (brought on by alcoholism, absenteeism, etc), and an inability to successfully complete company designed job courses.”⁴²³ Likewise, Singer Mexicana trained more than 500 school teachers annually in the use of sewing and knitting machines and sponsored a program for prisoners.

Companies also targeted youth support across Mexico through business and trade school education programs. Purina worked with 800 secondary and preparatory schools and colleges in agricultural education, which reached more than 180,000 students. The Rural Livestock Orientation Program (PROA) involved Purina’s salesmen and managers conducting technical seminars for teachers and students, as well as livestock demonstrations and camps during the summer. Local Purina dealers extended credit to schools and individual children who could buy cattle, poultry, hogs, and feed to put their new skills to use. Purina sales representatives periodically visited the livestock centers to advise students and to

⁴²² Staff, “A New Look for Cuautitlán,” in *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 4 (1960): 17-18.

⁴²³ Joe Harmes Jr, “Who’s Doing What,” *Mexican-American Review*, 25.

monitor the progress of the programs. Armando Dipp, Vice President of Purina Mexico, said that the Purina livestock center experiments exposed students “to the free enterprise system at the level of the family farm” and in turn “has opened eyes and changed attitudes among the country’s youth towards both Purina and the United States.”⁴²⁴ Purina sought to blend educational outreach with public relations campaigns to link in the minds of future consumers the idea that Purina represented quality and altruism.

Empresas Juveniles began operations in 1958 to pair Mexican youth interested in business with U.S. and Mexican businessmen serving as mentors. The teens and young adults, varying from 15 to 21 years old, started small businesses and served as “directors” for several companies in Mexico. They made decisions ranging from pricing of goods to setting wages for workers. In addition to their role as directors, they also worked in the companies, sold the products, and performed secretarial duties. The program was patterned after the Junior Achievement program in the United States. The advisors came from the American Colony and elite Mexican society with familiar men such as McNeil Stringer serving as mentors. Other mentors came from companies such as American Airlines, General Electric, and Arthur Anderson & Co. Once the teens raised the equivalent of \$100 USD through selling bonds to friends and family, the young entrepreneurs bought the tools and items necessary to begin their operations. Turning a profit was supposedly not the intended goal, but instead “it is not profit in terms of dollars which is the goal, but rather it is the profit of experience.”⁴²⁵ The goal for the businessmen involved in the program was supposedly “the promotion of the values of free enterprise.” Additionally, Empresas Juveniles had a rural-

⁴²⁴ Joe Harmes Jr, “Who’s Doing What,” *Mexican-American Review*, 17.

⁴²⁵ Ted Kirby, “Youngsters in Business,” *Bulletin* 15, no. 8 (1958): 15.

based program akin to U.S. 4-H clubs that taught children in the countryside how to manage herds and run small farms. In 1957 the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU/APEI) selected Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) de México as a benefactor. BCIU was started in Mexico as Asociación Pro Entendimiento Internacional A.C. (APEI) of Mexican and U.S. businessmen to use their business acumen in the realm of charity and philanthropic works. Working with agencies such as CARE, Heifer Project, the National 4-H Club Foundation, APEI inaugurated several hundred rural youth clubs and programs throughout Mexico that partnered with U.S. and Mexican businesses and relied on the support and guidance of U.S. businessmen.

In 1957, Goodwill Industries opened a facility in Mexico City to provide gainful employment to physically handicapped boys who rehabilitated donated furniture to be resold in the Mexico City Goodwill store. Timoteo de la Cruz was featured as a positive example of how Goodwill helped the less fortunate. Born without a right hand, Timoteo learned refurbishing techniques to repair old furniture. Through the program, workers at the Goodwill shop gained “self-respect and self-confidence as well as income.” Goodwill couched its type of corporate-lite non-profit charity not as a hand out, but as a trade skill that was deeply intertwined with business interests. Each Goodwill store is independently operated and funded. In the Mexico City case, the Board of Directors was composed of both Mexicans and U.S. Americans who viewed the nonprofit as a tool to lift people out of poverty and aid them in learning a trade. Even though each local agency had its own unique flare because of the independent nature of the operation, the main structure was still very reliant on the U.S.-style business model in scope and purpose. The director of the Mexico City location stated that “the establishment of a rehabilitation center in this city reflects not

only the humanitarianism of the director and board, but also points up the civic responsibility and community spirit of those who have contributed time, money, or effort.”⁴²⁶

Good corporate citizenship has the power to secure stable business for U.S. corporations and affiliates and subsidiaries. U.S. American businessmen in Mexico recognized the power of using corporate citizenship and welfare capitalism to persuade Mexican consumers to buy into brand loyalty and trust that corporations had the best interest at heart for consumers and employees. An educated and upwardly mobile consumer base ensured that more people would, in theory, have disposable income to purchase products.

Advertising the Good Neighbor Policy 2.0

U.S. corporate advertising in Mexico stressed the importance of inter-American unity and consumerism. U.S. corporations with operations in Mexico used advertising to praise the “progress” their companies brought to Mexico as reasons why Mexican consumers should support foreign businesses. In turn, Mexicans who supported U.S.-affiliated and subsidiary industries were labeled patriotic and champions of Mexico’s development. General Electric México president William H. Taylor praised the opening of a new lightbulb factory in Mexico City for raising “the standards of living of the Mexican people and paving the way for a more abundant life.”⁴²⁷ A General Electric advertisement that ran in both English and Spanish stated: “We Illuminate the fun at Chapultepec!” The ad praised the company for introducing new lightbulbs and lamps that lit the Paseo de la Reforma and Chapultepec park, two popular leisure areas in Mexico City. With these areas safely lit, General Electric helped

⁴²⁶ AMSOC, “Not a Charity, but a Chance,” *Bulletin* 15, no. 1 (1957): 20-26.

⁴²⁷ No author, “American Industries in Mexico” *Modern Mexico* 23, no. 6 (1950): 22.

to “bring safety and pleasure” to the city. The tagline for the ad read: “Progress Is Our Most Important Product.”⁴²⁸ U.S. corporations used brand recognition of U.S.-made items to equate progress and safety, regardless if they were built or assembled in Mexico.

General Motors de México’s company tagline—“Transportando a la nación hacia una vida mejor (transporting the nation toward a better life)” — sold the idea of consumers purchasing modern, innovative equipment to improve not only their lives, but that of their fellow countrymen, with the indication that U.S. corporations were the transmitters of modernity. An advertisement written in Spanish titled “Shipments of Health: On the Way for the People” shows a dark-skinned farmer in a fertile field holding a basket of fresh produce for the viewer to appreciate. In the background other farmers load a new General Motors truck with freshly picked corn, tomatoes, beans, and onions. The text below the advertisement praises Mexico for its overabundance and agricultural capabilities, describing Mexico’s agrarian richness as “the main fountain of energy and health” for Mexicans. However, the advertisement warns that without a modern transportation system, “it would not be possible to efficiently take advantage of the variety and magnificent products of our farmers.” General Motors de México is portrayed as the savior of Mexico’s abundant harvests because of its reliable trucks that are “fundamental for the good diets of our people.” According to the advertisement, Mexican farmers and U.S. corporations made Mexico into a prosperous and forward-thinking nation whose citizens were well-nourished and patriotic. The U.S. company was not merely an automobile dealer but a benevolent entity that “contributes to the continual welfare of the Mexican Republic.”⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ AMSOC, “General Electric advertisement,” *Bulletin* 23, no. 5 (1965): 119.

⁴²⁹ General Motors advertisement in *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 5 (1950):11.

Another advertisement for a new General Motors truck used the same imagery and references of progress and modernity that linked the old/countryside to the future/urban. The advertisement shows a Mexican charro on horseback tipping his hat in admiration to a gleaming General Motors truck carrying cows to market. In the background a modern and futuristic city shines brightly. The caption in reads: “Economic development of a nation progresses behind the advancement of industry. Behind this vehicle . . . Progress!” The farmer in the new truck quite literally leaves behind his old country life of four legs—a horse—and instead moves towards the futuristic city on four rubber tires. The text tells the reader that General Motors products bring positive change to a nation by providing material wellbeing and urban development. The future for Mexican farmers and ranchers no longer belonged in the past because “the wealth of a country all depends on the resources of the transportation industry, that puts into intense circulation the national elements of progress: men, ideas, machines, and wealth!” For modern Mexico to advance, it needed modern General Motors automobiles to develop “better resources for industries that have translated in more possibilities for the economic development of Mexico.”⁴³⁰ The past waves on the future as if saying, “*adelante!*”

⁴³⁰ General Motors ad in *Mexican-American Review* 18, no. 12 (1950): 103

TRAS DE ESTE VEHICULO... EL PROGRESO!

El desarrollo económico de una nación marcha tras del progreso de una industria: la del transporte.

El bienestar material de sus habitantes . . . la prosperidad de los centros de población y, en general, la riqueza del país . . . Todo ello depende de los recursos de la industria del transporte, la cual pone en circulación intensa todos los elementos nacionales de progreso: hombres, ideas, máquinas, riquezas . . .

Desde que General Motors de México inició sus actividades, aporta a la industria del transporte mexicano más y mejores recursos para desarrollar sus tareas. Y más y mejores recursos para esta industria se han traducido en mayores posibilidades para el desarrollo económico de México . . .

GENERAL MOTORS DE MEXICO
S. A. de C. V.

Illustration 10. General Motors de México, “Tras de este vehículo . . . Progreso!” *Mexican-American Review* 18, no. 12 (1950): 103.

While most upper management of U.S. corporations in Mexico came from the United States, lower and mid-level corporate workers tended to be Mexican. A General Motors advertisement depicted a dignified looking young man, notably fair with blond hair, holding a pencil and notebook staring pensively into the distance. The main figure was surrounded by other depictions of men in lab coats examining machinery, listening to presentations, and

working on a car engine. The ad stated in bold font: “Crear técnicos . . . El secreto del progreso [to be a technician . . . the secret to progress].” The complimentary text beneath the image declared that the current generation of Mexicans “rests in a bright future for the country, where men train in specializations to realize the full development of national industry.” It highlighted the scholarships and training for GM employees in Flint, Michigan that had the possibility of “converting” young Mexican men into automotive experts who would “directly contribute to providing a more modern life for the Mexican people.”⁴³¹

While businessmen and experts spoke of assimilation and ingratiating oneself into the local community, U.S. managers worked toward erasing any kind of Mexicanization in U.S. business culture. U.S.-designed and Mexican-made products sold the idea of a sanitized yet tangible corporate good neighbor policy. U.S. Ford and General Motors cars and truck were represented as tools for Mexico to usher in a new era of modernity and progress.

Advertisements painted images of how innovative technology brought endless possibilities to the Mexican people, whether through training and skills acquired through U.S.-corporate education, or by the health and well-being of the Mexican people thanks to the capabilities of trusty machines that brought the richness of Mexican produce to every corner of the nation. The corporate Good Neighbor policy was less about cultivating overt friendliness and more about molding Mexican workers and consumers into standardized versions of what U.S. businessmen viewed as the ideal customer.

⁴³¹ General Motors ad in *Mexican-American Review* 18, no. 2 (1950): 5.

Men's Groups and Clubs: Operation Amigos, the American Legion, and Rotary Club

Historians Victoria de Grazia and Jeffery A. Charles argue that service clubs and men's groups helped to bring structure and order to twentieth century U.S. American life. In the international context, these groups were mediums for U.S. cultural and economic power to gain a foothold abroad.⁴³² Businessmen involved in these organizations were brought together to pursue the goals of social solidarity and charitable giving in what is termed boosterism. Boosterism developed out of the Progressive Era notion of curbing the excesses of emerging urban corporate life that "spurred businessmen to unite for the benefit and growth of a community as a basis for greater individual gain."⁴³³ Men in these groups sought to improve their communities to improve their business prospects in their communities. This translated seamlessly into overseas organizations and clubs with local and domestic members in the Mexico City context.

Operation Amigos

In late 1955, 100 local Mexican and U.S. citizen businessmen met in Mexico City to discuss how they could best ease the pessimism after that year's peso devaluation. U.S. businessmen felt uneasy operating in an unstable Mexican economy. Operation Amigos, also known as Comité Norteamericano Pro-México, emerged from this meeting "to promote Good Neighboring through fostering understanding between the individual peoples of

⁴³² Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) and Jeffrey A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁴³³ Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*, 37.

Mexico and the United States and by economically benefiting the Republic of Mexico.”⁴³⁴

The men of Operation Amigos claimed that their organization represented the first instance that an American business colony in a foreign land organized, not for individual company profit, but “for the overall benefit of their adopted homeland and their native country.”⁴³⁵ The main function of the non-profit was the promotion of tourist travel from all parts of the United States to all parts of Mexico. Operation Amigos called upon civic groups in both countries to assist in business promotion within Mexico.

Groups like the Lions Club and AmCham Mexico held “Noches Mexicanas” once a year, and smaller benefits throughout the year to raise funds for advertising and charitable donations. The half-hour American Airlines-produced film “Viva Mexico” was played at benefits in both nations. A goal of Operation Amigos was “to make ‘Mexico’ a word in the household vocabulary of Americans.”⁴³⁶ American Colony members were advised to send their friends and family in the United States recipe books and colorful tourism posters provided by the Mexican National Tourist Bureau, as well as write letters back home extolling the beauty and good investment climate Mexico offered for the short and long term.⁴³⁷

James B. Stanton, El Paso-born but raised in Mexico City since 1922, graduated from the American High School, attended university in the United States, and promptly returned to Mexico City where he co-founded the Stanton Pritchard Wood advertising agency. He was

⁴³⁴ Anita Brenner, “Operation Amigos,” *Mexico This Month* 1, no. 1 (1955): 1.

⁴³⁵ Anita Brenner, “Selling Mexico to the American Vacationist,” *Mexico This Month* 4, no. (1958): 11.

⁴³⁶ Anita Brenner, “Selling Mexico to the American Vacationist,” 12.

⁴³⁷ AMSOC, “Operation Amigo,” *Bulletin* 13, no. 3 (1955): 12-15.

active in many organizations, served as president of Operation Amigos, and was elected President of the American Society of Mexico in 1966.⁴³⁸ Men like Stanton were vital to U.S. corporations operating in Mexico, not only because of their advertising expertise in local markets, but because they represented a bi-national identity of someone born to U.S. parents and raised in Mexico. Stanton understood the psyche and mindset of the Mexican consumer. For Stanton, being a member of the American Colony meant recognizing the obligations one had to the colony and to the Mexican community. In his 1966 Annual Meeting speech to the Society, Stanton reiterated why AMSOC mattered, saying that the organization was “made up of all the Americans who feel a strong love for their country [. . .]” He claimed that people asked him, “what does the American Society do for me?” to which Stanton replied, “the American Society was never constituted to do something for *you*. It was constituted to provide an organization through which you could do something for others—namely your community and all it stands for—an organization that would provide the means for developing activities aimed at preserving community togetherness.”⁴³⁹

Stanton conceptualized AMSOC as more than a civic group for U.S. citizens living abroad. The organization was an instrument through which U.S. citizens improved their immediate American Colony, but more importantly it was a tool for improving Mexico in the eyes of the colonists. The community stood for bettering relations with Mexico, and as a man with strong ties to the business community, it meant amplifying ties between U.S. corporations and the Mexican state and Mexican consumers. The American Colony could only flourish if the Mexican economy and U.S. corporate interests succeeded.

⁴³⁸ Douglas Purdy, “Annual General American Society Meeting,” *The News*, Sept 12, 1964.

⁴³⁹ AMSOC, “Annual Meeting American Society of Mexico” *Bulletin*, November 1966, 38-39.

