

KEEPING RURAL TRADITION ALIVE: THE RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER
DYNAMICS OF THE MODERN CHARRO COMMUNITY

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The Charro tradition is the national sport of Mexico. Yet, its national recognition is limited even though the Charro tradition has influenced other important Mexican and American cultural symbols such as the mariachis and even the American cowboy. I conducted an ethnographic study (2013-2015) in Mexico on the Charro community to assess their cultural adaptability in a changing Mexico. The figure of the Charro serves as the personification of centuries of culture and tradition as it is displayed through their body comportment and clothing, as well as the behaviors, mannerisms, and adherence to the norms that are unique to this subculture. Charros perform *suertes* or events as a team to gain points in front of judges during *Charreadas* or competitions to pay homage to early Charros. The judgment is strict and points can be deducted for incorrect techniques, clothing, or form which is indicative of the continuous standardization by the Federation of Mexican Charros. Charro women (*Escaramuzas*) perform a ten-minute routine of synchronized horse dancing to traditional Mexican song and are judged on their grace, elegance, and presentation. Although men and women both participate in the Charro tradition, emphasis is placed on men since their presence in the Charro tradition originates from its inception. The following chapter use the theories of Thorstein Veblen to analyze the race, class, and gender dynamics of the Charro community in relation to a changing Mexico.

DEDICATION

To the Mystics, the Aldana and Marquez families, and Emily Knox

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Charro grabbed his son and roughly placed him on the saddle. "Hold on tight," he ordered, while he looked directly into his son's eyes. The little boy grabbed the horn of the saddle with a big smile, he nervously said, "Okay". The music began and the all the Charros began to line up for the parade of the teams. The announcers begin to announce the names of each teams as the Charros proudly prance around the circle section of the lienzo to their designated spots. The teams ride their horses around the edges of the lienzo and greet the audience with a wave. Their eyes are centered on the audience. One Charro has his ten-month old baby in his arms. The baby is dressed in a miniature Charro outfit and looks like a doll-sized representation of his father. The father looks down happily at his baby and the baby smiles at him. Once the father is settled in his spot in the lienzo, he grabs the baby and lifts him slightly above his shoulders. The audience claps and yells in approval. His legacy will be kept alive.

(Observation, 2013)

What is a Charro?

The Charro tradition commenced from a complex and racialized relationship between the Spanish Conquistadors and the indigenous population. During Spanish colonization, Spanish colonial officials attempted to institute a strict racial category between the indigenous population and the colonizers by implementing the *casta* or caste system that subjected a long-term inherent division in social economic, and cultural identity (Jackson, 1999). The Spanish condemned mestizo and indigenous people by denying them resources and rights in colonial society. Indigenous people were granted even less rights as mestizos became synonymous with bastard offspring leading to necessary distinction by the Spanish colonizers regarding claims to Spanish ancestry and rights in the *casta* system (De Mente, 1996). Spanish rule in the 1570s prohibited mestizos and indigenous people from living among one another (Werner, 2001).

The *casta* impacted rural life since lower *casta* work was bound to hard labor in small and large haciendas. According to Merchasin (2014), “These vast entitlements existed as semifeudal systems, where *patrones* were responsible for the *campesinos*, and the *campesinos* were reciprocally dependent on the *patrones*. Survival tactics for life in these ruthless places, where you could not speak with out permission, were: Don’t bring bad news, avoid conflict, don’t initiate” (Merchasin, 2014). Docility was expected of the mestizo and indigenous groups that worked lengthy and strenuous days. Kathleen Sands states, “Manpower for herding posed problems for the early cattle and horse breeders of the newly conquered land. Fearful that possession of the horse by natives might threaten Spanish supremacy and well aware that the best physical and psychological weapon they possessed was horsemanship, the Spanish took great care to keep horses out of the hands of the natives...” (Sands, 1994). Initially, the *casta* law prohibited mestizos and indigenous people from riding horses or carrying a gun since the Spanish feared that accessibility to guns and horses would lead to rebellion from their workers. Yet, this exclusionary practice became disadvantageous to the Spanish hacienda owners when the expansion of haciendas required continuous labor from the lower *casta* (Myers, 1969; Chevalier, 1972; Brading, 1978).

Although the first horses were brought to the Americans during the Colombian Exchange in the late 1400s, the horse became an influential sources of profit for Mexican haciendas. Horse breeding became a great way to turn a quick profit while the the cattle industry grew immensely (Sands, 1994). Members of the lower *casta* had to develop their equestrian skills in order to fit the growing demands of the hacienda.

Although the Spanish had their own equestrian style and culture, the hacienda workers adapted a saddle style and riding techniques that were unique and significant to them that ultimately formed modern *charreadas* or Charro events. They adopted the Charro dress and style from the culture of Salamanca, Spain which had a dominant agricultural population during the 14th century. According to Robert Smead (2004), the term Charro was a derogatory term in colonial Mexico to refer to a peasant worker or a person of lower caste and it was also used as an adjective to describe something that was poor in taste. Further, Sands (1994) also indicates that the original Charro idiom was connected to attire because of the clothing used by 17th century rural communities. Although Charro has a negative connotation, the term Charro became exclusively associated with these men. The Charros used this term as their own for a positive mode of Mexican rural identity.

The *casta* officially ended on September 16, 1821 when Mexico gained its independence from Spanish rule. Although the *casta* legally distinguished people based on racial classification, social classes became symbolic and based on socio-economic status. After the *casta*, Charros underwent physical and symbolic discrimination due to their rural origin even though Charros played a significant role in defeating Spanish rule. According to James Norman, “In the 1810 War of Independence, which freed Mexico from Spain, the small ranchers and *vaqueros* played a most important part. The war also freed them from Spanish restrictions, and as a result they went to extremes in decorating their costume [with bullets and guns]” (Norman, 1970). The horseman became a symbol of power for Mexicans and this symbolism was reflected in art and literature. The Charro

imagery became synonymous with Mexican patriotism yet class distinctions within the Charro tradition emerged as newfound opportunities in the accumulation of property became available.

The three-decade presidency of José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori in the 1870s established the rise of economic change in Mexico. Expansion into manufacturing and industry led to the migration of the landless poor in cities (Slatta, 1997). According to Sands, “Many of them maintained ties with their villages and sustained an identification with Charro traditions as practiced on the haciendas. When Charro performances came to the city, these new factory workers were there to swell the audience” (Sands, 1994). The presence of the Charro community in city life gave rise to the use of the Charro events as entertainment for more than just its participants. The Charro tradition became a pastime in urban Mexico which led to cultural shifts within the Charro community. Class distinctions exacerbated the tension between revolutionaries and Porfirio Díaz’s political followers.

Upper class Mexican used the Charro tradition as a method to elevate their class status by distinguishing themselves by dress, speech, horses, etc. By the end of the 18th and early 19th century, there were evident class distinctions within the Charro community that stemmed from Mexico’s changing economic structure (Wilkie and Michaels, 1969). As Mexico’s economic structure depended more on industry rather than agriculture, the Charro tradition became a symbol rather than a lifestyle. Sands states:

Although the traditional haciendas disappeared, the Charro who had survived the war and could find vaquero work or revive their small independent rancharo

operations returned to take up familiar roles. Even village celebrations and rodeos were revived, so Charros could show off their skills as they had done for centuries. But for those who went to the city, and even those that remained in the countryside, only memories of the old way of life on haciendas remained. Charro shows had been discontinued during the war, and although horses continued to be a major form of transportation for rural people, horsemanship was not a necessity for the city dweller. For many Mexicans, particularly for the vaqueros, hacendados, and hacienda administrators who migrated to the cities, and for their offspring, the possibility of losing the horsemanship skills that had linked Charros so closely to the evolution of national identity was a frightening prospect (Sands, 1994).

Economic growth benefited his allies but also a few wealthy estate owning hacendados. These wealthy estate owning hacendados—renamed ranchos— were able to acquire large portions of land leaving many rural vaqueros, hacendados, and Charros to migrate into Mexican cities for work.

The tension between the lower class and upper class Mexicans led to the Mexican Revolution in 1910 which ousted Porfirio Díaz from power. The horse once again played an important role for the revolutionaries in the defeat of Porfirio Díaz's regime (Griffith and Fernández, 1988). Important figures such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata became famous public figures of the Revolution as well the Charro community. In particular, Emiliano Zapata and other vaqueros that fought in the revolution proceeded from the Charro community. Zapata grew up with the Charro tradition and his family experienced financial hardship due to Porfirio Díaz's policies. Emiliano Zapata dressed in the Charro-style and was often characterized as the the Charro of Charros (Newell, 1979). As Zapata gained popularity and leadership in the revolution against Porfirio Díaz, revolutionaries were associated with the Charro community. Sands states, “[Zapata was characterized as] the perfect Charro, a man who

espoused democratic principles, rose from and remained loyal to the oppressed, displayed the highest level of equestrian skill, led the army of the south in the cause of justice, and was assassinated by a corrupt government. Even his assassination contributes to his Charro reputation” (Sands, 1994). The Mexican Revolution officially ended in 1920 yet the Charro symbolism became reestablished as national importance that represented all levels of society.

The Charro community remained active in the rural margins of Mexico. However, a governmental push to preserve Mexico’s national traditions and customs prompted the formal organization of the National Association of Charros in 1919 in Mexico City. The National Association of Charros was organized to preserve the Charro tradition in Mexico City and led to formal organization of Charros from other states such as Jalisco and Guanajuato. Further, the Mexican government in 1933 announced that the Charro tradition was the national sport of Mexico and funded the *Federación Mexicana de la Charrería* (Mexican Federation of Charros). The Mexican Federation of Charros controls the regional and national competitions or *charreadas* across of Mexico (Franco, 1990). In 1934, President Abelardo L. Rodríguez instituted the *Día Nacional del Charro* or the National Day of the Charro on September 14 two days before Mexico’s Independence Day solidifying the Charro’s national identity (Carreño King, 2000).

The formal institutionalization of the Charro tradition reaffirmed the respected position of Charros as a national and cultural symbol of Mexico. Mexican popular culture used the Charro character in their films and songs to characterize a national sentiment and symbol. Olga Nájera-Ramirez argued:

Like other cultural groups Mexicans have been engaged in constructing and displaying images of their culture groups consumption for a long time... The popular 1940s Mexican song of my epigraph proclaims the Charro, the dashing Mexican horseman, as the pride of Mexico... The Charro figures prominently in a variety of discourses including, but not limited to, film, music, folkloric dance, and literature (Nájera-Ramírez, 1994).

It was no surprise that in the same decade that the Charro tradition gained institutional legitimacy, Mexican popular culture was dominated by the Charro imagery. Similar to the importance of the Western American cowboy, the epitome of Mexican masculinity and identity was deeply rooted in the Charro performance. Significantly, the use of the Charro in film and music portrayed how people from rural communities coped with the Mexico's rapid urbanization and social class issues.

The personification of the Charro became generalized and reduced to stereotypes regarding their womanizing ways, drinking habits, and passion for dignity and respect. The American western film genre in the United States gained popularity after the Charro had already become a well-established figure in Mexican cinema and borrowed from the Charro imagery (Allen, 1998). The American cowboy gained more popularity than the Mexican Charro because of the notions of Manifest Destiny that held Americans as exceptional and endowed with God's approval.¹ D.H. Figueredo states, "This message was popularized in movies and novels and comic books. So widely accepted was the notion that by the early 20th century, cowboy was a word commonly known and used in many languages, while vaquero was only recognized and uttered in Spanish" (Figueredo, 2014). While the cowboy is universally recognized, the Charro is only recognized by

¹ Although the American cowboy is portrayed in American film as white, the earliest American cowboys were in fact not white, but Mexican, black, and Native American (Homann, 2006).

Central and South America. This further exemplifies how Mexico and other Latin American cultures are marginalized because they are associated as being developing countries.

Today the Charro community exists in both sides of the Mexican border. The modern Charro refers to the embodiment of a particular type of culture, etiquette, mannerism, clothing, tradition, and social status that is linked to its complex historical past (Najera-Ramirez, 1994; Marquez, 2016). The Charro imagery as a popular culture figure has been reduced to mariachi music and antiquated modes of life. The Charro's origin to Mexican nationalism and patriotism are only rekindled during Mexico's commemoration of the past or blatant expressions of Mexican rural identity. The Charro is no longer the dominant figure in popular culture or even rural and urban way of life. Many urban Mexicans are unfamiliar with the presence of the Charro community or even the *charreadas* in surrounding communities. Mexicans recognize the Charro figure but are no longer familiar with their modes of life or their subculture.

The Charro community survives through active participation in formal and informal *charreadas* throughout Mexico. Without continuous active participation in the Charro community, the Charro tradition would not survive. Entry into the Charro community is generally passed down from one Charro family to another; however, the skills, customs, and beliefs of the Charro community can be acquired from interested outsiders who wish to compete or marry into the community. Men and women in the Charro community undergo a particular type of socialization into the Charro tradition whether its from birth or adulthood. The Charro community, under the guidance and

authority of the Mexican Federation of Charros, is aware that they are a marginal culture in Mexican society. Although the Charro community has remained the same in many ways, it is not completely impervious to external changes in Mexican society. This dissertation will analyze how modernity transforms or effects rural cultural traditions like the Charro tradition and how rural cultural traditions continue to stay alive. Further, I will examine how members of the Charro community produce, maintain, and enact the Charro tradition and its impact on the dynamics of race, class, and gender.

Prior Work on the Charro Tradition

Previous examinations of the Charro community have argued an importance to the Charro as form of creating national identity in Mexico (Sands, 1994; Nájera-Ramírez, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2003; Palomar, 2004). The Charro identity was a hallmark of the Mexican way of life in rural communities and had great importance in Mexican popular culture (Palomar, 2004). In particular, Mexican emblems of popular culture centered around the Charro as the ideal man during the 1940s and 1950s and launched the careers of Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, and Tito Guizar.² The Charro was a man of strong familial ties yet was free to pursue infidelity in the quest to acquire a

² Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, and Tito Guizar were popular Mexican actors during Mexico's Golden Film era. Tito Guizar was professionally active during the 1920s until his death in 1999. Pedro Infante began his film career in 1939 and starred in films that reflected the massive migration that many rural Mexicans underwent during Mexico's urban and economic development. Although Guizar was the first singing Charro, Infante's personification of the Charro was more relatable in a changing Mexico with major social class issues and his fame as Mexico's Charro remains even after his tragic death in 1957. Jorge Negrete, similar to Guizar and Infante, was active in the 1930s and gained popularity as a singing Charro and recorded *Mexico Lindo y Querido* which became the unofficial anthem of Mexico.

woman to be his lover. Although these films played upon the rural stereotypes of Charro men and women, these films did solidify the Charro's status as a notable representation of Mexican national identity in the 1940s and 1950s. It is comparable to how Clint Eastwood and John Wayne become the epitome of American cowboys. The classic Charro personification gained a powerful cult following until it lost its popularity in the last twenty years. Mexican films and telenovelas have shifted their attention from the rural Charro to the modern abrasive corporate man (Gutmann, 2006). The Charro is no longer the dominant characterization of Mexican society but rather a marginal cultural symbol depicting an outdated way of life.

Mexican scholars have also conducted considerable research on the Charro tradition (Barragan and Chavez, 1993; Lopez, 1997; Chávez Torres, 1998; Montfort, 2007; Miranda, 2013; Medina, 2015). In particular, Ana Cristina Ramírez Barreto's (2009) "El juego del valor: Varones, mujeres y bestias en la charrería en Morelia" examines the Charro tradition in terms of race, class, and gender. Her work is successful in providing foundational work for illuminating the Charro tradition's use of violence, masculinity, and the marginalized role of women. Although her work is substantive in analyzing the cultural aspects of the Charro community, Ramírez Barreto's work, does not provide a viable sociological explanation for the economic changes in the Charro community. Further, her analysis is limited to the state of Morelia which is bounded by their unique and social problems such as the rise of organized crime in the city of Michoacan (Yepes, Pedroni, Hu, 2015). The threat of organized crime has permeated into different states of Mexico and business practices in the Charro community are

impacted by their control yet the growing influence of power, prestige, and honor can be explained in alternative manner. This particular dissertation expands the work of Ramírez Barreto by incorporating *why* the Charro tradition proceeds even when mainstream Mexican culture does not uphold its values and traditions as it once did in the past.

Anthropological research studies focused on the Charro community have provided a substantive historical background of the Charro tradition (Valero Silva, 1989; Sands, 1994; Ancona, 1999). These Charro's historical context links the Charro tradition to Mexico's revolutionary past and counter-narrative from Spanish conquest. Special attention is provided by Sands (1994) on how the Charro tradition is organized and why it persists in modern Mexico and the United States. Although Sands (1994) argues the progression of the Charro tradition to the enactment of nationalist identity, her juxtaposition of the Charro past to the present does not sufficiently explain *why* modifications Charro tradition occur in the first place. In her analysis, she outlines the class differences within the Charro community however her analysis insufficiently explains emerging generational differences. Najera-Ramirez's (1994) examination deconstructs the cultural production of the Charro image as a master status. Unlike Sands (1994), Najera-Ramirez (1994) analyzes the intersections of gender, nationalism, and class within the Charro iconography to argue complexity of the authority over the representation of Mexican culture. Although her focus centers on Charro symbolism, her analysis does include historical context for the myriad representation of Charro traditions in popular culture yet no explanation is extended to *how* people reproduce, maintain, and

enact the Charro tradition. In summary, the existing literature on the Charro tradition is not sufficiently cultural in its orientation. A cultural analysis must be done in order to address these issues.

Why Veblen?

C. Wright Mills argued that Thorstein Veblen was the foremost critic of America that America has produced. In the forward of Veblen's 1953 edition of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Mills stated, "We might learn from [Veblen] that the object of all social study is to understand the types of men and women that are selected and shaped by a given society—and to judge them by explicit standards." While Mills attributed Veblen's theory to an American economic context, Mestrovic (2003) interprets Veblen as a valid cultural theorist even if mainstream social and cultural theorists have ignored Veblen's contributions. Mestrovic (2003) states, "Rather than treat Veblen as he has been approached, as an economist, social critic, and problematic sociologist, I offer a new vision of him as a cultural theorist... [Veblen] concerned himself with topics that concern students of culture: fashion, leisure, work, education, the status of women, and other topics." While mainstream social and cultural theorists like Talcott Parsons, Jürgen Habermas, Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, Robert Park, Everett Burgess, and George Ritzer marginalize Veblen's contributions, Riesman (1953) wrote an intellectual biography of Veblen in which he extends Veblen's significance as a cultural theorist beyond America and Veblen's milieu to international cultural settings. Riesman argues

that Veblen's theory may be refracted in various historical and cultural contexts, including our own.

Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) may be his most famous and cited scholarly work however it is not his only significant contribution. Veblen's *The Barbarian Status of Women* (1899), *The Vested Interest and the Common Man* (1920), *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (1914), *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904), and *On the Nature and Uses of Sabotage* (1919) provide starting points for the cultural changes within the Charro community. Veblen's combination of idle curiosity, parental bent, and instinct of workmanship describe the original intention of the Charro community's organization. Further, his argument regarding the peaceable and the barbaric pertain to the rising implication of the accumulation of wealth within the Charro community.³ Idle curiosity entails no vested interest and no waste to humanity while gaining "something for nothing" is an emerging predatory theme in the Charro community. As the Charro community becomes more exposed to business principles, the push for pecuniary interests become more critical than cultural performance and preservation.

Veblen's cultural theoretical framework is the most appropriate to document the changes that this particular rural tradition has experienced because it accounts the effects of modern technology, urbanization, and industrialization. Although Mexico can be associated with developing characteristics that disqualify it as a powerful and influential

³ Barbaric and predatory habits refer to notions of exploitation, coercion, manipulations by others over people they deem to be subordinate. In a barbaric and predatory culture, these characteristics are deemed more honorable than the peaceable habits.

country of the Western world, its economic development throughout the last fifty years has led to rapid industrialization and urbanization across all thirty-two federal entities (Yepes, Pedroni, Hu, 2015). Rural tradition, in any socio-cultural context, experiences change regardless if its voluntary or coerced. The Charro tradition is just one of many marginalized cultures in Mexico that has had to culturally adapt to a more modern Mexico no longer accepting antiqued customs and rituals outside of their designated national and cultural holidays.

The Charro community prides itself on reproducing and maintaining the rural tradition of their ancestors by actively competing in national *charreadas* throughout Mexico yet it is not the only way they enact the Charro tradition. Although the level of participation from these Charros is crucial for the replication of rituals and traditions, Veblen's theoretical framework provides a possible answer to *why* shifts in the Charro culture occur and *how* the Charro community reproduce, maintain, and enact their culture. Cultural shifts in the Charro community are not uniform and emerge through careful examination. Social structures within the bounds of the Charro tradition designating gender relations, class dynamics, and distinctions regarding skin color resonate with Veblen's arguments regarding cultural lag, the peaceable and the barbaric, predatory culture, vested interest, and pecuniary interests.

Generational differences with the Charro community elucidate the growing tension between newer Charros and older Charros. Issues of authenticity become apparent while the developing emphasis on business and the growing institutional power of the Mexican Federation of Charros contradict the Charro ethos of brotherhood and

community. While Veblen's framework can explain cultural shifts and adaptation, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1961) can speak to the ramifications in cultural shifts in the Charro community. Riesman's (1961) three phases of social character development—tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed—can explain the divisions within the Charro community. By connecting the broader and mainstream Mexican culture to the rural traditions of the Charro community, Riesman's (1961) framework reaffirm Veblen's cultural perspectives.

Research Methods

The following chapters will describe only snapshot of the very complex culture of the Charro community in Mexico. I began this project from the perspective of my own life, as the granddaughter of a generational Charro, unfamiliar with my own Mexican roots. My family immigrated into the United States in the early nineties with nothing but fear and our culture. Although I was raised in rural New York state, my mother told me tales of my grandfather and his small ranch outside of Mexico City. She referred me the three generation legacy of Charros that had become part of my family identity. I was intrigued by the rich culture of Charro tradition that had made an impact in my upbringing. My mother always told me that my family was different from other Mexican families, but I never had another frame of reference. This was until I talked to other immigrant families from Mexico City who did not share my family history. Although there was a consensus of machismo and racism among my Mexican friends, I

began to realize that my Charro history played an important role in the manner in which my family synthesized issues of gender, class, and race.

In 2012, I had the honor of meeting my great grandfather before he passed at the age of ninety-one in the small village where he spent the majority of his life. This experience inspired me to pursue my graduate career on the Charro tradition that had regulated the life of so many of my family members. I had so many questions about the perceptions, worldviews, and life outcomes of those who actively participated in the Charro community. The Charro tradition impacted my own mother's life outcomes as she was denied access to high school because she was a woman. My grandfather believed that women should not get too much education since their primary goal was to get married and have children. At first, I thought this was unique to my mother but I then discovered that my first cousin from my generation was also denied access to education. Mexico, as a country, has continued to transform as it has become more urbanized and industrialized in the last few decades. Although the Mexican Charro carries a great deal of historical significance and nationalist symbolism, many (both American and Mexican people) do not know about its operation and function. The Charro tradition, in this study, should be understood as a process in which individuals reproduce, maintain, and enact this particular subset of rural Mexican customs. From this point forward, the generalizations I make about the Charro tradition come from the empirical data collected.

In order to address my research questions regarding the Charro community, I conducted an in-depth participatory ethnographic analysis during the summer months

(May to August) of 2012-2015. Using my personal access to the Charro community (my maternal family members), I conducted research in six different states in Mexico: Mexico, Jalisco, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, Hidalgo, Puebla. Throughout out my first year of my ethnographic analysis, I befriended a Charro rookie (a Charro without any generational ties) (Miguel⁴) from a mid-level team who acted as my gatekeeper to the experiences of Charro rookies. Gatekeepers play a crucial role in social research methods because they are usually the research's initial contact and access to participants by endorsing the research's work (McGivern, 2006; May, 2006; Crowhurst, 2013). Miguel was able to identify crucial contradictions of the Charro tradition that had not been identified by others with generational ties (more than one generation tie to the Charro tradition). He was able to get other Charro rookies to trust in me and my project.

My last name was well recognized in Mexico as family which also opened many doors for my research. Because many Charros associated me with my actively competing family members, they treated me as if I was part of the community. Since I was raised in the United States, many Charros were eager to teach the “ways of my people”. My unique position as an outsider and insider presented many opportunities that are not necessarily afforded to researchers of the Charro community because many Charros tried to protect me from being mistaken as an outsider. I developed close research relationships with an additional ten Charro men and women throughout my three years in the Charro community that required follow-up questioning throughout my

⁴ The names of the interview participants were changed to protect their privacy.

ethnographic research. However, I interviewed and observed a total of seventy-two people during my time in Mexico. My respondent's ages ranged from eighteen to seventy-eight years old. In the three years I conducted interviews and qualitative observations, I shadowed the experiences of both generational and non-generational Charros in national, regional, and friendly tournaments throughout central Mexico.

Using a symbolic interactionist approach, I was able to examine how indigenous status, class, and gender were uniquely negotiated among Charros who did not believe there were any forms of inequality or discrimination present in the Charro tradition. Matters of indigenous status, class, and gender were shaped by social context and patterns in the interactions between members in the Charro community. Drawing from the qualitative work on race, class, and gender that examines the what an individual “does” rather than what an individual “has”, I evaluated the different dimensions of variation within the Charro community that stratified legitimacy (Best, 2003; Bettie, 2003; Moore, 2002; West and Fenstermaker, 1995). The use of language, in particular Charro slang, revealed how outsiders are quickly exposed to insiders. The examination of how respondents constructed their identity was crucial for how Charros cope with the gradual changes of the Charro tradition.

Since this project was an in-depth participatory observation ethnography, I worked alongside Charros from various backgrounds. In the months of May 2013 to August 2013, I traveled with a midlevel team and lived with the family on the ranch. I took care of their children when necessary, helped with the cleaning and cooking, and helped with the horses. When I asked, I would ride alongside them learning the specifics

of the Charro tradition while I would watch them work. During the months of May 2014 to August 2014, I lived with a divorced Charro women and her two children. In this section of time, I was able to learn even more about the notions of decency and respectability that is required of all generational women. In addition, I travel to different parts of central Mexico in order to gain more access with the wealthier side of the Charro community. In the last portion of my ethnography (May 2015 to August 2015), I was able to do follow ups of my interviews and work with a team of elite Charros. The summer months were crucial to my analysis since the majority of important competitions take place during this time. My observation settings varied from competition arenas to family homes.

In my interviews, I asked questions about their beliefs regarding the Charro tradition, brotherhood, relationships, team support, employment, newcomers, expenses, etc. The questions were open-ended to encourage discussion about the Charro tradition and concerns that respondents may have had in their life at the time. These interviews lasted from fifteen minutes to two hours. Interviews were recorded using an audio recording device and were later transcribed in Spanish to be translated in English. Observations were recorded in a notebook and three hundred pages were recorded during my times in Mexico. Respondents were informed about their rights as participants, as stipulated by the Institutional Review Board. Transcriptions and observations were later coded using qualitative data analysis and research software, Atlas.ti.

