Little Farm Hands: Rural Child Labor, Family, and Memory in the U.S. Southwest, 1890-1940

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LITTLE FARM HANDS: RURAL CHILD LABOR, FAMILY, AND MEMORY IN THE U.S. SOUTHWEST, 1890-1940

by

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B.A., History, Stanford University, 2010
M.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2014

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Child labor was a traditional subsistence and agricultural practice throughout the rural Southwest. Between 1890 and 1940 a series of changes occurred within agriculture, ranching, and rural land/labor patterns in New Mexico and Texas. However, child labor remained a useful economic strategy for families well into this period, because it remained grounded in environmental challenges, cultural practices, agrarian ideologies, and children’s social and physical development. Agribusinesses took advantage of this labor pool, while schools and communities continued to allow children to labor, believing it to be either necessary or beneficial.

Families and children continued to have agency to determine the exact nature of their labors, though economic and political crises of the 1930s and 1940s drove families out of rural lifepaths, so child labor was no longer an effective strategy after those decades. After its real decline, it rapidly transformed into a key piece of rural family and public memory.
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Introduction

Rural child labor in the 20th century United States, despite significant legal and moral efforts to eliminate it, owed its survival to specific historical structures and ideologies. Generally, it existed as a phenomenon in locations where industries of one kind or another utilized children as workers, though the popular consensus surrounding child labor has historically underplayed the role of children as labor resources within the family. In the rural U.S. child and youth labor persisted because law, social custom, and capital allowed it to continue contributing to the social and economic fabric. More research must be done on the lived experiences of rural child laborers and their families. Rural work often exists in a liminal state at the boundaries of the category of child labor. Among scholars of modern child labor, the discourse between the meanings of “child work” and “child labor” draws significant attention. Other problems in child labor stem also from the contested building of terms and categories, including the concept of childhood, intrafamily work, and who counts as a child. Further complicating these issues is the question of local context—who was a child in the early 20th century Southwest, how was their work understood, and how did their work impact families and communities in the region?

In a broad sense, this is a narrative of cultural, economic, and social continuity, undone by sudden economic shifts. It is also a history of local place, rural communities and family dynamics. This dissertation, titled “Little Farm Hands: Rural Child Labor, Family, and Memory in the U.S. Southwest, 1890-1940,” will examine rural child labor across New Mexico and parts of Texas. My research will situate child labor within various regional
systems of agriculture, education, culture, and ethnicity. It argues that the family decision to utilize children's labor was historically essential to the cultural and economic survival of rural communities, that it remained a significant tool well into the 20th century, and that its sharp decline by mid-century signaled important reconfigurations about family life and public memory in the region.

My project uses questions about labor as a springboard to better understand the familial, social, and economic contexts of child labor in the 20th century U.S. Southwest. As family historians have explained about their own field, it involves the study of “kinship,” “the life course,” “family strategies,” and “the family and the process of social change.”¹ This dissertation spans the breadth of those thematic concerns. My actors include the youths who worked, their parents and relatives, their employers, and the various groups who supported or opposed the labor, from county officials to schoolteachers. This project provides a cross-section through the various categories of race, social class, labor, immigration, gender, and age in order to expose how family units and communities negotiated their labor demands, their social organization, and their relationships with both the land and other sociopolitical groups. Children as a class in themselves conducted domestic duties, picked crops, shepherded animals, did ranch work, maintained homes and other structures, and labored through a rash of other tasks—all necessary labors in the

support of rural livelihoods. For their own ends, families, governments, industries, and communities all appropriated the labors of children.  

Historically, American cultural tropes promulgated the salutary effect that rural work supposedly had on youths, but over time reformers, especially those drawn from the middle class and urban areas, posited the dynamic as an inherently exploitative relationship between children and work, and advocated for the cessation of child labor in favor of mandatory schooling. Complicating this discourse was the fact that reformers stood amidst complicated cultural and economic structures that excluded rural work for a number of reasons. This reasoning included the racialization of labor norms, family necessity, and the moralism of agrarian ideals.

In conceptualizing this discourse, it is important to consider the other major labor models that utilized children as a resource. There was a form of industrial labor, largely done by immigrant and native-born white children, that persisted in the 19th century in the Northeast and other urban spaces. This is the “classical” model, where children tended to machines and industrial production tasks. There was a related form of domestic and street-

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2 Of course, “their own ends” were sometimes tightly constrained by circumstance, power imbalances, or cultural beliefs, but many Southwestern families did have space to organize themselves, particularly when compared to the industrial rigor that many (perhaps most) working-class people faced in the U.S. during the first half of the 20th century. In calling children a “class” here, I want to signpost that they existed as a subset of larger labor groups, but also point out that their actual tasks were mediated by class, region, family system, and so on. Children did not recognize themselves as a self-evident labor class, though the challenges they faced and attributes they shared highlight that they have many of the characteristics of a class in the traditional sense of the term. Much of the dominant literature in the U.S. West focuses on ethnic or economic class divides, but I argue in part for a recognition of children’s own needs, self-conceptions, labors, and position within Southwestern communities. Much as women, or industrial laborers found their footing as a class in the 19th and 20th centuries, the concept of “childhood” was becoming part of the discourse, though it was not being led by children themselves. This topic will be explored in greater detail in discussing definitions as well as in Chapter 3, where I look at children’s social lives.
level child labor in those cities, where children shined shoes, sold newspapers, picked rags, and did other odd jobs, or were working in homes as cooks, maids, apprentices, and caregivers. There was also a less-prominent form of industrial labor done in mines, quarries, agricultural packing sheds, and fisheries. Then there is rural child labor itself, taken as the sum total of fieldwork, ranch work, domestic work in rural areas, hunting and gathering, and a litany of assorted home tasks. Yet understanding rural work also requires thinking about sectional variance. Rural work in the West remained distinct from the Jim Crow labor model of the South, where African American children worked alongside their parents on postbellum plantations or served as domestic servants. This Southern child labor model is different from the child labor I am examining in large part because it has not been romanticized through public memory.³

Thus, children's work on the land existed beneath long shadows cast by both factory labor and the hazy nostalgia of rural life. Many middle-class Americans thought that industrial work posed an immediate threat to moral and physical health to white children, but considered rural work to be salutary to those same populations; they gave little consideration to nonwhites in these opinions. The public imagination, values and expectations, and intergenerational memories all supported the cultural power of this labor model. The history of child labor in the 20th century is best understood as a tale of slow, ³

³ Although there is some romanticizing of the 19th century South, it tends to hide or ignore the experiences of black (and poor white) tenant farmers and sharecroppers—therefore it appears that the labor regime itself is not valorized. Some people have romanticized the orphans and other homeless youths who did much city child labor, though there were also reformers targeting this type of work as well. As I will discuss later on, rural child labor was in fact sentimentalized in some important ways, particularly in the Southwest.
hesitant decline, and it cannot be properly understood without an emphasis on the families who practiced it.

Given the complex systems surrounding rural child labor, it is clear that such work was not an incidental part of growing up in the U.S. throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a difficult reality of rural life. Changes in conceptions of childhood, regulations, the rise of public education, agricultural market forces, and the increasing interconnectedness of the U.S. seemed to foretell the end for rural child labor. However, cultural norms, economic utility, isolation, and other smaller factors ensured that children in the Southwest continued to work on farms and ranches well into the 1900s. A youth’s tasks were endless; they felled trees, milked cows, planted crops, watched their siblings, built adobe structures, herded cattle, carried water, did the cooking, and husked corn, alongside a hundred other tasks. This labor was absolutely essential to the economic survival of most rural families.

Families, as diverse as they were with respect to race, language, and homeland, faced similar challenges in the Southwest and they used children’s production as a major source of stability and sustenance. Exploring why child labor was such an effective adaptation for families demonstrates the relationships which developed in rural communities within the Southwest. Some Anglo families integrated into hispano communities, joining them at matanzas and dances. Elsewhere, the children of Mexican immigrant families played with the children of their ranch owners. Parents with many

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4 Matanzas were slaughters of livestock, often pigs, that provided meat and lard for the family as well as other neighbors and community members.
children sometimes “gifted” a young son or daughter to a childless relative in need of the labor and companionship. Pueblo families grappled with maintaining their rural traditions in the face of colonial pressures. Across this broad space, rural family systems responded to their situations in creative ways, and their complexities challenged the more rigid beliefs of many Americans regarding what families and communities ought to look like. It is time to reframe the nature of rural family survival and success around systems, interpersonal dynamics, and children’s involvement. It took several decades into the 20th century for the primacy of children’s work to decline, not due to changing moral or legal standards, but owed to external catastrophes that undercut the viability of older rural norms. In the wake of these unexpected crises, a new narrative developed that situated children’s work on farms in an idyllic agrarian past, neatly excising the difficulties experienced by families and children who lived through it.

Project Outline

This dissertation explores the lives of children and their families as they performed agricultural labor in New Mexico and Texas. The following subsection will describe the parameters of the project, including my regions of interest, a brief historical overview of the region, my subjects, and the primary sources.

Studying the Southwest means studying a land and environment with incredible variety. Since rural child labor models were constructed in response to agricultural realities, this project analyzes such work in geographically connected locations. The primary regions of interest herein include the interior southern Rockies, which was the heartland of hispano
and Pueblo culture in Northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. In this region agriculture varied widely, and communities tended to consume much of what they produced. For contrast, this dissertation also analyzes the High Plains of far eastern New Mexico and northwest-to-central Texas, where numerous homesteading Anglos came to seek their own fortunes, either on subsistence farms or as ranchers and grain farmers. This project also studies the tumultuous southern Rio Grande region, which forms the border between Mexico and the U.S. Large ranches and farms were hallmarks of this space, which bled into Texas cotton country towards the East and arid desert to the West. In this place, Anglos, tejanos, hispanos, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans worked, sometimes together but often times as part of a racial labor hierarchy. Between these core regions are other pockets of rural life, tucked into the desert, the arid plains, or on high plateaus.

All of these regions were parts of the American West, and over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries became essential to the American project; incorporating these places into national and international markets, turning their population into “proper”

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5 Here, as is the case throughout the dissertation, when I have included a Spanish-language term I have italicized it, except for a few words that have common use in the region or nationally (like chile). Most of these terms will be clear in context, and will be described in further detail within the footnotes. When I use a lengthier Spanish-language quotation or phrase, I will provide an English translation (or offer the translation preferred by the author/subject) in the footnotes, or it will be clarified in-text.

6 I use the term hispano to refer to the Spanish-speaking peoples, descended from the Spanish and later Mexicans, who have traditionally inhabited portions of what are now the states of New Mexico and Colorado. Tejano is the same signifier, but in the state of Texas. In some instances it will be substituted with “Mexican American,” particularly when the sources do not provide sufficient evidence to determine a family’s history. This term is distinct from “Mexican” because that term denotes the peoples who moved into this region during the course of my period (primarily as a result of U.S. efforts and the Mexican Revolution). In a couple of instances in the conclusion I will instead use the modern term Latinx. I avoid such usage in historical context because it was not a term that people self-identified with, but it has some value in describing the broader Spanish-ancestry population in the modern Southwest.
citizens, and controlling the physical landscape were all part of that project.\textsuperscript{7}

Chronologically, this project begins in the late 1800s, a transitional period of Southwestern history. As railroads interpenetrated, New Mexico was slowly moving towards incorporation as a state, and the Federal government was increasingly involved in land issues across the region, whether via the extension of the Homestead Act or through the Court of Private Land Claims.\textsuperscript{8} By the time of statehood in 1912, market and population forces were on their way to transforming agriculture in the Southwest. The population of the Southwest was increasing during the early years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century; New Mexico's population nearly doubled in size between 1900 and 1920, and Texas added over 1.5 million people in the same span.\textsuperscript{9} Much of that population gain occurred in rural areas, and small-scale agriculture remained essential to the social and economic fabric of the region, much as it had been across the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Despite this change, for most families, life continued

\textsuperscript{7} For evidence on the process of incorporation, there are numerous sources available. For an older environmental account, see Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1931). For the process of industry and American integration of the West, see Gerald D. Nash, The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). For the impact of culture on Western expansion, see Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West As Symbol and Myth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

\textsuperscript{8} For more on the land claims, see Richard Wells Bradfute, The Court of Private Land Claims: the Adjudication of Spanish and Mexican Land Grants, 1891-1904 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975). For information on railroad entry into New Mexico, see “Railroads in New Mexico,” The Public Library, Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, updated March 14, 2019, accessed April 10, 2019, http://abqlibrary.org/railroads. The second transcontinental railroad crossed through in 1881, and a north/south line to Denver came online in 1887. Railroads were vital to agricultural markets, as they allowed the transportation of milk, meat, grain, and produce (and many rural families indeed sold their goods to railroad agents for transport elsewhere).

as it had since the late 19th century. Political and racial changes were also afoot, as Anglo-American political efforts continued, and the region received an influx of Mexican families.\(^{10}\)

The 1930s served as a major point of departure for the project; economic crises and changes decimated the vitality of family farms over the course of the 1930s and 1940s. The Great Depression halted economic growth, destroyed systems of lending and credit, and led to business closures across the country. Its ripples struck those farmers who had recently integrated into the marketplace, and rural workers migrated in large numbers to other parts of the country. The Dust Bowl wrought havoc on the high plains and quite literally destroyed thousands of acres of family farms.\(^{11}\) The storms themselves were only the first volley; the second came when rural banks foreclosed on thousands of farms across the plains. Many of these families and individuals had to search for work in other agricultural regions or join one of the New Deal relief programs. For Mexican and Mexican American families, the thirties also brought with them a rise in deportations; the U.S. sent thousands of men, women, and children back to Mexico during this decade. Finally, it was the entry of the United States into World War II, and the rapid changeover to a war economy, that siphoned the labor of young men and women off of farms. These entwined crises provoked major outmigration from the region and disturbed the old patterns of work, while also allowing agribusinesses to cheaply purchase large tracts of land. This is where the bulk of

\(^{10}\) These political efforts included the “whitening” and/or appropriation of New Mexican culture, and were part and parcel of the American imperial project in the Southwest.

\(^{11}\) There are innumerable works on the Depression and the Dust Bowl. Here are several that have been useful in the structuring of this project: Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Also see Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
my research ends, although I also intend to speak about memory, family, and the rural labor model in the postwar period.

My subjects are the families who lived in, moved through, and survived in those places. These working families were made up of whites, Native Americans, Mexicans, tejanos, and hispanos, and they participated in numerous forms of labor. Racialized models of physical labor often sorted workers according to their fitness for agricultural work, at times even segregating working-class Anglos. However, the breadth of children’s chores resisted this easy categorization—a child’s tasks depended more on their physical environment, the economic structure of their home-as-business, and the expectations of their family and community. Alongside this primary focus on families and children, I will study other adults interested in children’s work; schoolteachers and administrators, landowners and agribusiness owners, neighbors, workers, and innumerable others all participated in shaping the sphere that children lived and worked within.

This structure adds depth to several standard assumptions about children’s work in the 20th century. On the one hand, the Progressives of the period (and the later New Dealers) argued that a moral and legal revolution ended children’s labor. Their efforts centered on moving children out of factories, mines, and the like, then placing them into

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13 For an exploration of racial ideologies in Texas, see Neil Foley, The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 4-6. In this work, Foley argued that white cotton pickers became lumped together with Mexicans and African Americans in the minds of middle-class whites (who cast pickers as “lowly blacks, peonized Mexicans, and moronic whites”) while still attempting to assert their own racial dominance over those groups. In short, farm labor became intimately entangled with race and social standing in central Texas, a key theoretical concern of my own work.
the schoolhouse. These reformers typically had sentimental ideas about the worth of children, and saw few positives in the continued labors of children. Many of them never faced the challenges that required difficult choices from rural families. The second assumption came from within the remembrances of rural families. Across numerous sources there appears to be a pervasive narrative that valorized rural work and life as “authentic” or “traditional.” Both narratives signaled the presence of intense moralizing over children and their labors, and the continued discourses within public imagination, pedagogy, and other spheres indicates that the question of the moral worth of children’s interactions with agriculture has yet to be settled.

In essence, the driving questions of this project are: why did child labor persist in rural places such as the Southwest into the 1900s, how did communities and outside interests shape its existence over this period, how does our understanding of rural labor change when we examine families and children as parts of larger systems, what choices did children and families make or have available regarding their own labor, how has that phenomenon entered into popular memory, and what do these historical memories tell us about the emergence of postwar modernity and the reconfiguration of rural cultural symbols?

In order to answer those questions, I adapted the sources and approaches of social, labor, and cultural history to this wide-ranging project. The most difficult part of researching children’s labor remains the paucity of sources created by children themselves. As a means of accommodating this limitation, I turned to the existence of personal narratives created by individuals who grew up as rural working children. I am utilizing
extant oral interviews, diaries, autobiographies, as well as family histories compiled by local associations. The use of oral histories will always be fraught with questions of authenticity and reliability, but in compiling dozens of testimonies useful patterns of work and life emerged. In fact, how individuals remember the past is sometimes more relevant than a narrow focus on the truth value of their statements. Subjectivity itself is not a problem here, since this dissertation engages with questions of historical memory as part of the project. Two maps in Chapter 1 will locate the interviews and family stories within the counties of the region.

Definitions
This project interrogates the construction of childhood, and the conceptualization of what it meant to be a child, at the turn of the 20th century. According to mainstream views, child development research, as well as legal and social norms, children are limited by numerous factors—including physical ability, mental and social understanding, and legal authority. These in theory preclude their full participation in the adult world and related systems. At the same time, as a class children appear deserving of special treatment because of their moral, social, and emotional potential. Although the first third of the 1900s is rightly considered part of modernity, places like the Southwest demonstrated how rapidly the conceptualization of childhood has changed over the 20th century. From the 19th century and deeper into the past, children shouldered significant responsibilities at young ages, especially regarding the work necessary for familial survival. Though scholars have

14 For an example of the last source category, see Kimble County Historical Commission, Families of Kimble County, Vol. I (Junction, TX: Shelton Press, 1985). Similar to this work is a source such as like Baldwin G. Burr, Historic Ranches of Northeastern New Mexico (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016). This book is primarily a collection of family photographs, along with snippets of interviews given to the author.
noted that the shift to moral and sentimental value took several centuries (as noted further in this historiography) it remained contested territory into the 20th century among many groups that worked the land in the Southwest. There are several historical terms to explain here: what “childhood” was as a class and category, who counted as a child and for how long, and the ways children actually experienced their own lives.

The concept of childhood is subject to significant study; scholars across many disciplines have debated childhood as a social experience, a historical ideal, a set of processes, and a legal designation. What is clear from the broader literature is that childhood and age categories are “socially constructed.” and have not always existed as they do today. Indeed, the farther back one reaches the murkier childhood appeared. Philippe Ariès, in his foundational text, argued that childhood as a concept or category did not exist several hundred years ago. However, in the United States by the late 19th century, children were clearly understood as a class apart, but there was significant debate

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15 For a recent overview of these issues, see Suzanne Shanahan, “Lost and Found: The Sociological Ambivalence toward Childhood,” Annual Review of Sociology 33 (2007): 407-28. Historical analysis is useful, as Shanahan noted, for parsing the issues which often blur or merge the category of childhood. She further described the history of childhood and children within the social sciences, noting that Progressive reformers were among the first scholars interested in children, but their limited lenses (reform and protection) bled into later studies. More recent historical critiques of childhood as a category have at times attempted to debunk the abuse-centric ethos of earlier works while in other places searched for childhood as either a universal or emergent ideal. The broad parameters of this debate are useful within my dissertation research, as they help inform and frame my historical lens, and help parse the linguistic issues inherent to child labor in the early 20th century.

16 Shanahan, “Lost and Found,” 26. She posited three fundamental tenets of childhood studies: childhood was constructed, children “are worthy of study in their own right” and “children are competent social actors.” My own reading of the literature suggests that these three tenets are widely adhered to across a range of diverse disciplines and provide a shared framework for understanding children and families in the same ways that researchers of race, gender, or class have developed their own approaches.

over the meaning of that designation. Other scholars have explained the emergence of childhood through historical perception models.\textsuperscript{18} Despite its recent development in human history, childhood often feels like a concrete, immemorial category for both children and adults, since it structures the course of people's lives. For children and parents engaged in labor during the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, however, it was anything but fixed—in some respects it was very real and close, such as in coming-of-age rituals, or in the schoolhouse, but in other instances it was an intangible, such as in the case of family emergencies, physical or social displacements, and inter-cultural conflicts.

The question of who counted as a child varied greatly depending on the frame of reference chosen. Legal, cultural, and local customs all intermingled in this regard, and as a result there was little actual consensus regarding the end of childhood in the early 1900s. U.S. law dictated a gradual loosening of legal and economic restrictions according to age. Thus, childhood was a transitory stage that youths passed through, gaining gradually more responsibilities and legal obligations.\textsuperscript{19} In the 1930s the Fair Labor Standards Act chose sixteen to be the age at which labor stopped being “oppressive child labor.”\textsuperscript{20} Beyond the legal definition, it appears that many scholars primarily interpret the term “child” as

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] John Clevener and D. C. Phillips, \textit{Visions of Childhood: Influential Models from Locke to Spock} (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1986), 7-9. In essence, their point is that people have to consider a concept possible/real in their everyday lives before they perceive it—in this instance, the concept of childhood as something distinct from puberty, or from adulthood, etc.
\item[19] There are numerous examples on this point—the amended version of the Fair Labor Standards Act is a useful place to start for my own research. Therein it stated that children under twelve may work on farms owned by their parents, as well as what labors become appropriate at age milestones. “Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, As Amended,” § 213 C, U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, updated May 2011, accessed September 10, 2019, https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/statutes/fairlaborstandact.pdf.
\end{footnotes}
signifying pre-pubescent youth.\textsuperscript{21} I posit that a more expansive definition, which includes adolescents even as they take on many of the formal aspects of adulthood, is most applicable to this project. This is because individuals could move back-and-forth through the conceptual categories of childhood and adulthood as their situation changed.\textsuperscript{22} Where relevant, I will explore the actual usage of the term in my primary sources, in order to depict the varied, informal understandings of childhood in the Southwest. This creates some difficulties in locating sources, as individual usage of terms like “boy” and “girl” or “child” and “adult” are subjective. Thus, where applicable, I provide age and social position for the individual subjects, in order to best explain their positioning on the continuum between “child,” “teenager,” and “young adult.” In other respects this subjective modeling of childhood is useful, because it offers more insight into the production of agrarian memories and the rigidity that people would ascribe to their own child/adult division, even when lived experiences show a more malleable depiction of those age categories.

Requing to the third statement about children’s lived experience also requires careful analysis of primary sources with the understanding that children are both informed and capable.\textsuperscript{23} While many modern views dictate that children remain “innocent” with

\textsuperscript{21} For examples of this in the literature, see Lloyd DeMause, \textit{The History of Childhood} (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), 40-52. His work primarily deals with issues that affected young children, including corporal punishment, feeding, “toilet” training, infanticide, and what he termed “child-rearing modes.”

\textsuperscript{22} When I say that people could “move through” the category, I mean that an individual is not a child in all contexts or to all people. A teenager who takes over his father’s work due to injury might remain a child to his parents, or in the law, but might be considered an adult to his customers. A lone boy might have to be more of an adult in order to get by, but a community might still consider him a child. A girl of sixteen or seventeen might be married but be a legal minor. In rural communities an individual’s status was mediated by communal standards, economic production, family organization, and biological benchmarks.

\textsuperscript{23} James and James, “Childhood: Towards a Theory,” 28-29. The authors outlined several methods of childhood research that may prove useful. Under what they call the “tribal model” the most important thing about studying children is seeing the “ways that competence is acknowledged and expressed or how it is disguised and controlled in and through children’s everyday relationships.”
regards to the adult world, children of the past had fewer protections from the various hardships that families faced. If a family needed their children to work in order to survive, or if the children felt they could help out, there was little stopping a family from using that labor. Certainly, sentimental conceptualizations of childhood held little weight with a family clinging to the edge of survival. Further, even among families living comfortably, children worked in order to learn the skills they would require as adults. Children by and large understood those realities and rationalized their work in a few ways, and many social norms supported this labor, whether they were produced by rural families or were imposed onto them by other interests. The most important concept to take away from this question is that the precepts of childhood as a symbolic world do not necessarily map onto the actual experiences of children.24

Many scholars have analyzed the disjuncture between “child labor” and children working, and scholars must also carefully define the boundaries of “labor” as a whole in light of these issues. As Lloyd DeMause articulated in his classic *The History of Childhood*, “it should be remembered that children did much of the work of the world long before child labor became such an issue in the nineteenth century, generally from the age of four or five.”25 Children's economic capacities have historically been essential to the proper

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25 DeMause, *The History of Childhood*, 20. He further commented that although child labor was not part of his project, it remained an essential component of the lived experience of children. One interesting yet continually understudied aspect of DeMause’s work is the concept that children do a dual form of work—they provide “concrete” help in the form of servitude but also provide emotional support to their parents. This process, which effectively turns the parent-child labor relationship on its head, may appear in the sources I find. My project intends to at least complicate that “natural” relationship between children, labor, and parents.
functioning of household and familial economies. In the more recent past organizations with a vested interest in the term, like the International Labor Organization of the UN and the Child Labor Coalition, typically recognize “activities whose production is intended for the market” or for “personal consumption” as child labor, but argue that “domestic tasks” fall outside this term. This implicitly contains a conceptualization of labor itself, which is typically defined as economically-productive labor (particularly those where money, goods, and/or services are utilized as the vehicle of exchange between individuals, corporations, and similar economically independent entities. In this definition of labor, certain acts are excluded, including training, subsistence activities, work in the home, cultural work,

These and similar legal definitions are useful starting points, but they obscured the domestic and intra-family realities that underpin nearly all forms of child labor. Many nonprofits, scholars, and others make a more expansive claim, claiming that child labor is any “activit[y] children undertake to contribute to their own or family economy.” A working definition that includes most kinds of children’s rural labor is most suitable for this project. After all, reformers created the term child labor as a response to problems of industrialization. Scholars have taken the term and creatively applied and adapted it. My

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26 Children’s work continues to be essential in places outside of the United States and Western Europe, although their labor is often intimately bound up with global capitalism and the search for low-cost manufacturing. Sweatshop work in Southeast Asia, technology “recycling” in Africa, and farming in most other places still utilize child labor.


project demonstrates how rural child labor in the Southwest both constituted and challenged the parameters of the term.

Historiography

Child labor in the Southwest resides in a unique historiographical nexus; the concept came from the history of Progressivism and reform, has connections to other labor histories, and is situated within the historiography of the North American West. The approaches in this dissertation also require some insights from other disciplines, including economics and family studies. Most relevant are studies examining the emergence of reforms and debates surrounding child labor in the U.S., the cultural language surrounding agricultural life, the development of rural gender and childhood studies, and the lived experiences of families within the Southwest.²⁹

The first relevant subfield examines the historiography of Progressivism, reform, poverty, and child labor in the United States. In essence, the chronology of child labor legislation in the U.S. began with a period of exploitation which emerged due to industrialization in the early-and-mid-19th century. Then in the second half of the century advocates, especially women and labor activists, began to decry the abuses seen in urbanized and industrialized sectors. Following that, reformers and political groups made efforts to criminalize child labor, especially in a number of Northern states. Then came a

period of national legislation, where groups like the National Child Labor Committee
effected change through narrow laws starting in 1916, though those are opposed in court
and ignored by the states. Real national restrictions do not happen until the second half of
the 1930s.

Works in this historiography emphasized the dangers and strife inherent to
industrial work, as well as the legal processes of reform. Take for instance Stephen B.
Wood's *Constitutional Politics in the Progressive Era: Child Labor and the Law*. Wood
described the legislative and judicial battles during the later Progressive Era in excruciating
detail, emphasizing the competing ideologies and politics of the lawyers, Congressmen, and
judges at work. This scholar categorized the history of child labor reform in several stages:
an early age of ineffective state legislation prior to the Civil War, a second phase of state
reform that remained poorly administered, a phase where national reform efforts emerged
with the National Child Labor Committee and other groups, and after a brief lull, the phase
of national legislation which included the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916. The rest of
his work focused on the bill itself, *Hammer v. Dagenhart*, and a later amendment. These

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30 One book which provides an excellent overview of later Progressives, poverty, immigrants, and children, but
also reflects the Eastern U.S. focus of the historiography, is James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against
Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). His work touches on rural
poverty, but for most Americans the poverty which forced children to work was endemic in cities, not the
countryside. For more context on transient populations in America, public policy, racial logics, and issues
which connect to poor children, see Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road: The Homeless in


32 Wood, *Constitutional Politics*, 4-18. If we take Wood's stages model at face value, it would require two
further stages—the post-defeat politics of the 1920s and early 1930s, and the Depression/New Deal's
emergent emphasis on labor reform, culminating in 1938 with the Fair Labor Standards Act. For more
information on the differences between Progressive reformers and the New Dealers who came after them,
see Otis L. Graham, *An Encore for Reform: the Old Progressives and the New Deal* (Oxford: Oxford University
categories, though nice and straightforward, do not capture the whole picture regarding child labor’s decline in certain regions, including the Southwest. This basic framework for understanding child labor reform has undergone some important revisions. Hugh Hindman’s *Child Labor: An American History* also focused on the NCLC's federal attack, but he moves past the Supreme Court case in 1918 and instead culminates with the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938; this law barred children from working in the industrial sector and regulated some agricultural work. Hindman also emphasized the ideological changes between Progressive and New Deal reformers, as legal tactics moved from overt moralizing to a more pragmatic approach.

Other scholars of reform focused on the construction of childhood as a space where family economics, moral value, and the law intersected in sometimes unpredictable ways. One particularly influential work in this field is Viviana Zelizer’s *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. Her work explained how middle-class and upper-class Americans interpreted the “value” of children, especially during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Essentially, child labor’s acceptability was intimately connected to “the shift in children’s value from ‘object of utility’ to object of sentiment.”

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33 Hugh D. Hindman, *Child Labor: An American History* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 84-85. Also see Fair Labor Standards Act, section 13 on exemptions. The regulations on child labor in agriculture were unaffected by minimum wage or maximum hour stipulations, and also did not apply when children were “not legally required to attend school.”

34 This was earlier articulated by Clifford B. Anderson, “The Metamorphosis of American Agrarian Idealism in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Agricultural History* 35, no. 4 (1961): 182-188. See especially pages 184-85; Anderson delineated several chronological changes in the minds of the public, arguing that by the 1930s few saw agricultural work in a primarily moralistic light. This helps to explain how New Dealers did attempt to end the most exploitative forms of agricultural child labor when the Progressives had failed to do so.

35 Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7-8. Zelizer’s focus in the work is to “systematically [explore]” childhood’s changing value from a sociological point of view, although much of her source base and analysis are historical. She argued that contemporary conceptions of childhood focused on the “individualistic and utilitarian” and lacked
U.S. children participated in economic activities, whether in factories, apprenticeships, slavery, on the street, domestic service, or on farms. They were “worth so much in dollars and cents, with no standard of value as a human being.” As Zelizer noted, the important shift in attitude transpired across the turn of the century; by the Progressive period these adults were working to redefine children in purely sentimental valuations. As a counter to this process, working-class families resisted their reform efforts on economic grounds. Zelizer’s approach helped understand the cultural and legal shifts which placed children’s industrial labor in opposition to the well-being of children. Other scholars in dissimilar fields have come to remarkable similar conclusions about the links between Progressivism, women’s roles, and the confines of childhood, including William Kessen, a developmental psychologist, who retraced the emergence of his own field in light of historical processes of reform across the 19th and early 20th centuries. Kessen argued that a child’s value was modeled through culture and morality, and this position shaped the contours of the study

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36 Although there were important critiques against this sentimental attitude during the period. Among the most eloquent came from John Dewey, who noted that “extreme depreciations of the child morally and intellectually, and sentimental idealizations of him, have their root in a common fallacy. Both spring from taking stages of a growth or movement as something cut off and fixed...” See John Dewey, The School and Society and The Child and the Curriculum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 191. This is a combined text of two smaller works, published in 1900 and 1902, respectively.

37 Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child, 56-8, 68. Many reformers thought that taking children out of the (industrial) workplace would help them become properly loved within working-class families—in essence, sentiment and love were on opposite sides of a scale from economic utility. Reformers used this language to bring middle-class Americans into their fold, and wielded it to shame and harangue those who thought their children provided necessary income to the family.

38 Their well-being was often couched in multiple discourses—they were morally pure, needed education, would become future citizens, were objects of sentiment, and were illegal competition for “legitimate” labor. For more evidence of Zelizer’s influence on the field, see Linda Gordon, “Teaching Pricing the Priceless Child in a Global Context,” Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 5, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 481-484. Here Gordon articulated the usefulness, but also limitations, of the work on an international scale. She also dealt briefly with the historical question of love, a topic of growing interest in the history of family and childhood.
of children as a group even within the sciences, because it positioned the scholar as inheritor of the “purity and perfectibility” ideology from reformers and advocates.\textsuperscript{39} To say that children have a “fixed” nature, whether economic, moral, or anything else, would be to commit a grave error. Instead, my study of the Southwest will depict how children and their engagement with labor received a moral stamp of approval towards agricultural labor. This emerged through dialogues between reformers, families, regional cultures, educators, and others.

Recent historians of child labor have continued to chip away at the questions of children's value, race, class, and reformer interests. James Schmidt’s work, \textit{Industrial Violence and the Legal Origins of Child Labor}, deftly examined the limits of children's power, the omnipresence of violence, and the ways that Eastern working-class children and families adapted the language of reformers to protect themselves.\textsuperscript{40} This language, it should be clear, was inherently classist and racialized. Another text, Shelley Sallee's \textit{The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform}, effectively showed these racial problems in context—labor activists allied with Progressives to eliminate children's work in Southern textile mills, but those Progressives ended up emphasizing whiteness over class solidarity, subverting the “controversial injustices exposed by organized labor.”\textsuperscript{41} The economic scholars Brian

\textsuperscript{39} William Kessen, “The American Child and Other Cultural Inventions,” \textit{American Psychologist} 34, no. 10 (October 1979): 815-818.

\textsuperscript{40} James D. Schmidt, \textit{Industrial Violence and the Legal Origins of Child Labor} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40-41,207-10. Schmidt explained that reformers had to create “a new language” for discussing children and families in industrial work, and that this framework would later be co-opted by families and young men themselves for their own economic and social advantages. Another note—the vast majority of families Schmidt analyzed were native-born whites or recent European immigrants.

\textsuperscript{41} Shelley Sallee, \textit{The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South} (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 2-3. She attempted to rewrite the history of white southern Progressivism to include conceptions of whiteness, racial uplift, and citizenship, which facilitated a North-South coalition to emerge
Gratton and Jon Moen also participated in this subfield; their article on child labor statistics revealed demographic data influencing rates of child labor usage in the United States, which included nonwhite ethnicity and living in rural places, among other factors.42

As scholars of child labor described, most white and immigrant Americans had few reservations about using children as agricultural workers, shepherds, or farmhands. Farming was purportedly a “moral” pursuit. One broad swath of literature, much of it from American Studies, has examined the cultural implications of agrarianism and rural life for U.S. society. This cultural construction, known as agrarian idealism, remains a potent and complicated symbol of the West in the American imagination.43 Clifford Anderson’s 1961 article on agrarianism and Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden* were among the first works to analyze this phenomenon in detail. Marx argued that one pervasive theme of American culture and literature was the uneasy commingling of the pastoral, “the Jeffersonian dream—a native version of an ancient hope,” and the industrial, what he called at the time the “contradiction between rural myth and technological fact.”44 Americans wanted to hold onto a comfortable past built by the imagined yeoman farmer. As this

among Progressives. At the same time, this focus on race subsumed class fault lines and precipitated the use of African American children as workers while white children were “saved.” As Sallee and others have revealed, a significant proportion of African American children worked in some capacity, as either servants or as farmworkers—but were excluded from state anti-child labor efforts.

42 Gratton and Moen, “Immigration, Culture, and Child Labor,” 386-87. Their statistical model suggested that being black or living in rural areas were two major factors that made a child likely to work. In the Southwest, I suspect that many Mexican, Pueblo, Asian, and African American children faced similar neglect from reformers, and perhaps were even further removed from Progressive efforts than children in the Southeast.

43 A number of scholars in both History and American Studies homed in on this agrarian construction of the 19th and 20th centuries. For more examples of early work on this line of American thought, see Anderson, “The Metamorphosis of American Agrarian.” For a broader overview of Anglo-American rural life and the persistence of agrarian idealism, see Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

dissertation shows, however, cultural principles acted more as recommendations than ironclad rules for families—the messy practices of intrafamilial dynamics would often challenge those models.

Throughout the 20th century scholars situated this cultural construct in the new modes of production within U.S. agriculture; in the wake of the labor activism of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez in the 1960s, scholars and journalists began to pay closer attention to the exploitative nature of migrant labor as it pertained to families. Ronald Taylor's work on California's Central Valley, and the use of Mexican children as farm workers, is one such example.\textsuperscript{45} Taylor, a labor journalist, found widespread economic exploitation of Mexican youths and explicitly linked that exploitation to agrarian attitudes. He noted that this particular construction, “the mythology of the farm... made the basic building block in American culture.” This fiction posited a childhood steeped in virtue, as youths “milk[ed] the cows and slop[ped] the hogs” in an idyllic agrarian landscape.\textsuperscript{46} More recent scholarship, including Neil Foley’s \textit{The White Scourge}, demonstrated that this mythos persisted well into the 20th century even as agriculture transitioned to a capital-and-labor-heavy mode of production. For Foley, the corporatization of agriculture meant the end of the “agricultural ladder,” a concept where white male farmworkers could “climb, rung by rung, through the stages” of agricultural landowning.\textsuperscript{47} Others have speculated that

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\textsuperscript{45} Ronald B. Taylor, \textit{Sweatshops in the Sun: Child Labor on the Farm} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). For more on issues with migrant labor in California, see Mitchell, \textit{The Lie of the Land}.

\textsuperscript{46} Taylor, \textit{Sweatshops in the Sun}, 2-3. Taylor’s sarcastic prose here is a by-product of his journalistic tendencies, but also the growing literature on migrant workers and injustice that was emerging during the Chicano movement. It should be no surprise that Taylor wrote in the years immediately following the Delano Grape Strike and other moments of migrant worker labor agitation.

\textsuperscript{47} Neil Foley, \textit{The White Scourge}, 9-11.
agrarian ideologies could still have value to present-day farmers, as Ronald Jager did in *The Fate of Family Farming: Variations on an American Idea*.

Historian Pamela Riney-Kehrberg articulated an alternative environmental-historical vision of farm life and farm children that saw them “immersed in their environments.” Farm life assumed a prominent place in public memory—Americans swayed by this myth believed that “farms were the best place—and perhaps the only place—to raise healthy, happy, moral children.” Riney-Kehrberg’s subjects wistfully hoped that children might “still look to the fields, lean on the plow, and feel the intoxication of the land.” Her alternative approach suggested that agrarian ideals held on because it remained powerful in the American imagination. Another recent work also complicated the traditional approach towards agricultural nostalgia—David Wallace Adams’ work, *Three Roads to Magdalena*, demonstrated how agrarian ideologies intermingled with other cultural constructions, including domesticity, religion, and independence. These and other factors helped support the prominence of agriculture as a preferred mode of life, especially for women, girls, and nonwhite families, who did not share in all the fruits that agrarianism purportedly provided. More work remains to be done regarding the agricultural memories of these

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48 Ronald Jager, *The Fate of Family Farming: Variations on an American Idea* (Lebanon, NH: University of New England Press, 2004). Fittingly enough, Jager’s approach emphasizes New England farmers, the place where agrarian ideologies were first developed in the colonies.


50 Riney-Kehrberg, *The Nature of Childhood*, 25, 40. Chapter 1 emphasizes farm living in the 19th century, but the bulk of the work focuses on efforts to get children back into the “natural world” that they supposedly left as the U.S. became an urban society. Interestingly, Riney-Kehrberg’s work says little about the difficulties of farm work (although there are a few examples, including the Dust Bowl), and for some, falls into the trap that Taylor saw, where nostalgia obscures the realities of rural life for children.

51 David Wallace Adams, *Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016), x-xi, 41-45. Wallace also edited an important volume on
populations. For all these scholars, the public memory and cultural myths surrounding agriculture obscured the lived experiences of working families and children, yet they retained power even in a rapidly urbanizing U.S. culture.

Although cultural models of farming, ranching, and life in the countryside dictated much of the structure of rural community, they cannot alone explain how rural family structures worked. A series of historians, some of them influenced by feminist theories and others the new social history, began to critically examine the ways that gender and family dynamics worked in rural spaces across the Americas. Most relevant to my work are the pioneering works from Joan M. Jensen and Elliott West. Jensen’s work, *With These Hands*, depicted a variety of women’s lifepaths in agriculture. West’s monograph on childhood, *Growing Up with the Country*, examined different areas of childhood, including the nature of play, rural work, and why children mattered to Western communities. In both of these works, lived experiences and individual formed the fundamental unit of analysis. Jensen’s volume encompassed numerous women’s rural lives, and advocated for a historical approach to their struggle to maintain their rural livelihoods—their strategies would also be the strategies used by families and children. West’s influence on children’s history in the U.S. West is vast, and his story here illuminated the ways in which childhood practices had

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deep roots in the past, while also noting the ways that children internalized symbols and practices of their agrarian lives in the process of becoming a “western” generation.

In more contemporary literature, many historians wrote on the U.S. West as a borderland where gender and kinship remained malleable and subject to challenge—these works showcased the negotiations that people had to undergo in order to survive in the West. What all these recent works have in common is a focus on families and the complex social circles of the West. As historian Juliana Barr noted, kinship and family ties were the “foundation” for interethnic relationships in the Spanish Southwest. Many other scholars working in Latin America have also picked up on the nature of gender, family, and rural work, especially in the slow transition to industrialized rural labor. My own work begins at the turn of the 20th century, but the echoes of this porous past remained in the daily lives of families, in their adherence to cultural and religious traditions, and in their continued adaptations amidst a complicated social climate. My project expands on the demands of...

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55 Barr, Peace Came in the Form, 9, 287-88. Barr is also valuable for her intricate analysis of gender-as-power via the exchange, symbolism, and actions of women within kinship networks.

56 For examples of this in Latin America, see Piedad Peniche Rivero, “Gender, Bridewealth, and Marriage: Social Reproduction of Peons on Henequen Haciendas in Yucatan: 1870-1901,” in Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990. Heather Fowler-Salami and Mary Kay Vaughan, eds. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 87-89. In this work, Rivero explained how women and children became part of an “invisible” workforce during the harvest—it was expected that men with families could draw on their wives and children when necessary, and that the money would return to the man (and by proxy the other family members). Another example can be found in Lourdes Arizpe and Josefina Aranda, “The "Comparative Advantages" of Women’s Disadvantages: Women Workers in the Strawberry Export Agribusiness in Mexico,” Signs 7, no. 2 (1981): 453–73.
these and other works; scholars must engage with the complexities and idiosyncrasies of rural life in order to form a more complete picture of rural life, one that is grounded in the lives of individuals and families and their responses to systemic and environmental challenges.

A substantial literature exists on international expressions of child labor across the latter half of the 20th century, especially emphasizing capitalist and industrial economic structures which continued to underpin its prevalence. Many of these scholars at the same time studied attendant efforts to reduce or eliminate such labor. Economic shifts, including industrialization, urbanization, and neoliberal policies, also impacted reform strategies because they continued to support child labor as an economic tool. These scholars disagreed on the extent that children's labor is automatically or inherently exploitative. One key example of the “exploitation” viewpoint was Roger Sawyer's Children

57 Some of the scholars of American child labor explicitly connect their works to these international issues, including Hindman, Child Labor, 286. Hindman recognized the international dimensions of child labor, and spent the final section of the work showing how the global industrial complex utilized child labor.

58 For an excellent example see Sarada Balagopalan, “Memories of Tomorrow: Children, Labor, and the Panacea of Formal Schooling,” Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 1, no. 2 (2008): 267-285. On pages 271-73, 277-78, and 280, Balagopalan explained how an Indian ban on garment factory labor was crafted on the assumption of “saving” working children from exploitation, but that it backfired because it sent children into more dangerous labor, ignored the dearth of economic opportunities afforded to many families, and overemphasized the power of schooling itself. Her research was particularly useful because it showed the ways that children and families reacted to the economic hardships imposed by mandatory schooling. For another example, particularly one that discusses abuses the only meaningful side of the debate (while ignoring forms of labor that are not wage labor) see Ranjan Ray, “Child Labor, Child Schooling, and their Interaction with Adult Labor: Empirical Evidence for Peru and Pakistan,” The World Bank Economic Review 14, no. 2 (2000): 347-367. Ray articulated that child labor had “almost universal agreement” that it is “undesirable,” on page 348.

Enslaved, an account of debt bondage, child slavery, indentured workers, and migrant child workers. Sawyer explained the persistence of child labor as a problematic phenomenon across the globe, driven by imperial and capitalist logics. For Sawyer, child labor had to be suppressed through legal avenues. Some of those same capital-driven processes are seen in the Southwest, though with different labor system outcomes. In contrast, economic philosopher Debra Satz argued that uniform child labor prohibitions, especially those in “developing” nations, undermined the limited agency of children and poor families. In Satz’s view a clear focus on truly hazardous types of labor would provide protection from exploitation without weakening already-fragile family economies. This viewpoint required abandoning the Western social norms and values of childhood; as she argued, “there is no inherent injustice in family structures that assume that children must make some contribution to the well-being of their families.” The Southwest, from the viewpoint of the urbanizing North, or the Jim Crow South, has historically been considered an underdeveloped land, and thus families there bear some striking resemblances to these more recent studies. Other scholars expanded on this approach with evidence from young workers themselves. In general, this international literature attempts to make sense of

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60 Roger Sawyer, *Children Enslaved* (London: Routledge, 1988). Little academic history has been produced on this topic, but a lot of good research has gone into a number of journalistic and social scientific books on child labor in contemporary society. Along with Sawyer’s work, see Peter Lee Wright, *Child Slaves* (London: Earthscan, 1990). Wright has an excellent chapter on Mexico/U.S. relations, entitled “Under the Eagle’s Wing: Mexico’s Uneasy Accommodation with the USA.” He also has chapters on India, the Philippines, and other international hotspots for child labor. Lastly, for a legalistic account, see the excellent edited volume by Burns H. Weston, ed., *Child Labor and Human Rights: Making Children Matter* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005). This book targets international organizations and governments who turn a blind eye to issues of child labor, and uses a human rights discourse to describe child labor throughout the world.


child labor’s persistence, contextualized as part of systems of social inequality, labor exploitation and cultural exploitation, and limited familial prospects.64

In my project, child labor is at times exploitative, at times advantageous, but in all instances mediated by personal agency, family systems, agribusiness models, and local conditions. In other words, reformers both past and present, in examining child labor structures in places like the Southwest, have been primed to miss the major nuances of lived experience as they look for a way to place child labor on either end of this continuum. As earlier noted in my section on definitions, this dissertation challenges scholars to view narrow definitions with suspicion; instead, examine the ways labor was used, study the end results for families, communities, and capitalists, and remember that individuals, not processes, made these decisions. It is important to differentiate the numerous types of labors possible within the Southwest, and to recognize that they often evaded neat categorization.

Beyond these works on child labor, there exists a much broader field on community and labor in the U.S. West, indispensable for any historian working on the region. Chief among these works is Sarah Deutsch’s No Separate Refuge.65 This book excellently demonstrated the shrinking world of Latino sugar beet pickers during the turn of the twentieth century until World War II.66 Early on, hispano and Latino families were able to

64 These “values” are specifically types of “traditional” or cultural values, places onto children’s work. This does not preclude capitalistic reasoning, but instead re-centers the question of why modern children continue to labor.
66 For another major work in the field, this time relating to Texas and the creation of industrial farming and Anglo-dominated labor regimes, see David Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).
compete and adapt, maintaining cultures and communities in New Mexico and Colorado, until their economic lives were subverted by Anglo economic competition, increasing racism, and the loss of land, among other issues. They migrated for work, but kept thriving villages alive despite the labor system. These villages of northern New Mexico are key locales for my own work on child labor, as children’s labor reacted to the same encroachments. Another major work in the field, Gunther Peck’s *Reinventing Free Labor*, also described the emergence of a migrant labor market during the late 1800s through the 1930s. Peck explained the mechanisms by which many Mexican laborers headed north, through places such as El Paso, where *padrones* held the workers in debt to them. This paternalist system also ensnared some families into child labor. These books, alongside numerous others, provide necessary context on labor and society in the rural West. They also elaborated on the systemic factors which shaped regional models that included child labor.

As borders shifted and colonial projects developed within the Southwest, they brought with them alterations to social, legal, and cultural norms. An excellent example of this encroachment in the Southwest comes from Pablo Mitchell; his monograph, *Coyote*

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*Nation*, shows how the processes of Americanization and conquest played out in New Mexico. In his estimation, New Mexico was an occupied space; “the roots of American Imperialism are deep in New Mexico.” Individuals and families within this cultural borderland had to contend with a “heterogeneous and polyglot” society, even as the American government and white settlers wanted to unify society under their racial hierarchy. Similar processes are visible in David Wallace Adams, Sarah Deutsch, and most other social histories of the Southwest. As they and others demonstrated, the “crossing” of borders happened quite frequently among families; Native American, Mexican, and hispano families had a fraught relationship with their Anglo neighbors, and at times with each other. Claims of traditional lifepaths, family structure, and race clashed repeatedly in this space. Social histories of these and other forms of “border-making” are necessary in order to explain the complexities of the Southwest as a social space.

**Methods and Sources**

Child labor is exploitative, but children found spaces to flourish even in harsh conditions. I have found great organizational support from the aforementioned *Growing Up With the Country*, as well as *Smeltertown*, by Monica Perales and *Becoming Mexican*

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70 For an intimate look at how this complex process played out, especially in the reactions by *hispanos*, see Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2-5. His subjects included rape trials, parades and fiestas, and clothing. His cultural and legal emphases are novel and illuminate how local skirmishes over race, identity, and power signaled broader challenges to New Mexican life.

71 Richard L. Nostrand and Lawrence E. Estaville, eds., *Homelands: A Geography of Culture and Place Across America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). They call for more representation of space and place in history, and Nostrand is a specialist on the *hispano* homeland of Northern New Mexico. For a unique example of racial tensions in a borderland, consider Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Here, white Arizona families literally stole immigrant Catholic children from Mexican Catholic families who intended to adopt them; the “baby-stealers” did so under the notion that white children had to be raised by white parents.
American, by George Sanchez. Perales’ work depicted border families and provided rich social descriptions of their work and family life, while Sanchez described the complex cultural and social webs of Mexican Los Angeles.72 These and similar works demonstrated how youth labor existed within broader spheres, as well as the cultural and social foundations of children’s labor in the U.S. West. These works also illustrated the advantages of illustrating labor through oral history and memories, both public and private. Children have different ways of sense-making than adults do, and that manifests itself in the stories individuals retell as adults. People inevitably attach new and modified meanings to their experiences.73 Those who tell their stories often do so in order to promote particular sets of ascribed meanings, or values.

In the interviews which make up the bulk of this dissertation, most interviewees were interviewed as part of numerous projects to protect or preserve the histories of rural life, under the notion that rural livelihoods were somehow dying out. Once preserved, these individual remembrances become part of collective memory, the re-telling of the past.74 However, transcripts and recorded interviews, another major source for this

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73 For an example of how people publish their family histories, and in the process remake/reimagine those histories, see Bart Ziino, “‘A Lasting Gift to His Descendants’: Family Memory and the Great War in Australia,” History and Memory 22, no. 2 (2010): 125-46. Ziino helpfully explained how memories, in this case regarding WWI, were composites; the processes of writing down narratives, being exposed to public/national narratives, and cultural norms all “enable us to see more clearly the dialectical relationship between public and family stories of the war, as each continually constitutes the other.”

74 I use the term “collective memory” with reservation here. For some scholars it references a collective product of the remembering process, and others tie it more closely to myth and legend. I think there is an element of myth embedded in the ways people remember rural childhoods—and indeed even childhood is a
dissertation, could present other facets of the past. The majority of family histories utilized in this dissertation derived from oral history projects and the research of local scholars and students. In some instances, surviving communities and political entities throughout the Southwest created public testaments through the collection of interviews and short ancestries. These works include *Families of Kimble County*, a tome containing hundreds of family recollections, gathered from every corner of the rural county. In the process of creating this work, the historical society invited family members to contribute their own ancestry work and photographs as testaments to their family’s journey to Kimble County; the chairperson of the Kimble County Historical Commission noted that “numerous inquiries and requests from interested persons prompted Kimble County Historical Commission to compile and publish this book of family histories as part of the Texas Sesquicentennial celebration... the committee is grateful to everyone who contributed a story, made a suggestion, or donated precious time and effort.” These interviews are limited in what they explain about the process of public memorialization, since they are by necessity culled from people who remained in their home regions, or otherwise stayed “in touch” with their rural pasts. They cannot explain the lives of thousands of others who left, fled, or changed positions as they aged, nor can they depict the harsher realities of childhoods, especially for those who wished not to discuss violence, trauma, or other problems in the creation of public oral histories. The great breadth of sources, and variety of viewpoints within, do

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75 Kimble County, *Families of Kimble County*, 3.

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category that people fill with values, obligations, and emotions which may differ from the actual sensory or emotive experiences of children. For more on the term’s origins and usages, see Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, “Collective Memory — What Is It?” *History and Memory* 8, no. 1 (1996): 30-50.
point to interesting shared experiences, ideological consensuses, and a clear focus on family
survival and resilience.

Other major sources for this project were autobiographies and similar forms of written memories; with those primary sources, people spent years crafting narratively compelling versions of their lives, incorporating stories and interludes from a variety of life moments. Many of these authors came from some privilege, enjoyed uncommon family circumstances, and were able to devote significant time to their writing. As other historians can attest, this can be problematic when attempting to utilize their words as proxies for a rural past. Still, they provide lengthier, more complex insights into family life and labor than short interviews.

Understanding the subjectivity of memory does not detract from the reality that memories build social consensus. The power of oral history lies in its multiplicity of meanings and its embedded cultural properties. As several oral historians reflected, “memory does not provide a direct window on the past, but we had learned from experience to trust the interpretive authority of ordinary people.” The words people chose to describe their own work say something greater; a “chore” is different from a “job” or “helping” in its cultural meanings, but they all might look quite similar from another

76 For an example of privileged voices skewing a narrative, see the discussion between Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, R. Douglas Hurt, and other historians as they critiqued the popular “The Dust Bowl” documentary. In that case, Riney-Kehrberg was critical of Ken Burns’ decision to utilize the letters from Caroline Henderson, who was “highly articulate and entertaining… in no way, the typical Dust Bowl resident.” Caroline’s rich prose and middle-class upbringing was the definitive voice of the Dust Bowl for viewers of the documentary, yet she could only retell events from a particular point-of-view. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg et al., “Historians’ Reactions to the Documentary, The Dust Bowl,” Agricultural History 2, no. 88, (2014): 262-288. See especially pages 266-271.

perspective. Furthermore, people described the unusual in great detail but swept aside the routine. Nostalgia can also play a role when the interviewee reminisces about their past; people often chose to emphasize the tragic while also maintaining a halcyon outlook. It is perhaps a simplification to suggest that memories of childhood inherently take on moral qualities in the present, but American culture underwent a particular shift in attitudes towards children starting in the late 1800s. Memory was integral to that change; it worked as a process to move children's work from the space of reality to a representative, symbolic space. Progressives and reformers were early adopters of that symbol, but rural Southwestern people also re-imagined it through their own lived experiences. Rural childhood became a symbol for social harmony, honesty, simplicity, and agrarian idealism. This creative use of the symbol is prevalent today, particularly in the imagined reconstruction of a hispano homeland. At the same time, this symbol-making process highlighted how external limitations, such as racism, legal status, or family economics, limit the persuasive power of the symbol. Mexican immigrant families and Pueblo families built their own variants of this imagined past, tinged with the political and social problems they faced. The symbolic power of children is great, as is the symbolic power of rural life, and the key to understanding both is to look inside the spaces of memory.

78 See my discussion of Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child. An investigation into economic philosophy of the time will also reveal a preoccupation with “value” especially with the various values that children hold, either intrinsically or mentally. Some examples of this type of reasoning include Ralph Barton Perry, “Economic Value and Moral Value,” The Quarterly Journal of Economics 30, no. 3 (1916): 443-85; Edward Howard Griggs, Moral Education (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1904).

The frameworks of *querencia* and memory therefore link my historical concerns and individualized primary sources to the theoretical paradigms of family studies, especially concerning how family dynamics affect work, kinship, community formation, and maintenance. One such framework, Family Systems Theory, is useful because it posits that families are the nuclei of much broader social structures and that they operate as open systems with respect to outside economic and social communities. This theory found remarkable success in sociology, psychology, and education, but it has also been productively used in the humanities as well. These and other uses demonstrate its effectiveness in understanding family dynamics at both the interpersonal and systemic levels. I will use this to explain why rural, agricultural work appeared to exist outside the parameters of “child labor” in the cultural imagination while still functioning as both an essential component of local economies and a reality for many children and their families. Most importantly, these theoretical frameworks can help describe the forms of agency that children held and disrupt the exploitation paradigm by demonstrating numerous forms of power within the family. It is glib to say that children merely obey their parents when they

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80 For the origins of Systems Theory, see Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory* (New York: George Braziller, 1968). A useful way of understanding Family Systems Theory is to think of concentric shells which surround the family; these permeable shells represent the layers of external influence that always influence familial interactions, and are in turn influenced by the actions of the family. Layers might include the local neighborhood, the broader community, and even government or legal structures.

81 For examples of this extended usage, see Beth McFarland-Wilson, “The Hobson Family System in Richard Powers’ Prisoner’s Dilemma,” *Style* 44, no. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 99-122. Also see the mixed approach from Kathleen Skott-Myhre, Korinne Weima, and Helen Gibbs, *Writing the Family: Women, Auto-Ethnography, and Family Work*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012, vii-ix. This insightful book demonstrated the value of family systems theory as applied to biography. Their emphasis on power dynamics is particularly useful for me, as contests over power are inevitable components of economic production.
are told to go work—the subsurface of those dyadic interactions teemed with conflict, compromise, and emotional attachment.

In order to supplement these testimonies and other biographic data, I rely on other traditional forms of primary sources. First, I analyze broad-scale government data, primarily from the Census, Department of Education, and Department of Agriculture, in order to showcase the macro-environments which family systems moved within. These types of aggregate data describe the flows of people across time and space, provide examples from other parts of the country, and show changes over time which often escaped personal recollection. Statistics also showed the obscuring of child labor from the public; for example, few landowners employed significant numbers of children, yet labor statistics from the Census counted “unpaid family” workers, including children. However, even those numbers are much smaller than the interviews suggest. Other scholars have used demographic data to look at children’s participation in rural work; one set of authors used a “statistical test” to reveal “child-specific labor demand, the socioeconomic status of parents, family structure,” and other vital information.

I also include artistic and interpretive sources, such as songs and dances, photography and paintings, and stories or similar literature. These are useful because they shed light on the cultural constructions of childhood and family life, and are part of the

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82 As will be shown in the chapter outline section at the end of this prospectus, my overarching structure requires “zooming in and out” at various scales in order to best understand child labor as a system of individual choices. Some stories are best told in chart or map form, and it will be helpful in explaining where my study’s boundaries are drawn.

83 Gratton and Moen, “Immigration, Culture, and Child Labor,” 356. They emphasized quantitative, demographic study to prove how many children engaged in rural child labor.
constructive process of public memory. In many cases, these sources originated in the sphere of childhood, or were developed in order to portray proper behaviors to children. Social historical methods are useful to this project because they recognize the value of the personal, and they ask historians to ground narratives in the actual lived experiences of individuals, rather than assuming that top-down processes reflected and dictated the pace of everyday life.  

Museums and their physical collections are also useful sources of information, as many local and state remembrances took the form of museums and other public history installations. These repositories typically house photographs, newspapers, books on local history, household items, as well as historic buildings and vehicles. Investigating these local spaces revealed how certain forms of historic memory are prioritized, catalogued, and recapitulated. Materials tend to focus on “notable” people of the region or county; in practice this generally privileges the experiences of rural white landowning families. Even within museums, the difficulties of rural life are papered over through the selective deployment of interview, diary, and other written documents alongside the museum’s artifacts. Museums in towns such as Tucumcari are part of the preservation efforts from

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84 This helps guard against the generalizations, which are quite common when dealing with children. I also think that grounding my project in personal narratives will show the complexity of children’s labor while also showing how families sometimes make similar choices despite their own contexts. The emphasis of labor history, which tends to focus on class-building and the common struggles of workers, can serve as glue to hold disparate stories together. I am aware of the critiques of social history, which include the problem of turning the local into the global, or the claim that the personal cannot become generalized in a meaningful way. For a useful discussion of these critiques, see Christopher Lloyd, “The Methodologies of Social History: A Critical Survey and Defense of Structurism,” *History and Theory* 30, no. 2 (1991): 180-219. I think that the field has largely moved past these problems by de-emphasizing the global claims that earlier scholars had made (such as Braudel) in light of claims organized around issues of gender, class, race, and the like, which are not global in scope, but are interconnected with other instances of those same categories (in essence, social history has done a better job grounding itself in context since Lloyd’s published article).
locals, but alongside those small-scale sites are larger, better-funded efforts from associations, universities, and nonprofits. The content of this dissertation would not be accessible if not for the efforts of the Center for the Southwest, located at the University of New Mexico, the Institute of Texan Cultures, located at University of Texas at San Antonio, the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum, and similar locations. Where local museums derive their collections from community donations, city records, and are often housed in historic buildings, these larger institutions draw from a wider pool of available sources and subjects. At large institutions, the passion for historic preservation runs the gamut from the same local preservation priority to more academic goals, yet to the public they often reiterate the same purpose as those local museums.

Lastly, I utilize an eclectic mix of other sources: government records, photographs, census reports, newspaper articles, and other publications. Despite the seeming reluctance of sources to categorize children’s work as “child labor” proper, many individuals discussed issues adjacent to children’s work, including agriculture, education, and rural social systems. Schools worried about child labor because work by pupils interfered with their educational mission. Children who worked were not in school, and school attendance records often indicate when harvests and other periods of intense agricultural labor occurred. Industrial publications on agriculture sometimes intermingled stories about crop pests with tales of

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85 I also looked at materials from the Tucumcari Historical Museum, the University of Texas at Kingsville, the Oral History Program at University of Texas at El Paso, among other locations. Nearly every county and major town in the region contains at least one history museum with similar types of content—old farm equipment, vehicles, tack and saddles, clothing, firearms, taxidermized animals, containers, tools, housewares, furniture, signs, photographs, folk art, and books. Essentially a collection of common, everyday pieces donated by individuals and local organizations.
children’s 4-H clubs. Government administrators compiled economic and agricultural data that revealed the fluctuating fortunes of rural families. This information helps situate children within labor categories—and also as a laboring class in their own right.  

Chapters

Each chapter explains one particular aspect of child labor and the systems which interact with its existence and conditions. Chapter 1, entitled “Spaces of the Southwest,” explains the environmental and spatial factors making rural life in the Southwest a challenge. It first articulates in brief the reasons why the Southwest is worthy of study separately from other rural parts of the U.S. The varied topography and climate of New Mexico, Texas, and neighboring states had intense effects on agriculture, labor practices, and family survival. This chapter will also demarcate several important geographic subregions of the Southwest. Each region imposed distinct conditions to rural family life, from the enduring patterns of shepherding in the Sandia Mountains to the massive cotton and wheat farms of the High Plains. Alongside discussions on climate, water, and topography, this chapter describes how agricultural patterns, land politics, and changing human demography overlaid human communities in the Southwest. Essentially, this chapter advocates for the Southwest as a unique space where child labor was a practical

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86 These categories of workers are still affected by region and time period, as even well-to-do rural children might be expected to perform some of the ranch/farm functions that poorer families expected of their children. There is also close contact between rural families of differing classes, particularly in regard to the proximity that migrant laborers might have to landowning Latinos or Anglos, or in the relationships that emerged between neighbors in rural spaces. Class is a problematic category in that regard, but certainly there is a utility in demarcating families according to their rural lifeways (subsistence vs. small market vs. migrant work vs. agribusiness, etc.).
necessity for most rural peoples because of the hardships created by climate, land, and aridity, then maintained by land and labor problems.

Chapter 2, “Agricultural Tradition and Community,” depicts the various modes of existence that dictated the pace of rural life across much of the Southwest throughout the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. Whether on a farm, ranch, or in a village, families drew on common cultural lexicons to make sense of their lives. This chapter depicts the shared agricultural ideals of Anglo, hispano, tejano, immigrant, and indigenous families. It also examines patriarchal structures, gendered labor, and other cultural understandings of gender that were reflected within children’s labor. The last section describes how rural families constituted and reconstituted themselves by examining adoption, child-sharing, and other informal systems of family creation. Overall, this chapter focuses on the ways that rural families organized themselves, as well as their space to make choices even within constraining social models.

Chapter 3, entitled “The Child’s World,” brings the daily lives of children into focus. It depicts the opinions of individuals regarding their home lives and labor as children; work was often complex, emotional, and difficult to disentangle from family life. Furthermore, this section interrogates the conceptual space where “child labor” resides—for children, work was often not separate from other rural experiences. Instead most children understood work alongside play and practical training, which all combined to offer meaning and purpose to their lives. Play, competition, discipline, and mischief were integral to the socialization of rural children. These processes, intimately connected to family and belonging, built memories of childhood work. This discussion of the world made real in the
minds of children (and adults through remembering) is often lost in academic discussions of child labor. Focusing on lived experiences of childhood provides context on what children thought of their own labors, and complicates the idea that child labor was merely an economic tool. Since children’s efforts were intertwined with all other aspects of childhood in the Southwest, efforts to end child labor (which were modeled on the cessation of industrial work) remained largely ineffective well into the 20th century.

Chapter 4, entitled “Education in the Midst,” looks at how schools intersected with the phenomenon of child labor. It first describes the state of education in the rural Southwest during the early 1900s. Educational statistics reveal that thousands upon thousands of rural school-days were lost to truancy, typically by way of working children. Then it details the agency families held when making educational choices. Children and caretakers carefully weighed education and their economic survival, mediated by access, class, needs, and desires. Some wealthy children were able to go to school without complaint, while other children could attend school intermittently based on their family’s economic situation. Even within schools, rural children sometimes had to keep working. This chapter will also flesh out the experiences of youths as they interacted with governments and private institutions with vested interests in the moral value of children, particularly among religious schools and the Indian School placements of Pueblo children. Altogether, it argues that educational efforts did not fully undermine the practice of child labor in the Southwest.

The following chapter, “Agricultural Growth and Child Labor,” examines the structures of agricultural economics in a rapidly changing era. Over the course of the early
20th century the inroads made by large-scale agriculture, national markets, and new techniques and crops created a new economic landscape for rural families; capital became key to rural life. Even families who primarily practiced subsistence agriculture, or who lived in closed communities, felt the pull of market forces. Land ownership became a key challenge for rural families, as models of sharecropping and tenancy moved into the Southwest. The chapter depicts how farmers, business owners, and organizations influenced the use of child labor. Much of this section is dedicated to a depiction of child labor within two developing sectors of the market economy; cash crops including cotton, fruits, and truck farming, and also animal husbandry, dairy products, and ranching. The key argument herein is that children’s work continued even as modernization occurred across the Southwest, much of it unseen by landowners and large agriculturalists.