The language used to describe the men (and the few women) involved in the Operation Amigos revolved around good neighbor rhetoric that linked friendship and business together for a better future for both nations. The U.S. Americans involved in the promotion of Mexico through their activities in Operation Amigos were described as “living examples of the Good Neighbor Policy.”⁴⁴⁰ The volunteers believed that they carried on a noble tradition that involved grassroots diplomatic relations and the careful cultivation of business relations in the name of international friendship, an endeavor that was not always the result of government planning and legislation, but instead was based on “mutual esteem and comprehension” of Mexicans and U.S. Americans working together to solve the peso crisis and generate U.S. investment in Mexican industries.⁴⁴¹

Operation Amigos promoted business interests and travel to Mexico through the magazine *Mexico This Month*. The magazine ran from 1955 until 1971. It was comprised of an eyepopping kaleidoscopic hodgepodge of tourism information, artistic renditions of Mexican urban and rural life, and business reports. Its readership came from privileged and corporate backgrounds and the upper middle class tourist. Anita Brenner, the famous U.S. American journalist, anthropologist, and cultural promoter of Mexico, edited the magazine throughout its run. The Mexican-born child of American nationalized Latvian refugees, Anita spent most her life in Mexico. She dreamed of creating a magazine that highlighted Mexican culture and customs that would counteract negative U.S. media representations of Mexico as dangerous and unstable. Without financial backers, her dream never came to fruition, until she found support through the business leaders of Operation Amigos. Through *Mexico This*

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, 29

⁴⁴¹ Anita Brenner, “Statement of Purpose,” *Mexico This Month* 1, no.5 (1955) 1.

Month, Brenner fused her love of Mexico and the promotion of business, and the businessmen-patrons made sure that advertisements and flattering articles on U.S. business in Mexico ran in every monthly issue.

The eclectic magazine was a blend of graphic and commercial art. It was apparent that Brenner's artistic background drove the design and layout of the magazine. Every month beautiful color photographs displayed Mexico's attractions, highlighted Mexican artists, and provided a wide variety of recipes, suggestions for vacation destinations, and lessons on Mexican history. Full page centerfold maps and drawings depicted archeological sites and local customs in bold, bright colors. The financial contributors of the magazine came from the American business community in Mexico City and from U.S. corporate interests such as Pepsi-Cola, Ford, and General Motors. In the inaugural issue, the original Amigos touched on the impetus for the magazine, saying: "We North American residents and businessmen who formed this program, and who carry it out with voluntary work and monetary contributions, are motivated by a sincere desire to help the country in which we live. We also realize that any successful effort in strengthening the economy of Mexico will inevitably result in benefit to all concerned." The members of Operation Amigos regarded themselves as not motivated by greed or corporate profits, but as agents of benevolent business whose primary concern rested on working together "toward a growing goodwill, better business and greater friendship between the United States and Mexico."⁴⁴²

Operation Amigos observed the burgeoning Mexican tourist industry as a means of supporting Mexico's economy that would pave the way for a smart and safe investment area

⁴⁴² Anita Brenner, "Operations Amigos: Something New in International Relations" *Mexico This Month* 1, no. 3 (1955): 11.

for future U.S. corporations.⁴⁴³ If Mexican tourism supported the Mexican economy, then corporations would feel secure in investing abroad and expand U.S. corporate influence in the future. Businessmen of the American Colony represented the barometer for home offices in the United States. They understood the local climate and “could act a little beyond their normal business functions to help increase trade and tourist travel and general good will between the two countries.”⁴⁴⁴ Local U.S. Americans were vital for U.S. corporations north of the border as citizen ambassadors.

An advertisement on the back page of the August 1955 issue of *Mexico This Month* showed an artist’s rendition of Teotihuacan and the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. The caption above the image boasted: “This is Mexico!” The description beneath the image tied together tourism, ancient Mexico, American-made products (modernity), and consumerism: “How pleasant is it to see the ancient engineering feats of the Aztec tribes from the comfortable seat of your wonderfully engineered Buick and to admire the magnificent pyramids of Teotihuacan, which have stood for a thousand years demonstrating the architectural wonder of ancient civilizations?” The ad told the reader that just like the pyramids needed tributes to appease the gods, so too did Buick automobiles, and what better way to appease your new car than to visit Mexico. Additional advertisements from Bacardi, Mobil Oil, and other automobile companies lined page after page, all praising the wonders of

⁴⁴³ For examinations of the Mexican tourism industry, see Christina M. Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins: Archaeology, History, and the Making of Modern Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 2016.)

Dina Berger and Andrew Grant Wood, eds., *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴⁴⁴ Anita Brenner, “Selling Mexico to the American Vacationist” *Mexico This Month* 4, no. 4 (1958): 12-13.

how U.S. companies made Mexico a consumerist and tourist dreamland on an upward modern revolutionary trajectory.

For potential investors uneasy with investing in a foreign nation, especially a country that had a history revolution and social unrest, *Mexico this Month* attempted to assuage any fears of threats to an economically stable Mexico, regardless of the peso devaluation. Students and workers rioted periodically in Mexico City against bus fare increases and threats to union solidarity. Eva-Marie Sperling, a U.S. college student studying in Mexico City, wrote an editorial in *Mexico This Month* on why she believed the riots by Mexican youth in the capital did not depict the true trajectory and sentiments of young Mexicans at midcentury. She lauded the achievements in higher education that saw over 40,000 students enrolled at the new campus of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Eva-Marie argued that women now had access to higher education and improved job prospects thanks to changing notions of gender roles and marriage. The new freedoms that the revolutionary Mexican nation offered its young people thanks to a stronger economy and democratic freedoms created a modern nation of “enlarged horizons” which “act like wine in the veins of the young people of Mexico.” The Mexican leaders of tomorrow “look ahead with excitement to taking their places in the national scene and though, in some respects, they bid for power ahead of their time, this—in the majority of cases—goes hand in hand with a genuine sense of civic welfare and acceptance of responsibility.”⁴⁴⁵

While Eva-Marie acknowledged that some youth might be upset and angry with the government on issues of public transportation and wage stagnation, her beliefs on the future of Mexican youth tells the reader to not concern themselves about any negative news stories

⁴⁴⁵ Anita Brenner, “Eruption,” *Mexico This Month* 1, no. 7 (1955) 10-11, 24.

on the state of affairs in Mexico. The nation was not coming apart at the seams. She downplayed serious grievances of the working classes and painted them as akin to a few disgruntled leftist agitators who do not understand how well Mexicans lived during the Mexican Miracle. In effect, she tells readers to continue to invest in and travel to Mexico.

Mexican economist Gilberto Loyo was a frequent contributor to *Mexico This Month*, and often gave his opinion on the economic climate for foreign investment in Mexico. Loyo represented the Mexican elites who had benefited the most from the post WWII conservative change in Mexican politics and dealings with U.S. companies. He served as Secretary of Economy under president Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. During many of his appearances in *Mexico This Month*, he wrote while being directly connected to the Mexican government. Therefore, when he stated in 1960 that after WWII Mexico had lost its “fear” over foreign intervention in the economy, he signaled to U.S. businessmen reading the magazine that the Mexican government would not repeat the 1938 oil expropriation, nor would the government be hostile or anything less than conciliatory to U.S. investment moving forward. The Secretary of Economy reported that the achievements of the Mexican Revolution ensured that the Mexican people could remain confident in their “national development, productivity, creativity, and individual fulfillment” that the Constitution of 1917 created so that the Mexican people could “move forward free and with love and understanding of the need for social justice.”⁴⁴⁶

Modern Mexico, a contemporary magazine of *Mexico This Month* that also focused on business and tourism, published similar articles that attempted to tamper any negative stories on the Mexican business climate. Articles published in *Modern Mexico* discounted

⁴⁴⁶ Gilberto Loyo, “Profile of Mexico,” *Mexico This Month* 6, no. 5 (1960): 23.

peso devaluations as issues to not fret over given the positive trajectory of Mexico's economy over the past twenty years. Scholar of Mexican political and economic history Frank R. Brandenburg wrote that "Mexico enjoys a political stability deeply entrenched into the nation's social institutions." He added that "foreign capital will find few investment climates anywhere in the world that can compare favorably with the outstanding features of Mexican investment."⁴⁴⁷

Magazines like *Mexico This Month* and *Modern Mexico* sold Mexico to the potential investor as a mostly stable investment opportunity. Both magazines were funded by men from the American Colony who served on the boards of major corporations and organizations like AmCham. The Mexico of the 1950s and 1960s represented the future of U.S. multinational corporate influence. Modern Mexico welcomed foreign investment, while maintaining its ties to mostly superficial revolutionary rhetoric. The Cuba issue would loom over U.S.-Mexico relations, but men of the American Colony worked to strengthen relations while continuing to lay the foundation for the entrenchment of U.S. economic influence in Mexico. The leftist at heart Anita Brenner did not see the men of the American Colony as interlopers because they ensured her zeal for promoting the cultural wonders of Mexico spread beyond Mexico's borders. The two seemingly incompatible parties achieved their goals and missions with each issue of *Mexico This Month*.

American Legion

In 1956, the Alan Seeger Post No. 2 of the American Legion built an elementary school in the town of Santa María Magdalena Petlascalco located in the Valley of Mexico. On

⁴⁴⁷Frank R. Brandenburg, "Foreign Capital in Mexico," *Mexico This Month* 3, no. 11 (1957): 22-25.

U.S. holidays the U.S. flag flew over the school, although upon completion, it was donated to the Mexican education secretariat, la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). The school cost over \$300,000 pesos. The American Legion promised to permanently maintain the school. The partnership with the Mexican government was a plan started by F.H. “Paco” Carnes, then-regent of the Federal District Ernesto Uruchurtu, U.S. Ambassador William O’Dwyer, and other members of the American Legion committee.⁴⁴⁸ Children from the town and neighboring villages applied for scholarships to attend the school. They received breakfast and lunch, school supplies, and school uniforms. Uruchurtu praised the Legion for its donation, saying that it was “one of the worthiest projects ever carried out by foreigners resident in Mexico City.”⁴⁴⁹ Ambassador Fulton Freeman visited the school in 1964 and gave the U.S. Embassy’s blessing for its construction.

Legionnaire expatriates living in Mexico City still donate funds to the school today.⁴⁵⁰ In addition to the school, the Legionnaires also brought the first iron lung to Mexico in 1949 during a ferocious polio outbreak. The American Legion’s Women’s Auxiliary for the wives of members raised funds to build a library addition, donated sewing machines for home economics classes, and visited the schools frequently to meet the children and take inventory of items the school needed. The Alan Seeger Post 2 remains active in Santa María Magdalena Petlacalco where it still maintains the school, provides scholarships to students to attend primary and secondary school, and help blind and abandoned children. The sentiment that first motivated the men of Post 2 remains alive and well when Dave Pederson told *The American Legion Magazine* in 2011, “I don’t care where you are in the world, children are

⁴⁴⁸ The American Legion Magazine - Volumes 142-143 1997 78

⁴⁴⁹ AMSOC, “Local Legion Post Serves Community” *Bulletin* 16, no. 11 (1958): 18.

⁴⁵⁰ Matt Grills, “Good Neighbors,” *American Legion Magazine*, October 28, 2011.

children. And kids here are not well taken care of, especially the ones who have been abused. They need help.” Another veteran, Andrew Zgolinski, remarked that, “It’s part of being a veteran and being an American.”⁴⁵¹



Illustration 11. Ambassador Fulton Freeman (on right) and Legionnaires at the American Legion school dedication at Petlalcalco. The Mexican schoolchildren wave U.S. flags. *Bulletin*, 1964.

Rotary Club

The 59th Annual Convention of Rotary International was held in Mexico City from May 12-16, 1968. The Rotary Club is a civic organization that unites business and civic groups to provide global humanitarian aid and foster goodwill. Agustín Salvat, Head of the Mexican tourism Department, published a letter to Rotarians in the official publication for all Rotary members, inviting them to attend the Convention. Salvat told his fellow Rotarians that

⁴⁵¹ Jeff Stoffer, “A Century for Children,” *American Legion Magazine*, March 20, 2019.

tourism helped solidify “understanding among men which creates confidence between peoples.” He added that international travel was “the road to appreciation of various cultures, making problems of one country more understandable to citizens of others.”⁴⁵² In addition to the four days of the convention, Rotarians and their families were told to attend one of the post-Convention tours orchestrated by the Mexican Tourist Department or explore the country individually.⁴⁵³

On May 12, Rotary International President Luther H. Hodges of Chapel Hill, North Carolina addressed the crowd of 12,187 Rotarians in attendance. He urged Rotarians to help “solve the problems of their communities such as maintain peace, alleviating hunger, disease, and ignorance, building respect for law and family solidarity.”⁴⁵⁴ On opening night a festival atmosphere welcomed foreigner Rotarians to experience Mexico on “Noche Mexicana” held outside of the Auditorio Nacional. Mexico City executive chairman Rotarian Antonio Lopez Silane introduced a vivid play performance spanning Mexican history. The finale portrayed the Mexican Revolution as the last step of Mexico’s progress toward the path of economic and social prosperity. The performance was also shown live on TV for Mexican audiences to view. Mexican President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz asked the audience to “tell your countrymen that there is a country that has no large armies, no cannons; a country that has no atomic weapons; a country that only has the moral authority of one that has never attacked another country. It is a country that has the firm desire to correspond with firm solidarity, offering its loyal and true and truthful friendship to all those countries that want it and wish to

⁴⁵² Agustin Salvat, “Letter to Rotarians,” *The Rotarian* 112, no. 4 (1968): 39.

⁴⁵³ William E. Walk Jr., “Mexico ‘68: Abrazos Await,” *The Rotarian* 112, no. 4 (1968): 37.

⁴⁵⁴ Rotary Club International, “1968 Proceedings: Fifty-ninth Annual Convention of Rotary International” Rotary International, 1.

correspond with it.”⁴⁵⁵ At the end of the convention, the Rotary Club gave scholarships to deserving high school graduating Mexican men and women to attend university in the United States.

The Annual Convention of Rotary International was one event in what the Mexican government dubbed “The Year of Mexico.”⁴⁵⁶ That year, Mexico hosted the Cultural Olympics, the Rotary Convention in May, and the Olympics in October. The Mexican government needed to project the image of a modern country that had shed its unstable past thanks to the paternalistic guidance of the PRI. Former President of Rotary Club of Mexico and the 1968 Convention Chairman Antonio López Silanes noted that Mexican Rotarians were committed to the “ideals of solidarity, understanding, and unity among men of the world” and hoped that this Convention “once again renewed and reaffirmed” the spirit of Mexican commitment to the Rotarian ideals.⁴⁵⁷

Rotarian ideals of mutual understanding, solidarity, humanitarianism, and business principles were similar in scope to the ideals engrained in the American Colony’s civic and business outreach efforts. Events like the Convention allowed Rotarians from around the globe to see modern Mexico in all its glory and displayed a stable and progressive nation agreeable to foreign investment.

Confronting Nationalism

U.S. business interests in Mexico had to contend with mercurial revolutionary administrations. Mexican presidents during and after WWII tended to shift to the right of the

⁴⁵⁵ Rotary Club International, 4.