As a female ethnographer of the Charro community, Charro men often thought of me as a potential love interest (see Chapter 3 for further details). This made interviewing and observations accessible, but many Charros often did not respect the boundaries of a researcher and respondent. Interviews where Charro men were drunk were usually really difficult as these men did not respect personal space or boundaries. I found that this was true for all Charro men of various ages and socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, Charro women with boyfriends and husbands initially mistook me as a threat to their relationships because many had not met a female researcher. This presented a unique opportunity to analyze how Charro women treat female outsiders or women who violate the norms of respectability. I had to censor my own identity as a Mexican-American lesbian and conform to the standards of Charro femininity and respectability in order to avoid issues.

An ethnographic analysis was better suited for the analysis of culture and identity formation due to the significance of the narratives and actions of the people actively participating in the Charro tradition. The intersectional analysis of race, class, and gender would have been impossible without this methodology as many members of the Charro tradition are resistant to outsiders. I concentrated my analysis on uncovering not only the way in which the Charro tradition has changed, but also how it has remained the same despite a number of varying external factors.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS PRINCIPLES

The Charro tradition, in its commencement, was unorganized, informal, and spontaneous. The men who worked on the large haciendas during the colonial and post-colonial rural areas of Mexico were focused on creating a legitimate space for their horsemanship skills. The original function of the Charro community was to create a safe space to demonstrate marginalized Charro horsemanship skills while—what Veblen called the instinct of workmanship—providing an opportunity to form bonds with other Charros in their community. The Charro tradition emerged as a rural counterculture that stressed the freedom to roam the land as much as the freedom to express their Charro identities. Rural villages throughout Mexico used the Charro tradition for entertainment and celebrations that incorporated Catholic symbols such as the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and regional saints into their team names and arenas. The Charro community was a source of pride in many pueblos and was sometimes the only form of inter-pueblo interactions. Friendly competition between pueblos was common and was often unorganized. It was not uncommon for *charreadas* to spring up spontaneously.

Charreadas were not about winning or about pecuniary gain but enjoying the company of other members of the Charro community. The original *charreadas* were usually between adjacent pueblos and these informal events had no judges, no time limits, and no pressure to win. Teams were usually comprised of two or three families with access to horses and land. *Charreadas* resembled family gatherings with food,

copious tequila, and cigars for the men. There was live music for spectators and the *lienzos* or arenas were open to the public free of charge. But since the formal establishment of the Charro tradition as the official sport of Mexico in 1933, the Mexican Federation of Charros implemented formal regulation of the Charro events or *las suertes Charras*.⁵ Further, the Mexican Federation of Charros unified various regional associations in order to establish concrete order of *charreadas* throughout Mexico. Since 1933, the Mexican Federation of Charros has supervised the majority of the *charreadas* and Charro associations in the country.

The Mexican Federation of Charros is the protector of rules and regulations that make a *charreadas* legitimate Charro events. Even the *lienzos* in which Charros compete is susceptible to strict specifications and measurements. For example, according the Mexican Federation of Charros's *Reglamento Oficial General Para Competencias* (Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016), *lienzos* must measure 60 meters long by 12 meters wide and at least have an arena that should be 40 meters in diameters. *Charreadas* must also be classified as official or friendly prior to the date of competition. Charro teams must register their *charreadas* with the Mexican Federation of Charros in order to use their judges or rules and pay dues to maintain their membership. *Charreadas*, before the creation of this rule, did not have to fit these regulations. This is only one example of how much control the Mexican Federation of

⁵ There are a total of nine *suertes Charras* in a single *charreadas*: 1. *Cala de Caballo* (Reining) 2. *Piales en Lienzo* (Heeling) 3. *Colas en el Lienzo* (Steer Tailing) 4. *Jineteo de Toro* (Bull Riding) 5. *Terna en el Reudo* (Team Roping) 6. *Jineteo de Yegua* (Bareback on a wild mare) 7. *Manganas de Caballo* (Forefooting) 8. *Manganas a Caballo* (Fore booting on Horseback) 9. *El Paso de la Muerte* (The pass of death)

Charros has upon those who wish to compete in the Charro community. Charros do not have much agency to stray outside of the bounds of the Official and General Rules for Competitions. Either they follow regulation or face disqualification.

Due to a growing pressure on making the Mexican Federation of Charros and the various associations into functional and profit-producing businesses, Charro competitions have become more influenced by standardization. Veblen's *Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904) highlights the collision between the business enterprise and the machine process in producing standardization, fungibility, and the pursuit of pecuniary gain. Although Veblen's original analysis focused on industrialization of American life, a similar analysis can be made in the context of Mexican Charros. These business principles have an expanding impact on the class divisions with the Charro community. In particular, Charro business principles provide the opportunity for the emergence of a Charro leisure class.

Applying Veblen's Theories

The increased power of the Mexican Federation of Charros has filtered into other aspects of the Charro community. In particular, Charro teams are now managed by Charro *jefes* (bosses) and organizers for the purpose of further regulating the creativity of the competing Charros and profiting from team's success. Charro *jefes* refer to the owners and financial endorsers of particular Charro teams throughout Mexico that operate more like absentee owners rather active participants. Although Ramírez Barreto (2009) referred to these Charro *jefes* as *paganinis*, I use the term most used by the

Charros that I interviewed during this ethnography. This management of Charro teams is a relatively new development in the last fifty years but its becoming a common practice among the more notable teams. There seems to be a bureaucratic push by the Mexican Federation of Charros to operate the Charro traditions and community like professional athletic teams in order generate more revenue in addition to corporate sponsorship.

Charreadas now place more emphasis on the opportunities for expanding business rather than only reproducing Charro culture. Standardization, quantitative precision, physical requirements, equipment uniformity, and other manifestations of what Veblen called “business principles” ensure that Charros fall into line and submit to the Mexican Federation of Charros.

In Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1889), the peaceable society has no notions of status, distinctions between gender roles, and no individual ownership as the dominant feature of their society. Emphasis is placed on the instinct of workmanship, idle curiosity, and parental bent to serve humanity beyond the direction of pragmatism and vested interests. Veblen states, “. . .in all their working, the human instincts are . . .incessantly subject to mutual ‘contamination,’ whereby the working of anyone is affected by the bias and proclivities inherent in all the rest” (Veblen, 1920). Idle curiosity is defined as a peaceable characteristic due to its “non-directed activity of exploration in the search for answers to life interests” in which “play” is at the center (O’Hara, 1993). Contamination of an individual’s idle curiosity occurs when there is a vested interest that directs a person to pecuniary gain or social status.

Barbaric culture, where exploitative characteristics are dominant, places great emphasis on the leisure class rather than individuals who perform manual labor, industry work, or anything associated with the everyday work to survive life. Vested interest in the instinct of workmanship may lead to exploitation and chicanery in the pursuit for status, honor, and prestige. In a barbaric and predatory culture, employment that does not use vested interest and exploitive means is considered to be unworthy. Veblen argues, “Those employments which are to be classes as exploit are worthy, honorable, noble; other employments, which do not contain this element of exploitation, and especially those which imply subservience or submission, are unworthy, debasing, ignorable” (Veblen, 1889). The work of women and other lower ranking men are deemed less honorable than those of able-bodied men. There is evidence of this in the Charro community in how women and lower ranking men are treated and talked about. Although the Charro community by no means can be classified as just peaceable in origin, the emergence of the power of business principles has made the newer generation of Charro participants more barbaric in character than previous generations.

The Charro community commenced from Spanish condemnation of mestizo and indigenous work. Mestizo and indigenous workers of the colonial period were defined as inferior by the law and thus, their work were regarded as unworthy. The Charro tradition of the colonial period had peaceable elements because they had a function for society. It was idle curiosity that allowed the early Charros to shape their equestrian skills. Although there are some aspects of barbaric culture in the early Charro tradition, the early Charros were not particularly interested in business exploits and vested interests

because they were part of the inferior class. As the Charro gained popularity among the leisure class due its national iconography, upper class Mexicans were able to use the Charro tradition as a method of elevating their status and prestige. For example, Charro *jefes* often do not participate in *charreadas* but benefit from the success of the work of others. Charro *jefes* are able to display that they have disposable incomes and status while their employees perform all the hard labor.

Before its cultural institutionalization and legitimacy from the Mexican government, the Charros participated in *charreadas* for the sole purpose of enacting their culture. There was no need for Charro *jefes* because multiple generations of family members comprised the Charro team and managed their own horses and equipment. Winning or losing was not the objective of the *charreadas* but rather, *charreadas* were essential for the reproduction and enactment of the Charro culture. Veblen states, “Industry is effort that goes to create a new thing, with a new purpose given it by the fashioning hand of its maker out of passive (‘brute’) material: while exploit, so far as it results in an outcome useful to the agent, is the conversion to his own ends of energies previously directed to some other end by another agent” (Veblen, 1889). The Charro community has many components of exploitation that affect gender relations, class, and race that have been exacerbated by predatory culture. The emerging role of the Charro *jefes* are just one form of the way in which the Charro community has been altered by predatory and barbaric culture.

Veblen does not consider the business enterprise and the machine process to be a solely barbaric characteristic. Both the business enterprise and the machine process have

peaceable origins such as the instinct of workmanship, idle curiosity, and parental bent yet business' barbaric characteristics allows for peaceable qualities to be suppressed. Veblen states, "The margin of admissible variation, in time, place, form, and amount is narrowed" (Veblen, 1904). As mentioned previously, the Charro competition was open-ended and spontaneous. Today, spontaneity is no longer the norm in the Charro community because the Mexican Federation of Charros must facilitate *charreadas* in order to calculate, time, and assess Charro performances. *Charreadas* are now timed, organized, regulated, and have judges appointed and certified by the Mexican Federation of Charros. *Charreadas* are also ranked and some are considered to be more legitimate than others. For example, only men can be judges for Charros and they serve as "the maximum authority in competitions" according to the Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016. In addition to a judge, a *caporal* or an impartial Charro moderator is required supervise *charreadas* to ensure the timely operation of the Charro teams. The *caporal* is not a judge but another method of securing standardization in the Charro tradition.

The freedom of the Charro to express the Charro tradition has become more restricted and thus suppressing idle curiosity. Idle curiosity, in the context of the Charro community, pertains the lack of exploitation and emphasis on discovery. Further, the instinct of workmanship also becomes contaminated in predatory culture due to the restrictions of standardization and regulation. Veblen states, "In any community where such an invidious comparison of persons is habitually made, visible success becomes an end sought for its own utility as a basis of esteem" (Veblen, 1889). Visible success in the

Charro community takes the form of trophies: physical and symbolic. Charro teams win prizes, plaques with their achievements, and money. These physical prizes produce an incentive to continue winning and to continue competing. Symbolic trophies, like gaining recognition and prestige, also motivate teams and Charro *jefes* to perform well during major *charreadas*. The power of business principles has transformed the Charro community.

In particular, new problems have become more evident between the younger and older generations of Charros. Charro *jefes* place growing pressure on Charro teams to win due their own vested interest of gaining honor and status rather than reproduce the Charro tradition. Often this pressure has consequences on individual Charro member who find it hard to “keep up” with Charro expectation. The peaceable intentions of the Charro community to promote brotherhood, identity, and community are suppressed by the need to produce a profit. The predatory and barbaric characteristics of business principles places worthy on control of Charro teams rather than individual Charro teams. Veblen states, “His control of the motions of other men is not strict, for they are not under coercion from him except through the coercion exercised by the exigencies of the situation in which their lives are cast...” (Veblen, 1904). The Charro *jefe* and the Mexican Federation of Charros contribute to the standardization of the Charro tradition and to adaptation of the Charro team as a machine process. The younger generation of Charros have a “barbarian appreciation of worth or honor” while the older generation still possess more peaceable qualities of the Charro community pertaining to maintain Charro traditions.

A Charro is considered successful, not by his ability to be versatile or independent, but by his ability to follow regulation enforced by the Mexican Federation of Charros. *Charreadas* in the Charro community have transformed the instinct of workmanship by making it narrower and more directed to profit. Charro *jefes* and promoters benefit from the work of Charros and their motives proceed from pecuniary gain. Veblen argues, “The modern industrial communities show an unprecedented uniformity and precise equivalence in legally adopted weights and measures” (Veblen, 1904). Uniformity and precise equivalence is significant in this rural tradition, but it is not everything. Measure requires hierarchy and standardization. The Charro tradition now has these modern industrial models embedded into their culture. While the desire to be a Charro is a peaceable trait, the repercussion of business principles dictate the performance and enactment of the Charro community.

Charro Jefes and Motive of Business

As Veblen argues, business principles mechanically regulate the livelihood of individuals and affect the welfare of society (Veblen, 1904). The objective is for production to be efficient, so as to avoid idleness, waste, and hardship. These strategies of efficiency are adopted by some Charro *jefes*. For example, Mario, a sixty-two-year-old Charro *jefe*, indicated that he operates his Charro team like a business. He is the Charro *jefe* for the best performing and recognized team in the state of Jalisco. Mario’s team is comprised of winners who have won championship titles and are often invited by the Mexican government to be present during Mexico’s Independence Day and National

Day of the Charro. His team consists of twenty Charros of various socio-economic backgrounds that he has personally recruited over the years. When asked about his recruitment style, Mario states that he asks members of the Mexican Federation of Charros about possible recruits in smaller competition circuits. “There is always someone out there good enough to work for nothing.” Mario’s uses coercion and chicanery by promising potential recruits fame and recognition in the Charro community. Although a few members of Mario’s Charro team are highly recognized within the Charro community, new team members tend to work on the ranch and only compete as alternates. Further, Mario funds his team with his own money and provides the Charro team with horses and equipment.

Veblen states, “The motive of business is pecuniary gain, the method is essentially purchase and sale. The aim and usual outcome is an accumulation of wealth. Men whose aim is not increase of possessions do not go into business, particularly not on an independent footing” (Veblen, 1904). The Charro *jefe*’s main motive is pecuniary gain and status. Although Mario is a Charro *jefe*, he rarely attends *charreadas* unless the *charreadas* are championship level events. Mario is not a Charro himself but he has been drawn to the Charro culture and tradition because he is interested in Charro music and livestock. His primary occupation is in advertising and promotion of tequila vendors. His business interests overlap with the Charro community since tequila is highly desired during *charreadas*. He is able to utilize the Charro community for business purposes while maintaining profits on his investments. Mario exemplifies the ideal barbarian that Veblen describes in his work. Veblen argues, “In the sequence of cultural evolution the

emergence of a leisure class coincides with the beginning of ownership” (Veblen, 1904). The Charro *jefe* forms the emergence of a leisure class within the Charro community.

Mario is not an outlier in the Charro community. In fact, he is part of a growing trend amongst the Charro community that manages Charro teams through his personal finances in order to further his investments. Veblen argues, “The leisure of the master class is, at least ostensibly, an indulgence of a proclivity for the avoidance of labor and is presumed to enhance the master’s own well-being and fullness of life; but the leisure of the servant class exempt from productive labor is in some sort a performance exacted from them, and is not normally or servant is not his own leisure” (Veblen, 1889). The Charro *jefe* is able to demonstrate his visible success through ownership. Since the Charro *jefe* does not often participate in *charreadas*, the very fact that he owns the Charro team provides him with honor and status. It is not his appreciation of the Charro tradition that makes him honorable, but his wealth.

Although the Charro tradition advocates for frugal approaches to everyday life, many Charros are inclined to purchase expensive horses for the element of prestige. Further, funding is needed for providing teams with suits, sombreros, boots, spurs, transportation, etc. These items are very expensive but very necessary if a Charro team wants to impress a set of judges and adhere to the cultural expectations of the Charro tradition. Teams that do not have a Charro *jefe* find themselves perceived as lack luster while their counterparts are praised for their flashy clothing. Some Charro *jefes* even invest in making their Charro teams wear the same clothes and emblems on their equipment. This further reinforces push for standardization since many Charros pride on

their individuality in their Charro self-presentation. The barbaric characteristics of the Charro *jefes* suppress the peaceable characteristics of the individual Charros.

Charro *jefes* are often background figures or absentee owners that profit from the work of the Charros because they do not compete or prepare for competitions. Veblen stated, “This organization rests on the distinction between business management and ownership. The workmen do not and cannot own or direct the industrial equipment and processes, so long as ownership prevails and industry is to be managed on business principles (Veblen, 1904).” The distinction between Charro *jefes* and Charro team members is significant. Similar to how workmen cannot own or direct the industrial equipment and processes, Charro team members are also restricted by the ownership and direction of the Charro *jefes*. Many of them cannot afford to purchase expensive horses or saddles. Charro *jefes* can be compared to corporate chief executive officers who profit from major decisions and actions of their workmen, but do not actually *do* any of the hard labor.

Due to their wealthy backgrounds and upper class markers, Charro *jefes* are exempt from hard labor. In the Charro community, Charro *jefes* represent an upper class that expresses leisure and conspicuous waste. Their association with the lower class is minimal. For example, the large land that many Charro bosses own is not worked by them but rather other groups of people that maintain the livestock. In the case of Javier, a Charro *jefe* from Mexico City, various workers that live on his land oversee his livestock on a regular basis. Javier’s job and house is located about thirty minutes away and he only comes to the ranch on the weekends. Unlike Mario, Javier has a generational tie to

the Charro community and was a Charro during his younger years but suffered an injury that limited his abilities. He pays various members of his team to maintain and train his expensive horses that he provides for the competitions. Veblen states, “At this stage wealth consists chiefly of slaves, and the benefits accruing from the possession of riches and power take the form chiefly of personal service and the immediate products of personal service” (Veblen, 1899). The Charro team cannot operate without the help the wealth of the Charro *jefes* however, as Veblen indicates, this stage of wealth consists of workers that are treated like slaves since many Charro workers cannot quit because they owe their Charro *jefes* a fair amount of money for equipment.

Charro *jefes* hire people from the nearby villages to work on their large ranchos. On occasion, these workers are from a low socio-economic status and educational attainment. They view the Charro community as a potential strategy to climb the social ladder and gain status. Charro *jefes* pay these individuals insignificant wages for strenuous labor and promise the opportunity to learn the Charro tradition if they continue to work for their place on the Charro team. In some cases, the worker is not paid but rather loaned equipment such as a sombrero, boots, spurs, lassos, horse, saddles, etc. that he must work to repay with interest. Veblen states, “The business man’s object is to get the largest aggregate gain from his business” (Veblen, 1904). By loaning equipment, the Charro *jefe* is able to secure the worker’s loyalty and labor.

The Charro *jefes* distinguished themselves from the Charro team by establishing their power through pecuniary means. Their investment is massive and also important therefore Charro team members recognize the risks of losing. Veblen states, “The

business man's place in the economy of nature is to "make money," not to produce goods. The production of goods is a mechanical process, incidental to the making of money; whereas the making of money is a pecuniary operation, carried on by bargain and sale, not by mechanical appliances and powers" (Veblen, 1919). The Charro *jefes*'s connection to the business world indicates that their main concern is about making money. Competitions now have entry fees for competing teams. Winners of these competitions are not only awarded prestige but also money and equipment. Therefore, winning is desirable for Charro *jefes* because exposure and winning titles yield pecuniary gain. The Charro *jefes* create an environment where winning is the most important figure of the team goals because there is money to be made.

For example, one particular well-known Charro *jefe*, Jesus, from central Mexico manages a prestigious Charro team and owns a large rancho in central Mexico. Jesus is seventy-eight years old and once served in a leadership role in the Mexican Federation of Charros. His Charros are all recruits that his business partners have tracked over the years. He is a ranch owner and makes his money through selling livestock. Jesus has no previous familial ties to the Charro community but his sons are now competing Charros. Managing this Charro team has generated revenue as his Charro team is invited to *charreadas* across the country. Since his team tends to win, they receive trophies and money. The Charro team has grown in the last few years, as there are now alternates available for Charros that are unfit to compete. Veblen states, "The first requisite of a good servant is the he should conspicuously know his place" (Veblen, 1889). Jesus's

Charro team recognize their place as employees and adhere to his every demand even if they do not necessarily agree with him.

One particular member of Jesus's Charro team, Ivan confessed that the demand of the *El Jefe*, Jesus, causes problems on the rancho. Ivan is a thirty-two-year-old recovering alcoholic and states that some of the Charros have developed drug problems due to the demands of the Charro *jefe*. He has seen instances where the *El Jefe* Jesus's business partners have offered amphetamines that they called "vitamins" to Charros in order to work longer hours and train. Ivan recalls one particular incident when a team member was found training a horse until 5:00AM. The Charro had taken these "vitamins" and had worked the horse to exhaustion. The horse no longer could perform in competitions due to this traumatic incident. Jesus was notified about the incident and was more upset about the loss of the horse than his employee's health. Although this an extreme example, this anecdote demonstrates the way in which the Charro *jefes* are driven by barbaric and predatory means rather than the peaceable elements of enacting and reproducing the Charro tradition.

The Charro Team and Social Duty

Veblen defines, "A vested interest is [as] a marketable right to get something for nothing. This does not mean that the vested interest cost nothing. These may even come at a high price. Particularly may their cost seem high if the cost to the community is taken into their account, as well as the expenditure incurred by their owners for their production and up-keep" (Veblen, 1919). Charro *jefes* have a vested interest because

they “get something for nothing” even through their large financial investments in the Charro community. The Charros are employees that produce the Charro tradition and feel the pressure from the Charro *jefes* to strive for excellence. Often, the pressure to win limits Charros from pursuing their idle curiosity due to the fear of failure. The changes to the Charro tradition have also played a role in the way that Charros compete. Specifically, the regulation of time inhibits the Charro team from focusing their attention to the animal or to their own safety. Since importance is granted to winning, Charros center their actions on the expectations of the judges. I have observed various occasions when an injury could have been avoided if the Charro team was not trying to beat the clock.

For example, *el paso de la muerte* or the pass of death is considered to be the fastest paced *suerte Charra* in the competition. The Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016 defines *el paso de la muerte* in the following way:

This task consists of a Charro riding bareback on a meek horse while attempting to jump to a brutish horse and facing forward; three Charros will support the Charro’s run as jumper is subjected exclusively to grab the mane of the brutish horse. The jumper in this *suerte* starts from the moment he enters the *lienzo* and ends either when the rider dismounts gracefully, is shot down by the brute horse after he has jumped from one horse to another, falls on his initial meek horse in the attempt to complete the task, or when the three minutes to complete the task is up.

Completing the task before the three-minute timer is essential to receive the the maximum number of points. Extra points, ranging from 15 to 20, are awarded based on whether the jumper completes the pass in the first, second, or third run. Figure 1 demonstrates an example scoring template that Charro judges use to assess the work of

FIGURE 1 : SCORING FOR EL PASO DE LA MUERTE

| Classification of the ride | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| | Without the assistance of wrangler | Assistance of wrangler | Use of a riding quirt whip with the assistance of a wrangler | Use of a <i>cuarta</i> whip without the assistance of a wrangler | Dismounting while crossing both feet on one side or grabbing the horse ear to dismount | Landing with both feet on the ground without help from the team after the horse slows down | Failing to gracefully dismount |
| Excellent | 6 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Good | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | -1 |
| Regular | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -2 |
| Minimum | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -3 |

This figure is the scoring template translated from Spanish to English from the Mexican Federation of Charros' Official Rules for Competitions 2012-2016. This depicts the scoring for El Paso de La Muerte.

the Charro team. Judges evaluate Charros based on how they conform to the Charro tradition as well as the standardization implemented by the Mexican Federation of Charros. Infractions can range from causing the horse to bleed due excessive use of spurs to failing to hold the *cuarta* whip correctly.

As the last *suerte* of the *charreadas*, this *suerte* becomes very important for a Charro team trying to establish victory. This *suerte* can determine whether the Charro team wins the prize money, new equipment, or is eliminated from competing in the national championships. Failing to complete the *el paso de la muerte* results in the loss

of ten points but there are more physical consequences that can occur. Failing to pass from one horse to another can result in falling under the horse's feet and getting trampled to death. Death is the ultimate sacrifice but serious injuries can occur that may debilitate the Charro permanently or temporarily. Many jumpers have suffered from critical back injuries that have left them permanently injured. The jumping Charro does not attempt this risky *suerte* by himself but rather, he is assisted by his Charro team. His team is responsible for aiding the jumper by forming a cluster of wranglers around him to direct the horse along the way. Charro team may help him by providing a forceful push if the team feels that the jumper is taking too long to pass to from one horse to another.

The following is a description of an incident that occurred during *el paso de la muerte* attempt in Querétaro, Mexico:

The Charros prepare the horses for el paso de la muerte near the opening door of the lienzos. The jumper is securing his boots and wraps tape around his ankles and hands for support. He is wearing a protective vest in case he falls and the horse kicks him in the chest. He looks nervously into the crowd and then taps the top of his sombrero. His teammates position their horses around him. The team needs ten points to win the competition. They all look worried but ready to finish. The judges announce the team name loudly, "RANCHO AGUA SAGRADA!" The crowd claps and waits for the Charros to start. The jumper prays for a few seconds, crosses himself, and points to the sky. He is ready. He signals his teammates and the wild mare is released into the arena. The horse sprint for thirty meters and the jumper struggles to find the right position to shift from one horse to another. He grabs the mane of the horse as he uses his cuarta whip to position his horse. He prepares himself. His teammates then push him forcefully and then the jumper hits his head hard onto a concrete post. He is disoriented from the blow but not enough to stop. He successfully dismounts from his horse and the judges award him a total of eighteen points. He walks to his teammates and takes off his sombrero. He is bleeding from the blow and displays symptoms of a concussion. He wipes the blood from his forehead and gathers his things. They won and that's all that mattered. (May 2013).