Chapter 6, “Depression, Deportation, Deployment, and Dust,” depicts the tumult as the Depression begins to harm agriculture and family farming in the region. The economic downturn had a variety of effects—in some locales children used their skills to strike out on their own, in other places children and families left rural life for good, and in others the work became even more important to the economic survival of families. For High Plains families, the Dust Bowl upended long-term practices of child labor because it destroyed the acreage that families previously worked. At the same time, Mexican and Mexican American families across the region faced deportation, and indigenous families faced a different challenge in the form of the Indian Reorganization Act. Towards the tail end of this period, the national war over child labor’s legality seemed to end due to legal and social interventions. A further shock came as World War II suddenly mobilized of thousands of
rural youths, most of whom would later become part of the urbanizing and suburbanizing of the U.S. All of these events ruptured the lives and economic habits of working families in the Southwest. This reconfiguration of rural life did not end its history; rather, it signaled the beginning of its second existence as an object of nostalgia and memory.

The concluding chapter, “Conceptualizing Family Labor through Memory,” will briefly explain new trends that impacted child labor in the post-WWII Southwest, including migrant farm work and government interventions into childhood. These trends will be placed into the national context of the postwar period, which will show how child labor vanished as a category of laborers (although the exploitation of children did not end). What did change was that most rural children lost their economic character—their work was no longer essential to the operation of the household by the latter parts of the 20th century.

The bulk of this chapter will then elaborate on how people constructed memories of rural life after-the-fact. While children's work waned, its moral qualities waxed, and nostalgic Americans wanted to recapture what they saw as an honest, simple way of life for their families. This will examine both the individual family stories from interviews, as well as the larger public memories at stake within museums, books, and art. At the local and state levels, memories of rural life continue to shape politics, social life, and culture, while Southwestern families continue to interpret and create their own narratives of childhood, labor, and community.
Chapter 1: Spaces of the Southwest

The Southwest’s varied environments provided havens for distinctive models of rural labor to emerge. Economic, social, and political paradigms from outside the region did penetrate its fabric, but that happened piecemeal. In order to understand the labor systems, communities, and family dynamics that existed in this region, it is vital to situate those within the superstructures of climate, topography, agriculture, and land politics. These structures provided the limiting parameters for settlement and usage of the Southwest, and were in turn reinterpreted as political, social, and economic spaces. As Elliott West mused, “we need to recognize the play between the ‘natural’ world and human minds. If the environment is always helping shape and limit human understanding, people (and only people) are forever imagining new environments and trying to muscle them into being.”

Other scholars of U.S. history echoed West’s assertions; Richard White has long depicted how human work forms the intersection between environment and society, and Thomas Andrews developed the concept of a “workscape” to illustrate mining labor conflicts in his own work, and numerous authors have connected gender, labor, and environment together to demonstrate how family systems used labor as a constitutive and interpretive process. Labor systems in the Southwest developed in response to both human usage of the environment and environmental pressures on humans.

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This chapter will enumerate the key geographical, cultural, and environmental divisions present in the Southwest, noting their impacts on local families as well as their construction of a regional culture and economic system. In some instances, this information will be provided in broader terms, as the regions intersect with each other and also environmental, economic, cultural, and political contexts. Land and climate factors in the Southwest provided fertile ground for labor systems that incorporated children, and the politics of landscape formed a backdrop for all other levels of human interaction. In essence, it is the landscape of the Southwest which produced much of the need for rural child labor; the unique hardships of the land, weather, flora and fauna, and human landscape all created additional tasks for families looking to make a living in the arid soil. In nearly every rural family, the response to these environmental factors was to maintain long-standing practices of integrating children into daily work. As the dissertation will demonstrate, the presence of children working was the norm, not an unusual sight, for families in the rural Southwest. For these and other reasons, the study of child labor’s conditions and persistence in the spaces of the Southwest must begin with an environmental account.


It is also true that the regions chosen herein could have easily been constructed using different parameters. For example, the study could have focused on community size, placing the sources according to their population. It could have also focused on watersheds, with a zone following the Rio Grande, the Brazos, the Nueces, etc. This study has attempted to construct key sites that are meaningfully distinct from one another in multiple parameters (geology and geography, racial makeup, culture, agricultural production, history) but this is an imprecise process in a place as complex as the Southwest.
The Southwest, as the chapter will demonstrate, had both important similarities and differences to other agricultural areas of the U.S. and Mexico. Texas, as this chapter will show, has long been considered part of both the Southwest and the South proper—however, demarcating lines can be found through examination of land and labor systems, such as tenancy and sharecropping, as well as through the racial divides in the state. Eastern Texas was, and perhaps still is, much more similar in economic and political outlook to the South, while the plains and deserts of the western half of Texas are more similar to places like New Mexico, Arizona, and southern California. The South’s agricultural model relied on both poor whites and blacks, and heavily utilized children as pickers and laborers since the colonial period, due to the legacy of slavery and a severe wealth gap. There was very little sympathy in the Southern imagination for the African American child laborer. At the same time, white children were also engaging in cotton work, in both industrial mills and fields. As historians of that labor system have noted, similarly to the Southwest there was widespread reliance on a “family labor system” but it was not a response to geography or politics—instead it was used because it was a “solution to problems of labor recruitment” and a way to control the working class. By contrast, the Southwest did not have traditions of chattel slavery, of large plantations, a strong export focus in agriculture, nor of stark biracial lines.

The Midwest, another major agricultural region of the 19th century, was also distinct from the Southwest. It did not have much agricultural history prior to American and

European settlement, since many of the indigenous peoples there were nomadic and did not plant significant crop acreages. U.S. settlers from the Northeast, primarily, would settle the Midwest and transform it into a highly organized, spread-out system of grain and cattle production. Portions of this system could be found in the Southwest, especially along the plains, though increasing aridity and difficult geography meant that such pursuits still had to adapt to local conditions. The Midwest was not a multiracial society—where ethnic conflicts emerged, they were between native-born and immigrant populations. Another mark of difference between it and the Southwest was that Anglo-Americans considered the Midwest to be “their” land; they did not have to acculturate and Americanize large nonwhite populations, instead exterminating indigenous peoples as they moved into the area.  

The first key space is located in central and northern New Mexico. Here, the southern Rocky Mountains intrude into the state, producing rugged terrain, isolation from major urban areas, and a mix of forest, grassland, and mountain. Most importantly, this area is the traditional homeland to many communities of Pueblos and hispanos. This area centers on the rugged highlands around Santa Fe and west of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Water is relatively more plentiful in this region, since numerous streams and rivers drain into the Rio Grande, and during the winter abundant snow accumulates. This place exerts a strong pull on the memories of many New Mexicans; its status as a cherished ancestral land for so many residents of this region gives it a central cultural position for New 

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91 Notwithstanding the numerous European immigrants who would eventually call that area home, a trend which did also happen in the Southwest with less frequency.
Mexico as a whole, and it has also been the epicenter for resistance against colonization of New Mexico.

The next key site is the greater Albuquerque area, encompassing the fertile Rio Grande valley and its hinterlands in the Sandia Mountains. This area, drier and warmer than the mountains, forms the southern part of a majority *hispano* subregion. Pueblos were scarcer but still present, numerous villages and towns dot the river’s course southward, and homesteaders eked out a rugged existence in the surrounding mountains and high steppes. At the center of this region lies Albuquerque; its development during the early 20th century as an increasingly Anglicized urban center created tensions, opportunities, and challenges to rural families within this key site.

The third is the arid desert region that follows the Rio Grande from southern New Mexico and El Paso out into the Trans-Pecos. The river cuts a shallow valley through the Chihuahuan Desert, the largest desert in North America. The sands are pockmarked with small mountain ranges, like the Organ and Sacramento Mountains surrounding the Tularosa Basin, or the Franklin Mountains which cut through El Paso.92 This region has been a key pathway for people heading across the border, but also housed large numbers of internal migrants.93 The contrasts between the narrow but fertile band of the Rio Grande, the thriving city of El Paso, and the barren desert landscapes are vast, as are the racial and labor

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93 In particular, the Tularosa Basin in the second half of the 19th century became home to many “Hispanic refugees from the flooded Rio Grande Valley” and white Americans fleeing the intense drought farther east. See Hawthorne-Tagg, *A Life Like No Other*, 1.
struggles over this border region. This borderland shows how rural migrant families adapted to life in the United States.

The fourth key geographical space is the High Plains region, a broad area that stretches from far Eastern New Mexico in a swath southeast to the Edwards Plateau. As the famed historian Walter Prescott Webb explained, the High Plains were flat, treeless, and arid or “sub-humid.” These plains are a subset of the Great Plains, functioning as the westernmost “plateau belt.” Numerous rivers crisscross this region, but clear drinking water is still rare; many rivers are thick with alluvial sediment deposits, which rendered them “unpalatable” because of their mineral contents. The Edwards Plateau, in the center of Texas, forms the easternmost boundary of this study, as east of it there is a pronounced Southern influence on land and agriculture use, as well as a marked increase in rainfall. These plains challenged Anglo and *tejano* families who wished to settle and raise cattle or crops. This land’s defining feature is its breadth—flat land, long grass, and promises of self-sufficiency. These “staked plains” were also where the American model of settlement started to falter in the West.

My last area is Texas’ far southern region, which exists as a triangle of land eastward from the Rio Grande, has its northernmost point at San Antonio, and continues until it meets the Gulf of Mexico. The interior low-lying plains are prime ranching country, the coast is a humid and flat grassland, and the Rio Grande is lined with vegetation. Much like the El Paso region, these plains were also sites for border crossing, racial strife, and the

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specter of “King Cotton.” This area of Texas remained heavily Mexican and *tejano* through the first half of the 20th century, but became a major site for massive farms and ranches to take hold.95

One important caveat regarding these key subregions is that it is an impossible task to provide a truly comprehensive account of child labor across as large a place as the Southwest. However, careful usage of sources with an eye towards representative sampling can provide a useful overview of the region and its working children. These sites were chosen because they offered substantial landscape and climate diversity within the macro-region of the Southwest. Where sources were available from other regions, like the Texas Panhandle and the Colorado Plateau of New Mexico, they have also been included, though they are not main foci. At the same time, since social life and the lived experience of families are the core of this study, the availability of sources (particularly oral histories) also drove the selection process. The tertiary concern was that the sites demonstrated distinct political, cultural, and racial dimensions of the Southwest, while still suggesting continuities one another.96 Below are two maps, highlighting the counties where interview, autobiography, and related families could be found within this study. Maps always provide a more static perspective on the position of families—family members split up and regrouped over time, they moved between locations, and county size does not map neatly

96 This is in part why the study focuses on subregions within two states, instead of selecting subregions in other states with their own very different political and economic histories. Interesting work remains to be done in other regions, such as the Salt Lake Valley of Utah, the Snake River region of Idaho, and the Central Valley of California. Having those sites would have made this study too large and unwieldy, so it is by necessity limited to the states of New Mexico and Texas (with some brief mentions of nearby states, incl. Colorado and Oklahoma, as they border some of the subregions).
with geography in western states. Still, this demonstrates where the bulk of the sources come from. Unfortunately, efforts to obtain more sources from the Texas Panhandle as well as western New Mexico (except for Catron County) were not fruitful. High densities of interview in Bernalillo, El Paso, and Kimble counties reflected a denser sampling from interview projects as well as historical societies.
Figure 1 Rand McNally Market Maps, New Mexico Counties, 1983, map, Map and Geographic Information Center, University of New Mexico.
Figure 2 Rand McNally Market Maps, Texas Counties, 1983, map, Map and Geographic Information Center, University of New Mexico. Numbers added by author. These show where families lived—some families count twice, as they spent significant time in two locations.
Climate, Geography, and Challenge

The Southwest, as the key sites show, is a place of varied climate, natural life, and geography. Mountains ringed with forest rise from arid deserts and sunny plains. Its few large rivers are essential to life. Herds of wild horses roam the grasslands while rattlesnakes hide in rocky outcroppings. In New Mexico, all of these geographic features sit at high elevations. The Southwest’s climate, on the whole, is arid and sunny, with large daily fluctuations in temperature, a brief rainy season in the summer, and winters which run the gamut from quite mild to icy and severe. Climate and geography defined many of the obstacles facing families in the Southwest. The challenging nature of the landscape required families to adapt and overcome, and during this centuries-long process of adaptation, most local communities developed labor systems that required everyone to participate. Most rural people understood their survival was in large part dictated by their ability to work against adverse conditions. As James Frazier wrote in his ranching memoir, “old and young depended on each other... we spent our lives together under God’s great sky in the sun, rain, dust, and the ice of winter.” In short, child labor was essential to family survival in the Southwest because the capricious natural world required high amounts of work in order for people to draw sustenance from it.

There are several natural processes that mediated human settlement of the West, including water access, storms, drought, unpredictable winters, as well as disease.

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97 For a historical appraisal of the “arid Southwest,” see Paul M. Carrington, “The Climate of New Mexico,” Public Health Reports 22, no. 8 (1907): 945-957. Carrington argued that the climate in New Mexico “is always superb” but then allowed that “there is occasionally bad weather.” His report seemed to be aimed at Easterners unfamiliar with the territory.

98 James Bruce Frazier, What I Learned on the Ranch, and Other Stories from a West Texas Childhood (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2003), 21-22.
dangerous animals, and the like. The scarcity of water is perhaps the defining natural barrier to human habitation of the West. Access to reliable sources was essential, and thus families and communities in the Southwest developed systems to ensure that they had water. Among the hispano and Pueblo families of New Mexico, the acequia system organized and regulated water availability. Acequias originated with Pueblan cultures, and by the colonial period most Pueblos had complex, established stone ditch systems, terrace farming, and other innovations which the Spanish adapted and expanded on.\textsuperscript{99} By the turn of the century, acequia management had evolved such that the acequia associations gained political and corporate legitimacy from the territorial government—although they had centuries of cultural and social authority, this newfound power provided certain legal rights to acequia users and administrators.\textsuperscript{100} Regarding the history of water among Pueblo and hispano communities, “water scarcity or aridity set the environmental parameters within which subsistence farming and pastoralism could take root and flourish in the Upper Rio Grande Valley. Societies that survived in this setting adapted by devising ways to capture, preserve, and organize access to water... Indigenous and Iberian water-management traditions flowed together on the colonial frontier.”\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{99} See José Rivera, \textit{Acequia Culture: Water, Land, and Community in the Southwest} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 1-5. This section provided a detailed depiction of acequia systems, their origin, and the materials used. Also see Sylvia Rodríguez, \textit{Acequia: Water Sharing, Sanctity, and Place} (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2006).

\textsuperscript{100} Rivera, \textit{Acequia Culture}, 77-79.

\textsuperscript{101} Rodríguez, \textit{Acequia: Water Sharing}, 79.
Across Texas and some Anglo-settled parts of New Mexico, irrigation ditch systems
were far less common, although some communities did build such systems. They had to
manufacture water sources because few ranches and farms had the luxury of a stream
crossing, that was “a rare thing in this dry country.”

Menard, Texas provided one such example; the Menard Irrigation Company took over a ditch system built in 1876 and
provided water to local farmers around Menard.

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102 Janice Gnatkowski, interview by Jane O’Cain, November 16, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New
Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. Page 4.

103 Menard is a town in the Edwards Plateau. The Menard Irrigation Company provided water since they took
over the ditch in 1905, and it became increasingly valuable after drought years. For example, the family of N.
H. Pierce purchased land adjacent to the ditch because their cotton crop had failed in 1917 after a dry spell.
They considered it an investment into their own water security. Interestingly, irrigation canals had previously
been constructed in the 1700s to serve Mission San Saba, which was close to where Menard would be
founded. At present, the river is dry in many places due to overuse; the irrigation canal begins five miles
upstream from the town and returns water back to the San Saba River several miles past Menard, although it
does not always have any water to return to the river. N. H. Pierce, interview by Mayon Neel, November 10,
1986, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San
Antonio. See also “Menard: Ditch Walk: The Prettiest Ditch in Town,” Historic Sites and Cities, Texas Historical
rights and prior appropriation (which was adopted in 1890) held that families had access to water sources that existed on, or traveled across, their property, and that older landowners had stronger claims to such water. One scholar termed this “an essentially unmanageable system.”

By the turn of the century irrigation captured the Federal government’s eye after much agitation by westerners; in 1902 Congress enacted the National Reclamation Act, which provided federal funding towards irrigation projects in the arid West. Texas was at first not included, although they would indirectly benefit from reclamation projects in New Mexico, and hundreds of thousands of acres along the Rio Grande would eventually be irrigated by federal funds. Texans also began to regulate their own water use during this period, but municipal and industrial water districts did not emerge until World War II. In both New Mexico and Texas, communities and government officials relentlessly worked to

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105 One major project along the Rio Grande was the Elephant Butte Dam in southern New Mexico, which provided irrigation water along the Rio Grande basin and down towards El Paso. This project is important to that key site as it enabled new, intensive farming to emerge after its completion in 1916. See “Electphant Butte Dam,” U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, accessed March 25, 2018, https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=94; Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 130, 160-169. Worster argued that the Act represented a coup for the established political order and helped advance agribusiness across the West. That may be true, but Worster over-emphasized the destruction of what he termed the “agrarian” societies of the West—those communities were never so neatly isolated from other localities, and they persist in various forms up to the present. Worster’s contributions are still valuable, however. For another take on the Reclamation Act, see Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin, 1986).

106 Marvin C. Nichols, “Action on Texas Water Problems,” *Journal of the American Water Works Association* 50, no. 9 (September 1958): 1160-1165. Nichols pointed out that Texas’ water problems were increasing in severity, and the old forms of local or individual ownership over water rights were no longer sufficient.
maintain their own water security. Many families turned to subterranean sources of water, including springs and wells, when possible. In some places, the aquifers ran close to the surface, although these waters were sometimes dangerously alkaline. Water scholar Sylvia Rodríguez aptly summed up the Southwest’s water situation, explaining how the regional “context has always been one of scarcity.” Water was a primary limiting factor regarding the subsistence of rural families.

For families, the wellspring, creek, pond, and irrigation canal were intimate spaces where the family’s fortunes were made or destroyed. In parts of the west with “bad water,” a clean, refreshing drink was a luxury. Out on Tom Long’s ranch, he reminisced about the “creeks, big springs” and rainwater cisterns which provided the best water. Elsewhere, the water was contaminated by minerals such as gypsum, and as a result his family had a windmill-driven well for the animals, but had a cistern for household use. Other western families echoed Tom’s sentiments, with one noting water’s importance and prominence: “it was the springs that were your liquid gold.”

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107 The Territorial Governor of New Mexico in 1903, Miguel Otero, claimed that the “Lost River,” a drainage course running in southern New Mexico, could be tapped via wells. He stated that it was “a subterranean water course that traverses a large area and could be developed into an almost exhaustless source. The waters of this underground flow approach in many places to within 3 feet of the surface, with 50 feet as a maximum pumping depth.” Elsewhere in this document, the author noted that alkaline and gypsum impurities in the water made it toxic to cattle, and that springs in the Tularosa area had to be fenced off to protect livestock. Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other, 16-18.

108 Rodríguez, Acequia: Water Sharing, 79.

109 Alma and Tom Long, interview by Hardy and Sarah Cannon, December 5, 1989, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Pages 16-18.

110 Julia Nail Moss and Dr. Ernest Speck, interview by Bill and Precious Gregg, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Pages 38-39. A bit later in that interview, Julia explained the flavor of the spring water she drank as a child, which was mineral-rich but tasted “awful good.”
Families in the Arid Southwest also had to deal with the intensity of thunderstorms and their after-effects. Thunderstorms, endemic to the West, cross the region in predictable seasonal patterns and inundate the ground with rain. Lightning, although it rarely struck individuals, might panic livestock, and it could ignite deadly wildfires, particularly on the High Plains.¹¹¹ There were numerous severe fires in the West during the early 1910s.¹¹² Wildfires formed an immediate threat to rural families, although by the turn of the century people worked to reduce the severity of such fires, often with unintended results.¹¹³ Even when fires did not scorch the landscape, dry soils could be overwhelmed by intense storms. Once dry lands became saturated, dusty depressions transformed into torrents of fast-moving water. Flash floods were particularly dangerous to children working on the range or herding, as they often worked alone and could not rely on the caution of adults. Seasonal storms appeared to accelerate natural processes of erosion during the late 19th century; this “gullying” produced new arroyos and depressions along the rivers of New Mexico.¹¹⁴ In extreme cases floods could alter the course of family lifepaths; W. G.

¹¹¹ It did strike people on occasion, with deadly results. Ernest Aguayo lost one brother to a lightning strike while they were “blasting post holes” at a mountainous ranch. His other brother was seriously wounded in the event. Ernest Aguayo, interview by Beth Morgan, June 14, 2001, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.

¹¹² In particular, 1910 and 1912 were bad fire years in Arizona and New Mexico. See Thomas W. Swetnam and Julio L. Betancourt, “Fire—Southern Oscillation Relations in the Southwestern United States,” Science 249, no. 4972 (August 1990): 1017-1020.

¹¹³ As prairie fires waned in frequency, locals in South Texas noted an increase in woody plants and a decrease in the total acreage of grasslands. This could have negative effects on grazing animals. See Thadis W. Box, Jeff Powell, and D. Lynn Drewel, “Influence of Fire on South Texas Chaparral Communities,” Ecology 48, no. 6 (November 1967): 955-961. In New Mexico, grasslands turned to shrubland due to “fire suppression” and the pine forests became loaded with dead wood, a boon to firewood gatherers but an ever-greater threat when fires did happen. Swetnam and Betancourt, “Fire—Southern Oscillation,” 1019.

¹¹⁴ At the time, observers felt that increased sheep numbers were at fault for this erosion, but Denevan refuted that thesis and instead focused on the interaction between periods of drought and periods of intense rainfall during this period. William M. Denevan, “Livestock Numbers in Nineteenth-Century New Mexico, and the Problem of Gullying in the Southwest,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers 57, no. 4 (December 1967): 691-703.
Andrews’ family, migrant cotton pickers across Texas, were heading north from South Texas to “join up with another family moving to Oklahoma but were turned back by flood waters” near Brady, Texas.\textsuperscript{115}

Of course, many families preferred the yearly dangers of thunderstorms, wildfires, and flash floods to the destructive power of prolonged drought. The whims of long-term climate patterns have dictated that drought is inevitable in the West.\textsuperscript{116} Droughts came on slowly, and sometimes lingered for years at a time. Often combined with higher-than-usual temperatures, it killed off crops, livestock, and dried out the topsoil. There are several major drought episodes in the Southwest from the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century to the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century. In New Mexico, from about the late 1880s to 1896 there was famously intense drought, from 1900 to 1904 abnormally high temperatures combined with low precipitation, in 1908 drought came back and lasted to 1910, and an extremely long drought began in 1945 and did not abate until the mid-1950s.\textsuperscript{117} In West Texas, families also faced significant drought.


\textsuperscript{116} Webb provides a lyrical example of how settlers thought about the cycles of drought on the Great Plains; the Chief Hydrographer of the US Geological Survey stated in 1896 that “the Great Plains can be characterized as a region of periodical famine... Year after year the water supply may be ample, the forage plants cover the ground with a rank growth, the herds multiply, the settlers extend their fields, when, almost imperceptibly, the climate becomes less humid, the rain clouds forming day after day disappear upon the horizon, and weeks lengthen into months without a drop of moisture. The grasses wither, the herds wander wearily over the plains in search of water holes, the crops wilt and languish, yielding not even the seed for another year...” Although this example detailed drought on the plains, it provides a good appraisal of the climate over interior West. Webb, The Great Plains, 342-343. For an in-depth take on the story of water and the West, see Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

in 1910, had a sudden drought in 1917, and suffered under the 1950s drought as well.¹¹⁸

1933–34 stood as an unusual case, in that it was a localized drought year (in the High Plains and El Paso region) that helped produce the Dust Bowl, a devastating combination of drought, human negligence, and wind that blew away the soil of farms across the High Plains. Droughts could upend the livelihoods of dozens of families in a brief period of time. One woman, looking back on her family’s life in Marathon, Texas after the droughts of the 1950s, used a sadly all-too-familiar metaphor, stating bleakly that “Marathon’s kinda died on the vine.”¹¹⁹

The extremes of seasonal heat and cold were also deadly to crops, livestock, and inhabitants in the Southwest. Heat, as already stated above, helped precipitate dangerous drought and wildfire conditions. Blizzards, hailstorms, and severe winters created a different set of challenges.¹²⁰ These “bitterly cold” winters buried the mountains and plains of the three northern subregions in snow; in the words of one High Plains settler, “the incessant wind... whipped every cold draft into a blue norther and every snowfall into a blizzard.”¹²¹ One family of travelers found themselves stranded on the streets in Carlsbad, NM due to winter conditions. Only a boy at the time, Breathett Hewgley remembered that

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¹¹⁹ Hallie Stillwell, interview by Bill Gregg, Precious Gregg, and Ernest Speck, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Quotation from page 28.
¹²⁰ Webb, The Great Plains, 23–26. Here, Webb provides a map of hailstorm averages in the U.S. Northern-central New Mexico was in the most dangerous zone for hailstorms. More broadly, Webb acknowledges that blizzards are endemic to the Northern Plains, but they do occur in the Southwest along the mountains and in the High Plains.
the biting wind and cold caused his mother to surrender the wagon’s reins to his ten-year-old brother because her hands were freezing. Winters were dangerous whether one was in a town or village, moving through the country, or living out on the range. In order to maintain their livelihoods against snowstorms, ranchers and other livestock owners had to corral their cattle to protect them from the sustained cold; livestock left out alone often perished in such conditions.

Figure 4 Snow and Cows at Giusewa Ruins, Jemez State Monument, New Mexico, undated, postcard, no. 006419, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, https://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/acpa/id/17968/rec/751. The picture below, of two cows stranded near Jemez State Monument, illustrates such winter conditions in Northern New Mexico.

Exceptional cold also produced a more insidious danger for farmers—it could permanently kill orchard trees and delay the planting of spring or summer crops. Even a less frigid winter could still cause long-term damage to the land. For example, according to eyewitnesses commenting on the New Mexican Plains of San Agustin, the wet winter of

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122 Breathett Hewgley, interview by Esther MacMillan, June 11, 1981, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Pages 7 and 8.
1904-1905 did irreparable damage to western grasslands (which were already under threat from overgrazing since the late 1800s). One observer, John Allred, noted that “in all of them low places it stayed, great big playas where there was low places that grass all rotted, killed it, while on the steep hillsides the grass... it didn’t hurt it, it drained off.” A place where rich fields of grass grew had become barren.\footnote{John Allred and Lewis Jones, interview by Lou Blachly, January 1, 1955, CD 5, MSS 123 BC, Pioneers Foundation Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.} In those plains, and in other places, weather exacerbated human and animal overuse of the land.

Families and children working in the Southwest faced dangerous animals. Coyotes and rabbits were perhaps the most common pest animals across the entire region. Coyotes, of course, were dangerous to livelihoods of most rural families, as they “could bring down a calf easily” and indiscriminately preyed on most other small farm animals. Rabbits and hares ate both garden and farm crops, but since they were also edible, many families hunted them as well. Coyotes became the targets of government-funded trapping efforts in some regions during this period.\footnote{Hawthorne-Tagg, \textit{A Life Like No Other}, 193-194.} Rattlesnakes, similarly to other venomous creatures, threatened rural homesteads because a bite could prove fatal if a human was caught far from help, and such creatures could also take livestock that stumbled into their burrows or were bitten. Historian Elliott West noted that children, in their curiosity, sometimes disturbed dangerous creatures such as rattlesnakes; he recalled one frightened mother whose toddler had been “investigating some mesquite roots” and ran into a rattlesnake. When asked if the snake “had bitten her,” she exclaimed “‘No... but it said it would.’”\footnote{Elliott West, \textit{Growing Up With the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 103.}
another example, New Mexico rancher Tommy Danley observed, “Rattlesnakes always got a few cattle... That’s the worst [pest]... if they get them on the bottom here in the throat, or right on the nose where it will swell and cut the air off, they normally die.” In rarer instances families faced the threat of larger animals, including mountain lions and wolves. However, despite the perceptions of these animals as pests, the most common danger from animals to children came from livestock and horses; oral testimonies are replete with injuries sustained at the hands of a mule’s kick or a charging bull. One animal that terrorized the Southwest in earlier decades, but had died out by the late 19th century, was the Rocky Mountain Locust. Their swarms devastated Great Plains crops as late as the 1870s but went extinct shortly thereafter. Animals remained dangerous throughout this period, as rural children could encounter them near their homes, in fields, out in the backcountry, or be attacked by their own livestock. As later chapters will attest, children also bore a large share of pest control duties within the Southwest.

Lastly, medical emergencies and diseases such as the Flu, Smallpox, Typhoid, and Diphtheria were common dangers to children and families. These afflictions could alter the structure of families by afflicting a parent or other caregiver, prompting the family to change their circumstances, affecting a child’s development, or even killing a family member. In instances where parents or relatives were sick, was common for an older child

126 Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other, 218.
127 Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other, 194.
(particularly a boy) to take over their labors. Given the remoteness of many rural communities, infant and child mortality was an ever-present danger. Lula and Ruth Collins recalled the struggle of their mother and newborn sister; “Mother had recently had Spanish influenza and almost died of complications. In six weeks [sic] time this frail bit of humanity [the baby] was to suffer through a severe attack of whooping cough. Statistics would not have given her a chance to survive either one of these misfortunes, much less both. But Polly didn’t know about statistics so she kept right on living.”

Ernest Aguayo’s family was also no stranger to illness. As a teenager, he witnessed two of his younger siblings perish in the 1918 flu epidemic. A variety of aid providers, including midwives, rural doctors, and curanderos tirelessly in many of these regions. Parteras such as Jesusita Aragon delivered most babies and provided maternal health support in local communities from the colonial period until well into the 20th century. Doctors rose in prominence in the Southwest during the 1920s and 1930s, although the scattered population meant that they had to cover vast distances to see their patients; for example, New Mexico had about one doctor

129 For examples of this, see Andres Mora, interview by Joyce Mendel, July 26, 1990, box 1, folder 13, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico; his father became ill for two years when Andres was a teenager, and he then said, “I had to take care of the house and take care of my dad and mother.” Also see Dulcinea Sanchez, interview by Joyce Mendel, February 15, 1991, box 1, folder 22, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico; Moss and Speck, interview, 26-27.


131 Ilse Griffith, interview by Esther MacMillan, February 3, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. She stated that around her home in Corpus Christi, one “Dr. Watson” would offer free medical care and make trips around the area to treat her neighbors. For more information on the history of midwives in New Mexico, see Lena McQuade-Salz-fass, “‘An Indispensable Service’: Midwives and Medical Officials After New Mexico Statehood,” in Precarious Prescriptions: Contested Histories of Race and Health in New Mexico, Laurie B. Green et al., eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 115-142.

for every 250 miles in 1920.\textsuperscript{134} Public health information also began to circulate during this period, often printed on fliers or in newspapers.\textsuperscript{135} Diseases, injuries, and other medical issues were accepted hardships of rural life across the Southwest, and they could strike with little regard for economic, ethnic, or regional identity. Families persisted despite these weather events, climate cycles, and natural dangers, although they could instantly alter a family’s lifepath. Nearly every diary, testimony, and interview from these regions acknowledged the great power these forces held over human communities. Families, as later chapters will show, adapted child labor as a practical tool for mitigating the loss of productive labor from all these sorts of catastrophes.

Arable Land, Ownership, and the Market

Geography and climate dictated agricultural possibilities to farmers and ranchers within the region. They also imposed unique hardships that families, including children, would have to labor against. In order to analyze the varied labors of children, and the difficult decisions made regarding education, child circulation, family structures, and even public memory, one must first understand the agricultural production of New Mexico and Texas. The most important crops for New Mexicans during the early 1900s were alfalfa, corn, oats, wheat, forage grasses, and orchard fruits. Beans and potatoes, though not as significant in terms of total cash value, were also cultivated in large quantities for primarily

\textsuperscript{134} “Doctors Find Cars Triple Efficiency,” \textit{Automobile Topics} 58, no. 3(June 5, 1920): 36. In Texas, professional medicine developed somewhat faster, although much of the early growth was along the Gulf Coast and near towns. For a narrative of this development, see Chester R. Burns, “Health and Medicine,” Texas State Historical Association, updated March 2, 2017, accessed July 14, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/smhzc.

\textsuperscript{135} For a good example of a public health alert of the period, see “Dos Manantiales Agua Peligrosos,” \textit{La Tuerca} (Albuquerque, NM), July 8, 1926, 4. The dangerous springs were at San Lorenzo and Cañoncito, and the Department of Health recommended anyone drinking water at those places to boil it first.
local consumption. It may be surprising to note the absence of both cotton and chiles from these numbers; cotton came into New Mexico during the following decades, from less than a thousand acres of cotton recorded in the 1910 census to over a hundred thousand acres planted by the mid-1920s. Red and green chiles, another crucial part of the local diet, did not have a large commercial presence until after World War II. In New Mexico, cattle were the largest single livestock group by value, but New Mexicans owned more than three times as many sheep and goats, and they were the second-most-valuable group of livestock. The preponderance of sheep owes to the rugged terrain of New Mexico, the sheep’s ability to forage in rough conditions, its historic presence in New Mexico, and the long tradition of weaving in the state.

138 Chiles, or chilies, are commonplace in New Mexico culture as an addition to most common foods. They come in both green (fresh) and red (dried/powdered) varieties, though red chiles were more common within traditional homes, as they can survive longer periods of time. Commercial production and advertising of New Mexico chiles came in the Postwar period but were predicated on a few important developments. In 1913, Dr. Fabian Garcia, a scientist at New Mexico State University, developed “New Mexico No. 9,” a chile cultivar based on local chiles from Las Cruces, New Mexico. This green chile became the progenitor for future mass-market chile crops out of NMSU’s agricultural laboratories. Improvements on No. 9, including New Mexico No. 6 and New Mexico No. 6-4, emerged during the 1950s, and by the 1970s chiles were a commercially valuable crop for the state. For more information on chiles and agribusiness, see Danise Coon, Eric Votava, and Paul W. Bosland, *The Chile Cultivars of New Mexico State University* (Las Cruces: NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station, 2018), accessed September 20, 2019, https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/research_horticulture/RR792.pdf. Also see “New Mexico Chile Industry Value,” New Mexico Chile Pepper Institute, New Mexico State University, accessed May 10, 2018, https://cpi.nmsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/60/2016/06/new_mexico_chile_industry_value_1977_2009.pdf
140 Sheep were well-suited to life in the rugged portions of New Mexico, including near the Spanish-speaking and Pueblo villages of northern New Mexico as well as the steppe lands surrounding the Rio Grande. For a modern description of these and other traits, see Clay P. Mathis and Tim Ross, *Sheep Production and Management* (Las Cruces: NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, 2000), 2-3, https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/CR604.pdf.
One defining feature of New Mexican agriculture was its highly regionalized character. In the eastern portion of the state, farmers planted High Plains staples such as corn and hay. Along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, families grew larger varieties of crops, but typically on smaller acreages. In some places, such as the Tularosa basin of southern New Mexico, farmers experimented with cash crops like cotton in the 20th century.\textsuperscript{141} The diversity of agriculture in New Mexico at the turn of the century made sense for a region that had not fully adapted to the existence of national and international food markets. Families and communities grew what they needed to eat and exchanged or sold their surplus at a local level.\textsuperscript{142}

Within Texas, the primary agricultural products of the time included cattle, dairy, cotton, corn, and other grains. Cotton was the most valuable crop in Texas during this period—farmers planted almost ten million acres of it in Texas by 1909, and it was roughly two-thirds of the total crop value of the state.\textsuperscript{143} Texas’ broad plains and prairies made it well-suited for grains as well. Corn predominated, but Texan farm families also planted thousands of acres of rice, wheat, oats, and forage grasses. Vegetables, fruits, and nuts were economically marginal crops in Texas.\textsuperscript{144} Among livestock, approximately 42% of the

\textsuperscript{141} See Hawthorne-Tagg, \textit{A Life Like No Other}, 28-9.
\textsuperscript{142} Even during the Great Depression, it was common for New Mexicans to trade chile \textit{ristras} as credit to merchants. For a popular take on this topic, see “Chile Roasting in New Mexico,” New Mexico History, accessed August 10, 2018, http://newmexicohistory.org/people/chile-roasting-in-new-mexico
\textsuperscript{144} U.S. Bureau of the Census, \textit{Thirteenth Census of the United States, Vol. VII}, 628-32. I want to stress here that other crops, including pecans, oranges, market vegetables, and tobacco all contributed to the Texan economy in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and might be very important to individual families. For an overview, see Henry C. Dethloff and Garry L. Nall, “Agriculture,” Texas State Historical Association, accessed August 28, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ama01. One intriguing primary source is a guide for farmers interested in growing citrus in Texas: see Stanley B. Crockett, “Complete Citrus Grove Management in Texas,” \textit{American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers} 3, no. 2 (October 1939): 83-88. Crockett stated
total value on Texas farms was held in dairy and beef cattle, with most of the remainder split up by horses, mules, and pigs. Unlike in New Mexico, sheep and goats comprised an insignificant percentage of total livestock holdings. What these numbers say about farm labor is that the majority of children engaged in rural work in Texas were working on large ranches or monoculture farms. However, economic value does not always dictate the division of labor, and children on larger farms often had to deal with a variety of agricultural tasks.

The ruggedness of the Southwest’s terrain, coupled with its limited water resources, restricted the availability of arable land across this region. For instance, despite New Mexico’s rich agricultural heritage, much of its land was unsuitable for cultivation or livestock. In the agricultural census conducted in 1910, the U.S. government determined that less than 20% of land was farmed in numerous New Mexico counties, including Bernalillo, Valencia, Rio Arriba, Taos, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Luna, and Dona Ana. According to this study, the eastern High Plains counties of New Mexico had significantly more agricultural (or ranch) land; these included Colfax, Roosevelt, and Curry Counties. The government likely utilized a flawed methodology in making this assessment; they often under-valued or ignored the cultivation of land and the use of communal and public land for that Texas began growing citrus by 1910 (it was concentrated along the southernmost counties, which had the right climate and enough water to grow grapefruit and oranges).

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146 Two other notes are interesting here. Of the Rio Grande counties in New Mexico, only Sierra County had 20 to 40 percent of its land under cultivation. Secondly, the county lines in New Mexico have been redrawn since this period—Valencia, Socorro, and Grant counties were all split up, and there was no Los Alamos county at the time. For more information, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, Vol. VII, 146 and 148-151.
grazing among the Pueblo reservations or among land grant communities. It also ignored the gathering and harvesting of non-commercial plants in marginal lands, such as the picking of piñon nuts and firewood in the forests of the Sandias or the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Land use in Texas told a different, more homogenous story. In the same 1910 census, only two counties in West Texas had less than 20 percent of their land devoted to agriculture or ranching, and many counties in the Edwards Plateau area were completely covered in farmland. Texan families also engaged in gathering and alternative forms of agricultural subsistence, but those activities tended to lack the cultural and communal value they held among many New Mexicans.

This regional diversity meant a large variety of tasks. In a massive single-crop farm of corn or wheat, children’s labor was kept close to the domicile and garden, but in mixed-use homesteads, small villages with outlying fields, and large ranches, there was too great a number of tasks for families to complete. Coupled with the slow growth of mechanized farming in the region (covered in greater detail in Chapter 5), this meant that children were necessary participants in the labor pool. The tasks explained above, including the gathering of firewood, the protection of siblings and livestock from snakes and coyotes, the care of

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147 This will become clearer later on in this chapter, when I discuss American attitudes towards western settlement; Anglo-Americans often considered themselves the “best” farmers, and the only ones who could fully utilize acres of land. Of course, this attitude also gave them a clear moral imperative to bring “unproductive” lands into American hands.

148 Numerous transcripts, particularly in New Mexico, suggest that this kind of gathering was quite widespread. Firewood was sold to towns and other settlements. Andres Mora, who grew up east of Albuquerque, remembered cutting wood for firewood and for posts at the Chilili land grant, which his family later sold in Albuquerque. Andres Mora, interview. Also see Jacobo and Margarita Armenta, interview by Kathleen Hanlon, May 1993 and June 26, 1993, box 1, folder 16, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. For a literary rendition of piñon gathering, see Ricardo Garcia, Coal Camp Days (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 200-202.

mixed crops and large gardens, and the vigil kept over free-range livestock, were all part and parcel of childhood in the region. Most of these tasks at the turn of the century were done within households, although some children were participating in wage labors, like the “hoodlum” youths who worked on ranches, doing any chore required of them.\(^{150}\) Yet this marked a significant distinction between child labor in the West and child labor elsewhere. Firewood was more abundant in the East, predators were reduced in number or nonexistent across much of the rest of the country, tractors and other equipment eased the production of staple crops elsewhere, and fences had already claimed most of the Great Plains by the 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^{151}\) Where small tasks encroached on the available labor-time of families, child labor became the first choice for most households.

The use of land, although dictated by geography, soil, and climate, also varied due to systems of land ownership and labor—those two conditions often determined much about the daily operation of the given property, and these systems had strong regional predispositions. In general, land was held by owners (either individuals or corporations) who purchased the land, held by those who homesteaded, those who held a land grant, held in common (via a reservation or land grant) or owned by a government body (such as the Forest Service). Any of those properties could be sites for agricultural work. Scholars of the time considered farm labor to consist of four groups: “(1) the croppers, (2) wage laborers, either regular or seasonal, (3) tenants, either closely supervised or free operators,

\(^{150}\) This boy in particular was in charge of managing the firewood and water for a chuck wagon at the Bell Ranch. He had to bring water from a distant windmill to the camp. T. O. Woody, “Horse Work August 1913,” February 10, 1965, in *Bell Ranch: Recollections and Memories*, Martha Downer Ellis, ed. (Amarillo: Trafton and Autry Printers, 1985), 15-16.

\(^{151}\) For information on fencing, see later section on land and water in this chapter.
and (4) owners and part-owners who engaged in manual labor as well as management. The family labor of each group is, of course, included.”

To this group should be added those who worked as part of their own community (but not for wages and without a single-owner stake in the land). In each subregion, different combinations of ownership and labor system produced a highly diverse, segmented regional economy. It is worth describing the backdrop behind certain work—particularly tenants, sharecroppers, and seasonal laborers, in brief.

In New Mexico, tenant farming remained uncommon throughout this period, as most farms were operated by their owners, and a sizeable minority of farms were worked and held in common. In 1910, only 5.5 percent of farms were run by tenants, and of that proportion, even fewer were sharecroppers. It was virtually nonexistent within the Southern Rockies. However, in Texas the percentages of tenant farming and sharecropping were far higher; tenant farms overtook owner-operated farms in total number by 1900, and tenancy continued to grow in number up until 1930. This reliance on tenant and sharecropper labor signaled the deep roots that the Southern labor system had in many parts of Texas. Although data is not available for some of the desert counties, in both the

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155 Academics of the time were interested in the development of this labor system as industrialization and other problems began to apply pressures to the labor markets in Southern states. R. J. Saville, “The Economics of Southern Agricultural Labor,” 179-184.
High Plains and the Southern Plains regions the average tenancy rate per county runs higher than 40 percent.\textsuperscript{156}

The prevalence of tenant farming helps illustrate important distinctions between Texas and New Mexico agriculture. In Texas, three agricultural systems advanced, one coming westward from the South and bringing cotton, sharecropping, and a black/white divide, with another coming from the Midwest that brought the final surges of homesteading and white “yeoman” farmers, and the last emerging from the restructuring of land and labor relations between Mexicans, \textit{tejanos}, and Anglos. New Mexico faced similar upheaval among traditional land/labor systems, but there the Southern system of land tenancy did not find a steady foothold.\textsuperscript{157} Even though this study does not include East Texas, where sharecropping and cotton were the defining features of agricultural life, those attributes bleed over into both the High Plains and the southern lowlands of western Texas.\textsuperscript{158}

Seasonal and migratory labor systems, which became prominent during the Great Depression and the Bracero Program, existed in earlier decades as well in particular industries. Among many \textit{hispano} families in the Southern Rockies and Albuquerque regions,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{156} \textit{Farm Families: Hired or Rented, Census 1910}, Social Explorer (based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census), accessed October 26, 2016; \textit{Farms Operated by Tenants, Census 1920}, Social Explorer (based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census), accessed October 27, 2016; \textit{Farms of Tenants, Census 1930}, Social Explorer (based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census), accessed October 27, 2016.
  \item \textsuperscript{157} \textit{Farms of Tenants, 1930}, Social Explorer.
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Ashburn, “Economic and Social Aspects,” 299-301. Ashburn’s article recognized that tenant farming systems tended to exist within “one-crop” systems, such as existed with cotton farms. He was a product of his time, however, and attributed the prevalence of tenancy to personal deficits amongst the tenant population, although he seemed to acknowledge the precarious position of the tenant family who was dependent on a cash crop, rather than a variety of homegrown produce and livestock; in a down market families lacked the cash (or credit) to purchase the necessary supplies for their own survival.
\end{itemize}
the men participated in seasonal labor in emergent industries such as railroad and coal, or worked for the sugar companies springing up in Colorado across the 1890s.\textsuperscript{159} Such seasonal labor became commonplace for dispossessed families now slowly entering the wage labor markets. In Texas many Anglo, Mexican, and \textit{tejano} families participated in seasonal harvest and ranch work.\textsuperscript{160} Of course, racial norms drew particular lines around migratory labor.

It is also important to note that the Southwest was still industrializing across this period. Large-scale agribusinesses were slowly transforming local markets, linking them up to the national and global markets already developed elsewhere within the U.S.\textsuperscript{161} This gradual transformation of local markets impacted Southwestern families in numerous ways. Throughout most of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, rural families in the region had similar modes of subsistence—they grew a garden or vegetable patch near the home, had a few animals such as goats, chickens, or a dairy cow, and if they had enough acres they grew crops and/or owned a herd of livestock. The scale of such farms varied greatly even within each subregion, but in general the largest farms and ranches emerged along the High Plains and the southern lowlands of Texas. Subsistence agriculture followed a rhythm; the garden “produced its bounty of vegetables and what was not consumed for daily summer meals

\textsuperscript{160} For examples, see “W. G. Andrews,” “Hubert and Shirley Brewster,” and “Joaquin Robles,” in \textit{Families of Kimble County}, 23, 74, 322. Also see Fields, \textit{Walking Backwards in the Wind}, 49, 120-122. 
\textsuperscript{161} The most notable example of this process in the American historiography is William Cronon, \textit{Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West} (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991). Cronon articulated the “annihilation of space” that transpired as Chicago became a major metropole and center of the grain, beef, and other agricultural businesses of the Great Plains. No comparable metropolis existed in New Mexico or Texas, but they felt the pull of coastal markets across the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.}
was canned or preserved.” Livestock and game animals which were not immediately consumed were smoked, salted, and dried. Families gathered eggs and milk, and produced cheese, butter, and other durable foods. The labor involved in the storage of foodstuffs fell primarily to mothers and children. Most rural families in these regions were aware of larger agricultural markets, but most participated in small ways. As the nineteenth century waned, however, new developments accelerated the involvement of rural families with larger agribusinesses and markets. The historian Neil Foley quoted one Texas journalist on this emerging phenomenon; “will the small, one-family farm give way eventually to the mammoth farm under corporate ownership and management?”

For many rural people of Texas and parts of New Mexico, the answer to Foley’s question would become obvious by the early 1900s. The shadow of agribusiness loomed over the Southwest. The usage of the term agribusiness herein merits a brief explanation. “Agribusiness” as a term was coined by the scholars John Davis and Ray Goldberg in 1957, well after the period under examination here. However, incorporating the thoughts of later scholars the term has come to signify a practice of agriculture including industrial methods of production and cultivation, the creation of complex markets and chains of commerce, and large corporations or partnerships. The common thread is that agribusiness signifies the “interdependence” of different sectors of an agricultural marketplace. Although many of the lands in this study remained in the hands of families, rather than being under the

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163 Kitchen labors are described in greater detail in Chapter 3.
ownership of corporations or investors, those family endeavors were still being drawn into an interdependent economic relationship with banks, buyers, middlemen, processors, and a host of other actors, many of whom were far away from the Southwest. In subsistence growing, the farm contains “virtually all operations” related to agricultural products, from growing to selling, but in agribusiness, the “farmer is a specialist.” Many families in the 19th century did sell their goods to others, albeit within a local reach (especially shepherds and ranchers, since they are by definition not self-sufficient).  

The dawn of inclusion into the national markets began with the completion of many rail lines throughout New Mexico and West Texas. Railroads were the single most influential new technology in this region during the late 19th century. Tracks and trains had an influence beyond their economic value. Their advance across the plains and scrublands quite literally altered the landscape for all groups residing in the Southwest. Railroad crossings and depots provided the nuclei for new, primarily American towns to grow in this place. They also expanded the reach of government power. Railroads came into New

165 In some ways I use agribusiness, or “large-scale agriculture” to denote a form of economic practice distinct from what some (including Davis and Goldberg) would term the “traditional” or “subsistence” method of farming. For an extended definition of the term, see John A. Davis and Ray A. Goldberg, A Concept of Agribusiness (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1957), 1-3, 79-80. For a more recent take on the definition, see Desmond Ng and John W. Siebert, “Toward Better Defining the Field of Agribusiness Management,” International Food and Agribusiness Review 12 no. 4. (2009): 123-142.

166 For a study of how railroad towns developed and existed on the plains, see John C. Hudson, “Towns of the Western Railroads,” Great Plains Quarterly 2, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 41-54. For an account of why Anglo-Americans benefited from the railroad’s westward expansion, and to see the idealized version of Western settlement patterns, see Chapter 6 of Jason E. Pierce, Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2016), 151-178. In this chapter, Pierce described how railroad agents and developers held closely to the agrarian mythos, which stated that white men working as independent farmers was the best form of American settlement. Of course, the federal government empowered railroads with grants of public land that they in turn sold off to prospective settlers, pages 152-154. Despite these dreams of a patchwork of independent farmers, railroads also created urban spaces and invigorated extant towns—Albuquerque, one of my key sites, is a major example of how railroad prompted urbanization.
Mexico in the 1880s, and they immediately began shifting away trade routes from *hispano* merchants towards Anglo newcomers and their railroad contracts.\(^{167}\) Their agricultural effects amplified with the arrival of refrigerated boxcars in the West in the early years of the 1900s, after their successful deployment in the Midwest during the 1880s.\(^{168}\) The rest of this dissertation will explore in detail how farm families interacted with the emerging markets, how families chose to participate, and what they received in return, but no family, however rural, could ignore the impact of the agricultural markets on their lives.

Population and Land Politics

In addition to the geographic, climatic, and agricultural features of these landscapes, any serious study of labor systems in the Southwest requires an understanding of the political environment, land ownership, and demographics. This section will briefly discuss the populations within these two states in the first decade of the 20\(^{th}\) century, before turning to an analysis of land grants, encroachment, and homesteading as part of the U.S. colonial project in the Southwest. These processes induced friction along racial lines, as newcomers to the region sought to assert their political, economic, and social power. *Hispanos, tejanos,* and Native Americans in turn fought to preserve their historic claims to land. The political environment also served as a limiting factor to community survival, much like climate and topography structured the initial conditions of settlement. In this tense,

\[^{167}\text{Deutsch, } \text{No Separate Refuge}, \text{ 19.}\]
\[^{168}\text{Cronon, } \text{Nature's Metropolis}, \text{ 233-234. Also see Linda Danes-Wingett, } \text{"The Ice Car Cometh: A History of the Refrigerated Railroad Car," San Joaquin Historian 10, no. } \text{4 (Winter 1996): 1, 3, 4. This article focuses on Californian railroad adoption of ice cars, but it has some description of the national story of the railroads engagement with refrigeration in the early 20\(^{th}\) century.}\]
In 1910, close to statehood, the territory of New Mexico’s population was 327,301, according to the U.S. census. In contrast, Texas’ population was 3,896,542, more than an order of magnitude larger than New Mexico. However, the bulk of those people lived in East Texas, as shown on this map. Thus New Mexico and West Texas were similar in population number and density.

The racial makeup of these two states is worth further examination. In Texas, the state was about 82 percent “white” and 17 percent black, with virtually no others. In that same 1910 census, New Mexico was comprised of 93 percent “whites,” .5 percent African
Americans, and 6.4 percent “other race.” The labels indicated by quotation marks obscure the racial and ethnic diversity of this space. The federal government's census methodology lacked a fine sieve when it came to race or ethnicity. Their categories included “white,” “Indian,” “Negro,” and sometimes “others” but lacked a clear measurement for Mexicans, Mexican Americans, hispanos, and tejanos. One scholar at the University of New Mexico noted that “any ethnic study in New Mexico is necessarily incomplete since adequate data are not available concerning the two most important elements of the population, “namely, those designated locally as “Anglos” and those called “Spanish-speaking.” The same scholar suggested that New Mexico’s “white” portion was split into two halves.

It is important to understand that the census was more than a simple collection of data—it was a political project of the United States government. In some places in New Mexico, communities resisted the imposition of oversight and control that the census implied. Rural families sometimes chose to ignore census takers or went uncounted because they were too remote. At Sandia and San Felipe Pueblos, the residents turned census takers and other non-residents away, because they feared for the Pueblo’s

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171 Bruce, “School Enrollment in New Mexico,” 19. He argued this case using educational statistics from 1931-1932 that showed 49.7 percent of students in New Mexicans schools were Spanish speakers. Again, this is a roundabout way to approach the question of the entire population, but it gives some guidelines concerning children, so it is useful to this project. The percentage of Spanish-speaking pupils in schools cannot be neatly correlated to all children (or all individuals) as it likely undervalues the total number of children who speak Spanish (or were raised in Spanish-speaking homes), cannot overcome the difficulties in equating language with race (particularly when the Pueblos often had Spanish as a primary language), and might also hide Mexican families who are migratory, among other issues.
autonomy. In both cases the matters were mediated by Territorial Governor George Curry.\textsuperscript{172} The collection of information on people, land, and work helped inform the federal government about the contents of its territories and states, and this information then helped determine the political fate of those places. New Mexico, for example, did not achieve statehood until 1912, when it was sufficiently “American.” Federal and state programs also used census information to divert funding, policies, and manpower wherever they were needed to accelerate American development.\textsuperscript{173} As later chapters will depict, the racial makeup of the region was key in determining the rhetorical and administrative stances adopted by educational institutions, local agencies, and agricultural industries. Race, in no uncertain terms, would come to dictate the labors of children by the end of this study, yet in the early 1900s, the types of work children remained similar across racial lines.

Historian Sarah Deutsch, when describing the movements of both \textit{hispanos} and Anglos in New Mexico, stated that “by 1880 the Hispanic frontier and the Anglo one interlocked rather than merely met.” Deutsch’s “joint frontier” paradigm tried to encapsulate how American encroachments precipitated communal responses from peoples already settled in the region.\textsuperscript{174} This borderland process of land dispute, adjudication, and subjugation has happened several times in the Southwest. Throughout its history, land ownership in the Southwest has taken on a decidedly political slant. Nowhere was this more acutely felt than within the issue of land ownership. Within this region, particularly in

\textsuperscript{173} The National Reclamation Act, the Desert Land Act, and public works during the New Deal were good examples of government development initiatives in the West.
\textsuperscript{174} Deutsch, \textit{No Separate Refuge}, 13-14.
northern New Mexico, the grants emerged as the largest issue of the 19th century.

Originally parceled out by the Spanish (and later Mexican) governments to local Spanish and Pueblo communities, as well as to individuals, the land grants became a flashpoint between populations after the Mexican-American War. In Texas, most of the Spanish land grants were provided along the Rio Grande (in narrow, long strips) and in South Texas. These land grants encouraged settlement of what was at the time the northern frontier of New Spain, and over the centuries they accumulated great cultural, economic, and social value.

The forcible reallocation of granted lands began with the Spanish colonists in New Mexico—they continuously encroached on and claimed the land of Native Americans, as was true in many places where the Spanish crown attempted to limit settlement.\(^{176}\) This

process accelerated after the Mexican-American War, as *hispanos* hungry for agricultural lands applied pressure to sparsely settled portions of Puebloan lands. Across the next decade, many of the *hispano* settlers, whose families had taken these croplands, succeeded in holding onto their ill-gotten parcels, especially among the northern Pueblos.\(^{177}\) However, they in turn faced land grabs from American entrants to the region. There are several methods by which Anglo-Americans appropriated land grants for themselves. The federal and territorial governments utilized their legal authority to undo some land grant boundaries; in the mid-19\(^{th}\) century many communal portions of those grants “went to the public domain and in turn to railroads, Anglo homesteaders, and national forests.”\(^{178}\)

*Hispanos* did attempt to fight against their land losses; in 1891 Congress created the Court of Private Land Claims, but it did little to quell the land losses. Many *hispanos* had to pay their attorneys in land, since they lacked liquid assets, and in other instances they were defeated by strict judges.\(^{179}\) Most claims processed through the Court lost all their profitable acres, leaving only slivers of the Spanish grants; the La Petaca grant shrunk from 186,000 acres to 1,392 acres, and the San Joaquín del Río de Chama grant was reduced from 470,000 acres down to 1,422 acres.\(^{180}\) After the Anglo-American land expropriations, the *hispano* process of squatting, purchasing, or stealing land from the Pueblo came to a

\(^{177}\) Alvar W. Carlson, “Spanish-American Acquisition of Cropland Within the Northern Pueblo Indian Grants, New Mexico,” *Ethnohistory* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 95-110. See the discussion on pages 103-104.


head in the 1910s and 1920s with the decision in U.S. vs. Sandoval and the 1924
establishment of the Pueblo Lands Board.\footnote{Carlson, “Spanish-American Acquisition,” 94-99, 101-104. This section covered the Land Board. It was
clear for many whether Pueblo peoples could willfully sell their lands due to confusion over which legal
precedent (the Spanish, or the Mexican, or the American) held sway. U.S. Vs. Sandoval (1913) stated that
Pueblo peoples were under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and could not alienate their lands.}

Other efforts of the late 19th century and early 20th century surrounded the question
of land ownership, including the rights to open pasturage and to water. Smaller farmers
and village dwellers across the West felt their livelihoods strangled by the closure of open
lands; an act as simple as spooling out barbed wire or building a fence across the arid plains
created intense economic pressure. This process of fencing started in the second half of the
19th century, and was fraught with conflict between ranchers, landowners, local
governments, and others who utilized the formerly open spaces.\footnote{For a description of fencing and its attendant political and economic issues in the 19th century High Plains, see Webb, The Great Plains, 237-238, 316-318.} Landowners also fought
to control water resources during this period. In response, local communities who still
allocated their own water moved to develop precise acequia regulations and laws, in an
attempt to enforce their traditional common rights.\footnote{Rivera, Acequia Culture, 83-86, 89-90. The increasing legalism here, I argue, was part of a local response to
Anglo-American legal and political encroachment. It can also be seen as part of a “professionalization” of
acequia management, as the officers of the associations began to receive salaries, could levy taxes/finelines
against acequia users, and began keeping detailed records of payments, assignments, and the like.} This demonstrated the desirability of
irrigable lands within the arid Southwest, and the ways that various populations within the
Southwest articulated their own land rights, claims, and ownership as the threat of
American claims became real. As with other conditions of the region, fences needed repair,
water had to be carried, and acequias required cleaning, so children’s labor was made even
more valuable by these incidental factors.
The complex land distributions of the Southwest also happened in large part due to the Homestead Act, which was enacted in 1862 and ended in 1934, and the Desert Land Act, which passed in 1877 and increased the possible homestead claim from 160 to 640 acres. It allowed families to allocate and settle acres of land for themselves at a minimal cost. Of course, in many places this land was already claimed by others, including Native Americans or Mexican Americans. As one political theorist opined, the “U.S. government used settlers to lower the cost of enforcing state ownership over the western frontier.”

Whether families saw themselves as tools of the federal government or not, their westward movements radically altered the composition of the West. By the early 20th century, large farms and ranches abounded because homesteaders often sold their land and moved elsewhere; by this crude mechanism larger landowners emerged who held vast acreages.

Lastly, immigrants from Mexico also complicated the demographics of the Southwest. This population increased rapidly during the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1900, most of the immigrant population lived in counties adjacent to the border. Nearly three-fourths of the total Mexican-born population of the U.S. lived across New Mexico and Texas at that census. Those populations concentrated in counties with

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184 Thomas Donaldson, “The Public Lands of the United States,” *The North American Review* 133, no. 297 (August 1881): 208. Donaldson argued that mineral rights provided most of the economic value of western lands, not ranching or farming. He was also deeply suspicious of the “herders, wood-cutters, lumbermen, and prospectors” who lived off of public domain lands; he preferred to “fill the public lands with actual settlers or occupants.”


186 George J. Borjas and Lawrence F. Katz, “The Evolution of the Mexican-Born Workforce in the United States,” in *Mexican Immigration to the United States*, ed. George J. Borjas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 19. According to the census of that year, every county along the U.S.-Mexico border within those states was at least 20 percent foreign-born. 10.9% of the Mexican-born population lived in New Mexico, and 62.5% lived in Texas. Including Arizona, the picture becomes even clearer; 17.2% of the Mexican-born population lived there.
numerous Spanish land grants, including Webb County and Zapata County in southern Texas, and Dona Ana County in New Mexico. The data from 1910 told a similar story, and although the percentages changed little in 1920, they showed that there was both a total increase and a spreading-out of the number of Mexican-born residents.\textsuperscript{187} Data at the national level also showed this increase throughout the 1920s, the “classic era” of Mexican immigration to the U.S.\textsuperscript{188} Immigrants moved north during the 1910s and 1920s for a number of reasons, including the “consolidation of rural landholdings, the substitution of cash for staple crops,… the widespread implementation of capital-intensive agriculture,” violence during the Mexican Revolution, and increasing demands for labor within the U.S.\textsuperscript{189}

These Mexican immigrants played a vital role in the transformation of American agriculture from a small-scale to an agribusiness model in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Their entry into sections of the regional labor market was apparent to members of the public inside and outside the Southwest. Anglo Americans tended to ascribe specific cultural connotations to this labor. A demographic scholar from the 1920s, Roden Fuller, noted that “nine occupations were found to be common to all [of the border states]: Agricultural laborers; Farmers, planters, and overseers; Laborers (not specified); Merchants and dealers (excluding wholesale); Stock raisers, herders, and drovers; Steam railroad

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employees; Miners and quarrymen; waiters and waitresses; Laundresses.” Anglo
ranchers and farmers eagerly exploited this labor force whenever possible, linking together
migrants with the arrangements of land and labor. White landowners felt that Mexican and
Mexican American workers demanded less for their subsistence, and “were more politically
vulnerable than were other groups,” even before the turn of the 20th century. This
practice was primed to explode in frequency, an issue detailed further in later chapters.

Child Labor as Subsistence Adaptation
Child labor’s eminence in the Southwest was predicated on the environmental
challenges of climate, topography, and natural life. The Southwest had numerous
geographical subregions, including large places like the Rio Grande valley, the Southern
Rockies, the Chihuahuan Desert, and the High Plains, as well as smaller regions like the
Sandias, the Tularosa Basin, the Rio Grande forests, the Llano Estacado, and the Gulf Coast
plains. In each location, rural families faced unpredictable and challenging weather
patterns, including intense thunderstorms and hailstorms, dangerous tornadoes, burning
temperatures and drought, and bitter winters of ice and snow. Dangerous plants, animals,
and diseases could also pose a threat to families and their agricultural enterprises. As a
result of these and other factors, agricultural practices varied widely in the Southwest, as
farmers planted forage grasses in the reaches of the plains, only growing fruits and garden
crops closer to the rivers, irrigation ditches, and Texas coast. Hardy staples like corn, wheat,
potatoes, and beans were planted wherever families could find a small, even patch of

190 Roden Fuller, “Occupations of the Mexican-Born Population of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, 1900-
191 Neil Foley, The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1997), 37.
ground, and livestock from goats to cattle followed in the same manner, adapted to the rocky steppe and dry plains. Why did these challenges matter to the use of children as laborers? Simply put, the terrain and climate required more effort if a family wanted to subsist. When combined with the limited labor pool of very rural locations, and without the recourse to hire help or purchase machinery, families had to use whatever labor remained available—most of that potential energy laid within children.

Given these limitations and adverse conditions, the diverse families who have called the Southwest home over the centuries attempted to harness the resources of the natural world through various forms of resource allocation. These included communal practices like acequia-based irrigation systems and village-wide land usage and harvesting. However, incoming Anglo-Americans attempted to install their own practices and political norms regarding land and labor. Railroads and other industrial processes would radically alter the lives of farm and ranch families by the 1930s, though at the turn of the century many could not have anticipated the extent of the changes. However, other events immediately impacted families in the Southwest. These intruders seized many acres from hispano or Pueblo families, using a variety of tools, ranging from the Homestead Act and Desert Land Act and squatting to direct land purchases and legal actions. This land grab damaged the land grants which had been in place for centuries. Though New Mexico continued to resist the imposition of tenancy or sharecropping systems, in Texas the practice surged, bolstered by Southern economic and political traditions. In both regions, agricultural interests also began utilizing migrant laborers from the affected populations, drawing many families into wage relationships, and presaging the development of Mexican migrant labor. As the 20th
century continued, Americans would exert increased political and economic control over the region. Over time, the imposition of American land and labor use norms would upend long-standing relationships within hispano, tejano, and Pueblo families.

For most communities, responding to either the old environmental or new American pressures meant extracting the labor of their children, especially for minor tasks requiring time, but not heavy lifting or technical skill. As Chapters 2 and 3 describe, communities structured the lives of children and their gender roles in order to manage their subsistence. Nearly every daughter was assumed to be able to care for her younger siblings, mend a piece of clothing, and gather eggs and milk from the animals. Most sons were expected to learn how to ride and rope cattle, to defend the home from pests, and to haul water and firewood. In other parts of the U.S., the cash economy was rapidly rendering these activities obsolete, but it would take many more years for the same erasure in the rural Southwest. Environmental factors thus dictated the fundamental subsistence interactions between people and their land, food, and water, a factor which made rural child labor a useful subsistence adaptation in the region. Yet environments alone could not determine the specific systems that communities developed; cultures and traditions also shaped the boundaries of children’s labors, determining the appropriateness of various tasks, how those tasks were divided between family members, and how the labor hierarchy itself was structured.
Chapter 2: Agricultural Tradition and Community

Regional ideas about the primacy of agriculture, gender, and family structures informed and structured the interpersonal relationships and family systems of rural peoples across the Southwest. Broadly speaking, these norms developed across several centuries of difficult rural life within the borders of New Spain, Mexico, the Puebloan homelands, and the United States. Understanding popular traditions and practices of the late 19th and early 20th centuries helps to clarify the widespread existence of child labor. This chapter highlights the dominant agricultural traditions that intersected along the border: ideologies about agriculture and the frontier, the peasant versus the patrón, and the long tradition of Pueblo farming. It then details the social organization of gender and childhood within the Southwest, before finally turning to the movement of children between families. Daily activities exposed the latent norms which structured daily life among the peoples of the Southwest and the ways that children learned their “proper” roles, but they also delineate the spaces and times when families had to improvise or challenge such norms in order to meet their needs. Within rural Southwestern communities, common cultural and social understandings produced a durable consensus about the utility and value of children’s labor.

Attempting to define the boundaries of what is “traditional” usually thrusts academics into debates which are impossible to neatly resolve. There are numerous

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192 The *patrón*, in this usage, is typically the landowner or head of the household, ranch, village, and/or community. They are respected by the community members, make decisions on behalf of the community, and often control and direct its economic activities.
opinions as to what constitutes tradition, what it does for scholars as a conceptual or hermeneutic framework, and how it interacts with the equally slippery term “modernity.”

These debates are vital to studies of the past, particularly when speaking about cultural, social, and economic processes. It helps to situate “what is tradition” in a subject-oriented frame; this will show that within rural communities there were generally accepted norms and traditions, while also demonstrating that traditions waxed and waned due to external and internal circumstances. As noted in the previous chapter, rural people adapted their lives to their environmental, economic, and political situations, and the modulation of traditions was an integral tool in this process of adaptation. It is my position in this work to depict what rural families saw as their community’s traditions and social norms, without interrogating the absolute truth value of those statements. Most of the rural people within this study had few qualms about making straightforward statements regarding their ideals.