⁴⁵⁶ Antonio López Silanes, “Our Welcome is Ready,” *The Rotarian* 112, no. 4 (1968): 39.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

political and economic spectrum, but presidents also had to play into the revolutionary rhetoric that helped the PRI consolidate and maintain power long after the Mexican Revolution ended. Adolfo López Mateos reoriented the PRI toward a more nationalist centrist tilt during his presidency. Foreign companies, but especially U.S. companies, feared another nationalization struggle when the administration of López Mateos began buying foreign utility concessions to nationalize. This attempt alarmed U.S. businessmen who saw what happened recently in Cuba. Instead of expropriating industries, the administration purchased claims outright and fairly compensated firms. U.S. businesses remained uneasy in what many described as Mexico's "third force" economy. The Mexican government took a middle path between laissez faire free enterprise and communism, developing what AmCham Mexico viewed as "its own personal form of economy that places it in neither camp nor the other."⁴⁵⁸ U.S. business interests in Mexico were told to rest assured that the Mexican government wanted to create a partnership between the state and private enterprise "aimed at solving the problem of underdevelopment to the best advantage of the Mexican individual as well as of the country as a whole."⁴⁵⁹ The Mexican government needed foreign private monetary and technical investment to build up key industries that the state could not support, whether due to lack of funding or expertise, such as chemical companies and automobile manufacturing. Nationalizing certain industries allowed the Mexican government to pay lip service to the idea that the Mexican revolution continued on into midcentury, while allowing foreign investment to flow into other industries that would contribute to Mexican industrialization and raise the standards of livings of millions of Mexican citizens, which was

⁴⁵⁸ No author, "Neither Communism nor Capitalism: Mexico's 'Third Force' Economy," in *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 12 (1960): 77.

⁴⁵⁹ No author, "Neither Communism nor Capitalism," 78.

a tenant of the revolution in 1910 and in its fiftieth anniversary in 1960 when the president decreed the utility nationalization completed.

U.S. business subsidiaries and affiliates in Mexico, along with the U.S. Embassy and the National Polytechnic Institute of Mexico City, created a program to send engineers and engineering students to U.S. factories and plants to learn how large operations functioned. These exchange programs allowed Mexican workers to gain experience and skills, and then return home to either work for U.S. subsidiaries, or eventually take their skills to Mexican industries. Standard Oil funded Mexican petroleum engineers to visit its refinery in Baton Rouge, and petrochemical engineers visited the Coden petrochemical plant in Big Spring, Texas. Other engineers visited steel and iron plants throughout the United States. The program aimed to give young Mexican engineers “a proper perspective of the vastness of their field and of the opportunities that lie ahead of them” through U.S. and Mexican private industry.⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, the Mexican government needed its citizens to gain knowledge and experience through such programs for the strength of Mexican industries and a spirit of Mexican nationalism that relied on foreign assistance. Sympathetic Mexican professionals might also not adhere to anti-American or leftist policies.

In the late 1960s, U.S. companies in Mexico started receiving negative reports of how Latin Americans viewed the influence of U.S. business in the region. Businessmen could not understand why so many Latin Americans remained skeptical of the supposed help that U.S. industries brought to countries like Mexico when Ford, General Motors, and other companies opened factories that provided jobs for local workers. They blamed “economic nationalists”

⁴⁶⁰ H.D. Hixson, “Visits to U.S. aid Mexican Engineers,” *Mexican-American Review* 26, no. 12 (1960): 71.

for the bad press, lamenting that the leftists “are questioning the role of foreign investment and how it can contribute to development of the area.”⁴⁶¹ Experts argued that the future of private investment in Latin America depended on the ability of companies to adapt creatively to the demands of economic nationalists without sacrificing the interests of U.S. companies.

Additionally, experts added that to truly combat economic nationalists, companies had to actively involve Mexican workers in upper management roles to bring “Latin Americans onto the same side of the table as the U.S. business partners.” While the public relations veneer and miscellaneous “good works” programs were a necessary part of dealing with the problem of nationalism, Latin Americans by the late 1960s grew frustrated with the lack of representation in important positions within U.S. companies. Mexicans accused U.S. multinationals as being “an advanced arm of aggressive US foreign policy,” willing participants whose jobs were to “keep Latin America in an easily exploited, primitive state,” and “favor and promote dictatorships, proof positive that they are not interested in the will of the people.”⁴⁶² The Business International Corporation suggested that local AmChams had the power to curb nationalism and pave the way for better relations with U.S. corporations. Preventative public relations built good public images before any problems developed, the experts advised, saying that “the AmChams have some use in combating nationalism, particularly when the Chamber can show a united concern for some pressing local problem.”⁴⁶³ Investment in local communities through AmChams or other business organizations provided “selective and intelligent use of funds can help the cause of foreign

⁴⁶¹ Business International Corporation, *Nationalism in Latin America: The Challenge & Corporate Response* (New York: Business International Corporation, 1970).

⁴⁶² Business International Corporation, *Nationalism in Latin America*, 32.

⁴⁶³ Business International Corporation, *Nationalism in Latin America*, 34

investment”⁴⁶⁴ To combat nationalism, multinationals were advised to “brighten your image” and do not “rub in your foreign image. Pick a nationalist identification that blends into the local scene.”⁴⁶⁵

Conclusion

In 1978, Lloyd L. Halstead President and General Manager of Ford de México, wrote an article in *Mexican-American Review* on the importance of good public relations in combating nationalism and building a positive affinity for a company’s image and products. Halstead argued that Ford had for several years “taken positive action to contribute to solutions to social and community problems” through its various community-orientated programs aimed at combating anti-Americanism and Mexican nationalism.⁴⁶⁶ In the case of Ford, the company continued to focus on civic affairs that were far removed from the automobile sector of the company, instead choosing to engage with local communities on educational and agricultural endeavors. Ford consulted with the Mexican governmental authorities who he claimed “warmly welcome” assistance from the private sector. Halstead said that all parties involved were recipients of “positive side effects”—from the Mexican government, which did not have to shoulder all the work for social and civic issues, to blue and white collar employees who felt connected to their communities and took pride in their endeavors, and of course the recipients of the charity and projects.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ Business International Corporation, *Nationalism in Latin America*, 38

⁴⁶⁵ Business International Corporation, *Nationalism in Latin America*, 86.

⁴⁶⁶ Lloyd L. Halstead, “Business and the Community,” *Mexican-American Review* 46, no. 4 (1978): 7.

⁴⁶⁷ Halstead, “Business and the Community,” 9.

P.J. McGuire, chief executive officer Carnation de Mexico, noted that that the “easy way” was to donate funds to organizations such as the UCF to handle any charitable needs. The hard way, he countered, was to get executives involved to select programs to fund that would add a personal contribution to the local community.⁴⁶⁸ The personal touch instigated by businessmen in Mexico would generate positive brand recognition and public perception and consumer loyalty. The main goal was to “awaken the public to the contributions that the business community makes to society.”⁴⁶⁹ Frequent contributor to *Mexican-American Review* Lloyd Rosenfield viewed corporate citizenship as an endeavor that had only winners and no losers. He argued that then multinational companies successfully acquire a “selfless image, everyone will be better off—the citizens because the companies are providing services they really need, the companies because they will be making more sales and profits, and the host government because it will be collecting more taxes from the companies. In fact, the governments may collect so much more that they will feel they are exploiting the multinational corporations.”⁴⁷⁰

The image of selfless U.S. corporations provided highly profitable. U.S. economic dominance was secured in Mexico by the mid-1970s. In 1970, U.S. Americans represented 51% of all foreigners residing in Mexico totaling 50,890 people.⁴⁷¹ U.S. companies had a

⁴⁶⁸ Jim Budd, “Social Responsibility and the Bottom Line,” *Mexican-American Review* 38, no.5 (1970): 53.

⁴⁶⁹ Jim Budd, “Social Responsibility and the Bottom Line,” 55.

⁴⁷⁰ Loyd Rosenfield, “Business Sidelines,” *Mexican-American Review* 46, no. 4 (1978): 59.

⁴⁷¹ Simposio sobre empresarios en Mexico Volumen II: Empresarios mexicanos y norteamericanos, y la penetracion de capital extranjero (siglo XX) Cuadernos de la Casa Chata #23 Centro de Investigacions Superiores del INAH.

Presentacion 3, Empresarios norteamericanos en el Mexico Actual Carmen Bueno, Kathy Denman, Carmen Icazuriaga 1979, 41.

virtual monopoly on certain industries in Mexico by the late 1970s. Of the 311 largest industrial companies in Mexico, 132 were controlled by U.S. and non-Mexican companies.⁴⁷² Of the 15 largest companies in Mexico, 11 were 100% controlled by the U.S. parent company, which included John Deere, Anaconda, and ITT. Virtually the entire automobile industry was owned by General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. The six largest chemical plants, which included Colgate, Proctor and Gamble, and Walgreens, were U.S.-owned. Various departments within the U.S. Embassy functioned to maintain good relations between the U.S. government, the Mexican government, and U.S. corporations. American colonists were a significant factor in the success of U.S. corporate domination in Mexico.

In her study of U.S. businessmen abroad, Mira Wilkins softened the stereotype of the American businessman as an unemotional number's man when she said that "American corporations go abroad not as soulless shells, but as entities represented by human beings."⁴⁷³ While the businessmen connected to the American colony did engage in charity work that had great impacts on the lives of ordinary Mexicans, they also did so with ulterior motives. Once again, the issue is not simply black and white. Businessmen used charitable acts to craft a favorable public image. Yet, individual men became sincerely invested in the charities and programs of which they were personally apart of that helped Mexicans. It was not always an easy task to persuade businessmen to spend what would have been their leisure time involved in charity work. But, over the course of the twentieth century, corporate citizenship became intertwined with public relations. Colony businessmen viewed good corporate citizenship as in alignment with the goals of the colony and its good neighbor aims.

⁴⁷² *Empresarios norteamericanos en el Mexico Actual*, 48.

⁴⁷³ Wilkins "The Businessman Abroad," 90.

Chapter 5

Soft Power Cold War Domesticity

In the March 1978 issue of *Mexican-American Review*, Lloyd Halstead stated that he “would like to be reincarnated as an overseas wife” because of the so-called “perks” of being a married U.S. woman living abroad.⁴⁷⁴ Halstead and U.S. American housewife Frances Phillips interviewed thirteen U.S. American housewives living in Mexico City to gauge how they adapted to living abroad and what their lives consisted of on a daily basis. All of the women interviewed were married to AmCham board members who engaged in business interests in Mexico. Most families moved a total of five times over the course of the husband’s stint in business, although one family moved seventeen times. The wives overwhelmingly agreed that housewives had more trouble adjusting to their new environments than their children or husbands who had readymade work and school outlets and diversions upon arrival to a new country. Wives were forced to create their own outlets centered around female-centric midcentury-approved channels, such as volunteerism and charitable organizations, or what Halstead viewed as the perks of “easy living” abroad. For women who had school-aged children, the thirteen women agreed that they “thrust themselves into community projects” and volunteered at hospitals and schools or any place that needed their help. Lucille Drummheller added that one of the greatest advantages in being an overseas wife “is that we have the free time to do things for other people. Back home, it’s so easy to leave everything to the welfare department.”⁴⁷⁵ Some women became so interested in medical professions that they took nursing and paramedic classes or completed

⁴⁷⁴Frances Phillips, “Multinational Wives on Adapting,” *Mexican-American Review* 46, no. 3 (1978): 13.

⁴⁷⁵ Phillips, 14.

certificates to work with children with disabilities. As a Pink Lady at the ABC Hospital, Beverly Blake assisted at cesarean births and worked in the maternity wing. Free from household chores because they could afford maids and drivers, one wife stated, “we are able to do more things for ourselves”—such as volunteer in the communities they lived amongst and find fulfillment in giving back.⁴⁷⁶

This chapter examines the connection between the construction of foreign policy and the construction of gender centered around overseas wives. When asked if they felt jealous of the AmCham or companies for taking their husbands “away so often from the family,” Dorothy Lio situated herself and her fellow overseas wives in Mexico as playing critical support roles for U.S. corporate interests abroad. Dorothy claimed that her husband’s work for his company and for AmCham was important and necessary. She argued that if U.S. Americans wanted “to see private enterprise survive, we had better tell our story, or at least support our husbands while they tell it. You could call it my small contribution to the Chamber, and I give it willingly.”⁴⁷⁷ These women viewed their support role in the realm of volunteering and engaging in charitable actions, but also in projecting a benign feminine image of U.S. political and corporate power abroad. Just as their husbands supported their companies through good corporate citizenship, their wives engaged in an auxiliary role, much like missionary wives who helped their husbands spread the gospel around the world in colonial settings.

At least nine of the thirteen wives felt that their “roots” were in Mexico, with housewife Elena Kyle stating, “we built our house here and have molded our lives in Mexico.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Phillips, “Multinational Wives on Adapting,” 19.

This is our home.”⁴⁷⁸ They believed that their charitable work contributed to the success of their husbands’ personal careers, and therefore the success of U.S. corporate interests and U.S. foreign power in Mexico. Charity work not only filled a personal void and created social outlets for women, it aided in corporate and diplomatic evangelizing. By and large, men of the American colony did not view themselves as anything other than good patriotic U.S. Americans whose lives were not rooted in Mexico. Women, on the other hand, framed their work as contributing to Mexican national development. They believed that they were not interlopers but quasi Mexican nationals due to their time spent living in Mexico and working with disadvantaged populations.

By identifying as U.S. American women, they were required to be of assistance any way possible to people they viewed as simultaneously the “other” and their neighbors. They quite literally believed they carried with them civilizing ideas that they could impart to Mexicans. The examination of women’s gender roles is a vital way of observing how gender influences the position of the expatriate in the exotic. Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh argue that non-working white women who accompany their husbands abroad find themselves in a similar position to colonial women insofar as their support work is necessary and expected of them, yet systemically downplayed through a narrative of “idle” expatriate women.⁴⁷⁹ Charity allowed women to assert U.S. superiority under gendered structures which further inculcated a gendered idea of appropriate women’s work with an emphasis on the rightful place of women in the nuclear family.

⁴⁷⁸Phillips, “Multinational Wives on Adapting,” 15.

⁴⁷⁹ Fechter and Walsh, *The New Expatriates*, 91.

Expatriate women have rarely been examined as contributors to host culture society. However, sociologist Ruth Hill Useem conducted a case study of 129 overseas Americans in India in the mid-1960s. She found that the social structure, cultural setting, and physical environment all played a role in how U.S. American women conducted themselves in India. Wives and children had what she calls “representational roles” that in the United States were hidden from public view and classified as private family matters; however, in a foreign setting these representational roles were deemed “visible ‘public’ behavior and ‘everybody’s business”” ranging from local Indian and American government dealings, to the sponsorship of agencies and charities, and even newspapers which spread community gossip and news and set them up as living examples of Americanness.⁴⁸⁰

For middle-class U.S. Americans who were accustomed to individualism and merit-based praise, suddenly being lumped into a group and taking on the role of a living representation of national identity was not always an easy task to shoulder.⁴⁸¹ U.S. women in Mexico City had few opportunities to stand out on individual merit-based accomplishments. Nearly all their time spent outside of the home revolved around community or group activities. This further reinforced the idea that united as a group, the women of the colony represented a homogenous idea of “America” and in turn created a local culture that frowned upon individualism. Charity became the avenue through which colony women could act as “proper” representatives of the United States and fulfill the duties of good midcentury corporate wife, mother, and social redeemer.

⁴⁸⁰ Ruth Hill Useem, “The American Family in India,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368, no.1 (1966): 134.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

The representational role that women and children played on behalf of their husbands and fathers had far-reaching implications for U.S. business and potentially U.S. foreign policy. Ruth Hill Useem found in her India case study that “husbands expect, and often get, good performance from their wives and children. If they do not, the men either leave the overseas assignment or, occasionally, select a more competent wife.”⁴⁸² Expatriate women and children, no matter their location around the globe, were viewed as performing “America” in daily life abroad. Midcentury middle class and elite women and children were an extension of their husbands and fathers, and if their husbands engaged in business, they had a duty to perform as “the good wife” or “the good child” and represent him and his company accordingly. The strict feminine subculture of American neocolonialism fortified and defined how the community should appear to outsiders. In the social hierarchy of the expatriate feminine subculture, high-ranking women organized resources for new community members, educated newcomers on the norms of the culture, and held other women accountable for their community behavior and standards as representatives of the United States of America and U.S. multinational interests.