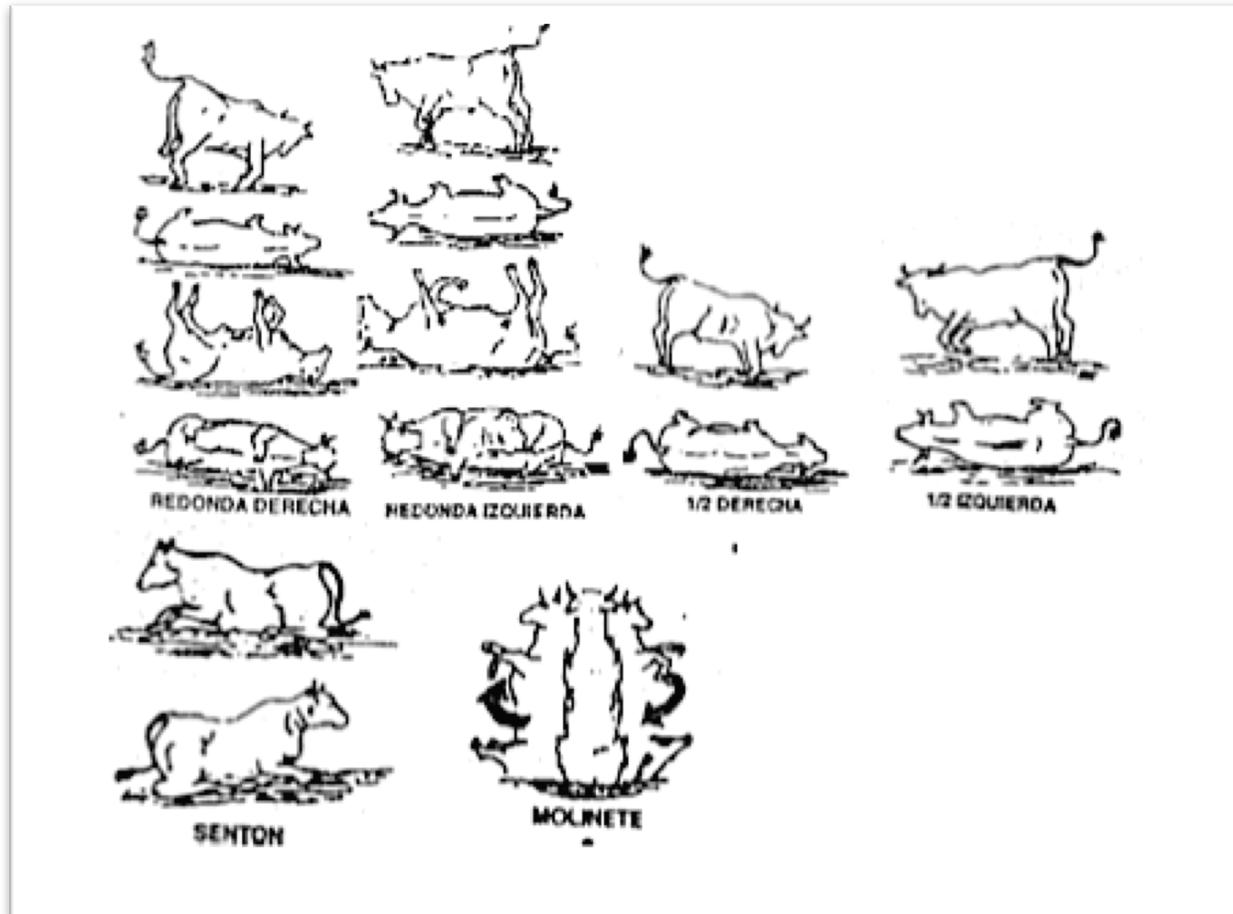
His teammate attempted to help his bleeding by pouring tequila on his forehead in order to stop the bleeding. The Charro in this vignette had a head injury, however the pressure to win was so much greater. Earlier that week, his Charro *jefe* had emphasized that this win was essential for him to remain on the team. His teammates also felt this pressure and disregarded the safety of their fellow Charro because finishing the event was more important. When asked why they pushed the Charro so forcefully, one team member explained that they felt that the jumper was taking too long to cross. Another explained that the jumper sometimes gets scared when the horses are running too fast therefore pushing him allows him to complete the task. It should be noted that the jumper is eighteen years old and only been competing at the professional level for a year. Accidents occur in the Charro community all the time however, this particular type of accident is new development in the Charro community.

Another example exists in the decreased disregard for the welfare of animals. The Charro tradition has always, according to many Charros, considered the welfare of animals to be important. There are several clauses in the Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016 that deduct points from Charros that prohibit the abuse of horses, cattle, and bulls. The Charro tradition prides itself on caring for the welfare of animals. This is associated with the peaceable characteristics of the Charro community that emphasize idle curiosity, instant of workmanship, and parental bent. Many Charros, especially older and more experienced Charros, often scold Charros who injure horses or cattle.

The *coleadero*, is one the most popular *suertes* in the Charro community because Charros are able to display their masculine strength for the audience and the audience is able to witness their brute force in three attempts. The practical use of this *suerte* is to prepare the bull to be branded. This technique was originally used in the colonial period. In the *coleadero*, the Charro has thirty seconds to grab the tail of the bull to proceed with the *suerte* after the Charro judge determines that the bull is ready. The Charro is judged and scored on how the bull falls: full rotation on the right, full rotation on the left, middle right, middle left, on their stomach, heavy fall on its backside, and the bull falls on it's rear-end. Figure 2, taken from The Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016 demonstrates what the judges look for in terms of identifying the bull's fall. The Charro is not supposed to hurt the bull or their horse in this *suerte* and can be deducted points for slamming the horse to hard against the wall before take off or reprimanding the horse in a physical manner. Mistakes can be detrimental to the Charro, the horse, and the bull.

In a particular incident, a Charro of about thirty-five years old (José) was performing the *colas en el lienzo* or the steer tailing of a bull. José is well-known for his ability to carry out the *colas en el lienzo* and often is the favorite to win. During a particular competition, José prepared himself at the entrance of the gate. The Charro is required to greet the judges with a nod before he starts the *suerte* and wait for the signal from them confirming that he can proceed. José received the signal from the judges and then forcefully presses his spurs against his horse's body. He has thirty seconds to grab the bulls tail but struggles to firmly hold in his hand. In a panic, he grabs the tail of the

FIGURE 2 : COLAS EN EL LIENZO



This figure demonstrates the Coles en Lienzo. This figure is from the Official and General Rules for Competition 2012-2016 mandated by the Mexican Federation of Charros. Judges use this template to award points to competitors. Reprinted with permission from the Mexican Association of Charros.

bull and pulls it to far back behind him. He was aiming for the maximum amount of points, but by pushing the bull to close too his horse's hind legs, he injured his own horse. A loud haunting crack could be heard throughout the *lienzo*. The horse stopped and lifted his left foot in pain. There was clear pain in his eyes. The *lienzo* is quiet and everyone in the audience is left to witness the last few hours of this horse's life. The team of veterinarians ran the *lienzo* as they tried to help the horse to an isolated horse stall near the *lienzo*. José had broken his horse's foot badly but had gotten the bull to roll twice for the maximum amount of points. He was embarrassed for hurting the horse's foot badly and therefore did not make eye contact with the judges or anyone else. In the pursuit for glory, he had broken the foot of his Charro *jefe's* best horse. Although he would have to wait to get reprimanded from his Charro *jefe*, he was subjected to the older and experienced Charros shouting "Mr. Break" and "You're a garbage of Charro" that continued until the end of the night.

Veblen further argues, "Before business principles came to dominate everyday life the common welfare, when it was not a question of peace and war, turned on the case and certainty with which enough of the means of life could be supplied" (Veblen, 1904). Due to the increased influence of business principles in the operation of the Charro tradition, the common welfare of animals and Charros has been ignored because of organizations such as the Mexican Federation of Charros' push for standardization and emphasis on prestige and honor. In addition, Charro *jefes* have pushed for their vested interests causing there to be a tension between the peaceable traits of the Charro community and the barbaric traits of the Charro community. The peaceable traits are not

eliminated but suppressed. Although the Charro community pushes for the welfare of the Charro and the animal to be a significant and constant requirement, these concerns are deemed less important than the pressure to win and make a profit. Charros recognize this urgency and operate according to what these absentee owners request of their teams. The infringing principles of business are also causing derangement within the Charro community. Veblen describes derangement the disturbance of the equilibrium between peaceable and barbaric habits at any particular point. The Charro community has been divided between those that support the business principles of the Charro *jefes* and Charro teammates that still have the instinct of workmanship, parental bent, and idle curiosity with regard to the Charro tradition. Further division is evident within Charro teams due to generational differences.

Generational Differences in the Charro Community

“CHARROS DE SAN ANTONIO!” yells a short man of about forty into the microphone as a group four Charros make their way into the center of the thermometer shaped arena. The Charros prepare to compete, as it is their team’s turn to attempt the Manganas a Caballo or the foreleg horse catch from horseback. The leader signals the other Charros with a forceful wave and they all split in their positions as a wild mare is released into the area. A large cloud of dirt slowly rises into the air as three Charros sprint on their horses across the arena trying to manipulate the sprint of the wild mare. OOH! ORALE! VAMOS! They scream loudly as the spring in a circle. A single Charro remains steady on his horse as the other sprint around the circle. The single Charro looks at the wild mare and targets his lariat to the feet of the horse. He swings the lariat side to side and then he makes a full circle above his head bringing the circular motion closer to the body of the horse. His muscles work hard to prepare for this catch. He is focused. He is ready. The wild mare sprints once past him. As the wild mare approaches for a final turn, the Charro launches his trap catching the front two feet of the wild mare. He pulls the lariat forcefully closer to the hook of his saddle and rapidly ties the lariat around it. The twine on the horn of the saddle fiercely breaks from the intensity of the pull. The movement is quick,

dramatic, yet successful. The wild mare falls and the crowd roars with applause. The successful Charro turns his head and lifts his sombrero to the three judges on the left side of the arena.
(July 2013)

This vignette depicts a moment of glory for a young Charro trying to impress the judges, his Charro *jefes*, and the audience. Many young Charros are motivated by promises of prestige and conspicuous leisure from the higher class Charros. Although issues of class stratification within the Charro community have always been present, class divisions are read differently among generational lines. The peaceable characteristics of the Charro community are less visible in the younger generation of Charros than in the older generation of Charros. The difference seems to be the result of where Charros are socialized. The older generation of Charros are more likely to have grown up in rural communities while the younger generation is more likely to have been socialized in urban areas of Mexico. Young Charros are entering the Charro community at a time when there is a clear strain regarding what makes a Charro authentic. Further, many young Charros are socialized from a young age to modern amenities such as electricity, running water, and televisions and are less likely to have a personal narrative to the rural traditions of a small Charro town. Although Mexico can be associated with developing characteristics, its economic adjustment throughout the last fifty years has led to rapid industrialization and urbanization throughout the country (Lusting, 1998; Gutmann, 2008). Due to these changes, the Charro competitions now exhibits more modern elements than ever before such as large display screens, digital streaming, and digital clocks.

Social character types have an effect on employment, leisure, politics, and child-rearing activities of society. Since Mexico has undergone social, institutional, and economic changes, it is only correct to assume that Mexico has also undergone social character changes. Although social character types may dominate a milieu, social types are not permanent and can be applied to generational differences. Riesman (1961) argues that there are three social character types: *Tradition-directed*, *inner-directed*, and *other-directed*. Riesman stated in regards to inner-direction, “the source of direction for the individual is ‘inner’ in the sense that it is implanted early in life by the elders and directed toward generalized by nonetheless inescapably destined goals” (Riesman, 1961). For example, most of the older generation of Charros do not focus on mastering the Charro tradition for the purpose of glory or recognition but for the respect of the tradition. While there are various older and notable Charros that have gained recognition throughout the years, their reputation is centered on commitment to the Charro tradition and making sure their traditions live on. The older generation of Charros is inner-directed because their rural parents predominantly set their metaphorical gyroscope which orientates their actions Riesman states:

The inner-directed cynic is or can be an opportunist, ruthless in pursuing his goals. Or he may be a disgruntled idealist, still in practice committed to rectitude. In pursuit of his aims, good bad, he may be quite ready to exploit others, just as the inner-directed moralizer may be quite ready to force others to be moral, too (Riesman, 1961).

While the older generation of Charros have every capacity to exploit others like the younger generation of Charro, their goal is vastly centered the reproduction and continuity of the Charro tradition.

Juan is a seventy-one-year-old Charro from Mexico City. He has spent his entire life working on his small ranch located twenty minutes on the outskirts of Mexico City. His ranch is between two other properties that focus on agriculture rather than cattle. His ranch is not very big but he manages to upkeep his land with the help of his adult son. He owns a few horses but nothing close to a Charro *jefe*. He owns a few bulls that he sells to the local markets if he sees himself in an economically touchy situation. Juan's primary source of income is his ability to train and reign horses for *charreadas*. Occasionally, Juan will compete in individual Charro competitions that do not require a team however his participation has decreased due to multiple back injuries which inhibit his skills. He has a true sense of what Veblen would characterize as the instinct of workmanship since he has never missed a day of work. He was born in a small village of about one hundred people in the state of Jalisco. His father was Charro but did not compete in formal competitions. Juan learned the Charro tradition by working with his father and his six other brothers on the ranch. Although he comes from a low socio-economic background, he achieved his dream of owning his ranch and becoming a competing Charro like his father. Introduction to the competitive Charro sphere occurred in the 1970s when his brother began competing professionally and invited Juan to join him. Juan represented the older generation of Charros that are more interested in the Charro tradition than in winning.

The generational ties to the Charro tradition are very revealing. The emphasis on tradition by the older Charro generation also allows many Charros to believe that the

Charro tradition should be reserved for those who come from Charro familial ties. When asked if any person could be a Charro, Samuel, a fifty-one-year-old Charro stated:

My grandfather was a great horseback rider. My father is a great horseback rider. My father, I think was better. [My father] is seventy-eight years old and he is known as Charro Don Major. He started [practicing Charro tradition] at eighteen as a professional and now is a legacy. Everyone knows how much he had done for [the Charro tradition]. My father is great because it is in his blood. It's in my blood. My father started from nothing. His success, his success is based on the love for the animals. Charros. Tequila. (laughs). I tell my sons, nephews, and grandchildren that if they want to be men...get on that horse. No one can be [a Charro] just like that. Being a Charro is from the soul. (August 2014)

Samuel's statement is telling of an inner-directed perspective. His desire to be a Charro was a family necessity but his decision to compete was due to his determination to express his traditional connection further. The Charro tradition, Samuel's description, is associated with what Veblen regards the instinct of workmanship. His family has dedicated their entire lives to the Charro tradition and believe that true Charro legitimacy comes from being born into the community rather than the latter.

Bloodlines are very important to older generations of Charros because it validates the Charro tradition's origins of rural communities. As Riesman argues, the inner-directed character is "very considerably bound by traditions: they limit his ends and inhibit his choice of means" (Riesman, 1961). The Charro is bounded by the Charro tradition that conveys the instinct of workmanship, idle curiosity, and parental bent in relation to horsemanship skills. Additionally, Riesman states, "Even if the individual's choice of tradition is largely determined for him by his family, as it is in most cases, he cannot help become aware of the existence of competing tradition—hence of tradition as such" (Riesman, 1961). The competing tradition is the Charro leisure class that includes

the Charro *jefes*, tequila investors, and famous Charros. Veblen states, “Under common-sense barbarian appreciation of work or honor, the taking of life—the killing formidable competitors, whether brute or human—is honorable in the highest degree” (Veblen, 1889). The emerging leisure class in the Charro community holds a barbarian appreciation of prestige or honor while those Charros considered to be lower class have more peaceable attributes due to their inability to sufficiently exploit others.

In the example of Samuel, he was exposed to competing Mexican traditions when he moved to Mexico City in his early thirties. He continued his involvement in the Charro community even though the city was not convenient for practicing the Charro tradition. Although he makes up the older generation of Charros, his children and grandchildren have been exposed the newer developments of the Charro community. His children associate themselves more with the business principles of the Charro tradition rather than the original peaceable attributes of the instinct of workmanship, parental bent, and idle curiosity. Although Samuel’s goals during *charreadas* are to enjoy the company of other Charros, his children and grandchildren strive to win competitions and make money as the motivating factor to continue in the Charro family tradition. Samuel spends most of his time on the ranch caring for his animals personally while his sons hire local teenagers to watch over their horses and cattle. While Samuel is not interested in becoming part of the Charro leisure class, his sons center their daily activity around achieving leisure class status. Veblen states, “The leisure class lives by the industrial community rather than in it. Its relations to industry are of a pecuniary rather than industrial kind” (Veblen, 1889). As Veblen theorized, those who want to achieve leisure

class status and honor are more interested in the pecuniary gain rather than serviceability. Samuel's sons embody barbaric and predatory habits of exploitation which is contingent of an inner-directed social character in the younger generation of Charros.

As mentioned previously, the older Charro generation does compete in national Charro competitions throughout Mexico. There are even competitions reserved exclusively for older Charros throughout the year that are promoted by the Mexican Federation of Charros. During these competitions, the older Charros compete in the same series of *suertes* or tasks however they spend their free time drinking tequila, smoking cigars or cigarettes, and catching up with old friends. Since the early *charreadas* were about brotherhood and celebrations between adjacent village, the remnants of these characteristics are still present today. Many older Charros do not feel the stress of winning because winning is not the goal of their participation. During Charro competitions, it is not rare to see a group of older Charros laughing and drinking on their horses while they wait their turn in the Charro line-up. Many older and experienced Charros focus on their own personal goals during *charreadas* rather than a goal set by a Charro *jefe*. Their skills are often refined therefore they care about exceeding their own expectations while staying true to the Charro tradition.

In addition, the older Charro generation of Charros often host their own informal competitions at their ranchos that are not sponsored by the Mexican Federation of Charros. These informal gatherings mimic the traditional *charreadas* of the past because there is no enforcement of standardization through time limits, measurements, or Charro

judges. The Charros that are invited to these informal events are friends and family of the hosting Charro. Although these are informal competitions that are often characterized as practice sessions, the participating Charros will bring food and drinks for everyone present. There will be plenty of tequila and cigarettes for all. In one particular situation, an invited Charro brought goat meat from his ranch to roast over a fire. While the Charro men enjoyed themselves out on the *lienzo*, the Charro wives worked hard to make tacos for the entire group. It should also be noted that these informal competitions tend to be hosted by older generation of Charros because they have the space and resources. However, the younger generation of Charros that have the financial means to host a similar event will not do so if the event will not yield beneficial to them. The older generation of Charros are acting upon the Charro tradition that promotes brotherhood and community.

When asked what is different about modern *charreadas*, several older Charros argued that technology has now been included within the community that both helps and inhibits the Charro tradition community. Specifically, large television screens that project the statistics of the competition as well as replay shots of particular *suertes* are present in more funded and prestigious national competitions. This coincides with standardization and the influence of business principles that Veblen argues relates to technology as well as the dominance of what Riesman called “screen culture”. Although older and experienced Charros expressed some positive commentaries on the behalf of technology, the majority of the older of Charros claimed that organizers were trying to make the Charro tradition similar to soccer. Pedro, a sixty-seven-year-old Charro,

complained that the Charro tradition is not about replay or statistics. “Replay is bullshit. I do not want to see how many times this Charro messed up. I do not want to see it at all.” Statistics projected on a giant screen cause anxiety for competing Charros that want to satisfy the expectations of their Charro *jefes*. Further, replaying mistakes and accidents distract Charros and the audience from original purpose of the Charro tradition. While the older generation of Charros seem relaxed and calm from a distance, the younger generation of Charros look anxious and stressed about their upcoming performance.

The younger generation of Charros consists of a mixture of legacy Charros and first generation of Charros. As mentioned, many younger Charro competitors feel the pressure of the Charro *jefes* and feel that the older generation of Charros do not care enough about winning national titles. Riesman argues, “The inner-directed person becomes capable of maintaining a delicate balance between the demands upon him on his goal in life and the buffetings of his external environment” (Riesman, 1961). The older generation of Charros understood how to balance their goals and the external environment, however this not true for many young Charros. Rather, the younger generation of Charros can be considered to be more other-directed in social character. Unlike inner-directed social character types that gain a feeling of control over their own lives, Riesman explains other-directed social character types as directed by the environment of people. Riesman states, “What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual—either those known to him or those who whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and

through the mass media” (Riesman, 1961). Although some younger Charros can have other-directed inclinations, it is evident that the younger generation of Charros exhibit more other-directed qualities. Neither their parents nor the Charro tradition influence their goals but rather, their desire to be like other winning Charros and associate themselves with the Charro leisure class.

The allure of the Charro leisure class is much more attractive to the other-directed Charro because of the honor and perceived respect that Charro *jefes* are given by the Mexican Federation of Charros. The Charro *jefe* lifestyle is luxurious and many younger Charros find themselves trying to emulate them. As previously argued, the Charro *jefe* belongs to a Charro leisure class due to their conspicuous consumption and lack of Charro generational legitimacy. The younger generation of Charros notice the Charro *jefe*'s large ranches and expensive equipment as the model of success. Further, the Charro team is able to enjoy the wealth of the Charro *jefe* through vicarious leisure due to their connection to the Charro *jefe* control. Veblen stated:

In so far as this is true the labor spent in these services is to be classed as leisure; and when performed by others than the economically free and self-directing head of the establishment, they are to be classed as vicarious leisure. The vicarious leisure performed by housewives and menials, under the head of the household cares, may frequently develop into drudgery, especially where the competition for reputability is close and strenuous (Veblen, 1889).

The Charro team, particularly comprised by younger Charros, receive the benefits of the Charro *jefe*'s wealth even though they perform drudgery. They have access to expensive and well-trained horses, authentic silver spurs, space to practice, etc. The younger generation of Charros are often preoccupied with having the “right type of

clothing” and the “right type of horse” rather than replicating the very culture that inhabit.

These are not the interests of the older generation of Charros. Wealthy young Charros spend large quantities of money on clothing worn by famous Charros in the competition circle. They are willing to spend large amounts of money on clothes as long as they acquire the best clothing and equipment to appease their Charro peers’ judgmental eyes. Those younger Charros with limited funds will spend their limited budgets on acquiring luxury clothing and equipment in order to blend in with their Charro peers. The older generation of Charros with generational ties usually wear Charro suits that were handmade by their family member. In addition, older Charros are often seen wearing the same Charro suit for years since they do not place much emphasis on luxury Charro clothing. As long as their self-presentation satisfies the requirements presented in the Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016, the older generation of Charros will not place much attention on the self-presentation of other Charros. The suits of the older generation of Charros typically possess a deep historical significance because these Charro suits often resemble the suits worn by the first association of Charros in the 1920s. Older Charros do not use the Charro suit to distinguish themselves from the Charro community but rather to demonstrate their membership.

Sombreros are also very important features to the Charro self-presentation. The older generation of Charros tends to have sombreros that are dirty from the ranch because they wear them all the time. Similar to their original utility, sombreros cover the

face from the sun as well as protect the head in the event of a fall. Yet, young and wealthy Charros have custom-made sombreros as well as Charro suits that are made from the best materials for the sole purpose of competing. Their self-presentation is also contingent of conscious consumption since their Charro suits display their social class status or perceived social status. Generational differences are apparent in the condition of the Charro suit and even the type of sombrero they possess. For example, younger generation of Charros tend to wear their sombreros only for *charreadas*. There is a growing trend of having Charro team emblems embroidered onto the sombreros furthering displaying their status. A sombrero is already an expensive item, costing from five hundred dollars to ten thousand dollars and having intricate embroidery further elevates the price. Although the younger generation of Charros emulate Charro self-presentation, their other-directed social character also drives younger Charros to even duplicate the performance of others. Regional differences also allow some younger Charros to opt for more prestigious sombreros representative of their home states.

Further, since *charreadas* for the younger generation of Charros place emphasis on victories, many young Charros will jeopardize their own Charros skills in order to avoid failure as well as possible unemployment. For example, Gustavo is a twenty-seven-year-old Charro with generational ties. Although his father grew up in a small ranch outside of Pachuca, Gustavo grew up in the city. He was required to work on the ranch with his father at an early age until he earned his college degree in his early adulthood. Gustavo's Charro *jefe* is a wealthy businessman that he met through his father's friend. His Charro team is well-respected among the Mexican Federation of

Charros and performs well during competition season. Gustavo is a *Charro completo* or a complete Charro. A *Charro completo* may be considered as a jack-of-all trades in the Charro tradition because they have the expertise to perform all nine *suertes*. Although the label of *Charro completo* was the standard in colonial Mexico, Charros are less likely to label themselves as a *Charro completo* and specialize their Charro skill to one or two specific *suertes*. Although the Mexican Federation of Charros hosts several competitions throughout Mexico specifically for *Charro completos*, the same cluster of *Charro completos* tend to participate at each event. Modern Charros, in particular the younger generation of Charros, acknowledge the disadvantages of mastering all nine *suertes*.

Although Gustavo has the skills to compete in every *charreada* as a *Charro completo*, he actively chooses not to compete as such because of his desire to be a team player. Gustavo selects to compete in the *suerte* called the *jineteeo de yegua* or bareback mare riding. In this particular *suerte*, the Charro will have up to six minutes to accomplish the task of removing two ties from the bucking mare. The goal of the *jineteeo de yegua* is to remain mounted on the back of the mare until it stops bucking and then gracefully dismount without falling. Judges award points based on time completed, quality of the rider, and the dismount. Gustavo can focus his attention on performing well on this specific *suerte* rather than performing well on every *suerte* in the *charreada*. He avoids potential replacement if he is responsible for performing badly in every *suerte* and costing his team the winning title. The older generation of Charros argue that the fear of failure causes younger Charros to sabotage their talents. Veblen argues that the

use of sabotage is a common practice within vested interest and business principles. He states, “Workmen have resorted to such measures to secure improved conditions of work, or increased wages, or shorter hours, or to maintain their habitual standards, to all of which they have claimed to have some sort of vested right. Any strike is of the nature of sabotage, of course” (Veblen, 1919). Similar to Veblen’s analysis, young Charros recognize that their full efficiency would be expected by Charro *jefes* each time they complete therefore they sabotage their own skills in order to secure their work and wages. *Charro completos*, like Gustavo, would rather specialize in a particular *suerte* and jeopardize their Charro skills rather than making themselves vulnerable to failure or unemployment.

The younger generation of Charros also have anxiety about performing well. Unlike the older generation of Charros that view competitions as celebrations, younger Charros view competitions as work. The Charro tradition is transformed into tasks that are needed to be mastered for competition rather than the purpose of keeping culture alive. The barbaric elements due the influence of business principles negatively influence the new generation of Charros by suppressing their idle curiosity, parental bent, and instinct of workmanship. Their idle curiosity is suppressed because of their growing fear of failing others. For example, Humberto, an eighteen-year-old Charro, described his relationship with the Charro community as stressful. He stated, “I hate disappointing the team. I want to experiment with my movement...my horse and I have been practicing...practicing other strategies. I can’t do it because that’s not what [the Charro *jefe*] wants.” Humberto was experiencing the suppression of his idle curiosity.

During his practice sessions, he seemed more relaxed and able to perform the *suertes* the way he wanted to because he was not directed by any authority or others. There was no judge. There was no Charro *jefe*. He was free to ride his horse and experiment with his movements. The anxiety returned the presence of his Charro team and his anxiety was noticeable in his demeanor. He would conform to the direction of others.