194 I am taking some cues from Pierre Bourdieu here, particularly from his theories of doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy. He first introduced this idea by stating that “there is, perhaps, no better way of making felt the real function of classificatory systems than to evoke as concretely as possible the abrupt and total transformation of daily life which occurs on... the adoption of a new rhythm.” Bourdieu asserted that people attempt to maintain the communal status quo, what he called “an implicit definition of the fundamental value of conformity.” The doxa, therefore, is the “universe of the undiscussed” because things like tradition, cultural norms, and custom all go “without saying” and are outside the practical realm, so people within a doxa cannot critique the existence of its contained traditions until crisis intervenes to force a reappraisal or the “production of a critical discourse.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 159, 161, 167-169.
Their plain speech regarding tradition helped explain the broader cultural values in the Southwest, but also signaled the ways that they, as children, were inculcated with norms.

Agrarian Traditions

The primary unit of agricultural life in the cultural imagination of most white Americans during the 19th century was the individual male farmer. Anglo-American tradition situated rural work at the center of a major foundational myth—the yeoman farmer. This symbol stretched back to Thomas Jefferson and the debates surrounding the founding of the United States. This agrarian mythos articulated its cultural and political presence in two arguments, best articulated by historian Clifford B. Anderson in the journal *Agricultural History*. Anderson stated that “the first doctrine hinges on the conviction that agriculture is fundamentally basic and superior to other occupations because it supplies the food and clothing of the nation and is the original source of all wealth and industrial materials... the farmer is the “primary producer” and the “backbone” of the nation. The second doctrine of agrarianism assumes that farming is a way of life, not a mercenary occupation, and that for this reason the farmer is morally superior to the laborer, the merchant, the entrepreneur, or the townsman. Because the independent, self-sufficient, non-pecuniary husbandman lives close to nature and God, he is the repository of virtue, patriotism, independence, and all other noble attributes.”

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It is also important to recognize that traditional ideas were creatively repurposed to fit the political and economic ends of rural whites during the latter half of the 19th century. Although the symbolic authority of rugged individualism and self-sufficiency had waned in power during the Gilded Age (in the face of industrial, urban, and corporate power), Western and midwestern political groups reconfigured their understandings of agriculture and sought to reassert its centrality as part of mainstream American life. The Grangers of the 1870s and 1880s were aggregations of farmers who sought to protect their economic well-being, and who targeted “middlemen,” railroads, and merchants, setting them as the enemies of farmers. Agricultural Populists followed suit in the 1880s and 1890s, building coalitions with other laborers and some middle-class reformers, looking for a way to “match corporate organizational power.” These rural Populists “proudly claimed” the imagined heritage of the frontier settler as “a civilizing force,” and believed they were the next phase of rural American development. For a Southwest example, one local journalist for the Las Vegas (NM) Daily Optic exclaimed in breathless terms that “the highest authorities do not hesitate to say that the vast expanse once called “the Great American Desert” is bound to become the home of the highest agricultural civilization in America.” These two political groups lost ground by the turn of the 20th century, but their rhetoric surrounding the farm

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199 Postel, The Populist Vision, 25-27. Postel’s major contribution was this link between the Populists and notions of progress—rural whites were not pining for a disappearing past, they were deploying that imagery but mixing it with a focus on progress, economic development, and political integration of rural people into the national fabric.
and ranch resonated with many rural Americans, particularly in the West, where there was even some participation among hispanos.201

The lofty prose of Jefferson, the Grangers, and others found its way into the lives and speech of common people. Helen Fields articulated one folksy version of this symbol in her memoirs: “a farmer was a free man—his own superior. He decided how and when he would plow and plant, reap and sell; his decisions were the final word.”202 The farmer, as free citizen, was the center of the agrarian world. As part of their prominent position within the nation’s symbolic past and future, many rural Anglo-Americans turned towards performative spectacles of patriotism. The Fourth of July held a particularly prominent spot among rural American festivities. Fields stated firmly that “those farmers and ranchers of the ’20s... were fiercely devoted to their country,” and that her Garza County compatriots only missed the annual picnic in cases of illness or injury.203 Mary Ann Kokernot, a rancher from Texas, also recalled these celebrations from her youth: “back, back, back when I was just a little child, we had big 4th of July celebrations... and big parades. And we’d put our chuck wagon in it and everybody’d have a shirt, a red shirt.”204 In this way farm families enacted the symbolic power that the yeoman myth held, and interpreted it in a way that

201 For a more detailed examination of Populism in the far West, including Colorado and New Mexico, see Robert W. Larson, “Populism in the Mountain West: A Mainstream Movement,” Western Historical Quarterly 13, no. 2 (April 1982): 143-164. See in particular his discussion on 148-153 about Colorado and 159-162 on New Mexico. Larson connected the Populists in New Mexico with hispano land/labor groups, including the Knights of Labor and the Gorras Blancas (the White Caps). This made New Mexico an interesting case regarding Populism in the West.


203 Fields, Walking Backwards in the Wind, 65.

204 Kokernot Ranch Group, interview by Sarah Massey, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Page 34.
was understood and accepted within local communities. In essence, to live as a white farm family in good standing within the community required such public displays of patriotism because they were part of the moral lexicon of agrarianism.205

The process of settlement itself was also integral to agrarian cultural memory. In the family recollections of Nicholas Q. Patterson’s descendants, they stated that his family listened to “the immortal words of Horace Greely [sic] to ‘Go West, Young Man, Go West.’”206 Others implicitly tied their movement into the west to the physical artifacts of pioneer life; for instance, families still moved around using covered wagons, a fact that they were quick to state.207 Even some middle-class *hispanos* and *tejanos* found common cause with the rhetorical and symbolic power of the frontier and the farmer.208 As a child, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca would look out across her family’s High Plains ranchland and wished “to be like the pioneer women who settled the sparsely inhabited sheep and cattle country.”209

The pioneer aspect of farm life exerted a powerful influence, particularly among rural

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205 Hispanic families, particularly in Texas, had more complex relationships with patriotism and the nation-state. For a depiction of how they negotiated this space, held on to a regional identity, and practiced allegiance as a “two-way exchange,” see Alexander Mendoza, “For Our Own Best Interests': Nineteenth-Century Laredo Tejanos, Military Service, and the Development of American Nationalism,” *The Southwest Historical Quarterly* 115, no. 2 (October 2011): 125-152.


207 See “John A. Taylor,” in *Families of Kimble County*, 360. His descendant opens the story with “on a summer day in 1910, John Albert Taylor, accompanied by his several children and his mother, arrived in Kimble County to make a new home.” She later added that “the trip to Kimble County was made in a covered wagon and hack, complete with the family milk cow tied to the back of the wagon.” For other examples of references to the pioneer/yeoman symbols, see 343-344.

208 Mexican immigrant families also referenced their “pioneer” status, but the sources that I have seen which use that language do not use it as part of a broader agricultural symbol/myth. As an example, Luis Lujan, a Texan 3rd generation immigrant, did use the term to refer to his family’s search for a “better life” as pioneers to the United States. See Luis R. Lujan, interview by Georgina Mendoza, April 1984, interview 656, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

Westerners who must have believed, at least in part, that they were inheritors of this legacy. Their understandings were also informed by the embedded constructions of social order, agricultural primacy, the frontier process, and gender hierarchies which existed within the broad agrarian mythos.

Nonwhite populations within the Southwest also held their agricultural identity close to heart, although they interpreted agrarian life using distinct symbols and myths. For people of Spanish and Mexican descent, agriculture was a requirement for life prior to the 20th century, as remoteness from other population centers in Mexico necessitated subsistence agriculture within this region. Similarly to Anglo-Americans, hispanos and tejanos saw farming (or ranching) as a precondition for civilized life, particularly during the early days of settlement, where water needs, the fortified plaza model, the centrality of religion, and local dangers pushed settlers to build tight-knit, small communities. Among wealthier and politically-powerful hispano families, claims of “pure-blooded Spanish” ancestry and a disavowal of mexicano identity went hand-in-hand with public constructions of their place along an unbroken chain of farmers and ranchers who thrived at the edges of empire. In this agricultural worldview, the genealogies of families were all-important.

However, in other rural locales “devoid” of overt displays of this supposed Spanish heritage,

210 For an outsider perspective on agricultural conditions and town formation in New Mexico, see Sanford A. Mosk, “The Influence of Tradition on Agriculture in New Mexico,” The Journal of Economic History (December 1942): 34-51. See especially 35, 39. For more information on the historic centrality of ranching, instead of farming, among some populations in South Texas, see Armando Alonzo, Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 63. Although not covered in detail here, the fortified, cloistered layout of the Spanish colonial plaza town was a practical necessity in rural New Spain. This was a departure from the spread-out farmhouse model, which was preferred by settlers, but proved vulnerable to raiding. This spatial model is detailed in Marc Treib, Sanctuaries of Spanish New Mexico (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 16-20.
this conceptualization did not take hold to the same extent. When asked about his hometown of San Elizario in rural South Texas, Lorenzo Alarcon articulated a vision of local life rooted in place, land, and people. It was communal, centered around the Tierras Prietas land grant, and it was “a farming community all through the years since [he] was born and a long time before that too.” Francis Quintana similarly depicted the way that land and time bound hispano communities together. Francis focused on the historical and communal power of the acequia—"la acequia as a concept is much more. It has developed and maintained a Hispanic cultural tradition that has survived three hundred years of constant human expansion and development...the acequia ties the present rancheros to each other as well as to their collective past.”

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211 For evidence on this Spanish heritage conceptualization, its political effects, and resistance in rural places, see David Wallace Adams, *Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 151. Importantly, they also saw religion and agriculture as deeply connected practices. For an example of the ways this connection has been present in the 20th century, see Sylvia Rodriguez, *Acequia: Water Sharing, Sanctity, and Place* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2006), 98-107.

212 Lorenzo Alarcon, interview by Minerva Sanchez, May 19, 1975, interview 201, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

Many indigenous peoples, *tejanos*, and *hispanos* in the Southwest held close to an ideology which linked their communal identity to the physical spaces they inhabited, a sharp break with the process-oriented ideologies of many other Americans in the Southwest.\(^{214}\) By the late 19\(^{th}\) century community and space had been intimately

\(^{214}\) For white Americans, as well as the Mexican and European immigrants who moved into the Southwest at this time, the same cultural practices did not emerge. Many of those migrants did develop strong communal ties, but they were built over time or integrated with extant communities. For those families, their family’s cultural frame-of-reference was tied to places outside the Southwest. For native-born American families, who often had greater leeway in their migrations, they tended to see themselves as belonging to a class of Americans who “tamed” and “built” what they saw as a frontier. In this cultural framework, the specifics of a particular place held less importance. This was reflected in the lived experiences of the restless chain homesteaders, who comprised a small but significant portion of the rural population in places like the Southwest.
connected for centuries. Among many of the Pueblos, geography combined the lived experienced with a sacred cosmology—the community could not be thought of as existing separately from the spaces it occupied. As one scholar noted of Acoma Pueblo’s origin myth, the Acoma moved to their “Sky City” from an older mesa home after a storm catastrophe. When they people saw what had happened, “the majority of the people were isolated in the valley below, and they had to seek a new life and a new home in the closest defensive stronghold they could find... On the summit, some seventy-odd acres, the Acoma Indians built their new pueblo. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to conjure up a more dramatic, poetic, and less likely place to found a community. Next to nothing of life’s necessities, except defense, was found on the cliff top... Only sky and protection were abundant. And yet the setting and those structures that have been constructed and resolutely dwell on this rock strike the basic chords of harmony and inevitability.”

Also commonplace among the Pueblos of New Mexico were family and kin networks that maintained strong traditions of agricultural practice. One interviewee from Isleta Pueblo, south of Albuquerque on the Rio Grande, stated that “a long time ago, before we had supermarkets and all that stuff, people did use to plant everything that they needed.” Another Pueblo man, Jerry Fragua from Jemez, spoke similarly: “as I was growing up we used to have plenty of everything, and it was grown right here.” Many

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215 Treib, Sanctuaries of Spanish New Mexico, 304-306.
216 Rosinda Lucero, interview by Dawn Stewart, July 28, 1969, microfilm 7, interview 609, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
217 Geronimo Fragua and Jose Toledo, interview by James P. Romero, March 1-2, 1970, microfilm 8, interview 446, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
Pueblo boys also had early experience shepherding and handling livestock as part of their responsibilities to the community; Juan Jaramillo remembered how his grandfather began with a small herd, then passed part of it onto Juan’s father, who in turn passed on the same heritage to Juan. All these generations raised cattle on the same “pasture land.”

It was quite common for the family to participate in communal farming and ranching endeavors, and the maintenance of these efforts was key to the internal structure of the pueblo. For example, certain Eastern Pueblos historically divided up the community within moiety systems; Taos Pueblo, for instance, portioned itself into the “Winter People” and the “Summer People” with the Winter in charge of hunting and the Summer “associated with agriculture.” Other Pueblos had religious systems that included kiva communities, corn clans, and similar membership-based societies; children were brought into these societies as they reached particular age milestones. Pueblo families in the 20th century attempted to maintain traditional agricultural practices and ideologies to the best of their abilities.

Mexican immigrants entering the Southwest carried with them still other understandings of rural work. These were not well-understood by Anglo observers, with

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218 Juan A. Jaramillo, interview by Michael Husband and Donald Cutter, January 27, 1969, microfilm 7, interview 73, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. This tradition held on well into the 20th century, as another interviewee, a teenager names Juan Padilla, remembered receiving livestock from his grandfather when he was a young child, and he kept working on the land of both of his grandfathers. See also Jose Trujillo and Juan Padilla, interview by M. E. Smith, July 12, 1967, box 24, folder 20, interview 490, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.


220 See description of the Red Eye/Black Eye Kivas in Rosinda Lucero, interview by Estellie Smith, August 15, 1969. box 24, folder 20, interview 699, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico; description of Corn Clans in Anonymous, interview by Estellie Smith, box 24, folder 20, interview 611, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
one scholar noting that Mexican immigrants in the early 1900s were successfully entering into railroad, agriculture, and mining work because they were “amenable to discipline by a tradition of peonage.” Fuller’s hypothesis made sense to Anglo Americans and their entrenched racial hierarchy of labor, but it was partially grounded in the lived realities of rural Mexicans. Migrant families during this period generally understood agricultural work and employee/employer relationships through their experiences as laborers in Mexico. A majority of these families did not share the same agrarian outlook as the landed Latinos and Anglo-Americans of the Southwest. They interpreted their agricultural work in class-based terms instead, especially if they were influenced by the rhetoric of the Mexican Revolution, which emphasized agrarian reform for the benefit of the working classes and peasants. However, coming to the United States typically perpetuated similar land-labor relationships as those that existed in Mexico. Although that peasant/peon relationship often formed between single border-crossing men, their coworkers, and their bosses, it was true of families as well.

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222 For another contemporary American account of agrarian reform in Mexico, see Herbert Ingram Priestley, “Mexican Agrarianism,” *The North American Review* 215, no. 795 (February 1922): 200-207. Priestley focused on the purported injustice of land redistribution, but also presented an overview of the land reform efforts from the National Agrarian Commission and the (already dead at the time of publication) Venustiano Carranza’s government.

Many migrant families internalized this class-based understanding of agriculture, family, and work; one telling instance came from a bracero, Sebastián Gutiérrez. Born in the midst of the Mexican Revolution, Gutiérrez’s family was a prototypical landless working family; when asked what they did, he simply stated that they were laborers and peasants, that he was also a laborer and a peasant, and when asked about what they farmed, he pithily replied “Maíz, maíz, todo el tiempo maíz, para sostén.” Some of the wealthier families that moved north during the Mexican Revolution instead understood themselves as landed agriculturalists; Fred Ponce, an hacendado from Chihuahua, emphasized the productivity of his family’s farm, and how he understood his role even at an early age. He eventually fled as an adult after an encounter with Pancho Villa’s soldiers, but his accumulated wealth allowed his family to leave rural work behind and open a small foodstuffs factory. Ponce’s outlook pointed to an important distinction between working class and middle-class migrants—the latter were not dependent on rural work for their subsistence, but still participated in the reconstruction of this cultural norm. However, these and other moments signaled a growing rift in the power of agrarian symbols. For all the symbolic power farmers held across different ethnic and cultural groups, thousands of other families in the Southwest had to construct their relationship with land differently,

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224 Braceros were Mexican migrant workers who came in as part of an official U.S. labor program, the Bracero Program, though the term is sometimes also applied to migrant Latinx workers generally.
225 “Sebastián Gutiérrez Interview,” interview by Violeta Domínguez, July 8, 2003, interview 1051, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. Translation: “corn, corn, all the time corn, to sustain/support [themselves].”
226 Fred R. Ponce, interview by Fred Canales, January 1, 1983, interview 630, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. Ponce had split his time as a merchant and a rancher while in Mexico but saw the brewing Revolution as a warning to liquidate his agricultural interests. With the money he saved he took his sons (who had briefly found jobs with the railroad) into their new business.
because they migrated across the region as laborers. Furthermore, the communal farming practices of some groups clashed with American ideals of the farm as a self-contained unit.

If the yeoman was quintessentially independent, the migrant family was by definition dependent. As quoted by Clifford Anderson, “the laborer has nothing but labor to sell, and when that fails his condition is very sad.” This agrarian model of the free, independent farmer did not represent the lived experiences of thousands of rural families across the Southwest, especially by the 20th century, but for most of them it represented an aspiration, a goal that through hard work they could achieve.

Patriarchy in the Home

Agrarian myths and cultural norms, in all forms they appeared throughout the Southwest, remained only part of the cultural world that surrounded child labor. Gender roles, family structures, and expectations for children among families in the Southwest were fundamental parts of a child’s communal education. Although the rules were typically taught in absolute, clearly defined terms, real life proved that such norms could be remarkably flexible and malleable. One early lesson taught among nearly every ethnic and class group to children was that men were the default heads of household. This patriarchal model of the family partially derived from the yeoman myth. As noted above, it was the singular farmer that tamed the West in the American imagination—that he brought his family with him, and that they might have done much of the labor, remained tacit.

Historian Peter Boag argued that whatever political equality the agrarian mythos implied, “it

227 “The Independent Yeoman,” from American Agriculturalist, 1861. Found in Anderson, “The Metamorphosis of American Agrarian Idealism,” 188. At the end of his article, Anderson cited this essay in full. It is intriguing, however, that he did not robustly connect this issue of agricultural labor with his definition of agrarianism.
also reinforced patriarchy and the separate male-female genders... Jefferson envisioned family farms and expansion through reproduction.”\textsuperscript{228} This ideal persisted well into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, despite the reality that farm families of the period understood that their survival required the combined efforts of parents, children, relatives, and other household members.

Work and economic power were also recognized as the media through which household members staked their claims in the family hierarchy, but work alone did not bestow status. The patriarchal nature of the independent agriculturalist remained powerful, and family members did not have equal access to its rhetorical and symbolic authority.\textsuperscript{229} These conceptualizations combined with Christian teachings about the “proper” ordering of the family. They also interacted with legal norms in the Southwest. Women in New Mexico and Texas faced a unique legal position in the U.S.; since the colonial period they had held specific rights, including the right to own property and share in communal holdings, to keep their children if widowed, as well as some limited contractual rights. The “feme sole” or unmarried woman legally held rights akin to what men held, “save only the rights of franchise.” By contrast, in the early 1900s one author argued that married women’s legal authority was on par with that of “lunatics, idiots, and


\textsuperscript{229} However, women did have access to a distinct set of symbols surrounding motherhood, morality, and virtue. This sphere, its limitations, and the agency of Western women have been the subject of significant scholarship, starting in large part with Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, “The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West,” \textit{Pacific Historical Review} 49, no. 2 (May 1980): 173-213.
drunkards under guardianship." These rights existed for women in New Mexico and Texas because of the legacy of Spanish law; elsewhere in the U.S. most married women (as well as daughters and other women of the household) were subsumed under the legal identities of their husbands. Rural women across the turn of the century faced legal barriers which reinforced their position as subordinate members of the family, but they also actively participated in economic practices (beyond the domestic) which were integral to the family. A careful inspection of gender, kinship, and structure within New Mexican and Texan families revealed other places where rural challenges created spaces where such norms were bent, altered, or temporarily suspended.

These norms dictated that the eldest male (usually the father) was the final arbiter of any decisions, whether inside an individual household or within a community. Hallie Stillwell’s family demonstrated how these decisions might be made within a rural home; her mother resolved the tensions she felt with her adventurous husband through strict deference to his needs. In Hallie’s view, her mother did whatever her father ordered, even referring to him as “Mr. Crawford” rather than his first name. Farm families tended to

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232 Hallie Stillwell, interview by Bill Gregg, Precious Gregg, and Ernest Speck, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Although Hallie valued the input of her mother, in her own estimation she grew up less of a “lady” and was more headstrong than her mother. For another example of this process of maternal deference to the head of household, see the stories of Cleofas Martínez (later Jaramillo, referenced elsewhere through her own works).
understand this process through the concept of “family solidarity—each one as important to the family unit as any other,” but with the father at the head.233 Within communities in the Southwest, this framework also held true, as older men typically held positions of power, as large landowners, *patrónes*, elders, and heads of local organizations.234 This social hierarchy, especially among *hispanos*, *tejanos*, and Mexican immigrants, was indicative of the “Hispanic legacy of *patrón*-peón feudalistic rule” but also demonstrated the deep kinship bonds that formed between the heads of communities and subordinate families.235

This connection, ideally constructed as a “a bond of faithfulness on the one hand, and of responsibility on the other,” was in all places mediated by class, race, and religion.236 Cleofas Jaramillo, remembering her position as a young girl in a wealthy family, recapitulated this idealized form of patriarchal relationship: “work on the arms was slow, and the hours were long. The workers started at sunrise and sometimes continued until after sunset. Nevertheless, the *peones* worked happily, talking great interest in doing their

Cleofas stated “harmony existed always. If father or mother had a different idea about something, they talked it over in a nice way. If mother could not convince my father as to how a thing should be done, she dropped the subject without arguing.” Cleofas Martínez (Jaramillo), “A Life of Harmony and Respect,” in Melzer, *When We Were Young*, 49.

234 See the depiction of *patrón* hospitality and largesse as part of church society among *hispano* towns in the eastern plains of New Mexico, in Cabeza de Baca, *We Fed Them Cactus*, 53-56. Those men regularly hosted other families within their holdings and provided patronage to the local Catholic church. For examples of local organizations, see the role that men played in *hispano* groups of *penitentes* or the many fraternal organizations that Anglos participated in across the U.S. For information on those organizations, see David T. Beito, “To Advance the “Practice of Thrift and Economy”: Fraternal Societies and Social Capital, 1890-1920,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 4 (1999): 585-612. Beito stated that nearly one-third of American men were members of such organizations, and my sources indicated that affiliation held true within towns of the Southwest.
236 Monday and Colley, *Voices from the Wild*, xi.
best for the *patrón*, whom they held in great esteem and respect.\textsuperscript{237} Similar social structures dominated the religious life of rural villages, with the male priesthood as the spiritual head of the community. While the priest was away, a man became *mayordomo*, the caretaker of the chapel. They exercised their vested power in this position as a means to organize the community’s labor. As Fabiola noted, “these mayordomos were responsible for keeping up the chapel, but for the coming of the priest, everyone joined in whitewashing the inside walls, in plastering the outside, in cleaning the yard, and in decorating the altar.”\textsuperscript{238} Whether inside the family, on the land, or in the church, mutually-reinforcing patterns of male leadership valorized their position as the heads of the community across the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

Indigenous communities showcased their own hierarchical forms; each Pueblo held different models of community organizations, with some having matrilineal descent and ownership and others holding to more patriarchal models. Political leadership was typically held by men in both structures, however. Many ethnographers of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century attempted to distinguish these “traditional” structures from those imposed by Spanish, Mexican, or American colonizers.\textsuperscript{239} Some Pueblo men and women espoused a similar hierarchy as their Hispanic and Anglo counterparts; Jerry Fragua, born in the 1920s, considered that every member of the home and kin network needed a clear “self-

\textsuperscript{237} Cleofas Jaramillo, *Shadows of the Past/Sombras del Pasado* (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1972), 40.
\textsuperscript{238} Cabeza de Baca, *We Fed Them Cactus*, 54-55.
identification,” whether it was “as a provider, as a mother...” and he further noted that the “lack of proper identification and playing of those roles” created strife and chaos in the community. One woman from Isleta Pueblo, Rosinda Lucero, provided another example of how the Catholic church buttressed a patriarchal model; Rosinda discussed how girls needed to be modest and “ladylike,” because “they are going to be future mothers.” She further opined that parents needed to be reminded of their role in this practice, and suggested that rather than relying on “clan heads for advice” that Pueblo families should learn from church. For biracial families, negotiating relationships, family unity, and cultural systems could prove challenging as well.

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240 Fragua and Toledo, interview.
241 Rosinda Lucero, interview by Estellie Smith, Dawn McCormick, and Harold McGee, August 8, 1967, box 24, folder 20, interview 604, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Rosinda Lucero was interviewed several times over a few years—perhaps she was more willing to discuss private Pueblo topics with the white researchers.
242 Of course, situations such as these often made the women and children susceptible to abuse, including violence. For some works dealing with how domestic violence interlinks historically with patriarchal systems, see Bárbara Reyes, Private Women, Public Lives: Gender and the Missions of the Californias (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Linda Gordon, Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880-1960 (New York: Viking, 1988). For an example in Latin America during the 19th century, also see Chad Thomas Black, The Limits of Gender Domination: Women, the Law, and Political Crisis in Quito, 1765-1830 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 242-248. For another 19th century example (from the U.S. South) see Laura F. Edwards, “Law, Domestic Violence, and the Limits of Patriarchal Authority in the Antebellum South,” The Journal of Southern History 65, no. 4 (November 1999): 733-770.
Caught between the complex visions of gender within Pueblo communities were interethnic families. As in the mixed family shown below, parents and children in these circumstances had to negotiate intrafamilial dynamics.

Familial hierarchies were necessary components of childhood education. Through relationships within these systems, children learned appropriate gender roles, agricultural traditions, and cultural norms. Most children learned through watching the roles as enacted by their parents, relatives, and other community members. They also experienced and internalized these norms through their own experiences (a subject dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3). Children first learned to work through the practice of chores; these efforts succinctly demonstrated to children the impact of their labor on the family unit, as well as their subordinate familial status. Among the Blackburn family of Junction, TX, the six brothers “were never bored, for true to the custom of that time, they had chores to attend
to,” and had a litany of tasks to complete each day. James Bruce Frazier remembered similar experiences on the Cross Eli Ranch, out in the plains of Texas. James felt great camaraderie working alongside his relatives and opined that in those days there was “no talk about a generation gap.” Famed New Mexico midwife Jesucita Aragón also learned by sitting alongside her elders, primarily her grandmother. As a young girl, she was more interested in doing “a man’s work” with the family’s livestock, while her “younger sisters stayed at the house and tended to domestic work.” However, Jesucita’s grandmother “selected” her to continue the family tradition of midwifery. When asked why she felt her grandmother had chosen her, Jesucita did not have an answer, other than to repeat her grandmother’s refrain that “you won’t have me forever, and I want someone to remain in my place.” Jesucita heeded this duty, learning the practices of midwifery and medicine at the side of her elder. By doing chores and working alongside their relatives, children received an intergenerational transmission of rural and agrarian ideals. Much like other forms of intergenerational transfer (of land, of skills, and of social standing) the rural child learned to recapitulate the norms they grew up in.

243 “James Milton Blackburn,” in Families of Kimble County, 60.
244 James Bruce Frazier, What I Learned on the Ranch, and Other Stories from a West Texas Childhood (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2003), 21-22. It is interesting that James articulated it in this manner, and that his son Donald reprinted the phrase—the concept of a generation gap would not have held meaning in his own childhood, though it is part of the modern discourse on children, adults, and intrafamily issues. In a single phrase, James and Donald showed that this was not merely about collecting and cataloguing the past—it was part of a moral claim about the past versus the present.
245 Anselmo F. Arellano, “Traditional Midwifery: Partera Practices,” Mother Earth Living (September/October 1997): 1-2. A partera is a midwife, though they often also participated in other forms of folk medicine, and acted outside “professional” medicine.
246 Chapter 3 will go into detail regarding the specifics of these practices. For general depictions of intergenerational cultural transfer, see Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962. 374-375. Here, Ariès depicted what he saw as the tensions between community and domesticity in the “triumph of the modern family over other times of human relationship.” The family and its relationships became expressed as, by the Early Modern period, the central place of
Children’s activities outside the home also indirectly demonstrated cultural practices inside the family. The extant notes from a white American teacher at Nambé’s Demonstration School revealed one cultural challenge from a teacher to her primarily hispano and Pueblo students. During the process of teaching a unit on food, teacher Mary Little asked her 2nd grade students to write short stories about traditional foods that they cooked at home. As part of that, her students collaborated to produce “Posole,” an instructional account of making the staple soup. The story explains how the children and their mothers worked together to “put hot water on the corn,” “put cal, or lime on it,” and “cook [the] posole with chile, meat, and onions.” The children, both boys and girls, understood the fundamentals of cooking because of their observations of, and practice with, their relatives. Unfortunately for the children, they were marked down on this assignment because the teacher believed (erroneously) that they miswrote the word “lye” instead of “lime.”

Daily interactions through work with their parents, community members, and elders were key to developing rural norms throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

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247 The “lime” referred to here is calcium hydroxide, a common ingredient for preserving foods. That Little did not understand the children here (and was elsewhere critical of “the native dishes”) is unsurprising given her general lack of knowledge about the community she taught within. See Mary Little, “Food Unit, Nambe School, Grade 2,” 1937, teacher’s notes, box 1, folder 4, MSS 306 BC, Nambe Community School and San Jose Demonstration School Records and Teacher’s Diaries, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
Public cultural products, such as songs and stories, also provided clear and public articulations of family ideals, children’s work, and gender roles. They reinforced norms about childhood either by talking about children, being sung by children, or being sung the presence of children. These traditions were particularly rich among hispanos, tejanos, and Mexican Americans. John Donald Robb, an esteemed collector and musicologist of Hispanic songs, stated that songs presented an opportunity to let “the people speak for themselves. Their lives, their jokes, their adventures, their sins, their religious devotion” formed the fabric of regional folk songs. Songs expressed rural attachments to place and home, common hardships, and the “importance of parents and family.” As Robb noted, many songs emphasized the crises of childhood, whether they were the separation of sons and daughters from their parents, the lamentations of an orphan, or the struggles over discipline and obedience within the family.248 These forms of cultural transmission were particularly important within children’s social circles, which will be described in detail in the following chapter.

Gender and Labor

Southwestern households structured the work necessary for survival along gendered lines, as part of overarching patriarchal ideologies. Perhaps the most striking difference between male and female labor was the culturally supported mobility of male labor, even among male children.249 All ethnic groups in the Southwest participated, to greater or

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249 The most prominent work on this topic in New Mexico continues to be Sarah Deutsch, No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Peck’s Reinventing Free Labor also depicted the masculine cultures of migratory work.
lesser degrees, in a circulating labor market. The historian Sarah Deutsch explained that this form of migratory labor was highly gendered—men and boys moved around, while women and girls managed the home and village during these cycles. Men, teenagers, and even younger boys had the latitude to travel, and thousands of them did migrate for work from the 19th century up through the 1930s. Some migrated to leave their families behind, others searched for better wages that could then be sent back home, and some left simply out of a spirit of adventure.

Hubert Brewster, a teenager from Shackleford County, TX, exemplified male mobility. He was born in Shackleford County in 1909, but his family of ranchers homesteaded in Montana when he was seven. They moved back to his birthplace after World War I, but Brewster was listless. He left school at sixteen to find interesting work elsewhere, and at various points in his young adulthood he picked apples in Hondo Valley, NM, worked at a grocery, and did mechanical work. By the end of his life, Brewster had made roughly “70 major moves” across the U.S. and internationally. Abelino Garcia, a hispano from Entranza, NM, also recalled his childhood spent roaming away from his family. After first grade, his father told him to start shepherding, and he continued to work as a shepherd through his teenage years. By the time he was 16, he was accustomed to being out on the pasture for seven or eight months at a time. He enjoyed the money but struggled with the solitude; “it’s an easy job. It’s not a heavy job. The only thing, it is too

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250 See the chapter on “Hispanic Village Women,” in Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 41-62.
251 “Hubert and Shirley Brewster,” in Families of Kimble County, 74.
lonesome.” Not all boys were as lonely. Apolonio Martinez remembered his work at the age of 16, walking for a week with a group of seven other village boys to the railroad near Cimarron, where they were all hired to help construct the line, where they received $1.75 a day. In other instances, families faced internal friction regarding such continual migration; Hallie Stillwell’s father, who usually got his way, was only challenged by his wife when he wanted to move the family with him. Hallie remembered her father as a “natural-born pioneer” who “liked to adventure… and he didn’t put down roots,” whereas her mother “always put down roots. She never wanted to move.” As a result, her family split their time between farming, ranching, and small-town mercantile enterprises. This sort of restless, masculine spirit embodied itself in many southwestern boys and men of the late 19th and early 20th century. Of course, this mobility also exposed an unstated truth—that when men moved around beyond the auspices of the household, women assumed the mantle as heads of household.

Families entrusted their boys with another highly gendered task: hunting. The act of hunting (whether by gun, snare, or sticks and rocks) served to provide supplemental food for the family and/or to control pest and feral animal behaviors. Across all cultures of the

252 Abelino Garcia, interview by Joyce Mendel, April 17, 1995, box 1, folder 19, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
253 New Mexico Commission on Aging, Canciones y Dichos: Songs and Sayings of New Mexico’s Senior Citizens. (Santa Fe: GPO, 1976), 14.
254 Stillwell, interview. This example, when combined with the example from the previous paragraph, shows the interesting tensions that can emerge through family memory. Although Hallie knew her mother as a deferential woman who always put their father first, it is also clear that she did challenge his ideas, if not his authority, in limited instances.
255 As Sarah Deutsch explained in her analysis of gender roles, “at the orderly center of the village... lay a closely-knit community of women.” As a migrant labor market emerged, they “held that spot increasingly alone” and through their labors without men they “sustained the community physically and spiritually.” Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 60-61.
Southwest, hunting was strongly coded as a masculine behavior, and one that encompassed necessary skills of male adulthood in the rural Southwest—the ability to feed one’s family, to protect the home, and to use weapons. Girls and women were sometimes taught how to use firearms, but the practice of hunting was typically off-limits. For many boys, learning to hunt (and fish) became a rite of passage which afforded them some personal space and autonomy. Some boys, like Gerald Lyda, had favored spots, in his case a place along the river near Marble Falls, Texas, and would regularly head out to catch game on their own, even as “a little kid.”

Marriages also structured labor along gendered lines. The lengthy wedding ceremonies of hispanos and tejanos funneled teenagers towards adulthood and integrated them into the larger community. These often began with a prendario, where the bride was “given away” at her home. The party moved to the nearest church or chapel for the wedding, then once the bridal party returned to the bride’s home the celebration continued. The entrega de novios came the day after, where “a special verse, indicative of the responsibilities of wedded life, separation from parental care, and a final farewell to bachelorhood, was sung.” Reyes Martinez, a writer with the Federal Writers’ Project in the 1930s, stated that “the look of modesty of the bride, in contrast with the look of pride of the bridaegroom, was a sight to be remembered.”

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256 Thelma Fletcher, interview by Jane Wilmer, June 21, 1982, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Here, Thelma noted that virtually no women (or girls) went along on hunting trips at her family’s ranch, that it was “a man’s world.” However, she did learn to shoot, as that was deemed a necessity.

257 Lyda Family Ranches, interview by Laurie Gudzikowski, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.

258 Marta Weigle and Peter White, *The Lore of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 383-384. This information is directly from a primary source, entitled “Rural Weddings,” written by
ranch families of the eastern New Mexico plains, marriages often held similar religious significance. After the ceremonies came the division of labor and the creation of a new family household. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca articulated her version of the nineteenth-century gender and labor ideology; “it was a difficult life for a woman, but she had made her choice when in the marriage ceremony she had promised to obey and to follow her husband. It may not have been her choice, since parents may have decided for her. It was the Spanish custom to make matches for the children. Whether through choice or tradition, the women had to be a hardy lot...” Indeed, whatever choices women had available, all women and girls within rural families were expected to contribute to the household economy.

Traditionally, while “men worked on the land,” the rural female domain was the house and garden. In numerous families, the eldest woman woke up earlier than the men and went

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Reyes N. Martínez in 1936 for the Works Progress Administration. Additional information on the entrega de novios comes from an article by Juan B. Rael, “New Mexican Wedding Songs,” 1940. He agreed with Martínez's conclusions, noting that the entrega “is so called because the bride and groom are returned once more to their parents and placed under their guidance.”

259 Weigle and White, The Lore of New Mexico, 382-383. They quoted Jean Burroughs on weddings and courtship. Among these white American families, it was typical for the bride and groom to stay at the bride’s home, where they would be interrupted continually by the “chivareers” or male celebrants. These men and boys would also sometimes prank the groom by kidnapping him and leaving him somewhere out on the prairie. “Physically taxing and emotionally upsetting pranks were the order of the day in the early 1920s.”

260 This tradition is similar to the modern bachelor party and related events.

Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, 59.


262 To some, gardens may seem like extensions of the “land” but their function within rural families was constructed differently. Larger acreages were typically cash crops (or grazing lands) but the garden directly supplied the home, and many tasks related to garden produce were clearly the domain of women (including pickling and canning). Later chapters further explain the work that children and women did within rural gardens.
to bed after they did so. This work was no less tedious, difficult, or time-consuming than outdoor farm and ranch work.

Women’s labor, particularly the labor of respectable married women, held a distinct value, separate from the economic worth of men’s labor. Within Spanish-speaking communities, “the patrón ruled the rancho, but his wife looked after the spiritual and physical welfare of the empleados and their families... she was a great social force in the community—more so than her husband.” Women built a “social position” through the public morals of their family, their social engagement within the community and church, as well as their undeniable contributions to the household economy. Many wives and mothers in the Southwest embraced this moral authority, and were active in local social life. Even women of fewer means could find value in this position within their ranch, their neighbors, or extended family. However, this gender norm was also ripe for abuse, as men still had the social latitude to mistreat their families if they chose to do so. Nevertheless, it remains important to understand how traditional gender roles structured family interactions and work among most communities in the Southwest.

Children occupied a liminal space alongside the gendered spheres—boys and girls were engaged in the process of learning their “appropriate” labors, age and birth position modulated the sorts of labor that children did, and there was some boundary-crossing where girls did masculine work and boys did feminine work. Child-rearing norms among

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263 Monday and Colley, *Voices from the Wild*, 126.
265 For a detailed look at gender roles, women’s moral value, and family, see Adams, *Three Roads to Magdalena*, 37-40.
most families allowed for this flux, as it was considered part of the process of growing up. For example, within hispano communities of the time, children typically shared in the same tasks until they reached eight or nine years old. After that age, they quickly began to engage in the separate worlds that defined masculine and feminine behaviors. The following few examples will illustrate this liminality.

Some tasks required siblings to work together, regardless of gender. The Collins family tended towards an egalitarian distribution of work—the sisters recalled going out with their brothers in girl-boy pairs to look for cow chips on the plains, which the team brought back to heat their stove. They also hauled water and ice as teams when necessary. Another Anglo family from the plains, the Fields, held stricter standards regarding their children’s roles. Helen Fields explained the family’s seasonal cleaning routine: her brothers and father cleaned the chicken coop and other farm equipment outside while the women and girls swept the floors and cleaned the house. Families organized their labors according to their own interpretations of gender appropriateness, but there remained space for children to negotiate their own work. Raquel Maldonado remembered her childhood spent outdoors, doing fieldwork and chopping wood. She

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266 Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 42. Deutsch emphasized this as the age when the separate world/sphere of womanhood began. It appeared that boys also experienced this divergence at a similar age, as they began to partake in some adult male tasks and learned certain masculine-coded work (such as riding and roping).
268 Fields, Walking Backwards in the Wind, 38-41.
found household work disagreeable, so she spent most of her childhood working outside the home instead.\textsuperscript{269}

These gender norms sometimes ran aground against practical considerations. When the male head of household was injured, sick, away, dead, or otherwise not present, families reconfigured their hierarchies and labor requirements along loose guidelines.\textsuperscript{270} When no man or boy was available for a masculine-coded job, women and girls handled the task, generally under the tacit understanding that this inversion of labor norms was a stopgap measure, not a long-term arrangement. Texas native Mabel Noble recalled her aunt’s brave decision to help Mabel’s father, who was violently ill with tuberculosis. Their doctor ordered the family to travel out to a drier, healthier climate, but no family members were available who could drive the wagon, since Mabel’s grandfather had recently passed away and her father was sick. They even used their rural telephone to no avail. Mabel’s aunt Hannah, twenty years old at the time, volunteered; she had previous experience running a wagon for another family, and she wanted to help her brother. She stated “I don’t see any other way but for me to go. I’ve just got to go.” Hannah successfully drove their wagon for several days until their father’s cough cleared up enough for him to assist in

\textsuperscript{269} East Mountain Historical Society Recollections Panel, August 1999, box 1, folder 21, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Of course, her preference for outdoor work likely meant that another woman in the family shouldered more of the housework, although in some rare cases boys did significant domestic labor. 

\textsuperscript{270} For an example, see Paul Kutsche and John Van Ness, \textit{Canoñes: Values, Crisis, and Survival in a Northern New Mexico Community} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 35.
the journey. Hannah’s admirable job inspired Mabel, but it did not lead to long-term changes in the labor configuration of their home.

The same reconfiguration of the household ensued when feminine-coded work needed to be done. In families with children where the female co-heads of household had passed on or otherwise left the family, family members and neighbors also worked together to fill the emotional and economic void. Eralia Gonzales’ mother passed away in 1932, when Eralia was only three years old. Her father took over some of the childrearing responsibilities, but the family also accessed the labor of their aunt, Carlota Baca, who was married to her father’s brother, their maternal grandmother, as well as the efforts of a neighboring grandmother, Predicanda Gutierrez. Predicanda, in the interviewer’s estimation, “did most of the child care and took care of the house. They considered her as a mother.” Gradually, the operations of the household fell to Eralia as she grew older. She developed her cooking skills through training with her father, and she learned to clean the house as well. The short-term labor of other members within the extended kinship network was valuable, but there remained the expectation that the oldest female household member, once at the appropriate age, would assume the responsibilities of her sex as caregivers and domestic laborers.

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271 Mabel Noble, interview by Esther MacMillan, July 9, 1981, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Quotation from pages 19-22.
272 Interestingly, their maternal grandmother only took in baby sister Lupita, as their mother had entrusted the newborn to her mother in the year before her death. Lupita lived with their grandmother until she was a teenager. This is another example of how children were informally moved around, as will be demonstrated in the next subsection of this chapter.
274 Gonzales, interview.
Overall, the hierarchical structures of the family resembled those of rural Southwestern communities, centering male power and discretion while constructing “complementary” roles for women, children, and subordinates. Children learned to code labors along gendered lines from an early age, and most participated without complaint. However, as was necessary in a challenging social and economic environment, these roles were always subject to adjustment as families required. Such adjustments would only become more common as economic and social threats loomed over the families of the early 20th century.

Child Circulation

Further complicating these idealized structures of a stable, male-headed rural household was the reality that families took on a variety of forms in the Southwest, particularly through the ways that children were moved around between families. Families engaged in cultural, emotional, and economic negotiations as part of this “procurement” of children. These creatively constituted and re-constituted families would have shocked middle-class urbanites who constantly reinforced the moral and social values of the small, tight-knit nuclear family.275 Families in rural places formed in numerous ways, from the aforementioned boss-employee relationships which took on attributes of familial affinity, to the ties that bound neighboring families together, to unusual arrangements that others

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275 For an excellent example of this concern in a colonized space, and legal efforts to impose particular forms of family order, see Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008). The efforts to promote “white domesticity” in Canada were in some ways similar to the concerns held here in the U.S., especially towards indigenous and immigrant families. For examples of families in the West that directly challenged those ideals, see several stories of nontraditional families, including split families, unmarried women, and girls learning farm roles in Jensen, *With These Hands*, 115, 122-124, 132-135, 136-137.
developed in the West. Rural families, diverse as they were, adapted to the difficult conditions of Southwestern life by practicing numerous forms of child circulation. In this system, youths moved around between parental figures. Culture, love, and social duty were always considered integral parts of these exchanges, but at the same time, parents and relatives calculated the costs and benefits of their children; in some cases children moved to relieve a family of the child’s burden, in others they did so to provide an economic benefit from their labor. Extant affective bonds also factored into where a child was sent, though that was not typically foregrounded within the sources themselves.

Adoptions, informal exchanges, and temporary placements were socially accepted events that transferred the child into new kin relationships. There was no singular reason to move children around, although the following examples will demonstrate how children’s emotional and physical labors were key to the practice. The historian Linda Gordon demonstrated this how this ideology worked by using the words of Charles Loring Brace, a prominent New York City minister and “initiator of the ‘orphan trains.’” Charles Brace sent orphans into the West because “the demand here for children’s labor is practically unlimited. A child’s place at the table of the farmer is always open,” and rural life molded

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the orphan into democratic, morally upright citizens.\textsuperscript{277} Here, families and institutions commoditized children’s labor within a sociocultural outlook that framed such transactions as positive options for the child, the new caretaker(s), and the community-at-large.\textsuperscript{278}

The notion that orphans and other children were doomed without such interventions was disseminated throughout the Spanish-speaking Southwest in interesting ways. Families commonly used folklore to teach children about the importance of their parents, typically through the terror associated with familial loss. In the song, “El Huerfano,” the titular orphan cries for his lost honor and dignity; he remembers his mother’s soothing presence when he was young, but after losing his mother and being slighted by everyone, he ends up in jail. While behind bars, he dreams about his mother, stating that “\textit{Si viviéra mi madre / viéndome en esta prisión / me echera su bendición / o por mí ya hubiera hablado.”} The moral claim here is quite clear; having a stable family was a precondition for living a moral, sociable life. This song about orphans was not directed at children, although it provided a strong moral for any boys listening in. For younger children, there was another song on the same topic, entitled \textit{La Huerfanita}. This children’s verse described the life of a young girl who used to travel by coach and eat chocolate, but without her parents she lived on the street and wore sackcloth.\textsuperscript{280} The lyrics and accompanying


\textsuperscript{278} Although some children were neglected, exploited, or otherwise harmed during these experiences, it remained an acceptable practice and those stories were not part of the mainstream discourse among locals.

\textsuperscript{279} John Donald Robb, “El Huerfano,” notes, 1964, ML 156.4 F6 R61, J. D. Robb Field Recordings, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, accessed September 25, 2019, https://econtent.unm.edu/digital/collection/RobbFieldRe/id/11873/rec/5. Translation: “If my mother was alive / seeing me in this prison / she would give me her blessing / or would have spoken for me.”

\textsuperscript{280} Dolores Gonzáles, ed., \textit{Canciones y Juegos de Nuevo México} (Cranbury NJ: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1974), 44-45. This is an edited version of a book originally published under the auspices of the New Mexico WPA, which
game seem intended for children to learn how to appreciate their families and their livelihoods, as the orphan lacked in all categories that would make for a happy life.

Moving a child from one caretaker to another was a complicated matter; the adoptive family, the child, the community, and in many cases the government all participated in the negotiation of the adoption. Throughout most of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, adoptions were handled informally within communities or were adjudicated by religious groups and their orphanages.281 For example, when Martin Vigil’s mother passed away while he was a toddler, his grandmother and father jointly cared for him. When his father died as well, he lived with his uncle’s family.282 As retold by two cousins, this familial care was an unwritten law of rural hispano life. Raoul Cordova and Adolfo Sanchez, both from Jarales, NM, explained that Christian ideals ensured that “the whole family would give a hand” to children who had lost their parents.283 This all happened without government intervention. Anglos who took in poor children also explained those adoptions through a religious lens, even when their labor was equally important. Genevieve Burris Davis described her family’s unusual practices; her father would locate orphaned children and bring them into the household, whether he saw the child hitchhiking or was “offered” the child from the birth parents. Although she never

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281 A prime example of the ways that communities interfered in the adoption process at the turn of the century in the Southwest can be found in Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction, 3-9. Her work discussed the “orphan trains” that brought “foundlings” into the Midwest and Southwest from the East Coast.
282 Martin Vigil, interview by Dennis Stanford, April 28, 1972, box 24, folder 65, interview 869, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
283 Raoul J. Cordova and Adolfo Sanchez, interview by Jane O’Cain, January 12 and February 27, 1998, tape 2 side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
outrig explained how important child labor was to her family, Genevieve noted that her family had a large ranch, she recalled doing “cowboy” work alongside her siblings, and one of her adopted siblings became a notable farmer out near Deming, NM. With twenty youths on the ranch, a substantial portion of the labor must have been accomplished by the children.\textsuperscript{284} Similar practices also occurred across the border among rural Mexican families.\textsuperscript{285}

Over the course of the early 1900s government officials began intervened in these placements, citing the state’s authority as an arbiter of family and community suitability. Their social workers interacted with and augmented the services already provided by religious and educational institutions. For example, here is a description of several institutions the Bureau of Child Welfare interacted with between 1925 and 1926: St. Vincent’s Orphanage of Santa Fe, St. Anthony’s Orphanage of Albuquerque, Baptist Orphanage of Portales, the Girl’s Welfare Home in Albuquerque, the Boy’s Reform School in Springer, and Menaul School in Albuquerque. Altogether they opened cases on children at thirteen schools and orphanages in New Mexico, with nine of them located in either

\textsuperscript{284} Genevieve Burris Davis, interview by Ramona L. Caplan, May 26, June 2, and July 18, 2003, tape 3, side B, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.

\textsuperscript{285} See Ann S. Blum, \textit{Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943} (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 116-117. Blum contrasted the redeployment of state-structured adoptions in urban parts of Mexico with the “extended patronage household that absorbed working minors as dependents, but on an informal basis.” Her study focused on Mexico City, but the relationship she examined was prevalent elsewhere. These kinds of domestic service contracts were common in Mexico, and as one author noted for women, but is also true for girls, in “provincial” areas during the early 1900s “virtually the only source of non-agricultural employment... was domestic work.” See Susie S. Porter, \textit{Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourses and Material Conditions, 1879-1931} (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 3. Even into the latter half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, studies showed that “live-in” domestic work remained common among girls above the age of 10 in Mexico, as well as other Latin American countries. See evidence from Deborah Levinson and Anne Langer, “Counting Child Domestic Servants in Latin America,” \textit{Population and Development Review} 36, no. 1 (March 2010): 125-149.
Albuquerque or Santa Fe. New Mexico had relatively few orphanages and schools for children, particularly if compared to states outside of the Southwest. However, these institutions and the Bureau of Child Welfare were not afraid to wield their meager authority. In one case, publicized by the Bureau, a blind girl from “a tiny, isolated community 35 miles from the railroad” was sent to the State School for the Blind in Alamogordo. To ensure the family’s compliance, the social worker involved waited overnight and brought the child to the train station on their own. Taken as a whole, this emerging state bureaucracy handled 118 cases of “dependency (including adoption cases” and 191 cases of “illegitimacy,” which was nearly half of their total caseload for 1925 and 1926. In addition, two-thirds of the families impacted by their efforts were hispano or Mexican American. In many of these instances, the government played a key role in moving children around to families they deemed suitable.


287 NM Bureau of Child Welfare, *Biennial Report*, 26. This source did not say anything about the family except chastising them for not understanding blindness the same way that the social worker did. This paternalistic response suggests that the child was from a hispano community. Although this might not have been a permanent separation of the child from their family and community, the broader literature on children’s institutions suggests that the U.S. did not typically value reunions between “bad” families and their children.

288 NM Bureau of Child Welfare, *Biennial Report*, 12-13. They had a total caseload of 687 separate family cases, which affected a total of 1,614 children. 430 of the families were “Spanish-American” and the rest were either native-born Americans or European immigrants. It is unknown how many, if any, were Native American.
Even among informal adoptions, the process could be particularly fraught when class, race, or religious differences between the adoptee and the family became apparent. In a group interview, Valencio Garcia from Santa Ana Pueblo, John Sinclair, and David Holmes, two caretakers of the Coronado Monument, described their perspectives on a potential adoption. Connie, a young, half-African American boy who Garcia had heard about in his young days, was adopted, likely out of an orphanage, near Santa Ana Pueblo by a local “Spanish” family. After a short while they “were going to leave him and they don’t want him anymore, he was just a little kid, you know,” and the family asked two elders of the Pueblo if they would take Connie in. Valencio stated that “they were going to accept him” but ultimately the adoption stalled. At this point, Sinclair interjected that “they didn’t
take him, well I wouldn’t want him either.” They were unsure what happened afterwards, except that Connie stayed down in Llanitos with the “pachucos” and “that is how they didn’t make an Indian out of him.” John implied that the community made the right choice in rejecting the adoption of Connie (likely because of racial issues), and David agreed that Connie had become a “bad guy” as he grew up. Valencio then commented that these sorts of adoptions into the pueblo community happened frequently.289 This incomplete account of one adoption hints at the internal negotiations which likely happened within Santa Ana Pueblo regarding the appropriateness of bringing in a biracial child into their fold. Even as a fragment, one can imagine Connie’s precarious position, adopted then left behind by one family, nearly brought into another, then likely finding refuge among other families or individuals. It is also clear from this series of events that race mattered when families looked to add people to their numbers; being half-black and living among the “pachucos” were factors in his rejection from the Santa Ana community (both at the time but also at the time of the interviews).290

The related practice of child circulation, where a family allowed one of their children to live with a neighbor, elder, or other relative for an extended period of time, happened

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289 Valencia [sic] Garcia, interview by Arlene Berman, April 2, 1968, interview 487, box 18, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Some of the facts are hazy here, including whether Connie was from an orphanage, what his last name was, when it occurred (although it seemed to happen in the 1930s or perhaps early 1940s), and what happened to him after the failed adoption, beyond the fact that he worked with a “Mike” down in Llanitos. This must have been a noteworthy event for these three men to recall it years later. The [sic] above is in reference to the misspelling of his name as Valencia—other documents clearly refer to the man as Valencio. These men were likely using the term pachuco as a slur against people of Mexican descent, given their interview was taken in the 1960s.

290 For more evidence on how race mattered in the adoption process, see the depiction of racial ideology and the debates in an Arizona town about white orphans being adopted by Mexican families in Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction, 97-107, 110-111.
with some regularity among rural families. This exchange could happen for a variety of reasons: a relative might need the labor of the child on their farm or ranch, the child might place a strain on the family’s livelihood, the child could reaffirm kinship or communal ties, or in rarer cases the child wanted to leave their family and this was a compromise.  

Maria Herrera Dresser related one incidence of child circulation within her family: “It was also common to give one of your kids away to one of your relatives if they didn’t have any kids. Augustine Herrera—he’s really a Garcia, but his grandfather raised him... It wasn’t because you didn’t like your kids. You knew they were going to be well taken care of.” Mexican immigrants into the Southwest also participated in this practice; tradition in Mexico dictated that lower-class girls and boys could work and live within more affluent households. Class informed this “blend of fostering and labor” in their home country, but similar relationships could emerge between Mexican families and landowning Anglos, hispanos, and tejanos. Anglos, informed by urban practices, participated as well, but often also drew these class lines around adoption. As the rancher Edith Nicholl implied in her autobiography, adopted children were not necessarily equals within the family, as she depicted her white maid’s adopted heritage and the dismay the maid felt with her own

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291 Numerous scholars of childhood and family have attempted to understand this practice across time, especially in Latin America. For a detailed anthropological analysis of one version of the practice, see Claudia Fonseca, “Inequality Near and Far: Adoption as Seen from the Brazilian Favelas,” Law & Society Review 36, no. 2 (2002): 397-432. Fonseca called the practice “child circulation” and argued that it formed a social response to poverty and destabilization; children stood a better chance of growing up well if they had access to multiple homes and parental figures. See pages 399-401, 405-407. Historians Ann Blum and Nara Milanich have written articles on the links between child circulation and the “formal” adoption sectors. Nara Milanich, “The “Casa de Huerfanos” and Child Circulation in Late-Nineteenth-Century Chile,” Journal of Social History 38, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 311-340; Ann S. Blum, “Public Welfare and Child Circulation, Mexico City, 1877 to 1925,” Journal of Family History, 23 no. 3 (July 1988): 240-271. For an investigation into the deep historical roots of this practice as it pertains to labor, see Ariés, Centuries of Childhood, 366.

292 Blum, Domestic Economies, xvi-xvii.
adopted daughter’s “marryin’ no better than” a working-class husband. In the same passage, she referenced the Mexican girls who lived on the ranch and worked for her.293

Families in the rural Southwest also made painful decisions when out-of-wedlock births cropped up.294 Some families, as noted above, surrendered illegitimate children to other relatives or to the state, in order to put the child into a new home. Sometimes these secret exchanges came out years later; Gus Garcia, raised near the Sandias, offhandedly mentioned in an interview that he knew about an illegitimate daughter from the Montes-Skinner family. He stated that a local woman, Maria Carpenter, was not related by blood to the Montes-Skinners, but was instead an illegitimate child from a romance between her mother and a philandering Bostonian known in the community as “Mr. Davis” who would come around, then leave for weeks at a stretch.295 It is unclear how Gus knew about this secret, but gossip and rumor moved swiftly within tiny rural communities.

Another option was to hide the out-of-wedlock birth from neighbors and relatives. It is impossible to know exactly how often this played out during the turn of the century, but on occasion sources hinted at how this furtive process worked. One example is found in the diaries of Charlotte and Paul Ellis, of which the entries for 1908 and 1909 have

\[\text{References:}\]
294 Such births were considered immoral by most people in the Southwest well into the 20th century; one government case worker in the 1930s bluntly conflated such births with “Mexicans” and “low white trash.” She had been assigned to deliver government relief goods to one rural county, but had an argument with a mother and grandmother who wanted some clothes for their “illegitimate baby” but the case worker adamantly refused. See Lucille Cowley Nixon, interview by Walter and Janie Sargeant, May 16, 1987, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
survived.296 Charlotte Ellis lived with her mother, father, and “brother” Paul out in a remote part of the eastern Sandias. Charlotte’s father, a civil war veteran, was infirm, and the family lived off of his pension and the work that Charlotte and Paul did. I will return to their daily lives, but for now the focus is on Charlotte and Paul’s relationship. Charlotte never stated anything otherwise about Paul, but other sources and fragments suggested that Paul was her son, not her brother. Charlotte, born in 1874, had gone to Albuquerque for school as a teen, but came back to live with her parents after an unspecified issue. Paul was born in 1891, after Charlotte would have returned home.297

Cultural Strategies of Child Labor

It ought to go without saying that most children had families in this place and time. But they did not have the same types of families. Far from the nuclear ideal promulgated by reformers, social critics, and popular culture of the period, these children had incredibly diverse home situations. Paul and Charlotte alone were testament to that lived reality. The extant sources cannot confirm whether Charlotte was Paul’s mother, but other familial factors implied as much; her status as an unmarried woman of thirty-four, her decision to stay with her family out of a sense of duty, and her close ties to Paul did not mean anything by themselves, but together with conflicting sources they suggested a familial protection strategy, where they brought up Paul as their own child. At the same time, Paul and Charlotte’s story revealed a truth of equal importance—whatever the structure of the family, children were partially responsible for its subsistence activities. With their father,

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296 Charlotte Ellis, diary, 1908-1909, box 1, folder 5, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
297 Ellis, diary. Also see Narratives, Clippings – Ellis Ranch, 1933-1991, box 1, folder 6, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
the formal head of household, unable to sustain the family’s livelihood, Paul and Charlotte
turned towards numerous other economic ventures, including wood cutting, ranch work,
and hunting, in order to make ends meet.  Although children rarely became the heads of
households, the phenomenon did occur. Elsewhere, they fit into families and communities
as necessary, according to cultural norms, traditions, and economic strategies.

Children’s placement within the family was predicated on the threads of agricultural
primacy and self-sufficiency, regardless of the particular instantiation across different ethnic
groups, environments, and times. Children were told through cultural practices, through
tacit beliefs, through community and family systemic structures, and through their own
activities, to affirm that rural labor was the bedrock of a functioning household. Without
this fundament, the family would erode and crumble in the face of challenges both physical
and moral. Further still, this mythos’ effects reverberated well past the family—these
agrarian echoes can be heard across memories, testimony, and biographies, and all other
forms of rhetoric around tradition lifepaths.

This chapter delineated the gendered ideals about labor that built a superstructure
around families. Parents taught children their roles and the strata they occupied, and these
relationships, whether dyadic, triadic, or otherwise, were the most immediately influential
factors in the lives of children (or at best a close second after internal biological and
psychological factors). The germ of this idea even structured relationships in the
community-at-large, with the patrónes, religious leaders, and others occupying the role of

298 Ellis, diary. These efforts by Paul are detailed further in a later chapter.
communal patriarch, tending to a flock of adults and children who all labored for the benefit of the community. These cultural practices helped reveal the nature of the child as a laborer; the work they conducted was both an indicator of the child’s position and a necessary form of practice for their future roles within the group, whether they would be laborers, subsistence farmers, caregivers, bosses, or anything in between. If this system sounded stifling to personal autonomy, that is because it sometimes was. However, even the most strident familial advocates of rigid roles also acknowledged that roles had to be somewhat flexible. Fathers could get sick or injured, leave the family, or die. Mothers faced the same dangers. Elders were not always there in times of crisis. When labor and affective patterns were “flexed” in these ways, rural classes were making choices to prioritize their economic, cultural, and kin relationships. Somewhat paradoxically, families in the Southwest were both defined by rigid cultural parameters yet also willing to adapt to their circumstances. This flexibility was most readily apparent in the status of children; they did not neatly fit into the categories of everyday adult life, and utilizing their labor was a culturally sanctioned strategy for family survival. In order to understand how those cultural constructions influenced children’s conceptions of themselves and their worlds, however, the next chapter will show how children learned those behaviors, how they internalized beliefs, and how they created emotional and relational bonds within these cultural constructions of rural place and life.
Chapter 3: The Child’s World

Within the complex spheres of geography, culture, government, and the market existed individual actors—children who worked, played, and lived surrounded by forces far greater than themselves. The following chapter argues that child labor, given its importance within numerous human processes in the Southwest, cannot be understood completely without seeing the world from the child’s point of view. Children’s articulations of their work, their social standing, and their home life matter if scholars hope to understand why child labor persisted and why reforms were destined to fail when applied to agricultural, domestic, and cultural labors in the Southwest. The difficulty herein lies with the reconstruction of childhood viewpoints when sources made by children remain scarce. However, memoirs, diaries, interviews, and other forms of collective memory can help recreate some of the attitudes, actions, and sentiments of rural children during the first third of the 20th century.

The subsections of this chapter will discuss the intimate connections between rural labor and the home, children’s understandings of their work, the nature of work versus play or practice, and other elements of the child’s world which help to explain child labor as part of larger community and family systems. It is an exploration of the rural world from the perspective of those who grew up within it. As previously explained, child labor formed a key component of larger social, cultural, and economic systems. Focusing more closely on the immediate dynamics affecting the child and sphere of childhood challenges the long-held belief that children could be easily categorized into either “child laborers” or
nonworking children. Child labor as a concept is much more slippery when children worked as part of a family unit, when children were expected to do cultural and communal labor, and/or no money was exchanged for services. Children did work because of the family’s economic needs, but the fabric of rural labor was tightly interwoven with other activities, including play, socialization, and discipline. Furthermore, the agricultural and familial status of these activities precluded children from developing rigid spatial, mental, or social boundaries around labor as a distinct entity. At a fundamental level, children’s work created meaning for their lives; reform rhetoric about freeing children from labor held little meaning in the Southwest because to outlaw their labors would be to dislodge youths from crucial social, affective, and developmental processes.

Interestingly, time and place appeared to matter little for these children, as deeply ensconced as they were in their lives. However, the decades preceding World War II were probably the last years where these youths could remain mostly ignorant of the wider world, even as mechanization, war, mass media, the postwar economy, and other changes loomed ahead. Their activities, emotions, and ideas were similar to those of their agrarian kin elsewhere in the U.S. (since childhood is both a biological reality and a socially constructed experience) but the specifics were often unique to the social geography of the region. For the rural Southwestern child, work was merely another facet of their complex lives, even as aforementioned forces like agricultural industry, land dispossession, and environmental pressures placed great importance on their contributions to the household economy. Ultimately, the child’s world demonstrates the interconnections between work and all other aspects of childhood. The Progressive impulse to end child labor rested on a
conceptualization of work as a foreign body, promoted by exploitative institutions, which could be removed painlessly from the child. Instead, there was no process which could remove child labor from the family without causing significant ruptures and strife across the entire region.²⁹⁹

Home and Heart

Viewing the world from the child’s perspective necessitates an acknowledgment of the spatial dimensions of rural life. For children, there were no “natural” delineations between spaces of work, play, education, or leisure. Those concepts were embedded in cultural norms and learned over time. In the rural family home and its surrounding environs, children felt free to let their curiosity and energy wander. To an adult the grassy plains beyond the home might represent economic survival and work, designed solely for livestock to graze upon; to a child not yet habituated to this narrow understanding, those same plains held a multiplicity of meanings: as a space for exploration, a place for learning, and sometimes a holder of dangers. The following section demonstrates how spatial reasoning impacted childhood understandings of family life and work.

Without contemporary accounts from children, recollections of home must be sifted from interviews and biographies. For most interviewees, authors, and others thinking about their labor as children, the home was a central and immediate focus of their reminiscence. Nostalgia, though a complex entity in its own right, was deployed by these individuals for several reasons. First, it enabled connections to the affective “public culture”

²⁹⁹ Chapter 6 illustrates those disruptions when they arrive in the late 1920s and 1930s. Child labor was not erased from the Southwest through the mechanisms of law or social coercion, but instead was reduced through catastrophe.
surrounding farm life as an object of historical memory. Second, nostalgia for the home was a way to promote positive thinking. Third, it functioned as part of self and social identity formations. Ultimately, it is best understood as simultaneously a “private” and “social” emotion, and as instantiated through agricultural memory, “the pastoral as the purest... expression of nostalgia.”

The edited childhood memories of James Bruce Frazier, collected by his youngest son Donald, spoke to the process by which emotional links could be built through memory. In What I Learned on the Ranch, Donald stated that “these stories came to be, I believe, because my dad was trying to recapture his lost sense of place and to deal with his new sense of rootlessness as he left Big Spring for good. At the same time, he was passing on his West Texas ranch heritage to his kids.” Donald himself grew up in the postwar suburbs of the Dallas-Fort Worth area. As noted in the previous chapter, Donald included in the work his father’s commentary on the nature of modernity versus the past, a veiled moral critique of contemporary childhoods (including his own). It is also telling that the book’s first chapter was called “Cross Ell Home,” after the name of James’ childhood ranch. James

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300 See discussions on nostalgia as a concept in Krystine Irene Batcho, “Nostalgia: Retreat of Support in Difficult Times?” The American Journal of Psychology 126, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 355-367. Detailed in their background discussion on 356-357. See also Janelle L. Wilson, “‘Remember When...’: A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia” ETC: A Review of General Semantics 56, no. 3 (1999): 296-304. Wilson has also written on space and time as factors in nostalgia and memory, see Janelle L. Wilson, “Here and Now, There and Then: Nostalgia as a Time and Space Phenomenon,” Symbolic Interaction 38, no. 4 (2015): 478-92. Many scholars who work on nostalgia are careful to note that it has both positive and negative affective components—in the interviews I have collected, this range of emotions is on display, yet they lean heavily towards the positive. This is further discussed in Chapter 7.