Women could be ostracized if they did not follow the prescribed social norms of the community. Not all U.S. American women in midcentury Mexico City followed such restrictive gender norms. The exceptions in the American Colony are just as fascinating to examine because they allow us to see how nonconformists navigated living in a fishbowl environment while also charting their own path.

⁴⁸² Hill Useem, “The American Family in India,” 135.

The Domestic Side of Soft Power

Joseph S. Nye Jr. argues that there are three ways to influence a person to achieve what you want: coerce them with threats; induce them with payments; or attract them with something positive. Nye posits that soft power “uses an attraction to shared values, and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values.”⁴⁸³ Women of the American colony consciously engaged in soft power through attraction. The Junior League, American Society of Mexico, American Benevolent Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and other charities and organizations presented the feminized, softhearted, concerned, and supposedly less threatening side of U.S. imperialism and corporate influence. Colony women were told that their duties, outside of their homes, were to the service of the community, both Mexican and U.S. American. They were upheld within the colony as domestic and civic altruists who had the power to transform society around them through their respectable works, with an AMSOC article proclaiming that “in no other volunteer service in Mexico do our American Colony women yield better and richer harvests of wellbeing and good will.”⁴⁸⁴

For mid-century U.S. American women who moved their entire lives to Mexico (mostly due to their husband’s occupations), recreating a culture and community where they felt at home was paramount to the success of their domestic life and for their personal wellbeing. Many male members of the American colony were already married upon arrival. As noted, few historical studies on expatriates examine the lived experiences of women in

⁴⁸³ Joseph P. Nye, Jr., “Soft Power and Leadership,” *Compass: A Journal of Leadership*, Spring 2004 reproduced in “The Benefits of Soft Power,” 8/2/2004 at <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4290.html>.

⁴⁸⁴ AMSOC, “Volunteer Ladies,” *Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (1952): 13.

foreign communities other than missionary women and wives of male missionaries.⁴⁸⁵

Although their spouses often received pre-departure training on what to expect abroad, U.S. colony women mostly had to fend for themselves and relied on each other to acclimate to Mexico City's foreign environment. Mothers had to learn how to enroll children in school, form and join social organizations, navigate a foreign culture, manage a household, and instill in their children "American" values prevalent during the Cold War period.

Emily S. Rosenberg argues that scholars face many challenges in examining the role of women in foreign relations. When women are examined in the context of foreign relations, their roles are oftentimes relegated to that of missionary or nurse. Focusing exclusively on women in their gendered spheres of influence places blame on women for being static and complacent in their roles, or labels them as complicit in continuing the romanticized idea of saviors of Anglo culture.⁴⁸⁶ Rosenberg argues that by pigeonholing women into strict gendered role of the savior-mother figure, historians do a disservice to how women actually lived their lives, what they believed, and how they viewed themselves in their environments. She says that "at particular times in United States relations with weaker nations, gendered imagery helped convert stories about foreign affairs into mythic tales, often with the form and structure of popular romance novels."⁴⁸⁷ However, in many cases, the women of the American colony did in fact view themselves as righteous redeemers. They reshaped their

⁴⁸⁵ Many non-fiction recounts of life abroad exist, especially for expatriate life in San Miguel de Allende, Chapala, and Mérida. For anthropological and migration studies cases of present-day white female migration abroad, see C. Lundström, *White Migrations: Gender, Whiteness and Privilege in Transnational Migration* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014); Shannon Young, *How Does One Dress to Buy Dragonfruit: True Stories of Expat Women in Asia* (Smashwords Edition, 2014).

⁴⁸⁶ Emily S. Rosenberg, "Gender" *The Journal of American History*, 77, no. 1 (1990): 116-124.

⁴⁸⁷ Rosenberg, "Gender," 5.

roles as mothers and wives into a broader role of charitable redeemer; in effect, in their eyes, they became surrogate white mothers for the Mexican people they interacted with daily. After all, most found themselves unable to work, even if they wanted to, because of Mexican labor laws restricting spouses employed by foreign corporations, and their strict gender roles proved prohibitive even if they had access to employment outside of the home. Their social outlets revolved around their home lives and the American colony. If Rosenberg views the United States government in foreign relations as a paternalistic figure, then women involved in grassroots foreign policy did have a role in performing stereotypically gender-specific roles that sought to bring Mexicans into the U.S. sphere of influence politically, economically, and socially.

Civic and Charitable Organizations

Ambassador William O'Dwyer's wife, a former model and radio personality much younger than he, did not mince words or actions with other women of the American colony when it came to their participation in civic organizations. Sloan Simpson O'Dwyer infamously gave a tea for the ladies of the Social Service Committee (SSC) during which she asked the women to produce more funds for the sewing circles that made clothing for needy children. The women protested that they could not force people to attend and give up more of their time and money. One woman asked if it would be more productive to hire a seamstress. To that particularly irksome question, the ambassador's wife argued that the money spent to pay a seamstress could go toward buying more material to make even more dresses and shirts.

The next day, Mrs. O'Dwyer sent a uniformed chauffeur with a personal message from herself to the ladies who failed to attend the sewing circle: "Sign the receipt here, please." She fined the women for not attending their meetings and publicly shamed them for renegeing on their offer to help. Attendance for the sewing circle skyrocketed the following month to more than double the previous number of participants. Mrs. O'Dwyer held another tea at the ambassador's residence for the women whom she deemed "worthy." The ambassador's wife was so invested in the civic programs in her community that she collected baskets and toys for the annual basket drive, and instead of storing the items at the American Society's headquarters at Lucerna 71, she ran the entire operation from the basement of the ambassador's residence. While her husband demonstrated an effective outward appearance of how a Good Neighbor should act, the ambassador's wife did the same for the social and civically-minded women of the American Colony. She, too, was the poster child for a "good" American abroad, and she did not allow her countrywomen to sit idly by and shirk their civic responsibilities.⁴⁸⁸ Charity work afford U.S. American women the opportunity to be seen by their fellow countrywomen but also to be good agents of empire.

The heart of the community for expatriate women were the myriad organizations that catered to women. Through participation in clubs and leagues, women not only found outlets for their free time, they also tackled the tricky subjects of social isolation and cross-cultural adjustment. At the same time, they furthered the goals of soft power and public diplomacy by doing charity work and community engagement. Their standing in the American colony, as well as their privilege as white women, added another layer to the complex social and cultural roles they cooperated in as a group in Mexico City society.

⁴⁸⁸ AMSOC, "SSC Ladies," *Bulletin* 11, no. 9, (1952): 13.

Republican Motherhood, a nineteenth century concept that deemed women vital actors in a healthy and functioning democratic society, remained at the heart of the lived experiences of the women of the American colony. Active benevolence has a long history with evangelical and other protestant Anglo women's groups.⁴⁸⁹ Women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were told time and again that their purpose lay in religious and secular mutual aid and benevolent societies that spread Christianity throughout the United States and overseas territories, reformed wayward husbands, and secured the continent for Anglo-American expansion and dominance. Similarly, Anglo and Euro American women who went abroad took on the role of secular evangelists who spread the gospel of U.S. American democracy, consumerism, and anticommunism. Women's generosity rested on its ability to influence through subtlety and piousness.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ For an examination of imperialism and women missionaries, see Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie Shemo, eds., *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); Andreana C. Prichard, *Sisters in Spirit: Christianity, Affect, and Community building in East Africa, 1860-1970* (Michigan State University Press, 2017); Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (University of Michigan Press, 1985); For an examination of imperialism as a gendered phenomenon, see Nupir Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, ed, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); See Amy Greenberg's study on gender and ideology in the development of Manifest Destiny *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴⁹⁰Keith Melder, "Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early 19th Century America" *New York History* 48 (1967): 231-254; Gail S. Murray, "Charity Within the Bounds of Race and Class: Female Benevolence in the Old South," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 96 (1995): 54-70.

The Junior League

Women in the American Colony had an inordinate amount of free time. Husbands worked, children attended school, and servants cooked and cleaned. Out of sheer boredom or a desire to help, women joined organizations to feel part of a community. The Junior League provided a network of social contacts for newly arrived women. It also afforded American colony women the chance to interact with Mexican woman and to participate in charitable opportunities that elevated one's social standing which could benefit the wife as well as her husband. Since its founding in Mexico in 1930, the wealthiest and most influential U.S. American and Mexican women joined the Junior League's ranks. Not until 1973 did the Junior League have a Mexican woman as president. In their daily lives, so-called Leaguers promoted "trained voluntary participation in community work, in hospitals, convalescent homes, working class slums, and in Mexican government projects." The Junior League established a food distribution program in 1962 that repurposed surplus U.S. government food and redistributed it to 2,000 children in day nurseries in Mexico City. Leaguers also volunteered as midwives and nurses in hospital birthing units to help low income Mexican women.⁴⁹¹

Historically, the Mexican president's wife always played an intermediary role between the non-member Mexican volunteers and the U.S. and Mexican Leaguers. Through the Volunteer Service Bureau, non-member women from the Mexican middle class were placed in volunteer programs alongside U.S. American mentor members. The Junior League allowed for the most contact between U.S. American and Mexican women, although the women who tended to gain acceptance to the Junior League came from upper middle class to

⁴⁹¹ Gilded Guilt Corps, 12.

elite backgrounds. It was the most exclusive group for women and the hardest to enter because of its connections to wealthy members of Mexico City high society. New Leaguers were taught the “skills and attitudes” of volunteer service through mandatory bootcamp orientations that trained new members how to engage with community awareness. Women came away from the orientations fully committed to the idea that they held the key to solving Mexico’s social problems, be they Mexican or U.S. American.⁴⁹²

The Junior League actively went out into the Mexican community to make a visual linkage with their charitable causes and the American Colony. Leaguers created and supervised workshops for Mexican women which allowed Colony women and their Mexican counterparts to interact with Mexican women of different socioeconomic backgrounds. In 1952, the Mexico City League created the Comité Internacional Pro Ciegos. The Comité hosted workshops and taught life skills to women with visual impairments. One class called “Learning to Earn” helped seeing impaired women learn skills such as knitting or sewing that they could do at home to earn extra income.⁴⁹³ The American women who helped claimed that they did not “seek personal publicity” and instead were “only trying to organize and run a worthwhile educational center.”⁴⁹⁴ The League also administered el Centro Editorial de Braille in Coyoacán after receiving a grant through the Rockefeller Foundation.⁴⁹⁵

Leaguers put on traveling plays for children in orphanages and day nurseries. Mexican members acted as translators while the U.S. American women most often acted out

⁴⁹² AMSOC, “The Junior League and the Volunteer Service Bureau,” *Bulletin* 37, no. 6 (1973): 14.

⁴⁹³ “Junior League Helps the Blind Earn a Living,” *Bulletin* 8, no. 9 (1950): 13.

⁴⁹⁴ “Altruists Anonymous,” *Weekend: The Art of Good Living in Mexico* 1, no. 4, 15.

⁴⁹⁵ AMSOC, “Junior League News,” *Bulletin* 35, no. 3 (1971): 12.

the roles. The Leaguers performed for over 10,000 people in 1956 and 1957 for the plays Hansel and Gretel and Sleeping Beauty.⁴⁹⁶ Their role as teachers and performers highlighted the different worlds they belonged to as privileged women who had free time and money to devote to non-income generating hobbies. Charity work further demarcated the line between haves and have-nots. The have-nots understood that they only received benevolence thanks to the decision of the haves to give whatever they decided. The have-nots were at the mercy of the givers. This reinforced the idea that the givers—who were almost always wealthy or elites—were the rightful heirs to capitalism. The benevolence that elites benefactors give away does not get to the root of the issue of social inequality and poverty, but for a moment, it allows for the benevolent sponsors to feel like they contribute something of value to society, and they believe that it makes them (the American Colony and elites) look less malicious. By framing their work as social support for underprivileged Mexicans, Mexican and U.S. Leaguers tried mitigate negative impressions of imperialism and intrusion and sought to maintain and develop their identity as charitable saviors.⁴⁹⁷

Comité Americano Pro-Infancia

Women were persuaded by AMSOC and other colony charities to donate their time and money to help alleviate childhood poverty and inadequate childcare in the capital.

Women of the Comité Americano Pro-Infancia supervised the children of a day nursery in *colonia* Buenos Aires through what they called their “public-spirit” and dedication to those

⁴⁹⁶ “Junior League Children’s Theater,” *Bulletin* 35, no. 4 (1956): 24-28.

⁴⁹⁷ T. D. Allen, S.E. McManus, and J.E. Russell, “Newcomer Socialization and Stress: Formal Peer Relationships as a Source of Support” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 54, no. 3 (1999): 453-470.

less fortunate.⁴⁹⁸ The *colonia* was often described as an “unhealthy environment” and a “slum-area” in AMSOC publications. Although the nursery received paltry funding through the Mexican Secretariat of Health and Public Welfare, the day school had fallen into disrepair by 1940. Somehow the condition of the nursery had come to the attention of AMSOC board members, who decided to absorb the nursery into AMSOC’s charities in 1941. AMSOC and the UCF donated several thousand dollars annually to support the nursery, with AMSOC referring to the nursery as “our most heartwarming project.”⁴⁹⁹ After renovating the nursery and hiring more staff, working mothers in the *colonia* were told that they could now leave their children in the “capable” hands of medical and educational professionals. The children—all under seven years old-- had access to a modern playground and “plenty of fresh air,” pre-school instruction, and free breakfast and lunch.

Images printed in *Bulletin* show the children of the nursery wearing uniform overalls and dresses posed in front of Mexican and American flags. The caption reads: “without day school, what would happen to these youngsters while their mothers work?” Members of the Comité were told that if they did not volunteer their time, the children of Buenos Aires “might be running wild, exposed to all the evils of slum existence while their mothers work in order to maintain their homes.” Their service to the day nursery was phrased as creating “happier, healthier Mexican youths” and therefore a happier and healthier Mexico. Colonists were told to not only donate funds, but to physically assist with the day-to-day operations of the day nursery by volunteering as teachers and support staff to the nursery’s 100 pupils.⁵⁰⁰ If women volunteered their time, their pictures could end up in one of the many photographs in

⁴⁹⁸ AMSOC, “United Community Fund,” *Bulletin* 13, no. 6 (1955): 16.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ AMSOC, “American Colony Helps Maintain Day Nursery,” *Bulletin* 8, no. 1 (1950): 11.

colony publications, which would boost their own community standing and that of their husbands. Wives whose husbands had connections to major U.S. corporations in Mexico were highly sought after to join charity groups.

For the community drive of 1951, funds supplied improvements for new shrubbery and grass for the children of the Buenos Aires nursery to play on in the patio. Additional donations updated electrical installations and provided more equipment for the kitchen and dining area. The president of General Electric in Mexico, William Taylor, whose wife was a Comité member, donated a GE washing machine. Likewise, a Sears Roebuck executive whose wife belonged to the Comité donated a lawnmower for the new patio area. Both Taylor and the Sears executive stipulated that in order to receive their donations, the Mexican federal government had to ensure that the nursery remained open seven days a week, not only during the week, to provide adequate childcare for children who otherwise would not have a safe place to go on the weekends while their parents worked.⁵⁰¹ Amazingly, the Mexican Secretariat of Health and Public Welfare agreed to the demands of the Comité, GE, and Sears.

⁵⁰¹“Caring for Children of Slums” *Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (1951): 20-21.