The older generation of Charros notice that the younger generation of Charros operated with fear to fit in with the Charro *jefes* and with each other. When asked their thoughts about the younger generation of Charros, most older and experienced Charros will proclaim “*estos chamacos no saben* (these kids don’t know)” in relation to the Charro tradition. The older generation of Charros notice the growing concern of the younger generation of Charros to appease other Charros rather than upholding the Charro traditions of their family. Riesman stated, “...it matters very much who these ‘others’ are: whether they are the individual’s immediate circle or a ‘higher’ circle or the anonymous voices of the mass media; whether the individual fears the hostility of chance acquaintances or only of those who ‘count’” (Riesman, 1961). The other-directed nature of the younger generation of Charros triggers their anxiety by causing them to conform to their peers rather than keeping the Charro tradition alive. The younger generation of Charros tends to place value on the opinion of their peers and slowly destroys the original purpose of the Charro tradition. Further, the growing influence of the instruments of mass media such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. among the younger generation of Charros will be addressed further in the upcoming chapters. Although the younger generation of Charros demonstrate the most cultural adaptation

due to their adoption of Charro business principles and other-directed social character, this does not mean that the older generation of Charros is completely immune to these changes. However, the older generation of Charros are more resistant of changes due to their Charro generational ties and rural upbringing.

Veblen's theoretical arguments regarding standardization, pecuniary gain, barbaric and predatory culture, the instinct of workmanship, idle curiosity, and parental bent allows for the explanation of some of the new problems within the Charro community. In particular, Veblen's argument regarding the power of business principles provides clarity to why *Charro jefes* have growing importance and influence upon the younger generation of competing Charros. *Charro jefes* place new pressure on Charro teams for their own vested interests rather than the peaceable intensions of the Charro community. Further, *Charro jefes* now comprise a growing Charro leisure class which influences how Charros view success. The Charro team often compromised their Charro talents in skills in order to conform to the needs of the team and causing them to sabotage their own skills for the desire to win. The older generation of Charros notice the differences in the younger generation of Charro's behavior and consider their behavior to be below par with the Charro tradition. In the next chapter, I will address construction of the Charro identity as legitimate and the role of women in the Charro community.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERN CHARRO AMBITION AND FANTASY

We arrive at the lienzo around 11:36AM. The charreada does not begin until 1:00PM but there is so much to do. There are about six large trailers full of horses ready for competitions. Ranch hands, mostly young men, quickly begin their work by making sure the animals are taken care of. They make sure the horses are walked, fed, and prepared for a long day of charreando. Gerardo, a thirty-five-year-old Charro, takes his horse from his worker, Miguel, and begins to saddle it up. His son, Gerardo Jr. of about six years old, walks up to him and attentively watches his father work. He waits patiently as his father signals him so he can warm up the horse. Although Gerardo Jr. is only six years old, he has been riding horses practically his whole life. His mother, Silvia, smiles as she brushes her hair next to the truck. Con cuidado! "With caution!", she yells. Gerardo places his son on the horse and directs him to the lienzo. Gerardo Jr. flashes his father a huge smile as his feet dangle a foot from the stirrups. The young boy demonstrates confidence when managing the towering horse and tightly holds the reins in his tiny hands as he steers the horse. He gallops towards the rest of the Charro sons before flashing another smile in the direction of father...It will not be very long until Gerardo Jr. will be competing in his very own charreada. (Observation, May 2014)

Socialization in the Charro tradition and community starts early for many young aspiring Charros. In the case Gerardo, his son has been exposed to horses since he was an infant. Gerardo Jr.'s very first appearance at a *charreada* was at only 4 months old and since then, has rarely missed the opportunity to watch his father compete with his Charro team. Although the customs and traditions of the Charro community are not the mainstream cultural sentiments of the greater Mexican population, those who participate in the Charro community are very dedicated to its discipline, culture, and traditions. As previously stated, the Charro community formed as a rebellious counterculture against Spanish colonialism and as a form to take ownership of their marginal identity. Initially the Charro community welcomed those interested individuals who wished to up keep

their tradition, but as the generational ties to the Charro community gained more importance than the inclination to participate, problems regarding legitimacy emerged. These differences among class and generational ties within the Charro tradition stem from the divisions created by the upper and ruling class prior to the Mexican Revolution (Sands, 1994). The older generation of Charros, as alluded in their generational differences in relation to the younger generation of Charros, explained the significance of bloodlines as a necessary requisite for “belonging” in the Charro community. “Blood” to these Charros forties the link between one Charro generation and another.

The Charro tradition is typically passed down from generation to generation of a father unto their male children. In previous generations, Charro teams were comprised primarily of Charro families. Charro children learn and practice the Charro *suertes* and some even compete in *charreadas* sponsored by the Mexican Federation of Charros. These aspiring underage Charros go through a specific socialization process into the Charro community that is not experienced by Charro rookies with no generational ties. Access into the Charro community for these non-generational Charros is harder and their socialization process is unlike Charros with generational ties. “Belonging” in the Charro community creates obstacles for those who have a genuine interest in the Charro tradition yet have no current or past connection. Further, continuous marginalization is more prominent among indigenous and lower class Charro rookies. In particular, issues of classism and colorism have become real problems for many competing Charros with no generational ties to the Charro community. This causes continuous marginalization of

Charros that are labeled as “illegitimate” by others. They are often denied opportunities and their work is often more dangerous during Charro competitions.

In this chapter, I will analyze the socialization process of Charros with generational ties and Charro rookies. I will highlight the subtle ways that lower class Charros with generational ties negotiate their legitimacy to the Charro tradition. The emphasis on “bloodline” as the only true component in “belonging” to the Charro tradition will be the most used defense among poor and working class Charros. Further, the expression of legitimacy and authentic ties to the Charro community diverge significantly among the younger and older generations of Charros. While the older generation of Charros are more likely to express that authenticity depend upon generational ties, the younger generation of Charros with generational ties will make an effort to be express more inclusive statements about Charro rookies. However, these expressions of inclusivity depend on the audience. Ultimately, I will argue that Charro rookies with indigenous ties experience higher incidents of marginalization and acts of exclusion from generational Charros in their socialization process than their Charro counterparts. This in conclusion, demonstrates the contradicting notions of the Charro community which proceeded from indigenous roots.

Charro Socialization, Identity, and Legitimacy

Although the original Charros were of lower economic brackets, today Charro men come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The early Charros of the colonial and post-colonial period in Mexico dedicated their lives to their ranches and animals.

Although there were a few wealthy Charros in the early twentieth century, most Charros resided in working-class rural areas in Mexico. The notion of the “professional Charro” did not occur until the formal organization of the Charro community in the 1920s due to the growing standardization within the Charro community and the pressure from the Mexican Federation of Charros to expand the audience base of Charro competitions. Those who labeled themselves as a “professional Charro” made their money by participating in Charro teams funded by wealthy Charro *jefes*. Since the Charro tradition is the national sport of Mexico, professional Charros can be regarded as professional athletes without the nation-wide notoriety of professional soccer players. Some are recognized within the Charro community but only a few have a national or transnational recognition. However, not every professional Charro is funded by Charro *jefes* and some even find themselves in continuous financial distress due to the growing costs of participating in the Charro community. These professional Charros often have modest ranches that provide them with enough money to financially support their families and pay their competition and association fees. The source of income varies greatly within the Charro community because they invest their money in cattle and reigning horses. Many well-known Charros make a living training horses for Charro competitions for their Charro teams or external customers from various parts of Mexico and the United States. Nevertheless, there are arguments within the Charro community with respect as to who can claim legitimate and authentic status as a Charro.

Generational ties are often the most significant claim to the Charro tradition, regardless of socioeconomic status. Due to the growing importance of wealth in the

Charro community, many working class Charros have to rationalize their low socioeconomic status by drawing on their generational ties to enhance their self-worth and identity. For example, Mario is a forty-one-year-old Charro with generational ties from a small town outside of Arrandas, Jalisco. His grandfather, Juan, owned a sizable plot of land that they used to grow crops and tend cattle. Mario's grandfather was a notable Charro in his pueblo merited by his ability to train even the most stubborn of horses. Mario's father, Enrique, inherited the land and continued to grow crops and expand the cattle business. He added another room to his childhood home; however, they did not have modern appliances like a stove, refrigerator, laundry unit, etc. Enrique met his wife at the age of seventeen during a Charro festival adjacent to his hometown and married her shortly thereafter. Mario is the third child out of twelve children from that marriage and all his family members consider themselves to be an "authentic Charro family." Mario expresses that although his family did not have much money growing up, they did not need money to be Charros. He states:

Look, mi hija, [my daughter], the Charro tradition is for the people who worked hard. During the time of my grandfather, you did not need a ton of... a ton of money. You were a Charro because what you did with your hands. (Gestures to his horse) Those [horses] are the reason you want to do this. My father taught us everything we know and made sure that we were rich in traditions. I see these pendejos (dumbasses) that think money makes them Charros... (laughs). The Charros of the past were like me. Like my family. Don't be fooled by them. It's not true to us (the Charros). (Interview, May 2013)

Mario's emphasis on the generational connection to the Charro community provides him a basis to claim Charro identity since he lacks the capital to acquire expensive horses or better equipment. Similar to the inner-directed Charros in the older generation of Charros, hard work, expert horsemanship, and family is all one needs to be a "true

Charro”. Mario recognizes that his lower-socioeconomic position may result others to discredit his Charro identity and he is quick to shut down such remarks. By reaffirming his generational and familial connections, Mario is able to reestablish his self-worth and identity as an authentic and legitimate Charro.

This type of defense mechanism is not unique to the Charro community. For example, in *The Color of Class: Poor Whites and the Paradox of Privilege* (2003), Kirby Moss examines the how poor whites in the United States negotiate social class and racial category. He reveals the paradoxical nature of whiteness within the bounds of social class. Moss argues,

Where many scholars draw an unconscious or unrequested racial line between poverty and working class—non-Whites poor and Whites working class (or blue collar, a term many use interchangeably)—my research disrupts by showing that poor Whites exist as a discursive anomaly. A group who, rather than identify or be identified with forms of poverty, identifies instead with forms of privilege because they see themselves in Whiteness and all of its promise. Yet, within that privileged category there are distinct cultural and class differences between poor, working-class, and middle-class White folk that are often glossed over in representations we commonly see linked to poverty and privilege (Moss, 2003).

Although Moss (2003) is examining poor Whites in the Midwest, the use of a privileged category is a fundamental tool of lower class Charros with generational ties. Racial categories in Mexico are not institutionalized as in the United States; however, race relations in the United States can be stratified based on indigenous, mestizo, European lineage, and socio-economic status. In this case, the Charro community is the source of privileged category is authenticity and legitimacy to the Charro tradition. Lower class Charros like Mario are not discriminated in the Charro tradition based on racial or ethnic categorization but rather their social class. My observations of Mario led me to believe

that wealthier Charros stigmatized based on his clothing, horses, etc. based on their subtle comments and their actions of exclusion (i.e. not extending for business or invitations to informal social gatherings). It should also be noted that Mario does not have any markers of indigenous identity such as darker skin color or indigenous traditions. Mario's marginalization from his wealthier Charro peers is situated upon his class status. Although these actions of exclusion are not always recognized by Mario, he was aware enough of the class differences within the Charro community to use his generational ties as the only form of quintessential Charro legitimacy and authenticity.

Many Charros, whether in the older or younger generation, hold the firm belief that the Charro community is a space in which boys become men. West and Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" (1987) draw attention to gender differences as accomplished through routine social interactions of the everyday. Gender can be divided between the masculine and feminine while its expectations are set by historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. Judith Butler (1990) defines gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*." Gender, according to Butler (1990), is a performative accomplishment in which both the social audience and the actors themselves come to believe and to perform its expectations. The Charro tradition stipulates a rural Mexican masculinity that requires constant enactment and negotiation with the historical significance of its past. Gutmann (2007) argued that the conception of masculinity, dominance and power of men over women, has remained fairly consistent in Mexican culture yet Mexican masculinity has expanded its boundaries in the domestic and social roles. Mexican masculinity fits, what

R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt (2005) described as, the hegemonic masculine model which identifies multiple masculinities that fluctuate over time, culture, and person. The Charro masculinity is only one component of hegemonic masculinity that allow Charro men to sustain a leading and dominant role in the Charro community through its engagement and active participation with the Charro tradition. Charro men express a personal responsibility in socializing younger Charros, whether they be their own children or other Charro youngsters, into the Charro tradition and making them “true Charro men”.

Kimmel (2008) argues that sports dominated by men have become a space in which men escape and can reinstate their masculinity away from women. Since Mexican dominant society has accepted women into public domains such as business and education, Mexican men often find spaces to express masculinity. Veblen (1889) can further broaden his argument regarding the barbaric and predatory habits to sports and the construction of manhood. He states:

These manifestations of the predatory temperament are all to be classed under the head of exploit. They are partly simple and unreflected expressions of an attitude of emulative ferocity, partly activities deliberately entered upon with a view to gaining repute for prowess. Sports of all kinds are of the same general character, including prize-fights, bull-fights, athletics, shooting, angling, yachting, and games of skill, even where the element of destructive physical efficiency is not an obtrusive feature. (Veblen, 1889)

Although the Charro tradition has peaceable elements, one cannot not deny the predatory and barbaric features that pervade its formal institutionalization as a sport. Sports, according to Veblen, speak to the boyish temperament to exploit and conquer. Similar to Kimmel’s (2008) argument, sports are a space to freely express masculinity and the

Charro tradition is no different. The Charro community provides young Charros with the opportunity to be around other Charro men while also learning the expectation of how to be a Charro man. These spaces are hypermasculine because of the types of conversations that take place. Although the dominant Mexican culture may allude to more egalitarian practices and gender equity, the Charro tradition has become a “safer space” to enact masculinity without the threat of femininity. Charro men, of any socio-economic class, can engage in conversations with one another without censoring themselves because the Charro community is their domain while women are supplementary. Conversations between Charro men often take the form of informal life lessons that will encourage ideologies that reproduce and reaffirm particular aspects of the Charro tradition.

Further, the assessment of rural masculinity in this context has to be negotiated and protected continuously against urbanity. In Brandth and Haugen’s (2005) study of Norway’s rural masculinity, the authors examine how rural spaces where agricultural work was the prominent is now experiencing commodification of natural and cultural resources. Rural masculinity in rural spaces are shifting from being expressed through actual agricultural labor to elements of rural activities such as fishing, hunting, and wilderness related activities. In the context of the Charro community, some Charros, in particular the younger Charros who reside in urban areas and have a college education, use the Charro competitions as a safe space to enact rural Mexican masculinity without judgment of other non-Charro people. Further, since many of the *charreadas* organized by the Mexican Federation of Charros are in urban areas, the Charro community becomes rural activity that allows the existence of rural Charro masculinity to continue

from generation to generation within these urban spaces. Many Charros perform a form of code-switching when they face other members of the Charro community versus Mexican outsiders. Code-switching is common among the younger generation of Charros and Charros of high socio-economic status. For most, socialization into the Charro community commences from birth and never truly ends as long as a Charro is always involved in the Charro community through formal or informal organizations of *charreadas*.

The vignette at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates just how early young Charros are socialized into the Charro community by their fathers. This socialization is fundamental to the development of their Charro identity and involves continuous interactions with other Charros within the Charro community. These types of observations between sons and fathers are not rare in the Charro community and can be witnessed at any particular *charreada* throughout Mexico and the United States. Gerardo has made sure to expose his son to horses so that he will be less scared to ride them in the future since his father did the same for him and his brothers. Gerardo Jr. can be considered a very skilled horseman for his early age and many other older Charros even say it's because it's in his blood. Although he has learned how to handle the temperament of a horse, Gerardo Jr. has much to learn and is always being told how to act by his father as well as other older Charros.

I observed Gerardo and Gerardo Jr. at several *charreadas* throughout my ethnographic observations. Other older Charros with generational ties would try to advise Gerardo Jr. on the ethics of being a Charro man. In one specific instance, Gerardo

Jr. was slouching and his bow was crooked. One older and more experienced Charro on Gerardo's team grabbed Gerardo Jr.'s arm and told him to sit tall because only "tired old ladies slouch". Another Charro laughed and signaled the young Charro to fix his bow. Gerardo Jr. quickly adjusted himself and continued to smile happily as any happy six-year-old would in the presence of adults. It can be said that Gerardo Jr. would be continuously monitored for the course of his Charro career.

Pedro, is a thirty-five-year-old Charro with generational ties. He has a ten-year-old son, Marco, from a previous marriage. Although divorce is not very common among Charro families, Pedro's friends and family never mention the fact that his current partner is not his first wife. This is for the purpose of showing respect to his current wife and this is due to the conservative Roman Catholic beliefs that many of the Charro families possess. He has a total of three children, however, Pedro only has one son or only one true heir to the Charro tradition. The Charro community emphasizes the father and son relationship due to the importance of reproducing the Charro tradition. This is significant to the generational Charros since inculcating the Charro tradition links the young with the old Charros. His relationship with his son is not the most loveable compared to the other Charros that I observed due their particular familial circumstances. Yet, Pedro, like most Charro fathers, does want Marco to be a Charro therefore his is very harsh on his son when it comes to practicing. The following observation depicts Pedro's attempt to instruct his son.

During a practice session at Pedro's father's ranch in June 2014, Pedro had returned from the opposite end of the mountain side to check up on his children who are riding their horses in the lienzo. He had herded all his cattle and made sure that none of the neighboring ranches had attempted to cross on his land. He

was smoking a cigarette as he approached closer to the lienzo. Pedro's father was hosting a practice session for some of his Charro friends and people were beginning to arrive one by one. One truck full of men pulled into the side of the makeshift lienzo and began unloading their equipment. They greeted the children and began setting up the fire pit to make tacos for everyone. Marco had been playing in the lienzo with his sister and they seemed to be having a good time. He was laughing and yelling out for his sister to race him when he realized his father was approaching. Pedro entered the lienzo and asked Marco to do part of a cala de caballo. Marco's demeanor completely changed from happy to agitated but he did what was asked of him. His suerte involves the Charro sprinting from his horse the ninety-meter mark of the lienzo and then making a sudden stop at the fifty-meter line leading the horse to glide the back of its legs potentially across a fifteen-meter mark. The smoother the glide and the longer the distance, the more Charro is able to demonstrate that he has excellent control and domination of his horse. Since this a practice session, there are no judges and there are no restrictions about movement. Pedro has been teaching his son how to do this particular suerte since he was five-years-old. Since the purpose of the cala de caballo is to demonstrate a Charro's horsemanship skills, this particular suerte often takes years to perfect. Marco, reluctantly, struts his horse to the ninety-meter mark and proceeded to sprint the horse to the fifty-meter mark. The men on the outside of the lienzo were attentively watching the young boy as he proceeded to attempt the cala de caballo. Marco was able to slide the horse at a sizable distance but was noticeably scared when the horse's legs struggled to balance. He had not controlled the horse well enough and the horse had jumped slightly from the sand. The other Charros watching were impressed however Pedro was not. He gave Marco little praise and proceeded to tell him all the movements that he had done wrong. He exclaimed, "Don't look nervous! Do you ever see me nervous? No. A Charro has to be ready and calm." Marco quietly agreed and said that he would do better. Pedro asked Marco to repeat the cala de caballo until he felt that Marco was at the standard that he wanted him to be. At Marco's final attempt, Pedro finally praised him and Marco waited until his father wasn't looking to shed a tear. (Observation, 2014)

Although Pedro and Marco's father-son relationship is occupied with external familial problems, Pedro's responsibility as a Charro father is to teach his son about the Charro tradition. Other Charros have also told him the importance of teaching his skills to his son. Pedro has been critiqued by other Charros that he has not dedicated enough time to teaching his son. Pedro's close friend has mentioned that he is not sure why Pedro does not dedicate enough time to his son since a lot of Charros with daughters wish they had a

son to teach. The *cala de caballo* is one of the most difficult *suertes* because of the technical precision that is required of the Charro therefore requires extensive practice time. Mastering the *cala de caballo* takes many years therefore the manner in which Pedro pressures his son is not uncommon and often the norm for many Charro families.

Manuel, a twenty-five-year-old Charro is also a Charro with a three generational ties to the Charro community. Originally from Guanajuato, Manuel now lives on the outskirts of Guadalajara and lives on the ranch that his Charro *jefe* owns. When recalling his childhood, Manuel focused on his Charro upbringing and his relationship with his father. Although his mother was a stay-at-home mom, Manuel rarely mentioned her in his stories about his childhood. He centered his stories around how his father taught him to be the Charro that he is today. He stated the following:

When I was twelve, my father had just traded some horses to a neighbor for some bulls. These bulls were... giant. Bad tempered, big balled, assholes. (laughs) [My father] was very happy about [this trade] because we wanted to show me how to ride the bull (jinete el toro) on bigger bulls... I had only tried it on smaller bulls before (laughs). You don't break your face on the nice ones. I was very stubborn though and would say that I didn't want to learn. He could tell that I was nervous...but he wouldn't let me do anything else until I would get on the bull. One day... I got on the bull but he poked it so hard with a stick that I almost fell off from the buck. I was so scared because I thought that I was going to hit my head on the metal bar. I had already broken a rib the previous year so I was more nervous than I should have been. My father just laughed and yell at me to hold on tighter and adjust my legs and posture. He is one of the best bull riders of his generation so I am glad he was my teacher. If didn't threat to kick my ass if I fell, I would probably be horrible. (Interview, 2013).

Manuel is currently one of the best bull riders in Mexico. He also wishes to teach his future sons the Charro tradition when the time comes for him to start a family. In his discussion regarding his father, he described that he would be physically reprimanded by his father if he did not succeed in a *suerte*, practice or competition. Although Manuel is a

part of the younger generation of Charros, he shares the experiences of the older generation of Charros when it comes to training and socialization into the Charro community.

Angel is a seventy-year-old Charro from Mexico City and like Manuel, his father was also very ruthless about his Charro lessons. Angel recalls various times when his father got violent toward him if he did not successfully achieve a *suerte* when he was younger. Older Charros were more comfortable sharing stories of violent episodes with their fathers than the younger Charros. He also narrated these incidents in the similar tone as Manuel. Most of the Charros that recalled harsh reprimands from their fathers did not view these incidents as child abuse. Although not every Charro in the Charro community experienced any form of physical abuse, the Charro respondents that I interviewed tended to imply that physical punishment is a common tool of discipline. These Charros viewed these incidents as necessary to establish their dedication into the Charro tradition.

The socialization into the Charro community is often, as previously mentioned, a group effort among the older generation of Charros. It is noteworthy to mention that this extension of help or Charro wisdom is only granted to young Charros with generational ties. The older generation of Charros with generational ties will bestow their wisdom to younger Charros with generational ties because they have a sense of personal responsibility in keeping the Charro tradition alive. The older generation of Charros with generational ties will not necessarily seek out young Charros to mentor. However, these types of relationships occur more organically between generational Charros because there are

ample opportunities for mentorship to occur. As mentioned earlier, the older generation of Charros often hosts informal *charreadas* to spend time with other Charros. At times, generational Charros will bring their young children to practices and older Charros will take these opportunities to teach the young Charros skills. Although the trajectory of what the Charro identity represents and embodies depends on generational lines, young Charros with generational ties have a deep respect for older Charros. For example, Martín, a twenty-year old Charro with generational ties, stated that he idolizes the older generation of Charros for their skills and ideas regarding Charro brotherhood. Although Martín has characteristics that would classify him as other-directed, he highlighted the significance of mentorship between the older Charros and young Charros because that was the basis of the Charro tradition. He stated:

My grandfather and father are my biggest mentors. They have made me the Charro that I am today. Everything that I do...I do because I learned from them. They always give me advice...even when I do not want to hear it (laughs). They taught me that one must be disciplined to be in this. Train a minimum of 3 times a week if you to be in competitions. I think you have to have a strong character to be a Charro and that is what my father taught me. (Interview, August 2013)

Martín credits his father and grandfather for his Charro character. His socialization began as a child and continues into his early adulthood.

The purpose of training one Charro generation to another is to bestow and reproduce a specific type of Charro manhood while refining their Charro horsemanship skills. As stated previously, the Charro tradition has been formally institutionalized as the official sport of Mexico and as a result, the Charro tradition has some sports-like characteristics. Incidentally, this is true of the Charro sportsmanship and character in *charreadas*. While the Mexican Federation of Charros judge vigilantly for Charro

horsemanship, portions of the Official and General Rules for Competitions 2012-2016 also evaluate Charro sportsmanship and points can be deducted based on the lack of appropriate temperament. Evaluation of Charro sportsmanship is not a new incorporation to the rules like the strict measurement of distance or the factor of time. Charro sportsmanship is significant to the Charro tradition since the original purpose of *charreadas* were to celebrate the Charro tradition with adjacent pueblos and celebrate community.

Charro fathers training their sons will often teach their children about sportsmanship in the Charro tradition. As stated earlier, Charros believe in the welfare of animals and often chastise Charros who injury their horses. Charro children are taught from a young age to never hit their horses and if they do serious consequences can occur. For example, Jorge, a sixteen-year-old Charro was practicing with his father, Torbio on a Sunday afternoon in July 2015. I did not interview Jorge but rather his father. My association with Jorge were intertwined with his father, Torbio who had invited me to his ranch to observe his everyday work. Jorge had been trying to perfect his *cala de caballo*. The horse was becoming aggravated by the continuous practice and Torbio noticed. Torbio yelled at his son to bring the horse in for rest and continue in an hour. Jorge, looking tired, agreed. However, he yelled back that he wanted to try the *cala* run one more time. His father reluctantly agreed but allowed him to continue. Jorge's horse sprinted across the ninety-meter mark but halted abruptly as it reached the fifty-meter mark. Jorge was noticeably irate and began yelling at his horse and grabbed his whip to punish the horse. Torbio looked noticeably angry and told his son loudly to drop the

whip and go home. Jorge did exactly what his father asked and proceeded to walk toward the other end of the *lienzo*. Torbio apologized to me for losing his temper in front of a woman.⁶ He did make it a point to tell me that he wants to prevent his son from becoming someone who does not respect the “horses that feed him.” Torbio was implying that the horses in his ranch provide him with capital to take care of his family. He further added that the Charro tradition is about respecting the horse since they are what gave their ancestors freedom from the Spanish.

Charro teenagers with generational ties are even more monitored and regulated by Charro men with generational ties. In particular, older Charro men will frequently engage in conversations with adolescent Charro boys in order to make sure that the young Charros are being correctly conditioned to the Charro tradition. Many young adolescent Charros admire their older Charro counterparts for their skills but others esteem their wealth and honor more. Either way, adolescent Charros will respect the authority of older Charros with generational ties and will adhere to their expectations. In a particular incident in June 2013, an older Charro with generational ties was drinking tequila and coke near the entrance to the audience. A young Charro of about seventeen years old walked toward the older Charro to greet him. The older Charro grabbed the young Charro by the shoulder and proceed to exclaim his excitement to see him. The older Charro offered him a drink but the young Charro rejected his offer with a slight

⁶ Torbio’s apology was due the fact that his yell was very loud and powerful causing me to also flinch in the similar fashion that Jorge had in the moment. While his son was the direct target of his sanctions, his yell was powerful enough to effect those who were around him. He apologized since he had scared me and I was his guest making observations around his ranch.

smile. Annoyed, the older Charro proceed to pour him a shot of tequila anyway. He stated:

Mi hijo [my son] ...a Charro never turns down tequila (laughs). Here, take this. Now take the shot and never make a face. If you do, everyone is going to think you are weak. A Mexican takes his drink forcefully. (hands the young Charro his drink) Now take it. Drink it! Act like you like it! (laughs)

Having no choice, the young Charro takes his shot and tries not to make a face.