301 Wilson, “Here and Now,” 479-480, 482. Wilson further described two conceptualizations, termed “reflective” and “restorative” nostalgia. The former was a social practice which created links of “continuity” and the latter was a type of wishful thinking and/or longing.

302 James Bruce Frazier, What I Learned on the Ranch, and Other Stories from a West Texas Childhood (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2003), 9-10, 13.
described their arrival at the new ranch in 1927 with thick detail; “The Model T turned south past the corral, past out-buildings, many iron plows and wagons stopping in front of a weathered pine lumber house, gray like all the buildings... There were two rows of chinaberry trees in front of the house and a barbed wire fence... In the middle of the front porch was an underground cistern filled by gutters that collected rainfall from the roof.” Although he lamented that the “old house had seen better days,” James remembered waking up during that first night at the ranch, staring up at the newly clear night sky, and thought “I was at home, for the rest of my life.”

The creation of a home, then, was a spatial, temporal, and affective process all at once.

James and his son Donald were not alone in their halcyon visions of the home, nor in their efforts to articulate their vision of a true home, one that could call people back to their childhoods, and by implication, to a better, more positive emotional space. Jack Day, Jr., a teenage cowboy, wrote a letter in his later years explaining his feelings towards his home, the Bell Ranch. “Although I was very much of a youngster, I became very familiar on my trips around the Bell on the wagon with your “creeks and rocks and mesas.” I am just as fond of them still... As a somewhat homesick kid, I will never forget how often I was pleased and relieved to see Gavilan loom up sometimes, which meant that I was nearing Headquarters and could find a comfortable bed and some eggs and milk...”

Importantly, unlike nonwhites who faced land loss, many white families could remember their homes without historical traumas of dispossession. This kept the home an ideologically pure space.

303 Frazier, What I Learned on the Ranch, 16-17.
for many whites. Thelma Fletcher, an Anglo Texan, noted without irony her childhood cross-ethnic relationships, which were possible because of her family’s location near the border, but also due to the violence of the Mexican Revolution. She had been friends with young Mexican children at the ranch and in her boarding school, and her parents and neighbors had encounters with Pancho Villa, even creating posses to safeguard the ranches, but when prompted to recall her friendships with Mexican girls, noted simply “I guess we had the best of both worlds... the ranchers knew it, but the children, you know, all we knew it was just gorgeous.”305 Wherever the economic or domestic situation of their youth, rural Americans tended to fondly remember their rural childhood home environments.

Turning from the memorialized perceptions of home towards the construction and maintenance of rural family homes illuminates how the built environment reinforced ideologies of the home.306 Fabiola Cabeza de Baca detailed in her autobiography the construction of her childhood home on the High Plains of eastern New Mexico. It was an L-shaped, rock and adobe structure, organized around several rooms, including the despensa, which “served as a storeroom, summer kitchen, and sleeping quarters when stray cowboys dropped in on a snowy or rainy night,” the garage, a front room, a dining room, several bedrooms, and an all-important patio. Cabeza de Baca’s family cherished the respite that the patio provided during summer days, and the children all had a hand in its construction; “The hard dirt floor of the patio always had a certain coolness about it. Just a few nights

305 Thelma Fletcher, interview by Jane Wilmer, June 21, 1982, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 3-7 for her discussion on the Mexican Revolution and its indirect impact on her childhood.
306 Hispano households followed common structural rules, owing to the materials and terrain available, the wealth of the family, and the needs of the household.
before, the boys had been in the mood to renovate it. They brought a load of dirt, which we sprinkled with water and spread over with burlap sacks. We had such fun tramping it down. We made a game by jumping on it until the soil was packed hard. This was repeated until we had a solid, even patio floor. Around it the boys built a supporting wall of rock filled in with mud.”

Many rural families in New Mexico organized their homes similarly; they built rectangular or l-shaped homes out of adobe bricks, local stone, and timber supports. If the home was large, as Cabeza de Baca’s was, it might have an interior corral, open to the sky, or have other adjoining structures. Other hispanos and Pueblo villagers also recalled these home maintenance practices in their own childhoods, sprinkling the dirt floors, repairing the adobe, and cleaning the dust. The Jaramillo family men from Isleta Pueblo built their home brick by brick, with young Juan carrying adobe bricks and making the mud plaster on his father’s behalf. For yet another example, see the image below, captured by a Farm Security Administration photographer, showed a teen girl working with others to plaster an adobe wall. As a general rule, most members of the family participated in the construction and maintenance of the home, which served both a practical and cultural purpose; it reinforced their physical shelter while also reinforcing the bonds between family members and the primacy of the home.

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308 For a preserved example of these house layouts, see the Hacienda de los Martinez Museum, on the outskirts of Taos, NM. This fortified structure contains two interior plazas, a blacksmith shop, room for a priest, and everything else a rural patron could require.
309 Leborio Castillo and Placida Padilla, interview by Carol Pittman, April 3, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
310 Juan A. Jaramillo, interview by Michael Husband and Donald Cutter, February 11, 1969, microfilm 7, interview 74, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
For most Southwestern families, home was the most important nexus of daily life. Families organized their daily lives around the structure of the house, as well as the lands surrounding it. No part of the home was more essential than the spaces where food was produced or consumed. The dining room was typically a place of informal business for the rural head of household. Dining conventions also reinforced the familial hierarchy; people ate in order of their age, their work, and/or their social standing. Rubie Devries recalled her displeasure at having to wait until the “grown-ups” had eaten; “the dining room was big because my daddy had a lot of cattle men came there and that’s the way they did, you
know, they’d stay to eat... and we kids had to wait... we’d all get so mad.”³¹¹ Despite her hunger, this practice reinforced the authority of the father and the importance of market-oriented work. When not eating, many other children spent a majority of their time doing chores in the kitchen, as the cooking and storage of food remained central to rural lifestyles well into the 20th century. Parents expected children to participate in the labor-intensive processes required to preserve food for the year. Most preservation techniques required manual labor, including the boiling and sealing of food jars, the grinding and hand-packing of sausages, the churning of butter or spinning of cream separators, and the husking or winnowing of grains.³¹² For Helen Fields, “when canning days were announced, kids abandoned all hope of getting to play and resigned themselves to a long, tedious, unbroken workday.”³¹³ The photograph below shows another example of the family working as a unit to store food, as well as a clear example of the spillover of such work into other home spaces. Far from the sterile analyses of diet popular among urban Americans, eating was a form of family bonding, a home-making praxis.³¹⁴

³¹¹ Rubie Leigh Devries and Reverend James Devries, interview by Esther MacMillan, March 6, 1983, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 3-4.
³¹² For examples of the wide variety of hand-cranked devices available to even poorer families in the early 20th century, see the collection of kitchen materials at the Schoolhouse First Floor Exhibition, Tucumcari Historical Museum, Tucumcari, New Mexico. Similar domestic appliance collections can be found at museums throughout the West. Electric versions of these appliances began to emerge by the 1930s, but rural electrification lagged behind in many parts of New Mexico and western Texas.
³¹³ Helen Magnum Fields, Walking Backwards in the Wind (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995), 58.
³¹⁴ For examples of nutritional information available during the early 20th century, see materials such as the Farmers’ Bulletins. Alongside the one cited above, see Caroline L. Hunt, Food for Young Children: Farmers’ Bulletin 717 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1920); Care of Food in the Home, Farmers’ Bulletin 1374 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923). These and other materials were produced at the behest of the U.S. federal government and aimed towards the needs of farmers, nurses, public health officials, and families with children.
Figure 11 Carlos Vierra, Agrapina Quintana and children, wife of Marcial Quintana, with drying corn and chile, Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico, ca. 1920, glass negative, no. 41532, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum. This picture of Agrapina and her young children showed them posing while surrounded by their work. Their Cochiti Pueblo home was overtaken post-harvest by hundreds of ears of corn and dozens of chiles, each one needing to be bundled and dried outside.

Understanding Their Own Work

Given the discourses surrounding children’s work as a moral good, a family necessity, and a form of practical education, an outside observer may assume that children merely parroted those understandings of their own work. On the contrary, and depending on the individual in question, children interpreted their work in a variety of ways and came to their own understandings of work, which in turned shaped other knowledge and practices.  

In these moments, childhood realities did not always adhere to adult

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315 I ground my statement here in the work of psychologists such as Jean Piaget. Piaget articulated the belief that children were “functioning beings in their own right—they should not be thought of merely as immature adults, having imperfect adult capacities. Like other living creatures, children have to survive in the world around them; and their ways of thinking, although different from those of adults, allow them to get by and so are of great intrinsic interest.” For more on this and related thoughts on childhood as its own category, see
expectations. This bidirectional process depended on age, gender, personality, environment, and a host of other individualized factors, but some common trends became visible through interviews and recollections.\textsuperscript{316}

From infancy, children instinctively mimic and follow the roles and practices of their caregivers with minimal encouragement.\textsuperscript{317} Once they have basic motor functions down at an early age, parents, siblings, and others seek to slowly introduce their values and behaviors to children. Rural children were inevitably exposed to agricultural labor at a pace set by their environment and community. Some children quickly received significant responsibilities and workloads, while other families eased children into their chores or kept them from more dangerous or difficult work. In both instances, more experienced family members, neighbors, and/or employers provided instruction and supervision, whether that instruction was through observation of a “skillful adult,” the practice of responsive assistance, or through letting children take initiative.\textsuperscript{318}

As a result of this acclimation process, which did not emphasize their relationship to the market, nor to family economics, many Southwestern children internalized the belief

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{316} Some scholars refer to this structural process of learning and experiencing as a constant sequence of “transactions” between children and others or children and environmental factors. For more detail on this model, see Arnold Sameroff, \textit{The Transactional Model of Development: How Children and Contexts Shape Each Other} (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2009), 3-7.
\textsuperscript{317} For a description of the “innate-ness” of this practice, see Susan S. Jones, “Imitation in Infancy: The Development of Mimicry,” \textit{Psycological Science} 18, no. 7 (July 2007): 593-599.
\textsuperscript{318} Barbara Rogoff, \textit{The Cultural Nature of Human Development} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 318-322. These are three models of young child behavioral development articulated by Rogoff. They vary by cultural beliefs and practices. In observation, the child watches adults and older youths participate in a task. In responsive assistance, parents adjust the child’s behavior to help steer them towards a particular trajectory. With initiative methods, the child is left to develop their capacities independently, although they also used observation and helping activities with their elders.
\end{quote}
that their labor held only a small value (particularly in economic terms). The repeated refrain that they were simply “helpers” or “more trouble than they were worth” rung true in many of the interviews collected. Julia Nail Moss explained how she was suddenly thrust into the family’s work at age seven. Prior to that, she was spared from labor, but after the death of her brother, her work became a family necessity in the brutal Chihuahuan Desert.\footnote{Julia Nail Moss and Dr. Ernest Speck, interview by Bill and Precious Gregg, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.} In the memoir of Helen Fields, her family gradually introduced the children to field work. In her estimation, growth and skill, more so than age, determined the workload of a child. As a very young child, the simple tasks of dropping seeds into holes dug by an adult was straightforward, and keeping chickens from eating garden vegetables and other small tasks felt neither difficult nor essential to Helen. It was only as they grew that Helen and her siblings learned what they considered to be more important tasks. As she noted, “when I was a little bigger (we were judged more by size than by age) Uncle made a shorthandled hoe for me... I walked rounds with them from time to time, hoeing weeds on their rows, getting in their way, but feeling my importance at sharing in real farm work.”\footnote{Fields, \textit{Walking Backwards in the Wind}, 35-36, 55-56.} Even as her labors grew more complex and demanding, Helen felt pride, mixed with the sense that she obstructed the efficiency of her elders.

That former child laborers contextualized their work as a form of assistance, rather than in strictly economic terms, remained consistent with traditional expectations of work and reciprocity. Communal labor occurred in all aspects of domestic and agricultural work. Small, close-knit communities, such as the various Pueblos, small villages, or the ethnic
enclaves of immigrants, pooled their resources whenever available. Lucia Candelaria, in an interview, noted that her family helped manage their neighbor’s farm; they stayed in a tent and assisted until the crop was ready to harvest, which they then brought to Cedar Crest, NM in a wagon. Lucia still considered this intensive, long-term labor to be a form of help, because it was done on behalf of a neighbor who needed the assistance. This may have actually been another form of work, such as tenant farming, but Lucia was not privy to any financial or other material payments for her family’s labor. What she remembered, years later, was that her family supported their neighbor out of goodwill. The Ellis family, from nearby in the Sandias, also freely offered their support to relatives in need. Charlotte, Paul, and their parents exemplified this trait when sister Maude’s family fell on hard times; as Charlotte recalled in her diary, “the four of us at home live on Father’s pension of $12 per month. How can we feed six more? And yet to say they can't come would be terrible.” They tightened up the family finances in order to support the extended family. Younger brother Paul, only a teenager, continued to hold himself to his family’s high standards, going above and beyond in order to assist his relatives. When his aunt needed help, Paul took “time off” from his immediate family to repair a home for his aunt’s family. Further, he promised to haul supplies for them, bringing in vegetables, dairy goods, and furniture in

321 For example, the German immigrant community in Fredericksburg would gather together at the right time and weather in order to make sausages, both a necessity and a delicacy. They would “get together and cook” as well as “go from place to place” with the equipment, so each family could make a batch. See Arthur H. Kowert, interview by Bill and Precious Gregg, September 16, 1987, 13, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See page 13 for the quotation.

322 Ernesto and Lucia Candelaria, interview by Joyce Mendel, March 24, 1992, box 1, folder 17, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

323 Charlotte Ellis, diary, 1908-1909, box 1, folder 5, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. See page 21.
order to properly set up their new household. Paul did this work with no expectations beyond the notion that he was duty-bound to help his relatives when possible.324

Evidence suggested that even adolescent boys and girls, who often had years of experience, felt it was inappropriate to place a dollar value on their work; for example, W. T. Conway, the head of the Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs from the NM Agricultural Extension Service, chided his pupils, many of whom refused to put their labor costs into their project reports. “Some are not recording their own labor as being worth anything. That is not right. Every report blank says to count your time at ten cents per hour and charge that against the project. Now, if some of us did not work hard enough to be worth ten cents an hour, that is his own fault.” Conway’s emphasis on children’s work being worth at least a token amount was morally tinted, as per his suggestion that members had to work hard enough to “be worth” the ten cents.325 It is unclear from Conway’s piece why children did not report their labor.326 Still, some participants probably believed their labor was not worth detailing on its own merits.327 Others likely internalized the concepts that scholars such as Rogoff have articulated; she noted that “in many communities, people learn their trade through involvement in an apprenticeship. The novices learn largely through their engagement with other apprentices and the master… often, work to aid the master’s trade

324 Ellis, diary, 23-24.
326 It is certainly also possible that some youths did not track their labor accurately, or did not care enough about the report itself. However, given the financial incentive, this argument cannot explain all of Conway’s frustrations.
327 As an aside, ten cents per hour in 1915 was roughly five cents lower than the average agricultural wage (and on par with the harsh pay scale for Southern cotton pickers); this was apparently considered appropriate for a young person working on a project that was designed to further their practical education, rather than to make a profit. For the wage information, see Louis J. Ducoff, Wages of Agricultural Labor in the United States, Technical Bulletin no. 895 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1945), 70, 75.
is prioritized, with only a small amount of time and attention devoted to instruction per se.”  Though Southwestern rural families rarely used the rhetoric of apprentices and masters, children did work under the auspices of elders in order to maximize production and to learn the practices themselves.

Other children felt quite differently about their work and its value. Some used their labor as a method of asserting small measures of independence, enrichment, and autonomy. This practice appeared infrequently within the interviews, but many children worked small tasks or short-term jobs in order to make money or otherwise enrich themselves. The Collins sisters, though otherwise possessed of a rigid, moral understanding of their role in the family, occasionally used their domestic training for personal effect. One of the sisters, Ruth, for instance, babysat on behalf of their neighbor, Mrs. Armstrong. As she recollected the event, Ruth expected no payment from Mrs. Armstrong, but when she offered to make a dress, Ruth requested a pink one. She erroneously considered pink to be a more expensive color than the drab colors their mother purchased for them. Proudly, Ruth remarked “how elegant I was in my pink frock! Although I was disillusioned about the cost of pink, I still felt beautiful.”

The lure of these and other consumer goods spurred some children to conduct their work in a mercenary manner. Where girls might be paid for babysitting or other domestic tasks, boys turned towards other opportunities. Otho Allen, an old cowboy from near

Deming, NM, recalled working with his father, who rarely paid him anything. In response, he stated that he “always had some racket to make a dollar or two.” Among his odd jobs, Otho would round up cattle for other ranchers, break horses (a particular talent of his) and make whips or boot tops out of hides he found. He could make anywhere from 25 cents to three dollars from his leatherworking skills, even as a ten-year-old. Erwin Kretzschmar also worked with animal products to make money as an adolescent; in his case he learned taxidermy from a mail-order course and would trap raccoons and skunks in order to sell the pelts for a few dozen cents apiece. Another boy, Ernesto Candelaria, also worked on the side towards his goal—he wanted to learn to play guitar, but could not afford one. In a boy’s magazine, he learned about an opportunity to sell “a rose pomade,” at 25 cents per jar; as he sold them and sent the money in, he would get closer to “the premium which was a guitar.”

H. B. Birmingham and his family’s sheep business also illustrated this process. As noted in prior chapters, his family lost their farm and he had to work as a shepherd. He apparently kept some of his own sheep alongside the other flock, and even in his old age he clearly recalled the value of a sheep and its wool from his teen years, and seemed to profit from his investment, as he “could buy ten sheep for $100. Well, those ten sheep, I always r-[sic] raised over $100 [lamb] crop.” Even in fiction, rural boys in New Mexico and Texas could be found making a dollar or two through petty labors; the author Florence Hayes

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330 Otho Allen, interview by Lou Blachly, July 15, 1952, CD 8, MSS 123 BC, Pioneers Foundation Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
331 Erwin Kretzschmar, interview by James B. Sweeney, April 17, 1983, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 16 and 17.
332 Candelaria, interview.
333 H. B. and Margaret Birmingham, interview by Carol Pittman, April 10, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. See pages 47-49.
fictionalized the life of a *hispano* boy, Ricardo, in her work *The Burro Tamer*; what set the events in motion was Ricardo’s hope of capturing his own donkey in order to earn money at local fiestas.334 In these manners working-class children, especially boys, demonstrated how their economic knowledge and personal initiative could coexist with their familial obligations.

Building Bonds of Affection

All forms of rural work created and reinforced systems of kinship and mutual obligation within ethnic communities. Many youths happily participated in their daily labors because of these bonds of affection. This point—that you work within the family because you love them and because they rely on you—was a truism that went without saying among most families.335 Interviews and memories from across all walks of rural childhood were rife with examples emphasizing the importance of familial love and care. The family history entry of the Lewis Crockett family contains a typical description from a former rural child:

“some of the good times I remember were working on the ranch with my family: marking, shearing, hauling hay, cutting and hauling firewood and mill cedar.”336 Older teenagers also recounted the strong bonds they built with their co-workers, who were often surrogate

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335 This was true among most impoverished families, but wealthier families also reproduced this refrain, even if their subsistence did not truly rely on having every hand “on deck.” One scholar of Latino families described the way that her mother inculcated this particular lesson: “we were taught that each one of us had to contribute a percentage of whatever money we earned for the good of la familia.” As her mother often stated, “cuando yo trabajaba, le entregaba todo a mi mama.” [When I worked, I gave everything to my mother.] Raised in a latino family during the Great Depression, this adage helped the family members get “what we needed and wanted.” The scholar disagreed with this notion, but not out of spite; she “wanted to buy my mother the special things that I knew she would not buy for herself or for the house.” Gloria G. Rodriguez, *Raising Nuestros Niños: Bringing up Latino Children in a Bicultural World* (New York: Fireside Books, 1999), 255-256.
families. Bill Tatom began working on the Bell Ranch as a fifteen-year-old in 1937, and remembered his colleagues fondly despite the hard work. He cried that he “didn’t know the weather could be so hot, or that a person could get so dry for water,” but in the same breath, noted that “we had lots of fun, and at least some of us didn’t have many worries. I doubt if there would have been any great emergency if all the clocks in the bunch had stopped.” For Bill, ranch work’s drudgery was opposed by the strong sense of belonging—he even attended ranch reunion events in his later years.\(^{337}\) Constant, difficult labor was bearable, even desirable, because it created moments of familial intimacy and bonding.

While men typically recalled their work as one of the simple pleasures of farm family life, women from rural backgrounds were quick to rhapsodize on the transformative, emotional power of work. The memoirs of Cleofas Jaramillo, a youth during the late 1800s, demonstrated a lyrical, traditional form of this mantra; looking back at the labors of her household, Cleofas stated confidently that “the compensation for an everyday full day’s work was not material, but rather the kind that is felt in the soul. The satisfaction of having accomplished something, of doing even the small things right.”\(^ {338}\) For children of privilege living in a patrón household, work was afforded a peculiar reverence—Cleofas herself only did a limited amount of home work, but the internal relationships and tradition of the home and family reinforced the centrality of labor through undertones of religion and duty. Eva

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\(^{338}\) Cleofas M. Jaramillo, *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 11-12. Originally printed in 1955 by The Naylor Company, San Antonio, Texas. Cleofas’ prose here conceals the lived reality of her household—her parents, as upper class *hispanos*, had a corps of servants and workers who attended to the home and farm. Cleofas and her siblings did limited work, including some kitchen work and berry picking; it is interesting, however, to see her emphasize the merits of hard work as part of the retelling of her story.
Panana’s remembrances, although not coming from the same place of privilege, also emphasized the emotional impact of familial labor. Born into a Jemez Pueblo family in the early 1900s, Eva’s storytelling, clear and simple, demonstrated the pleasures of her childhood spent among her elders. She explained how she brought water to her grandmother every morning, and ground corn every afternoon for her relatives. Her recollections of picking piñones and working the fields had an idyllic tint, belying her tumultuous family dynamics. For Eva, emotional connections were built with her family sitting around a fire, roasting piñones they gathered earlier in the day. Eva, Cleofas, and others saw their relationships with family, neighbors, and friends as an essential part of their lives.

Youths built similar relationships within their local communities through the emotional power of their labor. Communities expected that girls and women would eagerly engage in this behavior. In the wake of tragedies, such work connected children and families across class and racial lines in powerful, unexpected ways. The 4-H club from Picacho, in rural Dona Ana County, New Mexico, provided one stirring example. In 1930, as economic conditions began to worsen, the girls of the club were looking to help “suffering” people within their village. They did some investigation and decided to help one local, destitute family with several young girls. The 4-H members took donations of cloth on the

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339 Eva Panana, Larry Panana, and Angie Tafoga, interview by Elizabeth Fragua, July 12, 1970, microfilm 8, interview 649, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Eva’s mother passed away when she was a toddler, and she spent much of her life living with her grandparents; however, her father took them to court because he wanted to raise her. The impact of these upheavals, doubtless difficult for a child to process, was minimized by Eva, in favor of discussions about work and play.
family’s behalf, then used those supplies to sew, from scratch, “six dresses and six pairs of bloomers” for the girls. In addition to this work, they provided other clothing donations and worked with the women’s club of Picacho to provide food assistance to the family.340 This article brief made no mention of the reactions of the club girls nor of the recipient family, but given the closeness of the community, it was likely a moving experience for everyone involved.

In other instances, children witnessed their family’s bonds and learned from the experience. Joe Nicola never forgot his mother’s resolve and attachment to her family in the midst of great tragedy. In 1915 near Austin, Texas, a sudden flood crashed over the riverbank, wiping out the home of his older sister and her children. He tried to hide this knowledge from his mother, but a neighbor informed her. Joe recalled how his mother walked all the way into Austin, where she was rebuffed by the police. Joe’s mother went to where the debris had been swept downstream, and found her deceased daughter.341 In another case, the Collins sisters’ provided support for their grieving neighbors Mrs. Nance and the Tarufelli family. Their trips over to lonely Mrs. Nance’s home, and their vigil with the Tarufellis, demonstrated the deep devotional and moral efforts that children had to bear in rural communities. Mrs. Nance had lost a baby girl in her earlier years, and so the Collins children functioned as informal daughters for her. The Tarufellis, a local immigrant family, had to bury their two oldest children after they drank polluted water from a nearby

341 Joe Nicola, interview by Les Pistel, June 8, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. This left a deep impression on Joe, as shown on pages 13-15.
creek and contracted typhoid fever. The Collins children helped console the grief-stricken family, and the entire family offered prayers and words at the funeral. Children’s compassion and sympathetic activities even extended to animals. Russell Hoover had a strange experience when he was going to school in rural Bracketville, Texas. One of his neighbors, who he referred to as “that old lady” panicked when she found that someone had intentionally poisoned her dog with strychnine. It fell to Russell to attempt a home remedy, using a small brand to burn a cross into the dog’s forehead, which apparently cured the poisoning, as he continued to see the dog for many years afterwards with a cross-shaped scar. These forms of emotional labor, especially in the midst of shared tragedies, helped prepare boys and girls for the emotional burdens they would have to share as adults. For girls in particular, this was a major labor they would have to shoulder as they grew older.

Some girls, mostly from Spanish-speaking families, found employment and self-determination even within this restrictive space, through long-standing traditional medicine, including midwifery. This space was available to them due to intergenerational, familial systems of local medicine that trained girls as specialists in herbal remedies, birth,

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342 Daudet and Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon, 41-43, 45-47.
343 Russell Hoover, interview by Marjorie Moore, February 15, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Russell was not prepared to do this work, but for some reason his neighbor trusted him. Perhaps even as a child he had more experience with iron tools, since he became a rural blacksmith later in life. See page 13.
344 For an examination of emotional labor as a concept in 19th century America, see Brandy Paris, “Emotional Labor, Women’s Work, and Sentimental Capital in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2005), 10-13. In a more specific context, women and girls were tasked with more emotional and affective labor because of their role within the family—they took care of the well-being of children and the elderly, they participated in rituals of childbirth and death, helped put together community events, and a host of other tasks not considered proper to the economic or social spheres of men.
and related medicine. Jesúsita Aragón, one of the most famous parteras in New Mexican history, started her training as an adolescent with her grandmother, a longtime partera herself. Her grandmother wanted “someone to remain in [her] place,” after her passing. At age thirteen or fourteen, Jesúsita delivered her first baby and begun her career as a midwife. Becoming a curandera or midwife meant staying within familiar realms but having greater agency and status. As midwives like Jesusita traveled rural circuits, attending to families who relied on their expertise, they quite literally ensured the survival of rural families. Even as this status eroded in the early 20th century due to the increasing presence of Anglo doctors and medical practices, girls continued to learn these trades, much as boys might learn ranch work or masonry from older male relatives. These female caregivers promoted cultural continuity in the face of increasing Americanization, and they reinforced communal and emotional bonds among women and girls in rural villages and towns.

Unlike girls who were taught to cultivate the emotional aspects of their labor, boys were not generally encouraged to be forthcoming with their emotions. Instead, they learned from patriarchal examples to support and protect their family with action,

346 Anselmo F. Arellano, “Traditional Midwifery: Partera Practices,” and Salima Krambo, “Midwife Recalls 65 Years of Caring,” Living Treasures Oral History Collection, box 11, folder 1, AC 338, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe. A curandera in this context refers to a healer who uses traditional practices, especially herbal medicine. To some individuals it might refer to a religious or mystic interpretation of medicine as well, and indeed curanderas did incorporate prayers and invocations of saints alongside their remedies. For Native Americans, curanderas reflected indigenous religious and healing customs.
347 For a depiction of antagonism between male doctors and midwives in rural places, see Jensen, With These Hands, 151-152. For a general overview of scientific medicine in New Mexico, see Jake W. Spidle, Doctors of Medicine in New Mexico: A History of Health and Medical Practice, 1886-1986 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).
decisiveness, and sometimes violence.348 James Collins, one of the elder Collins children, was hailed as a hero after saving four of his other siblings from two rattlesnakes while they were out on a leisure ride with their horses. James took leadership of the situation, ordering the other children away as he “pelted the snakes with stones until they lay lifeless on the grass.”349 In another case, Agnes James remembered her brother John’s “hero” status in the eyes of her family with a more skeptical outlook. The boys and their father were hunting deer with their pack of dogs along the Nueces River; at one point the deer leapt into some water, where the dogs could not attack it. John jumped in after the quarry and stabbed it to death with his pocketknife. In Agnes’ mind, the family hailed John as “hero of the hour” but she considered it “terrible” and “felt so sorry for that deer.”350 These boys, and others like them, received commendations in part for their willingness to use violence. As will be detailed later on in this chapter, the social life of rural boys grounded itself in aggression, competition, and action. More generally, the spaces of rural

348 Violence is not a topic that can be detailed thoroughly in this space; however, there is a rich literature on violence and the U.S. West, particularly regarding cultural constructions. I am arguing here that rural society, and families in particular, valorized the use of violence, especially when faced with the numerous environmental challenges of the Southwest. For examples on culture, violence, and masculinity in the West, see Richard Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Atheneum, 1992). Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, and Dee Garceau-Hagen, eds., Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West (New York: Routledge, 2001). For an example of using violence as an analytical lens, see Ned Blackhawk, Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2006). For a general overview that includes a brief section on violence and masculinity see Gail Bederman, Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

349 Daudet and Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon, 79.

350 Agnes James and Lucille James Hartwell, interview by George Hartwell, April 26, 1970, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
life held gendered rules and norms, and children were expected to learn these rules and adhere to them as teenagers and adults.\textsuperscript{351}

![Figure 12 Three Boys with Hanging Trophies, undated, photograph, A1985-003.0015, Armstrong Family Photograph Collection, South Texas Archives, Texas A&M University, Kingsville. The picture below shows several young boys from the Armstrong family, memorialized through a series of still depicting their triumphal hunts for deer and fowl. Even the youngest boys held their firearms proudly.]

**Work and Play**

Despite the lamentations of the New Mexico Farm Bureau in 1920 that boys and girls disliked farms because they were “all work and no play,” rural children in the Southwest mixed work with play.\textsuperscript{352} The following section depicts the numerous ways that

\textsuperscript{351} This notion has a long history, although the specific rules at play in any given space were further modulated by race, class, and necessity. Recall the exploration of gender ideals in Chapter 2; children did not fully understand these right away, nor were they expected to. Instead, through mimicry, participation, and teaching, families and community members provided spaces for children to learn these rules over time. See the explanation of gendered worlds of work and leisure in Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: the Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 100-107, 141-144. Also see John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 110-118, 122-125, 144-146.

\textsuperscript{352} “Why Boys and Girls Leave the Farm,” *New Mexico Farm Courier* 8, no. 9. (September 1920): 16.
toys, games, competition, and mischief intersected with agrarian labors in the Southwest. Small children played with crude toys or roughhoused around the farm to exert their natural curiosity and energy, while older children participated in rodeos, pranks, and other activities that helped them assert their place in the social hierarchy. As historian Elliott West argued, children actively turned their work into play; “it was thus a small step to transform their labor into recreation.” For West, play merited its own analysis. As scholars of childhood and development also attested, play has universal and culturally responsive parameters and preconditions that helped determine outlooks and capacities far later in life. Thus play could be considered an integral part of the “work” of growing up. This chapter expands on these refrains to include the ways that play and leisure occurred for older teenagers, and how these activities inculcated children into the rural societies they lived within.

Toys and other ephemera of youth provided comfort to rural children throughout the day. As one Southwestern writer noted, “the children’s primary business, of course, was play.” Oliver La Farge’s account of his wife’s upbringing stated that his wife and her siblings liked to bring along their “child-sized rockers, which they had already outgrown but to which they were devoted,” as well as their quilts and “whenever possible, one or more dolls.” Interviewees recalled how precious a real toy was—for one woman, dolls were a

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355 Oliver La Farge, Behind the Mountains (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1956), 124-125. Of course, it remains important to note that La Farge is a writer, primarily interested in selling his wife’s stories to a reading public intrigued by the foreign-ness of New Mexico. However, this section of the work, on children and play,
luxury only available as Christmas gifts. Nearly seventy years later, Mrs. Long even remembered the make of her cherished dolls.\textsuperscript{356} Christmas toys were “to be enjoyed,” but also cared for, so that they would stay in good repair.\textsuperscript{357} Another woman, Dulcinea Sanchez, owned a single doll, “given to her by a man from town.”\textsuperscript{358} In lieu of toys, Rubie Leigh Devries’ siblings took turns “pitching” a couple of silver dollars they had borrowed from their father.\textsuperscript{359} Most youths had few manufactured toys, especially among poorer families, yet they managed to play.

Despite the paucity of toys in this place and time, children devised their own amusements, mimicking the ranch and farm work adults participated in by playing with toys and games styled after the tools, places, and animals they saw.\textsuperscript{360} Placida Padilla and Leborio Castillo, who grew up together, jointly recalled their playtimes as young children; Leborio stated that “when we were small she was a pretty good buddy o’ mine. She used to [laughs] play with me. You know, I had two big rocks and all the little rocks were kinda colored, you know? We used to play those... they used to be our cows... those were our

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seems to conform well to other interviews and oral histories, so I believe it is as accurate as La Farge was interested in making it.\textsuperscript{356} Alma and Tom Long, interview by Hardy and Sarah Cannon, December 5, 1989, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 39 to 41.\textsuperscript{357} Lillian Sutton-Taylor, interview by Lasca Fortassin, December 16, 1977, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Page 26 described that Lillian’s family was wealthy, and as such they received more than one toy at Christmas. She also recalled a family who had “display toys” meant to look pleasing next to the tree, but not actually for the children to play with.\textsuperscript{358} Dulcinea Sanchez, interview by Joyce Mendel, February 15, 1991, box 1, folder 22, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.\textsuperscript{359} Devries, interview.\textsuperscript{360} This practice of using toys resembling the objects and activities they saw in their daily lives can be understood psychologically as part of the “associative” thinking endemic to younger children (about 6 to 8 according to some researchers). They have not yet formed the more complex lines of reasoning, but have moved beyond the mimicry processes of toddlers. See Committee on Child Psychiatry, How Old is Old Enough? The Ages of Rights and Responsibilities (New York: Brunner/Mazel Inc., 1989), 23.
toys… And we used to get the, uh, rocks and the little one that matched that, that was its
calf, you know." Thelma Fletcher and her brother also played together, but also fought
over the gendered nature of their toys; Thelma wanted to play with her “very few” dolls,
but her brother preferred to play “stick horse” in the pretend corrals they built from
stones. Some isolated ranch children had to play by themselves, and in those instances
they also made use of the “cows, horses, dogs, and cowboys” surrounding them. Eva
Panana also remembered animal-centric games played at Jemez; she detailed a game where
the children lined up and held onto one another, led by a “Mother Hen” and pursued by a
“wolf” who had to pick a child to catch as they dashed around the yard. These children,
like the ones photographed in rural Texas, built friendships with their neighbors and siblings
through play.

361 Castillo and Padilla, interview, 6. New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Oral History Project.
362 Fletcher, interview, 13.
363 Lucille Nixon pointedly stated that she never knew how to really play with others until she went to school
at the age of seven, where her teacher taught her to “play with girls” at the schoolhouse. Quotes from pages
16-17. Lucille Cowley Nixon, interview by Walter and Janie Sargeant, May 16, 1987, UA 15.01.12, transcript,
Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
364 Panana and Tafoga, interview, 1-3.
Outdoor play across the farm or ranch was a hallmark of nearly every rural child’s upbringing. For boys in particular, such activities and games offered safe opportunities for them to learn about masculinity. One such game, *El Cazador*, or The Hunter, revolved around two teams of children, one named after game animals such as rabbits and fowl, and the others labeled after parts of a gun, mimicking the process of locating and shooting animals on the hunt. Another game, *Pipis y Gallos*, was a game imitating the popular pastime of cockfighting; in this game, two boys faced each other in a circle, mimicking roosters as they bent their elbows and kicked at one another. The boys in Agnes James’

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365 For a theoretical approach to this topic within Chicanx Studies, see Maria Herrera Sobek, “Danger! Children at Play: Patriarchal Ideology and the Construction of Gender in Spanish Language Hispanic/Chicano Children’s Songs and Games,” in *Chicana Traditions: Continuity and Change*, Norma Elia Cantú and Olga Nájera-Ramírez, eds. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
family also entertained themselves in a similar fashion, using the farm as a playground. She explained how they would play around the stable, which included a storage space for hay. When there was fresh fodder in that area, the children “would swing” over to the hay pile and jump down, the hay cushioning their landing. These practices left indelible impressions on the memories of rural men; one interviewee stated that he could not remember much about his homes growing up, but remembered the “yards surrounding them,” and could detail the spaces where they played, whether they were the “walnut trees” or the “cellar door” which was good for “sliding.”

It is perhaps obvious that children’s play reflected their home environments. In many cases, their activities also blurred the lines between work and play. Children found, for example, that garden work could also provide amusement. Leborio and Placida remembered going out into the garden for their chores; Placida noted that “we used to sit right in the middle of the garden and eat the green peas.” She also noted that her sister enjoyed tracking the chickens as they came and went, as the hunt for a hidden chicken nest was great entertainment. Watching the hens might have been entertaining, but it also provided defense against the predations of a coyote or hawk. Another common labor which often transformed into a game was the shelling or husking of beans and grain. The Baca family children, as retold by La Farge, worked to crush the cornstalks and silage; “the girls wrapped their quilts around them against the artificial storm, arranged their

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368 Hartwell, interview, 8-9.
370 Castillo and Padilla, interview, 19, 20.
belongings, and fell to work at trampling. It had, inevitably, to become a game. They
decided to be Indians, Pueblo Indians... as Indians, they danced, jumped, and ran around.
The game took form, with parts for the dolls and uses for the chairs. It was a game, a
dance, and a play... for this they were being paid nine cents an hour.”371 This practice was
described in less florid prose by many rural children. Ernesto Candelaria’s family would use
the children to clean the husks from their bean crop; “the children would run around on top
of them, until all the beans got loose.”372 West also noted how common races were among
farm children; they would hurry to be first to pick or weed their row of crops.373 Savvy
family members might tacitly promote such races in the hopes that the chores would be
completed more quickly, but for the children, it promoted recreation and could become
ammunition for gentle teasing and mischief. Other historians have noted that “children
extracted much of their enjoyment from activities that in some small way contributed to the
families' welfare,” and whether it was “rustl[ing] cows” or “romping with lambs” children
acknowledged that both play and work coexisted.374

Even the songs children sung during play reinforced their agricultural upbringings.
Felicitas Lopez y Torres recalled one such song from her youth in the early 1910s, entitled
Las Manzanas; this song’s refrain references the juiciness and sweetness of apples, akin to a

371 La Farge, Behind the Mountains, 127-128.
372 Candelaria, interview.
373 West, Growing Up with the Country, 104.
374 David Wallace Adams, Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990
(Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 73-74. Adams argued here that “play must always give way
to work” but I disagree. They were both valuable and had places in the family. However, he aptly noted that
threats of punishment that could induce children to leave their play if it interfered too much with their labors.
slogan or chant one would use while selling them on the street.\textsuperscript{375} Street vending, especially of produce, was a common form of labor for rural children who lived near towns, but as the song suggests, it could also be a source of entertainment. Other songs sung by youths, including the hispano songs \textit{La Gallinita Ciega} and \textit{El Coyotito}, included lyrics about the process of finding food. In the first instance the song described the search for food for baby chickens, and in the second picking \textit{piñon} nuts for a hungry coyote.\textsuperscript{376} Both songs had accompanying games, were designed for younger children, and these together demonstrated the understanding of labor that children held.

As children grew into adolescents, playing with dolls, sticks, and beans was replaced with boundary-breaking and mischief, as groups of youths found new leisure activities which troubled their communities. Troublemaking and the breaking of social (or legal) norms was for many adolescents a necessary expression of their growing autonomy.\textsuperscript{377} Communities feared such actions, as teenagers sometimes crossed into dangerous territory or experimented with adult behaviors. The Garcia brothers, from the Sandias, became unwilling participants in a clandestine moonshine operation put together by their father during Prohibition. The father told both brothers to “watch the still in the daytime... because once you start it, you can’t stop it until you finish the last batch.” Their father

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{375} Felicitas Lopez y Torres, “Las Manzanas,” sung during interview by Emilio Chavez, 1974, box 2, CD 168, MSS 892 BC, Ruben Cobos Collection of Southwest Folklore and Folk Music, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
\textsuperscript{376} Gonzáles, \textit{Canciones y Juegos}, 40-41.
\textsuperscript{377} Committee on Child Psychiatry, \textit{How Old is Old Enough?}, 75-76, 86. The authors here described this search for autonomy as part of adolescence’s ever-growing social spaces. Although the writers explained it as a way that children developed more and more responsibility, their later discussion on children, parents, and negotiations about risky behavior and pushing boundaries implicitly argued that teenagers sought their autonomy through these sorts of behaviors.
\end{footnotesize}
hoped to sell this moonshine for seven to twelve dollars per gallon, a good sum for a rural hispano family. However, as adolescent boys, long hours sitting in the mountains made the brothers restless. Noting that their still produced leftover corn and plums as a by-product, the brothers decided to entertain themselves with a prank; they took leftovers from the still and fed it to a neighbor’s pigs, laughing as the pigs became drunk from the fermented corn.\footnote{Abelino Garcia, interview by Joyce Mendel, April 17, 1995, box 1, folder 19, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.}

The teenage friends of Erwin Kretzschmar engaged in risky behaviors without worrying much about the potential outcomes. At one point they egged on a friend who wanted to drink until he blacked out, then had to protect him after he dove into the river current. In another moment, they purchased whiskey and secreted it away during one of the local dances—Erwin’s friends then tasked him with discreetly carrying the whiskey around the dance while another friend sold it to their fellow boys. Girls also participated in these behaviors, but boys were generally the greatest risk-takers; Gladys Stratton recalled a tragedy which struck while she was a high school student. Several of her male friends from her El Paso-area high school went out into the fields on the outskirts of town, when they happened upon a watermelon patch. Their intent was to smash or steal some of the melons, but a guard patrolling the field spotted them; as Gladys recalled, the guard fired on her friends, killing one boy, Grady Weeks.\footnote{Gladys J. Stratton, interview by Rebecca Craver, January 20, 1984, interview 669, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. See pages 6 and 7.} For Gladys and her friends, the incident
became a deep regret. For most adolescents, these dangerous activities did not end in tragedy, and were simply part of the process of growing up.

Conflict in the Family

All of that troublemaking, as well as myriad other problems within the child’s world, created conflicts between children, their peers, their parents, and the community. For most children, the earliest understandings of this process came through the reprimands issued by parents and the quarrels started by siblings. Given the circumscribed nature of the child’s world, it should be no surprise that discipline, scolding, and punishment were freely utilized against misbehaving (and sometimes innocent) youths. Rural parents often saw few other options for controlling their children.

Within the social circles of children, conflict over childhood issues was inevitable. Though the stakes were low, siblings, friends, and neighbors all quarreled at times. Children seemed particularly to revel in arguments, physical confrontations, pranks, and other forms of annoyance. Although these conflicts could grow larger and involve families, communities tended to let the children resolve such issues themselves. Leborio, although he faced discrimination from Anglos at his rural school, also found friendship among some American boys. His friend, Leroy Simpson, helped Leborio out during one schoolground conflict, when “some of the guys want to whip me one time. And he said, ‘You whip him you have to whip me too!’... that was the end of that.”

Rural schoolteachers sometimes took advantage of this self-disciplining process to maintain order in the classroom, with the older children acting to restore order in the classroom. As one teacher recalled, “they sort of disciplined

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380 Castillo and Padilla, interview, 11.
each other...” and believed that her Mexican students held her in particularly high esteem, despite a bit of “rebellion” at times. She noted that these students were quite fearful of the discipline which their parents could inflict if necessary, a contributing factor to their self-policing.381

In retrospect, some adults found that disagreement and conflict were merely spokes on the wheel of childhood social life, adjacent to the spokes of family, education, work, and play. Some even argued that both conflict and discipline built stronger bonds within the community and family. The Collins sisters memorialized their childhood experiences as such; “we were all live, curious, mischievous participants of the whole of our environment.” They further argued that these sorts of localized struggles over sibling standing, disagreements with friends, issues with parental authority, and other problems of childhood became memories which bound people together. “We have all reached adulthood, differing quite obviously from each other in many ways... the conformists of our family along with the rebels have become, in adult life, independent thinkers, and most of us can say we did it our way.”382 Lillian Sutton-Taylor agreed with that sentiment. Her numerous siblings, eleven in total, often cared for one another when their mother was away; they were all “trained” to do so by her mother. Her oldest brother, John, was known as the “foreman” of the family; during these times he “got a broomstick in order that he could tap the ones not obeying the guidelines left for each child.” He often used this broomstick to its full effect, although at times he nearly came to blows with other siblings. Despite this lax

381 Emilie Wofford, interview by Mary Margaret Wofford, June 15, 1994, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 26-28.
382 Daudet and Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon, 63-64.
approach to internecine corporal punishment, Lillian argued that it provided a solid framework for mutual respect between her siblings.\textsuperscript{383}

Punishment sometimes came in the form of additional chores and tedious or otherwise disagreeable work. In this manner, labor became a corrective tool—whether it produced something economically valuable was often beside the point from the parent or authority figure’s standpoint. Work became a punishment when parents took the usual tools away, forced children to work longer hours, engaged them in particularly unpleasant tasks, or otherwise interfered in the child’s preferred routine. The Collins siblings once more provided a clear example of this punishment. The sisters depicted their mother in colorful terms as a taskmaster and disciplinarian who could sniff out “who was working and who was shirking,” during the daily chore routines. If they failed to complete a task to her satisfaction, their mother insisted that they repeat the task until “she was satisfied we had done our best.”\textsuperscript{384} The parents of mischievous Pino Baca also used work as a form of punishment. As an indirect consequence of his “getting too big for his boots” and “young irreverence” his father sent him out into the freezing night in order to retrieve lost “holy oils” on behalf of the local priest, a frequent victim of the youth’s antics. Pino had to travel out to retrieve more oil from a neighboring village, which he did, despite some silent protest.\textsuperscript{385}

\textsuperscript{383} Sutton-Taylor Interview, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{384} Daudet and Roberts, \textit{Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon}, 34.
\textsuperscript{385} La Farge, \textit{Behind the Mountains}, 45-51. According to his sister’s recollection, “it would never have occurred to the boy to protest an order of his father’s, but it was plain enough that he was thoroughly unhappy at having to drive some thirty miles of snowy road at night.”
Where parents deemed lighter punishments insufficient, violence was a commonplace and accessible recourse. Although the concept of child abuse was remote, many children knew that they could face “the rod” for disobeying their parents. Of course, spanking, switches, and “the belt” were also popular corporal punishments. In a few instances more severe punishments were deployed for serious offenses; Maria Pompa faced a harsh punishment for throwing a stone at her sibling; her father forced her to kneel in the corner atop a pile of stones, causing her knees to “bleed alot... I believed that I deserved it.” Communities sometimes participated in collective, organized forms of punishment, part of the group’s responsibility for its children. Leborio and Placida noted that “in the old days... if you got punished at school you got punished at home too.” The children believed such penalties were sometimes unfair, as they were scolded at school for speaking Spanish rather than English. Schools were the primary locus for this communal shaming, especially for indigenous and hispano children like Leborio and Placida. David Wallace Adams elaborated on these sorts of incidents, but noted that on occasion the community defended its students; in one instance, two Navajo students in Santa Fe were strapped without warning for a minor infraction they did not commit, then skipped their farm duty. When the farmer who worked with the school found them and heard their

386 See the example provided by Fletcher, interview, 24-25. When asked by her interviewer, Thelma stated that she “never heard of such a thing” as child abuse until she was an adult. However, it was clear that violence also occurred as forms of abuse against children in the rural West. Unsurprisingly, few interview sources indicated much child abuse within families, although other scholars have studied its existence in Western families. In one example, a woman from the Dakota territory noted that “child and wife beating were the rule in that part of the country... men found release from the pressures of frontier life by beating their sons and daughters.” West, Growing Up with the Country, 151-153.
387 Maria de los Angeles Gomez Pompa, interview by Esther Jauregui, April 22, 1983, interview 612, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. See page 4 for her explanation of the punishment.
388 “Castillo and Padilla, interview, 7-8.
story, he went back to the advisor who administered the punishment and began beating the advisor.389

For older teens, transgressions against the social order, like the aforementioned forms of “mischief,” produced swift repercussions. Hallie Stillwell and her sister faced an unusual punishment after they swam in an old stock tank. A neighbor, Mrs. Hanock, had witnessed them removing their stockings, and she thought that was quite immodest, so she told Hallie’s father and “got up a petition to make us put our stockings back on.” Hallie did not elaborate on her punishment, but instead wryly noted “that’s when I disgraced the family.”390 Boys appeared more likely to face corporal punishment, the police, or even the dangerous vigilante justice still surviving in the West. Ben Parker’s encounter with a policeman after he ran away from his parents was a gentle but firm reminder of this, as the police essentially shipped him out to be productive rather than an itinerant child.391 Art Green’s encounter with a shootout served as another reminder that children sometimes entered the dangerous spaces of adulthood. He saw “the men” gathering in the wake of a racially motivated saloon attack and was nearly caught up in the fracas. Art was allowed to

389 Adams, *Three Roads to Magdalena*, 243. Adams also noted that the punishment was especially harsh since Navajo students were not used to corporal punishment at home, unlike their peers from other ethnic groups.
390 Hallie Stillwell, interview by Bill Gregg, Precious Gregg, and Ernest Speck, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Quotation from pages 15-16. They had actually removed their stockings after another neighbor saw Hallie struggling to swim, and he suggested that their heavy clothing was causing them to sink.
391 Dr. Ben L. Parker, interview by James Sweeney, February 3, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
carry a gun, but due to his small stature he had to hide them in his boots, but due to his young age “they was so heavy I couldn’t hardly pick up my foot to walk.”

Ultimately, the emotional connections forged in rural labor were sometimes undone by unresolvable tensions. For some older youths, the outside world promised an escape. When those situations intersected with abuse, scarcity, or familial trauma, children were liable to leave their families. As already noted, boys often felt remorse at this separation, or viewed it as a temporary condition. The early life struggles of Tony Lucero, a Pueblo man from Isleta, illustrated how family ties might be severed due to a precarious, conflict-filled family life. Tony detailed his issues at the various Indian schools he attended, and the poverty of his home life, before his realization as a teenager: “I was there 6 years and after 6 years I got a little more common sense, why the hell should I be over here. They only graduated them up to 8th grade, already to go out in the world, but my father and mother are poor, I got to go to work and didn’t even have a dime, the heck with them, I went out. Then I joined the army.” He left both his school and family behind to do industrial and military work. More serious transgressions, including conflict over sex, were also grounds for immediate separation from the family. Jesusita, an older adolescent still living at home, was ousted by her family for having a child without being married. She noted that “my time came, and I had a hard labor ‘cause I was scared. All I wanted to do is die…” Jesusita left because of the intense berating she suffered at the hands of her family. Her grandmother

392 Arthur and Rosie Green, Interview by Jim Sweeney, October 31, 1985, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 4-6.
393 Tony Lucero, interview by Dr. Donald Cutter and Folsom Scrivener, March 4, 1968, interview 112, microfilm 7, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
even yelled at her while she was in the process of giving birth, and her “daddy didn’t want
to do anything with me anymore. Yes, oh, they were so mad at me.”

Conflicts between children and others ran the gamut from petty to violent, and
revealed the boundaries placed upon children by the community. At times, conflict and
discipline could even disrupt the fabric of the family itself. Yet in spite of the sometimes-
harsh nature of Southwestern childhood, most interviewees remained positive about their
family experiences and relationships—even though it is common for traumatic or
challenging memories to be more easily recalled. Conflict, it seemed, was natural to
families who faced strife at all sides, and as Lillian suggested, both “conformists” and
“rebels” existed in every family.

Children’s Social Circles

Although it did not directly impact the prevalence of child labor, the social
development of children and teenagers in the rural Southwest was entangled with
children’s autonomy, education, recreation, work, and cultural expectations. It appeared
true that children had the capacity to self-organize and develop competency in relation to
one another, forming “ad hoc communities of practice” beyond the realm of any official

394 Salima Krambo, “Midwife Recalls 65 Years of Caring,” box 11, folder 1, AC 338, Living Treasures Oral History
Collection, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe.
395 This apparent dissonance can likely be explained through the cognitive process of fading affect bias, or FAB.
Under FAB, the negative emotions associated with autobiographical memories more quickly dissipate than the
positive emotions. In some cases, it may even come to pass that a negative event generates “positive affect-
at-recall” when the person remembers the event later on in life. For descriptions of this process in
oversight. However, their social worlds also included community-dictated socialization. Dances, religious ceremonies, rodeos, fairs, and similar celebrations opened up the social world of youths by attracting families from beyond the village or small town. For example, dances were public events for members of the community, and typically came in the wake of a public event or holiday, including the conclusion of the harvest. For Spanish-speaking communities, dances indicated that the harvest was a fortuitous one, and they provided an opportunity for relaxation and socialization after the hard work of the whole community. They also brought families together from across cultural, class, and racial lines. For instance, Bill and Jean Loudon, who lived south of Albuquerque, would head east to visit Escobosa for the dances. In their eyes, “the people were all very friendly. There was no racial problems at all, between the few whites and the predominantly Spanish that were up in there... everybody within a pretty good radius up there would know about it way ahead of time, and they’d all show up.”

Teenagers in particular experienced dances as socially-and-romantically-charged forms of leisure. Adilia Garcia had worked on her family’s patch of land since she was a young child, and she knew the value of relaxation when her family could find the time. She noted that after the arduous tasks of picking their own crops, traveling to harvest at the farms of other families, traveling into town to grind their wheat, and selling their sacks of

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397 For more detail on how fairs and ranches promoted contact between young men and women, see Adams, Three Roads to Magdalena, 122-128.
398 Bill Loudon, interview by Joyce Mendel, January 22, 1992, box 1, folder 12, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
beans on the street in Albuquerque, her family and many others would head north to Chimayó (quite a trek from their rural homes east of the Sandias) to celebrate as an extended community. Adilia enjoyed the dances which accompanied this and other events. However, she remembered the constant presence of her family members as chaperones, and also recalled that if a boy asked her to dance, she could not decline. Among Anglo families, dances were also spaces of socialization. For example, in the Big Bend town of Alpine, Texas, they held dances at the local courthouse. As Hallie Stillwell remembered, “we had nice dances and we had a program, you’d have a card and the boys would exchange... I always liked being cut in on. That makes you feel like a real woman.”

Despite the personal differences of opinion regarding boys at dances, both girls enjoyed the event as a form of recreation, away from the daily toil of the farm or ranch. Dances were among the highlights of rural life for teenagers eager to build their own social lives, but their existence remained predicated on agricultural labors.

Another form of social gathering which connected families, communities, and agricultural life together was the rural fair. Fairs typically consisted of livestock shows and produce competitions, rodeos and horse races, as well as other small events. These affairs originated towards the end of the 19th century and were common entertainment well into the 20th century. They served, as other gatherings did, as places to “socialize and share the latest news and gossip.” County fairs could draw hundreds, or even thousands, of

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399 Adilia Garcia, interview by Joyce Mendel, October 31, 1991, box 1, folder 9, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
400 Stillwell, interview, 16.
spectators and participants from a wide area. Children, often hailing from the local 4-H club in their county, willingly participated in many of the events held as such functions. Formalized contests at such events could take on many forms, from the livestock raising competition to demonstrations of rural home economics. The agriculturalists at New Mexico State sponsored such events regularly, and youths seemed to enjoy the challenge. New Mexican youths had some success at the regional level as well. Peering inside these events helps explain the controlled interactions middle-class adolescents had with agriculture and domesticity.

The description from one girl, known only as “Bess,” aptly encapsulated the complex social, gender, and economic dynamics at play. “Dear Sue: I’m the luckiest girl! You know I told you about that demonstration contest that was going to be at the state College, October 30. Well, I never supposed I’d be there, but mother said I could go and so I did. On the train were some club girls going down to take part in the contest and they told me all about it... We got to the college Friday night. Then on Saturday the contest came off. Three girls from Torrance County gave a demonstration on ‘Setting the Table.’ They said their club work had made it easier to help at home and work seemed more fun, too.” She then described several other demonstrations put on by the girls there, entitled “Preparing and Serving Breakfast,” “Preparing and Serving Food to Convalescents,” and “Cutting a

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402 See picture and description from the Union County, NM, fair in 1921, in Burr, Historic Ranches of Northeastern New Mexico, 122. Original picture is from the Herzstein Memorial Museum.

403 Oliver Newton, an Anglo teenager from Abbott, NM, won $500 at a national event for stock judging, held in Kansas City. Oliver considered it a “great trip and one the members of the team will always remember.” He planned to save the money for an agricultural course in college. See “New Mexico Boy Wins $500,” New Mexico School Review 6, no. 6 (February 1927): 26.
Nightgown Pattern,” the last of which particularly intrigued Bess, since as she explained, “if I could cut a gown that quick and not make a mistake, just think how much I could help mama.” After describing the awards ceremony and the names of the other girls attending, Bess ended her letter by stating that “I’m going to be a club member next year so I can do some of these things.”

From her own writing, Bess clearly enjoyed domestic work and found inspiration to help her family (and especially her mother) in the demonstrations. She also had the privilege and means to attend this event, something many poorer families lacked. Bess also seemed to revel in the camaraderie provided in this youth-centric space, sharing the experience with girls her own age. For Bess, as for other youths, this sort of work was both performative and economic, since their training was laid out for display.

Other girls also participated in dressmaking and cooking competitions, which also publicly demonstrated their domestic prowess and their preparations for the women’s sphere of motherhood. Much like the training of midwives and parteras, girls who chose to participate in these competitions were asserting a small measure of their agency and ability.

Children and teenagers, primarily boys, also participated in the physical, competitive games and challenges that their social circles offered, especially during rites of passage.

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404 “Boys and Girls Clubs: Bess Writes about State Demonstration Work,” New Mexico Farm Courier 8, no. 12 (December 1920): 14-15. I can find no other references from Bess in the available copies of the Courier, and in the absence of other evidence I surmise that she was simply an enthusiastic teenager who wanted to write to the organization, or was encouraged to do so by a relative or perhaps someone she met while at the event. It is also unclear who “Sue” is as she does not appear to be part of the staff, but she seems to be a local chapter member of the Farm Bureau who forwarded the letter.

405 The Farm Courier and other publications regularly reported on these “home economics demonstrations” throughout the year; they typically had teams of boys and girls working on separate competitions. See New Mexico Farm Courier 9, no. 1 (January 1921): 16-17. As noted elsewhere, these competitions also served a practical purpose for Progressive agriculturalists to expose children to what they considered to be “modern” techniques, before those children returned home to teach their communities.
rodeos, and fairs. Where younger children had played *El Cazador* at their farm or had fun learning to ride their donkeys, ponies, or horses, this was where growing youths introduced their talents to a wider social sphere. These events emphasized the cultural power of the symbols of rugged masculinity for both Anglos and Spanish-speakers; the abilities put on display at the rodeo were stylized forms of ranch work.\(^{406}\) A number of talented boys (and a much smaller portion of girls) found that they could make a living doing this kind of work. The itinerant cowboy Samuel J. Garrett, for example, “began his rodeo career at age 14 with the 101 Ranch Wild West Show,” and grew to be a prominent member of numerous such shows.\(^{407}\) Even children without a future as professionals could test their skills. Bill Corkery, a longtime cowboy, got his start as a twelve-year-old working with polo and show horses in his birthplace of Long Island, New York, before coming out to West Texas as a fifteen-year-old with several other cowboys after the death of his mother. He participated in rodeos out there, stating that it was “nothing to brag about. Won a few prizes. But wasn’t trying to make a career out of it because I liked horses and to be with a bunch of colts. And educating them colts was my life.”\(^{408}\) Native American children too participated in ritualized competition through the cultural calendars of their communities. These were less-discussed in available interviews, likely due to their personal, religious nature, but through practices like hunting, Feast Day dancing, and kiva rites, they too grew into adulthood along

\(^{406}\) Rodeo work, along with hunting, were expressions of what John Mack Faragher called “a habit, a style” of competitiveness, “part of the definition of masculinity itself.” This was also true among Pueblo and Spanish-speaking populations, although the form and purpose of competition might vary. Faragher, *Women and Men*, 102.

\(^{407}\) Burr, *Historic Ranches of Northeastern New Mexico*, 121.

\(^{408}\) Bill Corkery, interview by Esther MacMillian, April 27, 1982, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 1-4 and 7.
a social pathway. What made fairs, rituals, rodeos, and other large rural gatherings interesting was that they valorized and honored the agricultural and ranching skills that made living in the rural Southwest possible. Children’s participation showed that they were living up to the expectations of their communities, but these fairs also reproduced a specific cultural vision of the American West in the minds of the next generation.

Development Through Practice

Taken as a whole, the world of children bubbled beneath the surface of rural agrarian life. These were the traditions, stories, and friendships fondly remembered by elderly interviewees when asked to recall their childhoods. In particular, adults remembered their homes, their landscapes, and their family members—these affective bonds linked children and adults in intergenerational family systems. Even as the juggernaut of capital violently reshaped the boundaries of rural labor in the 20th century, children, families, and communities held on to these affective ties whenever possible. In fact, these connections were essential to the development of children into teenagers and adults—they learned how to live rural lives primarily through the instruction and modeling of their parents, elders, and community members. In often-harsh situations, emotional connections helped children understand their selves, their values, their families, and their

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409 For some examples, see Joseph H. Suina and Laura B. Smolkin, “The Multicultural Worlds of Pueblo Indian Children’s Celebrations,” Journal of American Indian Education 34, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 18-27. Suina and Smolkin pointed out that such celebrations “generally exclude outsiders” although they examined how Pueblo youths played important roles in certain dances and societies, and in other instances were sponsored by tribal members during other practices, on pages 19-20. For an example of the older school of anthropological reports on initiations and rites of passage, with an emphasis on gender and exclusion/inclusion, see Pearl Katz, “Initiation Rites and the Status of Women at Taos Pueblo,” Anthropos 77, 5/6 (1982): 889-892. The historian Pablo Mitchell wrote a chapter on the contested public spectacles of celebrations and other Pueblo festivities, including some discussion of children’s roles, in Pablo Mitchell, Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 81-100.
labors. As a result, as adults they tended to recall labors as necessities that they did without complaint and with a full heart.

Though they worked in numerous and diverse tasks, children managed to integrate their work alongside play and training. What did children do as play? They laid out scenes with rock-cows and stick-fences, they clung tightly to dolls and other manufactured toys, they sung nursery rhymes and other songs, they played games with one another, and above all else, they have (mostly) free range to run amok around their rural homes. When parents required it, they turned their attention to work and integrated it into their childhood play processes, shelling beans by trampling them underfoot or racing each other during the harvest, or any of a thousand other minor games they could imagine. A number of children managed to go into business for themselves through small, ad-hoc labors for neighbors and relatives, though few became routine wage laborers. As they grew up, adolescence became a time of heightened autonomy, opportunity, and sometimes danger. They played practical jokes on each other, pushed their boundaries, and began to attract the attention of the opposite sex. When, inevitably, children and youths came into conflict with parents, neighbors, and siblings, disciplinary practices and intra-child negotiations came into focus, often resulting in harsh but necessary lessons and even additional labor. Communities tried to structure childhood and adolescent relationships through events such as rodeos, dances, fiestas, and other communal performances. Children performed social labor at these events, dancing, singing, performing, and competing as a way to demonstrate their growing social status. Over time, however, the changing economic landscape impacted who was able to attend or participate in such activities.
Examining the lives of children in their own terms shows how central labor was to childhood experiences in the Southwest. A top-down view of child labor can never capture the contours of the child’s world; it is only by seeing them closer to ground level that one discovers the importance of work. Efforts to eradicate rural child labor could not have been successfully enacted without undermining the very foundations of Southwestern life; children made meaning through their activities, especially those conducted with relatives and community members. They also found much of the emotional, cognitive, and social sustenance they needed through direct practice, and without ready access to other opportunities, work was a critical area of childhood development. Unlike the child labor prevalent in factories, mines, and mills, children maintained and strengthened familial connections through rural child labor. At least, they did for much of the 19th and some of the 20th century. At this time, the transition for agrarian life to agricultural and agribusiness life was poised to intensify the economic activities of children at the cost of their emotional and social development. However, the practice also contended with another set of interlopers into rural families: educators, who by the 20th century believed firmly that school was the “true” workplace for the child. They held distinct ideas about child development, as the following chapter will address.
Chapter 4: Education in the Midst

Several institutions in the rural West were in constant contact with children. These institutions structured the lives of children both inside the family and within the community. Chief among them were schools, which kept in close touch with nearly all families in the Southwest. Their proximity to rural children, and their influence within communities, equaled or exceeded that of traditional institutions, like churches, during this period. In the eyes of educational reformers, rurality and race were twin signifiers of backwardness, and both were present across western Texas and New Mexico. The following chapter situates children’s interactions with the school system and focuses on how they affected children’s lifepaths. Children and families faced both communal obligations and careful choices because of education’s growing importance, but the rapid growth of schoolhouses across the plains and deserts of the Southwest did not signal the demise of child labor—instead children and families negotiated their own educational and work equilibria.

Analyzing the tensions between education and labor requires an understanding of the nascent focus on schooling that emerged within the United States from the mid-to-late 19th century, then an account of the expansion of schooling in the early 20th century—a period when child labor’s decline has been linked to school attendance increases by scholars.\footnote{See David Tyack and Larry Cuban, \textit{Tinkering Towards Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 71-72. Tyack and Cuban argued that school developments such as the junior high may have contributed, alongside other issues like compulsory attendance laws, technology, and general job scarcity. Those changes, as this chapter will show, did not have their full effect in the rural}
agreed that a publicly funded common school system was the ultimate answer,” although there were numerous challenges to the implementation of such a program.\textsuperscript{411} In some rural parts of the country, rural schooling was decentralized, and families enjoyed significant autonomy to shape the systems by participating in them, a practice which will also be apparent here in the Southwest.\textsuperscript{412} By 1890 it was increasingly commonplace for states to require “compulsory education” for young children, and this was generally seen as an effort to improve the lives of children that also took them out of the labor force. The reality was much thornier. The struggle to keep, or bring, children inside the schoolhouse went well into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. These national efforts gradually extended the age at which children had to remain in school; “most states required schooling between the ages of 7 and 14 years” by the 1920s, and by the 1930s “students were told to go to school until the age of 16.”\textsuperscript{413} That was the idealized model for the American child; they should enter school at a young age and stay until high school, at which point some would continue their education while others (especially blue-collar laborers, farmers, and the like) would enter the workforce in their late teens. The advance of this model moved in tandem with the promulgation of the maxims of Progressive paternalism into the Southwest; as one New Mexican state administrator articulated, “in practically every state of our country, it is


\textsuperscript{413} Committee on Child Psychiatry, \textit{How Old is Old Enough? The Age of Rights and Responsibilities} (New York: Brunner/Mazel Inc., 1989), 11.
definitely recognized that final responsibility for the welfare of children—including their education, physical health, and social welfare—rests with the state.”