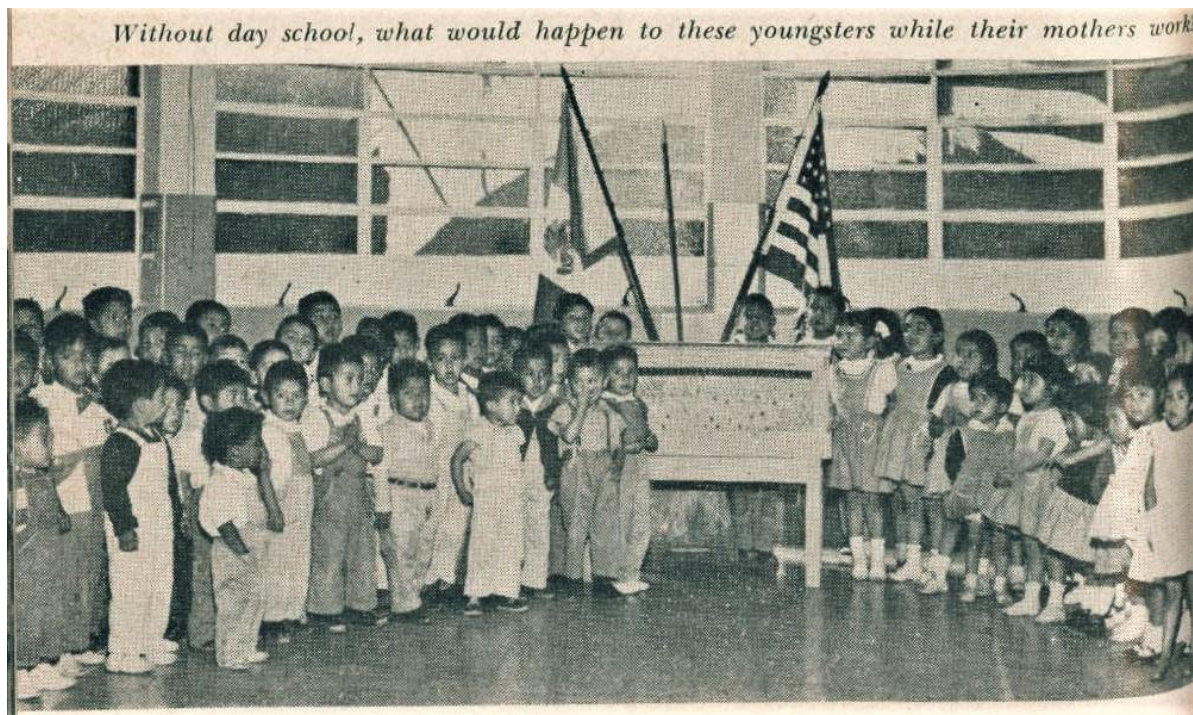


Illustration 12. Children of the Buenos Aires nursery posed in front of U.S. and Mexican flags, American Society of Mexico, Carlos Lazo de la Vega, *Bulletin*.

Social Service Committee

In the September 1950 issue of *Bulletin*, the author of a colony news piece attempted to shame the women of the American colony into sewing graduation uniforms for a girl's home. The article pleaded for help from members of the SSC, saying that the 49 "Indian" girls at the Casa Hogar Tamazunchale would go without their graduation dresses unless the women of the American colony volunteered to sew the blouses. One month later, the blouses arrived at the girl's home for the graduation festivities.⁵⁰² In addition to dresses and other garments, SSC women repaired donated toys to give to Mexican children. The women of the SSC created their own sewing and crafts space within the confines of the American Society meeting hall. Initially intended for destitute U.S. Americans, volunteers realized that the

⁵⁰² AMSOC, "SSC Blouses for Girls," *Bulletin* 8, no. 2 (1949): 25.

wider community was in greater need of help than the mostly well-off Colony members. For many SSC volunteers with older children, they worked nearly full time dedicating their free hours to ensure that local needy children had school uniforms and other essentials. For weeks leading up to Christmas, women donned blue jeans and old shirts and painted toys, sewed doll clothing, nailed and glued broken wooden toys back together again, and repurposed used clothing into “new” garments.⁵⁰³



Illustration 13. Girls of the Casa Hogar Tamazunchale wearing dresses provided by the SSC. Carlos Lazo de la Vega, *Bulletin*.

The women of the SSC believed their time and skills were worthwhile contributions of the Colony to the Mexican community made in the spirit of good neighborliness.⁵⁰⁴ They were often referred to as the “Colony’s unheralded angels of charity.”⁵⁰⁵ Mrs. T. W. Dowling

⁵⁰³ “Colony women Give Santa Claus a Helping Hand” *Bulletin* 7, no. 10 (1950): 16.

⁵⁰⁴ AMSOC, “SSC Volunteer Charity Workers Help Thousands,” *Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (1952): 16.

⁵⁰⁵ AMSOC, “SSC Volunteers,” in *Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (1967): 32.

explained that the SSC was the heart of the AMSOC and UCF charities because its “humanitarian spirit” touched almost all of the charities in one way or another through Casa Hogar Tamazunchale, the ABC Hospital, the American Red Cross, for the Christmas gift baskets, day nurseries, and several other organizations and groups. Every year the women of the SSC sewed over 1,200 items for the ABC Hospital alone, including gowns, mattresses, aprons, sheets, and pillow cases. An additional 2,500 garments went to needy families. Over 450 blouses were donated to the Comité Americano Pro-Infancia. The girls of Tamazunchale orphanage received 250 blouses annually. SSC women had the opportunity of touring the places and meeting the people that received their handiworks.⁵⁰⁶



Illustration 14. SSC women visiting a UCF-supported nursery, Carlos Lazo de la Vega, *Bulletin*.

⁵⁰⁶ AMSOC, “Social Service Committee: Expresses Humanitarian Spirit of Our People,” *Bulletin* 8, no. 6 (1950): 14-15.

Parque Lira

Every year new charities came into existence and members were implored to send money or donate old clothes to go toward more causes. The charities that colony members funded included the boys and girls home *Escuela Parque Lira* for mentally handicapped children. The boarding school housed and educated mentally handicapped and developmentally delayed children in an old mansion in a forested part of the city near Chapultepec Park. Students lived and studied on-site from kindergarten to fourth grade. They learned trades such as bookbinding, carpentry, weaving, knitting, dress-making, and gardening. Once again, the contributions of the women of the American Colony were regarded as those of redeemers, and without their support, the students of the school “would grow up to be delinquents or outright criminals.”⁵⁰⁷



Illustration 15. Nursery pupils in a classroom “refurbished” by the UCF and DAR. The girls also have on uniform dresses provided by the SSC. American Society of Mexico, Carlos Lazo de la Vega.

⁵⁰⁷ AMSOC, “Escuela Parque Lira,” *Bulletin* 10, no. 3 (1952): 16.

Polio, one of the most serious communicable diseases for children, figured heavily within community charity activities. After all, the infectious disease did not discriminate based on nationality or class. A polio epidemic in Mexico in the 1940s forced the community's charities to focus on the disease through widespread charitable drives. Colony members raised 200,000 pesos annually from the mid-1940s until the polio vaccine became available and was readily used in the mid to late 1950s. Members helped purchase a portable iron lung, funded the polio ward Centro de Recuperación, donated supplies for the brace shop in the ABC Hospital to make leg and arm braces for polio patients, and secured transport and lodging for children in the countryside to receive treatment in Mexico City.

The authors of article in *Bulletin*, *The News*, and other colony supported-media repeatedly told women that their participation in charities was their duty to the American community and to the Mexican people whose country they resided in: "This humanitarian effort thus helps to express the very real feeling of civic responsibility and gratitude which most resident Americans feel toward their host country."⁵⁰⁸ Their own achievements were highlighted monthly in Colony publications which emphasized the flattery that propelled many women into engaging in charitable behavior. The photos in *Bulletin* which accompany the charity articles are important signals to the reader that the work they do had a real world impact. The pictures ranged from beaming boys standing in front of their donated Christmas presents, children at Escuela Lira sitting still in their desks as they wear their shirts sewed by the women of the Colony, and girls in their crisp white uniforms at the Pro-Infancia Committee's Nursery. Almost all the Mexicans in the photos have darker skin and appear indigenous. Most photographs represent children of lower classes in hospitals or show visible

⁵⁰⁸ AMSOC, "SSC Christmas Giveaway" *Bulletin* 13, no. 6 (1955): 12.

signs of the devastation of polio along with the new technology that the women “brought” to Mexico through their volunteerism and fundraising.

Casa La Esperanza

Sister Celina Keller of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word operated a girl’s orphanage *La Esperanza* on the outskirts of Mexico City in 1954. News of Sister Keller’s arrival swept through economically devastated areas of Mexico City. Reportedly, soon after she appeared in Mexico City, Sister Keller heard of a baby who had been burned by his mother because she did not want to care for the child, so the mother locked the child in a room and set fire to the house. Sister Keller took in the child, who was described as “a little waif” in AMSOC literature and nursed him back to health. Before long, word spread that a U.S. American nun would care for abandoned children. Sister Keller soon reached out to the American Colony for support for what would become her girl’s home, *Casa La Esperanza*.

Various American Colony charities and organizations raised funds and supported the girl’s home. In 1956, 300 ladies of the English-speaking U.S. and British colonies held a benefit for the 34 children at Sister Keller’s. In the nine years since the home’s founding, 200 children received care from Sister Keller and her staff. The housing authority condemned the original home because the government wanted to use the land to build a new public market. Members of the American Colony and the Sisters of the Capuchin Order donated funds to build a new home 20 miles outside of Mexico City. The farm-school *La Granja La Esperanza* would be the first of its kind for girls in Mexico. Zenaida, an eight year old blind indigenous girl originally from the state of Oaxaca, was abandoned and begging on the street

when a police officer found her and brought her to Sister Keller. Sixteen year old Margarita escaped from the infamous La Castaneda mental institution after her stepmother left her there claiming the girl suffered from mental illness. Sister Keller took the girl in after her escape.⁵⁰⁹ Women of the colony oftentimes went to the girl's home to bring new clothing and supplies and to check on the children at Christmas and Easter when the colony women provided entertainment and holiday festivities for the girls. *La Esperanza* is still in operation to this day and serves as an all-girls orphanage that relies on support from the American Colony and the Junior League of Mexico City.⁵¹⁰

American colonist women of the Guild of Catholic Women supported a rural home for boys in the state of Morelos named Ciudad del Niño. The boy's home, located in the village of Tetecalita 30 miles south of Cuernavaca, housed 168 boys aged 5-15. It was maintained and run by a Catholic priest. The boys lived a spartan life in thatched huts and did not have access to indoor plumbing. Women and other colonists were encouraged to donate bed linens, toiletries, vitamins, old clothing, and anything else they could spare. Some of the Guild ladies organized food donations through an Alliance for Progress program that sent surplus foodstuffs to needy rural Mexicans. Readers of *Bulletin* were told that they had the power to change the lives of boys such as those at Ciudad del Niño, and with the continued support of Guild ladies and other civic-minded groups in Cuernavaca and Mexico City, "the little city of boys appears to have a promising future."⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ Emma Gutiérrez, "Nobody Wants Me: Unwanted Girls Find Refuge with Sister Keller" *Bulletin* 14, no. 9 (1956): 72.

⁵¹⁰ "Casa La Esperanza Home for Girls," Casa La Esperanza, accessed May 10, 2019, <http://casalaesperanza.org/en/home/>

⁵¹¹ "American Women Support Haven for Rural Boys in Morelos," *Bulletin* 20, no.6 (1962): 14-15.

Holidays

Holidays figured prominently in women's civic and charitable engagement with the Mexican community. The annual Christmas basket giveaway was one of the largest events of the women's civic calendar. Every year 1,000 adults and children received baskets and Christmas bundles full of clothing, medical supplies, toys, and candies. The women donned festive costumes and visited children at the Sister Mateo Rosa Tepexpan home for abandoned children where they gave gifts of candies, peanuts, and toys, and brought piñatas for the children. They also donated baskets to Father Wasson's home for abandoned boys in Cuernavaca.⁵¹² The basket giveaway provided an opportunity for women to come face-to-face with people who used their charitable services.

⁵¹² AMSOC, "Workshop Ladies in Role of Santa, Three Wise Men" *Bulletin 14*, no. 12 (1956): 14-16.



Illustration 16. People lined up in front of AMSOC headquarters for the annual Christmas basket and toy giveaways. Carlos Lazo de la Vega, *Bulletin*.

Colony women were reminded in colony magazines, newspapers, and other media that support of children's homes "falls into the bracket of 'charity,' a word which must fit into the vocabulary of every responsible citizen."⁵¹³ Therefore, if they did not participate in some form of charity, they neglected their duties not only as wives and mothers, but as responsible representatives of the United States. They not only acted out their motherly instincts by helping children, they demonstrated their responsibility as good neighbors and good citizens toward the abandoned and forgotten of Mexican society. It seemed that there was never a shortage of people in need of help.

⁵¹³ AMSOC, "Salvation Army Children's Home 'Asilo del Consuelo' Orphanage," *Bulletin* 16, no. 11 (1958): 16.

Social Clubs and Community Groups

The Progressive Era (1890-1920) saw a flourishing of women's social clubs in the United States. The women who joined thousands of clubs that proliferated across the United States devoted their time to cultural activities and social and self-improvement. Clubs addressed issues such as childcare, access to public education, local, state, and national government, health and sanitation, suffrage, and temperance.⁵¹⁴ Over the course of the nineteenth century, U.S. women who moved to Mexico created local chapters of many of the popular social clubs and organizations they belonged to in their home cities. Other clubs and associations were uniquely developed in Mexico or in the borderlands. What all many clubs had in common was the holdover ideals of the Progressive Era that regarded women as the rightful agents of social reform and the belief that social engineering had the potential to rid society of what was perceived as the problems of the lower classes. Once transplanted into the Mexican environment, middle class and elite American Colony women and their Mexican sister counterparts had new issues to confront and new social ills to reform.

Daughters of the American Revolution and Young Women's Christian Association

Although rather small and exclusive compared to the other social groups, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) John Edwards Chapter of Mexico City held a massive amount of sway in the American Colony and in Washington D.C. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) targeted single working-class young women in

⁵¹⁴ Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era* (The University of Press of Kentucky, 1991); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Yale University Press, 1990); Anne Fior Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

urban areas by providing housing, leadership classes, religious instruction, and job placement programs. The Social Gospel movement of the early twentieth century shaped how the YWCA evolved through much of the century. The women of the YWCA focused their energy on combating alcoholism, alleviating poverty, eliminating child labor, and fighting for women's issues.