Although attempting his best efforts, the young Charro lets out a gasp as the tequila taste becomes more dominant in his mouth. He reaches out for a drink of soda that the older Charro hands him as he laughs at the sight of the struggling young Charro.

Alcohol in the Charro community is a common practice and is encouraged by other Charros upon the younger generation and has become another socialization tool similar to the way that young boys are told how to sit or act at *charreadas*. Veblen states, “Drunkenness and the other pathological consequences of the free use of stimulants therefore tend in their turn to become honorific, as being a mark, at the second remove, of the superior status of those who are able to afford the indulgence” (Veblen, 1889). In the Charro community, alcohol is a tool in the expression of the Charro community’s particular rural masculinity. While not every Charro engages in drunken behavior, many recognize its significance to the process of becoming an authentic and legitimate Charro. Some Charros with generational ties recognize that alcoholism runs in their family but attribute these alcoholic tendencies as minimal and easily contained. I observed many young adolescent Charros watching older Charros drink and even in some cases mimic the behaviors of their idols. To an eighteen-year-old Charro that interviewed, drinking

alcohol to him is just a form of Charro expression that they have learned from watching the older generation of Charros.

Veblen states, “In popular apprehension there is much that is admirable in the type of manhood which the life of sport fosters. There is self-reliance and good-fellowship, so termed in the some-what loose colloquial use of the words” (Veblen, 1889). The notion of self-reliance and good-fellowship is also central to the Charro tradition because it is a peaceable trait that requires the nurturing of relationship of others. However, sportsmanship, like in any sport, transforms into a barbaric or predatory practice once exploitation of the other or even the individual occurs. Further, Veblen states, “The physical vigor acquired in the training for athletic games—so far as the training may be said to have this effect—is of advantage both to the individual and the collectivity, serviceability. The spiritual trait which go with athletic sport are likewise economically advantageous to the individual, as contradistinguished from the interests of the collectivity” (Veblen, 1889). The Charro training is beneficial for the individual’s cultivation of their skills and their place in the Charro community. The collective interests of the Charro community are additionally met since the Charro tradition is being replicated from one generation to another.

The notion of “good sportsmanship” is central to the Charro tradition, nevertheless “good sportsmanship” in application varies in the Charro community. The generational Charros tend to be pleasant to other generational Charros though unfriendly to Charro rookies. The younger generation of Charros with generational ties are more devious with their sportsmanship to rookies since they have a more other-directed social

character. Their other-directed social character, as Riesman argued, demands that their answer seem at par with the rest of the group. Since the younger generation of Charros with generational ties want to be liked and seem like they are receptive to newcomers in the Charro community, their answers will reflect notion of free opportunity rather than exclusion. Riesman states, “The thoroughly other-directed the individual is, the more unhesitatingly able he is to classify his preferences and to compare those of others. In fact, as compared with their inner-directed predecessors, other-directed children are extraordinarily knowledgeable about popularity rating” (Riesman, 1961). The other-directed Charro is also able to make formulate his answers to the standards of respecting newcomers and giving the illusion that they are not exclusionary in regards to Charro rookies.

For example, when asked if any one could be a Charro, about 36 out 42 of the Charros between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five with generational ties said that any person had the right to become a Charro if they showed true passion. Gustavo, the twenty-five-year-old Charro with generational ties, mentioned previously explained the following:

If they like...and they like it a lot...I think that if they go meet the right people at competitions that are bosses of teams maybe they can find a place to ride. Dedication, education, and attitude. It's the only thing [they] need. (Interview, July 2014).

Gustavo's Charro is a mixture of generational Charros and Charro rookies. His closest friend on the team is a Charro rookie from rural village in Mexico, however in the three years that I got to know Gustavo, he revealed that some Charros are better than others in subtle ways. When a Charro with generational ties did not continuously perform well, he

would make comments dealing with his bloodlines. He would state, “It’s in their blood. They will get better”. While Gustavo would not justify lack of skill in Charro rookies. His comments were coded to not appear exclusive to other Charro rookies and to promote his well-liked persona.

Joel, a twenty-two year-old Charro with generational ties, answered the question, “Can any person become a Charro and compete in *charreadas*?” in the similar way that Gustavo did in his interview. In his interview, Joel made sure to let me know that he believed that any man could become a Charro if they put enough work into it. Joel is from a wealthy family therefore he knows a fair amount of Charro rookies that have gained access into the community through financial means. However, like Gustavo, Joel also makes similar comments that suggest that Charros with generational ties have more claim to the Charro tradition. Joel’s other-directed social character prevents him from deviating from the peer-group, in this case being in the younger generation of Charros. For example, during a regional competition in Jalisco, Joel was sitting on a metal bar on the edge of the *lienzo* with a few of his Charro teammates. They were observing the *piales en la manga del lienzo* which tend to be performed by the older generation of Charros due to the amount of strength and practice this *suerte* requires. An older Charro, about sixty years old, had correctly and successfully carried out the *pial*. The Charro stopped the sprinting mare with ease before the ninety-meter mark. There was moderate cloud of smoke from the friction of the rope and the horn of the saddle. Joel was very impressed by the maneuvering of the older Charro and nudged his friends to pay attention. He stated:

This grand Charro knows exactly what to do. He does not hesitate or stutter his actions. You don't see that amount of grace in competitions anymore. You can tell that he was meant to be on that horse. It's in his blood. You can't learn that...(laughs)

Gabriel, twenty years old with no generational ties, had aspirations to become a *pialador* and Joel's comments visibly upset him. Joel's other-directed character requires peer approval therefore Joel backtracked his comments by saying, "Maybe you could learn his [Charro] grace" in order to reestablish his persona as a welcoming Charro and be liked by his Charro team members. He deterred the potential source of tension by inviting his Charro teammates to shot of tequila. This was not the first time that Joel had reverted his nonexclusive statements.

Joel's behavior is indicative the other-directed social character of the younger generation of Charros. Riesman states, "While all people want and need to be liked by some of the people some of the time, it is only the modern other-directed types who make this their chief source of direction and chief area of sensitivity" (Riesman, 1961). Joel exhibits this other-directed sensitivity and therefore, adjusts his statements around Charro rookies in order to secure their friendship. This type of behavior is not representative of the older generation of Charros. Since their social character is more inner-directed, the older generation of Charros do not mind potentially offending people. Their comments are harsher and they tend be more brutally honest. Riesman describes an inner-directed child in the following way:

Returning now to the situation of the inner-directed child, we see that he finds his playmates either among his own brothers and sisters or in an equally wide age range outside the home. This pattern still exists in rural areas, where the gang at the swimming hole or ball field will be widely ranged in age; there are no partitioned playgrounds. However, after age of "social discretion" is reached, the

inner-directed child is expected to confine his friendships to those of approximately his own social class. (Riesman, 1961).

Although the older generation of Charros are beyond their childhood years, the inner-directed modes of friendship still apply. Many of the older generation of Charros only associate or would characterize their friends as other generational Charros. Unlike the younger generation of Charros who tend to have Charro rookies as friends, the older generation of Charros confine their friendships within the bounds of the Charro community that have legitimate generational ties. This difference in friendship marks the differences in upbringing between the older generation of Charros and the younger generation of Charros. While some younger Charros grew up in small pueblos in rural Mexico, their active participation in the Charro community exposes them to non-generational Charros and Charros of different socio-economic backgrounds. The older Charros have set their networks and friendships based on who they grew up with and will even gravitate to the same group of friends during each *charreada*. Generally, the older generation of Charros tend to befriend Charros of their same socio-economic class and generational ties.

For example, previously identified inner-directed Charro, Samuel's Charro friends are very selective with who they offer drinks while making commentary about the *charreada*. His friends are also other generational Charros and they often spent *charreadas* drinking and laughing. The symbol of friendship to Samuel is the offering of tequila to another Charro. During one particular *charreada*, Samuel and his friend, Arturo were drinking tequila and discussing the competition. Five shots into their discussion, Arturo points to a Charro rookie trying to compete in *el coleadero* or *colas*

en el lienzo. The young Charro was barely eighteen years old and had only officially competed in the *colas en el lienzo* a couple of times. Arturo, mildly tipsy, tells Samuel that the Charro rookie was garbage. “He is new. You can tell.” Samuel, pouring tequila into his coke, laughs in agreement. The competitor after Charro rookie was the son of their great friend and was only a few years younger than the Charro rookie. Samuel says, “Now [gesturing to the Charro] is a real Charro. It is in his blood. It is in his blood. You can tell just by how he positions himself.” Arturo carefully examines the generational Charro’s actions and “That’s right!”.

Samuel and Arturo are not the only Charros in the older generation to use words like “garbage” to describe other Charro rookies. Even if the Charro rookie was considered to be a great Charros by his peers or Charro *jefes*, many Charros like Samuel and Arturo rejected their success and always found something to criticize. In the same situation, the Charro rookie that they were critiquing had successfully enacted the *colas en el lienzo* in his third and final attempt while the generational Charro did not. Rather than praising the Charro rookie, Samuel grabbed his drink and said, “So he can pray...(laughs).” Samuel was highlighted the Charro rookie’s luck rather than Charro skills. Unlike the other-directed Charros who’s main focus in conversation is to be liked by others, the inner-directed Charros use their moments of conversation during *charreadas* to unwind and distress from the stress of their work.

While harsh comments are generally stated from an older Charro to another, this not deter them from stating them in front of Charro rookies. While an other-directed Charro would alter their responses in order to not offend other Charro rookies, the inner-

directed Charro does not care much about “hurting” or offending Charro rookies. As stated previously, some Charro teams are comprised of different Charros of different generational backgrounds. Therefore, the older generation of Charro have some personal interactions with Charro rookies. In a particular *charreada*, Rafael (a sixty-three-year-old Charro with generational ties) was drinking coke and tequila with his three of his other Charro friends. Mateo (forty years old), Rafael’s son, had asked Rafael to compete with his Charro team because one his Charros teammates had injured themselves and could not compete. Rafael was discussing to his friends what he thought about Mateo’s Charro team. He stated, “*There are good ones [Charros] but there is bunch of garbage.*” His Charro friends proceeded to laugh. Rafael did not notice that behind him was a group of Charro rookies taking shots with their girlfriends. One of the Charro rookies looked visibly upset. Later on the same night, the Charro rookie went up to Rafael and said, “Am I garbage, Don Rafael?” Rafael was drunk at this point in the night, however, did not miss a beat and stated, “Pure garbage” while proceeding to laugh. The Charro rookie laughed awkwardly but did not contest him his answer. He instead fled from the group with his head down.

The older generation of Charro does not identify this type of behavior as mean or even discriminatory. Their ideas regarding ownership of the Charro identity are based on generational ties. Although their younger generational counterparts share similar sentiments about Charro legitimacy, the younger and other-directed Charros will adjust their comments based on their peer group. Nonetheless, the Charros rookies recognize

the resistance of the older generation of Charros and the false sincerity of the younger generation of Charros.

Charro Rookies and the Charro Community

Charro *jefes* spend a lot of money recruiting members of their teams. As stated earlier, the Charro *jefes* are interested in acquiring money, prestige, and power within the Charro community. While some Charro *jefes* have a generational tie to the Charro community, many Charro *jefes* have revealed that their interest in the Charro community is the first in their family. Charro teams are comprised of Charros with different socio-economic backgrounds and generational ties. This is a vast contrast from the Charro teams comprised solely of family members or other members of the pueblo community. Charro *jefes* often recruit aspiring Charros from the very villages that their ranches enclose. Aspiring Charros are usually young ranch hands hired from the local villages surrounding the ranches that are often brought to *charreadas* to tend to the animals once the Charro has finished competing. These young workers are often underage and see the Charro community as a potential marker of elevated social status.

For example, Vicente is a twenty-year-old Charro rookie who has been working with Charro *jefe* since he was fourteen years old. Vicente had always admired the Charro tradition but had no generational ties to it. He had grown up watching Pedro Infante films as a kid and watching the Charros sing their love ballads on television. His family is very poor and they rely on Vicente and his brother for income since his mother is very sick and his father is an alcoholic. His mother identifies herself as indigenous and still

speaks her native language. His Charro *jefe* hired Vicente for a low wage however has grown very fond of him throughout the years. Because Vicente's father is an alcoholic and has not been a good father to him, Vicente considers his Charro *jefe* to be like a father and has stated this sentiment throughout the time that I have known him. Vicente's experience is not generalizable to all Charro rookies but highlights some important experiences that many Charro rookies share.

As a hired ranch hand, Vicente was able to travel with the Charro team throughout different parts of Mexico while observing the very best Charros of the nation. When he was seventeen, he made the decision that he also wanted to be a Charro and began saving his money for his sombrero, an emblem of the Charro tradition. His family was resistant at first since they did not have the money to fund Vicente's dream. Since Vicente is responsible for herding cows on ranch, he used these opportunities to perfect his Charro skills. Since he has been riding for a few years, he befriended another Charro, Enrique (twenty-five years old with generational ties) who has taught him how to *jinetar* or ride a bull. Many Charro rookies take up bull riding because it requires less investment of time to learn and there are always openings on Charro teams for willing participants. Further, less material or equipment is also required in this *suerte* compared to other *suertes* such as special ropes or Charro saddles. Although there is less monetary risk, *jinetado* bulls or horses do leave these Charro rookies vulnerable to injury. These injuries range from rope burns on their hands to critical back injuries. Many Charro *jefes* recruit young Charro rookies for the *jineto de toro* and the *jineto de yegua* because Charro rookies are more likely to take the risk of injury. These *suertes* are also the less

prestigious and have the most turnaround. Nonetheless, Charro rookies view these *suertes* as entrance into the Charro community and are willing to put their lives on the line for the opportunity to gain honor and prestige.

Vicente has suffered from various injuries trying to learn the *jineto de toro* but he has been lucky that he heals quickly. At nine-teen years old, Vicente competed at his very first professional Charro competition. His Charro *jefe* needed an alternate for the *jineto de toro* since the last Charro rookie had broken his leg from a bull stepping on his tibia. Vicente describes his first experience as the following:

I was so nervous but I was ready. Enrique told me to never let them [other Charros] see me without the Charro outfit. He said that I could get confused as a worker. That day was so scary but I knew I wanted this for a long time. I got on that bull and lasted enough to pulled the back rope.... I was nervous so my dismount...my dismount could have been better (laughs). (Interview, 2015)

Vicente, unlike other Charros with generational ties, was more likely to report incidents of discrimination during *charreadas* than his Charro counterparts. For example, Vicente recalls moments when a drunk older and experienced Charro called him garbage after his ride because he had beat his nephew in the results. Other Charros, both young and old with generational ties are less likely to talk to him on the side lines therefore he makes sure to hangout with other Charro rookies with the same socio-economic backgrounds. They often share stories regarding discrimination.

Discrimination in the Charro community is often not discussed because acknowledging discrimination among the Charro community contradicts the foundational Charro ethos of brotherhood. Therefore, there is an illusion of achieved brotherhood that does not exclude others and centered on the continuity of Charro

tradition. Exclusion would be a direct contradiction of the ethos of the Charro tradition which originated from continuous marginalization of mestizo and indigenous Mexicans. The Mexican Federation of Charros have been recorded stating that discrimination in the Charro community is minimal and not accepted. Acknowledging any form of discrimination would counter-act the very ethos of the Charro tradition and would break the illusion that the Charro community basis its origin. Attributable to the imagery in which the Charro tradition symbolizes, many Charro believe that the Charro tradition is a space in which no change is necessary but rather mainstream Mexican culture is the source of problems of discrimination. Although Jean Baudrillard's *America* (1989) is written in the context of American culture, his theoretical standpoint regarding the "utopia achieved" can be applied to the Charro community. According to Baudrillard (1989), the idea of "utopia achieved" is centered on the fact that America has already conquered racism, sexism, classism, etc. and no real substantive change is necessary. This same concept can be attributed to the Charro tradition. As a result of Mexican independence and various Mexican revolutions, the Charro community is not the source of discrimination because to many generational Charros, these issues have already been conquered or addressed in their designated times. The Charro community, in particular Charro men, do not see issues of sexism in the Charro community because Charro women fought alongside Charro men during times of war and also have a space in the Charro tradition of their own.

Many Charro men, specifically Charro men with generational ties, believe the Charro community to be like Baudrillard's "utopia achieved". When I asked older and

experienced Charros about discrimination with the Charro community, many were baffled by the question and firmly stated that no problems existed in the “true” Charro community. Every single one of the fifty-two Charros with generational ties that I interviewed was asked about discrimination within the Charro community. There answers were all the same: “There are no problems.” Those few who did mention any form of discrimination only cited class-based distinctions as form but were hesitant to state any other forms of discrimination such as sexism or colorism. One high class Charro rookie with no indigenous markers mentioned sexism as a possible form of discrimination and framed his answer with Mexican machismo. Due to this appeal to the Charro illusion of brotherhood, Charro rookies, especially lower class and indigenous Charro rookies, have a harder time coping with discrimination because acknowledging discrimination would lead to their continuous marginalization.

Vicente’s friend, Mere, is a twenty-two-year-old Charro with no generational ties. Like Vicente, Mere comes from a lower socio-economic class and has indigenous ties. He is of a darker complexion and is shorter than the rest of the Charros that he works with. Mere also competes in *charreadas* and does the *jineto de toro*. Unlike his other Charro team members, Mere is not paid to participate in *charreadas* because he owes money to his Charro *jefe* for his equipment. He lives on the ranch and wakes up early to take care of the horses and livestock with another young aspiring Charro. He is only source of income comes from doing special jobs for other Charro such as taking care of their horses when they are away or washing their equipment. Although Mere is presented with the illusion that he is on the Charro team, his not treated as an equal.

Often, he overhears other Charros referring to him as the *indio Charro* (indigenous Charro) because of his family background. Ironically enough, the very discrimination based on indigenous ties among modern Charros was the very reason why Charro culture formed in the colonial period. Only the majority of rookie Charro with indigenous ties see these contradictions.

Vicente's indigenous background is not the only bases on his marginalization. Since he grew up outside of the Charro tradition, he does not possess the cultural capital that could identify him as a Charro. For example, he lacks some of the greeting rituals and some of the Charro terms that are widely used by generational Charros. Since some Charros with generational ties appear to be more indigenous, the markers of the Charro community can be read from even the very words that they use to describe certain items. Due to the Charro community's rural ties, certain Spanish words are cut shorter and harder to understand for someone who did not grow up in the listening to this particular type of accent. Vicente often asks his Charro peers to repeat words further eventuating the fact that he is not a native of the Charro tradition. The Charro vocabulary is just another form of identifying legitimacy within the Charro community.

Alejandro is an eighteen-year-old rookie Charro with no generational ties. He also participates in *charreadas* with a Charro team and has become a top competitor in the *jineto de toro*. Unlike Vicente and Mere, Alejandro has no recent indigenous ties but also does not have the Charro tradition identifiers. Although he is below five foot five inches tall, he has blue eyes, bright blonde hair, and a lighter complexion. Alejandro comes from middle class family and his parents graduated high school. His interest in

the Charro community started back in elementary school when he saw a Charro on his horse during Mexico's National Charro Day. He grew up in a town outside of Guadalajara, Mexico where Charro teams are the most common. Since his parents have disposable income, they were able to enroll Alejandro into a Charro school. Charro schools are operated by Charro *jefes* trying to make money off wealthier potential Charro rookies and are often linked to the Charro team that they manage. Alejandro is a graduate of his Charro *jefe's* school and was placed into the Charro team after his graduation from the program. His Charro *jefe* saw great potential and promise since Alejandro was his top student. In contrast to Vicente and Mere, Alejandro reported no incidents of discrimination for being a Charro rookie but rather moments of embarrassment. This is probably because Alejandro blends with other Charros with generational ties since they also tend to be lighter of complexion, colored eyes, or lighter hair shades. His embarrassing moments are centered largely on incidents where he lacked the knowledge to "pass" as a generational Charro. Alejandro "passes" as a generational Charro until he starts talking because he lacks the knowledge that is usually learned in childhood socialization among generational Charros. In my observation of Alejandro, many Charros with generational ties, both from the older and younger generation, did not refer to Alejandro as "garbage" the way that Vicente and Mere were during their participation in *charreadas* if they were only watching him compete. Comments about his Charro rookie status only revealed itself when Alejandro interacted with other generational Charros.

In particular, on one occasion when I was watching Alejandro compete, a group of older and experienced Charros were drinking on the sidelines near the curve of the *lienzo*. One of the older Charros was on Alejandro's Charro team while the other Charros were from the opposing Charro teams. The bull that Alejandro was riding during this particular competition was distinctively angry and massive in size. The previous Charro contender had grievously fallen and was rushed to the hospital. Since Alejandro was significantly smaller in stature, many spectators anxiously waited to witness how Alejandro would handle this dangerous bull ride. The Charro with no affiliation to Alejandro took a shot of tequila as he commented on Alejandro's bravery and management of the massive beast. The older Charro on Alejandro's team poured himself a shot as he stated, "And you wouldn't even know that he is new." The others looked at Alejandro more closely and commented collectively, "I guess you're right." These same men had been previously commenting on other Charro rookies in a more critical and harsh manner. Yet, their view of Alejandro did not correspond with their views of Charro rookies therefore they were less harsh about their critique. This did not mean that they disregarded their beliefs about generational Charros. Charros with generational ties still believed that generational ties to the Charro community is the only way for an authentic Charro identity.

In another occasion, Alejandro mentioned that he often finds himself trying to copy what other Charros are doing in order to not be read as a Charro rookie. Since he went to a Charro school, he was able to learn the proper Charro terms about the Charro tradition. However, he was not able to learn about mannerism and styles of greeting that

are unique to the Charro community. For example, during one of my observations of Alejandro, I witness him interact with other Charros during a particularly important *charreada*. Alejandro was talking to two other Charros from his Charro team. Both of these Charros were young and had generational ties. In the midst their conversation, an older Charro walked his horse by the Charros. He raised his hand slightly above his head with his drink and slightly nodded at the Charros. While the other two Charros without a single hesitation lifted their cups to the Charro, Alejandro stumbled in his maneuvering. He looked nervous and barely made eye contact with the older Charro. Later as he were talking about the events of that day, I asked Alejandro why he had looked so nervous in front of the older Charro. He stated:

I do not know... (laughs). I still feel strange around older Charros because you never know what they will say to you. They are not shy to tell you what they really think. And to tell you the truth... (laughs) I never know when I should lift my cup to someone. (Interview, 2014)

Alejandro often finds himself flustered even though he can pass as a generational Charro because he knows that he does not have the identifiers of a generational Charro.

Charro rookies like Vicente, Mere, and Alejandro range the amount of discrimination that they face in the Charro community as well as in larger Mexican community. Mexico is not immune to discrimination based on skin color, gender, class, and sexual orientation. These facts contradict the Charro belief that the Charro community has conquered these problems or achieved utopia. Due to the Charro tradition's connection to Spanish colonization, the caste system placed on Mexico colonial society had lasting consequences for many indigenous communities. Mexican racism differs from the United States in the sense that much of the racial marginalization

is based on an indigenous past and its connection to class (Schaefer, 2008). Further, discrimination based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation is further dramatized by regional and cultural descent (Nutini and Isaac, 2009). Since the Charro community is a subset of Mexican culture, the discrimination that has been documented in this dissertation has been based on the consequence of political power and struggle since the Spanish colonial period. Vicente and Mere are from Mexico State which often categorized as having more poor and indigenous urban people. The people of the Mexico City are categorized by Charros from different regions in Mexico as being cheap or lacking culture. Alejandro's home state of Jalisco is one of the originating states of the Charro tradition. While Alejandro's visual identity performance can be read as a Charro, his home state further carries prestige in the Charro community. Once again, Alejandro has a slight advantage since he is of a higher socio-economic class than Vicente and Mere. This is only until he enters into social interactions with generational Charros because of his lack of ease and Charro language. Alejandro, Vicente, and Mere all have to learn about the Charro tradition based on what other Charros are doing. Because Charro rookies tend to socialize among themselves, their behavior during *charreadas* is even more noticeable.

Charro rookies are included to emulate Charros that they think have prestige and honor. In the case of Vicente, he looks up to his Charro *jefe* who could be classified as a being part of the Charro leisure class. While there are Charro rookies that want to participate in the Charro community for the genuine desire to become a Charro and learn the Charro tradition, some Charro rookies are more motivated by for the prestige and

honor they hope to achieve by participating. Anderson's (1978) ethnographic research on black urban poor and working class people analyzes the mechanism in which people with low socioeconomic status negotiate their own measure of self-worth and social standards. This resonates with Veblen's (1889) arguments about vicarious consumption because the ways in which lower ranking men in predominately predatory society try to appear more honorable. Veblen (1889) states, "The need of vicarious leisure, or conspicuous consumption of service, is a dominant incentive to the keeping of servants." In the case of the Charro rookies, the notion of possible prestige and honor fuels their motivation to continue to participate even though Charro rookies face different forms of discriminations.

Charro rookies of low socio-economic status use the Charro community to enhance their self-worth. This is because the Charro community is still seen as a symbol of Mexican nationalism and its contemporary imagery in Mexico radiates honor and prestige. Charro rookies with indigenous ties are often discriminated against to the point that they chose to leave the Charro community for the American Rodeo; however, this leave of absence is often short lived. This is because the American Rodeo is seen as less prestigious and rip-off of the Charro community. The Charro community views the American Rodeo as a lower ranking form of equestrian skills because many Charros believe that the American Rodeo eliminates traditions such as the Charro form of dress, the Charro saddle, the commemoration of the past, etc. The American Rodeo has similar elements as the Charro community such as aspects of horse reining and bull riding, however there is no prerequisite to participate in American Rodeo other than willing to

take the risk. While there is some investment of money when wanting to participate in the American Rodeo, it does not compare to the hefty economic costs of participating in the Charro community. Many Charro rookies may look into the American Rodeo as way to escape continuous discrimination or participating in a sport with lower costs; however, the cost-effectiveness of the American Rodeo does not provide enough incentive to permanently leave the Charro community since there are no socially honorific or prestigious rewards.

While leaving the Charro community might be identified as a form of resistance against the discrimination that Charro rookies experience, the American Rodeo does not provide the same type of prestige and honor that the participating the Charro community does for their identity in their community. Ultimately, Charro rookies would rather endure forms of discrimination from their Charro peers than belong at the American Rodeo community that is labeled as “rodeo clowns” by the Charro community.