Schools held vital positions in this political project, because for most children, but particularly true for rural children, the most frequent contact with apparatuses of the state occurred in the classroom. Although modern readers may take for granted the proximity of the state in their daily lives, rural families in the Southwest were still acclimating to this presence around the turn of the century. For indigenous children, schools additionally represented government efforts to assimilate themselves and their families to Anglo norms. As historian Cathleen Cahill and others have explained, schools became spaces where “intimate colonialism” transpired between the child and the government’s agents. Spanish-speaking youths in New Mexico and Texas also faced this Americanization effort through the enforcement of English as the primary language. Children in some parts of Texas and New Mexico additionally faced the prospect of segregated schools; Emilie Wofford, a teacher from Texas, recalled that she “had the Mexican school... the schools were segregated at the time. There was the Mexican school and the Black school and the

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415 For a discussion on the emergence of “modern New Mexico” and the efforts of Anglos, the government, and other forces to enter the lives of New Mexicans, see Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See especially his introduction, 2-7. Mitchell’s focus on citizenship, race, and color is a useful lens for studying the phenomenon that I see encapsulated here within the lives of children. I would argue, however, that the project of integrating the nation into the Southwest also affected Anglo families and children, because they also found greater contact with the arms of the government (and American culture, industry, and other forces of “modernization”).
White school... each town had[sic]... Mexican school.” Segregation, the sole use of English, and boarding schools were all part of broader sociopolitical structuring of the racial hierarchy in the West. White Americans lauded these efforts in numerous public forums, suggesting that New Mexico was well on its way regarding the “transformation of the Mexicans to Americans through the public schools.” Children, in the popular imagination of the early 20th century, were natural targets of political, moral, and social reform efforts, and schools were meant to be the catalyst for change. Thus, many educators and scholars of education have posited child labor and education as opposite poles, each competing for children’s time and attention.

School Statistics and Educational Attitudes

The following section describes the emergence of school systems in New Mexico and Texas, and the distinct attitudes held by educators and parents regarding the importance of public education. Imagining an integrated Southwest through the power of education was easier said than done. It was difficult to modernize education in the Southwest, despite earlier 19th-century efforts at the national level across the territories. A series of ineffective education laws had been passed in the territory “in 1867, 1872, and 1884,” and it was not until 1891 that the Territorial Legislature passed a bill officially inaugurating the

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417 Emilie Wofford, interview by Mary Margaret Wofford, June 15, 1994, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See page 2-3.
418 In the interests of this chapter, segregation is not discussed at length; however, consider the boarding and day schools as one form of segregation oriented towards indigenous students.
419 “Editorial: New Mexico,” The Journal of Education 83, no. 8 (February 24, 1916): 210. The writer suggested that much of this success was owed to the new administration of the Department of Education in New Mexico since statehood.
public school system. Governor Edmund G. Ross had stated during the lead-up to the 1891 bill that only a quarter of the New Mexico territory’s forty-thousand school-age children even attended schools. Following years of contestation and debate, engagement with the new law moved slowly. In Texas, a similar process took place; although the Texas legislature had provided for the creation of urban school districts since 1875, they expanded the district system to all municipalities in 1883, and counties were further empowered to develop rural schools in the early 1910s.

Prior the turn of the century, most children received an education through one of three means: first, many children learned basic skills from their parents, relatives, or other neighbors, second, some well-to-do children had tutors or private teachers that their families hired, and third, some children received education at private institutions or day schools. Many of these private institutions were funded by churches and religious organizations, including the numerous missionary schools developed by Anglo Protestants in the mid-to-late 1800s. Furthermore, many of them were boarding schools, where

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423 See “Texas Education Timeline,” Texas State University, updated August 28, 2018, https://gatodocs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:27972b92-caac-48c5-9a04-baecc65647f43/Texas%20Education%20Timeline.pdf. In 1915, Texas also re-implemented a compulsory education law, which it had previously rescinded in the 19th century.
424 For more information on Protestant education and school-creation, see Juan Francisco Martinez, “Origins and Development of Protestantism Among Latinos in the Southwestern United States, 1836-1900,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1996), 26, 30, 62-69. For the Protestants of the mid-19th century, “education and evangelization were almost synonymous terms,” as they believed that they provided an alternative to the Catholic influence of local schools in New Mexico.
families sent their children away from home in order to receive their education.\footnote{425} Later on, this chapter will describe the emergence of Indian schools, which were similar in some respects to other boarding and missionary schools.

As Progressivism and new laws about state-sponsored education took hold in the West during the early 1900s, state authorities in Texas and New Mexico supervised a rapid expansion of rural schooling. By 1925, New Mexico’s Department of Education paid out just under 2.5 million dollars to run the state’s rural schools alone.\footnote{426} Among those rural schools, the state had approximately 806 single-room schools, another 287 small elementary schools, and a small handful of larger elementary schools, high schools, and mixed-grade schools. Eighty-five percent of all rural public schools in New Mexico were one-room schoolhouses or elementary-only schools.\footnote{427} These statistics hopefully provide a glimpse into the state’s educational structures. For most rural families across the forty

\footnote{425} This was common among families with money; subsistence households could not afford to board their children. See the example from Fabiola Cabeza de Baca in this chapter.

\footnote{426} Here is a further breakdown of the total cost of rural schools in New Mexico. “Maintenance expenses” including teacher salaries, supplies, and utilities cost New Mexico $2,071,675, administration at rural schools cost $115,679, other associated costs including repairs and bond interest cost $176,209, and improvements to school grounds and construction cost $95,845. See New Mexico State Department of Education and Isabel Lancaster Eckles, \textit{Report of Public Day Schools: 1924-1925 Term}, (Santa Fe: New Mexican Publishing Corporation, 1926), 14-23.

\footnote{427} NM Department of Education, \textit{Report of Public Day Schools}, 44-45. Rural schools like these often had only one teacher to handle all the students. The memoir of Bertha Ann Kothmann described the size of her schools; as a student, she was in a rather large school with close to 50 students but only one teacher, and after she became an elementary teacher herself in the mid-1920s, she taught in Kimble County at a tiny school with twelve students. Her sister Frances was also a teacher, and taught the same students after Bertha moved to another schoolhouse. See “Bertha Ann (Wootan) Kothmann,” and “Frances Alberta (Wootan) Nelson,” in \textit{Families of Kimble County, Vol. I}, Kimble County Historical Commission (Junction, TX: Shelton Press, 1985), 408-409.
years from 1890 to 1930, schools were within reach, but they were overwhelmingly small, poorly equipped, and lacked facilities for secondary education at any substantive level.\textsuperscript{428}

Of course, these numbers remain incomplete without an exploration of children, enrollment, and attendance. This consistent issue agitated educators throughout the region. The same data available for 1924-1925 depicted an education system facing potent challenges from family obligations, work, and chronic truancy. After accounting for the difference between total enrollment and the average daily attendance, New Mexico’s rural schools had only sixty-three percent attendance on an average day. State bureaucrats also noticed a discrepancy of approximately 12,500 children of school age enumerated in the census who were not enrolled in schools, an ambiguous problem that likely reflected many children not enrolled while also finding children who went farther afield to school in other towns or districts, or who migrated with their families.\textsuperscript{429} In some ways that number was a success, considering the daily attendance of years past. However, across other measures, the Department of Education struggled to win the war against absentee children.

It should come as no surprise that educators preferred children to be in school rather than working elsewhere. By the 1910s, national efforts to have teachers (and other public speakers, such as clergy) speak out against child labor were making limited headway into the Southwest. For Child Labor Day in 1914, local newspapers ran articles on the

\textsuperscript{428} NM Department of Education, \textit{Report of Public Day Schools}, 48, 52-53. This reality reflected itself in the rural pupil demographics—of approximately fifty-six thousand enrolled students in these New Mexico rural schools, only about five thousand were older than sixteen. In addition, the rural schools had only 757 boys enrolled in grades 9\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} and 866 girls enrolled. Compare those totals to the tens of thousands of elementary students enrolled.

cessation of child labor. The *San Antonio Light*, for instance, printed a piece from New York which recommended that teachers use the following school day to teach children to “think on their own behalf” about child labor.⁴³⁰ Later that same year, a Texas principal, speaking at the Alumni Banquet for West Texas A&M (in Amarillo), used interesting calculations to prove his point that Texan children needed to be in the classroom instead of in the field.

After providing some numbers on the total number of children enrolled in Texas schools, and the length of the school year, he proceeded to claim that between forty-two and forty-six million school-days were wasted as absences. He then argued that the cash value of those lost school-days was worth more than Texas’ entire yearly cotton crop. He asked, “Is this worth saving? What would this amount of money do?... None of these [tragedies], in actual money loss, equals what we lose by the non-attendance of our children in school... To be prosperous and efficient, educated and enlightened citizenship is the first essential.”⁴³¹

In some instances, schools would use the meager state resources at their disposal in attempts to improve their attendance. The New Mexico Bureau of Child Welfare provided such support to children and families that school administrators selected for intervention. Approximately sixteen percent of all Bureau cases in 1924 and 1925 stemmed from school applications.⁴³² This number may appear surprisingly low, but it suggests that either

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⁴³⁰ “Prevention of Child Labor is Advocated,” *San Antonio Light*, January 24, 1914, 5. This article was very forward-thinking in some respects, as it included a brief discussion of agricultural labor’s unregulated nature. A similar article also appeared as “Child Labor Day is Today,” *The Abilene Reporter*, January 25, 1914, 7.

⁴³¹ “Texas’ Greatest Loss,” *Lubbock Avalanche*, March 5, 1914, 7. The calculation here multiplied the total number of children in school by the total school days in the calendar (approximately 968 thousand children and a calendar of 135 days) and calculated the total number of absences in the state. He valued one day of school for one child at a cost of $6.36 if you included the earning power that the adult would presumably lose out on due to their lack of education.

⁴³² NM Bureau of Child Welfare, *Biennial Report 1925-1926*, 11-13. Applications from “private institutions and schools” and “local school authorities” totaled 160 for that biennium. Of the total number of cases, 50 were
teachers and administrators preferred to solve attendance and other school issues themselves, or that they lacked access to those resources.

In light of these attendance issues in both states, teachers and administrators had to bridge the gap between the stated value of education and the lived reality of widespread absences. Significant numbers of teachers, principals, and other educators seemed to rationalize the work of children as an essential part of rural life. Given the anti-child-labor rhetoric within the public discourse, which proposed education as a protection against mercenary labor practices, teachers and educators faced a difficult task in differently framing rural child labor.\textsuperscript{433} They acknowledged that rural children grew up learning about a variety of agricultural tasks at the home, and further understood that children participated in domestic production of food through the omnipresence of gardens. One educator explained that “As a rule, children in rural districts are familiar with the fundamental operations of the garden—preparation of the soil, planting the seed, and the cultivation and harvesting of the ordinary garden and farm crops.”\textsuperscript{434} For the most part, then, educators avoided discussions of exploitation and work, preferring instead the language of necessity and custom. Mary Little, a teacher at Nambé Owinge Pueblo, wrote

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\textsuperscript{433} By the turn of the 20th century this rhetoric was embedded into the fabric of child labor discourses. This dominant paradigm found expression as follows: “the wage-earning child was no longer considered to be the norm. Instead childhood was now seen as constituting a separate and distinct set of characteristics requiring protection and fostering through school and education.” Harry Hendrick, “Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: an Interpretative Survey, 1800 to the Present,” in \textit{Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Second Edition}, Allison James and Alan Prout, eds. (London: Routledge Falmer, 2003), 39. Hendrick’s articulation here is part of the British child labor discourse of the early 19th century, but I suggest that such rhetoric found its way to the United States in the latter half of the 19th century and remained potent throughout this period.

several references to her pupils’ work in her lesson plans and diaries, but did not moralize on the subject, except to suggest that the families did not do agriculture the “correct” way. Many of the teachers at the small, isolated schools of the range or the mountains had lived similar lives to their own students, and were thus attuned to the struggles of rural subsistence. For example, Manuela Solis Sager’s mother, an orphan, learned to teach as a trade in Mexico. When she came into the United States as a young teenager near the turn of the century, she continued teaching among Spanish-speaking communities around San Antonio, but saw no issue with children working. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca taught in rural Eastern New Mexico; she stated that it felt natural to her that the school year did not begin until October, after the harvest.

435 Mary Little, “Nambe School: Milk Unit, 2nd Grade,” and “Nambe School: Unit on Foods, 2nd Grade,” 1937-1938, teacher’s notes, box 1, folders 3 and 4, MSS 306 BC, Nambe Community School and San Jose Demonstration School Records and Teacher’s Diaries, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Ms. Little specifically stated in the Milk Unit that “some of the families in the valley own milk cows. However, many of the children do not have milk to drink and show this lack in the diet by their physical development.” She also dismissed the Pueblo’s knowledge of modern inventions, going into detail about the refrigerator and other food-related machinery. In her Unit on Foods, there are multiple veiled moments where Little insinuated that the Pueblo children under her care had to learn about agriculture from her, rather than their families. She also provided one annotation on a posole recipe, claiming that the students used an incorrect ingredient “cal, or lime” and substituting her own “lye.” Of course, hominy can be produced from either lye or lime solutions.

436 Manuela Solis Sager, interview by Dedra McDonald, Phyllis MacKenzie, and Sarah Massey, August 11, 1992, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.

This struggle to engage parents in their children’s rural education sometimes led to attempts at syncretism. Allene Cadawallader, a teacher in Mountain Park, suggested as late as 1940 that schools had too little practical, agricultural training in the face of rural labor needs. In order to combat the “oblivious and indifferent” attitude of rural families, she argued that schools should be “half-time intellectual and half-time motor activity” which would include proto-trade work in carpentry, farm mechanics, horseshoeing, and textiles. In her mind, families wanted school to be useful, and she even offered the school workshops for community use.438

438 Allene Cadawallader, “School, Home Cooperation in Rural Districts,” New Mexico School Review 19, no. 6 (February 1940): 14. Cadawallader considered these jobs in gendered terms—boys would do the farm repair and mechanical work while girls would learn “domestic science and art.” She did not discuss the fundamental skills of agriculture, suggesting that her students already understood those skills, and that her proposal would offer a well-rounded rural education.
On the other side of the equation, families within the Southwest had varying levels of interest in their children’s education, modulated by their lived experiences, their economic health, their cultural values, and their access to educational institutions.\(^439\) Access was particularly fraught; taxation problems, the “availability of public schools,” racism from Anglos against educating non-whites, as well familial interest in formal education were all barriers to education.\(^440\) Most interviewees surveyed by oral history projects received some manner of formal schooling, and a decent number of them had substantial education at the secondary and even post-secondary levels. Certainly, families agreed that education was a noble goal, even if it fell outside of their reach. As one interviewee explained, this happened despite the popular attitude that people coming into the West were “were penniless, were illiterate... practically everybody had an education up to the 4\(^{th}\) or 5\(^{th}\) grade.”\(^441\) Cadawallader’s proposition that practical training and education was uncommon among educators of the day, but it seemed common within family processes and “communities of practice.”\(^442\) These attitudes held true among the majority of Anglo-American and European immigrant families within the Southwest.

\(^{439}\) Scholars of childhood typically connect the emergence of education to economic feasibility; Alan Prout and Allison James noted that “the emergence of formal education and long periods of schooling as a prerequisite for children before they assumed adult responsibilities” was “initially only economically and practically possible for the upper classes” but over time this practice “diffused downwards through society.” James and Prout, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, 16-17.

\(^{440}\) West, *Growing Up With the Country*, 188-189. Some parts of the West did have “surprisingly high attendance,” although West noted that urbanized parts of the West had better attendance—New Mexico and West Texas were much more rural than his examples of Idaho and Montana.

\(^{441}\) Louise and Victor Nixon, interview by Bill and Precious Gregg, September 15, 1987, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See page 24 for the quotation.

\(^{442}\) For a theoretical approach to this question, see Jean Lave’s work on situated learning, where she argued for an approach where learners start at the periphery of an activity, but over time move towards mastery and the central space. This happened in particular in practical, rather than theoretical, forms of education. Jean Lave, “Situating Learning in Communities of Practice,” in *Perspectives on Socially Learned Cognition*, Lauren B.
However, according to some scholars, the attitudes of hispanos, tejanos, and Mexican immigrants were “harder to gauge.” As the historian David Wallace Adams explained, working-class families often chose the “short-term economic value” of work, and ranchers “had little to gain in raising the educational aspirations” of their communities, but admitted that some families held a “deep appreciation for education.” From the interviews, a more complex picture emerged regarding the educational values of Latino families. Ernesto Carrejo, although he was the child of Irish and Spanish parents, believed that his community valued education. He stated, “it’s surprising how many people” attended schools even in rural places, and noted that the abundance of small schoolhouses helped. He also agreed with the idea that rural families thought “more of education than, say, people in the big cities.” It is also important to recognize that most families valued education and literacy without the schoolhouse; Maria Duran immigrated with her family from Chihuahua to New Mexico at the end of the 19th century, and although she “never stepped inside a school,” she learned to read and write from her mother and half-brother.

In truth, interviews provided important clues regarding the actual importance of education for hispano, tejano, Mexican, and other nonwhite families. For many of them, access to free public education remained limited prior to the first decades of the 20th

century. Without available schools, formal education was the purview of the elite or the lucky, and thus measuring the personal value of education among those populations was not as simple as quantifying the amount of formal education individuals actually received. In fact, it might have been reasonable for a family with a strong agrarian base to argue that education held some long-term value, but work fulfilled short-term needs and also provided practical experience, so child labor ended up being an optimal survival strategy, much to the chagrin of educators and outsiders. As noted by Elliott West elsewhere, “the family’s heavy burden of labor tempted many parents to keep their youngsters at home, at least during the busiest season.” Families making that difficult choice continued to value education as part of their hierarchy of values. That distinction was often lost on Anglo reformers, who saw the lack of education as a moral and social issue that could only be rectified via the specific mechanisms of nonsectarian, Americanized educational systems. The differences of opinion suggest that there was no singular consensus on the value of education for Southwestern families, and the following examples will underpin the fact that school remained a negotiated choice for families and children well into the 1930s.

Making Attendance Choices

It is vital to understand what decisions families made regarding the education of their children, including their available educational options, their family environment, and their reasoning. In some cases communities came together as groups in order to manage schooling, but in other places families were constantly at odds with their teachers. Every set of parents made this choice differently; some included their children in the process,
while others did not. The following examples are meant to demonstrate the diversity of educational paths in the rural Southwest.

Families with financial means had the easiest path to education. They often seized the opportunity to send their children away to school, or to hire private tutors. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, prior to her stint as a teacher, lived at her father’s ranch during the long summers but always headed back to the town of Las Vegas for school as autumn approached. She wished she could stay on “the land that I loved” but her father dutifully drove her the 100 miles to school in his carriage. This practice was also common among wealthier white Americans. Julia Nail Moss recalled several governesses who made their way through her ranch home during the Depression. Elliott Phillips, the son of a rancher in northeastern New Mexico, spent his vacations and breaks on their Cimarron ranch or on their land in Oklahoma, but was sent to a preparatory school as a young teen. Some families sacrificed and saved in order to educate their children, but it was a difficult balancing act. H. B. Birmingham recalled that his parents had to hire a governess for his younger siblings after the graduation of their older children from the local school. Their family and two neighboring families previously had enough children to request a one-room schoolhouse; as H. B. retold it, “if you had uh, attendance of... eight a day,” New Mexico would help build a local school. Another white family, the Winslows from Texas, “valued

446 Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, 134. She was the daughter of a prominent hispano family in the region.
447 Julia Nail Moss and Dr. Ernest Speck, interview by Bill and Precious Gregg, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 15 and 16.
449 H. B. and Margaret Birmingham, interview by Carol Pittman, April 10, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. See page 45.
very highly” the education of their children, but keeping a tutor or governess to teach them all was untenable due to the age gaps between their children.450 Boarding children with the school or relatives was not always desirable or possible, but it happened with regularity among well-to-do families.

Other rural families relocated so that the children could receive an education. When their economic situation allowed, family members rented homes or moved near the closest town or city. For those with the means, a second house was constructed in town.451 John and Delia Grant managed to send their seven children to school in Alamogordo by moving the entire family to town during the winter season. Grant had experience moving families, as he ran a homesteading real estate business. Still, the strain of this movement appeared to take its toll on the family, as they stopped moving between their homestead and the town by 1908, when John “returned to his various occupations in town.”452 In the early 1930s, Leborio Castillo’s parents split their time between a ranch in San Ignacio and a school in Mangas, New Mexico. His father remained on their ranch while Leborio and his mother borrowed a house near the Mangas school so he could attend it.453 Cleofas Jaramillo also intended to follow her daughter to the “academy school in Albuquerque,” where Cleofas

450 John N. Winslow, interview by Mayon Neel, November 11, 1986, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
451 Adams, Three Roads to Magdalena, 176. Here, Adams explained that “many ranchers” near Magdalena, NM built homes in Magdalena so their children “could acquire a proper education.” His example comes from the late 1910s.
452 Lori S. Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other: Ranch Life on Lands Now Administered by Holloman Air Force Base (Holloman AFB, NM: Civil Engineer Squadron Cultural Resources, 1997), 103. John made his money in a variety of businesses, including farming, real estate, and selling/trading cattle, but farming was his least successful enterprise.
453 Leborio Castillo and Placida Padilla, interview by Carol Pittman, April 3, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
had promised to rent out her house in order to stay in town with her daughter. However, financial strain and uncertainty prevented the family’s move to Albuquerque and the continuation of Angelina Jaramillo’s boarding school attendance. In her work, Sarah Deutsch also suggested that women had a particular stake in the education of their daughters, and would exert their family influence in order to make school possible. She stated that “one Hispanic woman moved into town with her daughters, telling, not asking, her husband,” so that her daughters could be educated and become literate.

Many families in the Southwest could not afford those options. What they chose instead was to continuously negotiate a balance between school and work as their living situation changed. This complex process depended on the cultural attitudes of family members, their economic situation, as well as the hopes and expectations of their children.

As a rule, children’s labor was less essential during the spring and winter, so many children attended school during those seasons. However, during the summer and fall, planting and harvesting required intense, time-sensitive labor, and children were called in as part of the labor force. In some places, families banded together in order to manage school and work as a collective unit. As the Collins sisters recollected, local ranch families in their

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456 For an understanding of the seasons and harvests, rural families relied on sources such as newspaper crop reports. One good example is “Weekly Crop Report: Good Rains all Over the Country, Crops Looking Fine,” *The Eagle* (Silver City, NM), August 28, 1895, 2. This report provided information on the growth stages of major crops such as corn, wheat, and alfalfa, range conditions, and weather/precipitation from various farmers and specialists across the state. Other newspapers also had short reports in a similar format, including the *Raton Range*’s “Folsom Flashes” and the *Industrial Advertiser*’s “Weather and Crop Bulletin.” Even without dedicated sections, the local news portions of newspapers often had briefs on weather, crops, and ranching, like those from the “Little New Mexico Items” section of the *Colfax County Stockman* (Springer, NM).
region were loath to lose numerous days of school for their children; they either harvested in the afternoons and weekends, or on time-sensitive occasions, the farmers would congregate and “would agree to stop school for one or two weeks so that harvesting could be done en masse.” Elsewhere, families would simply take their children out of school, or keep them home, in order to work on pressing family needs. Emilie Wofford saw this practice in action during her teaching; she had the older Mexican children help her teach the younger ones, and never gave the older children homework because “there was no use in sending the books home because they wouldn’t do their homework anyway because they had to work after they got home... that was the problem... they had to work on the farms.” She also explained that although attendance was “compulsory” there were recurrent issues with absences when farms were busy, so she tried to “catch up” those students when they did attend. She had little power to change the opinions of families, so instead she worked around their intermittent school and work schedules.

Families sometimes tried to manage the education of all their children as a unit, with some children taking time off of school so their siblings could attend school. The Aguayos of the Carrizozo area utilized such a system for their numerous children. For example, one of their older boys, Ernest, stopped attending school in the 1920s after eighth grade, when he “started cowboyin’” on behalf of his father. He noted, “I had to help him. ‘N’ let the younger kids go to school.” Other scholars have noted that families commonly employed

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458 Wofford, interview, 3-4.
459 Ernest Aguayo, interview by Beth Morgan, June 14, 2001, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
this “family strategy” where certain children would “sacrifice” their education so that the younger ones could continue attending school. Yet other families managed to keep all their children in school by spreading the workload around. Ernesto Carrejo and his siblings all attended nearby schools; in order to manage he hinted that his numerous brothers and sisters all helped operate the ranch. They likely partitioned the work in a manner that did not interfere with school hours. During his interview, Ernesto explained that skipping school was not an option for his family; the interviewer commented that “Boy, if they didn’t Mama and Papa would, uh, change their ideas. Right?” to which Ernesto agreed.

Some children made the most of their limited opportunities and persisted in their educational efforts despite numerous challenges. Dr. Ben Parker was born on Christmas Day in 1902, in a town south of Dallas. His grandfather, the head of the family, had been a successful lumber dealer in Eastern Texas, but wanted to move further west. Ben, his family, and their herd of cattle moved westward, grazing where they could, selling cattle along the way, until their luck ran out and a snowstorm obliterated their herd and left the family reeling. Ben’s grandfather attempted several other moneymaking schemes during those years, and Ben had finished the third grade. At that point eleven-year-old Ben and his brother ran away from home after Ben’s father died and their mother remarried. He worked at various jobs for several years before he returned home to Runnels County, in West-Central Texas. After another period working on ranches and doing other agricultural

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461 Carrejo, interview, 24-26.

462 Previously they had 825 head of cattle, but after the storm only 148 survived.
work, Ben finally wintered with his family and had an opportunity to go to school. He felt comfortable in school “due to [his] wide reading, which [he’d] done when [he] was in the cow camps,” and successfully tested into sixth grade while also working with his stepfather’s cattle. At the age of 16, Ben had a middle-school diploma, had won his grade’s state Spelling Bee, and was looking for ways to further his education. At that point the family moved back with Ben’s grandfather, and he picked up where he had left off at a new school. However, the weather once again interrupted their lives—in January of 1918 a massive snowstorm threatened their livelihood, and Ben’s stepfather pulled him out of school in order to help herd and protect their sheep. In negotiations with his teacher, Ben was able to continue attending classes if he returned to school within a month or so. All of his work eventually paid off, as Ben was able to use his savings to attend Clarendon College, east of Amarillo, and later get his Master’s Degree from Phillips University in Oklahoma.\footnote{Dr. Ben L. Parker, interview by James Sweeney, February 3, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See his recollections scattered across 1-7, 23, 30-31, 36, 39-41, and 45-46. His title of “Dr.” came from an honorary Doctor of Laws degree he received through a chiropractic college he was an administrator at in Texas.}

Ben and his family took a circuitous route through Texas, so he sought out education and knowledge whenever and wherever it was available. Ben was an exceptional child, but many children in the West kept up with their education by reading anything they could find, including periodicals, magazines, and literature, and access to such materials was fairly common.\footnote{See comments on reading and literacy by West, \textit{Growing Up With the Country}, 180.}

Other individuals had less autonomy when family obligations loomed; Martin Vigil from Tesuque Pueblo attended school until his father died, at which point his new
caretaker, his uncle, decreed that Martin’s schooling was finished. In his words, “after my father died, I didn’t go to school anymore. No, my uncle told me my daddy left a lot of field for me to plant... I cried cause I couldn’t go to school. My aunt tried her best too, she is telling [his uncle]... you better let him go, it is important.” However, Martin did not return to his school. When asked about similar opportunities he was unable to take, he stated that in his community, “in those days you can’t answer no” when a family member or elder gave a command. 465 Another woman, Margarita Garcia, remembered her parents’ struggle to subsist; she never asked to attend school rather than work.466 Even among individuals and families with ample elementary and middle-school educations, leaving high school in order to work remained common well into the 1930s. H. B. Birmingham, as noted above, had many opportunities for education, but he quit his senior year of high school after his father “lost his shepherder” and needed his son to work.467

Children who lacked the means to attend school nevertheless expressed their hopes to receive education. Within the Ellis family, as briefly noted in Chapter 2, Paul and Charlotte worked together as a team because their parents/grandparents were sickly. In the winter of 1908 Paul hoped to attend school, and he shared that with Charlotte, but their

465 Martin Vigil, Interview by Dennis Stanford, May 20, 1970, microfilm 11, interview 645, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
466 Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 140. She argued that “the alternative to child labor was starvation” for many families. However, I think her analysis of school vs. work cannot be taken to be representative of the whole, as my other sources show that most children of the early 20th century had some education. It is probably best to think of child labor as an interrupting force in the lives of children rather than a wall which prevents any possibility of schooling.
467 Birmingham, interview, 47-51. New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Oral History Project. H. B. had owned his own sheep as a high schooler, but his family relied on hired hands to manage the flocks. After the loss of a shepherd, they had to adapt their labor situation. H. B. took it in good cheer, as he stated that the sheep business “was a better business” than cattle ranching, and he understood the market.
diaries mentioned nothing that might have come from his attempt. The closest he got to school was when he traveled into Albuquerque to sell produce next to the Menaul School. Adilia Garcia, also from the eastern Sandias, faced similar issues. She had attended a local village school up through eighth grade, but since her family was too remote, she had no access to a high school or even a bus route to a high school. At the same time, her father passed away from a head injury, and she likely had enough work to take care of at home, as she expressed in her interview. Carmen Velazquez, a Mexican immigrant, shared a similar experience as a child across the border in Mexico. Although she tried to find tutoring on the farm her family worked, she never received an education. When asked by an interviewer about that experience, she sarcastically exclaimed “¿Cual escuela?” Adilia and Carmen’s experiences came in the first few years of the 1930s, yet remained linked to the same rugged conditions and family issues conspired to keep both them and Paul out of school.

Some families took any chance they could to take their children out of school. The reasons differed for each family, but these absences hint at the ways families thought about the relative importance of schooling, work, and relaxation for their children. Lucille Harwell vividly remembered her father’s hunting and fishing excursions, because he often went to

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468 Charlotte Ellis, diary, 1908-1909, box 1, folder 5, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Although the diary fragments do not explain either way, Paul likely had some education (probably some primary grades) from his younger days, but his hope to return to school was not realized.

469 Adilia Garcia, interview by Joyce Mendel, October 31, 1991, box 1, folder 9, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Adilia typically cared for her siblings and cooked while other family members did the farm work.

her school and took her out of class so she could tag along. These father-daughter trips were one part work, one part “vacation.” While they hiked along the banks of the Nueces River, Lucille carried some of her father’s equipment, including his fishing pole, his gun, and his “game sack” where he “put quail and all that.” When asked about her feelings on these trips, she stated “I loved it. I always liked to go. I liked to get out of school.” In some ways Lucille and her father were outliers. It remained uncommon for daughters to go on hunting and fishing excursions with their father. It was also rare to leave school and not immediately get to work. In the words of the Collins sisters, “months of summer away from school were anything but a vacation for us.”

Indigenous Education

Children from the Pueblos also faced the balancing act between school and labor, but their experiences differed from those of their Hispanic and Anglo-American neighbors. The government had paternalist interests in indigenous children’s schooling across the Southwest; education was a tool of acculturation and Americanization, while leaving them to work at their communities was perceived negatively. These efforts began after the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887, as the development of contract schools, and later, government-administered schools, occurred across the end of the 19th century. There

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471 Agnes James and Lucille James Hartwell, interview by George Hartwell, April 26, 1970, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See quotes from Lucille on pages 17 to 19.

472 Daudet and Roberts, *Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon*, 34.

473 Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 42-45, 52-53. Contract schools were meant to avoid the “problem of patronage” and were run by charities and religious groups. This system ended in the wake of Protestant protests against the inclusion of Catholics in the system, and by 1893 the government controlled the appointments of educators and administrators in these schools. Cahill also described the government’s objective for the Indian Schools—to turn children into forces of “social reproduction within families” that would lead to the acquisition of American values and norms by the family. For an example of school
were three educational strategies developed by the BIA—education performed at day schools near reservations, the practice of boarding children close-to-home, and the more distant boarding schools, where children went to Carlisle School in Pennsylvania or any of the twenty-odd other institutions. In New Mexico, two boarding schools arose out of these circumstances. Unlike the private boarding schools favored by wealthier non-indigenous families, these schools were free, harsh, and sponsored by the state. The Presbyterian church, with a contract from the government, developed the first school in 1881 in Albuquerque, and it took up permanent residence in 1884. In 1886, the Bureau of Indian Affairs took over the school from the Presbyterians. The U.S. government oversaw development of the second school in Santa Fe in 1890. These schools had significant reach and large pupil populations; the 1928 Meriam Report noted that the Albuquerque School had 838 enrolled and the Santa Fe School had 505 students. In addition to the boarding schools, day schools on or near the Pueblo reservations continued to project Americanization efforts.

No Pueblo child could remain ignorant of the government’s intrusion into indigenous lives, although families, communities, and children did have some agency to negotiate their narratives from a unique Indian School, see Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to our Grandmothers’ Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2000).

Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 55-56.


Unlike boarding schools, Students did not live at day schools, although the teachers and staff still had an intrusive interest into their cultural activities due to their proximity to the Pueblo itself.
educational pathways. As a result, Pueblo children had complicated relationships with their local schools and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. One Cochiti man remembered his Pueblo’s local day school; “there used to be just someplace where our house is, just across there there [sic] is a house there... right there they taught us...” When asked about the quality of his teachers, he recalled that “we have a lot of teachers but they change every year or they quit every year... they didn’t stay just... a few of them.” Later as a teenager he was sent to the day school in Santa Fe, but continued to face challenges because he and his family were Spanish speakers and knew little English.\footnote{Anonymous, interview by Martin Murphy, March 29, 1969, microfilm 7, interview 204, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Spanish was a problematic topic within New Mexico and some Texas schools during this period. To wit, one author, L. S. Tireman, wrote an article for the\textit{Journal of Education} entitled “New Mexico Tackles the Problem of the Spanish-Speaking Child,” \textit{The Journal of Education} 114, no. 3 (November 3, 1931): 300-301.} This sort of discrimination worsened for children who only knew indigenous languages; Simon Ortiz explained that he and his community spoke Acoma, and that he faced “outright threats of corporal punishment, ostracism, and the invocation that it would impede our progress towards Americanization.”\footnote{Quoted in Margaret D. Jacobs, “Indian Boarding Schools in Comparative Perspective: The Removal of Indigenous Children in the United States and Australia,” in \textit{Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences}, Clifford E. Tratzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 217.}

Many indigenous children attended school away from their reservations—this was done as part of the BIA’s efforts to eradicate Native American lifeways and instill “American” values into their pupils. For most families and communities, this meant the forcible removal of their children.\footnote{This happened to indigenous peoples across the United States, but hit the Southwest particularly hard due to the large Native Americans population. It happened to many children, including the father of John Belindo—his father was forcibly removed from his home in Chinle, Arizona and sent to Fort Defiance in the}
Schools meant that students were not removed as far afield as the children from reservations in other states. These communities confronted rigid ideologies which valorized discipline and religion; teachers hoped that their lessons would turn hispano and indigenous children into morally upright adults. Their harsh methods often provoked backlash from their pupils, whether that was misbehaving at the school or disavowing religion later in life. Other forms of resistance took place when communities and families made attempts to bring their children back so they could help farm and herd, although these undertakings were often of little avail.

Children at these boarding schools faced rigorous discipline, a military-style regimen, and copious chores at the school. Agnes Shattuck-Dill, an Isleta girl, recalled having to clean around the dormitories, the older students cooking in the cafeteria, as well as the "industrial" and agricultural labor that students performed in order to learn trades. One man from Picuris Pueblo who attended the Santa Fe Indian School remembered similar chores. He stated that his cohort of students would “go to school in the day half a day”

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1920s, where school administrators changed his last name and sent him to the Phoenix Indian School. See John Belindo, interview by Margaret Szasz, December 8, 1971 and February 11, 1972, microfilm 6, interview 854, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

483 One example of this struggle is found in Manuela Solis-Seager’s family. Her grandmother was very devout, but her father disliked some of the practices that his mother-in-law demanded of Manuela and her siblings. Manuela, later in life, fell out with the Catholic church after being questioned by a priest about being either an “Indian” or a “Catholic.” See Manuela Solis-Seager, interview by Dedra McDonald, Phyllis MacKenzie, and Sarah Massey, August 11, 1992, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.

484 Margaret D. Jacobs, “A Battle for the Children: American Indian Child Removal in Arizona in the Era of Assimilation,” Journal of Arizona History 45 (2004): 30-62. See the example of Warrto’s family on 55; he attempted to bring his sons back during the summer of 1926 because he needed them to farm and shepherd the family’s flock. The boarding school denied the request.

485 Isaiah Montoya, “Remembering the ‘Pueblo Training School’”. These trades often included animal husbandry, dairy work, and other rural labors. Of course, the schools appeared to emphasize cattle and dairy rather than sheep or goats, animals more familiar to rural Pueblo children but less valuable to the state.
then “work half a day labor,” doing work in the kitchen, bakery, and dining room. He also recalled the wide variety of tasks that students learned; he preferred plumbing and shoemaking but ended up taking numerous agricultural lessons. “Farming they used to do, farming they used to change us around. Change every, I don’t remember, 15 days or two months. Change every, I change divisions, pick up all the trade that was there, like farming, gardening, poultry raising, alteration, milking cows, dairy, and all that... it used to be industrial, that is what I wanted. To set so that I could be industrial.”

Furthermore, government and educational efforts encouraged the production of American-style gardens within the Pueblo villages, so that children could repeat and practice what they learned at school, in the hopes that their parents would adopt some of their habits as well.

Educators designed rigorous training methods in agriculture, domestic service, and industry so that Pueblo children could conform to Anglo-American norms of propriety, gender, and race.

Children at younger grade levels also had to do many of these tasks. San Juan Pueblo’s Indian School provided a deep viewpoint into the lives of its own students through the creation of an educational book, written by a former teacher as well as her pupils. The short work, School Days in San Juan, was developed by Rhoda Tubbs, a teacher at a school on San Juan Pueblo; she utilized her own students’ writings and illustrations from Santa Fe.

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486 Ramos Duran, interview by Lonnie Pippin and Donald Cutter, September 25, 1968, box 18, interview 39, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

487 The Agricultural Extension Service coordinated efforts to have children start gardens among people at places like Taos Pueblo. In 1924 and 1925 these efforts produced over seventy gardens run by children, and in the eyes of the agent, this helped revitalize garden work among the adults as well, as the agent counted nearly “fifty true ‘home gardens” among the families. “A Child Shall Lead,” New Mexico Extension News 5, no. 17 (July 1925): 3.
Indian School art students in the book. put into print in the 1930s, and designed for use in Indian School elementary grades, it remained a fascinating look into the experiences of indigenous schoolchildren themselves. The book opened with a description, not of the cultural practices of the pueblo, but of its labors. It described what a pueblo was, then immediately discussed the work of building corrals, leatherworking and tanning, pottery, wool combing, and spinning, providing that “Indian children of San Juan did some of these same things at school.” The entire work is a series of short sentences, describing the work activities of the children at San Juan, with notable attention paid to the gender of such work. They described the creation of a corral, which required the boys to hammer stakes into the ground and saw the ends. The girls were seemingly not allowed to do this work, since it clearly articulated how many boys it took to do each task, so instead the girls practiced their clay work by making toy animals for the corral. Then the students discussed how they tanned a goat hide and a cowhide, soaking it, scraping it, rubbing soap and animal brain into the skin, stretching it, and drying it. This work took place over “many, many days,” and would be used to make moccasins. The girls primary contribution to the book came when they discussed their preparation of wool for weaving; they had to wash it, rinse it, clean out any particulate matter, card and smooth the wool, before they could begin spinning it. The book ends by describing how a hen took care of her eggs and chicks, but including practical information such as what they eat, how they should be cared for, and

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488 Rhoda Tubbs and Rose K. Brandt, School Days in San Juan: The Story of Child Life in a New Mexico Pueblo School (Lawrence, KS: Students in Printing & Haskell Institute, 1936). The by-line on the cover noted the authors as “Indian Children and Rhoda Tubbs.”
489 Tubbs and Brandt, School Days in San Juan, 1-2.
490 Tubbs and Brandt, School Days in San Juan, 4-6, 7, 10, 14-16.
when to provide water. Though the prose was simple, straightforward, and had been edited by Anglo educators, it was clear these children knew such labors intimately. They saw them in their home lives, and practiced them at their school as a form of both cultural and vocational training. These schools developed such skills in their students because they felt that Pueblo children were well-suited to these labors and would be expected to contribute to the care of animals, the processing of raw goods, or the creation of marketable wool and pottery products.

For some Pueblo children lucky enough to have the option, school was a choice. Former pupils remembered the stories told by other children as a major deciding factor. Jose Toledo stated, “I went voluntarily there, and they didn’t force me to go and then the kids that were there told such exciting stories about movies every Saturday night and this government gravy and beans, you know, and how they drilled and that there were many other Indians besides Jemez... I didn’t know what it was like to be homesick.” Despite his initial enthusiasm, Jose grew listless at school—he attended Albuquerque Indian School for fifth grade, then went to a local day school at Jemez for the following grades, before returning to Albuquerque for ninth grade. He only stayed there for about four months, then left school for a period, before returning to Albuquerque for several more months and ending his schooling.492

492 Geronimo Fragua and Jose Toledo, interview by James P. Romero, March 1-2, 1970, microfilm 8, interview 446, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Jose Toledo, born in approximately 1914, was a pupil in these schools during the 1920s through the early 1930s.
As a whole, indigenous communities faced more pressure to place their children in school than rural Anglo, hispánico, tejano, or Mexican communities did. The expectation from educators was that the children would receive intensive vocational training, with special emphasis on domestic crafts for girls and manual labor for boys. Both sexes, however, participated in chores and farm labor. Though these schools often couched such work under the umbrella of “industry” it was clear that these were rural children, prepped for the limited rural economies of agriculture, livestock, domestic service, or Native American craft production. The state in effect mandated that these children attend school, yet they remained within the productive realm of child labor anyway.

Schools and the Community

In the face of numerous challenges to Southwestern education, schools developed into important institutions for communities. In many regards, educators and community members were implementing a similar blueprint to the one set forth by noted education scholar John Dewey in 1897, when he decreed that “I believe that... the school life should grow gradually out of the home life; that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home” and also argued that “I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life.”

Although few would have read Dewey’s remarks, their held the same spirit. They provided opportunities for socializing, promoted local values, and in some cases directly contributed to the prevalence of child labor within their communities.

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Parents in the surrounding farms and ranches typically knew the teachers and understood their contribution to their children.

To both parents and children, schools were sites of socialization. Children met neighbors and played, while adults used the schoolgrounds for meetings. Schools were also often sites of religious service; Ruth Pipkin and her son recalled that in the early years of the 1900s the local Methodist church of London, Texas would meet in the schoolhouse on Sundays. The school in Ancho, New Mexico began life as a four-room school, but was also used as a church and later as “a community building where they have church and other functions.” Though schoolhouses were sparse and small, they were some of the only community buildings in rural parts of the West, and communities provided labor and monetary donations in order to create these spaces. The historic schoolhouse seen below was first built in 1899 then later moved and repurposed as a schoolhouse in 1916, as parents and community members in the rural county provided supplies and labor.

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494 Fabiola Cabeza de Baca recalled her Anglo neighbors using the local school for religious services, Sunday School, prayer, and other gatherings. In her words, “this was not only a religious ceremony, but also a social gathering. The women brought food, and after services the families spread out their victuals and all ate together. The congregation then separated into neighborly groups, exchanged gossip and then went home to get ready for another week of toil.” She also described the “dancing groups” that also appropriated the schoolhouse for their parties. Cabeza de Baca, *We Fed Them Cactus*, 151-152.

495 *Families of Kimble County*, 304.

496 Janice Gnatkowski, interview by Jane O’Cain, November 16, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. See page 19 in particular.
Teachers became sources of social authority among the children and, by extension, their families. Educators of the time acknowledged this privileged position; Dewey enthused that “every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant.”\textsuperscript{497} The noted reformer Mabel Carney explained that “in the first place, the position of the teacher as a director of children requires that she be at least something of a leader... moreover, people turn to the school as a center of authority... [the teacher] is in close and varied contact with them and on the same level... the teacher is the director of the one community institution in the neighborhood, the only all-inclusive community institution society affords.”\textsuperscript{498} The importance of communities in determining their own


\textsuperscript{498} Jensen, With These Hands, 165-166.
school situation and teachers changed during the 1930s, as school consolidation brought increased administrative oversight to schools, especially in Texas. Despite these changes, “rural schools” maintained their status as “community centers,” and communities continued to have a close relationship with their teachers and schools.499

Southwestern schools served their purpose for rural communities by gently encouraging school attendance while still reifying the position of agricultural work in rural life. They provided clear examples of its economic power, its moral value, the necessity of hard work, and instructed their children in all manners of farming and ranching. Children internalized these values and lessons in complex ways. During the formative years of the 20th century organizations such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America made inroads into the rural Southwest. In the thirties such Anglo-majority clubs could be found at many high schools in the plains of Texas, and elsewhere.500 Gerald Lyda spent his childhood on the Edwards Plateau running the local 4-H group as a student; his dream as a child was to become a Texan rancher.501 Other children found that school labor provided a physical and moral education. One boy from the Texas Mexican Institute of Kingsville, Arnulfo Rodríguez, gave this impassioned statement to campus visitors: “Tex.-Mex. is doing for me more than I am able to tell. It is here where I am learning the “better way” of doing things. When I first came... I had to wash one day, iron the next, grub and cut wood another, or do

500 Ainsworth, “Chronicles: Lubbock County Schools.”
501 Lyda Family Ranch, interview by Laurie Gudzikowski, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See transcript pages 34 and 35.
whatever [Dr. Skinner] told me to do. Then I took the milking course... When I first came to Tex.-Mex., I was in the second grade. Now I am taking Bible, General History, Spanish, Algebra, American Literature, Latin, Shorthand, and Typewriting, having taken Geometry last year. And also, I could not understand the Bible as well as I do now... In a word, Tex.-Mex. is helping me to grow physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially.”

In their limited time at the schoolhouse, communities expected teachers to offer a moral education conforming to local values. Education specialists like Dewey had called for similar reforms to prepare students for the “practical duties of later life.”

Child labor remained a potent tool for developing “character” in the pupils. However, for all the high-minded idealism about the power of education, schools across the Southwest also used their pupils for janitorial and maintenance purposes. The examples drawn from indigenous boarding school experiences were among the harshest, although chores and related work happened across most rural school districts. Educators tasked hispano, tejano, and white children with tedious, menial, and necessary chores. In many cases, local families and children literally built, cleaned, and maintained their own schoolhouses and classrooms. At the school where Fabiola Cabeza de Baca taught, she ordered the children to help her “clean the schoolhouse” at the beginning of the school year; they washed furniture, cleaned windows and floors, organized the schoolyard, and

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503 John Dewey, The School and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1907), 25-27. This section is likely one of the updates Dewey made, since the work was updated several times over the 1900s. Dewey believed that children needed such education because it held their attention as well as provided essential training that they may not have received in the home. Dewey focused on urban families in the U.S., though perhaps his ideals filtered through to rural educators. Regardless of the root cause, practical education was a component of many rural schools, though it was more a supplement for home-based training in such practical endeavors.
even cleared nearby brush of rattlesnakes. Stella Polk, a rural teacher who taught at Hilda and Fly Gap, Texas, also remembered her pupils having regular chores. Stella recalled that the sons of a neighboring family, the Flemings, would go over to the school in inclement weather to light and stoke the fire before school began. Her older male students also helped bring water buckets back from the nearby stream to the schoolroom. The Collins family also worked, indirectly, for their local schools—Lula and Ruth’s father contracted to run the school bus, but the children were often in charge of day-to-day operations. This practice was not unique, as older boys also transported younger children to school and back in the years prior to accessible bus services, and other families hosted the bus driver in their homes. In a few instances, children even participated in the disciplining of their classmates; a story handed down within Cleofas Jaramillo’s family described how her grandfather’s religious school would line up all the children, “and the two pupils having the highest marks in their class were given a little stick. With this stick they went down the line hitting the hands that had not been washed and the heads that were uncombed.” Children’s chores at school survived well into the late 1930s in some locales, as educators and Parent-Teacher Associations in larger villages began to develop

504 Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, 156.
505 Stella G. Polk Interview, interview by David LaRo, May 1, 1992, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 5-6 and 24-25 for Polk’s description of her teaching from the age of 16 onwards, as that was the age one could take the Texas teacher’s licensing exam (in the late 1910s when she was a teenager). She even noted that some of the older boys were around her age.
506 Daudet and Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon, 114.
507 Jerry R. Davis, Barns from the Land of Enchantment (Tijeras, NM: Artemesia Publishing, 2012), 62-63. A friend of the author, Dean Salas, remembered his father’s stories about how he “used one of his father’s horses and a small farm wagon to drive around” and pick up local children in the town of Abo, New Mexico. This example is likely from the early 1940s, but the same conditions existed for many rural schools in the decades prior. For the driver hosting example, see Gnatkowski, interview, 19.
508 Cleofas M. Jaramillo, Shadows of the Past/Sombras del Pasado (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1941), 29.
their own school lunch programs. These programs relied heavily on parent and child labor in their own schools in order to operate; in one early lunch program at Atrisco school, west of Albuquerque, the “eighth graders offered to wash dishes” and the “fifth grade boys offered to carry water” for the younger children’s lunches.\footnote{Adolfo Chavez and Belle Zillmer, “Free Lunches in the Atrisco School,” \textit{New Mexico School Review} (January 1940): 16-17; “PTA Clippings,” \textit{New Mexico School Review} (January 1940): 17; Adolfo Chavez, “A Study of the School Hot Lunch Program in New Mexico” (Master’s Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1941).}

There is little direct evidence to explain the prevalence of children’s school chores as part of a cohesive pedagogy. Furthermore, it seemed as though few parents or educators thought twice about using the children as laborers. This absence suggested that parents, teachers, and other authority figures felt it was perfectly reasonable and normal to utilize the labor of youths in their care. Children sometimes groused about this work, but again, nothing suggested a widespread disdain for these additional chores. Their labor formed an integral part of informal systems of social reciprocity among rural people and their institutions. In return for providing education, guidance, and structure for the child, they were sometimes tasked with labors which the institution required. This speaks to the larger cultural norms that abounded in the rural Southwest—in the absence of a labor surplus, a strong government apparatus, or a widespread availability of funding, communities bore the brunt of the maintenance costs for all communal benefits.\footnote{See previous discussions on the maintenance of acequias for further examples of this.}

Education as Complement, not Replacement

Taken as constitutive parts of rural communities, it becomes clear that schools were deeply entangled with the patterns of rural labor and family life. In the 19th century these
territories were sparsely appointed with local academies, most run by religious or private institutions. They were places like Cleofas’ alma mater, the Loretto Academy, Victorian institutions filled with children of the hispano elite, driven by piety and class status to educate those deemed worthy.\textsuperscript{511} By the early 1900s, schools were becoming public institutions, though they were yet to be standardized, fully funded, or bureaucratized. Well into the 1930s there remained many one-room schoolhouses attended to by a single teacher, usually a young woman who lived with a nearby family. They were the apostles of education, a national trend that would transform the lives of children, sprung from the minds of advocates like Dewey and his Progressive supporters. These pedagogists were reforming older models of education, attempting to focus on culture and curriculum, activities alongside lecture, an emphasis on the “project method,” and advocacy for schools as community centers.\textsuperscript{512} But such transformations are never as neat and straightforward as their advocates would suggest. The conditions of schools in the Southwest testified to this; they faced shortages of supplies and qualified teachers, they had little administrative support, and they were in fact creating something new in the Southwest. Realistically, there was no public education already present in the territory of New Mexico or in rural West Texas that could simply be “reformed;” in order to bring the region up to the standards set by education elsewhere, educators had to condense the timeline of educational development into only a handful of years, creating uneven development and

\textsuperscript{512} Adams, \textit{Three Roads to Magdalena}, 245.
sudden shifts for farm and ranch families, not accustomed to seeing the school as a natural part of their children’s lives.

Therefore, children and families reacted to the increasing pressures of public education with interesting familial adaptations. Some parents determined that education was an absolute necessity, so their children went to local schoolhouses, stayed in larger towns with relatives, or received tutoring at their home. Other parents negotiated a mix of education and work, where their children left school early, came to school late, were absent during harvests and other periods of intense labor, prioritized farm work after school, or in rare instances even demanded the school remain closed during certain periods. The sacrifices to allow children to receive an education were doubly challenging, as most rural children had to find their way to school; “parents of these children paid twice, once to board or transport their children and again by losing the young workers’ earning power.”

If a successful compromise could not be found, or schools were prohibitively difficult to access, due to financial, spatial, linguistic, or cultural issues, then children remained at home, working.

This complex process of negotiation revealed that families forced educational ideologues to confront their lived experience. Nearly every family believed in education, though it competed with immediate economic needs. It also faced challenges due to age—without multiple teachers or grades, the single-room school could not effectively educate older students; those same students were also under the most pressure to join the

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workforce permanently. The style of education available in the early 20th century also competed with cultural and traditional models of family life, as made apparent in the history of Pueblo children as well as the history of English-only education. If education had been the sole aim of those institutions, families likely would have offered little resistance. However, schools were also part of state and federal Americanization, which intruded into the lives of nonwhite families. Competing ideas about children and education sparked debate and resistance across the Southwest.

In many ways educational institutions and educators themselves provided a social, intellectual, and moral education that complemented children’s lives. In return, communities obligated their children to perform work and chores in the service of the teacher. These bonds were most tightly ensconced (and perhaps most visible) within hispano and tejano communities, but Anglo-American and Pueblo families also recognized these implicit systems. Rather than functioning as a force which sought to drive children out of the field and into the classroom, schools found a compromise with families that allowed children to continue working well into the 1930s. This agreement would ultimately come to benefit thousands of rural landowners, ranchers, agricultural businesses, and food corporations in the period. Unlike industrialists, who were quickly losing the ideological war to keep children employed in factories, these interests found ways to utilize the extant idea that child labor was “good” for the child in order to perpetuate new uses and abuses of family labor systems in the name of agricultural markets and capital.
Agricultural and livestock production in the U.S. Southwest underwent a gradual transformation across the first third of the 20th century. The industry rapidly advanced in the early years of the 1900s, driven by the availability of capital, opening markets, new technology, government activities, and other phenomena, changed the lives of rural families as they grappled with the changing economy. By the 1920s, agricultural overproduction and other issues weakened the economic position of laborers and small landowners, and the tragedies of the 1930s loomed in the distance. Child labor’s preponderance in the Southwest remained stable despite these rapid changes, and in fact, it meshed quite well with agribusiness interests at times. U.S. Census data from 1910 suggested that three-fourths of all working children were engaged in agriculture, and by the latter part of the 1930s most child laborers continued to work in agriculture.\textsuperscript{514} At the local level, families took these developments in stride, rearticulating their long-standing, family-centric labor strategy: “children who were old enough did the work of a man. Wives helped; most could do everything their husbands did, plus raise children and chickens and do household chores. Many hauled drinking water and helped with other daily tasks, such as carrying wood, milking, feeding animals, and gathering eggs. Young children helped with whatever they could, because even their economic “responsibilities came early…”\textsuperscript{515} Yet


this continuation of centuries-old labor practices faced subtle but undeniable shifts in the face of agribusiness development. Responsibilities became more onerous, hours grew longer, and economic circumstances destabilized.

The following chapter will explain how industries, communities, and families managed the conceptualization and utilization of child labor during a period of intense shift—the move from agrarian modes of production to industrial agricultural modes of production, from roughly the turn of the century into the 1930s. By necessity, it places an emphasis on technical and labor developments, the rise of cash crops and larger markets, and the divergence of distinct agricultural sectors as those processes related to children’s ongoing labors. During this period the conditions of farming and ranching changed without undermining the profitable and traditional labor norms that included children as laborers and helpers. What did change was the fact that families and children increasingly worked under wage labor, piece-rate, and similar conditions for the benefit of large industrial agricultural, livestock, and dairy corporations.

Farm Organizations and Rhetoric

Before closely examining the developments that created a new regional agriculture market, or how that market impacted children’s labor, it is helpful to briefly examine the existence of agricultural organizations and their child labor rhetoric. These groups historically served as mouthpieces for business interests throughout the United States, and they were also present in the Southwest. Despite falling from their heyday in the late 19th century, when they were a potent political force across the South and West, these organizations (and their descendants) continued to hold a prominent place, especially
among majority Anglo communities.\textsuperscript{516} They shaped the discourse surrounding children on farms and ranches, with some organizations spearheading limited attacks on rural child labor while others promoted it as a valuable form of practical education. Regardless of the side these organizations found themselves on, they did not target rural child labor as a whole. Their views on gender, race, scientific principles, and issues of economic development marked these organizations as Americanized, Progressive agriculturalists, in opposition to subsistence farmers and others they generally saw as traditionalists.\textsuperscript{517}

It is impossible to quantify how influential these organizations were, but they had ready access to the public via magazines, newspaper editorials, and sponsored events or speeches. Their approach to rural child labor meshed well with local attitudes in New Mexico and Texas. The public, including many Southwesterners, did not recognize the transformative shifts occurring in agriculture throughout the early 1900s. Even as the consensus grew that industrial labor was harmful to children, many still saw farm and ranch work in halcyon, moralistic terms. Arguments about children’s suitability for agriculture resonated with both lower and middle-class attitudes; as the historian Viviana Zelizer pointed out, “farm labor... was almost blindly and romantically categorized as ‘good’ work” in the early years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. This opinion formed an “influential cultural

\textsuperscript{516} For an example of their political clout during the last years of the 1800s, see Worth Robert Miller and Stacy Ulbig, “Building a Populist Coalition in Texas, 1892-1896,” \textit{The Journal of Southern History} 74, no. 2 (May 2008): 255-296. See in detail their discussion on 257-258 which describes the difficult task of contextualizing Populist power in Texas relative to farmers. See also their link between Populism and the Farmers Alliance on pages 265-266. The organizations that I am discussing here lacked the political force that earlier iterations had, but they still advocated positions which benefited the farmer and rancher in narrower, less incendiary ways. This meant dipping their toes into the debate over child labor.

\textsuperscript{517} There was organizational precedence for this attitude towards agriculture from the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, although the relationships between scientific agriculture and rural farmers remained difficult to spot. For more on the subject, see Charles Postel, \textit{The Populist Vision} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
consensus” which held sway even among reformers of the period.\textsuperscript{518} Most farmers’ organizations promoted this attitude at the same time they promoted a technical approach to agriculture. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, these organizations helped to maintain children’s economic value within the rural Southwest.

For example, when such organizations did denounce the use of child labor, they did so in vague histrionics which focused on narrow forms of unacceptable labor (especially in racialized and gendered terms). Some members found common cause with Progressives through their views on gender and labor when they attacked the sight of white women and girls in the fields; Peter Radford, a lecturer with the National Farmers’ Union, bluntly deemed women working in agriculture to be “the chain-gang of civilization” and decried the approximately four hundred thousand girls below the age of sixteen who engaged in farm labor. To Radford, the nation could not sit idle while their “daughters are raised in the society of the ox and the companionship of the plow.”\textsuperscript{519} Radford framed the issue as a challenge to family values and propriety but remained mum on the particulars which caused this “chain-gang” to develop. Others admonished the presence of women and children in the fields while simultaneously arguing that modern American agriculture did not require women to work in agriculture, a patent simplification which ignored the fieldwork of thousands of nonwhite women in the West and the South. A New Mexico newspaper

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\textsuperscript{518} Viviana A. Zelizer, \textit{Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 78-80. Zelizer’s commentary on when reformers began to seriously investigate rural child labor is true at a national level, but I hold that such forms of child labor remained part of a Southwestern “cultural consensus “well into the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.
\textsuperscript{519} Peter Radford, “Nation’s Labor Problem: Over a Million and a Half Women Work as Farm Hands in the United States,” \textit{Penasco Valley Press} (Hope, NM) November 27, 1914, 2.
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focused towards ranchers, the *Colfax County Stockman*, ran a full-page article entitled “Women who Work in the Fields,” which decried the work of women farmers in other countries while stating that U.S. women did so because of “personal preference” and did not “savor of drudgery.” This article, in contrast to the previous one, argued that “nor is the American farmer’s wife or daughter misled by the fallacy that she is not doing her share if she does not perform manual labor in the fields under cultivation.”\(^{520}\) This argument examined work done in the fields, conveniently ignoring the realm of rural domestic and garden work done to support male agriculturalists.

Reformers who did look into domestic work often noted that women bore the brunt of this labor and diminished the role that children played in home chores. For instance, the Commission on Country Life, sponsored by Theodore Roosevelt, opined in their report that the “the success of country life depends in very large degree on the woman’s part,” and they felt the effects of household stress most acutely. However, in the same section they also noted that most women kept the home tidy through the “kindly cooperation on the part of husbands and sons”\(^{521}\) This kind of discourse was at once sympathetic yet also patronizing of the role of household work. As a general rule the opponents of child labor on farms focused on narrow understandings of this work and did little to explain or understand why children worked on the farm or ranch.

Even articles from the government-sponsored publications of the Farm Bureau and its county organizations tended to avoid the question of why children were required work

\(^{520}\) “Women Who Work in the Field,” *Colfax County Stockman* (Springer, NM) July 8, 1911, 2.

on the farm, while simultaneously promoting an “acceptable” form of children’s farm work through their boys and girls clubs (also known as 4-H). These Farm Bureaus of each county were organized and supported by their national organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation, as well as the Agricultural Extension Service and land-grant universities; more pointedly, the Bureaus helped spearhead the development of technical, industrial agriculture by disseminating knowledge and attitudes to farmers across the United States.\textsuperscript{522} Bureaus’ efforts were sponsored by banks, railroads, and companies that directed funding to efforts under their jurisdiction, including but not limited to the expansion of 4-H club activities.\textsuperscript{523} For example, over the course of the year 1920 approximately eighteen-thousand dollars were loaned out to youth organizations in the state of New Mexico in order to support their livestock practices; “as a result of this work, 475 registered bred gilts and 177 calves, 30 of which were registered, were secured. Three hundred acres of crops are being grown, 195 members are engaged in poultry work, and 982 girls are engaged in some phase of home work. A total of 2,069 boys and girls are engaged in this

\textsuperscript{522} For a detailed description of the emergence of the Farm Bureau’s, as well as their local importance, see Nancy K. Berlage, “Organizing the Farm Bureau: Family, Community, and Professionals, 1914-1928,” \textit{Agricultural History} 75, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 406-437. Berlage argued that these Bureaus succeeded because they were “mediating national, local, and familial interests” in ways that helped the farmer understand the new world of agricultural production which was emerging.

\textsuperscript{523} For example, railroads in the Southwest developed “Farm Demonstration Trains” alongside Extension Service personnel. These trains carried farm machinery, kitchen implements, conducted experiments for farmers to watch, and literature on scientific farming principles. These were used during the interwar period, and regularly attracted thousands of onlookers in Texas and nearby states. See Victor H. Schoffelmayer, \textit{Southwest Trails: To New Horizons} (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1960), 27-30. For archival sources on these trains, see Demonstration Trains Collection, boxes RR 401-RR 406, Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company, Agricultural Development and Publicity Office, Kansas Historical Society.
demonstration work.”524 Agribusinesses insinuated themselves into the lives of children through marketing an emphasis on children’s education, rather than their economic utility.

Led by prominent county landowners and businessmen, these groups spoke obliquely about child labor; they couched such work in familiar terms, stating that it was part of the child’s agricultural education, rather than productive labor in itself.525 Furthermore, they too delineated acceptable versus unacceptable work for children on the farm; one small article encouraged farmers to purchase typewriters, which would benefit the farm by making them appear more professional in correspondence or other business interactions. Understanding the limited literacy of many rural farmers, even in the 20th century, the article writer helpfully suggested that their children ought to take over this part of the farm; “by conscientious practice the boy and girl on the farm may become experienced typists and at the same time handle the business for their father.”526 Another article targeted towards mothers with children emphasized that children could work on farms by doing work but should not be burdened with more than “two hours of ‘chores’ outside school hours, not enough work in either school or out to cause fatigue,” and that work done during the summer “must allow ample opportunity for the proper amount of rest and recreation.”527 Taken in the abstract, these recommendations seemed quite tame,

525 Other organizations also followed this model; see the existence of the Farm Boy Cavaliers organization of the Midwest, as detailed in Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, “Farm Youth and Progressive Agricultural Reform: Dexter D. Mayne and the Farm Boy Cavaliers of America,” Agricultural History 85, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 437-459.
527 “Are the Children of New Mexico Getting a Square Deal?” New Mexico Farm Courier 8, no. 9, (September 1920): 11-12. This article stemmed from advice by the national Children’s Bureau as well as work done by women in Chaves County in conjunction with a “home demonstration agent.”
and were not an admonition against the “reasonable” use of child labor. What was reasonable, of course, remained up to the family. What these examples from both the national and local level showed was an acknowledgment from farm organizations that child labor was morally questionable while at the same time obscuring the tendencies of rural industries towards using children as secondary or tertiary laborers.

There remained a political line of reasoning within these organizations which suggested that children’s work ought not to be regulated at the state or federal level, and most groups were happy to publicize their opinions during times of national discussion. One prominent national advocacy group for this position was the Farmer’s States Rights League, which posted lengthy advertisements railing against child labor regulation in newspapers across the country, including the Southwest. In the December 9th, 1924 edition of the *Albuquerque Journal*, a curious piece appeared. Posing as an editorial, this article consisted of a reprinted piece originally published in the *Farm Journal* of Philadelphia; it included numerous personal attacks on proponents of the 1924 Child Labor Amendment and appeals to individualism and family. In reality, the piece was part of the FSRL’s propaganda efforts, but its argument appealed to (primarily) white Westerners who mistrusted the increasing reach of government and who believed in the salutary effects of children’s farm and ranch work. The next year, other Albuquerque residents joined in the debate on the side of the FSRL and other organizations. F. E. Wood, an Albuquerque attorney, spoke before the State Bar Association, stating that less than 3.5 percent of

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528 These guidelines also gave latitude to older children or children who might attend school infrequently.  
children in New Mexico worked, and those that did were not in “objectionable” occupations. Wood even lauded the growth of cotton across the region, claiming that cotton picking was a “light outdoor work well suited to children” which supposedly did not interfere with school.530

It is important to note that these farm organizations did not speak to everyone equally. The reality was that these organizations, including 4-H, remained directed towards white American children and families. This sort of practical education of farmers and ranchers was meant to promote the next generation of landowners through the dissemination of both moral and scientific content. In this worldview, nonwhite children would grow up to be workers, rather than owners, so educating them in the technical principles of agriculture was not a priority for such organizations.

In fact, some Spanish-speaking populations of the Southwest attempted to develop a counter-narrative which demonized the industrialization of rural child labor. More broadly, this developing argument attacked the conditions of such work, not the existence of children working, signaling an acknowledgment of the traditional usage of child labor in hispano, tejano, and Mexican households. During the mid-1920s, the National Child Labor Committee released a public report on “Child Labor Among the Cotton Growers of Texas.” This report was quickly made available to the Spanish-speaking populations of Texas, where it made an impact. La Prensa of San Antonio reprinted the NCLC’s press briefing in Spanish with a stunning headline that suggested the children were essentially slaves; the NCLC

argued that children, half of whom were under 12 years old, were “peones regulares” and that children worked up to eleven hours a day during the cotton harvest, which could last upwards of two months. Interestingly, they laid the blame on both landowners, who exploited the children, and families, who did not understand the value of education or the predatory system of credit which kept them working. The piece ended with the refrain, “la pobreza se perpetúa por sí misma.” Unions created other critiques within their broader labor agitation, although agricultural unions were scarce across the Southwest, and those that arose among nonwhites were often put down by white authorities. The NCLC and others did not explicitly make much reference to Spanish-speaking children in their pieces, but the racial subtext of cotton work would have been abundantly clear to tejano and Mexican readers; the fields were spaces where nonwhite children were overworked and exploited. Yet the practices persisted because there were few other economic alternatives, and because agricultural interests were successfully able to maintain a public discourse centered on the “good” sort of farm and ranch labor.

531 Esther Lowell (translated) “En Algunas de las Finca Agrícolas del Oeste se Esclaviza a los Niños,” La Prensa (San Antonio, TX), June 5, 1925, 5. The comment about peones regulares, or regular workers, was meant to counter the common narrative that children only worked in emergency situations.