The DAR is a service-based organization founded in 1890 with strict admissions guidelines that historically prohibited many non-white and non-wealthy women until quite recently.⁵¹⁵ The goals of the DAR centered on forming a connection of the revolutionary past to its future: nation-building, and what scholar Carolyn Strange calls “true Americanism” built on the idea of exclusive patriotic service and conservatism, which include red-baiting, collaborations with the Ku Klux Klan, and labeling themselves as the defenders of white America and its future progress domestically and internationally.⁵¹⁶ DAR women in Mexico City chose the Johnson School as their pet project. The Johnson School, started by U.S. Americans, helped children stricken with polio, born deaf, living with cerebral palsy, and other debilities who were unable to attend school. Volunteer Gwyneth Vaughan specialized in working with physically handicapped children in the United States, and upon arriving in Mexico with her husband, opened the school to care for and to educate several dozen

⁵¹⁵ Women are eligible to join the Daughters of the American Revolution if they can prove through genealogy and historical record that they descend from an ancestor who helped achieve U.S. independence from Great Britain. Historically, the organization has held high importance for typically wealthy, elite white women. Daughters of the American Revolution, “Daughters of the American Revolution,” accessed July 3, 2019, <https://www.dar.org/national-society/become-member/how-join>

⁵¹⁶ Carolyn Strange, “Sisterhood of Blood: The Will to Descend and the Formation of the Daughters of the American Revolution” *Journal of Women’s History* 26, no.3, (2014): 105-128.

children and teach them how to play and read music to give them “a future means of livelihood.”⁵¹⁷ DAR held Boston baked bean raffles at the annual Fourth of July celebration to raise funds for new equipment, musical instruments, to throw Thanksgiving and Christmas parties for the children, and to celebrate an annual birthday party for George Washington. In 1956 DAR chose a little girl described as “spastic” to be their posterchild for the 1956 UCF drive. They had the girl speak on radio shows broadcasted live in Mexico City to solicit funds. She also attended Colony charity functions with DAR representatives. Edna H. Tatspaugh, Regent of the John Edwards Chapter, told the U.S. House of Representatives that “our Chapter pledges its continued support to the National Society and our best efforts toward the furthering of better understanding between the United States and Mexico.”⁵¹⁸ The women of the American Colony DAR chapter also supported the Salvation Army Children’s Home called Asilo del Consuelo. The girls lived in what was described as a windowless, rickety building on the brink of collapse.⁵¹⁹ The girls had no heat and few blankets to keep them warm until women from DAR added the orphanage to its list of charities.

The YWCA worked with 5,000 women members, mostly Mexican girls and young ladies, at its Mexico City location, which opened in 1922. Colony women used the YWCA as a means to teach Mexican girls and women of the organization’s cultural, social, and religious evangelizing ideology.⁵²⁰ Classes in health, education, swimming, dancing,

⁵¹⁷ AMSOC, “DAR Helps Handicapped Kids at Johnson School” *Bulletin 14*, no. 6 (1956): 21.

⁵¹⁸ “Report of Daughters of the American Revolution: Report of John Edwards Chapter, Mexico,” United States Congressional serial set, Volume 11999 8th congress 1st set document no 39, 1957, 57.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁰ Nancy Boyd examines the role of YWCA women abroad in *Emissaries: The Overseas Work of the American YWCA, 1895–1970* (New York: Woman’s Press, 1986).

recreation, civics, and home economics were taught to lower and middle class Mexican girls who were depicted as “often struck with terror at the lurking dangers of city . . .”⁵²¹ Teams of colony women went into Mexican schools, villages, and economic disadvantaged areas where they taught physical fitness, home economics, and civics classes. Colony women who volunteered with the YWCA in Mexico viewed their participation as a way to “reform” Mexican women into upstanding citizens through YWCA programs that by 1950 had “quietly but steadily” carried on “a program of real assistance and good neighborliness among thousands of worthy families of the country.”⁵²²

Despite the association’s promotion of egalitarianism and anti-racism in its leadership, tensions between U.S. American YWCA and Mexican members simmered for decades. The association welcomed Mexican women to take on leadership roles in their country’s local chapters. U.S. YWCA members oftentimes ran into conflict with Mexican leadership whose growing nationalism ran headfirst into what Megan Threlkeld calls “U.S. women’s tendency toward imperialist internationalism.”⁵²³ Mexican women wanted their good neighbor sisters to support their enfranchisement and advocate for Mexican nationalism in the face of U.S. intervention. U.S. women did not support their Mexican sisters and turned a blind eye to serious social, cultural, and political issues in Mexico.

International Clubs

Historian Dina Berger examined the interplay between Anglo-American women and Mexican women in the formation and growth of the Pan American Round Table (PART).

⁵²¹ National Board of Young Women’s Christian Association, *The Young Women’s Press* 35 (1941): 315.

⁵²² AMSOC, “YWCA: A Constructive Force,” *Bulletin*, 22 July 1950, 22.

⁵²³ Pan American Women: U.S. Internationalists and Revolutionary Mexico By Megan Threlkeld, 99

The PART was a binational and international civic organization that helped create a sense of Pan Americanism between Mexico and the United States. The organization was women-only from its founding in 1916. She argues that the women of the PART “acted as agents of ‘soft’ diplomacy reshaping Pan Americanism, a U.S. foreign policy goal intended to foster commercial and political ties and to spread democracy in Latin America.” While there were sister clubs in other cities in the United States and Mexico, for the most part the PART remained a border entity linking the two countries through Pan Americanism and a sense of common good.

The clubs that Berger profiles located in Mexico City, she contends, were isolated from the Mexican community around them precisely because they were expatriates living in a foreign land. Anglo-American PART-Mexico City members did not initially join the club for Pan Americanism out of a sense of duty to their land of birth but found the organization more of a club to socialize with other expatriate women like themselves who most likely did not speak Spanish and did not wish to learn Spanish. However, PART members organized several charities that raised funds to supply the Benjamin Franklin book mobile with more reading materials. The event in 1951 inaugurated Pan American Week in the village of Tepepan. PART women traveled to the village located near Xochimilco. For Pan American Week 1951, the women were encouraged to join a contest to build the Spanish-language library at *la Franklin*. Contestants mailed original manuscripts of books to *la Franklin* and

winners were chosen by raffle, with the winning books translated and published by the SEP for use in libraries and schools.⁵²⁴



Illustration 17. PART women with schoolchildren in Tepepan, *Mexico This Month*.

The International Club for Women founded in 1958 created friendly contacts and relationships between the women of Mexico and different foreign colonies in Mexico, acquainting each other with the music, customs, and food of the different nations. The women held teas, concerts, and charity events that supported the Junior League and DAR. At

⁵²⁴ Mabel K. Knight, “The Book Mobile Project and the Pan-American Round Table”

Bulletin 9, no. 7 (1951): 2-4.

the weekly meetings women gave presentations on their home countries, their country's relationship to Mexico, and they planned charitable functions that incorporated community charities. U.S. American women represented the majority of members, followed by Mexican and British women. The International Women's Club allowed for another venue for American Colony women to spread of U.S. American culture.⁵²⁵

Social organizations provided conduits for women of the American Colony to channel their cultural and religious missionary zeal. Women could socialize with their colony peers while "reforming" aspects of Mexican society they thought were harmful. Women of the American Colony can be viewed as supporting the foundations for mid twentieth century U.S. neocolonial expansion. Far from being excluded from the proverbial table of foreign policy, they actively participated in grass roots efforts to strengthen the images of U.S. corporations and U.S. foreign policy in Mexico. They believed their hard work had real influence on the lives of the people they helped. It would be incorrect to simply criticize them for regurgitating the U.S. foreign and corporate policies of their husbands. Their charity work, while not revolutionary, served a purpose of clothing children, feeding the hungry, and educating people forced to live on the fringes of Mexican society. As gendered actors, the women used the opportunities available to them at the time to make what they believed was a difference in Mexican society.

⁵²⁵ Robert C. Hill speech to Women's International Club, Mexico City, 1958, Hill, Box, 79 Folder 19, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

The Dual Identities of Anita Brenner and Mary L. Elmendorf

Two women of the American Colony stand out as straddling two worlds: Anita Brenner and Mary L. Elmendorf. Both women had deep ties to Mexico and shared a love of the nation. They dedicated their adult lives to educating U.S. Americans on Mexican history, culture, and indigenous peoples; however, they also conformed to the midcentury archetype of the respectable colony woman as wife, mother, and civic-minded good neighbor. Despite their role as working mothers, they could not escape the restrictive environment that upheld community over individual.

Dr. Anita Brenner

By the time of her death in 1974, Anita Brenner had helped to solidify Mexico as a tourist destination and nation rich in cultural heritage in the minds of U.S. audiences. She was born in 1905 to naturalized U.S. American Latvian refugees on her father's ranch in Aguascalientes. Throughout her life she never felt welcomed by U.S. Americans or Mexicans, although her dual identity did help her navigate multiple worlds. Her family fled the Mexican Revolution in 1911 and settled in San Antonio, Texas, as many U.S. Americans residing in Mexico decided to do while the civil war unfolded. She left the University of Texas at Austin after her freshman year due to her classmate's rabid antisemitism. Anita returned to Mexico in 1923 and settled in the nation's capital. She immediately befriended the bohemian artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. She found in the artists colonies of Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende not only a home, but family.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁶ Susannah Joel Glusker, *Anita Brenner: A Mind of Her Own* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998),

As antisemitism threatened European Jews leading up to WWII, Anita wrote editorials and served as a correspondent for the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, the *Menorah Journal*, *The Nation*, the *New York Evening Post*, and other magazines and newspapers in which she proclaimed Mexico as a safe haven for European Jews who were denied refugee access into the United States of America. She organized relief agencies to settle and connect European Jews to the already-established Mexican Jewish communities in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and elsewhere.

While studying at Columbia University, Anita met her husband Dr. David Glusker. In 1930, she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to study the impact of Aztec and indigenous art on U.S. and European culture. Anita did not believe New York City was a healthy environment in which to raise a family, and Mexico was by the 1930s her area of research, so Anita and her husband decided to remain in Mexico to raise her family and conduct her field research. In 1934 she received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University under the supervision of Franz Boas. During this time, she also wrote and published several books with themes related to Mexico: *Idols Behind Altars* (1929); *The Wind That Swept Mexico* (1943); and her popular travel guide, *Your Mexican Holiday* (1932).

The Brenner-Glusker family attended Beth Israel Community Center, a conservative synagogue that served the English-speaking Jewish community of Mexico City. Anita experienced antisemitism from her Texas classmates and contemporaries when she lived in the United States, but she truly believed that Mexicans did not care about her ethnic and

religious background because she believed that Jews and Mexicans had much in common.⁵²⁷ It did not hurt that as a writer and cultural critic of her time, she helped spread the beauty and history of Mexico on a global stage. The fame and recognition she received might have sheltered the overt antisemitism other members of Mexico's Jewish communities experienced. Likewise, the fact that Anita and her husband were welcomed into the almost entirely WASP culture of the American Colony proves that her fame helped her gain access into areas that might not have been as accepting of a person of the Jewish faith in the United States.

She seamlessly floated from the circles of artists and intellectuals to the privileged social circles of the American Colony, of which she was intimately intertwined. Her children, Susannah Joel Glusker and Peter Glusker, though born in New York City, spent nearly 14 years in Mexico as children and young adults.⁵²⁸ Both children attended the American School, participated in Boy and Girl Scouts, and Susannah later returned to Mexico City to teach history at Universidad Iberoamericana. In many ways, Anita was the glue that held the American Colony together and made introductions across social, cultural, and professional lines. She was unique because of her artistic background and her drive to promote Mexico in the United States and to help reimagine the country in the minds of foreigners. She was not simply a passive housewife, something that might have contributed to the breakdown of her marriage in 1951. Instead, her love of Mexico drove her life's work.

⁵²⁷ Adina Cimet, *Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico: Ideologies in the Structuring of a Community* (SUNY Press, 1997), 23.

⁵²⁸ Susannah Joel Glusker, *Anita Brenner: A Mind of Her Own* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998),

Her many projects, books, writings, and other achievements drove Anita to create the magazine *Mexico This Month*. This pet project was her ode-in-print to her homeland. She worked tirelessly to cultivate business connections to fund the operation of the magazine. Her connections to artists, intellectuals, politicians, and corporate interests allowed her to bring a balanced examination of Mexican culture. Former ambassador Fulton Freeman sent a letter to the editor to her in 1965 thanking her for creating the magazine and for her “very effective efforts at correcting some misleading impressions about Mexico and its relations with the United States.”⁵²⁹ Her daughter Susannah Glusker notes that, despite being part of the leftist circles of Mexican artists and intellectuals, the main supporters of the magazine were William “Bill” Richardson, Ambassador William O’Dwyer, Kelso Peck and Robert LaMontagne from General Motors, U.S. ambassadors to Mexico, and former Mexican president Miguel Alemán.⁵³⁰ She had the ability to connect to very different groups of people and find common ground.

Anita did not view herself as selling out to U.S. imperialism. She used *Mexico This Month* as a platform to expose the world to the wonders of Mexico, just as she used her books, articles, and artworks to display a multifaceted and hospitable Mexico that stretched from Baja California to Chiapas. The U.S. businessmen donors saw the magazine as less a labor of love and more of an economic and business necessity for U.S. tourism and U.S. corporate influence. Brenner’s editorship lent an air of legitimacy to the project that allowed the magazine to have a larger circulation in the United States than it would have had if it was strictly a business-focused magazine.

⁵²⁹ Fulton Freeman, “Letter to the Editor,” *Mexico This Month* 10, no. 11, (1965): 8.

⁵³⁰ Susannah Joel Glusker, *Anita Brenner*, 258.

Anita lived out her days at her family's ranch in Aguascalientes where she was born. She died in a car accident near her ranch in 1974. On being a European-American-Mexican, Anita noted in 1943: "I would like to say, sometime, somewhere, that being an American brought up in Mexico gives one an obsession to reconcile two ways of life, two almost opposed points of view, two sets of emotions and interests."⁵³¹ She believed that her obligation as an artist, writer, editor, and member of the American Colony and Mexican community was to bring the two countries together in a real spirit of good neighborliness. Her efforts sent *Mexico This Month* into the homes and offices of thousands of U.S. Americans for over twenty years, and in the process helped to humanize and destigmatize Mexicans and Mexico as backward and uncivilized.

Dr. Mary L. Elmendorf

At the age of 55, after many years spent in Europe, Mexico, and the United States as a scholar, researcher, educator, wife, mother, and expatriate, Dr. Mary Lindsay Elmendorf finally earned her doctorate. Long a champion of women's rights, she spent her adult life researching women's social issues and fighting for equal rights in the United States and Mexico. Along with her husband Dr. John Elmendorf, Mary made a lasting impact on the American Colony, the field of anthropology, and in U.S.-Mexican relations.

Both John and Mary lived their adult lives as devout Quakers. Their religious beliefs would motivate their professional and personal lives and shape the way they viewed the world and the roles of charity and philanthropy, education, and U.S. foreign policy. In 1941, John refused to be drafted during WWII. As a conscientious objector, he asked to be allowed

⁵³¹ Obituary of Anita Brenner, *New York Times*, December 2, 1974, national edition.

to leave the United States for San Miguel de Allende, Mexico where he and Mary co-administered a study abroad program for the Putney Preparatory School with artists Stirling Dickinson, Rufino Tamayo, and others who inhabited the San Miguel arts community. His conscientious objector status prevented him from leaving the country in 1942 to lead another study abroad program. Mary took his place and led 12 Putney students to San Miguel. Eventually John was drafted and sent to Europe as a medic.

In 1945, Mary traveled to France to help with refugee relief with Cooperative for American Relief in Europe (CARE—later changed to Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere) with John still serving nearby in France and Germany. Mary had an inner drive toward securing peace and safety for those less fortunate, especially women and children, and in education. CARE is a U.S. American overseas secular international disaster relief agency that grew out of the need to feed, clothe, and care for European refugees and war victims during and after WWII. Private donors in the United States sent care packages to families and individuals with canned food, toiletries, clothing, and other supplies. This is where the term “care package” originated. CARE packages were advertised as ways for U.S. Americans to lend a hand in protecting freedom by lifting people out of poverty and redirecting them away from communism and extreme nationalism.⁵³² From the beginning, CARE carefully cultivated connections to corporations to secure funding for relief effort.⁵³³ In the early 1950s, CARE started expanding outside of Europe.

⁵³² David Morris, *A Gift from America: The First 50 Years of CARE* (Longstreet Press, 1996), 56.

⁵³³ Starbucks was the largest corporate sponsor of CARE in 2011, Kathryn A. Agard, *Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations: A Reference Handbook* (SAGE, 2011), 564.