The socialization of Charro rookies with indigenous ties, Charro rookies with no indigenous ties, generational Charros is essential to a sense of belonging in the Charro community. While generational Charros are socialized at birth, differences surface when examining socio-economic status. Lower income generational Charros accentuate their Charro legacy and denounce those who use money to gain access to the Charro community. Charro rookies face some discrimination based upon class and ethnicity but various based upon socio-economic class. Generational Charros are very protective the Charro tradition and may engage in forms of discrimination to center legitimacy upon “bloodlines” and Charro legacy. However, Charro rookies from higher socio-economic

classes and no indigenous ties can “pass” as generational Charros until their lack of cultural capital and childhood socialization leaves their identity and legitimacy up to debate. Even though some Charro rookies experience resistance from their Charro peers, they would rather endure the discrimination than be permanently labeled as a “rodeo clown”. The Charro community provides with the prestige, honor, and nationalism to continue to participate in competitions even if they do not make enough money.

CHAPTER IV

THE RANKING OF CHARRO WOMEN

Charro rookies with no generational ties and lower class Charros with generational ties are not the only individuals that face continuous marginalization in the Charro community. Women have a space in the Charro community; However, it is separate and not equal to the Charro men. Although I have argued that the Charro tradition has, what Veblen would identify, as peaceable traits, the patriarchal social structure associated with barbaric and predatory habits to rank women and other objectionable men as secondary. Most women recognize and accept their secondary role due to their early socialization into the Charro community despite the fact that a small number of women express interest in changing these dynamics. Even though their place in the Charro community is one of subservience, Charro women who have been socialized into the Charro community hardly ever resist their position. Women who do resist are often faced by harsh reinforcement of other Charro women and men to conform to the Charro traditions.

In the Charro community, women can either be categorized as four of the following: 1) Charro female family members (i.e. Charro wives or Charro daughters), 2) Charro love interests, 3)) *otra* or other (i.e. a female outsider). Each category of placement yields a different level of respect and courtesy from other Charro men. Charro female family member are ranked at the top of the hierarchy and are approached with respect and are treated with Charro formalities. These Charro women have power, not over Charro men specifically, but other women below them in the hierarchy. Charro

female family members are protected by members of the Charro community from other Charros who have questionable romantic intentions.

It is evident that the role of women in the Charro tradition is secondary to that of men. I have affirmed previously that in barbaric and predatory culture, exploitation and the visible success are designated as honorable. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to assume that these aspects of barbaric and predatory culture are applied to how men and women interact in the Charro community. In the Charro community, women recognize their secondary status to men since they are aware that their role in the *charreada* is an aesthetic one rather than a competitive one. Veblen stated, “In such a predatory group of hunters it comes to be the able-bodied men’s office to fight and hunt. The women do what other work there is to do—other members who are unfit for man’s work being for this purpose classed with the women” (Veblen, 1889). Charro wives, Charro daughters, and Charro love interests often find themselves in a subservient position due to patriarchal division of labor that labels their work as trivial.⁷ Although these women perform meaningful domestic labor, the influences of predatory and barbaric culture marginalize their work when juxtaposed with Charro men’s labor.

The Charro identity is also heavily dependent on the romantic interests of other women. Courting practices in the Charro community are not unique to the Charro

⁷ My initial examination of the Charro community pertained to their gendered division of labor. In this work, I theorized the concept of *hacienda culture* as a subset of traditionalist masculinity due to the distinctive notions and definitions of masculinity that resonate with the Charro community’s history. I argued that Charros that actively participate in the Charro community reject emerging egalitarian perceptions of gender ideology distinct from their own. By adopting *hacienda culture* as their own, Charros reproduce and maintain traditionalist gender ideologies in their families and romantic relationships (Marquez, 2016). This work is separate from my analysis here.

community, nevertheless women serve an important function to elevate the status of men. The manner in which Charro men behave towards women is indicative of what Veblen identified as the barbaric status of women in a culture dominated by predatory and barbaric habits. Men, according to Veblen, in the predatory phase of life, praise aggression as an accredited form of action. Evidence of prowess is not only encouraged by Charro men, but also form as a necessary form to demonstrate success and the acquisition of women is no exception. Veblen states, “Likewise the earliest form of ownership is an ownership of women by the able-bodied men of the community” (Veblen, 1889). Precisely how younger Charros view *charreadas* in terms of trophies to be won, the same association can be applied to the women they desire.

In this chapter, I will argue that the role of women in the Charro women is reinforced and reproduced throughout generations. The hierarchy of women in the Charro community also plays a role in how women are “respected” and approached by Charro men. Further, I will explore the socialization of women in to the Charro community from generational ties compared to non-generational ties. I will note the important differences and illustrate how those who resist Charro culture are maneuvered back into submission. I will document how Charro men approach various rankings of Charro women as love interests and note the assortment of treatment based on respect. Lastly, I examine the role of Charro women as *Escaramuzas* in Charro competitions (*charreadas*) and how they view themselves and how Charro men view them. I argue that women who compete as *Escaramuzas* tend to be high income, have generational ties, and seen as respectable members of the Charro community compared to other

women. Yet, their participation and competition is, nevertheless, secondary to Charro men.

The Highest Degree of Charro Female Respectability

The patriarchal structure of the Charro community positions Charro men above women; however, within that patriarchal structure, women in the Charro community are not all treated equally by other Charro men. These three categories: 1) Charro female family members; 2) Charro love interest; 3) *vendedoras* or female vendors. Charro female family members have the highest acclamation of Charro men and other women in the Charro community. This is because they have a direct tie to Charro men as their wives, daughter, aunts, grandmothers, etc. Although the Charro community is a highly patriarchal structure, the household or the domestic sphere is still recognized by Charro men as the place where women dominate and set the rules. Further, Charro female family members are often protected by Charro men from potentially disrespectful men who wish to romance them without the promise of commitment. These Charro women acknowledge that they have some authority over women who are below them, but serve as tools for Charro men's identity and honor.

Charro men, in particular the older generation of Charros, spent most of their downtime in competitions drinking and smoking cigars with their Charro teams. Their Charro female members are expected to be present at every competition and cheer them on as they compete for honor and prestige. Many Charros start drinking alcohol from 10:00AM, when the competition begins to after midnight when the competition is over.

As stated earlier, Veblen argues that drinking alcohol or consuming mind altering drugs can be framed as honorific for men in a barbaric and predatory culture. Women, however, are not included in these behaviors. Veblen states:

Infirmities induced by over-indulgence are among some peoples freely recognized as manly attributes... The same invidious distinction adds force to the current disapproval of any indulgence of this kind of the part of women, minors, and inferiors. This invidious traditional distinction has not lost its force even among the more advanced peoples of today. Where the example set by the leisure class retains its imperative force in the regulation of the conventionalities, it is observable that the women still in great measure practice the same traditional continence with regard to stimulants. (Veblen, 1889)

Women, especially Charro female family members, during competitions are not supposed to consume alcohol or get drunk in public. This type of behavior is seen as low class and disrespectful to their husbands. Although most Charro men will leave the competition drunk and disorderly, Charro female family members are expected to be sober. Even though it is socially unacceptable for women to drink alcohol, they do keep the extra bottles of tequila in their purses for their husband's availability. Charro women may pour the drinks and hold the bottle but they may not consume the alcohol because that is seen as unconventional.

During competitions and practice sessions, Charro female family members sit together and keep each other company. Since competitions can last all day, they mostly sit and talk to one another about different aspects of their lives. Charro female family members are easy to spot because they are usually the best dressed women in these spaces. They are beautiful women with perfected makeup, styled hair, expensive cowboy boots, and fancy and expensive purses. Charro female family members with generational ties, like their male counterparts, hold the same views about authentic and legitimate

Charro identity in regards to bloodlines. Generational Charro women are more comfortable in Charro spaces and culture because they have been socialized into its customs since birth. These women present confidence that is not found in Charro love interests without generational ties and female outsiders. For example, Yessica, a thirty-two-year-old mother of two with generational ties, describes that she is the most comfortable around other Charro families. She states,

The charreadas are like family gatherings. My family is a real Charro family and have been to lots of charreadas throughout my life. My job is to cheer for our Charros and I have fun with the other women. (Interview 2015)

Yessica's sentiments are shared by many other generational women who do not question their position in the Charro community. She sees herself as valuable because she plays a role in how Charro culture and tradition is reproduced and is literally surrounded by other women and men who believe in the significance of the Charro tradition.

In the earlier chapter, I spoke about Charro socialization and the role of the Charro father. While often socialization can become violent between father and son, Charro female family members do not necessarily stop the violence from happening or from happening again. Charro wives, in particular Charro women with generational ties, encourage their sons to listen to their fathers and also expect their sons to become Charros themselves. They provide almost the same amount of pressure on their male offspring as their husband because Charro female family members also want to continue, reproduce, and enact the Charro traditions so that they survive future generations. Charro wives and Charro grandmothers with generational ties believe that "real" men are

created in the *lienzo* or the Charro arena. Like their male counterparts, the Charro tradition is in their bloodlines and tend to be highly critical of Charro rookies.

Unmarried and young Charro daughters are expected to become Charro women with a dignified and respectable status, therefore, these women are the most protected. Charro men and older Charro female family members spend a lot time teaching young Charro girls about the gendered rules of respectability. While young male Charro adolescents can enjoy being around the company of older Charros, Charro girls are taught to never approach a group of Charro men unless they are asked by their parents. For example, Esmeralda, an eighteen-year-old with generational ties, stated that if she wanted to ask her father for something, she had to wait until each member of the group had finished their conversation. This task could potentially take a long time; therefore, most young women ask ranch hands to handle their requests. By having a lower ranking male carry out their request, these women are about to avoid potential uncomfortable situations. Esmeralda also explained that she has been taught by her mother and aunts to never drink with a group of men by herself, to always look presentable in public (i.e. wear makeup and modest clothing), and to never argue with a Charro man.

Esmeralda has been to *charreadas* since she was an infant and has made many friends with other Charro daughters and sons. Like Yessica, she views *charreadas* as a family gathering and is often very excited to attend these events; however, she did speak to basic annoyance when it comes to the overtly masculine characteristic of the Charro community. She explained:

I cannot do anything without them watching me. I always have to have my brother [Esmeralda's brother is twelve] with me if I want to go do anything. It was

okay when I was fourteen... laughs...but not at my age. I have trained him to not tell my parents everything I do... but as he gets older ... laughs... the same ten pesos are not enough!

Betty: *What kind of things are you referring to?*

Esmeralda: *When I drink or smoke a cigarette. He is nosy but money works for now.*

Esmeralda explains that her independence is limited in the Charro community because she feels that she is constantly watched by other Charros. She mentioned in our conversations cases where her father's friends told her father she was talking to another unknown Charro rookie. By having her younger brother, Enrique, follow her around, her parents feel that they can protect Esmeralda's respectability within the Charro community. She bribes her brother in order to be able to smoke a cigarette or take a shot of tequila with her other friends because her brother is often asked by her mother to report on Esmeralda's behavior. Even though I have only known Esmeralda and her family for a few years, I also become expected to report on her behavior since I was an older Charro female family member.

Female respectability in the Charro community is remarkably held to the highest esteem. Charro female respectability can be tied into patriarchal notions of virginity and virtue before the sexual revolution. This notions of respectability are further connected to social relations of Mexican colonialism. According to Patricia Seed (1988), marriage promises in colonial Mexico were highly respected and cultural values were encoded into a system of honor. Seed (1988) stated:

Honor stemmed from either superior birth or moral integrity. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain as well as in Spain's colonies, honor primarily signified moral integrity. For women in colonial Mexico, this

dimension of honor meant premarital chastity and postmarital fidelity; for men, it meant courage and fidelity to promises made. Although the criteria for honorable conduct were different for men and women, the behavior of one sex could influence the honor of the other. Since a woman's status was defined by her relationship to men, the prestige of her father, brother, or husband established her standing in the community; a lapse in courage by her male kin disgraced her as well as them. Yet a woman's sexual activity and thus honor similarly could affect the status of her male relatives. (Seed, 1988)

Spanish colonial dimensions of honor and female respectability resonate with the Charro tradition's notion of femininity and respectability since its tradition stems from Spanish colonialism. Mexico is still a highly Catholic and socially conservative country and it is not surprising to be informed that the Charro community's ideas of virtue and respectability in the context of women is also highly rooted in religious conservatism.

Due to the highly patriarchal nature of the Charro community, many Charro men take it upon themselves to preserve the virtue of their female family members. Charro female family members are dependent on their relationship with their Charro men because their preserved respectability and honor is dependent on the respect bestowed by Charro men. Charro female family who disgrace themselves by denying notions of female respectability and honor (i.e. engaging in premarital sex), not only disgrace themselves, but disgrace their family's reputation. Therefore, having male chaperones to observe the behavior of young Charro women is not uncommon because it protects both the Charro female family member and the Charro men in her life. The practice of having a male chaperone is very common in the Charro community.

Esmeralda understands the implications of her actions, smoking cigarettes and drinking with her friends, to be perceived as potentially deviant by other members of the Charro community. Her brother, although young, has a responsibility to his family to

report misconduct because he also has a duty to protect his older sister's virtue and respectability. Although Esmeralda is only smoking cigarettes and occasionally drinking tequila with her friends, smoking cigarettes and drinking tequila is only acceptable for Charro men. She is breaking a gendered rule of agency. While women in the Charro community do drink and smoke cigarettes, Charro female family members are not expected to participate in such behavior. This is once again connected to what Veblen deems to be the "barbarian status of women" in predatory and barbaric culture. Veblen (1899) stated:

The accepted scheme of life or consensus of opinions which guides the conduct of men in such a predatory group and decides what may properly be done, of course comprise a great variety of details; but it is, after all, a single scheme—a more or less organic whole—a somewhat consistent and characteristic body of culture... whatever may be the immediate point or object of his thinking, the frame of mind which governs his aim and manner of reasoning in passing on any given point of conduct is, on the whole, the habitual frame of mind which experience and have enforced upon him. Individuals whose sense of what is right and good departs widely from the accepted views suffer some repression and in case of an extreme divergence they are eliminated from the effective life of the group through ostracism. (Veblen, 1899)

The Charro community, presided by Charro men, has set the regulations for men and women. Those who do not follow the Charro tradition's scheme for society are vulnerable to ostracism. The habitual frame of mind, the Charro tradition, mandates what women can or cannot do in the presence of other Charro men and Charro women of status. Those who deviate significant from the Charro tradition and its expectations could face permanent ostracism from their peers.

For example, Charro women, specially daughters, are expected to refrain from premarital sex. A Charro female family member with a questionable sexual past is likely

to be highly marginalized by members of the Charro community. A Charro female family member with a tarnished reputation may face being officially excluded from the Charro community; however, permanent exclusion is rare if Charro female family members marries a Charro man. In the case of Ana Cristina, a twenty-five-year-old from a generational Charro family, found herself in a vulnerable position when she was a teenager. Ana Cristiana was born and raised in rural Jalisco with five of her siblings (two sisters and three brothers). Like many other generational Charro female members, she grew up in the Charro community and attended many *charreadas* throughout her life. When Ana Cristiana was sixteen, she met Jacobo, ten years her senior, while attending a *charreada* in Mexico City. Jacobo was engaged to another woman at the time; yet, he carried on a romantic relationship with Ana Cristiana regardless of his relationship status. At first, Ana Cristiana kept their relationship a secret from her family since she did not want her father to intervene in her relationship. Ana Cristiana stated:

I was in love but very stupid (laughs). I was young and did not care what happened to me as long as I had Jacobo in my life. But... my uncle's friend told my father and I was kicked out my house. My mother did not talk to me for a month. I stayed at my friend's house in town.

Betty: *What did your uncle's friend tell your father?*

Ana Cristiana: *Well... that I was acting like a whore in Mexico City. (long pause) He told him that Jacobo had a fiancé and that I knew. (sniffles) And that I didn't care.*

Ana Cristiana and Jacobo relationship ended immediately after her family was notified. Their relationship was discovered after Ana Cristina was seen leaving Jacobo's hotel room in the early morning. This action hinted to bystanders that Ana Cristiana's relationship with Jacobo had been sexual. Although Ana Cristiana was sixteen at the

time and Jacobo was significantly older, her parents granted more importance to loss of respectability and virtue than the fact that Ana Cristina was taken advantage of by an older man.

Ana Cristiana was able to reinstate her reputation by apologizing to her family and more specifically, apologizing to her father for bringing upon this scandal upon her family name. Her actions did not only tarnish her reputation, but also her father's reputation in the Charro community because his last name was associated with this indiscretion. Jacobo was never confronted for his actions since Ana Cristiana was held responsible by her family for engaging in the relationship in the first place. Now at twenty-five, Ana Cristiana is a mother of two small children and has her own Charro husband. The passing of time played a significant role in healing her own reputation as well as her family's reputation. Further, Ana Cristina specified that her family has never discussed the incident since she apologized and was able to return to her home. Although it was a significantly emotional situation, Ana Cristiana expressed "*Yo como si nada* (It is like as if nothing had happened)" when around other members of Charro community. This, however, does not necessarily mean that people have forgotten about Ana Cristiana's past behavior, but other people simply no longer mention to her or her family. Since she is married with children, Ana Cristiana is deemed the respect and dignity that a Charro female family members are adhered in the community.

Due to the negative consequences of having a questionable reputation or past, many Charro female family members will attempt to hide any perceived deviant behavior from their Charro families. Ana Cristiana is not the first Charro daughter to be

romanced by an older Charro or to have sex before marriage. Any indiscretions between Charro female family members are usually kept secret or ignored by the Charro community. Charro women like Esmeralda have to hide their drinking and smoking from their families in order to avoid situations where their reputation would be deemed questionable. In the case of Cielo, a twenty-seven-year-old with generational ties, she has to hide the majority of her private life from her parents. Her father is an older Charro with a respectable legacy behind him and her mother is the daughter of a wealthy Charro family. Cielo is one of five siblings who all participate in the Charro tradition in some manner. She lives with her family and their house is located about twenty minutes outside of a conservative small town in Jalisco named after a patron saint. Cielo did not finish high school (although that is not uncommon for this area) but she owns several cows that she uses to acquire income for her own use. In the Charro community, Cielo is recognized as a hardworking woman from a respectable Charro family.

From an outside perspective, Cielo's life is very common of a single Charro daughter because she still lives with her parents while helping around the ranch; however, Cielo is a lesbian and is not out to her family. Her family, like many members of the Charro community are religious and socially conservative and have negative points of view about homosexuality. Cielo acknowledges that coming out to her family would have a negative impact on, not only her, but her whole family because her family would never accept it. Therefore, she is very secretive about her personal life and tries to not "show" her queerness to other members of the Charro community. Cielo only trusted with me with this secret after becoming aware that I was also gay. Cielo's lesbianism

contradicts Charro notions of female respectability since Charro female members are considered to be crucial features in Charro identity and characterization. Women, in the Charro tradition, can be framed as trophies of Charro men. While all women of different categories can be trophies, Charro female members are the ultimate trophies with the highest value. Veblen explains, “The man’s prowess was still primarily the group’s prowess, and the possessor of the booty felt himself to be primarily the keeper of the honour of his group.” A Charro female member who is a lesbian threatens Charro masculinity and authority.

Cielo makes sure to not ever reveal any elements of her queerness by refraining from being seen in public spaces with other queer people. For example, Cielo’s upbringing reflects many of the experiences gathered in this study. She was taught by her mother to always look presentable in public and at *charreadas* and to avoid drinking and smoking in public. Therefore, Cielo wears makeup and dresses up like her straight friends in order to blend in spaces predominantly occupied by members of the Charro community. Cielo’s closest friends are not in the Charro community and she believes in keeping the two domains separate from each other. Cielo explains:

It is better this way. Being less obvious. My friends do not understand why I care [about the Charro tradition] My parents cannot deal with it.

Betty: *What would happen?*

Cielo: *My mother would go to church...(laughs). She is really good friends with the priest but she would not tell anyone else. It would be too embarrassing for her. She ... She would not like other people asking her about it. My father would... I am not sure if he would...he would ever recognize it. My siblings are like my parents. Better to keep it a secret between us (laughs).*

(Interview, 2014)

Being honest about her sexual orientation for Cielo, may lead her to risk the acceptance of her Charro family. Although Cielo articulated that she might be happier not being the Charro community, she would never be able to escape where she comes from because the Charro tradition is in her blood. The significance of tradition is greater than the comforts of escape and freedom to be herself. She recognizes that Charro community may not label her as respectable and therefore, damaging her reputation as a hardworking Charro person. Cielo also expressed continuous feelings of stress and anxiety that she feels due to constantly having to hide her life from members of her family and the Charro community. Although Cielo is not unique in her case, her story illustrates the great lengths that Charro women of generational ties go through in order to adhere to the standards of respectability of the Charro community.

Even to generational Charro female members, notions of Charro respectability and tradition is regulated amongst themselves. While Charro female members may recognize their own behavior contradicts the expectations of respectability, Charro female members, in particular older women, are often regulated and managed by the criticism and stigmatization of others, usually targeting younger women. Veblen explains that although women are in the subordinate and subservient role of their culture, within these secondary categories, distinction is made between those individuals connected to noble and ignoble standing which be understood under the basis of how how women are categorized in the Charro community. Since Charro female members hold the most degree of honor, they must protect Charro female member status.

The protection of Charro female member status is usually controlled by older Charro female members. In particular, older Charro female family members play a crucial role in the manner in which Charro female respectability is enacted, reproduced, and maintained. Married Charro women, specifically, make sure to regulate inadequate or perceived deviant behavior. For example, Sofia, a forty-one-year-old with generational ties, often comments on how young women in the Charro community must be corrected for their indecent behavior. Sofia stated, “If I see [a girl] doing something I think is incorrect, and I know their family, I won’t allow it near me.” Sofia specified that she will not condone behavior she deems to be inappropriate to continue because such behavior reflects badly on the way that Charro female members are treated. She states, “[The Charros] only respect you if you respect yourself. If you do not respect yourself then they are not going to treat you properly.” Therefore, Charro female members must regulate each other and in particular, young Charro female members, because their respectability and honor depend on it.

For example, during one particular *charreada*, Sofia and I witnessed a couple of young teenage girls hanging around with a couple of young Charros. Sofia recognized the young teenage girls as the daughters of a high ranking official from the Mexican Federation of Charros. While Sofia was not related to the young teenage girls, she felt obligated to watch their behavior in order to assess whether she needed to step in and control the situation. The young Charros, barely eighteen themselves, belonged to the Charro team that had performed earlier in the day and were hanging out with the young girls during their time off. An open bottle of tequila was hidden beside the one of the

young Charro's feet and was clearly being offered to the girls who were holding plastic cups. Sofia had been watching the young teenage girls for about an hour but did not realize that the girls were also watching her. When she was not looking they would pour tequila into their cups. Sofia interjected after she realized that one of the girls was getting tipsy and was acting "too flirtatious" around the young Charros. She grabbed the girl by the arm and proceeded to order the other two girls to follow her away from the young Charros. While the girls looked embarrassed, they did not fight Sofia and walked with her. Sofia grabbed a bottle of water from her purse and gave it to the girl that was intoxicated. She looked at her in the eye and sternly said, "If you do not give yourself value, they will never treat you right."

While this most eventful example of an older Charro female member reprimanding young girls with generational ties, older Charro women, in particular mothers and grandmothers, often do not need to walk over to the spaces where young women may threaten or disrupt their presumed respectability and high value. For example, Charro female members often only need to look at a group of women with an obvious face of discontent in order to disrupt behavior. As I have previously mentioned, young Charro women often recognize that they are being watched by other members of the community, both Charro men and Charro women. Therefore, young Charro women will attempt to hide their inappropriate behavior but they are not always successfully. Older Charro female members frequently stare and give earnest looks of disapprobation. Their faces reveal enough of their discontent without having to walk over to the young

Charro women. This act of disapproval is enough to correct the behavior of young Charro women without verbally sanctioning them.

For example, Jacqueline, a fifty-two-year-old Charro woman with generational ties, on many occasions during *charreadas* will watch young Charro women for acts of disobedience. She never leaves her spot in the audience but her obvious face of discontent is enough for a young Charro girl to put down her drink and walk away. During one particular *charreada* in 2014, Jacqueline was watching a group of Charros near the bull pens. This is a popular spot for younger Charros, in particular Charros with no generational ties, to drink, eat, smoke, and watch the *charreadas*. Two young Charro women were signaled by the group of men and the young women enthusiastically joined them. Jacqueline was uncomfortable with the young girls spending time with Charros, but in particular, non-generational Charros. According to Jacqueline, non-generational Charros do not know how to respect Charro female members because these men did not grow up in the Charro community. Further, it is important to note that Jacqueline's concerns about the men are also racially motivated as the young Charros were all men with indigenous ties and the young women were all lighter in complexion. Jacqueline quickly sprouted an obvious face of discontent at the young Charro women. The young Charro women made eye contact with Jacqueline and proceeded to leave the Charro men. Jacqueline smiled at them because her plan had worked.

Jacqueline is prime example of how older Charro women manipulate and regulate the behavior of young Charro women. While young Charro women may find ways to resist and rebel against the highly restrictive belief system of the Charro

community, these young Charro women still correct and respect the authority of those women above them. This is even the case for young Charro women who were once rebellious against the Charro community. For example, Ana Cristiana has found herself now correcting the behavior of young Charro women. Although she would be considered to have had a rebellious teenaged past, she has fully embodied her Charro identity as a respectable Charro female member through her marriage and two small children. Due to her background, Ana Cristiana stated that she is more aware of some of the mechanisms in which young girls hide their behavior from their watchful peers. Therefore, she often is the most critical of young Charro girls and is often reprimanding them for drinking, smoking, and flirting with Charro men of all ages.

Importantly, the process in which Charro female members enact, reproduce, and maintain female Charro respectability and honor is enforced by Charro women and Charro men. Since married Charro women carry the highest caliber of prestige in the Charro community, they find themselves trying to prove their worth and value continuously to others. These acts include women recognizing their subservient role to Charro men but also recognizing their superiority when compared to other members of the Charro community. Since not all women in the Charro community are not regarded as equal, Charro female members must protect their identities or face stigmatization from the community, in particular from their Charro female peers. Although Charro women recognize the underlining sexism and highly patriarchal nature of the Charro community, many Charro female family members would rather submit to the obvious

gender inequality because the inclusion in Charro tradition is better than the potential exclusion.

Charro Love Interest

The process of courting is essential in the Charro community. In particular, generational Charros husbands and wives encourage their children to date and marry other generational Charro community members in order to best maintain the Charro traditions. Charro romances between men and women are also crucial components of the Charro masculine identity as a charming “womanizer.” Since becoming a reputable Charro female member holds the highest honor and prestige, Charro love interests can serve as the potential next step into becoming an official high status Charro wife. However, this is not always the case for many young women (especially women who are not part of the Charro community). While Charro men have agency to experiment sexually with other women, Charro female members are prohibited from such behavior and thereby making their respectability vulnerable to questioning. A Charro love interest may be romantically involved with a Charro man with the promise of commitment or the Charro love interest may be a temporary sexual conquest for the enjoyment of the Charro man. Thus, there are two different subsets of Charro love interests: 1) Temporary Charro love interests and 2) Serious Charro love interests. Serious love interests can be defined as women who Charro men engage in long-term relationships in which the ultimate goal is marriage and children while the temporary love interest involves no intention to permanently commit.