532 This translates as “poverty perpetuates itself.”

533 For example, a prominent but short-lived Mexican and Mexican American union in Texas, La Asociación de Jornaleros, organized an onion-picker strike on the border in Laredo, but the police arrested its organizers and ended these efforts between 1934 and 1935. The union went on to become part of a new agricultural union which Texas authorities also repressed. See F. Arturo Rosales, Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997), 121. Some minor discrepancies in date and outcome exist between Rosales’ account of the union and the depiction from “Heritage of Texas Labor,” Texas American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, updated April 9, 2018, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.texasaflcio.org/heritage-texas-labor. For further examples, see the description of sugar beet worker agitation from hispanos and Mexicans in Colorado during the late 1920s and 1930s in Sarah Deutsch, No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 166, 170-173. Deutsch did not note any explicit commentary from unions towards child labor, although one of their efforts, raising the wage per acre, would have helped the boys who traveled with their fathers and older male relatives to pick beets.
Southwest Agricultural Growth

Given the rhetoric surrounding child labor during this period and the willingness for officials and reformers to turn a blind eye to agricultural work, concrete statistics on the number of children working in rural agriculture remain difficult to locate. However, other markers of industrialization, including mechanized farming, changing political relationships, new crops, and larger farms all highlighted an intensification of agriculture. Schools and communities were not preventing children from engaging in agriculture, as previous chapters demonstrated, so it stood to reason that children continued to labor under agribusiness models.

One key indicator of the transformation of local agriculture and ranching into a national market was the advent of new forms of transportation. The ability to move goods rapidly was a major driving force for growth in the agricultural sector during these decades. Over the turn of the 20th century railroads inaugurated including large-scale freight shipping and refrigerated cars, which quickly spawned the attendant phenomena of land speculation and boosterism, quicker communication, and connections to faraway markets. By the dawn of the 20th these developments could not be ignored by rural communities. The advances of the automobile by the 1910s further accelerated these trends. As one author noted about the power of rail, “the processes of agriculture, manufacture, and transportation [are] vital and essential to the social organization.”

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534 For an example of automobiles and the farm industry see “Solution of Transportation Problems Seen in Motortruck,” La Estrella (Las Cruces, NM), November 5, 1921, 5.
Where new transportation options expanded into new towns and penetrated rural spaces, people and money followed.\(^{536}\) As Tom and Alma Long recalled, their sleepy plains village of Paducah, TX changed forever in 1909 when the trains came through. Prior to the train, it had been a ranching community, but once the opportunity presented itself “several men became speculators and began advertising land here” and soon enough it had transitioned into a farming community, oriented towards livestock feed and cotton crops.\(^{537}\) N. H. Pierce also recalled his adolescent awe at the development of a rail line out to rural Menard, TX; several years later his family came to Menard, buoyed by the promises of profitable farming.\(^{538}\) Their optimism existed in marked contrast to the problems that other youths saw due to boosterism, which will be shown later in this chapter.

Besides spurring the growth of towns and their hinterlands, new transportation methods eroded older traditions such as the cattle drive. These hallmarks of western stock-rearing slowly phased out as railroads (and later automobiles) became the preferred method of taking livestock to the market. Although “trailing” continued into the 1930s,

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\(^{536}\) For examples of railroads promoting growth, see the analysis of grain and meat markets in the Midwest in William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992). For other examples, see the growth of the mining industry, another market which required cheap freight prices to ship bulk resources, and how it created secondary and tertiary growth across the Great Plains, in Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 323-326. West argued that rail connections to the Rockies during the latter parts of the 19th century made it “possible to see history telescoped... the change was so fast that it was easy to overlook the new order’s intricate connections to the past. Counties were not imposed; they were ushered in.” For a recent and novel approach to the interactions between railroads and farming/ranching in the early 1900s, see Kevin S. Amidon, “The Visible Hand and the New American Biology: Toward an Integrated Historiography of Railroad-Supported Agricultural Research,” *Agricultural History* 82 no. 3 (Summer 2008): 309-336.

\(^{537}\) Alma and Tom Long, interview by Hardy and Sarah Cannon, December 5, 1989, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Pages 12-13, 19-20.

\(^{538}\) N. H. Pierce, interview by Mayon Neel, November 10, 1986, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
trucks were emerging as an efficient alternative, especially for smaller stock like sheep.\textsuperscript{539} Trains and automobiles reduced transportation costs for farmers and enabled them to sell their crops beyond the regional market.\textsuperscript{540} The transition to these forms of transport altered the conditions of the family’s labor without necessarily reducing the amount of labor required of its members. The farmer who was used to selling to local buyers now had to deal with unscrupulous railroad agents and faraway purchasers. Children who had previously driven wagons or guided carts for their families sometimes became truck drivers on behalf of their family.\textsuperscript{541}

On farms, mechanization meant an increase in the acres any given individual could plow and work. The proliferation of mechanical equipment led to the intensification of agriculture across the region.\textsuperscript{542} For crops such as cotton, studies at the time demonstrated

\textsuperscript{539} Janice Gnatkowski, interview by Jane O’Cain, November 16, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. The Gnatkowskis continued to drive their cattle when Janice was in high school, but when they had sheep they used trucks. When she returned to the ranch after WWII, her family used trucks for the calves as well.

\textsuperscript{540} William Cronon’s analysis of wagon-and-horse trade is instructive here; he stated that farmers in the Midwest before the advent of trains “could not make such journeys often, and that limited the entire economy. Furthermore, because farmers could carry only small loads in [wagons], the costs of wagon, horses, and driver consumed a sizable portion of any money they earned. Wagons offered few economies of scale, and so set well-defined limits to how far one could afford to travel in them.” Cronon, \textit{Nature’s Metropolis}, 59.

\textsuperscript{541} Fred Ponce’s teenage sons, for example, drove his supply trucks once he opened up his pasta factory in El Paso. Fred R. Ponce, interview by Fred Canales, January 1, 1983, interview 630, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. Pages 6-7 of the transcript. For an example of children helping drive wagons as part of the family’s combined efforts, see Mabel Noble, interview by Esther MacMillan, July 9, 1981, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Pages 5-7. Recall from Chapter 2 that her aunt Hannah had experience driving wagons and had done so during a family emergency.

\textsuperscript{542} These types of equipment are still on display at many local museums. The New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum holds antique tillers, harvesters, and tractors, and the Tucumcari Historical Museum has tractors and balers on its grounds.
a steady increase in both sales and usage in the Southwest during the 1920s.\textsuperscript{543}

Mechanization directly contributed to the debt incurred by smaller farmers. Many of them felt that tractors were necessary investments in order to turn a profit, but those same tractors burdened families with hundreds or thousands of dollars of debt. The New Mexico Extension Service promoted the adoption of tractors beginning in the late 1910s, arguing in one article that “This farm labor shortage [from World War I] is being met in practically all the western states by turning to tractor farming. In New Mexico itself the number of tractors in use has increased, materially during the last year, and the outlook is that their use will continue to grow by leaps and bounds. The tractor is a piece of farm machinery that has come to stay.”\textsuperscript{544} Several years later, the same magazine reported on a youth trip to Chicago, where several boys visited an International Harvester corporation factory. They reported that at least one boy was so affected by the trip that he “came home filled with ambition to stock his father’s farm with up-to-date equipment.”\textsuperscript{545} Families with limited means could not hope to compete with tractors, nor could they purchase their own, so in effect this technology functioned as a push factor, moving families away from their own farms and towards wage or piece-rate labor.

\textsuperscript{543} This scholar indexed the sales figures for tractor plows and harrows versus horse-drawn versions of both tools; in the “West South” region all forms of technology were being sold at higher rates in 1929 than they were in 1925, but tractor-drawn tools rates showed a fast adoption of the technology. For example, tractor plows were selling at an index number of 568, as compared to an index number of 110 for horse-drawn equivalents (in effect, the rate of sales increased by 468% for the tractor-drawn plows, versus a ten percent increase from the 1925 numbers for the horse equipment). The author noted that “in certain areas, particularly in the Southwest, large acreages of cotton are now being produced with tractor equipment... land values [in the Southwest] have doubled and trebled in the better cotton growing localities.” P. H. Stephens, “Mechanization of Cotton Farms,” \textit{Journal of Farm Economics} 13, no. 1 (January 1931): 28.

\textsuperscript{544} “Farmer’s Week,” \textit{New Mexico Farm Courier} 6, no. 2 (January 1918): 8.

\textsuperscript{545} Meeting of Third National Club Congress at Chicago,” \textit{New Mexico Extension News} 5, no. 1 (January 1925): 3.
A second major alteration of the Southwest had been taking place since the turn of the century. Water, the fundamental limitation created by the arid environment, had to increase in availability if the region would ever become a commercially significant part of the U.S. agricultural system. In 1902 the U.S. passed the Reclamation Act, which allocated funding and administration to water storage projects across the West, including on the Rio Grande. This model of federal dam-building (despite some hiccups) came to fruition for farmers in both New Mexico and Texas with the development of dams such as Elephant Butte in the 1910s. As water supplies increased, demand also rose in turn. In response to the increased availability of irrigation water, speculators and local towns advertised their lands, promising grandiose agricultural potential—during the creation of Elephant Butte Dam, El Paso boosters had wanted to increase the amount of lands covered by the project. They had tried to add nearly 100,000 acres “of fringe land” despite fears of over-allocation. Optimism about the transformative power of water was not limited to regions irrigated by federal projects. Across West Texas in the 1920s and 1930s, far from the river, land speculators made other types of dubious water claims, stating with conviction that “the climate had changed from dry to wet.” This marketing elided the fact that good rainfall would not fundamentally alter the climate conditions.

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would still fool hundreds of small landowners across the region. Though still beholden to the aridity and terrain of the state, agriculture intensified where water was available.

Figure 16 U.S. Bureau of the Census, New Mexico: Location of Irrigated Land, 1949, map, Historical Southwestern Maps, Map and Geographic Information Center, University of New Mexico. The map below shows the fruits of these irrigation developments by the 1940s, with small dots representing 500 acres and large dots marking 5000 acres of irrigated land.
One other change which precipitated economic growth in the Southwest concerned developments across the U.S. and Mexico. As examined in brief within Chapter 1, The long-term processes which created modern agribusiness and simultaneously shifted the ground under rural families’ feet were felt on both sides of the Rio Grande. As historian John Weber explained, the development of U.S. capital-and-labor-intensive agribusiness would not have happened without the struggles occurring in Mexico. While he argued that “the economic and demographic development of South Texas” across this period “resembled Porfirian Mexico to a striking degree,” divergences emerged during this time. In the U.S. agribusinesses were growing larger and seeking out low-cost labor through immigration, while in Mexico the Revolutionary government attempted to solve long-standing land inequalities through the creation of ejidos, where agrarian families would hold usufruct rights to agricultural communal lands. These connections, which were in some regards quite old, were plainly visible to many border communities, especially as the flow of immigrants from Mexico into the Southwest increased during the 1920s, in the wake of labor shortages in the U.S., the continuation of the Mexican Revolution, and the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. Over the 1920s, this practice greatly increased the presence of immigrant Mexican families within the region, coinciding with the marked

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551 The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, provided strict immigration quotas from places outside the Americas. However, it allowed for large-scale immigration from Mexico and other U.S. neighbors, as they were considered “non-quota” countries. See Immigration Act of 1924, H.R. 7995, 68th Congress, 4 (1924).
acceleration of cash crop planting throughout the area. Over the decade, it also planted the seeds of political antipathies which would tear those families apart by the 1930s.

As a result of these economic and political factors, across the 1920s and early 1930s there was a pronounced consolidation of farmland into larger, but less numerous, farms. Some of the statistics for New Mexico demonstrate that this process happened at different rates in various parts of the state. Across the state from 1910 to 1920 the number of farms dropped by nearly six thousand, but the reported total farmed acreage more than doubled. The distribution of farms also changed, as the number of farms between 100 and 174 acres fell by ten thousand and the number of large farms, those above 500 acres, grew by several thousand.\textsuperscript{552} The following data shows several representative counties, and their average acreage per farm at various Agricultural Censuses from 1920 to 1940. For comparison with earlier decades, the national average farm size for 1920 and 1910 was roughly 140 acres, with half of that land being “improved.”\textsuperscript{553}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Acreage per Farm 1920</th>
<th>Acreage per Farm 1930</th>
<th>Acreage per Farm 1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernalillo</td>
<td>183.9</td>
<td>68.01</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{552} “Chapter 1: Farms and Farm Property,” in Fourth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920: Volume V—Agriculture: General Report and Analytical Tables, U.S. Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1922), 34, 76. Again, as noted in chapter 1 there are problems with the reliability of these tables, but they are the best available data set for determining the process of consolidation of farm and ranches. Did 13,139,612 acres of new farmland first become cultivated during the 1910s? That seemed unlikely, but the 1920 census was the first time they were counted, and it is still probable that a few million new acres became farmland due to the conversion of scrubland into ranchland, the sale of small plots to large landowners, the effects of the Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916, or increasing irrigation. Most western states, including New Mexico, Arizona, and Montana, reported huge increases in farm acreage across these censuses. Texas, on the other hand, “gained” fewer than 2 million new acres of farmland, which probably represented a more accurate assessment of the increase of lands actually farmed over time.

\textsuperscript{553} “Chapter 1: Farms and Farm Property,” in Fourth Census of the United States, 24. In 1910 the average farm size across the U.S. was 138 acres; by 1920 the average size increased to 148 acres.
These counties provide useful regional data on the divergent outcomes of land usage in across these two decades. In regions with long histories of small hispano and indigenous landowners, family farms, and village life, such as Bernalillo and Taos Counties, farms remained compact, with a relatively even balance between fields and grazing land. Parts of the state with broad grasslands were changing instead into large ranching territories, as Lea County had just over 2 million acres of mostly range, and large parts of Union County were also all ranch land. Catron County, a rugged county with mixed wooded pasture and fields of grass, underwent the most dramatic transformation, as its insignificant crop acreages in 1930 belied its quick transformation into a ranching and commodity crop hub by 1940. Lastly, Doña Ana County’s mid-size farms (a quarter of its total farmland was in crops) indicated that the Elephant Butte irrigation project were having the intended effect downstream.\footnote{U.S. Department of Agriculture, \textit{Agricultural Statistics: 1930} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936), 412-420. These numbers were tabulated from compiled census data showing the total number of farms, total farm acreage, and type of each acre for every county (and county precinct) in the state of New Mexico. Also see U.S. Bureau of the Census, \textit{Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940—Agriculture, Vol. I, First and Second Series State Reports} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1942), 334-336; U.S. Bureau of the Census, \textit{United States Census of Agriculture—1925: Reports for States, with Statistics for Counties and a Summary for the United States} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1927), 264-268.} In general, the story of New Mexican agricultural land use here

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Acres 1930</th>
<th>Acres 1940</th>
<th>Acres 1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catron</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>1,481.3</td>
<td>3,107.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doña Ana</td>
<td>185.3</td>
<td>200.4</td>
<td>269.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taos</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>105.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>948.5</td>
<td>1,338.3</td>
<td>2,389.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lea</td>
<td>2,464.7</td>
<td>3,297.7</td>
<td>3,549.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
showed that the dissolution of land grants and communal grazing prior to this period led to increased settlement, that was then followed by a process of farm consolidation among successful landowners.

The same statistics were slightly more challenging to ascertain for Texas, as the 1910 and 1920 statistics were for Texas as a whole. Isolating West Texas’ agricultural growth remained more difficult due to the small size of most Texan counties, and the fact that Texas had less “free land” available than New Mexico did in the same time frame; this sample of counties provides the same statistical data as the previous table. However, what the subregions of West Texas illustrated was the rapidly changing fortunes of farmers and ranchers during this period—although consolidation continued to occur, misfortunes, boosterism, the oil boom, changing cash crops, and other phenomena caused significant fluctuations in the agricultural land market, as represented by the ebb-and-flow of farm acreages across these three decades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Acreage per Farm 1920</th>
<th>Acreage per Farm 1930</th>
<th>Acreage per Farm 1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brewster</td>
<td>10,871.7</td>
<td>12,475.7</td>
<td>11,005.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudspeth</td>
<td>15,330.7</td>
<td>6,055.5</td>
<td>13,493.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallam</td>
<td>3,817.7</td>
<td>1,214.3</td>
<td>1,720.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>228.6</td>
<td>125.9</td>
<td>134.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instance, looking at the average acreage per farm shows that the majority of Texan farms were between 20 and 99 acres in size, a fact it shared with the other Southern states, and which set it apart from the Mountain West, where much larger acreages were the norm. However, taking that data alongside the map showing the distribution of farms across space helps show that western Texas (esp. the far west) had fewer farms compared to the dense clusters of farming in the eastern and central, more humid portions of Texas. See Fourth Census of the United States, 25, 75.
These counties in West Texas hinted at a complex story of farm and ranch changes over the decades. Most showed growth in the total number of farms as well as the total acres utilized, but the average size decreased in most counties between 1920 and 1940. Hidalgo County told an outsized tale of rapid border settlement; there, boosterism, political struggles, and the emergence of cotton, vegetable, and melon farms broke apart older farms and settlers created thousands more smaller farms, in contrast to the dominant consolidation narrative. Randall and Dallam Counties demonstrated the shifting fortunes of farms on the Great Plains, as the number of farms and ranches doubled by the 1930s before contracting sharply. Bexar County, a historically developed region, did not experience intense swings during this period, as it followed the pattern of Bernalillo and Taos counties in New Mexico, already settled by small farms and villages. Far western Texas and the southern coastal plains were where ranches made their greatest mark on the landscape. In the desert west, Brewster and Hudspeth Counties (alongside Loving, Winkler, and similar counties) had the largest average farm size because they were both dominated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1920 Acres</th>
<th>1930 Acres</th>
<th>1940 Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bexar</td>
<td>182.9</td>
<td>159.9</td>
<td>156.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall</td>
<td>1,193.3</td>
<td>770.5</td>
<td>859.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimble</td>
<td>1,808.1</td>
<td>1,574.3</td>
<td>1,504.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garza</td>
<td>996.6</td>
<td>528.4</td>
<td>645.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

by a small number of large ranches; Hudspeth in particular was already a major ranching center with a small number of total ranches, and land sales or exchanges were responsible for its massive average shift over the decades. There, from thirty-five separate operations in 1920 the county boomed to 194 in 1930 before condensing down to 140 ranches in 1940. In the far south, places like Kenedy County were dominated by a few massive ranches. The census of 1940 indicated that it had only eight “farms” in the entire county, with an average size of fifty-five thousand acres apiece. The only comparable counties to Kenedy were nearby ranching counties like Kleberg, home to one of the interviewed families herein. In essence, regions with long-standing village settlement patterns from Spanish settlement remained smaller and denser, arid and flat counties became sites for huge livestock herds, and mixed-land counties with access to water developed cash crop economies.

All of these capital-driven phenomena came at a high price for families; predatory boosters, land companies, and banks all saw the potential for profit by pushing rural families towards market agriculture and away from subsistence methods. Employers also took advantage of immigrant families and other dispossessed peoples as a ready labor source for this new regime. As a general rule, ranchers and farmers across the West felt substantial economic pressure to take advantage of these new developments, lest they be left behind. Families with fewer assets and little land access would be forced into positions where they were laborers and pickers, rather than independent farmers. Their lands, which had sustained generations of small communities, were now in the hands of industrial

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557 Sixteenth Census of the United States, 332-354. Here is the (lengthy) section on Texas county statistics. Also see United States Census of Agriculture—1925, 1110-1135.
agriculturalists. If industrialization did anything to reveal the nature of family labor in the Southwest, it showed just how fragile the long-standing labor system was, as families across the region continued to practice agriculture and ranching as part of a new rural proletariat. Land usage and consolidation data tracked the creation of three distinct agricultural sectors, related to each other but increasingly differentiated by capital investments, labor requirements, and sheer scale.

Child Labor in the Market

Essentially, several distinct patterns of family labor emerged within the sphere of agribusiness. First, there were the growing cash-crop farms of cotton and assorted fruits and vegetables. This sector created the greatest disruptions to children’s labor and most clearly transformed them into laborers, typically under the guise of working with older members of the household in a piece-rate economic regime. In many cases, as will be illustrated shortly, cash crops were promoted by corporations that hoped to have individual families run small plots, dedicated to growing a single crop. This model seemed like the continuation of family farming, but reoriented the family so that they were under the thumb of a larger agribusiness. Second, the livestock and dairy industries were also industrializing, although the nature of technology in that field meant that children continued to do the same kinds of labor that they had done in decades past. Third, there were still thousands of small family farms and homesteads, and those families grappled with privation by diversifying and intensifying their labors in any ways they could find. The following sections will emphasize the usage of child labor within the cash crop and ranching/dairy sectors.
Given the economic and social climate, it seems that employers should have been happy to hire children and teens to work for them in their fields and ranges. However, the reality of the child labor situation was more complex. Southwestern children could not easily be classified as a single population within the agricultural labor market, but rather, occupied a liminal space between several labor definitions. Caught between the opened jaws of capital-intensive agriculture and traditional modes of subsistence, families and communities made different choices, dependent on regional quirks, family economics, and the needs of employers. It is important in some ways to “un-learn” the modern lexicon of child labor prior to understanding what it meant for children to work in the rural West.

It is first necessary to point out some developments as precursors to the 20th century agricultural labor model. First, many employers during the 19th century were interested in the family as a working unit, rather than the individual laborer. Whether due to moral misgivings or economic calculations, this interest gave shape to what became known as the “helper system.” This form of labor was common among cotton mills and other factories where women did the majority of the work. This model allowed young children, those “too young to work independently,” to work alongside their mothers or older children with “minor chores.” For some employers, this was a method of acclimating children to their labor at an early age, while others believed that it served the interests of the family. Among rural Americans, the helper system was probably most visible among men and women employed to weed, plant, or harvest crops as day laborers. In many cases,

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the head of household, or at least older adults, were paid directly by the landowner, but since their pay was often tied to piece rates or completed sections, there was an advantage in bringing younger members of the family along to assist in the task. The “helpers” in this variant of the labor system were not employed directly by anyone except their family, and were generally recognized as being inferior workers who needed to learn these on-the-job skills before their teenage entrance into the workforce proper. The landowner expected that the family would provide the guidance and, if necessary, discipline for the children. Thinking about this model in the context of agriculture, it becomes clear that the employer was in part keeping the moral question of child labor at bay—since employers did not require children to work, some agency remained with the family (and sometimes with the child). On the books, this would not appear to be a system which benefited substantially from the work of children.

There is a second important truth which helped structure familial labor relations within the Southwest; families held some autonomy, relative to the authority of any single employer, in making their labor decisions during the early 20th century. This autonomy was particularly high in the first two decades of the 20th century, as labor costs were

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559 Some economic historians have even argued that very young children who worked as helpers were a net loss to the farm. See Whaples, “Child Labor in the United States.”

560 Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 30. What I suggest here does not undo the earlier arguments, set forth by historians like Deutsch, that “Hispanic villagers” had to engage with capitalist systems. I am extending her argument that many families supported a “multi-source income” model that would protect the economic livelihoods of villages and other rural communities. Families did have choice when it came to their specific engagement with capital and markets, in some ways markedly unlike the experiences of Eastern urban poor, where industrial conditions tended to narrow the field of actual economic choices. A factory worker, for instance, worked long hours, often lived within the social purview of the employer, and families were often linked together by their occupation. A migrant worker had the space to live further from the grasp of their employer, and had more mobility to move to another farm or ranch without incident.
increasing for farmers across the region (and nationally).\textsuperscript{561} Furthermore, farmers across the nation complained about a widespread “scarcity of farm labor.”\textsuperscript{562} To this end, families in the Southwest also participated in a robust migrant labor market, moving to areas where labor demands were high. For this study, it is important to recognize the dominant mode of migratory labor. Rural Southwesterners accessed this growing labor market via word-of-mouth, advertisements, anticipating seasonal harvests, and also through government programs.\textsuperscript{563} Migrant work consisted of workers moving through regions and across state lines to locations like the Colorado sugar beet fields, the Texas cotton fields, and other places in the broader region.

Racial lines also mattered during the development of various migratory labor submarkets. \textit{Hispanos} and \textit{tejanos} probably formed the largest group of migrant laborers in west Texas and New Mexico prior to the emergence of the \textit{braceros}, but people from every racial and ethnic category participated in migrant labor. Beginning at the turn of the century, the Spanish-speaking communities of New Mexico slowly acclimated to migratory

\textsuperscript{561} It was noted in the Agricultural Census that farm labor was “very difficult to secure and very expensive in 1920” while also noting that trend reversed itself, and by the Depression, it had become quite cheap for a number of reasons. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, \textit{Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930—Agriculture, Volume IV} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1932), 11-12.

\textsuperscript{562} See discussion of farm labor in \textit{Report of the Commission on Country Life} (New York: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1911), 91-95. The report was originally developed in 1909 for President Theodore Roosevelt, but the sentiment that farm labor was difficult to come by remained true until the Depression. Some of their reasoning for this was suspect, however. They claimed in part that too many farm workers saved money and moved up the ladder to own their own lands, an unlikely venture in the increasingly industrialized farm economy of the early 1900s.

\textsuperscript{563} One example of migrant advertising comes from the bilingual paper \textit{La Tuerca}, which circulated in the rural areas surrounding Albuquerque: the Albuquerque and Cerrillos Coal Company placed an ad looking for coal mine workers for their operations at Madrid, south of Santa Fe. “Trabajadores” advertisement, \textit{La Tuerca} (Albuquerque, NM), July 8, 1926, 2. On p. 4 they are looking to expand, and state that they circulate to roughly 1,000 individuals and families in the rural hinterland around Albuquerque.
labor patterns throughout the region. Immigration from Mexico created a new pool of labor agricultural industries relied on during this period. In the 1910s and 1920s, farmers in the Southwest started drawing on the labor pool of migrant Mexican workers and their families. Government interventions into the labor shortages of World War I and the Immigration Act of 1917 bolstered the ranks of the migrant labor market. As shown below, in 1920 the Department of Labor authorized exemptions for farm laborers from Mexico, to “admit alien laborers without the enforcement of the head tax and the literacy test” for the purposes of agricultural work in the “border states and Florida” as well as the Midwestern sugar beet industry. Of course, legislation meant nothing if families did not have a reason to migrate. Mexican families from rural parts of Mexico felt very insecure in their livelihoods during the first decades of the 20th century; some Mexican government officials even acknowledged the advantages of migration, including better wages, favorable conditions, and protection from the physical abuses of patrónes. As a result, thousands of them chose to take the risk and travel north into the U.S. during this period.

564 Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 31-33. Deutsch explained that the first Spanish-speaking migrant laborers were brought into Colorado in 1900 (unsuccesfully) and 1903. Hispanos were also migrating earlier for industrial occupations on the railroad or in mines.
565 For a brief overview of the context of immigration, migrant labor, and farmer’s needs during this period, see Peter H. Wang, “Farmers and the Immigration Act of 1924,” Agricultural History 49, no. 4 (October 1975): 647-652.
568 Lawrence A. Cardoso, “Labor Immigration to the Southwest,” 404.
Pueblo men and boys also moved around to work, as they faced many of the same economic and land problems faced by hispano villages during the early 20th century. Jesus
Bermejo, from Picuris Pueblo, traveled some 300 miles north to work on the Denver and Rio Grande railroad when he was young, and continued to work in the area after he left that job. In response to a question on why people left the pueblo, Bermejo simply stated that they did so “to earn money... outside I worked and earned more than here. Here you don’t earn as much money as outside the pueblo.”⁵⁶⁹ Pueblo villagers likely traveled along similar paths as the hispanos, given their smaller total population and close physical proximity. They certainly used the same pathways to places like Colorado; Valencio Garcia remembered the villagers at Santo Domingo Pueblo hopping trains as one way of traveling outside the pueblo for work and trade.⁵⁷⁰ This migrant labor market would be particularly noticeable within specialty crops.

Anglo Americans, primarily in Texas, also participated in a migrant labor market during the 20th century. Historian Neil Foley argued that white individuals and families began migrating to work in larger numbers during the 1930s; those who worked the cotton harvest faced an erosion of their “whiteness” as they were participating in a highly racialized form of labor.⁵⁷¹ Cotton used a disproportionate share of white migrant labor in the Southwest, although while families and youths could be found elsewhere; recall the story of Hubert Brewster, who worked on his own as a teenage apple picker in New Mexico, or the musings of Thelma Fletcher on white migration for ranch work, “practically all the of

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⁵⁶⁹ Jesus Bermejo, interview by Donald Cutter, September 26, 1968, interview 42, microfilm 9, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
⁵⁷⁰ Valencio [sic] Garcia, interview by Arlene Berman, April 2, 1968, interview 487, box 18, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
the young men from Floresville [Texas] migrated out to West Texas.” Among all the different ethnic groups, migration helped families optimize their earning potential, offered direct access to cash, and helped insulate the family from any single economic blow. Beyond its economic utility, it connected family members and promoted interdependence.

Cash Crops and Cotton

Amidst the preponderance of child labor throughout the Southwest, several subsectors utilized child labor for the benefit of agribusinesses. The following section explains the explosion of cash crops including sugar beets, melons, and cotton, as well as the conglomeration of massive cattle ranches and child labor practices in the dairy industry. In these subsectors, children clearly engaged in market-driven labors, starting in the 1900s but continuing across the 1930s. As noted back in Chapter 1’s discussion of land/labor systems, by the 1920s and 1930s both of these growing sectors of agribusiness increasingly depended on sharecropping, farm tenancy, wage and piece labor, and migratory labor in order to produce their goods for the market. For reference, the chart below shows how farms in New Mexico were defined according to their primary crop in 1930. Those definitions showed that most farms in New Mexico remained mixed, small, or self-sufficient (sometimes in name only, because of land leases), but there were significant amounts of cash-grain, cotton, specialty, and truck farming operations. Animal rearing, stock, and feedlot areas took up the vast majority of agricultural acres in the states as well.

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572 “Hubert and Shirley Brewster,” in Families of Kimble County I, Kimble County Historical Commission (Junction, TX: Shelton Press, 1985), 74. See also Thelma Fletcher, interview by Jane Wilmer, June 21, 1982, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See page 10.
Several specialty and mass-market crops relied heavily on family labor. Perhaps the most prominent one within hispano families was the sugar beet. Used to create sugar much like cane, but able to be produced in the cooler climates of the U.S., sugar beets have been thoroughly documented as a major migratory labor crop in the West. Much of the sugar beet production in the United States occurred outside of New Mexico or Texas, in nearby states such as Colorado, and in faraway states such as Idaho, California, Michigan, or Nebraska. Sugar beets were an “optimal” migrant labor crop because they required intense labor only at the harvest. These beets attracted large numbers of hispano families due to their proximity to the state—several of the largest beet acreages could be found in the northern Colorado counties of Logan, Weld, Morgan, and Larimer counties, accessible for
many New Mexicans via a (relatively) short 350-mile railroad trip. Children, mostly boys, went along on these labor excursions. These trips were not considered exceptional nor unusual, and some children enjoyed the travel; one example showed a student at a New Mexico school matter-of-factly explaining how sugar beets (and potatoes) were grown in Colorado, in the wake of his migrant work earlier in the year.

![Figure 18](image)

Figure 18 Robert L. Campbell, Sugar Beet Fields—Maxwell Irrigated Land Company, July 25, 1912, negative, Robert L. Campbell Collection, Raton Museum (Raton, NM). Campbell’s photograph showed sugar beets raised in New Mexico, though they were more common further north as a draw for migratory families.

The sugar beet industry’s growth also attracted capital investment from parties large and small. The field show above grew on land from the Maxwell Irrigated Land Company,

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573 For specific acreages by year, see Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940—Agriculture: Ranking Agricultural Counties (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1943), 49-50. This chart shows the top 100 sugar-beet producing counties in 1939, and also provides reference numbers for 1929. The chart shows that Colorado is responsible for a significant percentage of total sugar beet acreage, but it was losing ground to other states, including California and Michigan, during the 1930s. This would also signal a shift away from significant hispano migration and towards the use of other labor groups.

574 Mary Little, “Nambe School: Unit on Foods, 2nd Grade,” 1937-1938, teacher’s notes, box 1, folder 4, MSS 306 BC, Nambe Community School and San Jose Demonstration School Records and Teacher’s Diaries, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. The teacher wrote in her diary that “one of the children had worked in the potato fields of Colorado” and let the child discuss those crops in the context of a lesson on regional food production. That the child worked was unremarkable to the teacher.
part of the infamous Maxwell Land Grant Company. This corporation, like others across the
U.S., advertised to the public, seeking people to farm on its lands as sharecroppers. They
enticed settlers with claims such as “BUY a well irrigated FARM where you can pay for it out
of the soil in a very few years from the crop returns... land sold on long time and low rate of
interest.”

Why did this form of capital investment matter to children’s work? Historian
John Weber noted that irrigators and speculators along the Rio Grande attracted substantial
interest from prospective farmers, dubbed the “home suckers.” Many of the families
who began sowing sugar beets never saw a return on their investment and fell into debt.
According to contemporary agricultural research conducted by the National Child Labor
Committee, families attracted to new agricultural enterprises who entered into
sharecropping, tenant, or similar financial arrangements were particularly inclined to abuse
children’s labor and to prioritize work over schooling. Thus, sugar beets were a potential
trap to rural families; once they entered into a lease or tenant relationship, they felt
pressure to have everyone work in order to realize a profit. If that attempt failed, they
would have to start over, or enter the farm laborer market, which often precipitated further
child labor under piece-rate or whole-family wage systems. Of course, Maxwell and similar

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575 See advertisement in Franciscan Missions of the Southwest, Vol. 1-10 (St. Michael’s, AZ: 1913), 65. This is a
collected volume of annuals printed by the Franciscans.
576 John Weber, From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century
577 See the research done in Kentucky by Edward Clopper of the NCLC—he stated that despite the “compulsory
education laws” of Kentucky, children could easily be found working on family tobacco farms. He further
stated that “the poor economic condition of the small farmer and especially the tenant farmer, accounts for a
large part,” of child labor and school absences. “Most Child Labor Laws Do Not Apply to the Children in
land companies were not directly buying the labor of children; instead, their predatory practices encouraged its abuse within the family itself.

In a few pockets of the Southwest, the growing national demand for fresh fruits sparked an interest in watermelons, cantaloupes, and related melons as cash crops. A significant amount of this fruit was grown under the auspices of fruit packing companies like the Lehigh Company, a cantaloupe producer from far southern Texas, just along the border. George Kitamura’s family, who had connections to a melon distributor in California, tried growing cantaloupes on rented land for this company during the 1920s, but their efforts failed. When a family failed, they had to leave and locate a new opportunity, or else enter the labor market directly. Corporations like Lehigh, that made some of their money by renting the land, could simply bring in another family to attempt production anew.

David Newton’s grandparents and parents also moved into far southern Texas, drawn by the allure of productive lands. He suggested their cotton and melon farm was a product of

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578 Counties in Texas that produced melons were relatively spread out—a large number were grown in central Texas as well as southern and far western Texas. Colorado and California had thousands of acres of melon patches as well, although I have not found substantial evidence for migrant laborers from New Mexico or Texas heading to either state. For acreages by county, see Sixteenth Census of the United States...Ranking Agricultural Counties, 63-64. Even people much further north, among the Pueblos, saw some potential in melons. Although he never participated, Juan Jaramillo was aware of cash crops like melons and carrots. See Juan A. Jaramillo, interview by Michael Husband and Donald Cutter, January 27, 1969, microfilm 7, interview 73, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. By the post-WWII period, melons were a major crop using migrant labor, as bracero oral histories bear out. For an example, see Heriberto Cortez Cortez [sic], interview by Violeta Domínguez,“ May 13, 2002, interview 1030, Bracero Program Oral History, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. He explained how employers would go to the assembled braceros, pick a number of them, and ship them out to pick cotton, or watermelons, or anything else which needed it. He traveled between California and Texas doing this work.

579 George Kitamura, interview by Thomas Walls, May 14, 1979, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. The Kitamuras were a Japanese immigrant family. Although Asian immigrants are not the focus of this dissertation, they were important in the development of certain crops across the West, and similarly to Mexican immigrants, they faced intense discrimination.
misplaced optimism; “they fell for the old land scheme, the 50-pound cabbage.”\footnote{David C. Newton, interview by Oscar J. Martínez and Virgilio H. Sánchez, October 9, 1978, interview 721, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. What I believe he means by the “50-lb. cabbage” is a metaphor for the exaggerated productivity of lands advertised by regional boosters—the notion that someone could see images of massive, impossibly large fruits and vegetables in a pamphlet or in the newspaper.} Other melon patches were also located along the border, including arid El Paso. They were valuable enough that farmers (likely the companies themselves) hired guards to deter thievery.\footnote{Gladys J. Stratton, interview by Rebecca Craver, January 20, 1984, interview 669, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. See pages 6 and 7.} In other places, children helped with the harvest and transportation of melons; one photographer marveled at W. A. Harding’s massive watermelon harvest from a comparatively small acreage. The photographer captured the unloading of Harding’s crop from several train cars onto a series of tractor carts in Raymondville, TX; about a dozen men of varying ages were posing around the 36,780 lb. haul, as were several boys, pointing and gawking at the harvest.\footnote{“Murff,” 36,780 lbs. of Melon from W. A. Harding 120 acre patch, June 20, 1914, photograph, A1986-50.2.60, Item 8, R. H. Carlson Collection, South Texas Archives, Texas A&M University, Kingsville.} Crops such as cantaloupes and watermelons remained niche crops, although Texas and New Mexico combined to produce roughly 2.5 million dollars’ worth by 1930.\footnote{U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930—Agriculture, Volume II (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1932), 308-309, 1360-1361.} Cash crops often required outsized labor in order to maximize their value, especially around the harvest, so migrant families and other laboring families within the community could be called on to assist in the harvest.\footnote{In the specific case of melons, they had a narrow window where they were flavorful and ripe, and could be ruined by rough handling if they cracked. Past that harvest window, they would rapidly rot.}

Cotton was another prominent crop that made inroads into the Southwest during the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Known as “King Cotton” for good reason, this crop’s influence...
warped economic situations wherever it could be grown profitably. After the Civil War, southern cotton remained an extremely lucrative enterprise. This caught the attention of individuals farther west through new publications such as the *Texas Industrial Review*; in 1895, in its third issue, the president of the *Manufacturers’ Record* penned an editorial in the *Review*, arguing that cotton “is to-day the most profitable business in which money can be invested” and citing evidence from bankers who dealt in cotton.\textsuperscript{585} The issue in question was dedicated to the opening of a cotton mill in central Texas, near Austin and San Antonio. That was at the turn of the century—cotton kept increasing its acreage across the Southwest until the 1930s, again through the promotion of land companies. Cotton benefited from the successes of boosterism in some areas, while it succeeded in spite of the failure of speculation in others. In the Tularosa Basin of New Mexico for example, boosters had brought in new landowners during the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, but the majority of those farms failed due to what one Department of the Interior investigator noted were “unscrupulous, poorly informed, or overzealous persons” who had exclaimed about the “the potential of dry farming in the area.” This led the remaining farmers and landowners to think critically about alternatives that would work. Those with access to water, mostly along the edges of the basin, “began making a switch from subsistence farming to more commercial ventures, especially in alfalfa and cotton.”\textsuperscript{586} Irrigation did not reach the entire Tularosa Basin, as it was across higher ground from the Rio Grande Valley. Elsewhere, in Texas, investors planned communities like Bishop, a village which sprung up in the early

\textsuperscript{585} R. H. Edmonds, “Editorial Correspondence,” *Texas Industrial Review* 1, no. 3 (October 1895): 64.
1910s due to the efforts of an ambitious Corpus Christi businessman. His purchases of “undeveloped brush, cactus, and mesquite” paid off over the decade as Bishop ascended to become a major cotton growing center, the “Cotton Capital of the Coast.”

Due to this rapid growth, farmers who purchased lands from the initial investor faced an issue—how would they house the migrant families who came to brand-new Bishop to work on their crops? The answer was the purchase and deployment of small corrugated steel shacks for the migrants, visible in long rows at the edges of the fields. These shacks, some longer than others, could serve as dwellings for small family units while they worked, then could be repurposed when the migrants moved on. Glistening in the sun, these temporary structures were inadequate for whole families, given the fact that they could trap heat, had little air flow, and were generally quite small. Yet they were a cost-effective option for agricultural landowners.

Cash crops, especially cotton, became part of the Southwestern agricultural industry in part because of the growing availability of credit. Banks and other lenders continually arose in small towns, sometimes led by local financiers who followed the possibility of profit from crops or cattle. Families, even those on small acreages, could take out loans to

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588 See various photographs taken of these structures. Migrant Housing. Bishop TX; Migrant Housing in Bishop, TX; Compartment House used by field hands/migrant workers during vegetable season, Bishop, TX, 1910-1914, photographs, A1977-35, items 9, 10, 11, Edna May Tubbs Collection, South Texas Archives, Texas A&M University, Kingsville.

589 For instance, in the ranching hotbed of Clayton, NM, a new bank entitled the “Farmer’s and Stockmen’s Bank” was constructed in 1920, led in large part by stockholders “mostly from the town and county.” This brief example helps illustrate another reality of the transition to agribusiness; not all exploitation came from the outside into the Southwest, much of it was done in the pursuit of profit between regional businesses and landowners. See “Southwest News from All Over New Mexico and Arizona,” Santa Rosa Sun (Santa Rosa, NM), March 28, 1920, 3.
improve their farmland, but in order to repay those debts, many turned to crops which promised to turn a profit. Erwin Kretzchmar recalled that this father took out a large loan, $3,000 in 1925, to modernize their Texas farm. With the money, they built a new house, drilled a modern well, and paid off some other small debts. Of course, in order to repay this loan, the family focused on their cotton efforts and deployed a new economic strategy. Erwin’s father held onto a surplus of cotton for several years until it appreciated. At the age of 14, Erwin found himself in the midst of the household economy; he “quit school” the next year to work “at home; I didn’t have no choice. I would pick cotton and I got 20 cents a hundred.” After they harvested their own crop, Erwin, his brother, and his mother would pick at a neighboring farm, where half went toward the family and the other half was split by the brothers.590 He enjoyed having some money of his own, though the loss of educational opportunities stung.

Manuela Mayorga, a tejana working in southern Texas, remembered similar conditions within her family, who were all employed (herself included) at a large ranch near Bishop. However, in order to make ends meet, she also traveled with her father to pick cotton nearby; “when it was cotton picking time, I helped pick cotton. I would leave at 4:00 in the morning with my dad. We walked toward Bishop along the railroad tracks to the cotton fields. I was very fast. I would pick two hundred pounds of cotton by 5:00 in the afternoon. I was paid $1.25 for every one hundred pounds. I went every day with my

590 Erwin Kretzschmar, interview by James B. Sweeney, April 17, 1983, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 15 and 16.
Left unquestioned in her account, but perhaps part of her thinking, was that the ranch work was not enough to support the family. They had to have everyone contribute due to low wages in both sectors.

Cotton and these other cash crops highlighted the persistence of children’s farm labor during this period. No bank or investor had the right, or authority, to declare that

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children had to work on rural farms, but the pressure to repay loans dictated that children ought to do so. Given that cotton was a labor-intensive crop, difficult to mechanize, and held virtually no subsistence value, the planting of cotton acreage signaled the transition of any given farm into a market-oriented farm. This reality, coupled with the high capital requirements, made rural life more precarious. As many family histories indicated, cotton required intensive reconfigurations of the farm around the ebb and flow of capital. The emergence of cotton also demonstrated the heavy pressures of modernity and capital which were rendering obsolete Helen Fields’ refrain that the “farmer was a free man—his own superior.” Rather, the farming family increasingly worked in a cycle of debt, where survival was determined by dependence on a single primary crop. Child labor remained a tried-and-true method of squeezing extra production out of limited croplands.

Livestock, Dairy, and Ranches

The livestock and dairy industries present in the Southwest also demonstrated why child labor remained relevant into the 1930s. Many Southwestern ranches grew larger during first thirty years of the 20th century. Large, corporate ranches had existed prior to this period, but some of the most massive ranches reached their size during the early 1900s. These ranches were located wherever high grass and low land prices combined. As native Texan Tom Long remembered, the 4-6 Ranch and the King Ranch dominated his county. The 4-6 Ranch owned multiple ranges, and the King Ranch famously had almost a million acres of land under its administration. Those ranches were located in the far south of

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593 Long, interview, 26-27.
Texas, a hotbed of cattle farming since the early 19th century. In the high plains, major cattle corporations existed since the late 19th century, when the Maxwell Land and Cattle Company and the Prairie Cattle Company dominated thousands of acres across northeastern New Mexico’s ranges. According to historian Baldwin G. Burr, the Prairie Cattle Company alone had nearly “five million acres in New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Oklahoma.”

Many of these farms were owned by investors and were early forerunners of the capital-intensive agriculture and ranching which was slowly emerging across parts of the Southwest.

The transition from numerous smaller ranches to fewer, larger ranches rooted itself in several developments. One series of events which accelerated the consolidation of ranchlands occurred in the wake of World War I. H. B. Birmingham recalled his neighbors and his father’s loss of land after the war. His family’s ranch, as with many other ranches, had borrowed money from the government during the war. However, “when the war is over with the government called, uh, called it in,” and the loan repayments, combined with a brutal winter in 1918 where his family “lost a lotta cattle” started a downward economic trend for the ranch. They held on for several more years until they “lost the ranch” in the 1920s and were forced to relocate to the Plains of San Agustin in New Mexico. Another process which hastened the enlargement of ranches emerged in the wake of widespread homestead failures during the early 20th century. The historian Joan M. Jensen argued that “most of the families who attempted dry farming failed... ranchers, who found their 160

595 H. B. and Margaret Birmingham, interview by Carol Pittman, April 10, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. See pages 32-33.
homesteaded acres of land insufficient to feed cattle, then purchased land from the failed farmers at bargain prices. The ranchers usually survived and flourished.”596 Not every ranching family profited from the growing prominence of credit, mortgages, and land leases, however. Janice Gnatkowski’s family struggled to maintain their ranches in the foothills of southeastern New Mexico; “we, we kept leasing ranches after Dad got all these mixed-up cattle, and, uh, you can’t hang on to a leased ranch one way or another. Somebody, the owner eventually wants it back.” She also noted that her family was “usually in debt.”597 Janice knew, even as a child, that her family’s lifestyle was tenuously buoyed by intense labor in the face of capital demands, though she may not have imagined how her own work might have helped keep them afloat. Ranches expanded in some locations during this period, even as farmland acreages also increased.

Child labor was integral to the productivity of ranches at any size. Children learned to ride horses and manage livestock, and they were often the primary helpers on smaller ranches and were present at all stages of ranch work. This early work typically prepared children to take on greater ranch responsibilities as they grew older, and to eventually work as ranchers or ranch-hands themselves. The Gnatkowskis worked as a single unit on the ranch, starting when Janice was about six; “if they went [to the range] there was nobody to keep me. We all went and worked.” She further noted that this built a close relationship with her father, as she was working with him “every day. I was with him all the time... I was never with Mother.” Curiously, Janice saw her work in hindsight as a “choice” rather than

597 Gnatkowski, interview, 6, 35, 37.
“a necessity.” Her emphasis on personal agency, even when such work was crucial to the ranch’s operation, hinted at the negotiations which took place at the interpersonal level within families. The Clavel family of Harding County also used their children to build the ranch. Their father, Celestin, was a railroad worker who dreamed of starting his own ranch. When their son Jodie was only ten, the family needed someone to drive their newly purchased cattle north, from Tucumcari to the village of Roy, a distance of “over 100 miles.” However, the family could not spare any other members to guide their cattle overland, so Celestin entrusted Jodie with this daunting task. He went down to the railroad depot and drove his family’s herd to their new ranch without assistance, enabling the family’s ranch business to begin in earnest. Over his teen years, Jodie learned how to manage the ranch alongside his brother.

On ranches large enough to require the labor, however, there was also a long-standing class of livestock workers, the cowboys and vaqueros. This semi-professionalized group of workers had long existed in a cash relationship with their employers, and larger ranches could have dozens of these men on their payrolls. Some ranchers happily hired

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598 Gnatkowski, interview, 8-9, 16-17. It seems likely that, if Janice did not follow her father on his trips to manage his herd, that she would have spent time working at the home with her mother. She implied this in the same section when she noted never learning how to cook since she did not work in the kitchen with her mother.

599 Numerous other examples also hint at this, though few are so open about discussing their own agency as a child. This may be an issue of utilizing interviews with adults; when looking back, they have had time to reconceptualize their work, and it seems that many adopted the language of economic or familial need to rationalize why they worked hard, even at young ages. Removing the agency of the family may also obscure the more difficult, harsh realities of punishment, arguments, and coercion of labor.

600 Burr, *Historic Ranches of Northeastern New Mexico*, 52-54. Judging by the family photographs, Jodie has a particular love of horses, and learned to ride at a young age. This training enabled him to become the head manager of the ranch at age 20, although he likely handled most of those responsibilities much earlier.

601 See *Dinner Time of E. Watts, Life Stock Branding Outfit on the Chiguite Cr. N.M.*, 1916, photograph, in Burr, *Historic Ranches of Northeastern New Mexico*, 76. The photo shows about 25 men (including a few boys) eating dinner out on the scrubland in northeastern New Mexico. For another example, see the massive
children to work alongside the adults, and in instances of homelessness or vagrancy, boys quickly integrated into the adult workforce. Ben Parker was thrown into ranch work as a homeless adolescent. After leaving his family, a policeman noticed him and fed him; afterwards the officer led Ben to a man who asked him if he wanted a job; when Ben said “I can work,” this man brought him to a landowner, Mr. Owens, who put Ben on a “12 section ranch” to work by himself. His path as a veteran cowboy began as he worked alone with his boss’ herd, and though this looked like an exploitative practice, Ben had few other options, so he welcomed the opportunity.

Boys not officially employed still often trained alongside the ranch workers, learning the skills necessary for running a ranch themselves. Ernest Aguayo’s story was typical for hispano boys who entered the ranching trade; his father worked as a “professional cowboy” and as Ernest recalled, “he taught us boys a lot” about ranching and cattle work. White ranch owners encouraged this behavior among their workers, and expected the children to

employee ledgers of the Red River Valley Co., another ranch in the high plains. These ledgers had dozens of individual employees, and demonstrated the itinerant nature of cowboy life, where they would leave one job for another, before coming back later. What they tended to not have were any children or women who worked on the ranches, either as domestics or with the cattle. “Employee Record Ledger 1937-1939,” and “Employee’s Record Journal, 1930-1932,” item 99, item 102, MSS 86 BC, Red River Valley Company Records, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

602 Dr. Ben L. Parker, interview by James Sweeney, February 3, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See transcript pages 6-7. Ben’s case was perhaps exceptional because he was seen as a homeless youth—perhaps the landowner would not have hired Ben in other circumstances, or felt that he was doing Ben a favor by giving him ‘honest’ work.

603 This method of learning on-the-job is detailed in Monday and Colley, Voices from the Wild, 108. There, one of their sources, Antonio Salinas, recalled that he began getting paid for work when he was twelve. Another source, Plácido Maldonado, stated that “I first remember being with Dad at ten. I went to the barn with him and would sweep and do other jobs. My first payroll job was at thirteen or fourteen. I raised calves.” This process can be seen in many pictures of ranch life, and this informal apprenticeship survived well into the 1940s and 1950s.

604 Ernest Aguayo, interview by Beth Morgan, June 14, 2001, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. His father had worked for numerous regional ranches and had participated in cattle drives up to Kansas City and elsewhere.
continue working under them as laborers when they grew up. As the Kokernot family, owners of several ranches in rural Brewster County, Texas articulated, “in those days, all of our help was... Mexican Nationals... we had at each of our ranches, we had three brothers and their children.... And then their children grew up and were workers and helpers.”

Adults (but more generally, commercial interests) who employed or worked with children in the livestock industry often knew they could take unfair advantage of youths, due to their inexperience. Paul Ellis, whose family owned a small ranch, and whose father was infirm, learned the job from fellow cattle workers as a teenager. Paul did a variety of ranch work, including finding lost cattle, providing salt licks for them, branding calves, and even butchering and dressing beef. After the slaughter, he hauled the meat to the nearest “grading camp,” where middlemen categorized the beef and sent it via rail to meatpackers elsewhere. These companies took advantage of Paul’s hard work and naïveté, purchasing beef and promising to send payment later. The camp agents sometimes held up payment for weeks, straining the family’s relationships as well as their meager finances. In one instance, the family waited one-and-a-half months for a $133.75 payment from a shipment of winter beef, quite the sum in the early 1900s, and during the harshest season of the year. Once more, capital directly shortchanged the labor of youths in order to eke out a greater profit at their expense.

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605 Kokernot Ranch Group, interview by Sarah Massey, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. On page 40, they stated that this process of recapitulation ended as World War II began, since the children of their workers left for the war or military industries.

606 Charlotte Ellis, diary, 1908-1909, box 1, folder 5, MSS 597 BC, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
The latitude provided to boys to work semi-independently was unique, but children of both sexes also assisted with domestic labor required by cowboys and the owner’s household. Adolescent boys conducted these domestic duties while out on the range. When going along on cattle drives for their employers, teens like Ben Parker were sometimes appointed to the chuck wagon or laundry duty. The majority of this toil involved girls, however. Manuela Mayorga, when not picking cotton with her father, also helped her mother prepare tortillas and wash the laundry for the “Big House” and another family at the King Ranch. Rubie Leigh Devries and her siblings worked on a smaller ranch near San Antonio; “when we got up, we had things to do. The boys had to cut wood. The girls had to make the beds and do the laundry and things like that.” After those chores, she had other responsibilities as well, including the washing of dishes, cooking, and watching over the younger children. Mrs. Della Roberds, a newlywed of only sixteen, also remembered the difficulties of domestic work on the ranch in the 1920s, and how she was ignored as a worker. Her and her husband Tom were just settling in at the Bell Ranch when the commodity trader came through to unload the groceries she needed. He roughly tossed the goods to the ground, as Tom tried to catch them. Through the tension, she cooked a “hearty supper” for both Tom and the trader, sitting in silence with the men. After the

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607 Dr. Ben L. Parker, interview by James Sweeney, February 3, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 17-19 for Ben Parker’s story, which was a great example of another curious Southwestern phenomenon—the “tall-tale.” In fact, many of Parker’s stories have the typical markings of exaggerated folk storytelling, although buried within those anecdotes are important truths about rural life. In this story, Parker’s cooking was wrapped up in an implausible story about him getting the best of a fellow cowboy who complained about his beans.


609 Rubie Leigh Devries and Reverend James Devries, interview by Esther MacMillan, March 6, 1983, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 11-14.
trader and her husband left, Della realized that that groceries were in great disarray, and spent an entire day cleaning off the spilled oil, nails, and bacon.\textsuperscript{610}

It may be difficult to reconcile domestic labor with agricultural industrialization, and certainly it was not viewed in the same light at the time. Domestic labor was more difficult to measure due to attitudes surrounding its importance—though laundry, food, and cleaning were vital to the ranch’s continued existence, and though they did not benefit from mechanization or transportation to any significant extent in the period, they were treated as nonproductive expenses. In many recollections, it was taken as a given that the women and children would manage the ranch household, raising a garden, the chickens, cooking dinner for guests, and other odd tasks while the men were out on the range.\textsuperscript{611} Thus, measuring the value of children’s work must be done by looking beyond raw productive output; laundry, cooking, cleaning, hauling water, and other domestic tasks remained the purview of children and women throughout the early-to-mid 1900s. Combined with their assistance conducting the regular duties of the ranch, children remained valuable as part of the ranching labor force as ranches expanded and grew more industrialized.

Animal products, especially dairy products and eggs, were another avenue where industrialization reached out to touch even the smallest homestead or village. It was


\textsuperscript{611} Mrs. W. M. Richard Tatom, “At Carros Camp,” October 26, 1964, in Ellis, \textit{Bell Ranch}, 28-29. Mrs. Tatom and her children managed their garden and chickens at a camp prior to their move to the main Bell Ranch compound, and in her recollection offhandedly mentioned how other wives would always have “a good hot dinner ready” when they arrived.
common for rural families of all stripes have a few milk cows if they could afford them.\textsuperscript{612} The household’s children and women typically conducted this work, milking cows and then churning butter or separating cream, and searching for the eggs laid by their chickens or other fowl. Children had historically integrated this labor into their daily chore schedules, usually in the morning before school or other work. Industrial processes did not matter at the individual family scale. Milking and otherwise caring for just one cow was a large amount of work; one report from dairy farmers near Tucumcari, using more modern equipment, estimated that care and hand-milking one cow cost the farmer at least 124 hours of work per year.\textsuperscript{613} However, investors and corporations in the evolving dairy industry developed methods to indirectly tap family and child labor. Dairies, creameries, food manufacturers, and distributors used the railroad as a nexus from which they could source and purchase raw milk and cream directly from small farmers villages, and landowners.

Children engaged in their daily chores did not realize the exact value of their labor, nor did they quite understand their place within the food industry, but individuals like the

\textsuperscript{612} For a description of this, see Leborio Castillo and Placida Padilla, interview by Carol Pittman, April 3, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. Pages 17 through 19 showed that Placida and Leborio would milk their family’s cows, then bring the milk in, where their mother would take over, using a separator for the cream and a hand church for the butter. In this case, the family consumed all the butter and cream they produced, but most families knew that those products could be sold when necessary.

\textsuperscript{613} H. B. Pingrey and W. P. Stephens, “Cost of Producing Whole Milk, Tucumcari Irrigation Project,” \textit{New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts Bulletin} 1073 (August 1952), 8. This was the estimate of a dairy farmer who hand-milked his cows, so it makes for a useful comparison to the total labor hours required without some of the industrial equipment that farm families would not have had access to in the years before World War II. I believe that the total hours-per-cow was likely higher for farm children in that period, perhaps significantly higher, without the benefit of efficient dairy barn setups, using tractors to haul feed, and other time-saving mechanisms which became commonplace by the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. This time estimate also does not include the effort made to transport the goods or separate the cream.
Collins sisters knew that selling milk, cream, and eggs were crucial to their family’s economy in lean years. As they recalled, “one of the chores we all hated most was churning the pure cream into butter,” but they also disliked taking the eggs, as it could be “a real hazard.” Still, the children doggedly completed their assigned chores, since they knew that a poor crop meant that their family “would depend solely on the money from our cream and eggs.”

Tommy Danley also recalled similar efforts by his family; his family would use “a little hand separator, cream separator. We’d make five gallons of it and take it to the train depot.” Janice Gnatkowski’s family would separate the cream daily and add it to a five-gallon can they had outside; when it was full, they then “took it over to Ancho to the railroad and they picked it up and took it... it went to different places according to who was paying the most.” During their weekly trip to the rail depot, there were numerous other families selling cream at the same time, as it “was a source of cash income.”

Other families sold butter as well. These direct sales of dairy products and eggs to companies infused the necessary cash into rural families so they could make it through economic downturns, but it also made their children into unwitting laborers for agribusinesses.

Despite their value to many families, in the common parlance these funds were often termed “butter and egg money,” designated for the farmer’s wife to purchase luxuries for herself of the family. This dismissal of household work reflected gendered ideals

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616 Gnatkowski, interview, 30.
617 For a reference to the term, see “Women Who Work in the Field,” *Colfax County Stockman* (Springer, NM) July 8, 1911, 2. Here, the author claimed that farming women were beginning to make larger sums of money, when in previous times they were only “allowed” the “butter and egg money” from their husband.
about the father powering the economic engine of the family while women “[work] to help the husband.” They were also a clear example of how companies indirectly profited from children’s work without having to hire children in any official capacity. Looking back, some former farm children saw the “butter and egg money” in a different light. Helen Fields carefully emphasized that farm families made their livelihood and income from both their father’s work (the cotton crop) and their household work (the butter and eggs). Some historians have even suggested that such small-scale economic activities undertaken by women and children historically accounted for close to thirty percent of the average family farm’s income. Regardless of the perception of such income, food industries relied on family labor to produce some of their raw materials.

The dairy industry could exploit the labor of families and children in a number of ways. Although many creameries began as cooperatives, the idealistic vision of farm reformers, who proclaimed that “the creamery system... has relieved the farmer’s wife of a heavy burden” did not come to pass. Instead they profited from children’s labor to produce the raw goods they transformed for the market. The Trinidad Creamery, located in

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618 This patriarchal viewpoint is visible in rural communities elsewhere in the Americas as well. Verena Stolcke, in her work on the relationship between gender and family ideology on one hand, and capitalism on the other, she pointedly argued that a “working-class adherence to the family” was part of capitalist interests in agriculture, and further noted that capitalist developments created conditions of subordination for rural women. She detailed the decisions made by women to enter the workforce, where they engaged with labor, and how their labor (and the labor of children) held a different symbolic and economic meaning to the work done by men. See Verena Stolcke, “The Exploitation of Family Morality: Labor Systems and Family Structure on Sao Paulo Coffee Plantations, 1850-1979,” in Kinship Ideology and Practice in Latin America, Raymond T. Smith, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984), 264-267, 283-285.

619 Fields, Walking Backwards in the Wind, 6.

620 This study was done on 19th century farm families in the North, but the numbers are likely in the same range as the economic production of small family farms in New Mexico and Texas even into the 20th century. See Whaples, “Child Labor in the United States,”; Lee Craig, To Sow One More Acre: Childbearing and Farm Productivity in the Antebellum North. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993.

southern Colorado, continually sourced dairy from northern New Mexico families. This company, like many other dairies, occasionally ran into trouble due to their violations of the Pure Food and Drug Act. In 1936 government officials, following a report from the Secretary of Agriculture, seized a small number of “adulterated” cream containers shipped, in large part, from New Mexican suppliers under the auspices of the Trinidad Creamery. The case results stated that these contaminated items were destroyed after the creamery confessed to the issues. 622 These cases suggested that the dairy industry had unscrupulous purchasers, who might underpay their suppliers, as well as quality control issues at the creamery itself, which continued to use the low-grade cream. Families sometimes brought bad cream to the depot, but sending it down the line meant a profit for the purchasing agent. 623 Families fought back if they could; the Collins’ mother erupted against the rail station agent at Des Moines, NM. “On one occasion, Mother received a check for only half as much as she were usually paid.” Normally the Collins’ provided top-grade cream, but this batch was graded at “third grade,” a much lower quality. Their mother asked for an explanation, and “she was told that a dead mouse had been found in the can of cream. She might as well have been accused of adultery! She was livid. Our mother fought dirt just as hard as she fought sin, constantly and furiously.” After she forced the hand of the station


623 Gnatkowski, interview, 30. She mentioned that the cream her family sold was never refrigerated, and sometimes it smelled “rotten.”
master, railroad detectives investigated and found that a purchasing agent “up the line” was stealing small quantities of each can to later sell for himself—he had left a can open, which let the mouse into the Collins’ cream. They received full price for their future cream shipments. Lula and Ruth were just two more children who saw firsthand the exploitative nature of agribusinesses. The juxtaposition of the small farm and the creamery underscored another point—industrialization occurred in stages, especially in rural areas; the raw products might come from a large dairy with milking machines, or a tiny farm with child workers, before heading into a modernized, industrial facility that mass-produced consumer products. The contrast is stark but unsurprising for the Southwest.

Figure 20 Russell Lee, Bottling milk at creamery. San Angelo, Texas, 1939, photograph, LC-USF34-035020-D [P&P] LOT 577, Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2017785106/. The picture here is of bottling work done at the San Angelo Creamery of central Texas. Photographer Russell Lee compiled a series of photographs detailing the industrial work, but he also captured the contrasts of rural life. Other photographs in this collection show dairy farmers idling outside the facility in their trucks and cars, caked with dirt and dust, hauling milk cans inside; they looked markedly different from the sanitized, cap-wearing young men who worked within the creamery.

624 Daudet and Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon, 19-20.
Invisibility within the Cash Nexus

These examples underscored a crucial point about children’s labor and agribusiness. Landowners, capitalists, and investors utilized a hybrid approach to the question of child labor. One the one hand, traditions of Southwestern (and more generally, rural life) gave wide latitude for parents and others to utilize the labor of children within their reach. Furthermore, as previously explained in Chapter 2, the relationship between bosses and employees still retained elements of a patrón system, where the landowner acted in both an industrial and paternal relationship to everyone else on the farm, ranch, or elsewhere. Finally, tradition also encouraged children to participate alongside their parents and older relatives as a form of training, family bonding, and “sharing” the burden. Even if business interests had not recognized the value of children’s labor, families would likely have continued to rely on the labor of their children, especially within migrant families or those on tenant or sharecropping arrangements.

As the previous examples have demonstrated, capitalists invested in agriculture understood that children were a cheaper, tractable source for certain types of labor than hiring adult men or women. Children were quick to learn, and when doing labor which did not require much specialist training or physical strength, they were adequate laborers. More than that, children also made the labor of the adult male labor force more efficient, through the domestic labor and other assistance that children and adult women provided. Landowners also recognized that adult laborers in the Southwest often brought family members along on their travels; hiring the whole family could create a lasting, stable workforce. Finally, agribusinesses tacitly understood that children’s labor costs did not have
to be shouldered by the company itself—as was the case with the dairy industry, children could provide manpower without the dairy having to hire children themselves (which would have opened them up to some criticism). Whichever approach dominated for a given employer or landowner, most were happy to leave the organization and management of children’s work to their family members.

In effect, the status of child laborers in these decades paralleled the broader efforts by agribusiness to render farm workers invisible across the 20th century. As Sarah Deutsch noted in 1920s Colorado, locals and agribusinesses tried their best to ignore the presence of migrants, but when they could not, they restricted their visibility in space—Paul Taylor opined that “some communities dependent upon seasonal labor are eager for the laborers to move in when they are needed, and almost equally eager for them to move out when they are no longer needed,” a practice common across the Southwest. Numerous scholars have broached this topic within migrant and nonwhite populations, but few have viewed children through this lens.

625 Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 132-135. This form of spatial, cultural, and legal segregation is of course different from what children and women faced on ranches, though they were also marginalized through space—they were less visible to businesses and the community than the men of the household. In addition, Heather Fowler-Salamini noted this rural phenomenon of “other members of the family” rendered “as invisible bystanders or dependents” in her own work on Veracruz’ coffee plantations. See Heather Fowler-Salamini, “Gender, Work, and Coffee in Córdoba, Veracruz, 1850-1910,” in *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990*, Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughan, eds. (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1994), 51-53.

626 See Nicholas Andrew Norman, “Subversive Mobility: Migrant Labor and the Visual Politics of Representation,” *The Steinbeck Review* 15, no. 2 (2018): 165-74. Norman argued that the symbolic world of agriculture, particularly landscape, served to obscure the ugly truths of migrant laborers, specifically white Dust Bowl migrants. I believe that a similar symbolic process was at work with children, given their lack of political power, their dependent status in the household and community, and the moral ideologies surrounding children and work. What agribusinesses benefited from was a world where children’s work could continue under false auspices. For a modern perspective on the “invisibilization” of migrant Latino workers, see works like James Michael Buckman and William Littmann, “Viewpoint: A Contemporary Vernacular: Latino
By the 1930s rural Southwesterners were well-aware of the reach of corporatized agriculture, as it touched all parts of their lives, from their farms to their tables. The market functioned as a two-way exchange, where certain goods were exported from the Southwest and others were imported. This importation impacted the farming habits of families and communities, discouraging the subsistence and self-sufficiency practices which had been necessary in previous decades. For example, Isleta Pueblo used to maintain local orchards for a variety of fruits and vineyards for wine production. As Juan Jaramillo told it, during his childhood Isleta farmers began to phase these orchards and vineyards out. He stated that those were hallmarks of the “old timers” and lamented the fact that his generation lost the ability and desire to grow their own crops. For instance, Juan explained that growing their own wine for celebrations was far preferable to “going into, town and getting other kinds of [alcohol].”