Their time spent in San Miguel as educators and program facilitators charted the path for Mary and John's lives following WWII. After serving as Deputy Commissioner of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC, a Quaker relief organization and a member organization of CARE) in Europe during and after WWII, John returned to the United States to begin a doctoral program in linguistics. Mary followed shortly after and began a graduate degree in anthropology. Before he finished his dissertation, John was asked to direct the Mexican-American Cultural Institute in Mexico City because of his background and training in linguistics and education. Mary followed as wife, mother, and graduate student, and occasionally helped her husband with the Institute while John finished his dissertation. Because of her interest and previous undergraduate training in anthropology and art, she handled the Institute's cultural programming which allowed her to meet leading Mexican anthropologists, historians, and artists.

The Latin America Regional Director of CARE, Nelson Neff, was sent in 1952 to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City to find a man suitable to run the new CARE Mexico operation. Neff was directed to John Elmendorf at the Mexican-American Cultural Institute for recommendations. Neff asked John Elmendorf if he knew of anyone in the American Colony who would be right for the position. John returned home to tell Mary that she should apply for the position because of her previous work with CARE and AFSC in Europe. Instead, Mary gave Neff a list of male candidates she thought should apply. That night, Neff attended a scouting mission at an AMSOC event with the Elmendorfs. The next day when he told his supervisor in New York that he had met Mary Elmendorf, Neff's supervisor demanded that Mary receive the position. Neff told his supervisor that a woman could not organize an international relief distribution program, especially in Mexico. A few days later, Neff met

with Mary and explained what his supervisor had suggested, to which Mary replied, “I’ll take it [the job] part time for six months, negotiate an agreement with the Foreign Office, set up an office, and start a program based on community development and self-help. In six months, we can renegotiate. By then you’ll know whether a woman can do it and I will know whether I can combine it with my family responsibilities.”⁵³⁴

Mary understood her obligations to family, which were strengthened by the social conventions of midcentury U.S. American motherhood, and which were also compacted in the bubble of the American Colony. However, her desire to achieve personal and career satisfaction superseded any norms and restrictions placed on women at the time. The fact that John Elmendorf encouraged her to take the position and advocated for her career advancement reveals that the Elmendorfs had a very egalitarian relationship given the time period.

Under Mary’s leadership, the new CARE Mexico program continued with the care package initiative but added a distribution program it termed “self-help” kits that included tools, books, building equipment, sewing machines, and even livestock that benefactors in the United States could donate to farmers, schoolhouses, and villagers in remote areas. Outreach programs focused on women and maternal health, a hallmark of Mary’s future research. Her day-to-day roles included channeling donations and gifts from U.S. and Mexican donors into the appropriate areas of need, acting as a conduit between private agencies and the Mexican government, and traveling to remote CARE villages to ensure that the needs of local communities were taken into consideration. In its first year of operation in

⁵³⁴ Interview with Mary Elmendorf, “A Collection of CARE Memories – Mary Elmendorf,” CARE Archives, <http://www.carealumninow.org>, 2.

Mexico, CARE distributed over \$60,000 in gifts and money to various projects in Mexico, mostly involving education, agriculture, and healthcare.⁵³⁵

The Board of Directors of CARE Mexico came from the U.S. business community, chaired by “Bill” Richardson of City Bank Mexico, and with support and blessing from Ambassador Robert C. Hill, with whom the Elmendorfs and Brenner-Glusker families were close friends. Local Mexican and U.S. businessmen donated funds for CARE projects and encouraged participation from American colonists. The Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU/APEI), a non-profit organization that promotes partnerships between business and government-- entered into a partnership to fund CARE projects beginning in 1957. Just as with other U.S.-supported charities in Mexico, Mexican and U.S. business interests were intimately entangled with CARE and its various self-help projects throughout Mexico.

Mary fully believed that if presented in the right light, the stigma of receiving aid vanished, and people accepted donations not as handouts, but as displays of gratitude.⁵³⁶ She asked CARE New York to accept her retooling of how packages were marketed both to donors and receivers in order to help grow the program in Mexico. Villagers were chosen by CARE Mexico staffers based on the recognition of “their efforts toward progress,” in hindsight a very arbitrary and nebulous designation. CARE donors—which varied from corporate sponsors to individuals-- heard through CARE publications about a village who wanted “progress.” In turn, donors sent tools, aid, and other supplies to “help” villagers “help

⁵³⁵ Dick Hayman, “Matching Good Will with Good Works,” *Bulletin 10*, no. 10 (1952): 16.

⁵³⁶ Mary Elmendorf, *From Southern Belle to Global Rebel: Memoirs of Anthropologist and Activist Mary Elmendorf*, (Sharon Fitzpatrick Publications, 2012), 151.

themselves” on their journey toward what was deemed “modernity.”⁵³⁷ While Mary looked back fondly on her original proposal in 2012, her use of the terms “progress” and “modernity” remain problematic when viewed through today’s lens of charity and benevolence.⁵³⁸ The CARE Mexico program was modeled on the study of Chan Kom, a small community in Yucatan, immortalized in anthropologist Robert Redfield’s study *A Village that Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited*. Redfield’s examination used the same language that Mary used to describe CARE Mexico villages, which were categorized as “primitive” or “modern” based on subjective measures.⁵³⁹ That said, the programs instituted under CARE did help thousands of people across Mexico gain access to potable water, healthcare, and education. It remains a question of how to view and weigh paternalistic benevolence if the end result actually resulted in positive changes that people warmly welcomed into their communities under their own free will.

Before she took the position as CARE director, people doubted that a woman, much less a housewife, could organize and run a nation-wide and international relief organization. But with her small all-woman staff comprised of colony women, CARE flourished. Mary and her staff asked donors to supply what the organization called midwife kits which were distributed to health centers in the capital to improve maternal and infant health. AFSC partnered with CARE with the help of the Elmendorf’s Quaker connections. Mary also collaborated with schoolchildren in participating U.S. schools to send old books to schoolchildren in Mexico for classroom libraries. The children paid for the books to be

⁵³⁷ Interview with Mary Elmendorf, “A Collection of CARE Memories – Mary Elmendorf,” 5.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ Robert Redfield, *A Village That Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).

cleaned and translated into Spanish. In 1959, 4-H clubs in the United States raised funds to donate farm equipment for sister clubs in Mexico. Additionally, CARE provided technical training in agriculture and health and sanitation programs through mobile health clinics that toured remote areas.⁵⁴⁰ In 1953, as Director of CARE Mexico, Mary helped to bring Helen Keller to Mexico City to speak at a Junior League fundraising luncheon.⁵⁴¹ She utilized her connections with AFSC to bring Quaker volunteers to install drilling wells and help with CARE Mexico programs. Mary and her staff proved the naysayers wrong judging by the success of CARE Mexico and the hundreds of people who petitioned to have CARE programs in their villages.

Even though Mary and John both strove to build strong inter-American relations, the Elmendorfs came under scrutiny from Senator Joseph McCarthy's House UN-American Activities Committee (HUAC) which started an investigation into their work in Mexico because of their belief in improving world peace and race relations, and because of John's work at the Cultural Institute.⁵⁴² Mary was accused of giving AFSC relief to Spanish refugees fleeing the civil war during and after WWII, and for having connections to radical Mexicans and U.S. political expatriates. In McCarthy's eyes, that was enough to label the Elmendorfs sympathetic to anarchists, communists, and anyone else "un-American." Similarly, John hosted and promoted artists and intellectuals at the Institute that the State Department disapproved of or viewed suspiciously, like artists Stirling Dickinson, Diego

⁵⁴⁰ AMOC, "4-H clubs pro entendimiento internacional A.C. APEI" *Bulletin 18*, no. 2 (1960): 26.

⁵⁴¹ Letter from Mary Elmendorf, Chief of CARE Mission Mexico, Mexico City to Eric T. Boulter, Box 41, Folder 8, February 24, 1953, American Foundation for the Blind, Helen Keller Archive.

⁵⁴² Paul L. Doughty, "Mary Lindsay Elmendorf: Citizen Activist to Applied Anthropologist" *American Anthropologist 113*, no. 3 (2011), 500.

Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and scholars and social critics Octavio Paz and even Anita Brenner.

In *Mexico This Month*, Anita frequently wrote and published updates on Mary's CARE Mexico projects. In one piece, Anita referred to CARE Mexico as having more power to enact change and bring about friendly relations between Mexico and the United States than presidential goodwill or other state-sanctioned efforts. She lavished praise on the well-drilling projects across Mexico, noting that "living abroad, the difference between power politics and honest neighborliness gets very visible sometimes." She related how the visuals of "hordes" of young Quakers and other CARE volunteers sweeping across the border into Mexico had the dramatic impact of showing that regular U.S. Americans such as the CARE volunteers were not invaders but peaceful do-gooders arriving in Mexico to offer assistance.⁵⁴³

Mary's fame caused her to be on the radar of Joseph McCarthy, who reportedly told the Elmendorfs to cease all associations with Anita Brenner and her family. CARE Mexico was seen as too socialistic and controversial with some in Washington. Despite the warning, Dr. David Glusker served as doctor for the Elmendorfs and most of the American colonists during his time in Mexico.⁵⁴⁴ The world of the American colonists was quite small and interrelated, and Mary and John were not people to be bullied because of friendships they had with supposed radicals. They two families continued to remain friends, but Mary later claimed that many in the community shunned the Brenner-Glusker family after McCarthy's

⁵⁴³ Anita Brenner, "Person to Person," *Mexico This Month* 5 no. 3 March 1959

⁵⁴⁴ Annotated curriculum vitae by Mary Elmendorf created in 2003, <http://www.library.ufl.edu/spec/manuscript/Elmendorf/Vitae.htm>

warning.⁵⁴⁵ The Elmendorfs fought the accusations against them, knowing they had nothing to hide. But, the stigma of McCarthy remained. At every Colony and U.S. Embassy event, Mary wondered, “who was watching us?,” and it left the Brenner-Glusker and Elmendorf families disheartened to know their friends willingly spied for the government against them.⁵⁴⁶ In later years Mary referred to herself and John as “survivors of McCarthyism.”⁵⁴⁷ The stain on John’s career due to McCarthy’s accusations forced him to retire from the Institute and take a position at Mexico City College. For the few months it took John to transition to MCC, Mary was the breadwinner for the family through her position at CARE.

In 1959, CARE and AFSC shot a documentary film on the efforts of a CARE Mexico water drilling project. The film, *World Our Hands Can Make*, profiled volunteer efforts to bring potable water to the CARE-supported village of San Mateo Atenco. Mary claims that this project was used as a model for the Peace Corps after a CARE report made its way to John F. Kennedy.⁵⁴⁸ The film showed a fictionalized account of a boy in San Mateo Atenco who was saved from death thanks to CARE medical intervention when elders agreed to allow CARE and AFSC to build a new well for the community. The film also depicted how CARE taught good hygiene and how to combat germs.⁵⁴⁹ The film, while attempting to be educational and enlightened, paints Mexican villages as backward and in need of assistance from foreigners. Interestingly, the film won an award at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁵ Mary Elmendorf, *From Southern Belle to Global Rebel*, 162.

⁵⁴⁶ Mary Elmendorf, *From Southern Belle to Global Rebel*, 166.

⁵⁴⁷ Mary Elmendorf, *From Southern Belle to Global Rebel*, 167.

⁵⁴⁸ Betty Bernice Faust, E. N. Anderson, and John G. Frazier, “Rights, Resources, Culture, and Conservation in the Land of the Maya in *The Worlds of Mayan Women*, 41.

⁵⁴⁹ Mary Elmendorf, *From Southern Belle to Global Rebel*, 157.

⁵⁵⁰ Annotated curriculum vitae by Mary Elmendorf created in 2003.

Mary's work not only brought attention to CARE, it also highlighted the volunteer work that foreigners did in Mexico, which became a central tenet of the Peace Corps and other programs that relied on U.S.-driven charitable volunteer development agendas. The people of Santa Mateo Atenco named the town plaza after Mary Elmendorf. They petitioned the Mexican government for the unusual request and shockingly, it was well-received, demonstrating that like the other charitable entities that U.S. Americans and foreigners engaged with in Mexico, the Mexican government allowed others to fill the void of a society in flux.

According to Mary, the project in San Mateo Atenco, the midwife kits, and other women-focused programs were life-changing for herself and for the women who received the donations. Women felt empowered through participation in programs that impacted their communities. Health campaigns and midwife kits reduced infant mortality in areas that lacked access to medical care. CARE built sewing rooms in Oaxaca for women equipped with sewing machines from U.S. multinational corporations operating in Mexico. The women communally sewed clothing and sold the finished product to fund community projects. CARE received requests from hundreds of communities for well drilling programs, packages, and community programs.⁵⁵¹ Women in the communities CARE worked in fully participated in the programs at every level. Through Mary's proposal, she tried new techniques and strategies to involve women in projects that were traditionally divided along gender lines in indigenous and rural areas. CARE staff organized and trained 94 women

⁵⁵¹ CARE Alumni Oral History Collection, "A Collection of CARE Memories – Mary Elmendorf oral interview," accessed May 24, 2019, <http://www.carealumninow.org>, 6.

volunteers in and around San Mateo Atenco who then went out into other villages and trained more women in maternal healthcare and community activism.

Mary ran headfirst into the roadblock many women faced in the American Colony—certain channels existed to give women “appropriate” ways to enact charity work and maintain U.S. influence within the Colony-- but Mary strayed outside of the carefully defined boundaries of what women could partake in. Despite a supportive husband, not everyone around Mary believed she should be traipsing into the jungles and meeting with Maya villagers to install wells and building libraries in Oaxaca. She received criticism from members of the American Colony who blamed the supposed “bad behavior” of her children on her work and the time she spent away from the home. People asked her husband if he could not support the family and if Mary was “forced” to work outside of the home to provide for her children.⁵⁵² Colonists accused her of putting her own career and interests above those of her family, although she never viewed it in that light. She contributed to community life and furthered the goals of CARE in her own ways that were not always officially sanctioned by community norms for privileged women.

During her tenure at CARE and after she left the relief organization in 1960, she acted as an adviser to the Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters and as a consulting anthropologist for the Peace Corps where she organized excursions, taught classes, and advised volunteers on Latin American culture and history. At times she stepped outside of the prescribed social and civic organizations for Colony women and cut her own path toward bettering her communities—U.S. American, Mexican, and Indigenous Maya--

⁵⁵² Mary Lindsay Elmendorf, “The Many Worlds of Mayan Women” in *Rights, resources, culture, and conservation in the land of the Maya*, ed. Betty Bernice Faust, Eugene N. Anderson, and John G. Frazier (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004),

while simultaneously volunteering in the traditional outlets for Colony women and taking her children to Little League training and Boy Scout and Girl Guide meetings.