Charro love interests, whether they are serious or temporary love interests, aspire to have the presumed level of respect from the Charro men that is bestowed upon Charro wives. Charro wives, as well as other Charro female family members, can be recognized as auxiliary members to Charro men. Again, due to the highly patriarchal nature of the Charro community, Charro men are at the center of the Charro community while women provide additional notability to their particular masculinity and are seen as dispensable. Charro love interests are viewed by Charro men as dispensable, but temporary love interests are classified as even more dispensable due to the indeterminate timeline. Temporary Charro love interests often preform a form of *vicarious prestige* due to the low status these women have without their association to Charro men. According to Veblen, services or labor performed by subordinates (i.e. women in the Charro community) is not for the aim of the self-actor but for their master (i.e. Charro men). Veblen states, “The leisure of the servant is not his own leisure. So far as he is a servant in the full sense, and not at the same time a member of a lower order of the leisure class proper, his leisure normally passes under the guise of specialized service directed to the furtherance of his master’s fullness of life” (Veblen, 1889). While Charro female family members, in particular wives, participate in vicarious leisure, I argue that Charro love interests engage in *vicarious prestige*.

Charro love interests, especially women without ties to the Charro community, want to secure respectability associated with being a Charro wife. Being a Charro love interest allows women to experience the short-term benefits of being a Charro wife, therefore experiencing vicarious prestige. Vicarious prestige provides temporary love

interests with some benefits of respectability because the Charro man that has claimed her can protect her from other Charro men. For example, Juana, a twenty-two-year-old without any generational ties to the Charro community, was the temporary love interest of Santiago. Santiago, a twenty-three-year-old Charro with generational ties, spotted Juana at a *charreada* during the summer of 2015. The following is an extract from field notes collected on the day that they met:

Friday, July 10th (Silao, Guanajuato)

11:30AM- The same people that I have seen at yesterday's charreada are here for the second instalment of the competition series. The bar is open and older Charros are already drinking and smoking their cigarettes on their horses. Juana is here with two other of her friends, Marissa and Camila. They are looking for Charro boyfriends. They spent most of yesterday talking with Charros and they are hoping today they will be able to continue to hang around with some of the Charros they met. Juana is wearing a cowboy hat, cowboy boots, a belt with a metal buckle in the shape of a horse shoe, and a tank top. She stands out next to her friends because of her long brown hair that reaches the bottom of her back. Many Charros watch her as she sits with her friends.

5:00PM-Juana is a pretty girl from the town of Silao and was personally invited by the owner of the lienzo where the charreada is taking place. She mentions that her sister dated a Charro from the neighboring town when she was younger. She describes how her sister was treated like a queen and was taken to many competitions. Juana likes being around horses and wants to be able to be a Charro wife because she thinks only real men are Charros even though she has no generational ties to the Charro community.

7:00PM-Juana watches the competition and watches a young Santiago from a distance. They make eye contact a few times and she occasionally smiles at him.

7:30PM-Santiago walks over to Juana who is sitting with her friends. He offers her a drink but only if she comes and sits with him and his Charro team. He tells her how beautiful she is and that she is probably the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. Juana blushes and smiles as she agrees to walk over to other side of the lienzo. Her friends follow her and laugh about how Juana always gets Charros to invite them for drinks. Juana takes a shot of tequila from the bottle and Santiago quickly pours her another drink. Her friends laugh and also join in.

10:00PM-Juana is drunk along with Santiago. A group of Charro female family members a few feet away from them stare at her in disagreement. Santiago is now holding her close and places his hand around her waist. He attempts to give her a kiss but Juana refuses.

12:00AM-Juana has stopped drinking for the night but disappears with Santiago. Marissa and Camila both tell me that she does this often with Charro men. They are not worried but they say that she wont leave without them. Marissa states that Juana is having fun and that we should probably give her some space until she comes back.

1:00AM- Juana resurfaces and is now ready to leave. She seems happy and is now sporting a hickey on both sides of her neck. Santiago is delighted and they exchange numbers. Juana asks him if she will see him tomorrow and he says yes. The girls leave. Santiago's Charro team laughs about his disappearance as they head over to their trucks and horses.

Santiago never showed up to the charreada next morning. This is because Santiago treated Juana like a temporary Charro love interest and not a Charro female member. Juana's status as a non-generational admirer of the Charro tradition further alienates her from the Charro female respectability that she clearly wishes for from Charro men. Juana wants to be a Charro wife because she believes that Charro men are the epitome of masculinity; however, Juana does not recognize that she functions as a tool to enhance Santiago's status. She was able to enjoy some of the benefits of being a respectable Charro wife such as feeling special, but her inability to adhere to the rules and regulations about Charro female respectability leaves her vulnerable to deception and ultimately, disrespect.

Temporary Charro love interests are often non-generational women who are fans of the Charro tradition. They do not have the proper socialization to know what kind of situations will make them vulnerable for disrespect. In the case of Juana, her inability to restraint her perceived deviance (i.e. drinking in public with Charro men) gave Santiago

permission to treat Juana with less respect than someone who he classified as a Charro female family member. Juana's mistakes were unbeknownst her and her friend group. Since Santiago continued to contact Juana for the next year when he was competing in Guanajuato, Juana did not see anything wrong with her actions. Juana's ultimate goal was to find a Charro man to commit to her and she was more focused on making her relationship with Santiago a permanent situation. Although Santiago continued to contact Juana and meet with her when he visited her town, he was not exclusively seeing her. In fact, Santiago had a "on again, off again" girlfriend of three years named Olga. Olga, a twenty-three-year-old with generational ties, is the niece of one of Santiago's teammates and can be classified as a Charro female family member. Santiago's demeanor is not the same around Olga because the rules of respectability must be followed. Again, this is due to the possible consequences that Santiago will face if he disrespects Olga since Charro female family members are protected by the community.

Juana is considered a temporary love interest because her relationship with Santiago is not serious to him. She is not the only Charro love interest to be lead on by false hopes. Temporary love interests are often seduced by the romanticized ideals of rural masculinity such as perceived chivalry. Temporary love interests are often drawn to the uniqueness of the Charro tradition. As Juana had noted, she believed that "real men" are only found in the Charro tradition. Her father is a wealthy business man and had even offered to pay for Juana's college education. But, Juana was more focused on getting married than further expanding her education. *Charreadas* are designed to place Charro men in the center of the audience's focus and having a man dressed in Charro

attire can be presumed advantageous for vicarious prestige. Although Mexico is shifting past the rural identities of the Charro tradition, the symbolism, as previously mentioned, continue to make an impression in Mexican popular culture. Juana endures continues disrespect because she hopes that her idealized notions of the Charro tradition will pay off.

Similar to Juana, Brenda once idealized Charro men. She is now a forty-year-old divorcee with three children. Brenda has no generational ties to the Charro tradition, and would attend competitions in Mexico City with her sisters. She met her ex-husband, Ruben, in the nineties while he was competing in a regional competition. Ruben was a forty-year-old Charro with generational ties and had to marry Brenda when they discovered that she was pregnant with their first child. Like Juana, Brenda was not familiar with the Charro regulations in respects to female respectability and subsequently gained a reputation among the Charro wives as a *zorra* or whore. Even though Brenda eventually became a Charro wife, the other Charro wives never truly accepted her because of her promiscuous past. She did not know about her reputation among the Charro female family members until she was married to Ruben. Although Brenda eventually married Ruben, she explained in our conversations that Ruben did not want to commit to her and often would date other women while they were together. She stated:

[Ruben] does love women...(Laughs). That he did make clear from the beginning. He was a womanizer, with girlfriends, with fans... he felt special because we made him feel special...(pause) What I can say is that when we were together... together as [boyfriend and girlfriend], he was very [romantic] but when we got married... (pauses and then laughs) ...he was a bastard.

(Interview 2013)

Brenda also stated that Ruben would write her love letters when they were dating and he would always bring her flowers if he was in town. However, she recalls these gestures as possibly strategic since Brenda would try to date other men when Ruben would break up with her. Brenda's disdain for Ruben is centered on the years of abuse that she underwent when they got married in the late nineties and his prolonged cycle of cheating. Brenda transitioned from a temporary Charro love interest to a Charro wife after she got pregnant with her first child out of wedlock and Ruben was pressured to marry her by Brenda's family. Only a few people knew that Brenda was pregnant on her wedding day due to the highly conservative nature of the Charro community. Her transition as a Charro wife was not easy for her, but while she was married learned about the regulation with respect to Charro female respectability through her mother-in-law.

While temporary Charro love interests are usually treated as disposable, serious love interests are what one would consider to be the typical courting scheme. Temporary Charro love interests often have no generational ties to the Charro community and romanticize relationships with Charro men because they seek vicarious prestige from these relationships. Although temporary love interests aspire to marriage, Charro men do not consider them viable options for marriage because they do not possess the symbolic capital necessary for Charro men to permanently commit to their relationship. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1984), symbolic capital refers to the degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honor that is founded on a dialectic of knowledge and recognition. Temporary love interests lack the socialization and education usually transmitted through the Charro family, thus making relationships less likely to be

permanent. Women categorized as temporary love interests often experience habitual disrespect from Charro men that leads to distress.

Serious love interests, on the contrary, are predominantly women with generational ties to the Charro community. These women are protected by the rules and regulations that must be adhered by Charro men in relation to Charro female family members and outrank temporary love interests. Dating a woman with generational ties to the Charro community consequently must lead to marriage. Charro men in the Charro community desire their wives to have generational ties to Charro tradition because on the emphasis in the Charro community on the progression of tradition. Charro men are more careful about being perceived deceptive by generational women since the ramifications of such things can be result in violence from her family.

The process of courtship in serious love interests follow restricted rules. First, the Charro man must try to attract a generational Charro woman. These actions vary in execution but revolve around three central themes: a) the Charro's ability to impress Charro women with their equestrian skills, b) their devotion to family, and c) their ability to respect them. Charro women are selective with regard to Charro men since Charro men have a reputation in the Charro community as being womanizers. As mentioned earlier, the older generation of Charro men compete for the continuity of the Charro tradition while the younger generation of Charro men compete for honor and prestige. In accordance with that pursuit of honor and prestige, the admiration of generational Charro women further elevates their identities as Charro men. For that

reason, the younger generation of Charro men strive to impress Charro women with their ability to compete.

In my observations, I found that Charro men who excelled during *charreadas* (i.e. got the most points from the judges) had the tendency to attract the most admirers, temporary or serious love interests. The *suertes* of the Charro tradition are designed to demonstrate the power and ability of each individual competitor. When the competitor excels, he demonstrates brute, prowess, and most importantly, his masculinity. This is once more connected to the mode of predatory and barbaric habits expressed in sports. Veblen stated, “They not only improve the contestant’s physique, but it is commonly added that they also foster a manly spirit, both in the participants and the spectators” (Veblen, 1889). Contemporary studies on organized sport have examined the mechanisms in which sports bolster a sagging ideology of male superiority and help to reconstitute masculine hegemony (Bryson, 1987; Hall, 1988; Kimmel, 1987; Messner, 1989; 1990; Theberge, 1981). Women in the Charro community are attracted to the characteristics expressed by men who participate in the Charro community because hypermasculine traits are held to high esteem while any feminine traits are in disrepute. Charro men who excel in the *charreadas* are as a result considered to be the most desirable by both temporary and serious love interests.

Serious love interests, due the regulations of Charro female respectability, are limited to the manner in which they can approach Charro men while temporary love interests experience no such thing. Hence, when a serious love interest wants to demonstrate to the Charro man that she is interested, she will make eye contact with him.

For example, Yessica, a generational Charro wife with two children, described her relationship with her husband prior to their marriage. She stated that she did not make the first move because she did not want him to think she was not a respectable woman. Yessica stated, “I would look at him and smile. He knew that I liked him.” Eye contact, in this context, is significant to display interest and a smile gives the Charro man the authorization to approach the potential serious love interest. The following observation in Mexico City exemplifies the utility of eye contact and smile in the Charro community:

Erika⁸, a twenty-seven-year-old with generational ties, is sitting with her two female cousins, her mother, and her aunt. They are there to watch her father compete in the charreada. She is sitting next to her cousin, Priscilla, and committing on the competition. They make note of who they know but also general gossip about members of the Charro team. Her father is competing against a second-rate team from a town outside of Mexico City. This team is relatively young and is funded by a Charro boss who never comes to competitions. Erika notices Oscar, a Charro completo, who is performing the manganas a pie with his team. Oscar is a generational Charro and has been to several competitions in Mexico City throughout his career. He is twenty-nine and is very popular among Charro women and fans. Erika watches as Oscar perfectly carries out each mangana de pie, a very difficult task to complete. His first attempt is flawless in technique and he receives praise from the audience, including Erika. Erika comments to Priscilla on how attractive Oscar looks competing. They laugh after Priscilla says, “Especially his butt in those pants!” Oscar concentrates on his last attempt and successfully performs the hardest method of success, “el orcado” or “the hanged man”. “The hanged man” calls for the Charro man to launch the rope at the legs of a mare and then use the weight of his own body to flip the horse in mid-stop. This particular maneuver is called “the hanged man” because those who incorrectly execute this suerte run the risk of accidentally hanging themselves. Therefore, the perfect execution of this method is rendered impressive and highlights the skills, strength, and professionalism of the Charro man. Erika, clearly impressed with his work, was able to make eye contact with Oscar and smiled at him from her seat in the audience. Oscar,

⁸ Erika first mistook my involvement in the Charro community because she thought I was interested in Oscar. I had interviewed him the previous day and therefore Erika thought that I was interested in pursuing Oscar. Once I revealed to her the indications of my observations and interviews, she was more at ease with telling me the story of her romance with Oscar and her involvement in the Charro community.

quickly noticed her, since she was a well-recognized Charro female family member from the association hosting the event. Oscar smiled back to her and tipped his sombrero at her direction. Priscilla quickly said, "Viste eso! (Did you see that!). Erika had opened the door for further interaction with Oscar.

(Observation, May 2013)

Erika, being an attractive woman, has no trouble drawing the attention of Charro men. As stated, she is a generational woman and her father is a highly recognized Charro competitor in the Charro community. At twenty-seven, Erika is a seasoned beauty contestant and is a former Charro queen of her father's team. Erika's interest in Oscar is centered on his skills and confidence. Later that evening, Oscar approached Erika by greeting her mother, aunt, and two cousins. He made sure to be polite and to adhere to the rules of respectability by not asking Erika to drink with him. Erika and Oscar were able to talk about the *charreada* while not risking Erika's status as a respectable Charro female family member. In this scenario, Oscar has displayed his intentions as serious rather than temporary.

According to Noel F. McGinn's (1966) analysis of marriage and family in middle-class Mexico, *noviazgo* or dating is an essential period for young Mexican women to paid attention by their boyfriends. McFinn stated:

Tradition states that the language and music of courtship used by the suitor should be rich with reference to her beauty and the great need he has for her. Furthermore, all this passionate wooing is to occur without the young woman's having to worry about being compromised, for she should always be accompanied by a chaperon... If he observes traditional rules, there are few opportunities for a young middle-class man physically to demonstrate his affection for his [girlfriend] (McGinn, 1966).

Although McGinn (1966) examined family and marriage dynamics nearly fifty-one years ago, the traditional dynamics are still applicable to the Charro tradition. Charro men, as I have argued, with great frequency reference the beauty of both temporary and serious love interest, yet serious love interests periodically require chaperons.

In case of Erika and Oscar, their initial encounter was surrounded by Erika's family members, but I had the unique opportunity to observe their relationship unfold in my initial study of the Charro community in 2013. Erika continued to attend *charreadas* with her family and Oscar would occasionally show up to competitions where Erika's father would be competing. Oscar would always greet Erika and he would sit with her family members. This continued for about a month until Oscar finally asked Erika on a date in August of 2013. While I was not present for their date, Erika reported that Oscar took her to his family member's quinceañera and invited her cousins to come along. Her cousins served as two functions. First, they functioned as Erika and Oscar's official chaperone, hence limited any inappropriate forms of physical affection. Lastly, Oscar's invitation established him as a Charro man that is devoted to family and Charro traditions. During her date, Erika was able to learn more about Oscar's family and his values without comprising her own. Erika was fairly interested in Oscar and their relationship was formally defined a week later as exclusive. This is due to Oscar's ability to impress Erika with his Charro skills, demonstrate devotion to family, and treat her with respect.

As a formal couple, Erika made sure to establish her claim on Oscar during *charreadas*. Again, due to Oscar's talents as a Charro, he was very popular among

serious and temporary love interests. In the following year, Erika and Oscar were still dating but Erika revealed that the “honeymoon phase” of their relationship was over. Even after a year, Oscar still adhered to the regulations of Charro female respectability. Thus, he honored Erika by remaining faithful to her throughout their relationship and no longer messaging or talking to potential love interests. Erika’s role as a serious love interests requires her active participating in maintaining her status as a serious love interest with the expectation of marriage. She is expected to oversee or manage Oscar’s behavior in order to protect her goals. For example, Erika made sure to scare away temporary love interests that would try to gain the attention of her boyfriend. In one instance, Erika made sure to stare at women who would linger near Oscar and when she was her friends, they would also help her by making temporary love interest uncomfortable with her “dirty looks”. Erika stated that these mechanisms of stigmatization were essential in protecting her boyfriend from temporary love interests that may “through themselves at him”.

In the summer of 2015, Erika and Oscar were engaged to be married. Although engaged, Oscar’s admitted that he still talked to a few temporary Charro love interests. Erika knew about Oscar’s infidelity but was still adamant about getting married to Oscar. A Charro wedding and marriage would solidify her position as a Charro wife, placing her at the top of the social hierarchy. Serious love interests are socialized to accept issues of infidelity and violence in their relationships as long as outsiders are not aware of such issues. Erika refused to talk about Oscar’s infidelity but her friends were open to the conversation. They mentioned that Oscar was rumored to see women when

he was out of town but Erika did not care as long as she had the promise of permanent commitment. Erika was more involved with planning her wedding than regulating the behavior of her fiancé.

Further, a Charro wedding is a high prestige act that evokes all the symbolism of the Charro tradition to solidify a women's status in the community. Women wear the traditional white dress but incorporate elements of the Charro tradition in how the wedding party is dressed and how they arrive with the groom at the ceremony. Charro husbands-to-be dress in Charro gala or a fancier form of the traditional Charro attire to celebrate their position as Charro husbands. Having a Charro wedding that incorporates the Charro tradition has been historically present but has become another component of the Charro leisure class. As previously stated, the Charro leisure class is the wealthier and more honor obsessed in the Charro community. Erika can use her Charro wedding to display wealth but also use the Charro tradition to elevate her prestige in the Charro community.

Ultimately, the serious Charro love interest endure forms of disrespect through infidelity and violence but will endure such problems in order to maintain their status as honorable and respectable women. Revealing or confronting problems of infidelity and violence places them vulnerable for public disrespect by not just Charro men, but Charro women. The high ranking Charro family members practice a culture of silence that encourages women to never address domestic issues. Serious love interests are encouraged to never fight or resist their future husband's demands. Therefore, serious love interests are conditioned to be satisfied with infidelity as long as they are the most

serious love interest and their ultimate goal of marriage has not been compromised. Issues of domestic violence are not frequently discussed but the older generation of Charro wives have discussed their experiences because younger women were more aware of outsiders who report issues of domestic violence to the police. In the case of seventy-one-year-old Julia, she faced constantly violence through her marriage to her Charro husband. During her interview, Julia disclosed how her late-husband would beat her for not cooking the right meal. Her most horrifying story was about enduring violence during her second pregnancy. Julia described how she was kicked repeatedly in the stomach by her late-husband because of alleged flirtatious behavior with the bakery owner. While Julia's experiences are at the severe, they depict a common narrative about jealous and violence. Julia never divorced her Charro husband because divorce would lead to her permanent exclusion by the Charro community. Further, she never reported her abuse to the authorities because she stated, "You just don't do that".

In the context of a hypermasculine culture like the Charro community, domestic violence is still a problem for the portion of Charro families. Serious love interests, unlike temporary love interests, are more likely to experience these forms of abuse because of the longevity of romantic relationships. Temporary love interests may be subjected to continuous disrespect, but they since their interactions with Charro men tend to expire rapidly, they are not subjected to these forms of physical submission. Serious love interests, as mentioned earlier, are placed in a position where the transition from romantic courtship is short-lived but infidelity will be endured as long as the couple is engaged and married. While some serious love interests aspire to marry, there

are obviously a few women who grow tired of Charro men. These generational Charro women will sometimes date an outsider of the Charro community but will eventually find that dating men the Charro community is more feasible. Serious love interests have complained that other Mexican men outside of the Charro community do not place value and tradition, making it hard to maintain a serious relationship with them. Although some serious love interests may desire issues of infidelity and violence to be resolved, there are little opportunities to combat these problems in the Charro community. In addition, women who do wish to escape find little help within the Charro community to escape unfaithful or violent Charro men.

The Invisible Women of the Charro Tradition

Las vendedoras or sales women of the Charro community are the lowest ranking women of the Charro community. These women are practically invisible to Charro men because they are not part of the Charro tradition or adoring fans. These women are usually the vendors focused on their businesses. While not all Charro men treat *vendedoras* like they are not present, the majority of Charro men, in particular, the older generation do not engage with these women in the same manner in which they engage with Charro female family members or love interests of any particular rank. Because the Charro tradition is culturally socialized from birth for most, Charro men have “learned” how to interact with *vendedoras*. They are never rude but do not pay them much attention. These women are responsible for providing food, for a reasonable price of course, making drinks, selling handmade Charro accessories, etc. These women are not

always alone but are with accompanied with their young children and sometimes their husbands or male family members. It is significant to note that the 90% of these *vendedoras* are of indigenous origin. Therefore, they are darker in complexion, may dress in their simpler clothing, and have no generational connection to the Charro tradition. These women and their families take advantage of the capitalistic opportunity at *charreadas*, knowing that Charros get hungry and thirsty or need Charro replacement items.

The most prestigious *charreadas* such as the championship or major qualifying regional competitions regulate the *vendedoras* that are allowed in the lienzo arena. But, many *vendedoras* can be found out side the surrounding competition. Due to who the Mexican Federation of Charros allows to sell food, drinks, and items at championship or major qualifying regional competition, these major competitions have less representation of the traditional vendors that smaller competitions have in other places throughout Mexico. Championship series and major qualifying regional competitions tend to have vendors that are connected to the Charro *jefes* that were discussed earlier. *Vendedoras* are usually poor or working class Mexican women who do not have connections or networks in the Mexican Federation of Charros. *Vendedoras*, nevertheless, are a significant component of the hierarchy of Charro women.

While *vendedoras* are not formally considered to be Charro women or in the Charro tradition, they are the lowest ranking women in comparison with the women present at competitions. Unlike Charro love interests, *vendedoras* do not necessary want to be Charro wives or desire to be in the Charro tradition. Their main objective is to

make a profit and make money by selling products. While *vendadoras* can become Charro love interests, if they are young and considered beautiful by Charro men, they never are considered as serious love interest. Charro men interact *vendadoras* when necessary but most of the interactions that *vendadoras* have with members of the Charro community are between higher ranking women. According to Veblen, those who perform low status or less honorable work are often separated from those who are perceived to perform high status or honorable work. Therefore, Charro men usually have their ranch hands or ranch assistants get them food from the *vendadoras*. Ranch hands or ranch assistants, as mentioned previously, are usually poor and of indigenous origin and therefore, share the same class and ethnic backgrounds.

Vendadoras find most Charro men to be condescending and elitist. Regardless of the types of discrimination that they personally face, *vendadoras* are in a unique position to see the contradictions of within the Charro community that are often ignored within the Charro community (i.e. issues of classism, racism, sexism, etc.). The invisibility of *vendadoras* to Charro men allows them to observe the behavior of Charro men with other people. For example, Pati is a forty-year-old *vendadoras* who travels to different *charreadas* in central Mexico. Pati sells *comida rapida* or Mexican fast food like tacos, quesadillas, and gorditas of various meats. She sells her delicious food at a reasonable price and has been going to *charreadas* for about fifteen years. *Charreadas* are the perfect setting for Pati to make money to bring back to her family of four. Her husband sometimes joins her if she requires additional help but the majority of her help is provided by mother and two sons. Pati has always has been a entrepreneur in Mexico

City but found that the Charro community can a perfect place to sell food for above the average rate. Many of the *charreadas* are located away from other food venues, therefore making Pati and several other *vendedoras* the only options.

Since Pati has been working at *charreadas* for about fifteen years, she has seen the changes with the Charro community that are often brought up by the older generation of Charros. She states:

You did not see the advertising or the need for better...better audio. It is all changing... changing fast. The Charros look more nervous, less relax than when I started. The looked worried...especially the young ones. It used to be about family but I see it changing. (Interview, June 2013)

Pati recognizes the changes in Charro men by addressing the impact of the standardization of the Mexican Federation of Charros. Further, she recognizes that younger Charros seem more nervous and are less likely to relax at these spaces. She states that Charros do not really make eye contact with her if they are buying their own food. Pati explains that most of the men she has conversations with are Charro workers or Charro rookies. When her husband occasionally helps her, Charro men do talk to him but she believes that this is because he is a man and they respect him more than her. This is not surprising when one realizes that Charro workers and Charro rookies have similar backgrounds. Overall, Pati is satisfied with her business and she is able to serve different Charros that come to Mexico City.

Another *vendedoras*, Monse, works for a privately owned tequila vendor that is owned by a Charro *jefe*. Monse is thirty years old and is a resident of Guadalajara, Jalisco. She had only been working for this tequila business for four months when I interviewed her in 2013. Similar to Pati, Monse is of a darker complexion, bigger of

build, and has two children. Her husband is an alcoholic and therefore has to work to support her two children. She was referred to this job by her brother who is a Charro rookie for the Charro *jefe*. Monse's job requires her to sell alcoholic beverages such as bottles or shots of tequila, whiskey, or rum, *micheladas* (Mexican drink prepared with beer, lime juice, assorted sauces, species, and peppers), a variety of Mexican beers, nonalcoholic drinks (soda and water), and Marlboro cigarettes. There are few different stands around the *lienzo* that sell drinks to the public, but Monse's stand is located right behind the area where Charros gather. Unlike Pati, Monse deals with Charros, especially the older generation of Charros since they tend to drink throughout the day at *charreadas*. She also reports that they do not make eye contact with her but will get always hassle her for more drinks. Although she has told various Charros her name, she is only referred to as *muchacha* or young lady. This is a mechanism that creates distance between Charros and *vendedoras*.