Ranches were fundamentally distinct from farms—it was rare to find a ranch oriented towards subsistence, rather than the market. However, ranches also practiced regular subsistence rituals, most notably *matanzas* and similar calf slaughters. These daylong practices were common among white, *hispano*, and *tejano* families, and involved the whole ranch and sometimes neighbors. These practices also waned in the 1920s and 1930s. Mary Ann Kokernot lamented after WWII how her family bought meat at the grocery store and no longer practiced the laborious, but valued process of butchering “a calf.

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627 Jaramillo, interview.
and maybe a dogie calf that didn’t have a parent and kill it right there; skin it, have son-of-a-gun stew…bury the head… and smoke it for a day or two.” She looked forward to that ritual, and it provided precious meat for the family and the Mexican families they employed. For Juan and Mary Ann, as well as thousands of other youths during the early 1900s, agricultural practices created pressure which moved them away from the “traditional.” In this way, the emergence of agriculture markets in the Southwest indirectly reorganized the labor of families—some could choose to maintain the old methods of farming, but those who wanted to purchase new goods found that their families had to grow crops which could be sold further afield. The new reliance on the market had another downside—as Chapter 6 will depict, the shift away from communal subsistence left families vulnerable to the crises of the 1930s.

Although the national marketplace did not fully instantiate itself in the Southwest during the 1920s and 1930s, it loomed on the horizon as an ever-visible capitalist phenomenon. Since its origins in the efforts of Anglo Americans during the late 19th century, agribusiness and its attendant processes have shaped the lives of rural families throughout the region. These processes included the emergence of a “cash nexus,” new banking developments (especially with farm credit and mortgages), the increase in farm laborers and managers as a labor force, the growth of national food markets, and the consolidation of subsistence farms and small ranches into larger enterprises. Again, this was an incomplete transformation. Farm and ranch families who still owned their land kept

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628 Kokernot Ranch Group, Interview, 38-40.
community subsistence traditions alive by planting gardens and orchards, by trading or sharing with neighbors, and by participating in communal harvests.\(^{629}\)

Understanding the persistence of child labor into the 20\(^{th}\) century requires an acknowledgment that children were often not employed by the agricultural enterprises which nevertheless profited from their labor. In many cases, it was only the male head-of-household who worked in any official relationship with employers, capitalists, and the other agents of the market. However, women and children provided significant beneficial labor, directly or indirectly, towards the burgeoning agricultural industries of the Southwest. Further, most farms remained in the hands of individual owner-operators well past this period; agribusiness did not suddenly upend land ownership patterns and transform the Southwest into a series of corporate-owned plots, but rather, it created systems which were structured by industrial and corporate concerns.\(^{630}\)

The exploitation of children’s labor has a long history, even within rural American life: in the early days of industrialization, many Americans saw the employment of children as “an unqualified good which made possible the development of manufacture without

\(^{629}\) For an example of the garden and orchard tradition, see Gnatkowski, interview, 31. New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Oral History Project. She stated that through the 1930s her family kept “pigs and chickens and dogs and cats,” had a “garden and fruit trees in there and they irrigated and raised vegetables and gave them all to the, away to the neighbors.” In her mind, “it was pretty, um, self-sufficient in that way.” For another see Aguayo, interview, 22-23. The Aguayos had several places on their large ranch where they had gardens, and everyone in the large family pitched in to work those so the family would get “just about all that, yeah, we needed.” For an example of community management of livestock, see Bermejo, interview, 9. He stated that “my father had a lot of cattle, and I took care of them with my neighbors at Rio Lucio.” He practiced his Spanish with those neighbors as they worked.

\(^{630}\) In fact, even in 1954 “approximately 98% of all farms were owned by individuals and 75.6% were owner-operated” in the United States as a whole. John A. Davis and Ray A. Goldberg, A Concept of Agribusiness (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1957), 80.
taking men from agriculture.” Of course, what many Americans neglected was the reality that children had always engaged in the agricultural pursuits of their families. Furthermore, what became apparent during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was that agriculture and industry were no longer realms apart; they were becoming interconnected, and with those links came emergent markets for rural families to work within. Much as they had done in years past, families continued to send their children into the fields, gardens, barns, and pastures to work. The impetus towards breaking that cycle of child labor would not come from agribusinesses themselves, but instead came from economic collapse, politics, and war—these factors destroyed the use of child labor indirectly, by undermining long-term, intergenerational land and labor patterns among rural families.

Chapter 6: Depression, Deportation, Deployment, and Dust

From 1929 through 1945 a series of disruptions struck the United States and, through their rippling effects, impacted the practice of child labor across the Southwest. The following chapter will depict several major events as they impacted rural Southwestern families, including the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, the New Deal, and the onset of World War II. Alongside these well-known events, a host of other smaller systemic issues grew through the cracks of the 1930s, including new land ownership issues, the mass deportations of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and urbanization in the West. While legal, cultural, and educational institutions could not upend the numerous systems which supported widespread usage of child labor in New Mexico and Texas, economic and geopolitical ruptures dealt a significant blow to rural livelihoods during the 1930s and 1940s, whether by driving families away from rural livelihoods or providing them employment and living opportunities elsewhere in the nation.

The Great Depression loomed over the United States, and the world at large, like a storm cloud. In 1929 the stock market plummeted, setting off a chain reaction which devastated local economies across the U.S.632 The effects of the Depression hit rural economies particularly hard. New Mexicans were somewhat familiar with this cycle of boom and bust—after World War I a prolonged depression had caused nearly half the banks in the state to close, but New Mexicans were not prepared for the devastation that

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632 The most useful overview of the Depression, Dust Bowl, and World War II is David Kennedy, Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
drought and economic hardship would cause.\textsuperscript{633} Texas families were similarly ill-equipped for the scale of the Depression. The most immediate impact for most rural families was felt in the household’s budget. As financial markets tightened, 1930s families were often forced to finance their existence through debt. As one study of urban populations in the West indicated, poorer families across the region faced inflexible budgets, with food, housing, and clothing taking up close to eighty percent of their total household spending. Families in small Rocky Mountain cities living on less than $1,000 a year spent an average of $213 more than their income.\textsuperscript{634} Rural families in New Mexico and Texas were even further down the economic ladder—U.S. Department of Commerce figures in the late 1930s showed that “the farm population of the Southwest has a per capita income of $161 compared with an average per capita income of $541 in the United States.”\textsuperscript{635} Among hispanos, tejanos, Mexican immigrants, Pueblo peoples, and poor whites, most rural homes had prior experience with economic insecurity. This can be traced back to a reliance on seasonal labor and the fluctuations of harvests. State statistics on unemployed persons, taken as the Depression started in 1930, showed that farm laborers held the largest single share of unemployed workers, with building trades, mining, and domestic service the other largest categories.\textsuperscript{636} These statistics conformed to expectations of working-class professions that


\textsuperscript{634} U.S. Department of Labor,\textit{ Family Expenditure in Six Urban Communities of the West Central – Rocky Mountain Region, 1935-1936, Volume II} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1940), 9, 14-15. This study did not track towns or villages in the Southwest, but the statistics for Colorado were the closest analogue.


\textsuperscript{636} U.S. Bureau of the Census,\textit{ Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930—Unemployment, Volume II} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1932), 670-672. Interestingly, this census of unemployed persons also showed unemployed children looking for work in the age categories of 10 to 14 and 15 to 19 years. Understandably, the numbers of official unemployed children were quite low, although the census did have another category for “unpaid family workers” in agriculture, which also seemed low. Although they counted nearly sixty
had significant variations in labor demand. This data also presaged the problems farm laborers who did not own their land would face throughout the 1930s.

**Surviving Hardships**

Due to economic pressures, rural families tried to supplement their livelihoods whenever possible; they worked harder, relied on communal efforts, and redoubled their hunting, fishing, and gathering efforts. Don Taylor, part of a ranch family in southern New Mexico, noted that in the 1930s “everybody was living on deer meat too. They didn’t pay much attention to the game laws. Those people were starving to death.” Whenever he successfully shot some game, he would quarter it then distribute the meat among the community. Families also reorganized around the most able relatives, altering the structure of the household. As Annie Bailey recalled, during her teenage years the Depression fell upon her family’s middle-class homestead. In order to make ends meet, they fired their domestic servant and turned to the labor of the family’s “grown children,” including Annie, who turned to quilting with her mother. Gender norms about working outside of the home also fell by the wayside as need grew; Mary Kuntz took up domestic work and cooking during the Depression, as she and her husband traveled around Northern

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thousand agricultural workers of all stripes, they saw only five-thousand eight-hundred unpaid workers. Of course, this category severely undercounted women and girls, counting only two-thousand total female agriculture workers. I use these statistics with caution for these and other reasons, but I still believe they are useful for showing why rural Southwestern families were vulnerable to the Depression.

637 Lori S. Hawthorne-Tagg, *A Life Like No Other: Ranch Life on Lands Now Administered by Holloman Air Force Base* (Holloman AFB, NM: Civil Engineer Squadron Cultural Resources, 1997), 206. Also see the example from Ilse Griffith later in this chapter for another instance of communities bonding together to take care of the dispossessed.

638 Annie Bailey, interview by Diane Williams, May 19, 2008, tape 1, side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
New Mexico. She cooked at a number of “lumber camps, dude ranches, and mining sites” across the area while her husband looked for work.639

Villages like San Geronimo, a mountainous village at the edge of the Plains near Las Vegas, NM, provided examples of the struggles faced by whole communities during the Depression. While studying the village under the auspices of the Soil Conservation Service, one administrator noted that their land lacked water, they had insufficient grazing lands, and the families were already teetering on the brink of abject poverty. Although the families there likely would have argued against some of the conclusions of the Anglo administrator’s survey, the reality was that their home was “rapidly becoming a deserted village.”640 San Geronimo’s hispano families faced the predation of landowners surrounding them, one who owned most water and irrigated land than the whole village, and another who had traditionally served as the patrón, employing nearly all the villagers. When this patriarch died, his son lost the majority of those lands to another white American landowner, further pressuring the village.641 Other isolated communities faced similar


640 “San Geronimo, New Mexico,” 1938, report, box 17, folder 22, MSS 289 BC, United States Soil Conservation Service Region Eight Records, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

641 “San Geronimo, New Mexico,” 10-14. The Soil Conservation Service began in the mid-1930s as the government began developing strategies to counter the effects of erosion and poor soil on croplands across the U.S. This program relied on local experts, including those at the various Experiment Stations in the Southwest, for practical experimentation and scientific development. Among the most notable of these individuals was Ray Dickson of the Spur, Texas Experiment Station, who helped develop the closed “contour furrow” which captured more rainwater and irrigation, even in dry soil. See Victor H. Schoffelmayer, Southwest Trails: To New Horizons (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1960), 204-205. For more on the SCS, see “80 Years of Helping People Help the Land: A Brief History of the NCRS,” Natural Resources Conservation
challenges, where their livelihoods were circumscribed by a handful of landowners and businesses, or were challenged by the environment. In fact, central and northern New Mexico (as well as counties of neighboring Arizona) were among the most impoverished rural regions of the U.S. during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{642}

Compounding the financial downturn were the dust storms of the early 1930s. These winds were always part of life in portions of the West. The Collins sisters described them as the design of “a brutal, jealous god... the wind became more ferocious than ever. It was angry! Dark clouds would appear to look like rain clouds but would turn out to be dirt whipped up by the wind.” They saw the storms affect their community: “women despaired. Strong men lost their minds,” and children suffocated in the storms.\textsuperscript{643} Others who were young and witnessed the dust storms depicted them in similarly apocalyptic terms.\textsuperscript{644} In the early 1930s a sequence of bad weather and longstanding human practice combined and upended the rural order across the West. Droughts began in the early 1930s, and by October of 1934 nearly all of the West, and much of the Midwest, was receiving federal

\textsuperscript{642} Data from the Farm Security Administration showed a county-by-county map, shading each county by the percentage of farms within it grossing $600 or less per year. The majority of New Mexico’s counties were shaded at 40% or 50%, with the most concentrated poverty in the central mountainous regions (the traditional hispano and Pueblo homelands). $600 was not enough to support a family without looking for other income or subsistence sources. The adjoining Navajo Reservation and other parts of Northern Arizona were shaded similarly. The text named this region, alongside parts of the Appalachia and the Deep South, as the poorest farms of the country. U.S. Farm Security Administration, \textit{Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture} (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1938), 9-10.


\textsuperscript{644} See the examples provided by Mildred Holland, interview by Richard Chavez, March 27, 2010, tape 1, side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. Mildred experienced several storms as a twelve-year-old; she described the dust as “so black and so dark and so penetrating” and said she believed it was the end of the world.
emergency aid due to the arid conditions. Droughts, as noted back in Chapter 1, were dangerous to the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers. Increased cash crop planting made farmers more vulnerable to natural disasters, since these families were often in debt and one bad year could make them lose their mortgage or tenancy. Rural families were competing with one another as they sowed and harvested “ever larger crops” in the wake of price shortfalls. Finally, practices of dry farming, a necessity in parts of the Southwest without adequate water access, also precipitated the crisis. Fallow fields and over-tilled land could become airborne during a storm. As one scholar noted, “dry farming was precarious at best, but it was now disastrous,” and counties with widespread dry farming practices saw massive numbers of families on relief. Those conditions alone were frightening to Southwestern farmers. However, a confluence of other weather events would combine with the drought to produce the worst ecological and agricultural catastrophe that the Southwest had ever witnessed. In northeast New Mexico, north Texas, and other parts of the High Plains, high winds led to intense erosion and massive dust storms, which blanketed the farms and towns of the region and ruined acres upon acres of

645 U.S. Agricultural Adjustment Administration, *The Drought of 1934: A Report of the Federal Government’s Assistance to Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1935), Chart 1. The only state west of the Mississippi which was excluded from drought relief was Washington. The drought relief efforts extended eastward into Wisconsin, Illinois, and Louisiana. Texas and New Mexico were both receiving aid in every county, except for coastal Texas.
646 Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 194.
647 Reeve, *History of New Mexico*, 367-368. Dry farming as a strategy failed for several reasons: as farmers utilized it more and more, it exposed delicate topsoils to the erosion effects of the wind, at the same time that farmers cut down native grasses which retained the soil. Mechanized tilling was also damaging for similar reasons. Dry farming, in effect, was meant to protect the farmer from crop failures by ensuring that his crops grew—in the early 20th century was not designed to protect the soil from the level of erosion caused by the storms. For further descriptions of these practices, see Sarah T. Phillips, “Lessons from the Dust Bowl: Dryland Agriculture and Soil Erosion in the United States and South Africa, 1900-1950,” *Environmental History* 4, no. 2 (1999): 245-66. For a modern description of dry farming, see “Dry Farming,” California Agriculture Water Stewardship Initiative, accessed August 10, 2019, http://agwaterstewards.org/practices/dry_farming/.
cropland. As the historian Douglas Hurt explained, these dusty conditions turned those lands “submarginal—land that, given the price of wheat, did not merit cultivation.” This technical explanation, though accurate, would have done little to allay the suffering of regional families.

While the storms blew, families tried to keep their farms, and livelihoods, together. Children pitched into this effort as much as other family members. From a young age James Frazier understood the dangers posed by dust and sand. The foreman at the ranch he lived on designated him as the fence builder; James learned to spool out barbed wire and pound posts into the ground. When dust blew the loose sand and soil, it could rapidly bury or otherwise destroy those painstakingly constructed fences. As James noted, during the 1930s he “built fence on a large sand drift by the maize field. In a few weeks tumbleweeds had blown against the wire, and sand driven by sixty-mile-an-hour winds buried four of the five wires.” In order to protect the cows from wandering, and the corn from being eaten, James rushed out to fix this section of fence. A few days later, after a renewal of series of “dust storms and hard west winds,” the changing weather patterns had blown away the accumulated sand and debris, suspending the new fence in the air. In the wake of a second fence crisis caused by the winds, James mused that “life gets tough, and we grow tougher as we mature. It’s hard building a fence when the ground keeps moving around.”

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experience echoed the sand-swept paintings of Depression-era artists like J. B. Jackson, who illustrated sand dunes engulfing desert farms and emaciated cattle.

![Figure 21 J. B. Jackson, Dying Farm Illustration/New Deal, ca. 1930s, illustration, PICT 000-866, J. B. Jackson Pictorial Materials, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. James’ experience echoed the sand-swept paintings of Depression-era artists like J. B. Jackson, who illustrated sand dunes engulfing deserted farms and emaciated cattle. That Jackson labeled it “New Deal” suggested that the artists was skeptical of efforts done to ameliorate the crisis.](image)

Families made destitute by the Dust Bowl and Great Depression left their children with few choices. Children, of course, noticed the economic downturn’s effects on their quality-of-life. Jacobo Armenta remembered having to chop and haul wood into Albuquerque for a couple of dollars, if they found the right buyers. His family suffered from a chronic lack of funds, and he explained that his adolescence “was a poor time. No work at all.”

David Newton’s father, a teenager during the Depression, lost both of his parents by 1935, and despite a middle-class upbringing, found that he had “no land, no money, no

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650 Jacobo and Margarita Armenta, interview by Kathleen Hanlon, May and June 1993, box 1, folder 16, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
idea” how to survive without the backbone of his family and their (sometimes) profitable farming and horse ranching. For David’s father, the army was his last resort, but in a twist, he was sent back down to Texas as a border patrol member because he spoke Spanish. Ernesto Candelaria, already shown to be a hard worker with his pomade side-business, felt compelled to leave his family behind and search for other work during World War II. Although he had previous experience farming and ranching with his uncle and grandfather, Ernesto likely felt that his economic chances were better in growing urban Albuquerque. Other families brought their children along to look for free food; children’s hungry faces and tousled “Buster Brown hair” often gnawed at the conscience of those providing scraps and older food to the destitute.

In the wake of the Depression and Dust Bowl, thousands of families decided to pack their wagons or automobiles and abandon their farms. Still thousands more simply left their homes and traveled any way they could, whether by train, hitchhiking, or even walking. According to one estimate, the Depression’s “crisis” of homelessness swelled to “1.5 million homeless people” by 1933. Much of that number was composed of Dust Bowl families and other rural refugees. This migration became a humanitarian crisis,

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651 David C. Newton, interview by Oscar Martínez and Virgilio Sánchez, October 9, 1978, interview 721, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.
652 Ernesto and Lucia Candelaria, interview by Joyce Mendel, March 24, 1992, box 1, folder 17, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
653 Ilse Griffith, interview by Esther MacMillan, February 3, 1983, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Ilse brought her two young boys with her to a bakery that provided day-old bread, then distributed the bread to families at a community center, see page 4.
applying pressure on rural families and small communities across the country, especially in the West and along the routes of migration. James Frazier recalled one such group, which he called “the Wagon Family,” staying at his family’s ranch in late 1934. No strangers to the Depression’s effects themselves, James remembered that “the Cross Ell Ranch was having problems. Cotton was a nickel a pound, cattle sold for a dollar a head, and people burned off their cane fields because binder twine to tie the bundles cost more than the bundles would bring.” At Thanksgiving, the Wagon Family “came to the ranch house door,” and requested space to camp over the winter. They were hoping to “find their fortune” in California, but before they left the Cross Ell, they lost their grandfather to tuberculosis, and welcomed a new baby to the family. James tried to stay hopeful despite the hardships he witnessed. It is unknown if the Wagon Family managed to start over elsewhere. They and thousands of similar families became public symbols of the failures of agricultural capital systems that coerced them into relentless planting. As historian David M. Kennedy noted, “they were refugees from the fabled heartland, outbound from the prairies that had beckoned their ancestors westward, sad testimonials to the death of the dream of America as an uncovered ore bed of inexhaustible bounty.”

In general, the Dust Bowl migrants sought out more agricultural work, and pursued any leads they had. After all, their families had spent years and generations tilling the soil—

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655 Frazier, What I Learned on the Ranch, 124-127. In his memoir, James wrote a heartfelt elegy to the departed grandfather; “Grandpa is at rest under the cholla until Jesus takes him to Heaven. Those fortunate kids were on their way to California where orange trees grow. Old people die, leaving room in the wagon for a baby, while grown people make a better life for the children. Flowers bloom on the cholla, Jesus knows the old man is waiting, and the cactus wren is building a home for her family. There are new calves on the range, and it’s time to plant again.”

656 David M. Kennedy, Freedom From Fear, 195.
it was work they knew. Fairly quickly, however, these families realized that they had to find any work they could, so numerous families headed for developing towns and cities in the West. Ilse Griffith recalled dozens of families from the dust-afflicted regions resettling in her “fairly smallish town” of Corpus Christi, which was transforming into a hub for commercial fishing and the oil industry. She noted that the development of petroleum “ruined everything...all those beautiful fields of carrots and all, turned into oil wells.” However, once they arrived many families still faced hardships; Ilse and many other community members in Corpus Christi tried to support everyone they could with common meals and entertainment.657 These small-scale acts of kindness provided sustenance to poor children and families, but many families kept wandering and searching for a permanent home during the Thirties and early Forties. Joaquin Robles was one of those migrants; a Tejano ranch worker with a large family of small children, he and his third wife Josepha had seen enough of Texas by the early 1940s, when they left their ranch behind to try and become an oil field worker in California. As a colleague commented, “he had his old truck loaded with household goods and little kids, all waving good-bye.” When the oil work fell through, he and his young children went to work in the orchards of the Central Valley instead.658

Some people seemed to survive the Depression without significant hardship, or at least children from the time did not recall many difficulties. Jerry Fragua, born in 1927, hazily recalled the later years of the Depression thusly; “as I was growing up we used to

657 Griffith, interview, 3-5, 12-14.
have plenty of everything, and it was grown right here. We had people raise all their
gardens, all types of fruit, and then we had gone hunting, so we had plenty of animals... we
grew our own corn, wheat... money didn’t mean too much in those days.” The Collins
sisters also remembered feeling lucky that their family and siblings were employed during
the Depression. For them, it was a mark of pride. One year when they were children, their
crop had failed and a family friend in Raton sent them a box of Salvation Army clothing.
Due to their religious upbringing and strong sense of personal pride, the sisters felt
ashamed; Ruth stated that “when I saw that box, I ran off and cried. It was humiliating for
us to accept charity like that.” Her pride rebounded in 1933, while she worked at the
Emergency Relief Administration. She felt a measure of revenge in writing “grocery orders
for some of the families who had given” the donations.

The Winslow family of Menard County, Texas managed their ranch business during
the Depression by bringing their children back together at the ranch. In 1934, when some
of them were ready to leave home, including son John Winslow, the ranch faced an
uncertain future. Their father had run the ranch alone while the rest of the family lived a
comfortable existence in Austin, but in order to finance the ranch they sold their home and
all the “unmarried” young adult children returned to the ranch with their mother. John,
fresh out of college, was able to shoulder the burden with the help of his siblings despite his
father’s passing the next year. John ultimately continued the ranch business after the end

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659 Geronimo Fragua and Jose Toledo, interview by James P. Romero, March 1-2, 1970, microfilm 8, interview
446, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research,
University of New Mexico.
of the Depression and World War II, the only one of the children to stay. The Winslows survived because they had some funds set aside, because the family worked as a unit, and because some of the adult children returned to maintain the ranch. Other families who survived the Depression with the lands intact had resources they could draw on when the economic downturn hit or decided to enter into novel economic arrangements as a safeguard. Armond Jackson remembered the survival strategies of landowners, farmers, and laborers in the lower Rio Grande valley. Since cotton was “king,” any price declines spelled disaster for local farmers, and in the 1930s many of the local cotton gins “shut down” because of the deflated price for the crop (which went as low as five cents per pound). However, Armond’s neighbors and other locals reorganized their business relationships to “keep the families living on the farms”; owners, farm contractors, and workers all would receive one-third of the total cotton crop as well as some forwarded funds. As Armond remembered, the workers were “all Mexican people” and those families ended up all working to pick cotton and complete other farm tasks. In Armond’s recollection this practice saved some farmers and workers, although the forwarded pay also contributed to the debt that many workers struggled under during this time.

Of course, these families were outliers in one important respect—they kept their land. Across the West, but especially in Texas, corporate farming was growing. These large-scale owners were an emerging class of capitalists, and their acquisition of land and labor

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661 John N. Winslow, interview by Mayon Neel, November 11, 1986, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 11-13.
662 Armond Jackson, interview by Oscar J. Martinez, February 4, 1975, interview 172, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. Pages 14-15 showed that Armond’s farm was not personally affected, since he was working again in Mexico, but he recalled his brother’s experiences with the farm.
created new economic conditions for rural families. As scholar Neil Foley explained about corporatization, “the era of small farms, which had sustained the centuries-old dream of the landless to own their own farms, was gradually yielding to the modern era of centralized, corporation farming, a development that spread from west to east... Mechanization and Mexicans accelerated this shift to large-scale cotton production in the West and western South.”

Government efforts and private recruiters were complicit in this process. For example, the Agricultural Adjustment Act created restrictions on planting of certain crops (in Southern New Mexico and parts of Texas cotton was most impacted) which caused the total acreages to decrease substantially. Families farming on marginally productive lands were encouraged to surrender those acres, while larger landowners in other areas kept producing on better irrigated, more productive soil. Ultimately, in the wake of the Depression and the war, “fewer voices were heard on the subject of ascending the agricultural ladder from tenant to owner. The growth of corporate cotton ranches in Texas had rendered obsolete the notion of rising up from farm laborer to farm owner.”

This procedural displacement of the “agricultural ladder” was not new for Pueblo, tejano, or hispano families, but the 1930s marked a milestone for rural Anglos, who then confronted the tenuous nature of land owning firsthand. The promises of land and self-sufficiency for average Southwesterners, borne by homesteaders, boosters, and speculators, were well and truly buried under the new economic regime.

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Government Interventions and Families

The federal government and the states struggled mightily to contain the damage of the Depression and Dust Bowl. By the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt many Americans were desperate for aid. FDR and a core group of administrators were particularly interested in rural programs, whether they created jobs, provided utilities, or impacted agriculture.\(^{666}\) As the government experimented with programs and projects intended to resurrect the economy, one program in particular emerged which utilized the labor of teenage boys: the Civilian Conservation Corps. This program “set up camps for men aged eighteen years and older to carry out various projects including erosion prevention, fence building, forest fire suppression, road building, and rodent control,” in many spaces across the West.\(^{667}\) This provided employment and training to thousands in the region.

Many young men from rural walks of life went into the CCC, including boys from Texas and New Mexico. As one historian of the Corps’ effect explained, the CCC helped transition rural youths into adulthood; “unable to achieve traditional rites of passage, dispirited adolescents felt stymied in their efforts to come of age in the Great Depression.” The Corps was a response to the pressing economic and social issues facing young men.\(^{668}\)

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\(^{666}\) As scholars noted, these developments did not suddenly emerge with the Depression, but were part of the advance of a “prehistory of public works policy” as well as the efforts by Progressives to combat moral and social issues through legislation. See Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23-31.


\(^{668}\) Richard Melzer, *Coming of Age in the Great Depression: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in New Mexico, 1933-1942*, (Las Cruces, NM: Yucca Tree Press, 2000), ix, 1-3. Melzer noted that unemployment among young men “under 25” was extremely high during the Depression, and that older adults worried that these youths needed appropriate avenues towards adult life. I suspect much of that concern stemmed from the widespread publication of homeless “jungles” and other spaces which came under the public’s eye during the 1930s. The CCC provided a practical education and healthy environment for the “right” kind of masculinity; other scholarship has pointed out the gendered nature of Federal oversight of homeless and at-
Lorenzo was among the boys who worked for the CCC. His father was a stonemason, and he put his training to good effect, building roads and fences for the CCC in Carlsbad and Albuquerque. His family received a large percentage of his pay, approximately $25.669 Juan Esquivel, a Mexican American from Hondo, TX, was one of the thousands of other rural teens whose families needed them to work with the CCC. He had already been working as a fifteen-year-old with his father, who built irrigation ditches, but their situation worsened as a result of the Depression. “I went for a few months to school, I really hadn’t had any education... and then I had to quit on account of the Depression.” He looked for other paying jobs, but only found backbreaking work at 50 cents a day. Given these circumstances, he stated: “well, we needed the money, and then at that time, Mr. Roosevelt became president, and then he start opening these programs... Here in Eagle Pass where we could make an application [to the CCC]” which he did as an eighteen-year-old in 1934. He thought the CCC did him well, as he learned English during the experience, gained a practical education, was taught to “be a man,” and with his pay was able to purchase a camera. Later in life, he became a surveyor and hydraulic engineer, utilizing the skills he had learned from the Corps.670

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669 Lorenzo Garcia, interview by Joyce Mendel, March 2, 1996, box 1, folder 19, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. He continued working as a mason after the war—he helped build the church at Carnuel.

670 Juan Esquivel, interview by John R. Moore, July 8, 1994, interview 856, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.
As part of their efforts with the Civilian Conservation Corps and other organizations which provided vocational and financial support to teens and young adults, the New Dealers (somewhat unintentionally) provided a new avenue for teens and young men to escape the farm and ranch by learning new skills and trades. At the same time, other arms of the U.S. government will become increasingly critical of how economics impact rural families, though in many cases they stopped short of arguing against child labor in its entirety. There were some who called out particularly abusive or dire circumstances, especially

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672 Another government program that provided job training was the National Youth Administration, which operated around the same time period. In rural towns like Raton, NM, the NYA provided carpentry training for young men and sewing/embroidery for young women. See Audrey Alpers, interview by Jane O’Cain, February 14-15, September 2-3, 1996, tape 1, side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
photographers and famous journalists like Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Paul Taylor, Lewis Hine, and others hired by the Farm Security Administration and National Child Labor Committee to document families in desperate straits. Their images and articles showed the importance of agriculture to families and children. These photographs tugged at sentimentality and pity from better-off Americans, a form of “social engineering” done by politicizing the child and their health.\(^{672}\) Hine focused the most on child labor, even photographing some farm labor, though that was mostly relegated to export crops and canneries where white children worked.\(^{673}\) Government-sponsored reformers did use these images for anti-child labor projects, although it may be argued that such photography represented the perversion of an agricultural order—the family falls into disarray when they cannot work, but if they had work, perhaps things would return to normalcy.

As they had in 1918 and at other moments, critics on the other side continued to proclaim that the moral worth of rural work inoculated it from the exploitative tendencies of industry. The Saturday Evening Post breathlessly attacked the New Dealer’s efforts, stating that it was foolish to control child labor “in fields where it may not only be harmless but actually beneficial... to decide at what age, at what tasks and for how long minors should be allowed to work is not a job for those professors and schoolteachers who would keep them all in school...” They further suggested that “work and chores” in youth helped


make “successful men.” The majority of New Deal politicians and administrators probably agreed with Henry Wallace, then-Secretary of Agriculture, who offered this counter-argument: “coming from an agriculture astate [sic], I am familiar with the attempts of opponents of the amendment to arouse employers against it on the ground that farm boys and girls would no longer [be] permitted to help with the chores and that the parents’ authority over their children would be seriously impaired. Of course this is nonsense...”

Other New Dealers also utilized agrarian ideology within their pro-intervention arguments; Senator Lewis Schwellenbach, in a speech on the virtues of the New Deal, exclaimed that “the spirit of the Pioneer” directed their efforts, and suggested that the New Deal would truly provide government support for rural working people, unlike government interventions of the past.

As white Americans debated the Child Labor Amendment, they contemplated only a narrow slice of child labor, and regarded most agricultural work as part of a rural child’s upbringing, not part of a system of “oppressive” child labor. In 1938 legal restrictions on child labor finally passed, as part of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This law prohibited children from working in “particularly hazardous” occupations, but once more, this legislation exempted children who worked with their parents or “person[s] standing in place of [their] parent” and also largely exempted harvesting and ranching from the child labor

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674 “The Big Barrage of Invective,” The Saturday Evening Post, February 8, 1936, 22.
676 Smith, Building New Deal Liberalism, 120-121.
Surely the laws passed during the New Deal, at least those which survived the courts, had some impact on child labor in the Southwest. Nevertheless, the reduction caused by legal mechanisms paled in comparison to the declines which would come in the Post-WWII period.

Other government agencies and projects also considered the effect of federal and state interventions into rural work. The New Mexico Extension Service bureaucrats recognized an important truth of the Depression—the surplus of laborers at the lowest wages was pushing teenagers (who “in ordinary times” would have found gainful employment) out of the labor force, without much else available to them. In order to provide relief, these administrators recommended several correctives; “first, they need opportunity for further education… Second, they need vocational guidance and opportunity for specialized training… Third, they need cultural training which will enable them to live a fuller life and employ their spare time to better advantage. Fourth, they need training in conducting recreational and social activities.” The first two recommendations were unsurprising, as they beat the same drum as Progressives of the 1920s regarding better education and practical training. The latter endorsements were more novel. They can be read as an acknowledgement that children’s labor and the practices of young adults were

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678 The previous attempts, as noted in the introduction, were struck down by court opinions. Arthur Garfield Hayes, “For the Child Labor Amendment,” Vital Speeches of the Day 1, no. 11 (February 1935): 343.
679 “Youth Service,” New Mexico Extension News 14, no. 7 (July 1934): 2. The implied solution of providing “recreational and social activities” was that children should join their local agricultural clubs and engage in the approved opportunities therein. In other words, even if you could not find paying employment, you should be participating in the same kind of productive leisure/training that chapter 3 described, except this time within a formalized setting. One could easily connect this to the recently inaugurated CCC’s emphasis on male bonding and outdoor labor.
changing due to the economic downturn, and that teenagers needed appropriate outlets for their energies. Still, despite some interesting ideas, they did not see that the upheaval of the Depression would produce permanent changes to the agricultural work of youths.

During the 1930s, efforts also targeted Native Americans, including the Pueblo and Navajo communities in the Southwest. The “Indian New Deal,” especially the Indian Reorganization Act, was promoted by New Dealers as a way for the state to “move American Indians further—but not completely—out of wardship.” Federal and state attitudes towards indigenous peoples were changing slowly during the 20th century, but they remained essentially colonial in their political context. The IRA allowed relief and land management agencies onto reservation lands, including the CCC, Forest Service, and Soil Conservation Service. It also made some efforts to stop land expropriations and the fracturing of remaining reservation lands. For a short time, these efforts seemed to improve the prospects of many indigenous peoples, although many tribal members and scholars critiqued the IRA, and its emphasis on assimilation and on termination as thinly veiled Americanization policies.

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682 See the lengthy discussion on the merits and flaws of the IRA in Kenneth R. Philp, ed., *Indian Self Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Salt Lake City: Howe Bros., 1986), 47-69. As one Sioux lawyer described his experience with the IRA: “It created a socialistic society, and set the Indian people apart from the mainstream of American life and made them a problem. So what this has really done, it has substituted in place of the governing system that the Indians had prior to the Indian Reorganization Act, a white man’s idea of how they should live, rather a paternalistic type of government which, had as its object the socializing of all the activities of the Indian people and while the framers of this act and the ones who are responsible for the idea of formulating it probably had the best intentions in the world, I cannot help but think that there was maybe not an overt conspiracy, but one in the back of the mind of these bureaucrats to really perpetuate their own existence.” See Ramon Roubideaux, interview by Joseph H. Cash, 1968, interview 6,
As these and other government projects demonstrated, the economic and social well-being of rural Southwestern families remained connected to the fortunes of the lands they worked. The complex agencies and projects active in the 1930s and 1940s held sometimes-competing visions of public infrastructure, land management, and agricultural relief. During the mid-1930s drought, subsidies to farmers and ranchers, as well as changing land policies, continued to shrink the rural labor pool and alter family lifepaths. The federal government decided to pay ranchers a set price per head, in order to ship out beef out of the region or to cull herds outright. As one report noted, “obviously feed conditions necessitated very heavy reductions in steers and stock cattle.” New Mexican cattle numbers in the mid-1930s had dropped to 1928 levels as a result of this program, a reduction of roughly four-hundred thousand head of cattle. In Texas ranchers lost nearly 1.3 million cattle between 1934 and 1935 alone.683 As Otho Allen told it, by the 1930s he owned his own ranch and ended up selling only to the government in 1933 for fourteen dollars per cow. Others in the area “went broke right then and there.”684 Erwin Kretzschmar also remembered this program, since at age eighteen he and his brother pooled their earnings to purchase some land and stock. This purchase, unfortunately, was made in 1930. They managed to avoid the culling and sold their meager cattle for eight dollars a head, before falling out of the cattle business and trying out other forms of

684 Otho Allen, interview by Lou Blachly, July 15, 1952, CD 8, MSS 123 BC, Pioneers Foundation Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
farming in the bone-dry soil. Through these lean times, historian David Wallace Adams mused that “many ranch youths must have wondered if there was a future in the cattle business.”

Similar efforts involved the Forest Service culling wild horses in the Southwest, as well as the decision by the federal government to forcibly reduce the size of Navajo sheep herds in the same time. The General Superintendent responsible for this stock reduction, E. R. Fryer, stated that it was a corrective to overgrazing which had emerged in the late 1920s and created a dire situation when the drought arrived. These events, taken as a whole, meant that less labor was required on ranches and in communal lands, so they served to temporarily reduce the labor pressures on children and families. In the case of the wild horse culling, this likely damaged mountain dwelling families who supplemented their livelihoods with selling or hunting horses.

The gradual restriction of public and communal lands for grazing, farming, and gathering, and the purchases of eroded land, were other government projects which caused many Pueblo peoples, hispanos, and tejanos to suffer. Historically, rural communities sent out boys to watch their small flocks or herds as they grazed on public or unowned lands.

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685 Erwin Kretzschmar, interview by James B. Sweeney, April 17, 1983, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.


687 One Sandias-area hispano remembered rounding up the wild horses for his family’s use, but “in the 1940s, rangers came and killed all the wild horses with high power rifles.” Tom Herrera, interview by Joyce Mendel, May 3, 1994, box 1, folder 20, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. During the Navajo livestock reduction, the government’s actions angered Navajo tribe members and threatened their longstanding shepherding practices. See Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 144-149.

The Naranjo family from Santa Clara Pueblo stated in an interview how Mr. Naranjo would tend to the Pueblo’s livestock; “they used to do those things you know. Young boys go up there and look after the cattle and horses and take turns doing those things. They grazed them in different places on the reservation...” The families living adjacent to Forest Service or other government-owned land tried to continue grazing their smaller flocks, but legal restrictions on these practices made it increasingly difficult. The map below showcased the lands administered under the Forest Service, Parks Service, Indian Reservations, or the U.S. military.

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689 Juan Chavarria and Agapito Naranjo, interview by Michael F. Weber, September 19, 1968, interview 544, microfilm 10, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
Much of this can be traced to the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934, which allowed for fencing on “the public domain” and which furthered the enclosing of previously communal lands. Among the lands organized into these grazing districts were millions of acres in New Mexico, which then required grazing permits in order to utilize. Such permits were allocated with preference to “citizens” and “corporations” who were “within or near a district who are landowners engaged in the live stock business, bone-fide occupants, or

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690 Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other, 185-186.
owners of water or water rights."® Lorenzo Garcia remembered that his family had to obtain these permits on their traditional land grant, as well as Forest Service land. This practice only lasted a decade, because after 1945 grazing was apparently disallowed in Cibola National Forest.® Similarly, Leborio Castillo remembered the government’s construction of fencing during the “late thirties and early forties.” Leborio’s understanding of the BLM land restrictions was that they precipitated further cultural changes among locals; he argued that “people started being proprietary,” and this produced more racial friction between his family and their Anglo neighbors.® Changing land use, including the prioritization of recreation in parts of the Southwest, was a major reason for the decline in farming in those immediate locations. The families of Maria Celestina Gutierrez de Garcia and Eralia Gonzales both remembered their agricultural landholding ending in the 1940s. Neither woman explained in detail the conditions surrounding these changes, but based on the locations of their plots (in Gutierrez Canyon and near Tijeras, respectively) urbanization of Albuquerque and the expansion of recreation were likely part of the process. By the mid-1940s neither family farmed on the land they had held during the 1930s and before.®

® L. Garcia, interview.
® Leborio Castillo and Placida Padilla, interview by Carol Pittman, April 3, 2001, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. See pages 2, 21-23, which explained the story as Leborio remembered it; their family had a neighbor, Mr. War, who feuded with his father over the trespasses of their cattle. Their neighbor ultimately attached painful wire harnesses to the family’s cows in order to keep them from crossing through or under the barbed wire fences.
® Maria Celestina Gutierrez de Garcia Interview, interview by Joyce Mendel, March and April, 1991, box 1, folder 16, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico; Eralia Gonzales, interview by Joyce Mendel, March 18, 1998, box 1, folder 19, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
The federal government also sought to buy out lands damaged by dust erosion and turn them into land reclamation projects. This was difficult for many farmers and families in the region to accept. Farmers felt pressure to sell their lands at steep losses to the government, in some instances losing ten dollars or more per acre. The government wanted to keep “productive” farmers on the land, but felt that the soil had been exhausted by excessive farming. Douglas Hurt argued that these struggling farmers “had slight chance of regaining self-sufficiency, let alone commercial production.” Although many of those acres were previously abandoned, the resettlement effort after the land purchases was perceived as a failure. The cartoon below demonstrated the opinion of the San Antonio Light’s editorial board. They shared the opinions of many local farmers, who remained skeptical of the government’s proposals regarding the dust. Other newspapers, like the Amarillo Daily News, fought for the government’s efforts and refuted the simplistic notion that High Plains farmers refused to address the erosion. Ultimately, those hit hardest by these reductions appeared to the families already struggling to eke out an existence; for example, “between 1930 and 1940 in Texas” tenancy decreased by “32 percent” as farm owners were paid not to grow their crops, leaving tenants and sharecroppers without any income. No one, from federal authorities to local farmers, could agree precisely on what

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696 See the lengthy rebuttal from Amarillo of an article in Collier’s, “Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness,” Amarillo Daily News, September 13, 1937, 1, 2, 7. Collier’s colorfully depicted a Southwestern farmer who stated “Nawsir, not me. No slick-hair college squirt is agoin’ to tell me how to plow. Nawsir. My father beat the pants offa me if I didn’t plow a straight [furrow]. My father and his father before him were farmers, by damn…” The local writer remained skeptical that conversation had ever taken place, as he combed through the argument from the Collier’s piece.
697 Foley, The White Scourge, 178.
to do regarding the dust storms, but those without a public voice suffered the brunt of the government-mandated reductions in land usage.

Figure 24 N. Harding, “Dust!” cartoon, San Antonio Light, April 4, 1935. This political satire depicted the windstorm as both a physical and administrative assault on small farmers, and echoed similar prose from agrarian reformers of earlier periods while simultaneously calling for a new approach that would help farms survive the storms.

Removing Mexican Families
Not all disasters of the 1930s were economic; others emerged from long-standing sociopolitical issues along the border. The mass deportations of Mexican and Mexican American families during this decade created chaos among communities in the Southwest, striking Texas particularly hard. During the early years of the Border Patrol along the U.S./Mexico line, officers focused their efforts on apprehending European immigrants.
coming in from Mexico. As one officer in the 1920s put it, “we didn’t pay much attention to the Mexicans. They were coming over here to chop cotton, pick cotton, or some vegetables. All purely farm work.” After paying an eight-dollar head tax, Mexican migrants were allowed into the country.698 This lax process tightened over the course of a few years, as by the end of the 1920s the Border Patrol began to detain and deport Mexican immigrants along the border. In towns like Hidalgo, Texas, at the far southern border, there were sometimes hundreds of detained migrants.699 These deportations expanded in scope over the 1930s and caught thousands of Mexican immigrants, including fathers, mothers, and children. These deportations occurred in part due to racial perceptions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as laborers who undercut the livelihoods of white workers. Other historians, such as John Weber, argued that the acceleration of this process owed to “repeated legislative failures by nativists” and the politics of immigration.700 Although most landowners and agriculturalists in the region wanted to keep Mexican laborers in the Southwest, other legal and political forces led to forcible separation, detainment, and deportation of thousands of rural families in the region.701

698 Wesley J. Stiles, interview by Wesley C. Shaw, January 1986, interview 756, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. The Border Patrol originated in mid-1924, but those early months were very disorganized according to Wesley. He slept on a cot in the jail, and ate with some soldiers, since there was no building set aside for him or his partner.

699 Stiles, interview, 9-10.


701 Their desire to keep Mexican workers was not created from sympathy—they enjoyed and profited from the cheap labor and easy access to workers that this system of labor provided.
Despite the threat of deportation, individuals and families continued crossing the border in order to work as laborers in agriculture and other industries. Many families and individuals did so because conditions in Mexico remained worse than the “uncertainty” of living as migrants in the U.S. Some children crossed on their own; Juan Báez Barragán remembered leaving his family to work in the U.S. He was unable to get any education due to the Cristero Rebellion of the second half of the 1920s, so as a teenager he came across the border, where he worked on his own for a time. Thousands of other families, as part of a Mexican diaspora, also fled the violence of the Cristero Rebellion, a conflict between “Catholic loyalists” and the Mexican government’s “anti-clerical reforms” that spilled out across much of Central Mexico. Cleofas Calleros, an activist and community leader from El Paso, explained the damage dealt by mass deportations in an interview. Having lived in El Paso for most of his life (and previously deported due to a public health scare in the early 1900s) Cleofas fought to defend migrants in the 1920s and 1930s. In his eyes, during “a Depression, when it comes in any country, the ones who suffer are supposed to be aliens. And very few Americans knew the difference between being a citizen and being a Mexican national.” He noted the scale of the deportation efforts as well: “within six months” the

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702 For a modern approach to this discussion, see Deborah A. Boehn, “¿Quien Sabe?”: Deportation and Temporality Among Transnational Mexicans,” Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development 38, no. 2/3/4 (Summer, Fall, Winter 2009): 345-374.

703 Juan Báez Barragán, interview by Mireya Loza, July 27, 2005, interview 1106, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. Juan knew how to work in agriculture because his family started having him work with them at age ten. Eventually Juan returned to Mexico, then in the late 1940s came back into the United States as a bracero.

government deported almost four-hundred thousand Mexicans living in the United States (of all legal statuses).\textsuperscript{705} Other Mexican families repatriated themselves, whether fearing deportations or being generally unsure of the economic climate. Armond Jackson remembered the long lines of trucks and cars carrying Mexican families back across the border: “they were people [who] lived here locally and they’d come over before. When the Depression hit, there was a lot of them, there was too much labor. That’s why we had all those repatriados. This road up here would be lined clear up past Anthony [Texas] with vehicles going back to México, waiting to get across the bridges.”\textsuperscript{706}

Communities in the Southwest tried to fight against the deportations, many of them on the grounds that deportations destroyed families. The \textit{El Paso Herald-Post} ran an article in 1934 on the plight facing a Rio Grande valley farmer, “an alien, who faced the loss of his crop and the money he spent cultivating a farm owned by a widow.”\textsuperscript{707} He received a stay on his deportation, but border communities continued to debate the practice. Rodney Dutcher, an Anglo writer for the Newspaper Enterprise Association, wrote an article decrying one such incident in 1936. At that time, the government was preparing to deport “2682 aliens of good character.” Dutcher argued that “in a spectacle probably unparalleled in American history, the department of labor will soon break up more than 2600 presumably happy families,” which would also force the family members to “go on

\textsuperscript{705} Cleofas Calleros, interview by Oscar J. Martínez, September 14, 1972, interview 157, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. See pages 16, 22-25.

\textsuperscript{706} Jackson, interview, 14-16.

Dutcher provided examples of families at risk of being split up—importantly, he did not depict the plights of any Mexican families, but instead used examples of a Syrian child and a European family. Nevertheless, Dutcher’s article resonated with readers in Texas, where it was printed in several papers. Even Anglo Texans found that the deportations damaged the socioeconomic well-being of the region.

These forced separations of families mattered because they produced hardships for children, whether they remained in the U.S. or were sent back to Mexico. Recent scholarship on deportations indicated that children suffered particularly harsh secondary consequences from this process; Joanna Dreby noted that “deportation policies are inexorably linked to the intimate politics of gender and family.” Dreby further explained that deportations produced negative impacts to children at a variety of levels, from “crying... sleeplessness... an increase in fear and anxiety” to the long-term damage to parent-child relationships and the child’s life outcomes. These negative repercussions must have happened to families in the 1920s and 1930s. Although incidences of child labor were reduced as a byproduct of these legal measures, they placed children in more precarious family situations. More importantly, these deportations crystallized a racialized depiction of labor that would echo across the rest of the 20th century.

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708 Rodney Dutcher, “Behind the Scenes in Washington,” Brownsville Herald, July 9, 1936, 4. His article was also printed in the Denton Texas Record-Chronicle the same day.
World War II

World War II did more to expand the horizons of rural Southwesterners than perhaps any other event. Of course, the immediate effect of the war was the recruitment and deployment of thousands of rural teens away from their homes, farms, and ranches. My paternal grandparents, Myrtice Davidson from Central City, NM and Edward Earl Marshall from Alvarado, TX, both had their lives radically altered by the Depression and subsequent war. For them, as for thousands of others, leaving was a choice that made sense. Myrtice was the youngest of several siblings, and her family did not depend on their small ranch for their sole source of income. She could make more as a typist and clerk in government administration. Edward’s family had little future in the dust-swept plains of central Texas, so they had left during the Depression to try their luck in Los Angeles. When the war broke out, Edward joined the army, underage, and served in the Army Air Forces.⁷¹⁰

Other youths faced an important choice—would they support their families and agriculture by staying at home, or would they enlist as well? Ernesto Carrejo reflected on his selection, stating “I coulda stayed, you know, in the, ‘cause we had to produce meat and stuff... ‘cause we had livestock, you know, but I, uh, the rest of our friends was going so I told my dad, ‘I’m, I’m goin’. Good-bye.’” With that, he joined the Navy and went to the South Pacific. Ernesto felt secure in his decision, noting that his father “still [had] boys at home,” his several brothers (and sisters), who could continue operating the ranch.⁷¹¹ Sam Collins, brother of Lula and Ruth, also joined the army when he was just seventeen; their

⁷¹⁰ Memories of the author’s grandparents.
⁷¹¹ Ernesto Carrejo, interview by Carol Pittman and Rosalee Miller, September 18, 2003, transcript, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. See pages 5 to 7.
large family made Sam’s departure easier in practice, if not in spirit. George Kitamura, a young Japanese Texan farmhand, was in a different boat when the draft notice came in the mail. He was about to be drafted into the army but received an agricultural deferment due to outside support. George farmed far more than the usual acreage and was “farming more than the rest of the boys,” as his employer stated. Among Spanish-speakers in New Mexico and Texas, some felt that their families were unfairly targeted by the military draft; Maggie Dominguez and his two brothers were all drafted away from their homes near Deming, NM, but Maggie felt that his local draft board deliberately chose to send hispano and Mexican youths at a higher rate than whites.

Unlike the vacillations and reservations of Ernesto, George, Maggie, and others, most boys who entered the military to fight during World War II felt that their wartime contributions outweighed any losses their families might face. For instance, Kenneth Fritz, a Texas boy living on a dairy farm, quit his farm labor and eagerly enlisted at age fifteen. Alongside this mixture of individual choices were the potent forces of culture and nationalism, which challenged rural manhood to respond to the nation’s needs. As military models of manhood were prioritized across the country, men and boys confronted rapid cultural changes that to an extent stigmatized staying at home, even in necessary

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713 George Kitamura, interview by Thomas Walls, May 14, 1979, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
714 Maggie Dominguez, interview by Jane O’Cain, August 30, 2000, tape 1 side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
occupations such as agriculture and ranching.\textsuperscript{716} These cultural portrayals certainly enticed boys to enter the services and may have played a role in their decisions to not return to agriculture. The picture below shows a typical group of young men during a period of downtime in their military service.

![Figure 25](image.png)

\textit{Figure 25} Juan Nevares, \textit{Group of Soldiers, Some in Uniform, Clowning for Camera in Front of Barracks}, ca. 1942, photograph, A2000-042.0005, Juan Nevares World War II Photographs, South Texas Archives, Texas A&M University, Kingsville. Photographs like these were part of nearly every family’s collection, and showed both the boyish mischief of the enlisted men as well as the reality that they were growing into an adulthood vastly different from that of their fathers and grandfathers.

While those on the cusp of adulthood entered the armed forces, the federal government continued to have concerns regarding the activities of rural families and children during wartime. Officials charged with the welfare of children worried that the

\textsuperscript{716} Historians have examined how these arguments were deployed in other places throughout the West; see the arguments laid out by Matthew Basso, \textit{Meet Joe Copper: Masculinity and Race on Montana’s World War II Home Front} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). See especially his introduction, 6-15, and his section on white masculinity and labor challenges, 130-133.
upheaval of war, with men leaving the family to join the armed forces, created new problems among youths. Boys in particular were suspect; the New Mexico department of child welfare noted that delinquency issues soared in the first years of the war; they pinned this increase on the “neglect” stemming from single parent households. They also noticed a ready market for child labor outside of the normal avenues of rural work; “many children have employment opportunities at high salaries which they did not have before [the war].” They backed up this issue with national statistics, showing a threelfold increase in work for teens aged fourteen to seventeen. After these boys reached the age of majority, their employment held steady because they were then drafted into the armed forces; unemployment was virtually nonexistent during the war.

As the war progressed, mass employment began to have negative impacts on farmers and agriculturalists across the Southwest; they worried that the ever-shrinking labor pool spelled doom for the farms that had survived the Depression and Dust Bowl. In order to fix this, they also turned towards the traditional reliability of child labor. At the national level, some high school youth interested in the war efforts were being recruited for summer farm work. A few years into the war, the New Mexico State Emergency Farm Labor Supervisor, A. E. Triviz, claimed that an emergency situation was rapidly developing among New Mexican crops. He worried that the “peak demand” for labor in the late summer/early fall could not be met, especially among cash crops like wheat, cotton, and

fruit. He argued that New Mexican young men needed deferments in order to stay at home, because they were generally experienced at farm work. He also argued that schoolchildren needed to be put to work, “definite plans need to be further developed to utilize fully every available boy and girl who wants to work on a farm or ranch.” In other places, especially in more productive states such as California, Mexican families returned from Mexico or relocated from other states, under the auspices of the Farm Security Administration and the Bracero Program of 1942.

Figure 26 Robert Hemmig, Group of children posing under sign that reads “U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Security Administration Farm Workers Community, El Rio, California, 1941, photograph, Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Workers Collection, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/toddbib000400/. This picture, from El Rio, California, showed some young children posing at one of these camps, likely while their parents and older siblings were out picking fruit.

These developments provided a temporary uptick in the usage of child workers during the war. These statistics appeared to go against the argument that World War II caused a decrease in rural child labor—what the increase during the war in fact signified was the deep demand for labor across numerous sectors, not just agriculture, since adult men and women were employed in the service of the war effort; this provided opportunities for teenage boys too young to enter the armed forces to work in a variety of trades and businesses. Furthermore, this increase of child labor was temporary—these children were not forming a renewed, permanent class of farm laborers.

Many of those thousands of individuals never returned to their families or the agricultural jobs which they had been accustomed to doing. Instead, they resettled in growing urban and suburban parts of the country. Albuquerque, Los Angeles, and the other large cities of the Southwest also received an influx of settlers from both the region and nation. Myrtice and Edward, once they married, resettled in Upland, a suburb of the burgeoning metro area of Los Angeles/San Bernardino. If Edward held on to any thoughts of one day returning to Texas, those ended after the war. The Pinkerton brothers also demonstrated how these choices transpired; although they both grew up in rural Texas and served during the war, they made different decisions. Milburn Pinkerton worked as a mechanic and county road worker after the war until he saved enough money and “financed [land] through the Veterans Land Board at three percent interest with forty years to pay for it,” where he had livestock. As he remembered, West Texas was a “pretty hard place to make a living in but a good place to live.” Meanwhile, his brother Gershom went to college after the war, received a Bachelor’s degree, and left his rural home behind for work
in places like Australia and Connecticut. Whichever path these young men took, they confronted the emotional and economic challenges inherent to any interruptions of the family’s agricultural legacy. Still, families often remained supportive of these decisions, despite the uncertainty faced by those who remained at home. For example, Sam Collins, at the time the only living brother from his family, struggled under the weight of tradition and the expectations of his strict Protestant parents. After the war, his sisters implied that he left the family’s ways behind. As Lula and Ruth recalled of Sam, “as much as we loved you, I think we were never able to show you our love. Far too much was expected of you. The traditions of religion, strict codes, and almost impossible ideals were incomprehensible to a little boy who loved life... you found a far different way of life and became your own man. How glad we all are for that.”

Some young men and women did return to their homelands, but even those who returned did not necessarily take up farming or ranching once more. Ernesto Carrejo was one of the ones who returned to his home. When an interviewer asked him “have you ever regretted that you came back... Are you glad that you came back here after the war?” Ernesto mused a bit, but stated that he accepted his choice to return to New Mexico, even as “lots of people went other places.” Another New Mexican, Jesus Bermejo, recalled that while many “young people” left the Pueblos around World War II, he returned from the

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721 “Frances Pinkerton” and “Milburn Luther Pinkerton,” Families of Kimble County, 302-303.
722 Daudet and Roberts, Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon, 117-118.
723 Carrejo, interview, 9. It is difficult to tell how sincere Ernesto was here, as the interviewer asked the question in a loaded manner, and provided responses that conformed to their notions. Ernesto simply said “yeah” before turning to discuss his occupations (ranching and Forest Service work) upon his return.
Navy shipyards to his home in Picuris Pueblo. The same was also true of the Maldonado brothers, understudies of their father, a master showman on the King Ranch in south Texas. While Plácido “left the Ranch to serve in the U.S. Army in World War II as a surgical technician... Beto Maldonado remained on the beef-producing Ranch, a critical industry for feeding troops as part of the war effort.” After the war, Beto would later take on his father’s tasks, and “continued the family tradition of handling cattle.” This feeling of loyalty and duty to one’s work and home was acutely felt by some young men. Jiggs Porter, a ranch foreman since he was seventeen years old, only left his beloved CS Ranch in order to join the army. When he came back, he dutifully returned home to Crow Creek, where he worked and “considered himself a ranch employee until the day he died.”

Many young adults who returned from the war worked in-between ranching, farming, and other industries, a hybrid economic arrangement. Ira Lewis Ferguson, born in 1921, grew up in rural Kimble County, Texas, as his father was a ranch manager for the Kingston Manufacturing Company of San Antonio, and after college Ira entered the war. Upon his return, he ended up both a teacher and a rancher; he helped operate his father’s ranch, the Lem Jones ranch, but he also taught public school and veteran’s classes.

Robert Fox’s life followed a similar path; he was the right age to be drafted in 1942 for the war effort, but when he returned in 1946 he “began ranching with his father. He also

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724 Jesus Bermejo, interview by Donald Cutter, September 26, 1968, interview 42, microfilm 9, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Pages 3-5.
725 Jane Clements Monday and Betty Bailey Colley, Voices From the Wild Horse Desert: The Vaquero Families of the King and Kenedy Ranches (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 59-62.
727 “Ira Lewis and Betty June Ferguson,” in Families of Kimble County, 141.
worked at other jobs, such as hay baling and cutting cedar.” A few years after, he started working at a Junction, Texas car dealership and garage, but returned to the ranch “to help his mother.” Robert later took up carpentry, but kept the ranch as well.\footnote{Robert L. Fox,” in Families of Kimble County, 151-152.}

Annie Bailey and her husband, who had shipped out to Southern California for the war efforts, returned to rural New Mexico in the late 1940s, but took up shop-keeping full-time, rather than the homestead/business split that her father spent his life doing. As her children grew older, they worked in the shop alongside Annie.\footnote{Bailey, interview.} Many of these young adults were simply responding to the changing economic conditions of the nation and West; farming and ranching remained important but there was increasing space for service-sector, commercial, and white-collar work, even in small towns.

Frank Vigil, who had experience working at the Bell Ranch prior to the war, left for the army in 1941, and he “didn’t come back to the Bell until 1956—after the Ranch was broken up.”\footnote{Frank Vigil, “Letter,” February 14, 1965, in Bell Ranch: Recollections and Memories, Martha Downer Ellis, ed. (Amarillo, TX: Trafton and Autry Printers, 1985), 54. He had gone to the ranch in the first place to replace his father who had to “look after some business at home.”} As the manager of that ranch remembered, “at the height of World War II... every ranch in the country was having all kinds of trouble getting enough help to keep operating. The Bell, too, had lost many of its good young men to the armed forces.” In the wake of this uncertainty, the ranch itself was partitioned and sold off shortly after the war, in 1947.\footnote{Geo F. Ellis, “Letter,” February 7, 1965, in Bell Ranch, 68-69, 73.} In a handful of places across the Southwest, ranchlands were taken over by the federal government for use as military bases and related facilities. Much of the Tularosa
Basin in southern New Mexico suffered this fate. Although it had long been ranching country, the government decided to repurpose this land in late 1941, intending to transform it into “the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range.” As Tommy remembered, his father received a visit “at about one o’clock in the morning” from a government agent who simply stated, “You’ll be gone day after tomorrow. We’ll send a truck to take you to town.” Although the government promised ranchers that the land would be held temporarily, it quickly became a drawn-out struggle between the government and the ranchers, with numerous legal actions taken and many debates over appropriate compensation. In the end, after decades of waiting after the war, the ranchers’ “federal leases had been permanently terminated,” and the government began buying up what remained.

In the Aftermath

Did these crises of the 1930s and early 1940s prove to be blessings in disguise for rural families? Many families ultimately benefited from the rising economic power of the United States in the years after the War, although often at the cost of their rural lifestyles. Those who were young suffered through the crises, but perhaps found it easier to rebound from the catastrophe because of their age. Families who lost members or friends, or who were separated due to deportations, could not easily forget the trials of the 1930s. Those

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732 Later on, this land became part of Holloman Air Force Base and the White Sands Missile Range.
733 See lengthy discussion on this series of events in Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other, 160-170.
Mexican and Mexican American families who remained in the Southwest faced an uncertain future, “casualties of particular racial regimes” in the U.S.\textsuperscript{734}

The demographics painted a bleak picture of rural life across the U.S. As noted in earlier chapters, the rural-to-urban trend had begun prior to the 1930s and was studied by the federal government: in the years between 1920 and 1930, American farms lost roughly “6.1 million persons” to outmigration. Across the thirties, farms lost an additional “3.5 million,” but the numbers across the forties truly represented the long-term losses that farms withstood; during and after World War II, the rural population declined by “8.6 million persons.”\textsuperscript{735} The South and Southwest were the hardest-hit regions of the country, especially in the specified “low-income farming areas” of Northwestern New Mexico and the “coastal plain” of Texas, including its southern subregion. The subregions of northeastern New Mexico, the Texas Panhandle, and immediately south of it also had large percentages of total outmigration, likely driven by the Dust Bowl.\textsuperscript{736} In New Mexico, this outmigration disproportionately impacted rural children; the largest numbers and percentages of outmigrants were found in the “10 – 14” “15 – 19” and “20 – 24” age ranges.

\textsuperscript{734} Buff, “The Deportation Terror,” 536. Her comments on Operation Wetback, a wave of deportations in the postwar period, showed that the 1930s were merely one episode in a series of racialized restrictions and legal efforts against families of Mexican descent.

\textsuperscript{735} U.S. Department of Agriculture, Net Migration from the Rural-Farm Population, 1940-1950, Bulletin no. 176 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1956), 1-2. Of course, there is a margin of error inherent to these statistical models, in large part because they are not counting migrants precisely, but are instead using estimates of the “rural-farm population” and further refining their data to include the population which was expected to be alive at both the start and end of the decade. Given these limitations, I use these numbers only to support the conclusion that children in rural places, who were likely to be child laborers, were among the groups most affected by the upheavals of the thirties and forties.

\textsuperscript{736} The New Mexican subregion had a loss of approximately 39 percent, and the Texas-Louisiana-Arkansas plains subregion had a 49 percent net migration rate. U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Net Migration from...” 12-13, 142-147, 174. The relevant subsections affected by the Dust Bowl, as determined in this study, were 101, 102, 103, and 107, which cover the general region of the Plains across north Texas and eastern New Mexico.
with losses of eight, twelve, and eleven thousand respectively. Across the West more generally, “10 – 14” and “15 – 19” also had the largest percentage outmigration among all age ranges. Clearly, many children left with their families, and many young adults left their farm homes, during the decade following the Depression and World War II. These numbers likely miscounted some of the Spanish-ancestry population shifts, especially among Mexican immigrant families who crossed the border regularly.

Certainly, the rate of rural child labor decreased sharply in the wake of these events, as wartime industries and events shaped what the U.S. would look like in the years following the war. As federal investment continued to pour in, the West was about to become one of the most urbanized regions of the country. Major cities were emerging in corners of the Southwest, and older populations clusters continued to centralize; chief among those for this study are the cities of Albuquerque, El Paso, and San Antonio, which grew rapidly in the postwar. Whether the decline of rural family labor brought on by the 1930s and 1940s was a positive change largely depended on situation and perspective. Rural life was destabilized in the short term, but employment and steady wages could be found for nearly any family or individual. In the long term the expanding horizons of rural youths meant that agriculture was driven to the margins of American life. In the lament of

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Lula and Ruth Collins about their cherished plains of eastern New Mexico, “one by one the settlers gave up, leaving their shacks and their fields to the ravages of time and the violent weather. Hardly a trace of all that excruciating human endeavor remains.”739

739 Daudet and Roberts, *Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon*, 126.
Chapter 7: Conceptualizing Family Labor through Memory

In the wake of the 1930s and 1940s came a radical spatial and conceptual reconfiguration of agricultural life. This final chapter is dedicated to the “slow death” of child labor in the U.S. Southwest, and its attendant impact on public memory, values, and family life in the region. Although it seemed as if its death knell rang out during the Depression and World War II, a subtle shift was instead at work, one that further codified the racial logics delimiting the space of farm labor. The first section highlights developments that further reduced incidences of rural child labor (and rural family life) across the West. It will also show how Mexican migrant children became laborers at the behest of agribusinesses while other families were leaving farms and ranches.

The final two subsections examine modern avenues of historical memory. The process of memorialization of the agricultural past, in ways both private and public, served to uphold and reify agrarian ideals as hallmarks of the Southwest’s cultural identity. Through numerous media, including family histories, publications, museums, public remembrance, oral traditions, and art, a set of related symbols surrounding rural family life have been created over the 20th century. This agrarian ideal laid the foundation for political, social, and cultural life within the Southwest. However, the processes of public memory obscured an important truth about children and families; child labor was not first constructed as a moral good, an economic necessity, or a social expectation. Instead, for children in the rural West their labor was all of those at once. Public memories, of the sort that stand in museums, move across the airwaves, or appear in art and literature, tended
towards representations of the past through sanitized, moralistic stories of child labor. Private memories were often much more complex, though through the passage of time they, too, prioritized specific rural attributes and downplayed others. Careful and critical reading of such memories can reveal the deeper significance of rural childhoods on the production of communal memories, while also checking against their aggregative tendencies. Cultural, social, and political scholars working in the region must account for memory’s selective bias in order to develop nuanced, accurate portrayals of rural life, while at the same time allowing such voices to speak as part of the historical sense-making process.

A Slow Death

Available national data illustrated the broad decline of agricultural work past the period under review. Generally-speaking, between 1950 and 1980 the percentage of U.S. residents engaged in agriculture or livestock raising declined from 6.7 percent (already a steep decline from the turn of the century) down to just two percent of the total population. Although data is difficult to come by for young children, there are numbers available on teenage workers. Economist Gerald S. Oettinger analyzed child labor data collected by the U.S. Department of Labor. Using the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, he found that approximately 55 percent of high-school boys and 41 percent of high-school girls worked at some point in the year while in high school. Of that working contingent, nearly seven percent of 17-year-olds worked as “farm laborers” nationally.