In 1960, Mary was presented with several awards and honors for her work with CARE. Before leaving his posting, Ambassador Hill visited the well drilling project at San Mateo Atenco. Mary was given an award by Hill for her years of service and “outstanding performance as the first chief of CARE mission in Mexico.”⁵⁵³ Also in 1960, Mexican screenwriter Juan Durán y Casahonda spoke on the television program “Metropoli” and asked the Mexican president to bestow upon Mary the highest honor for a foreign national, the Order of the Aztec Eagle. He claimed that Mary was “politically a citizen of the United States and spiritually a citizen of the world” and that due to her years of work, she deserved the “decoration because she has served our people as have few foreigners, with respect, love, and with no strings attached.” He told the story of how San Mateo Atenco named the plaza after Mary and threw her a going away party upon her dismissal from CARE Mexico. The villagers reportedly told Mary, “Go back to your country, dear lady, to that land which now we love more because you have helped us to know it better, and tell your people that you leave here some good friends, ready to be just that to all men of good will, without distinction of class, creed, or nationality.” Juan Durán y Casahonda was supposedly rabidly anti-American until he became involved in CARE Mexico and eventually sat on the Board of Directors.⁵⁵⁴ His comments tie together the mission of the Elmendorfs years in Mexico: Mexicans and U.S. Americans became united along common bonds of friendship,

⁵⁵³ Hill visit to CARE well-digging project, San Mateo Atenco, Mexico, Box 33 Folder 13, Robert Charles Hill Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

⁵⁵⁴ “Translation-Statement made by Don Juan Duran y Casahonda, Mexico City, October 21, 1960,” Series 4, Box 1, Folder 8, Mary L. Elmendorf Papers, University of Florida Digital Collections, University of Florida Libraries.

community, and charity. Whether the screenwriter's words are over embellished does not distract from the sentiment that Mary was respected by Mexicans for her contribution to Mexican society.

Mary resigned from CARE in 1960 when the New York office transferred her to Yugoslavia. She was told that most directors only stayed on for two to four years in a given office, not eight, and it was time for her move to a different posting. It pained her to resign but she had no desire to move her family to another country she had no ties to when her husband still had a position at MCC. In the fall of 1960, she ran for director of AMSOC, one of the first women to ever run for the position. In her personal statement to AMSOC members, she relied on her experience with CARE and her background in social work to pledge to help the American Colony further its civic and charitable goals. She also looked at her retirement from CARE as a chance to spend more time with her family and devote herself to more civic interests within the American Colony.⁵⁵⁵ She did not win the presidency, but she did become an AMSOC officer.

In 1961, John Elmendorf became vice president of Brown University, and the family moved to Rhode Island. Just as she had done before, Mary threw herself into any work she could find that connected back to Mexico. She organized study abroad programs for Brown students. Eventually, she returned to school and completed her Ph.D. in 1972. She conducted a 1973 study for the Ford Foundation on changing roles and status of women in Latin American. She became the first anthropologist employed by the World Bank in 1975 in which she researched and authored a sociocultural study, all the while conducting her own

⁵⁵⁵ AMSOC, "Candidates for director of American Society of Mexico," *Bulletin 18*, no. 8 (1960): 14.

separate research on Maya women's fertility for her personal research projects. Over the course of her scholarly pursuits, she received funding from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the World Bank, and other corporate and philanthropic entities.

Dr. Mary Elmendorf represented an unusual type of expatriate woman who navigated two separate spheres simultaneously—one wholeheartedly U.S. American and very much part of the American Colony; the other, that of a nonconformist scholar-activist who spent weekends and holidays dispensing aid, conducting research, and documenting indigenous cultures in areas most members of the American Colony would never dare visit. Much like Anita Brenner, Mary's love for Mexico compelled her to share the nation's wonders and indigenous cultural heritage with the world through her anthropological studies on Mayan women and her work on what today would be termed social justice. Reflecting back on her time with CARE, Mary noted that the program succeeded because it took the hard work of not just herself but of Mexican anthropologists, Mexican officials, private agencies and foundations, and of course the townspeople and villagers who collaborated to build hundreds of wells and establish programs for thousands of people across Mexico in what she called the best "demonstration of 'people-to-people' friendship."⁵⁵⁶

Conclusion

What scholars overlook is that while some women were indeed not willing to assimilate into Mexican culture, they were by no means entirely removed from it. In fact, many women believed that their charity work helped make them members of Mexican society and therefore allowed them to plant "roots" in Mexican soil. If women of the

⁵⁵⁶ CARE Alumni Oral History Collection, "Mary Elmendorf," 8.

American Colony removed themselves from the Mexican community around them, they could not effectively act as agents of soft diplomacy, as Berger herself posits. Their activities and engagements with Mexicans in the form of charity work and other community outreach initiatives proves that they were not entirely isolated away in a walled expatriate fortress. They engaged in soft diplomacy through their works, whether they did so out of altruism or out of a sense of civic pride as citizens of the United States, one can never know. However, women actively contributed to the soft power efforts of the U.S. government and corporate interests during the Cold War in an incredibly gendered way.

Women like Anita Brenner and Mary L. Elmendorf, while intellectuals and “radicals,” navigated environments that had deep connections to U.S. corporate, government, and philanthropic influences. They paved their own ways in their scholarly and personal pursuits, and they very much remained tethered to corporate and governmental influence because they relied on outside financial support to fund their research and projects. They found ways to participate in roles that their peers could not or did not wish to engage in. They promoted the values of U.S. American foreign policy through their activism, scholarship, and artistic works, albeit in what could be viewed as in a more progressive manner. And, most importantly, Mary L. Elmendorf and Anita Brenner challenged the status quo and used the channels available to women of their standing to play a double role within the American community and Mexican society to further their personal and civic goals.

Conclusion

The Mechanics of Building a Soft Power “Empire”

Historian of European-U.S. relations Geir Lundestad has stated that “rarely does the United States conquer; it rules in more indirect, more American ways, so indirect, in fact, that frequently, but far from always, it is still invited to play the preeminent role it does toward the end of the (first?) American Century” in what Lundestad calls an “empire” by invitation.⁵⁵⁷ In many ways, the American Colony was a miniature empire by invitation. Welcomed by the business class and elites of Mexican society, courted by the Mexican government in varying manners throughout the twentieth century, and even praised and received by ordinary Mexicans of all backgrounds, members of the American Colony were not perceived as intruders, but as benevolent agents of U.S. governmental and corporate power. The overt anti-Americanism of the Mexican Revolution and the 1938 oil expropriation disagreement faded into the background as more connections formed between U.S. and Mexican political, business, and cultural entities thanks in part to the benevolent model portrayed by members of the American Colony. The word “empire” is a hotly contested term. While the United States did not have a formal empire in Mexico, its impact on the Mexican political, economic, and cultural landscapes does bring forward questions about a U.S. informal “empire.” As Lundestad states, this “empire” building occurred in more indirect ways that softened the blow of empire wielded by traditional imperial powers like the British.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Geir Lundestad, “‘Empire by Invitation’,” 217.

⁵⁵⁸ Lundestad, “‘Empire by Invitation’,” 195.

Ambassador Fulton Freeman sent a letter to the editor of *Mexico This Month*, his friend Anita Brenner, thanking her for the work she did to further Mexican-U.S. Relations: “Embassies and governments can only do so much in promoting understanding between peoples,” remarked Freeman, “real success depends upon the kind of imitative and sense of responsibility shown by private citizens like yourself and *Mexico Thus Month* in this instance.”⁵⁵⁹ Members of the American Colony in Mexico City regarded their charitable and philanthropic efforts as grassroots diplomatic exercises in carrying on a post-WWII Good Neighbor policy. Despite Freeman’s testament to the responsibilities of the everyday colonist, he of all people understood that embassies and governments embodied the same efforts as the colonists, and oftentimes used them as agents of soft power for the U.S. formal and informal “empires.”

Likewise, businessmen united colonists and bureaucrats around the goal of fighting communism through consumption and positively marketing the United States and its economic strength. Through their actions in Mexican society, colonists projected the United States as a well-intentioned good neighbor. The community activism they participated in helped reinforce the economic and social neocolonialism that the American colonists brought into Mexico City. Activism and charity work made them feel good on a personal level. They believed that they made a difference in improving U.S.-Mexican relations. The U.S. corporations the colonists worked for and supported became successful operations which are now deeply ingrained in Mexican culture and life.

By the 1990s, Mexico was firmly entrenched within the U.S. corporate sphere of influence with the implantation of NAFTA in 1994. The American Colony persisted, and still

⁵⁵⁹ Fulton Freeman, “Letter to the Editor,” *Mexico This Month* 10, no. 11, (1965): 8.

exists to the present, but the motivations and goals of the thousands of U.S. citizens currently residing in Mexico have shifted. The end of the Cold War brought an end to the justifications of selling the United States as a benevolent neighbor in comparison to Cuba or the Soviet Union. Organizations and associations like the American Society of Mexico, which had been the cornerstones of colony life, do not hold as much sway as had been the case before the end of the Cold War. Similarly, the relationship between the American colonists and the U.S. Embassy is not as intertwined as it once was because neither side needs the other to further any significant strategic political, economic, or cultural goals. In the present, colonists are simply not needed like they were in the past to spread the image of a benevolent empire to their Mexican neighbors, friends, business associates, and charitable beneficiaries; however, it could be argued that given today's contested relationship between the two countries, a renewed cross-cultural engagement could mend the tarnished image of the United States in Mexico.

Through their social and civic organizations, colony men, women, and children contributed to informal and formal empire building simply by being U.S. Americans and selling their identity as white saviors and good neighbors.⁵⁶⁰ In their eyes, they represented "America" in all its consumerist and diplomatic glory. Elite and upper middle class Mexican support for U.S. corporate and governmental influence meant that Mexico would stay protected from "outside" influences. Colony organizations and societies fortified American identity from within and created avenues for members to dispense American identities to neighboring foreign communities. The actions of members of the American Colony reinforced the justifications-- in their own minds-- to continue to support and perpetuate

⁵⁶⁰ NACLA, "The Gilded Corps: The Junior League," 12.

cultural and economic “imperialism.” The American colonists meant well when they gave money to abandoned children or refurbished schools, or when they spread U.S. corporate influence, and they succeeded at both sometimes simultaneously.

In rural communities it is often cheaper to buy a bottle of Coca-Cola than it is to provide clean drinking water. Mexican children have the highest obesity numbers in the world thanks to the Mexican marketplace being flooded with U.S. junk food. Midcentury American colonists are not solely to blame for the current obesity epidemic, poverty, or the lack of infrastructure, but they certainly laid a few bricks in the foundation (along with elite Mexicans) that crafted the image of the United States as a benevolent empire selling Mexicans United States-styled “modernity and progress,” most often to the detriment of lower income Mexicans.

This examination sheds light on how U.S. corporations use existing networks of people, employees, and institutions to further corporate goals and spread influence. The corporate world had tendrils into the public and private lives of American colonists and the U.S. government. Future research should examine other intersections of soft power, charity and philanthropy, and U.S. economic and cultural imperialism through corporate structures and foreign communities. Future studies should uncover an in-depth examination of Ford and Coca-Cola’s corporate citizenship efforts through the corporate school programs that both companies directed. Next, a study of Cuautitlán and other Ford towns in the same vein as Greg Grandin’s *Fordlandia* would shine a light on the interconnectedness of U.S. corporate power abroad and its impacts on local communities. Other U.S. automotive corporations could also be examined such as General Motors and Chrysler in the Mexican city Toluca.

U.S. corporations acted in tandem or at least in agreement with the Mexican government to operate facilities and plants in Mexico. The myth of Mexican nationalism posits that the Mexican government's allowance of U.S. corporations to operate in Mexico—and to take over where the Mexican government failed its citizens in jobs creation, healthcare, and education—contradicts the public versus private message of the Mexican government during the time period known as the Mexican Miracle and Import Substitution Industrialization. In many cases, the Mexican government needed U.S. corporate support to stimulate economies and create jobs.

Not enough emphasis has been placed on the role of civilian foreign national soft power in shaping U.S. foreign and economic policy abroad. Although Lundestad focuses primarily on U.S.-European relations, the concept of “empire” by invitation during the Cold War should be examined in other Latin American contexts more thoroughly, notably in Latin American nations with historically large populations of U.S. Americans and important centers of business, such as Cuba before the Cuban Revolution of 1959. How did the State Department and U.S. corporations tailor messages to the American colonies of other Latin America nations to impact the local contexts and further diplomatic and economic goals?

In many ways, conducting research by relying on majority non-archival sources is much harder, but also more rewarding. Archives are not comprehensive. I spent many days in Mexican archives frustrated that my research topic was not included in the archival record. People tend to curate archives to include documents they believe are important for recordkeeping or history. I looked at a theme and sources that few considered to reveal this story. Just because this topic is not in traditional archival spaces does not mean that it is not worthy of study, nor is it less academically rigorous. I have had to use ingenuity and

unconventional research skills to reach this final point. The voices of the subaltern have historically been silenced in the archive. American colonists were not members of the subaltern, but they were also not considered at the time to be as important actors as they turned out to be, which confirms their abilities of going undetected and of appearing as benevolent empire makers not actively engaged in anything considered out of the ordinary. This project has felt like a giant jigsaw puzzle and a test in perseverance.

The historical puzzle is almost never fully complete; however, the picture is coming into focus more clearly now. The history of U.S. American expatriates in Mexico City at midcentury is more complicated than most realize. The American Colony left an indelible mark on Mexico City, U.S.-Mexican relations, and U.S. corporate influence in Mexico. They were not passive background characters transposed into a foreign environment and separated from Mexican society. This group of privileged migrants actively engaged in grassroots soft power diplomatic efforts to spread a reinvigorated Good Neighbor policy while also paving the way for economic entrenchment of U.S. corporate influence and U.S. foreign policy influence in Mexico. Most of the actors more than likely participated out of the kindness of their own hearts, for business purposes, or a mixture of both. Their opinions of lower income Mexicans and their white savior complexes did not foment radical social change in Mexican society, but instead kept the status quo firmly in place, which was the goal of the benevolent empire. They were used as tools of empire, but they also used the tools of empire to further their own personal, political, and professional goals.

In the novel *The Ugly American*, Eugene Burdick and William Lederer lambast the Foreign Service Officers of the U.S. State Department transplanted abroad to Southeast Asia

to serve the interests of the State as living in “Golden Ghettos.”⁵⁶¹ They are ineffectual and not concerned with creating lasting bonds with the locals. It is the civilian American colonists not directly affiliated with the State Department who are viewed by the authors as redeeming the image of the United States abroad. They learn the local language, sample the local food, and engage with the locals. The optimistic views of the authors leaned too heavily on American exceptionalism, painting the colonists as the true heirs of U.S. foreign policy and capable of transforming the world if they just continue to be themselves. One character notes that “average Americans are the best ambassadors a country can have.”⁵⁶² Written in 1958, it is impossible to know if U.S. Ambassadors to Mexico such as Robert C. Hill read the novel, but ambassadors must have sensed the urgency to conduct diplomacy in new ways as spelled out by Burdick and Lederer.

Even though the American colonists were agents of benevolent empire and did view themselves much like the characters in *The Ugly American* as American exceptionalism personified, the charities and cultural organizations they created did help ordinary Mexicans with everyday necessities and allow for some people who had been enveloped into this American Colony access to higher education and job opportunities. When talking about U.S. corporate and business interests abroad, especially in Latin America, it is often taboo to state a claim that such entities had positive repercussions on the community. But it would be an insult to the people they helped to say that the colonists did not have a remotely positive impact on the Mexican community. They ensured that the nurseries they worked with had provisions, paid the fees of Mexican students to study domestically and abroad, and even

⁵⁶¹ William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1958), 277.

⁵⁶² Lederer and Burdick, *The Ugly American*, 108.

took care of street dogs. The colonists lived in gilded cages, but they did venture out and attempt to help, and whether it was at the behest of the U.S. government or U.S. corporations, their charity work was felt by the thousands of people they worked with for decades. They were not the typical ugly American but were as Kennedy had told the crowd at the Fourth of July celebration in 1962, “the most prosperous looking Peace Corps contingent which I have reviewed.”⁵⁶³ Whether they knew it or not, U.S. citizens living in Mexico City played the role of agents of soft power representations of U.S. diplomacy and corporate power.

⁵⁶³ John F. Kennedy, Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration With the American Community in Mexico City. June 30, 1962, JFK Presidential Archive digital recording.

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