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Although Oettinger did not comment on the specifics of these numbers, his statistics for later age groups showed a marked decrease in the preponderance of farm work.\textsuperscript{741} Results from the Census of 1970 also indicated that about 103,000 teens aged fourteen and fifteen were officially counted as farm laborers.\textsuperscript{742} From these statistics, it is obvious that youths in areas where rural work remained available tended to work during their summer breaks. These teenage farm workers did not stay in that occupation after high school, a marked distinction from older models where farm work was often a lifelong path. Still, teenage labor in agriculture did not vanish completely in the decades following World War II.

Changes in the social and physical landscape rendered visible the rural-to-urban transformation of the Southwest. Even casual observers during the postwar period could witness on the rapid transformation of the region into an urbanized, industrialized space. But fewer outsiders saw the damage wrought to traditional, rural lifepaths. One result of the general decline in rural family labor and the development of urban zones was the abandonment of many rural villages and towns across the Southwest. For individuals whose childhood homes and communities were impacted, this process became a source of loss, shame, and moral outrage. Susanne Eldridge, who had lived as a child in Taiban, NM, recalled its poor condition in the postwar period. In her estimation there were only a few

\textsuperscript{741} While 6.8\% of 17-year-olds had worked in farm labor during the year (mostly during the summer) that number dropped to 3.8 percent among 18-year-olds, and was under 3 percent for 20-and-21-year-olds. This data suggests that farm labor remained a somewhat common summer occupation for teenagers well into the latter half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, but it was not seen as a position for young adults to remain within. See Gerald S. Oettinger, “Seasonal and Sectoral Patterns in Youth Employment,” \textit{Monthly Labor Review} (April 2000): 6-12. For specific data on sectors, see pages 7, 10, and 11.

“old-timers” still living there, going to the last café and church.  

Another woman from Taiban echoed Susanne’s words; Annie Bailey remarked during an interview that “people have just moved away,” also adding that there was little opportunity for youths who chose to remain. The Longs, who were living in a small town in the Texas Panhandle, placed the blame for their town’s fall from grace onto the declining class-status of its inhabitants. As Mrs. Long, a retired schoolteacher, declared, the “early settlers” were educated, religious, and had both “culture and background,” which marked the difference between “then and now.”

Beyond the rapid desertion of small communities, farmers who had previously relied on manual labor, including family labor, continued switching over to picking and harvesting machinery. Landowners commiserated with the sense of loss felt elsewhere, focusing on traditional ranching practices and ideals. One Southwestern landowner, Armond Jackson, opined that “when the machines come in, there were larger farms and there was more land developed. Of course, the lower labor that was doing the hard labor, the hand work, found other jobs in construction and what not. Some got jobs like driving the picker... a farmer would use more local hand labor now if they were good workers.” After his description of increasing mechanization, the interview quickly veered into moral territory; according to Armond, families who would have worked on his land in the past were presently “[making]

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743 Susanne Eldridge, interview by Diane Williams, May 18, 2008, tape 2 side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
744 Annie Bailey, interview by Diane Williams, May 19, 2008, tape 1 side A, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM.
745 Alma and Tom Long, interview by Hardy and Sarah Cannon, December 5, 1989, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
more on welfare than what they can do through their family and connections... they don’t work like they used to work.” He further argued that this breakdown in the agricultural hierarchy was responsible for the dissolution of many families.\footnote{Armond Jackson, interview by Oscar J. Martinez, February 4, 1975, interview 172, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.} Armond echoed Mrs. Long’s approach; for them and others thinking along similar lines, the physical decay of small towns and the cruel mechanization of the farm mirrored the declining moral and social landscape.

Ranchers also utilized technology for their businesses whenever feasible, and they too expressed regret at the changing nature of their work. For example, the Lyda family began incorporating into their ranch work two-way radios, helicopter oversight, tractors for brush clearing, and hydraulic chutes for holding cattle.\footnote{Lyda Family Ranch, interview by Laurie Gudzikowski, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 34-35 of the transcript. For further evidence of technology in ranching, see Mary Lewis Kleberg, interview by Shirley Mock, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. On page 9, Mary Kleberg stated that the future of ranching was “changing... it’s more mechanical... less people needed... using helicopters to round up.” She further noted that “modernization does that,” and explained that technologies did destroy some of the cultural mystique surrounding ranch life.} The older men of the Lyda family appeared wistful about the hard manual labors of the past; in the same portion of the interview where they discussed the business’ expansion and their adoption of technology, Gene Lyda noted that “I’m kind of dressed up today, but I’ve been known to tie an old cow down when she won’t go to the pen... I love good horses and cattle and doing things and handling the rope.” He felt the need to clarify that they utilized technology because the ranch was too large and hectic to maintain old methods.\footnote{Lyda Family Ranch, interview, 34-35.} Modernization might have been “necessary” for these landowners, but it obliterated long-standing relationships to land and
labor for future generations. No interviews I found directly connected mechanization and the reduced need for children or teenagers to work, but it was implied across several interviews that youths were “missing out” on a vital part of their practical and moral education.

A few major government and organizational interventions during the postwar period helped increase school attendance and control delinquency across the country and within the Southwest. Commensurate with the general decline in agricultural labor was a significant increase in school enrollment and attendance across all age categories during the 1940s through the 1960s. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that enrollment of children aged 5 to 6 went from roughly 70 percent in the 1940s to nearly 85 percent by 1965. Elementary-aged enrollment (ages 7 to 13) was already close to total, at 95 percent in 1940, but it too increased to over 99 percent by 1965. Among high-school youths the numbers dramatically improved, from about 79 percent enrollment in 1940 to just under 99 percent in 1965. As educational access and expectations of a high school diploma increased, more and more teenagers remained enrolled in school instead of entering the work force. These enrollment records remained imperfect proxies for actual attendance, but they did demonstrate an increase in state efforts to educate children rather than allow them to work. In 1949 in Texas, the legislature drafted significant alterations to

749 However, the percentage of 16-and-17-year-olds who were out of school remained about ten percent higher than the equivalent percentage of 14-and-15-year-olds. For example, in 1956 98.9% of teens in the younger age bracket were enrolled, but 87.4% of teenagers in the older bracket were enrolled. “Table 103.20. Percentage of the population 3 to 34 years old enrolled in school, by age group: Selected years, 1940 through 2015,” Digest of Education Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics, updated July 2016, accessed August 10, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_103.20.asp
the education system; they developed a new method for distributing funding to local districts, created the Texas Education Agency and a State Board of Education, and “reorganized the administration of public education.”

In New Mexico, the Child Welfare Bureau pushed for greater coverage and services during the 1940s, claiming that there still existed significant need in the rural portions of the state. The state’s reach and intrusion into families, though it began during the Progressive era, grew in scope and potency during the postwar period. Their expanding definitions of children who were “destitute” or “abandoned” would undoubtedly have implicated many families of earlier decades in child abuse or neglect, for sending their teenage boys to work, letting them migrate, or exchanging them in informal systems of child circulation. Boys such as Ben Parker or Connie would have been drawn into the web of state welfare agencies, rather than being left to their own devices or the whims of local communities. Once within the child welfare system, these children would expect to be placed with a relative, in foster care, or in institutions such as orphanages. Under the auspices of such organizations, some youths continued to do rural labor, but they did so as a form of moral correction. For example, the Albuquerque Boys Ranch, known today as The Ranches, was


751 New Mexico Department of Public Welfare, Child Welfare Services in New Mexico, (Santa Fe: GPO, 1945), 17-19, 22-23.

752 Connie was the African American child set on being adopted by two Santa Ana Pueblo members until the community rejected him. His last name is not provided in the sources.

753 NM Department of Public Welfare, Child Welfare Services, 38-42. The department argued that “every child that must leave his own home and live away from his parents suffers a profound emotional and social disturbance which can never be altogether compensated,” but were clearly willing to move children as they deemed necessary.
developed by the local Kiwanis as a home for delinquent boys in the 1940s. The below picture shows a smiling Clyde Tingley, former governor and then-mayor of Albuquerque, posing with a cadre of boys, dressed in their ranch best, at the 1952 State Fair.\textsuperscript{754}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{youth_hall}
\caption{Kenneth Carlisle Marthey, \textit{Clyde Tingley, Boys Ranch}, 1952, gelatin silver print, Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives. The description is as follows: “A group of boys stands with Clyde Tingley and other men at the Youth Hall at the New Mexico State Fairgrounds. Several of the boys are eating cotton candy. Clyde Tingley is holding a framed document.”}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{754} Background information can be found at “Our Work: History,” The Ranches, accessed August 10, 2019, https://www.theranches.org/history/. The Ranch was administered for many years by the same administrator as the Christian Children’s Home of Portales, NM.
Among the Pueblo peoples there was a long-term decline in the practice of agriculture within their reservation communities. Several scholars prior to World War II argued that the Pueblos were losing their “agricultural nature,” stating that “where people live close to the soil, their first concept of luxury is quantitatively more of those necessities for which they must strive in order to sustain life. Desire for qualitative change comes with easier living conditions and, often, with acculturation. The people of Zia no longer raise all of their foods, but plant their fields partly to crops which can be exchanged at the trading post for the new foods on which they have learned to depend.”

The Pueblo “dependence” on external goods was in fact deeply rooted in the colonial relationship between Pueblo peoples and the U.S. government. The U.S. government provided food subsidies (of mostly preserved, canned, and processed goods) to rural reservations since the nineteenth century; the distribution of so-called “commodity foods” continues today through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Industrialized agriculture and a mass market left little space for indigenous food practices to coexist.

However, the decline of child labor among rural villages and Pueblos was only a partial collapse. Children continued to work, especially for their families, although many of Americans tended to view this process as yet another “lost” element of Native American culture. This argument tended to follow the lines laid out by early anthropologists, as demonstrated in the cited article.

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them did not share the dream of self-sufficiency or a lifelong rural existence that their parents and grandparents held. A fifteen-year-old Isleta Pueblo youth, Juan Padilla, recounted his experiences in the 1960s. He lived with his grandparents and helped work their fields. In Juan’s words: “on my grandfather’s farm I’ve planted corn and chili and 12 50 lb. sacks of alfalfa seeds... I help both my grandfathers and go to summer school for math and reading. So I’m working left and right. I want to finish school and get a good job in town and then do that farming like a hobby—in my spare time.” There and his grandparents managed his time so that he could attend school while also helping with the crops.

Rural youths also continued to participate in rodeos, fairs, 4-H exhibitions, and other public events during and after WWII, maintaining some connections to children’s work of the past. As the 20th century advanced, the cultural and especially economic importance of these events waned, but they remained popular community events. As a child, Barbara Patterson recalled beaming as her father took her to get custom cowboy boots with their ranch’s brand emblazoned on the leather. Barbara needed to look the part because her family would ride in the local parade and later appear at the livestock show. As also shown in the photograph below, children young and old took pride in their public labors. These two boys were grooming their entrant into a 1987 livestock-judging contest. Another

758 Jose Trujillo and Juan Padilla, interview by M. E. Smith, July 12, 1967, box 24, folder 20, interview 490, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
photograph from the same collection showed another eager child hosing off their oblivious pig prior to another competition.\textsuperscript{760}

![Image of two children grooming a cow.](image)

\textit{Figure 28 4-H Members Groom Cow for Santa Fe County Fair, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1987, photograph, Santa Fe New Mexican Collection, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum.} Though one child was hard at work, the other found time to pose for the camera. Clearly this was a difficult task for smaller children, but they found it amusing nonetheless.

A second vital qualifier to this story of decline was the increasing presence of Mexican and other Spanish-speaking families among the farms and ranches of the West. As other families left the farm labor pool, agribusinesses and their supporters continued to utilize and exploit the work of immigrant families.\textsuperscript{761} Juan Báez Barragán, whose story began in the previous chapter, returned to the United States several times during his life. In 1949 he came into the Southwest as a bracero, and thirty years after he first came to the

\textsuperscript{760} 4-H Member Readies Pig at Santa Fe County Fair, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1987, photograph, Santa Fe New Mexican Collection, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum.

\textsuperscript{761} As noted in earlier chapters, the mobilization of the Border Patrol and political battles over immigration made this population particularly vulnerable to economic exploitation in the latter half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.
United States, he returned as an undocumented worker. Although he left his family in Mexico for many of those years, they eventually came into the United States with him. As an elderly man, he recounted his life to an interviewer from his new home of San Jose, California. Hispanics and tejanos also participated in migrant labor in the postwar. Jacobo and Margarita Armenta, who were raising a family in the Sandias, found their economic prospects dwindling after the war. In 1950, the entire family, including their children, left New Mexico to all work in the fields of Bakersfield, California, as they were trying to save money in order to purchase a truck. In the modern, industrialized West, agribusinesses continued to utilize whole families as pickers and planters. The same strategies of paying by the piece or by the field remained useful for extracting the maximum labor value from their workers, in large part because paying the head of household (likely Jacobo in this instance) obscured who else may have been working at the behest of the farmer or corporation. However, despite their continued status as farming families, they often found themselves alienated from their labor’s cultural and moral value. Individuals and families with similar migrant patterns and political statuses were often excluded from the apparatus of public memory-making. As the following section will demonstrate, who

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764 This is a deliberate usage of the term alienation, but here I am using it with a dual meaning—the migrant laborer is alienated from the economic value of their labor due to their marginal status in the capitalist economy, and at the same time they cannot even benefit from the sociocultural value of their farm work, because of cultural shifts at the national level as well as the valorization of white farm memory at the expense of nonwhite remembrances.
had the ability to shape public memory was defined in sometimes-rigid manners, and these “stakeholders” were validating only narrow slices of rural life.

Intergenerational Memories

As children and families left their homelands, farms, and tools behind in the mid-20th century, the natural human propensity to construct memories into meaning took hold. The following sections explore the creation of private and public memories of rural family life in the Southwest, including how this process situated children’s work as part of a larger lamentation of a “vanishing” past. They also tended to fall back to familiar tropes, including the yeoman farmer, the cowboy, the unified nuclear family, and the beauty and simplicity of country life.

Most visible among the litany of private remembrances were biographies and other published works. The writing of Cleofas Jaramillo exemplified this sense of loss. In Romance of a Little Village Girl she retraced her visit to the old family home during the 1940s, noting with disgust some new construction, “with nothing left but memories of our once lively, happy home, now in melting ruins. With a sigh, I turned away from this sad sight.” She further noted that the people of Taos “complain that it is such hard work to live in the country. They fail to appreciate the comforts they are enjoying.” Oliver La Farge’s 1950s biography of his wife’s family also expressed this belief, that the rural past was vanishing; “life in the mid-nineteen-twenties had a timelessness that makes it difficult for my wife and her sisters to place the events of their childhood in order or to date them. That

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life has so completely ended that when they talk about it now, it is as if they were recalling some far-off legendary period.”\(^{766}\)

Even historians, scholars, and reformers of this period waxed poetic about the past; Walter Prescott Webb’s famous work *The Great Plains* contains a small but significant section titled “The Ways of Life on the Cattle Range” where he discussed the “haze of romance” regarding cowboys, rural life, and the “Western man.” Even as he attempted to parse this cultural phenomenon, Webb fell victim to its spell; he exclaimed about the “tradition of courage” among ranch hands and other adaptations to the rugged terrain of the West, during the halcyon days of the “Cattle Kingdom.”\(^{767}\) Although authors spoke from very different personal viewpoints, their prose converged around the notion that living in the West was a special experience of the past, and was at risk of being forgotten or otherwise buried. Aging Progressives continued to recommend rural work as a curative for the social ills inherent to modernity and industrialization. Harry Burroughs, a reformer from the Northeast, noted that rural institutions were required “wherever boys, by force of circumstance, are deprived of a normal and happy childhood...” Growing up as an immigrant child, Burroughs still clung to the “country life” he had back in Russia; he remembered how he “roamed the fields and meadows, watched the buds open, saw fruit ripen. This fruit I tasted as well, lying back in the shade of friendly trees and watching the clouds. At night I heard the twitter of happy birds and wondered at the countless stars,


which the peasants called ‘the windows of heaven...’ I could at least live in memory of the country.”

These authors writing on rural life tended to resort to familiar narrative forms in order to depict their rural lives. In most cases, the titles and outlines of the works focused on the power of nostalgia. From Romance of a Little Village Girl and What I Learned on the Ranch to Pinto Beans and a Silver Spoon and We Fed Them Cactus, these autobiographies emphasized the simplicity, moral value, and happiness of childhoods spent in the Southwest. All of them worked to a lesser or greater degree, and they crafted an image of labor as a necessary part of their growth. Even when their childhood selves complained that work was strenuous or tedious, as adults the authors emphasized the bigger pictures of family, growth, morality, and necessity. In reconstructing their memories, a writer can render purposeful every action.

Interviewees offered a different approach to historical memory, given that the questions asked, the interview context, and the relationships between interviewer and interviewee all could inflect the answers provided. For the most part, these interviews were collected at a minimum of thirty years later—the majority in fact were interviews with people in middle-age and the elderly. Interview projects for the most part were conducted by researchers looking to study the past before these individuals passed away, although the

768 Burroughs was a Progressive reformer in the Northeast who built an organization, Agassiz Village, in the early 1900s in order to help newsboys and other city-dwelling child laborers move away from the urban environment. Agassiz Village provided country lodging, work, and recreation for child laborers, and in his memoirs, Burroughs continued to argue in favor of rurality and the natural world as curatives for the social and economic ills of the city. Harry E. Burroughs, Boys in Men’s Shoes: A World of Working Children (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1944), 66-67, 362.
American Indian Oral History Project focused more on culture and politics on the contemporary pueblos, with fewer questions about childhood. Some questions focused on “notable” stories of the past, especially local histories like the raid of Pancho Villa, criminal activities, unusual weather and economic conditions, and the range wars—in those interviews, childhood was often a framing device surrounding the main content, which was orthogonal to family history. As a more general rule, interviewers asked about childhood as a way to begin the conversation, before steering towards the topic of primary interest. This, if anything else, furthers my claim that child labor was so routine, so unremarkable, that it was sometimes a perfunctory part of interviews.

However, in a few interviews, the participants had candid discussions of the historical value of their words. Hallie Stillwell’s interview captured this exchange with her interviewers: “the transcript of this tape will come back to you. And you’ll get a chance to look at it and erase, change, add, anything you want. And the way you send it back altered as you may see fit, that’s the way it is put into the history there.” Hallie responded with a shrug: “Well, if it’ll be any help to anybody.” After hearing about research and public interest into the project, she responded “I find that a lot of the younger people are getting interested in the old time things. And so many, well my great grandchildren... And my grandchildren really appreciate hearing all the early day things. Of course, they don’t live like I did.” Interviewees and authors shared a belief that they were doing a necessary service, preserving the past for future generations. The interview of Louise and Victor

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769 Hallie Stillwell, interview by Bill Gregg, Precious Gregg, and Ernest Speck, May 9, 1988, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
Nixon opened with a dialogue between the couple and their interviewers, the Greggs. Bill Gregg stated that “what we’re plainly interested in is not today, or even yesterday, but anything before yesterday...your childhood or what your grandmother said, or... we’re here to get the old times before everybody forgets.” In response, Louise mentioned that she was “writing those facts down for [her] children.” The respondents for Lori S. Hawthorne-Tagg’s work on the Tularosa Basin also faced this reality. However, those individuals ruminated for years on the story they wanted to tell; as described in an earlier chapter, the families interviewed in that project faced the loss of their land due to the conversion of their ranches into a military base and testing range. As the author noted regarding her interviews, “they did not attempt to conceal their true feelings... if something angered them, they said as much.” Nevertheless, she also explained that “presenting accurate information seemed very important to [the interviewees].” Their stories, like many of the stories told by land grantees and indigenous peoples, were tinged with resignation, pride, and profound loss. There are several common threads interwoven throughout these individual life histories. At the macro-level, many refrains centered on place and agricultural practices, the moral values of rural life, and on the socioeconomic impact on future generations. There was a great deal of overlap between these categories, as most interviewees saw them as inseparable, or otherwise quickly shifted between themes—the same stories might be retold with different emphases.

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770 Louise and Victor Nixon, interview by Bill and Precious Gregg, September 15, 1987, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
771 Lori S. Hawthorne-Tagg, A Life Like No Other: Ranch Life on Lands Now Administered by Holloman Air Force Base (Holloman AFB, NM: Civil Engineer Squadron Cultural Resources, 1997), 246-247.
Many recollections centered on food and eating as part of the unique essence of the rural past, a practice rapidly losing ground to modernity. For rural families who produced their own food, meals were a cultural proxy for the effort put into raising the crop or livestock according to cultural notions of the ‘right’ way. As a teenage cowboy, Bill Corkery listened to one of his mentors opine about the quality of fresh beef, and in combination with his own experiences eating at the ranch or the chuck wagon, he later detailed his own attitude: “but the thing is in them days you had fresh killed beef. Now the stuff you get at the store these days tastes like eatin’ a piece of old card board or somethin’. That was real beef. And that was grass fed; it didn’t have any of this dad gum push-‘em-up-quick and get ‘em out and sell ‘em [practice].”772 Another individual, an anonymous interviewee from Cochiti Pueblo, described the inimitable flavor of Pueblo-grown corn: “everything that we raise our own, it sure has good flavor.” Locally butchered meat was fresher, and vegetables had a stronger taste than the products people could purchase at grocery stores. The interviewee further commented that as a child, they experienced the food their father raised at home, but that practice was rapidly vanishing. The interviewee remarked that even they rarely gardened in the present day.773

Others reminisced about the respect for tradition, family, and religion which were supposedly buttressed by agricultural living. Maria Herrera saw the decrease in churchgoing about younger hispanos as a cause for concern in her interview; “I think when

772 Bill Corkery, interview by Esther MacMillan, April 27, 1982, transcript, UA 15.01.12, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See page 7.
773 Anonymous, interview by Martin Murphy, March 29, 1969, microfilm 7, interview 204, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
we were poorer, we were more of a church-going people than we are now. We also celebrated the fiestas on the day of the saint.” That's when we were farming.”

Similar concerns peppered interviews with Pueblo villagers as well. As Rosinda Lucero recalled, the whole community, including “clan heads, cacique, everybody” helped in the cleaning and adobe plastering of the church and kiva. However, by the 1960s she argued that “now they don’t have community plastering and cleaning any more. Nobody takes care of the church or the community house.” The church had been covered with “cement” which eliminated this traditional practice. Even when they brought out their saints for a fiesta and procession, they did not leave it in the church because it would be “desecrated” by “all that talking and kids playing around,” inside of the chapel.

In Rosinda’s worldview, respect for religious practices, sacred spaces, and the community’s traditions intersected with community work and involvement. As previously noted in Chapter 2, she also connected these forms of community work and religious adherence to social propriety, especially of youths. She even criticized the emergence of a Community Action Program during the 1960s; this project put young people to work, fixing roofs, cutting weeds, and cleaning around the Pueblo. She linked its existence to the failures of the previous generation (those raised during the 1930s and 1940s). “The parents sort of neglected each other, meaning the brothers and sisters and cousins. But if the parents stuck together they would be able to help, to be able to teach their children to sort of help each other. But if the children just

774 Maria Herrera Dresser, interview by Joyce Mendel, December 2, 1993, box 1, folder 18, MSS 597 BC, transcript, East Mountain Historical Society Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.

775 Similar problems were developing among those tasked with the care of the acequias. See Rosinda Lucero, interview by Estellie Smith, August 15, 1969, microfilm 8, interview 699. MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
didn’t want to grind dirt or whatever, they just didn’t, that’s all.” No longer did people do this work from their own initiative or sense of belonging—they had to be paid for their labors.

Families who owned land into the postwar period worried about the legacy of their business and their acreages. When asked directly about their ranch’s legacy, Mary Ann Kokernot opined that “I hope they’ll keep [the ranch] and keep it intact. Now I don’t know that, because, you know, times change as families grow and separate and have different interests and live in different parts of the country. I don’t know that they’ll be that interested, you know, when you get down to grandchildren and grandchildren—I mean childrens’ children. You know, they may not care at all about it. They may want to sell their part maybe, I don’t know.” Mary Kleberg, a matriarch at the massive King Ranch of southern Texas, also worried about the future of her ranch. As a corporation with shareholders, the ranch remained a powerful economic engine for the region, but Mary and her husband had little success in keeping their children at the ranch. Of her five children, just one remained as a member of the Ranch Board of Directors. During her interview, conducted the same day as the Kokernot ranch group, she stated that “I’ve talked to some other ranching families today, and it seems like diversification is the name of the game.”

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776 Rosinda Lucero, interview by Estellie Smith and Bill Leap, undated, microfilm 8, interview 681, MSS 314 BC, transcript, American Indian Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico.
777 Kokernot Ranch Group, interview by Sarah Massey, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Quotation from page 25.
778 Mary Lewis Kleberg, interview by Shirley Mock, February 18, 2000, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
For certain populations in the Southwest, the agricultural legacy linked them to their deeper ancestral lineage. This temporal connection served a social, political, and cultural purpose; families who could trace themselves as farmers or ranchers back into previous centuries could claim a long-term affinity for, and ownership over, the land. For example, Ignacio Flores traced his family’s heritage and influence in the San Antonio region. Descended from early Canary Islands settlers to the region, his family was publicly noted for “always” having farmland along the San Antonio River. Even though he was a doctor in town, a significant part of his personal identity remained bound up with these deep agricultural roots. Memories of ancestry and land were rarely simple matters of individual family pride—they were subject to public scrutiny, challenge, and conflict. Contesting terrain in this manner during the postwar period was a zero-sum game; those who owned land defended it using any available strategies, whether rhetorical, legal, or physical, from those who did not own land, especially those who had lost their rights to land. Indigenous land claims, as well as those of non-landed and immigrant families, remained on the sidelines of the hispano and tejano-led contestation of land ownership.

Even individuals who had long left their rural lives in the Southwest behind expressed profound longing for the past; Dorothy Ruggles, who had tutored children at the Bell Ranch in the early 20th century, wove tales of her ranch life, “greatly embroidered I am sure after all of these years” for her grandchildren. She could still clearly envision “the deers nibbling the hollyhocks over the fence on one of those bright New Mexico moonlight

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779 I. D. Flores, Jr., interview by Esther MacMillan, May 12, 1983, 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio.
Owen Amaon, who as a child lost his father and was raised by a neighboring family, told stories to his family about going to the schoolhouse with his brother Jack, fishing on the Llano river, and riding horseback across the plains. As an adult, he left the Southwest (and the U.S.) to travel for his occupation. But the memories and yearnings for the rural past ran deep in him. While his family resided in Spain in the early 1960s, Owen rented a farm in order to teach his children how to plant, tend animals, and ride horses. This figured prominently in the memories of his children.

Mexican and Mexican American public memory folded an important complication into the neat mythos of Southwestern agriculture. Rather than a clear picture of idyllic ranching or farming, stories of migrant work, sharecropping, and other farm labor typically dwelled on the struggles, and resilience, of the family. As Lorenzo Galvan Jr. explained of his family’s history, he noted that “people suffered because of [prejudice and the Border Patrol]... and that’s why we’ve come where we are now... because we overcame that...” Most farmworker families across the Southwest faced the politics of Americanization in intimate, visceral confrontations. Other individuals at the same group interview explained how prejudice even restricted which streets their family could walk down, and how rural Texas towns were sites of intense “bigotry and rac[ism].” A growing consciousness regarding migrant labor has opened the gates of public memory in certain parts of the

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781 “In Memoriam Owen Amaon,” in Families of Kimble County, Kimble County Historical Commission, (Junction, TX: Shelton Press, 1985), 422.
782 Tejano Community Meeting, October 16, 1994, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. See pages 1, 3-6.
Southwest. Aggregated interviews from Mexican farmworkers highlighted similar concerns to their farming counterparts in the early 1900s. School remained an issue, as Virginia Saucedo recalled working during the summer, going to school for a month, then returning to work. Work was still a matter of family subsistence, as twelve-year-old Mario Costilla explained, “after school we go to the fields and we have to work a lot, because we need money to eat and pay our bills, our water and light.”

Even when skeptical of their place in a hostile American society, Spanish-speaking peoples in the Southwest could find the positives in their family histories. As noted above, if they had a history of owning land, farming, and ranching (in both the Southwest and Mexico), they could take pride in their ancestral accomplishments. This was particularly true among hispano and tejano families who still clung to the edges of their traditional lands. The families of farmworkers, peasants, and the rural poor, most often found within recent immigrant families and the laboring classes of villages and Pueblos, conceptualized their family histories instead as part of an effort to provide a better life and future success for their descendants beyond the limitations of agricultural work. Cleofas Calleros remembered his childhood labor fondly, articulating a vision of Mexican life where government school “instruction” was less necessary than moral “education,” which he believed was taught in church and at home. His grandfather had warned him of the dangers of American schools, telling young Cleofas “you learn everything that the gringos teach you, but don’t believe half of it.” Throughout his adult life Cleofas fought to protect rural and

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783 “Farmworkers: Who Are We?” interview, September 6, 2001, UA 15.01.12, transcript, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio. Mario’s name is given in the video and transcript, so it is provided here as well. See pages 2-5.
migrant Mexican families from abuse.\textsuperscript{784} Many other Spanish-speaking families emphasized formal education as a tool to lift themselves out of poverty. Remembrances of education thus followed a path where family labor was a necessary precondition to a better life, and remained something honorable and moral.

In the recent past these communities have begun to push back against more dominant narratives. The Institute of Texan Cultures invited Latinx participants around San Antonio to a community interview in the 1990s; many of the respondents noted that they came to the U.S. as migrant farmworker families, where they pulled cotton and did other farm tasks. Through these struggles, one member explained how their parents “taught [them] that farming was good but too many hours to work,” yet at the same time they “stressed education.” One of the interviewers, Lorenzo Galvan, opined that the importance of education was vital to Mexican American and \textit{tejano} communities in rural parts of the state. Although “not everybody” could benefit from education, many of these community members, born in the 1930s and 1940s, no longer worked in the same manner as their parents.\textsuperscript{785} Even among marginalized groups, such as farm laborers, child labor was slowly declining due to improving educational conditions and viable economic alternatives.\textsuperscript{786}

It is fitting to end this section on rural remembrances with the memories of Juan P. Valdez, a participant in one of the most contentious crises of modern New Mexican history.

\textsuperscript{784} Cleofas Calleros, interview by Oscar J. Martínez, September 14, 1972, interview 157, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso. See pages 12-14, 24-26.  
\textsuperscript{785} Tejano Community, interview, 6-8.  
\textsuperscript{786} Thinking along economic lines, it makes sense that migrant farmworkers, sharecroppers, and others who lacked ownership stakes in property or land would turn towards education as an alternate pathway to a better future. For a family-owned farm or ranch, most of the family’s labor is reinvested back into the family, but those working for others cannot make the same economic claim of their labor.
Issues which began during American encroachments in the Southwest continued to simmer even during the mid-20th century. Nowhere was this most apparent than in 1967, when the *Alianza Federal de Mercedes*, led by Reies López Tijerina, went to the courthouse in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico. What ensued was an attempt to arrest the District Attorney, a shootout, and “the most intense manhunt in New Mexico in recent memory.”\(^{787}\) This event left an indelible mark on New Mexico’s cultural consciousness. In justifying the raid, members of the *Alianza* like Juan Valdez articulated a deep vision of the struggle over New Mexico’s rural heritage. Juan recollected (as if to his grandchildren) that the discussion over the incident could not “start by talking about the shootout at the courthouse” but instead had to “start by talking about what happened to our family during the 150 years before we went to the courthouse.”\(^{788}\) Much like Ignacio Flores’ account of his Canary Islander roots, Juan’s story began instead with the Spanish land grants, the difficult work undertaken by ancestral family members to make livelihoods in what became New Mexico, the U.S. land grab which undermined centuries of rural life, and the unscrupulous Americans who exploited *hispano* laborers and landowners. “‘I don’t know if it’s true they were told to leave,’ he’d continue, ‘but they left. Where the hell are all the houses, the corrales—the barns? Where’s the school?’” Our people lived there for no telling how long—three, four generations—and then they were run off the land. ‘Where the hell did they go?’”\(^{789}\) For New Mexican *hispanos*, the loss of land and their efforts to regain it encapsulated


\(^{788}\) Scarborough, *Trespassers on Our Own Land*, 1.

numerous historical struggles, which scaled from the individual family up to entire communities. Land remained essential to the historical and social identity of *hispanos* because their memories are “encoded... to their place.” The following section explains how uneven access to the vehicles of public remembrance continue to hamper the memory-making practices among these communities.

Making the Past Public

Rural communities attempted to reconcile their present conditions to their past. These efforts were disseminated through local history books, museums, and public art. Regardless of the form, communities expected that these materials would inform and shape the nascent public memories of children. One interesting case of public preservation came from the remarkable genealogical documentation conducted by Kimble County, Texas. As a book, the work was typical of local history; most of the family entries go back several generations, often to the last place a family was before traveling into Kimble County. They list all the marriages, children borne from those unions, and deaths of the family line. Where further details intrude, they revolved around business interests in the county, public service and volunteer work, military service, and hobbies. Monotonous as the book may be to read for some, it is not meant to be read in the traditional sense. For

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790 Estacia Huddleston, “Querencia: Placemaking in the Heart of Northern New Mexico,” Center for Regional Studies, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, updated November 1, 2015, accessed June 7, 2019, http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/crs_rio_chama/7, 23. As theorists of *querencia* noted, “losing connection to place erases histories and stories—people feel like that to lose their land is to lose themselves, and erases the transferable memories to secure children’s future investment in the land.”

791 These museums are one of the few, if not the only, places where young children learn about the histories of their home communities. Local history is not typically taught in much detail at public schools, and many children do not have access to a knowledgeable relative or neighbor who could tell them about the past. Despite their many flaws and limitations, local historical collections are thus essential to the place-making identity process of children.

792 Kimble County Historical Commission, *Families of Kimble County.*
contributors, the publication of these family histories must have been a crucial part of the historical sense-making process. It created an indelible record of their family, ensconced within a particular place, time, and culture. As with any creation of public memory, a process of omission was also at work—families contained within the work were generally still present within or near Kimble County. Those with family histories that took them through the county, but who did not stay, are largely absent. This pragmatic decision unintentionally erased the family histories of immigrant families and others who traversed this space but did not remain.

The Tucumcari Historical Museum, located in an old public building from the early 20th century, is one example of a local effort to make sense of an agrarian past. At the museum, locals and visitors can pore over rural life relics, and perhaps imagine the struggles and small pleasures of that lifestyle. Through the careful placement and documentation of its collection, a visitor might conclude that rural Tucumcari was a place of idyllic pasturage, rough-but-honorable cowboys, and small-scale agriculture. Even where artifacts from agribusiness appeared in the collection, they remained benign, even necessary for the continued existence of the community.793 The family portraits, school pictures, and other showcases of childhood in Tucumcari elided much of the richness and complexity of children’s lives. Latinx people, though part of the history on these high plains, are apparent

793 For an example of agribusiness artifacts, see the dairy machines and advertising from the Crescent Dairy, located in Tucumcari. For another view, there are also images of the Tucumcari Experiment Station and the images of massive herds roaming in the surrounding plains. Second Floor Collection and Rear Barn Collection, Tucumcari Historical Museum, Tucumcari, New Mexico.
in the images, though their stories do not appear in as much detail as English-language,
Anglo-American descriptions of rural life.

An example which shows how smaller communities can band together to display
their own stories is the A:shiwi A:wan Museum at Zuni Pueblo—this institution holds
collections and exhibitions on the Zuni Day School for children, on traditional games, and on
the voices of Zuni elders, among other things. Most large communities across the
Southwest have small museums of their own, but it is comparatively rare to see museums
with such a self-conscious approach to their own history as there exists at Zuni Pueblo.
There, the museum’s mission “is to ‘set the record straight;’ to correct inadequate,
inaccurate and/or wrong representations of our collections housed at satellite museums
and archives. Museum collaborations enable us to negotiate access to our own cultural
patrimony and work towards regaining control over the circulation of our objects and
knowledge associated with those objects thereby reconciling historical asymmetries of
power between source communities and holding institutions.” However, in creating such
museums rural communities also created a chronology of their own survival and resilience,
with agriculture at the center of their livelihoods.

Larger institutions also preserve the past in distinctive ways. For instance, the
massive New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, located in Las Cruces, was initiated
in the 1980s as an effort to “recognize pioneering and long-time farm and ranch families,”

794 For examples of the day school exhibit, see “Special Exhibition,” A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage
but by its opening in 1998, the mission statement became “connect[ing] the present
generation to the history of farming and ranching in New Mexico, inspiring a deeper
appreciation and understanding of the state’s rich heritage.” This approach included
livestock and agriculture demonstrations, museum artifacts, collected oral histories, and
links to New Mexico State University. Despite the expanded mission, the museum is still
primarily oriented towards the history of white American ranching and farming; the
Museum Board has only a single hispano among its members, and much of the push to
incorporate the museum came from Anglo farming families in the region.

Artistic representations of the past also play a continuing, key role in the
reinforcement of public ideologies regarding children, work, and rural life in the Southwest.
There are many different media which expressed these ideas, including the behemoths of
television, movies, and popular music. However, those tend towards very simplified
pastiches of the past as either idyllic country life or a rough-and-tumble Wild West. For

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http://www.nmfarmandranchmuseum.org/about.php?id=58
797 See “Museum Board,” New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, accessed September 13, 2019, http://www.nmfarmandranchmuseum.org/about.php?id=105. Also see Yetta Bidegain, interview by Jane
OCain, May 13, 1996, tape 1, side 2, Oral History Program, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. Yetta also noted that there was conflict between the Hispanic Cultural Center and the
NMFRHM, but did not go into details.
798 These works, many of them consumed or viewed at a national level, are beyond the proper scope of this
dissertation. However, for an overview of the ways that film, television, radio, and music shaped public
understanding of the west, there is a large historiography covering these themes. See Richard Slotkin,
**Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America** (New York: Atheneum, 1992);
Chapters from Nicholas Sammond, **Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American
Child, 1930-1960** (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), are also useful for seeing how the frontier connected
to mass media. For a broader analysis of Western identity and myths as a way of condensing complex
histories, see Richard R. Flores, **Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol** (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Patricia Limerick, **The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American
West** (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988). For an emphasis on tourism and mythic themes, see Hal
Rothman, **Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West** (Lawrence, KS: University Press of
Kansas, 1998).
example, in 2009 New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson deemed “Under the New Mexico Skies” the official “State of New Mexico Cowboy Song.” In this song, songwriter Syd Masters extolled the “mesas,” “juniper,” and “creek water,” of the range.” His narrator briefly links to memory, as he sings; “leanin’ against adobe walls of old--Their stories to be told.” Political theatrics of an official “Cowboy Song” aside, the song itself is a beautiful but hollow interpretation of Anglo-centric ranching life in the state. Some artists were more critical of this rural past, even as they commercialized a Western heritage for their own interests. Celebrated country musician Johnny Cash wrote a song entitled “New Mexico” for his 1964 album; in the song Cash sang as a “young fellow” on a cattle drive into New Mexico. Although it started off “pleasant” and “lovely” by the time they reached New Mexico the cowboys were being harassed by “thorns and thistles,” “hail,” and “Indians,” and the narrator opined that “Go back to your friends and loved ones, tell others not to go/To the God forsaken country, they call New Mexico.” Cash juxtaposed the youthful naiveté of the narrator to the harsh environment. This sort of usage of New Mexico as a simplistic proxy was common in the postwar period, and despite its lack of lived experience, both sorts of songs helped shape public opinion regarding the rural past. Much of the art which valorizes rural labor is similarly superficial—a pastiche of common natural forms is

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799 “State Songs,” New Mexico Secretary of State, accessed January 10, 2019, http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Kids_Corner/State_Songs.aspx. Included is a .pdf with the lyrics to Syd Masters, “Under the New Mexico Skies,” song. As of September 15, 2019, the song page has been altered; the current page is https://www.sos.state.nm.us/about-new-mexico/state-songs/

800 Johnny Cash, “New Mexico,” audio, track 9 on The Original Sun Sounds of Johnny Cash, Sun Records, 1964. The record was released well after Cash had moved on to Columbia Records, but he had left a wealth of material already recorded for Sun Records.

801 It is perhaps telling that the Native Americans were discussed in the same breath as the natural obstacles.
non-controversial and easily digestible, but it lacks the historical and emotional weight of lived experiences.

Some visual representations of children’s work, although produced to record or dramatize rural life, have moved beyond the realm of historical evidence and/or folk art and into larger museum collections. Paintings like *Pastor de Cabras* by William H. Dunton, produced as part of the Taos art colony, hang in museums and galleries—Dunton’s depiction of a neighbor boy shepherding his goats provided a pseudo-realistic look into children at work. The piece is currently viewable alongside landscapes and related folk art in the Albuquerque Museum, so a modern viewer is likely to consider the work as a constitutive, realistic depiction of the Southwest itself. Among the collection of local materials at the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe is another piece which straddles the boundaries between art and historic representation. The photograph shown below came from John Collier Jr., son of the BIA commissioner and a famed social scientist in his own right. Entitled “Sorting Beans, Juan Lopez and Son, Trampas, NM” it revealed a moment of love and labor between father and son, though it obscured the difficult and tedious work of bean-sorting.

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Alongside the visual representations hanging in museums were stories, sometimes known as cuentos, which described New Mexico and Texas. These stories can be found in books, audio recordings, and other places of public memory production. Stories and fables, although similar in content to family histories, are acknowledged to be fictitious representations. However, many storytellers intermingled the personal and imagined in
order to hone the fable’s moral potency. Paulette Atencio, a storyteller from Peñasco, New Mexico, provided several excellent examples in her compiled work *Cuentos From My Childhood*. Stories such as “Don Cuerno” emphasized the moral qualities of simple farm work contrasted with the dangers and vice of industrial work. In “Don Cuerno,” the villagers of a small hispano community stopped celebrating their traditional religious practices when a prospector discovered gold near the village. As the parable explained, “muy pronto, la gente ya no quería trabajar duro o dedicarse completamente al trabajo de casa. Ya muchos no querían sembrar, no querían ordenar sus vacas y hacer quesos. No querían ni ir a misa. Las Iglesias estaban casi vacías.” Ultimately, the newfound wealth led to divorces, vice, and a breakdown of traditions, punctuated by an appearance from Don Cuerno himself, a demon, who danced with the townsfolk at the new dance hall.803 “Don Cuerno” and other stories such as “La Flor Que Cantaba” and “La Nuera” often integrated supernatural and religious overtones into daily life, including the practices of children’s work.804 Stories such as these were told and retold within Spanish-speaking communities of the Southwest. As with others mentioned herein, Paulette wanted to preserve these stories for future

803 Paulette Atencio, *Cuentos From My Childhood: Legends and Folktales of Northern New Mexico*, trans. Rubén Cobos (Albuquerque: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1991), 106-109. Cobos’ translation (of a slightly larger excerpt) is as follows: “This discovery changed the town forever. A gold mine opened, providing jobs for many men. They started to earn good wages and families were able to buy land, clothes, food, and furniture… Soon very few people wanted to plant gardens, milk cows, make cheese, or attend mass.” He truncates a couple of the lines, including the final two, which could otherwise be read to say “they didn’t want to go to mass. The churches were nearly empty.”

804 In “La Flor Que Cantaba,” the backstory for the parable involved a father and his adolescent sons heading to the mountains in order to chop wood for both their personal consumption and for sale. The relationship between the sons rapidly deteriorates and one son ends up killing the other and burying him on the mountainside. “La Nuera” described the harsh family life of a married couple who lived with a grandfather and their son. Although the daughter-in-law was strict and cruel to the grandfather, their son remained devoted to his grandfather, doing the domestic work and caretaking the elderly man needed. Paulette Atencio, *Cuentos From My Childhood*, 138-143.
generations under the belief that such stories constituted both a cultural and a moral heritage of rural life.

As the 20th century progressed, locals have been recording, collecting, and otherwise preserving cuentos, dichos, songs, and similar oral traditions of the West. At the behest of Governor Jerry Apodaca, one such collection from New Mexican seniors contained the following introduction: “it seemed fitting to ask New Mexico’s older citizens to share their talents, to interpret their nation’s history, their own lives, and to reflect on ‘age’ and growing old... The selections which follow show many ways of seeing the world.”805 The stories and poems within spoke to the complexities of aging, with many of them focused on the need to preserve knowledge and culture for younger generations. The winning entry, written by Serafina Sena from Clovis, NM, pointedly expressed the emotions at play in the efforts to maintain intergenerational memory. “Old age is, a book of Wisdom / written too late to be read, / All that is left for the Young / is the Love that was, the work of its hands / the History untold, and the foot prints / to follow.”806 This act of preservation formed yet another method by which public memory is shaped, complex traditions are consolidated, and life experiences are reconstructed into moral parables, suitable for children.

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805 New Mexico Commission on Aging, Canciones y Dichos: Songs and Sayings of New Mexico’s Senior Citizens. (Santa Fe: GPO, 1976), 1. The collection contains both original and inherited poetry, stories, sayings, and similar works, entered into a contest sponsored by the state.
806 Commission on Aging, Canciones y Dichos, 3. The other pieces varied in content, with some expressing religious values, and others discussing the realities of aging. Most repeated some variation on Serafina’s refrain that the older generation held precious knowledge but could only attempt to provide it to the young. Most made only oblique references to rural life or their past as children, but that provided the subtext for many of the works. A few, including a list of “Remedies” by James Ladd from Farmington, “Old Kitchen Floor” by Mrs. Bolton from Albuquerque, and “My Home in the West” by Wanda Woods from Pena Blanca were quite clear on the subject. See pages 31 and 33.
Renewing Rural Life

Though the slow death of child labor was just one phenomenon among a number of related rural practices in decline, it held a special place within local and regional memories. By virtue of its capacity to link older family members with youths, these recollections of childhood remain among the most cherished, poignant, and resonant memories that parents, grandparents, and other relatives can share with younger generations.

During much of the 20th century, the industrialization of food production meant a move towards “abundant crops and a surfeit of inexpensive food” for hungry, thrifty consumers. Thus agricultural and rural developments paralleled food-market developments, with the creation of instant meals, the rise of fast food, and mass preservation and processing of foods being the most prominent symbols of the U.S.’ post-World War II foodscape. The farmers and ranchers who survived the 1930s and 1940s had already experienced consolidation towards industrial ends, so their participation as the producers of raw materials for postwar diets came quite easily. Smaller survivors continued to feel the pressure to grow more, enlarge their fields, and fatten more cattle, so that food industry giants could reap windfall profits. This remains the dominant mode of food production and consumption into the modern day, though some Americans envision a different future for food and diets.

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808 For more details on these developments, see Harvey Levenstein, Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
Specifically, recent cultural developments across the U.S. indicate a renewed interest in agriculture, food, and rural life among some populations. For the middle class, going to pick produce, farmer’s markets, backyard gardens, eating organic, and an upswell in outdoor leisure show some markers of the agricultural legacy. These show that the national market has some demand for alternative models of production and consumption. Southwestern agriculture continues to advertise itself effectively, and foodstuffs such as green and red chile, beef, piñones, pecans, wine, and honey have become prized by food aficionados. Among rural communities, organizations such as 4-H continue to educate and impact thousands of Southwestern children. Schools across the region are also now developing more robust garden and farm education. For some dedicated individuals, especially in parts of the Southwest, this moment offers an opportunity to engage in rural work once more, within a favorable cultural and economic milieu.

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809 As an organization, it has expanded to a far wider range of services across the realms of “health, science, agriculture, and citizenship.” They remain connected to the Cooperative Extension Service as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but clearly their scope has increased as a result of changing economic, social, and cultural influences. This change transformed 4-H into a massive mentorship and education organization, quite different from its roots as an educational tool to develop scientific agricultural practices among the next generation of Anglo farmers. The centrality of agriculture is gone, replaced by a modern reinterpretation that foregrounds STEM engagement as key to childhood development of good citizenship and strong work ethic. There are still 4-H associations in most counties of Texas and New Mexico; “Find Your Local 4-H,” National 4-H Council, accessed August 10, 2019, https://4-h.org/find/. For more information on what the modern 4-H system emphasizes, see their annual reports. “4-H Grows: National 4-H Council 2017 Annual Report,” National 4-H Council, accessed August 10, 2019, https://4-h.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/AnnualReport-2017.pdf.

However, the emergence of a local, organic food marketplace and a renewed interest in farming has not benefited all agricultural families equally. In many places within the Southwest, owning farmland is now out-of-reach for most families, as productive lands are more expensive than in decades past. Second, there is an implied racial component to the marketing of local produce; it places value on the farmer or farm owner once more as an individual, devaluing the work done by farm laborers (who are of largely Mexican descent). Finally, it creates a dialogue around the “rediscovery” of traditional food knowledges that ignores or marginalizes historic experiences and practices. Local families and individuals maintained or developed those foodways for their own cultural and practical uses, and did so at times when they were not valued by the broader society for their “authenticity.” As other scholars have noted, foods with special, local, and cultural valence can “condense meaning and capture the pride and tradition of a region in a celebratory manner.” In creating this market, businesses and individuals participating in it turned to traditions (such as the importance of chile to New Mexicans) as something marketable, a way to sell agricultural goods using a veneer of agrarianism, tradition, and legacy. Practices and foods which were grounded in subsistence, and which were practiced historically by Pueblo and hispano people have since been repurposed as part of middle-class America’s increasingly broad foodscape. As a society, Americans are eating these

811 See the approach taken by Bridgette Rivers, Robert Oliver, and Lynn Restler, “Pungent Provisions: The Ramp and Appalachian Identity,” Material Culture 46, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 2, 10. They analyzed the cultural significance of ramps, a wild leek native to the Appalachian Mountains and widely appreciated by locals. They argued that it made its way into popular food culture as a luxury ingredient, while remaining a unique ingredient in local cuisine. In their methodology, they divided up their responses into several thematic categories, including “personal or community benefit,” “family,” and “memory.” Most ramps pickers did so for subsistence and culinary variety, but a substantial number also stated that the process of picking and eating ramps “reminded them of family” and was a way to “revisit [the] past.”
novel foods, but a diversifying appreciation of new cuisines can and should do more to contribute to thornier dialogues about colonialism, inequality, racism, and historic land and labor injustices. Those issues cannot be marketed nor consumed, but they must be part of any modern discussion on the revitalization of Southwestern foodways and traditions.

The treatment of historical processes of child labor, family subsistence, and agriculture is mediated by a number of factors, including location, economics, cultural participation, political issues, and family dynamics. Public memory also depends on the personal interpretations of locals and visitors alike; there are key differences between envisaging a “past” and a “heritage.” Despite the efforts of museums, storytellers, and artists to sway observers, cultural producers do not strictly dictate a singular understanding of events to individuals. On the one hand, a “past” implies something inevitable, even necessary, about the decline. A “heritage” suggests a moral quality or guiding lesson, even more important perhaps than the lived experience. Neither interpretation can recapture lived reality—a difficult and slippery task even in the best circumstances—but both models inform the development of public memories.

Scholars and locals alike have suggested approaches that may reconcile the agricultural past with agrarian ideologies; the model of intergenerational cultural heritage promoted under the umbrella of “querencia,” for instance, might prove a more durable form of historical sense-making, though it still has limits. Articulating a sense of homeland, place, and community through practices of “autonomy,” “reciprocity,” and “integrated systems,” this theory provides community-centric approaches to the maintenance and revitalization of cultural practices, traditional knowledges, and a positive sense of self-
identity which steeled marginalized communities against rapid economic and political dislocations.\textsuperscript{812} It also brings in community-based practices and research, linking scholars to practitioners and interested locals.

Its practices might even prove to be a locally-produced antidote to the narrow, racialized legacy of American agrarianism; as the Arid Lands Institute articulated this vision of local history, “the acequia landscape produced a democratic society of self-governing water stewards, capable, cognizant, and collaborative, long before there was a Monticello, an educated yeoman, or a Jeffersonian grid designed to produce them.”\textsuperscript{813} More specifically, querencia’s impact can already be seen in some parts of New Mexico—over the late 90s and into the first decades of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, communal practices like the \textit{enjarre}, the plastering of community adobe buildings, the cleaning and restoration of \textit{acequias}, the planning of open and community spaces, and the provision of communal gathering spaces, or \textit{resolanas}, and the reclaiming of streets and roads for traditional parades and gatherings are all concrete practices that querencia’s model has been promoting in towns like Chimayó.\textsuperscript{814} All of these practices can, and should, include children as active participants in the communal activities. Actions that bring people together have the potential to create new, durable connections between future generations and their labors. Even those who

\textsuperscript{812} Huddleston, “Querencia,” 35.


\textsuperscript{814} Huddleston, “Querencia,” 18-29. \textit{Enjarre} literally means “to plaster.” A \textit{resolana} is best understood as a place where the sun warms the area, a “suntrap,” and in these communities they were locations where (primarily men) would go to listen to news, gossip, and relax, near the plaza and church.
lost their land in previous generations could find a renewed engagement with agriculture,
ecology, and traditional lifepaths.

Despite its power to inspire new commitments to heritage and land, *querencia* addresses only the historical displacements of *hispano* communities—it may not be the best model for interpreting and evaluating intergenerational memories of white Americans, non-Latinx immigrant populations, and more recent Mexican American immigrant families.

*Querencia* also does not have government support behind it—the community model here is not an analogue to the *ejido* or more radical forms of land protest and activism.\(^{815}\) This is problematic because it hides the historical dispossession of indigenous lands by the Spanish and risks reifying the colonial past. It also tends to reciprocate American models of property ownership even as it claims to call for communal living.\(^{816}\) It may also fall short in connecting dispossessed families who have become firmly ensconced within urban communities where opportunities to explore agriculture and the natural world are scarce. There is still space for new, more holistic models of public memory in the Southwest; hopefully future efforts can be inclusive of children as important actors in the renewal of their traditions and practices.

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\(^{815}\) *Ejidos* held land in common to local agricultural communities, and were made up of land donations by the government. J. Granville Jensen, “The Ejido in Mexico: An Agrarian Problem,” *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 20 (1958): 7-16.

\(^{816}\) The long-term question which remains is whether this is a call to return to older models of community land ownership, a hybridized approach of land trusts, or a new approach. What balance will be struck between the economic, cultural, and environmental uses of these lands? Some of the literature addressed these questions, including Kristina Gray Fisher, “Reclaiming Querencia: The Quest for Culturally Appropriate, Environmentally Sustainable Economic Development in Northern New Mexico,” *Natural Resources Journal* 48, No. 2 (Spring 2008): 479-531. See the comments on land trusts and economic development challenges on 525-529.
Conclusion

What do we then know about child labor and its impact on the peoples of the rural Southwest? It was a major factor in the economic life of this region, and deserves a thorough account of its own, alongside the growing historiography on miners, domestics, farmworkers, and other marginalized laborers of the rural West. Children were rendered invisible and silent due to their age, physical capability, and mental development, but also due to their subordinate status in society and the labors they were given. As a result, adults had significant leeway to construct the public meaning of child labor, and they were happy to codify it as a moral good; some did so in order to obfuscate any misgivings they may have had about the practice, but most others sincerely believed that child labor was in fact an inheritance they passed on to the next generation.

This project explored child labor through its interactions with various systems in the Southwest, from environment, culture, and education, to rhetoric, economics and family dynamics. In all these spaces, I searched sources that could illustrate the reasons that children labored, the choices they and their families had the space to make, and how they saw themselves within the region. Fundamentally, it was the environment which created the initial preconditions for child labor. Since the Puebloans first developed agricultural villages in the region, children worked. When the Spanish came to conquer and settle in New Mexico and Texas, they too had their children work. When Americans arrived by wagon, rail, or foot, they still faced the same bleak environment. All these communities built systems of land and labor that included children, quite simply, because the landscapes
of deserts, mountains, and plains demanded long hours of labor in order to eke out a living in the harsh, unforgiving soil. Children were necessary multipliers of force, providing hours of low-cost labor to families that needed to extract every ounce of energy they could. Children could not do all the tasks required to run a household, but they could chop wood, plant seeds, haul water, scare off animals, herd livestock, pull weeds, watch siblings, clean their homes, gather eggs and milk, husk crops, care for others, plaster adobe, and help their elders with more complex tasks. That they ought to do these tasks was considered undeniably “natural” within most families.

In fact, child labor was built into and supported by family structures, which included patriarchal models and gendered labor roles. This had been the traditional model of the family within the Spanish, Mexican, and American visions of the Southwest, though Pueblo attitudes challenged it in some areas. Men groomed boys to work in the fields or with livestock, using their labor to provide practical training in these areas. Women worked with girls in order to prepare them for married and domestic life, though they had a healthy dose of work around the house as well. Elders in the community and other leaders organized communal work through the same mechanisms of deference and obedience. Though this model appeared stiff, unchanging, and cemented by tradition, in practice it remained much more complex. Family structures always accounted for a level of flexibility, so that roles could be modified when external circumstances demanded such alterations. If the male head of household was sick, boys and girls might take over his duties plowing fields or bringing goods to market; if an elder midwife could not practice, she would call upon her young assistant to administer her practices; and if a parent passed away or abandoned the
family, other family and community members stepped in to give the children a decent life in whichever way they deemed best. Communities relied on and trusted one another because there were few other avenues of support in the late 19th and early 20th century. Part of that trust meant that children shouldered much of their own weight through labor.

Throughout all the trials and tribulations of rural living, children interpreted their labors as just another fact of life, a responsibility entrusted to them by their families. They still found time to build relationships, get educated, grow, and play. At schools, in villages, and on the range, they found entertainment. Play was as routine as labor, and children naturally found methods for combining both during their long days. In fact, play helped children develop the valuable economic skills they would need as they grew older, and communities (in formal and informal manners) structured childhood socialization to provide spaces for such activity. Older youths gained autonomy and agency through showcasing their abilities at rodeos or other competitions, though such participation was heavily gendered, and they also attended to the problems of youth through internal conflict mediation. These activities, like those of adult laborers, help structure their attitudes and behaviors within the labor system. Some children demonstrated more financial savvy than others, going into business for themselves, but many others tended to minimize the impact of their own work. Children’s attitudes actually assisted in the invisibilization and marginalization of child labor in the public eye, though they still found it meaningful, and the capturing of those practices through memories and lived experience can help restructure public understandings of child labor’s place in the Southwest.
The traditional practice of child labor had been so deeply ingrained into the fabric of local communities that it remained durable in the face of several challenges. Perhaps the greatest threat, as it were, to child labor was the promise of education, always a rarity in the 19th century West. Around the turn of the century education was fast becoming a necessary and fundamental part of U.S. public services across the nation. However, educators and pedagogies designed for urban youths back East ran aground when they encountered the variety of family arrangements in the Southwest, the numerous languages that children spoke, the limited resources of the territories and states, and the great spaces which separated families from one another. They also had to acknowledge that children worked; school could not be the only labors that children participated in, nor did it even take priority over rural chores. Thus, the schooling of the Southwest did not proceed in an even, measured manner. Instead, educators across the region had to negotiate around these externalities to provide some measure of education; families largely agreed that education was a noble goal, but it had to be balanced alongside economic and social obligations. Thus, depending on familial wealth, location, school community development, and personal preferences, some children received more education than others in the Southwest. Schools became rural institutions despite these limits, providing spaces for community meetings and organization, but unlike in the dreams of many educators, they would not and could not eradicate the presence of child labor. This would prove to be a boon for the growing national agriculture and livestock market.

As agribusinesses grew during the 1910s and 1920s, they too found novel ways to tap into children’s labor. Their success at doing so without placing children on their payrolls
was largely predicated on the regional rhetoric surrounding children doing rural work with their families—if children primarily worked under their parents and older relatives, who functioned as surrogates for the company’s supervision, then children (it was believed) were not being exploited by capital. Instead, they were just “helpers” assisting in the real productive work done by adults. This belied the tremendous economic value children brought in all the sectors they worked within; children following their parents were key to the cotton and cash crop harvests across the West, they managed many of the domestic tasks necessary to keep ranches and farms productive, and they even handled the raw goods which were channeled into industrialized dairies and creameries. These labors were in most cases invisible, not because rural people were unaware of them, but because they took children’s labor for granted. More than any other part of the long history of child labor, this move to turn children into agricultural laborers without drawing them into wage labor directly should force us to reconsider the boundaries of the term child labor. Direct, unequivocal exploitation cannot and should not be the only marker of child labor—their presence within economic production at any scale made them laborers in a very real sense. As children became laborers for larger businesses, some of the “shine” came off from their work, but they adapted to the new demands of their families as best they could.

By the end of the 1920s major natural, economic, and political changes loomed, which would cause fundamental disruptions to economic practices across the region. These crises targeted families, not children, but when families exited the agricultural systems, children followed, few to return. First came mass deportations of Mexican families of the late 1920s; many of these migrants had worked in agriculture and ranching for years
beforehand with few problems. Next came the market crash and Great Depression; when banks came to recoup their loans, thousands of families could not provide the necessary repayments, and lost their lands and livelihoods. In the middle of this economic depression, a meteorological phenomenon struck the Great Plains—the Dust Bowl. These storms ravaged farmlands already overworked by dry-land farmers, pushing even more families off their land and bankrupting them. When the government intervened, they ended up purchasing or taking over thousands of acres of damaged farmland and ranchland, culling livestock, and ordering farmers to let crops rot. Agencies also tried to provide employment for thousands of boys and men who had lost ground during the preceding years. These efforts provided them new skills and opportunities that drew many away from agriculture permanently. These employment efforts crescendoed when the United States entered World War II; some children actually went back to work on farms, but total employment meant that rural families suddenly entered a highly industrialized, developing economy.

As this closing chapter demonstrated, in the decades since World War II, child labor (and rural livelihoods more generally) morphed for many from a tool of economic survival into a family memory, a character-building practice, and a moral parable. Children’s work permeated the fabric of public memory across rural communities, and much as reformers and locals of the early 20th century never recognized such work as “child labor,” most modern remembrances also did not connect the labors necessary to family subsistence to the labor of children toiling in soot-blackened factories of the East. Nevertheless, the region depended in part on the economic value of this practice, but as new horizons opened
for youths and schooling took priority, child labor was slowly but inevitably relegated to the margins for most children.

The change over time of children’s labor reflected aspects of broader alterations in the land and labor systems of the Southwest. In many Spanish-speaking communities, the *patrón* system, grounded in reciprocal obligations, religious and cultural traditions, and local economics, was present from the early 1800s until the turn of the 20th century. White Americans were already in the process of settling the regions in large numbers, though many of them were small, independent homesteaders, farmers, and ranchers. Both sets focused on subsistence with some goods traded at the local level, and there were some farm and ranch wage laborers, though they were not the majority. These models transitioned into new land/labor systems, as land inequalities, new financial and technological developments, and other events disrupted the traditional subsistence model. This was the turn to agriculture as a business practice; with it would come tenancy and sharecropping, and an increased tendency to focus on crops for the market. This quickly transitioned into full-blown industrial agriculture, as lands were consolidated ever-further into the hands of fewer landowners, as larger corporations traded goods in the national market, as families were brought in or transformed into migrant wage-or-piece laborers, and as old models of subsistence, like foraging, hunting, and gathering were further circumscribed.

Critical analysis of the lived experiences of rural children and the everyday practices of families revealed that the same questions of social agency prevalent in labor history matter in the realm of child labor, too. Historically, children in *hispano, tejano, Spanish,*
Mexican, and indigenous societies worked much like little adults, learning how to maintain their small communities and engaging in culturally structured forms of labor. Anglo-American families who entered into parts of Texas and New Mexico in the 19th century faced the same conditions on their farms and ranches, though they had their own ideas about agriculture. By the turn of the 20th century, most children worked within an informal labor market, working on the land of relatives, in their own homes, or alongside elders. In some respects, families also functioned as proxies for employers and labor brokers. However, the usage of children as workers was never a given; instead it was negotiated and re-negotiated through family relationships and community systems. Every family adjusted their choices to their particular situation, internal dynamics, and knowledge, and most children had some understanding of their work, even if it was simplistic. These and other factors contributed to a dynamic, complex market in children’s labor.

This phenomenon is remarkably similar to the history of women’s labor in many respects, but as robust as that historiography has become among American historians, child labor as a topic of study remains over-focused on industrial and urban work, uninterested in the daily lives of rural children. On the other hand, historians of the West have spent considerable time on childhood itself, but have done little interrogation of children as a category of laborers. Moreover, in the public discourse child labor is rarely considered a hallmark of the Southwest. If they think about it at all, most modern Americans consider child labor either a punchline or a characteristic of less “developed” nations—that our own history of child labor has been so thoroughly hidden is a testament to the power of public
discourses on agrarian life, the power of farmers as a political bloc, as well as the tendencies to avoid difficult discussions about the position of children in the past.  

In this regard a careful examination of the lived conditions of childhood actually brings the entire project full circle, returning to questions of rhetoric, law, and ideology that have largely dictated the history of child labor. Despite efforts early-on to re-center the study on children and their practices and avoid the reification of the intellectual and legal history of child labor, it became apparent that perhaps a better and more thorough understanding would instead incorporate the rhetoric of families and children into that admixture, to stand equally alongside the rhetoric of reformers, educators, business interests, religious leaders, traditionalists, and anyone else who had something to say about child labor. The participatory nature of family and child engagement with the rhetoric has traditionally divided them from the world of (largely middle-class) rhetoric. In order to advocate for a history that gives agency to children and families, they must also have some ability to speak, to reason, and to argue for their own positions. This articulation of their choices, grounded within the socioeconomic context, was not usually as dramatic, high-minded, or prolix as the words of middle-class interlocutors, but it is perhaps the best way to integrate the social and intellectual strains of child labor scholarship.

817 Farmers have held that power, essentially, since the midcentury, and still hold vestiges of it today. Leo Marx articulated the ways in which “localism” was deployed as a rhetoric in order to promote the “power of the farm bloc in Congress,” and the “special economic favor shown to ‘farming’ through government subsidies.” Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 5.
Yet despite all the challenges it has faced, child labor has not died out completely. It survives on some farms and ranches, where youths are still taught some of the old techniques so prized by their elders. It remains within families where foraging, hunting, fishing, and other traditional ways are making a comeback. It appears where agriculture is used as an educational tool, rightly assuming that there is some value for children in working with plants and animals. Unfortunately, agriculture and nature it also lingers as a viable agribusiness tactic for exploiting the labor of (mostly) migrant families. Ultimately, economic, political, and environmental changes pressured children out of the workforce during the 20th century. In many instances, families continued to need their children to work; some of them doubtless persisted in their labors, doing so despite growing public disapproval and legal proscriptions. Within the contemporary formalized economy of the U.S., there has been little space for children to publicly operate as workers. But understanding why and how their families worked, and disrupting “child labor” as a wholly negative category, means analyzing the positives it brought to families.

A new and more complex understanding of the practice can assist efforts to revitalize traditional practices within Latinx and Pueblo communities, it can help increase engagement with the environment and our foodways through school agriculture and outdoor education, and it can even promote healthier family relationships as families (re-)learn to grow gardens, tend to animals, and build bonds of affection through shared labor experiences. A more nuanced ideology surrounding agriculture can also help advocates and reforms more precisely target and articulate ills of contemporary child labor, cutting through invisibilizing, pro-agrarian rhetoric here in the U.S. and abroad, in order to ensure
that families have economic alternatives to coercing their children into work. It can also help us emphasize that the child is at all times a curious person, especially regarding the natural world, and all its attendant sights, smells, and sounds. Educators and theorists from Rousseau to Vygotsky and Dewey have articulated this psychological truism, and child development scholars today continue to expound on the importance of the natural world to children. We as adults and caregivers face an obligation to provide children opportunities to experience nature and agriculture. Lastly, careful analysis of children’s places in the world ought to shape our academic and public discourses on families, children, and the long history of rural communities in the Southwest. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca’s closing words from *We Fed Them Cactus* remain as true now as they were when she first published her work in 1954: “He is gone, but that land which he loved is there... But each generation must profit by the trials and errors of those before them; otherwise everything would perish.”

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