Vendedoras recognize that they are ignored by the Charro community. Many state that they enjoy the music and believe it is a really beautiful tradition, but they do not feel like they are included in the celebrations. They recognize their position as workers or servers. This is once again Veblen's argument about barbaric and predatory habits that create distinctions among individuals. Restating Veblen's point, "The first requisite of a good servant is that he should conspicuously know his place" (Veblen 1889). It becomes evident the pattern of subordination of individuals that are not in the Charro tradition based on class, gender, and ethnic origin. *Vendedoras* rank the lowest in the hierarchy of Charro women. Although they may not be formally involved in the

Charro tradition or have generational ties to the Charro community, *vendedoras* take part in an in major work of elevating the status of Charro men. Similar to Charro female members and Charro love interests (both serious and temporary), the interactions between *vendedoras* and Charro men allows them to feel powerful, important, and honorable compared to those they perceived below them.

When asking Charro men about *vendedoras* many of them could not recall significant interactions with them. Again, this is due the fact that they do not interact with them and prefer to get someone else to order their food or get them a drink. However, Charro rookies, in particular those with indigenous ties and modest backgrounds, did report positive interactions with *vendedoras*. In the case of Miguel, the twenty-year-old Charro rookie, he voiced that *vendedoras* were often the only positive interactions they had at *charreadas*. Due to the classist and racist tendencies of generational Charros, Charro rookies will find these *vendedoras* and the spaces they work in to function like sanctuaries from the continuous discrimination. Miguel states that he enjoys eating tacos and talking to the women who make them. Sometimes Charro rookies even know their family members or find some familial ties. But, Charro rookies that have been participating in the Charro community for longer periods of times, recognize that there is a division between *vendedoras* and the rest of the Charro community. They begin to slowly pull away in order to adapt to the norms of the Charro traditions and the expectations for Charro men. Pati mentioned that she witnessed this particular type of behavior from many Charro rookies that she met over time. She states,

They were always smiling and talking to [my family]. Over the years, they would only spend five minutes of their time. It is sad but it is normal. I do not expect

them to be [eating] next to me (laughs). They would tell me about the [Charro men] ...you know, the ones with grey in their beard...and say “Oh they treat me like shit” or “He hates me”. It is sad to hear but they love being a Charro more. (sighs) I only make their food... (laughs)... I am not their mothers. (Interview, 2013).

Pati acknowledges that over time Charro rookies modify their behavior around them.

Although she tried to state her comments as humorous, she was noticeably hurt by these changes even if she did not explicitly state it.

Vendedoras may be the lowest ranking women in the Charro community but they are the most aware of the issues of the Charro community. This is due their lack of membership in the Charro community. Their interactions in the Charro community are limited and are only at *charreadas*. They are not integrated in the Charro community like Charro female family members nor do they desire to be included like temporary love interests. Their goal in life is to make a profit so they can go home and feed their family. They do not have to accept their subordination like Charro female family members and Charro love interests because they have the option to leave. Many *vendedoras* do in fact take their business elsewhere if they feel like they cannot deal with the lack of eye contact or invisibility. If they leave the Charro community, they are not ostracized because to many, it is like they were never there.

CHAPTER V

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN ON HORSES

While some women in the Charro community do not wish to participate in the Charro competitions, there are those who have fought for the right to do so formally. *Escaramuzas* can be defined as a type of all female equestrian drill team with musical accompaniment linked to the historical significance of the Charro tradition (Sands, 1994). In the Charro community, *Escaramuzas* refer to a group of women who demonstrate their horsemanship skills by performing daring and risky procession horse ballets in synchronized patterns. These women typically wear colorful traditional garments and ride sidesaddle. These women are usually from respectable and wealthy Charro families in the community since becoming an *Escaramuza* requires a sizeable investment due the expenses of specialized saddles, garments, and so on. Comparable to the historical social circumstances that link modern Charros to the Charros of the colonial and post-colonial, *Escaramuzas* also make up an integral part of the Charro community due to their past female revolutionary predecessors who fought side by side with Charro men for the rights of Mexicans. Their traditional outfits are a commemoration of these Charro women who fought along Charro men during the Mexican Independence and Mexican Revolutions. However, *Escaramuzas* did not have the governmental support of Mexico or the Mexican Federation of Charros until 1992. *Escaramuzas* also lack agency to make decisions within the Mexican Federation of

Charros and are denied the opportunity to hold leadership positions within the organization. Their presence at these meetings are specifically symbolic.⁹

Kathleen Sands stated, “Though Charro teams express great pride in the *Escaramuzas* who ride with their associations and strive to support and encourage them, they see their own competition as significantly more important than the women’s riding demonstration and retain the power to decide when and where the *Escaramuzas* will perform and their place in the *charreada* schedule” (Sands, 1994). The inclusion of *Escaramuzas* in *charreadas* was strategic because it is also linked to influence of Charro business principles that saw the potential to make a profit from their performances since additional costs can be billed to Charro teams with a partnering *Escaramuza* team. While the Charro men assert a specific type of Mexican rural masculinity, *Escaramuzas* provide *charreadas* a feminine touch that many Charros express as necessary that is also specific to Mexican rural femininity. Further, *Escaramuza* teams are pertinent to the *Charro* leisure class due to the financial demand to fund them and Charro *jefes* can further demonstrate their visible success in their ability to spend money. Furthermore, some Charro teams even elect an *Escaramuza* as their team’s queen further exhibiting the barbaric and predatory cultural habits of the Charro community that place women as

⁹ The role of the *Escaramuza* in the Charro community is comparable to how the American National Football League’s looks upon their cheerleaders. Although an integral part of the National Football League’s revenue stream, cheerleaders are paid (sometimes below) minimum wages and are required to attend unpaid events. In a recent 2016 court case, the NFL’s Buffalo Bills cheerleaders, known as Buffalo Jills, sued and successfully won a case between the NFL’s team for wage inequality. The Buffalo Jills made claims about requirements of strict dress codes and guidelines that was regulated by the NFL’s Buffalo Bills. These are not the first claims and lawsuits that have transpired in the NFL regarding their treatment of their female dancers. These court cases further illustrate how the presence of women in sports, specifically in traditionally masculine sports, are recognized as symbolic.

tools for additional prestige. The Mexican Federation of Charros also elects an Escaramuza queen every several years to represent the community in prestigious and notable *charreadas*.

In this chapter, I argue that women who compete as *Escaramuzas* tend to be high income, have generational ties, and seen as respectable members of the Charro community compared to other women. I examine *Escaramuzas* as a separate component in Charro competitions (*charreadas*) and how they view themselves and how Charro men view them. Yet, their participation and competition is, nevertheless, secondary to Charro men. In addition, I will analyze their status with the Mexican Federation of Charros to illustrate that even with evolution within their representation, their role in the Charro community remains symbolic even though Charro women have played a crucial role in Charro history.

The Reproduction of the Spanish Aristocracy

Charreadas, as fore mentioned, are centered on the participation of the Charro men who complete the *suertes Charras* or the Charro events. Like the Charro man, the *Escaramuza* has a historical past bounded to Spanish colonialism and revolutionary resistance of tyrannical power. The word *Escaramuza* in English translates to skirmish or an episode of irregular or unpremeditated fighting, especially between small or outlying parts of armies or fleets. Even the very name highlights the fighting and predatory characteristics illustrated in the Charro tradition's history. Although Charro women were originally of humble socio-economic backgrounds, the late 1870s during

the time period of the Mexican presidency of Porfirio Diaz presented the rise of appropriating the Charro tradition for aristocratic women. Sands argues:

In the New World, aristocratic women continued to be trained in the Spanish equestrian tradition, but with the development of ranching and the civil wars in Mexico, women took on roles as stock handlers, couriers, and fighting, adopting a much more active riding style in process. Although the term *Escaramuza*, which means “skirmish,” suggests this later mode of riding, the charreada *Escaramuza* preserves the appearance of the genteel seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century tradition in its use of sidesaddle, graceful protocols, and costume. While colorful and ornate, the dresses the girls wear are modestly high-necked and long-sleeved, and skirts come no more than two inches above the boot tops. Pantaloon and crinolines ensure modesty as well, and the full costume and sidesaddle technique give the Charras an air of aristocratic grace that masks their physical exertion and daring (Sands, 1994).

Escaramuzas represent the clash between the Mexican women of the past with fighting and working tendencies and the respectable equestrian traditions of Spanish European society. While the origins of *Escaramuzas* is bounded by class and ethnic distinctions made by Spanish colonization and notions of decency, the modern *Escaramuza* emulates these notions of aristocratic decency and femininity more than the lower class historical past. As previously argued in Chapter 3, matters in Charro female respectability play an essential in the ranking of women in the Charro community. Therefore, *Escaramuzas* are no different in this context. Their performance is the public display of these notions of decency, grace, and modesty that was borrowed by the Spanish ideology of class. It is evident that the performance of *Escaramuzas* is another massive contradiction to the Charro beliefs regarding the subject of class, gender, and ethnic origin.

While the equestrian style is borrowed by the colonial Spanish aristocracy, the outfits that *Escaramuzas* compete in are borrowed by the Adelita style of dress. The Adelita dress was made most famous by the heroines of the evolution. According to

Sands, “Adelita is a legendary figure said to have a friend and companion to Pancho Villa early in his career as a general. She also gained fame as a fighter in his army. Her costume—a long skirt, *rebozo* [cloth garment] crossed over her bodice, and calf-length boots—became popular with women during the revolution. (Sands, 1994)” The use of the Adelita style of dress demonstrates the juxtaposition of Spanish aristocratic notions of decency and the low class symbols of the revolutionary women of Mexico. This is a way in which *Escaramuzas* romanticize Charro women that fought alongside men during the Mexican civil wars.

The historical significance of the *Escaramuza* has been conducted by various scholars across different disciplines (Valero Silva, 1987; Nájera-Ramírez, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2003; Sands, 1994; Lopez, 1997; Chávez Torres, 1998; Ancona, 1999; Vereá, 2000; Montfort, 2007; Ramírez Barreto, 2005; Miranda, 2013; Medina, 2015). While it is understood that *Escaramuzas* are pivotal to the history of the Charro tradition, I argue, using the Veblen (1889) theoretical framework, women who compete in Charro competition as *Escaramuzas* are more wealthy than ever before and come from highly respectable generational Charro families. The requirements to become a competing *Escaramuza* are similar to the financial burden of Charro men. However, the financial burden has become even more evident in the last two decades according to active *Escaramuzas* resisting participation to only the upper class Charro community. This is because *Escaramuza* teams must have matching dresses, boots, sombreros, bows, saddles, riding sticks, spurs, etc. that are highly costly to acquire for a team of eight.

There is no room for individuality in the realm of *Escaramuzas* because their purpose is to perform in unison.

The ability to compete in the Charro community as an *Escaramuza* is limited to the wealthy. The many *Escaramuza* that I interviewed described the costs as high but worth it in order to be included in *charreadas*. In the case of Cielo, the twenty-seven-year-old closeted lesbian, competing as an *Escaramuza* for a well known team gives her a sense of pride. While Cielo may have ulterior motives for competing as an *Escaramuza* (protect her respectability from being questioned by others in the Charro community), Cielo's family is also wealthy enough to finance her continuous participation. Her mother was an *Escaramuza* in the 1980s and was able to compete in various part of Mexico. It was assumed that Cielo would become a legacy and participate as an *Escaramuza* alongside of her mother. Cielo has been competing professionally since she was an eight-year-old. Unlike Charro teams where most of the participants are eighteen or older, *Escaramuza* teams vary in age. While *Escaramuza* teams can compete in juvenile competitions requiring the participants to be under the age of eighteen, the majority of *Escaramuza* festivals have participant of various ages. The purpose of these performances is present the notions of decency, grace, and modesty that epitomize the notions of Charro female respectability. Cielo is able to feel included in the Charro tradition without resisting the socio-cultural structure.

Cielo understands that being an *Escaramuzas* is not for everyone. In our conversations, she described the manner ways she has invested into her career as an *Escaramuzas*. While her father has helped with the majority of the costs involved in

competing as an *Escaramuza*, Cielo has also invested a majority of her time to becoming a great competitor. Cielo stated:

You have to have a lot of time... (laughs)... I'm a little strange because I work on the ranch but I know girls on my team who just come to practice... ask for... ask for attention and that is it. They do not work really... not like me and they have stupid amounts of money. This [being an Escaramuzas] takes time because you have to get everyone working together... but you need money. It is not for everyone... Not for the girl... the girl with no money (laughs). I have girlfriends in the past that liked what I did but realized that it was impossible for them. Escaramuzas are not inviting people. They want to know who you are...

(Interview, 2014)

In Cielo's description, she is referring to the exclusive nature of the *Escaramuzas*.

Similar to the discriminatory practices of generational Charros towards Charro rookies, *Escaramuzas* without generational ties are rare. The majority *Escaramuzas* without generational ties are rich women with a connection to Charro *jefes*. Access in these cases is achieved because the newcomer can pay their way onto the team. This does not mean that these women do not face resistance by generational *Escaramuzas*. However, money does guarantee newcomers with a spot on the team unlike the experiences of Charro rookies who are subjected to dangerous positions or strenuous labor in order to pay their participation costs.

Escaramuzas are not welcoming to people who question the Charro tradition.

This was evident in my observations and during the interview process with these women. Due to their high ranking nature in the Charro community, my position as researcher threatened their beliefs about the Charro tradition because I asked them verbalize issues the often ignored (i.e. sexism, classism, and racism). Nevertheless, my questions required inquiry about their beliefs and practices. They were highly selective

about who they talked to during *charreadas*, but *Escaramuzas* that did agree to be interviewed revealed why they had animosity towards outsiders. Similar to the way that Charros are the keepers of the Charro tradition, *Escaramuzas* maintain, enact, and reproduce the ideals of Charro female respectability. Outsiders, especially female outsiders, may use Charro men to evaluate their status or as an access point to the Charro community. Their animosity is strongly evident against poor women with indigenous ties. One particular *Escaramuza* argued that these women do not belong in the Charro community because they are bad for the bloodlines. This type of rationality is bounded to notions of racism and exclusion against indigenous communities in Mexico. The reference of bloodlines by *Escaramuzas* indicates the socialization from birth for women to date and marry men of lighter complexion. This again is a continuous contradiction of the original ethos of the Charro tradition where emphasis was placed on opportunity for all and the resistance against racial and ethnic distinctions.

Many of *Escaramuzas* that compete in the Charro community are lighter in complexion, in addition to coming from families with higher socio-economic statuses. Although the issue of colorism (distinctions within ethnic and racial groups based on the shade of one's skin) is a general social problem through Mexico, these are exacerbated in the Charro community. Due to *Escaramuzas'* cultural connection to Spanish elements of female aristocracy, issues of cultural and ethnic superiority are intensified. For example, Renata, a thirty-one-year-old *Escaramuzas* with generational ties, explained that *Escaramuzas* should remain a high-class group. Renata stated:

[Participating as Escaramuzas] should remain for women like me. We have real connections to the [Charro tradition]. Not everyone is going to be displayed in the same way on the horse. You have to be feminine...you have to blend in...be together. You can always tell who does not belong.

Betty: *How can you tell?*

Renata: *(Laughs)...well...because they look like people on the street.*

(Interview, 2014)

Renata was inferring to women with darker complexions. Although Renata is a college educated mother of two, she her ideological standpoint on who can be displayed as an *Escaramuzas* is clear. During our interview, she specified that women with darker complexions do not look “right” riding next to women with lighter complexions. Despite the fact that Renata’s statements are by far the most problematic and racist, she presents a common assumption the Charro community: Charro women with lighter complexions are better than those with darker complexions. By integrating these school of thought to how *Escaramuzas* view access to their teams, it evident that *Escaramuza* teams are even more selective than Charro teams.

Furthermore, the beauty and graceful nature of the *Escaramuza* should not be mistaken as effortless. On the contrary, the equestrian technique required for these performances require continuous dedication and practice in order to perfect. Any miscalculation in the routine may result in collision and injury to riders and animals. Riding sidesaddle also requires training. Cielo states, “It’s all about balance with your body. Shifting your weight...it can result with on the floor.” Cielo learned how to ride sidesaddle when she was five because her mother taught her. Nevertheless, further training was provided to her by her father who hired a coach to teach her how to

maneuver her horse. Similar to Cielo, Rosario, a twenty-year-old generational Charro female family member, was also trained by a paid coach. Rosario's mother was not an *Escaramuza* but her father's sisters were when they were teenagers. Her father made sure to hire the most expensive coach in order to ensure that Rosario would be preserved a spot on a popular team in Mexico. Rosario explains that the majority of the women she competes are like her. She states:

They have family in [the Charro community]. I have known some of them from the events that our fathers have and from the different associations that come to [Mexico City]. A few of my teammates went to high school with me... (laughs). This is an expensive sport...you need the money to compete. We happen to have it.

(Interview, 2015)

Rosario went to an expensive private high school in the Federal District. She alludes to her father's wealth as her source of access to the *Escaramuza* participation and believes *Escaramuza* teams should not accept everyone. Unlike the Charro men who still claim that the Charro tradition is not discriminatory based on class, *Escaramuzas* recognize that the cost of participation may not be accessible to everyone.

The women who participate as *Escaramuzas* are often perceived to be the most beautiful women at *charreadas*. As mentioned, these women have generational ties to the Charro tradition and are therefore at the top of the hierarchy of Charro women. The perception as beautiful is amplified by their participation as *Escaramuzas* since women are required to exacerbate their femininity through the use of makeup and hair products. For example, it takes about an average of an hour to an hour and half for *Escaramuzas* to get ready for events. Rosario explained that she has to make sure that her makeup matches the rest of her teammates' makeup. There are often disagreements about how

makeup should be done but the majority of *Escaramuzas* wear a heavy eyeliner around their eyes to accentuate the color of their eyes, neutral tone eye shadow, pink blush, and a bright red lipstick. Their hair long and is normally brushed back into a pony-tail or in a braid to avoid getting hair in their faces during their performances. Similar to Charro competitions, *Escaramuzas* are also judged by a group of judges. These judges are also appointed by the Mexican Federation of Charros and have competed in the past as *Escaramuzas* and Charros in the Charro community. Judges evaluate *Escaramuza* not just by their performance but also their appearance. Therefore, it is important to make sure that *Escaramuzas* to look uniformly beautiful.

In short, *Escaramuzas* are usually wealthy women with generational ties to the Charro community. They are not accepting of newcomers who lack the financial stability to invest in the lavish demands of *Escaramuzas* teams. Veblen's theoretical framework regarding the barbaric and the peaceable can be examined in *Escaramuzas* teams. The barbaric notions of Spanish aristocracy intertwined in the participation of *Escaramuzas* clearly illustrates how the Charro tradition can be exclusionary based on race and class. While not *Escaramuzas* are as severe about their ideologies regarding race and class, these discriminatory practices still existence in the Charro community. *Escaramuzas* believe that participation should be selective, yet secondary to men in the Charro tradition.

Self-Reflection and Charro Scrutiny

Escaramuzas believe that their performances are important to the Charro tradition. They believe that their participation celebrates a cultural past significant to Mexico's notion of nationalism. The *Escaramuzas* were incorporated formally into the *charreadas* in the 1960s and many *Escaramuzas* see this inclusion as satisfactory because it presents them with the opportunity to display their equestrian skills in addition to their high status femininity. Rosario believes that the *Escaramuzas* are not above Charro men in the Charro tradition since *charreadas* celebrate Mexican equestrian skills dawning from the Charro tradition. She recognizes that the Charro tradition is not centered around women but expressed that *Escaramuzas* have their own moments during *Escaramuzas*. She states, "No one comes to see just us. The most exciting part is the *charreada*." She did not say this with disappointment or a sense of resentment. She was sincere that the performances of *Escaramuzas* are to present a particular subset of Mexican femininity. "I work hard but not as hard as [Charro men]. My life is not about being a Charro like them." Rosario is complicit in her own subordination in the Charro tradition because that is how she was socialized. Her mother and grandmother mentioned to from a young age that being an *Escaramuzas* would be a fun activity to do since her brothers were learning to be Charros. No generational Charro views their own participation as a hobby.

The idea that *Escaramuzas* are secondary in relation to competing Charros is echoed by Cielo. While she rejects many of the hypermasculine ideologies about the role

of women in the Charro community, she still acknowledges that *Escaramuzas* are not respected by Charro men. Cielo states,

I have [Charro] friends tell each other when they mess up that they were going to try out for Escaramuzas. They like to look at us but they do not care for what we do. We are just there to look at... (laughs) but who wants to look at them (laughs).

Cielo described an important issue in the performances of *Escaramuzas*, the presentation of women as trophies. Veblen argued:

All the women in the group will share in the class repression and depreciation that belongs to them as women, but the status of women taken from hostile groups has an additional feature. Such a woman not only belongs to a subservient and low class, but she also stands in a special relation to her captor. She is a trophy of the raid, and therefore an evidence of exploit, and on this ground it is to her captor's interest to maintain a peculiarly obvious relation of master toward her. (Veblen 1899)

The notion that women are trophies is vastly present in the Charro community. The financial burden that is placed upon the Charro fathers of many of the *Escaramuzas* establishes that Charro men place their daughters and wives in exhibition to be observed. Their wealth supplies the ability for these *Escaramuzas* to look flawless to the public but also exhibit mastery of skills funded by their affluence. The ability to spend money on your daughter or wife to participate in conjunction to the emerging Charro leisure class described in Chapter 1. As Veblen argues above, the purpose of funding this expensive activity is not only for the purpose of enacting, reproducing, or maintaining the role of *Escaramuzas* in the Charro community, but elevating the status of Charro men who are able to promote their honor and prestige to their peers. There is no *Escaramuza* tradition but a Charro tradition. *Escaramuzas* are only a component of the Charro tradition that celebrates elements of historical pasts.

Escaramuza competitions are divided into two categories. The first feature of the competition requires *Escaramuzas* to perform a modified *cala de caballo* (reigning demonstration). Young women are expected to race their horses from the far end of the lienzo to a reined stop for a sliding stop. Depending on the competition, *Escaramuzas* may be required to perform spins to be evaluated on their reigning capabilities. This is the only portion of *Escaramuzas* performances that vaguely reflects the performances of Charros. However, *Escaramuzas* are mandated to do this reigning demonstration on sidesaddle, making it more difficult to carry out. The gendered distinction in the performance further illustrates how men and women in the Charro community are categorized differently in the Charro community. The second feature of the competition requires *Escaramuzas* enact drill maneuvers to the tune of traditional Mexican music. The performance requires *Escaramuzas* to be unison, therefore making any mistake obvious to the judges and the audiences. In particular, performances that incorporate the *cruzada* demonstrate the highest ability of discipline and grace. Performances that incorporate *cruzada* moves can be explained as a threading needle action. *Escaramuzas* riders ride in lines and alternate in crossing other lines of galloping horses. This feature of the competition is unique to *Escaramuzas*.

Although Charros and *Escaramuzas* share similar competition features, Charros do not respect them as true competitors. Many Charros have used the words, “pretty” and “cute” to describe *Escaramuzas* and their competitions. As Cielo mentioned above, Charro men do not take the *Escaramuzas* performances seriously and even use the term *Escaramuzas* to make fun of low performing Charros. For example, the older generation

of Charros use the term *Escaramuzas* to tell stigmatize their peers for lower quality performances. Samuel, the fifty-one-year-old generational Charro, was the most vocal about telling other Charros, in particular young Charros, that they should looking careers as *Escaramuzas*. During one particular *charreada*, Samuel was drinking coke and tequila with a few of his friends. One particular Charro from the opposing team had missed his third opportunity in the *colas en le lienzo* or the steer tailing of a bull. Samuel stated to his friend, “Look, another *Escaramuzas* for your daughter’s team.” They laughed and shook their head in agreement. This comments continued throughout the night as failed opportunities were credited with low Charro skills. By comparing these low performing Charros to *Escaramuzas*, Charro men conceptualize that *Escaramuzas* do not have the skills necessary to be compared to them.

These comments may seem insignificant but demonstrate how *Escaramuzas* are not truly equal participants in the Charro tradition. They are only for display. Veblen argued:

In such a community the standards of merit and propriety rest on an invidious distinction between those who are capable fighters and those who are not. Infirmity, that is to say incapacity for exploit, is looked down upon. One of the early consequences of this deprecation of infirmity is a tabu on women and on women’s employments. In the apprehension of the archaic, animistic barbarian, infirmity is infectious. The infection may work its mischievous effect both by sympathetic influence and by transfusion. Therefore, it is well for the able-bodied man who is mindful of his virility to shun all undue contact and conversation with the weaker sex and to avoid all contamination with the employments that are characteristic of the sex. (Veblen, 1899)

Veblen’s analysis of women in barbaric and predatory cultures, those with a highly present patriarchal structure, provides clarity of the role of *Escaramuzas* in the Charro community. By inferring that low performing Charros “should try out for *Escaramuzas*”,

Charros are claiming that they exhibit characteristics of the subordinate class (women). *Escaramuzas* are for display and for the purpose of exhibiting brute, prowess, and Charro excellence. These elements are absent from the *Escaramuzas* performances.

The younger generation of Charros tend to not be as vocal about their thoughts regarding their beliefs of *Escaramuzas*. Nevertheless, they still make such comments that confirm their beliefs about the secondary status of *Escaramuzas*. While there are many factors that can contribute to a Charro's desire to perform well (i.e. maintain their contract with a Charro *jefe*), deterring stigmatization from their peers plays an important role. Stigma is usually in the form of jokes that infer that Charro men are not performing well. For example, Santiago, the twenty-three-year-old Charro with generational ties, used the term *Escaramuza* as a tool of stigmatization against his Charro team.

During one of their competitions, Santiago had had a great night in the *charreada*. His team had won the overall *charreada* and had qualified to go to an important qualifying regional competition; yet, one of his teammates, Joan did not perform to his potential. Joan, usually, is an exceptional Charro and the majority of his teammates believe that he is one of their best Charros. Joan is a twenty-seven-year-old generational Charro and specializes in the *colas en le lienzo* or the steer tailing of a bull. During that particular *charreada*, Joan failed to obtain the majority of the points because his hand was slipping off the bull's tail. He had previously broken his finger during practice and had trouble fully closing his hand. Despite his injury, Joan still generated a middle-level score that was able to help propel his team to victory. Santiago, knowing that Joan had broken his finger, jokingly suggested that if his career as a Charro

continued to deteriorate he should look into joining an *Escaramuzas* team. Although annoyed with Santiago, Joan laughed and said that he would rather die than join an *Escaramuzas* team. Santiago responded by stating that Joan would look horrendous in a dress anyway so he recommended that Joan better get well fast before he is faced with that option.

Escaramuzas are fully aware that Charros use their identity as a form of stigmatization. While most are annoyed that Charros do not view their equestrian skills as legitimate, there is not much that *Escaramuzas* can do to combat this form of discrimination. Violeta, a thirty-five-year-old *Escaramuzas* with generational ties stated, “If they did not respect the original *Escaramuzas*, they are not going to respect us.” Violeta, unlike Renata and Rosario, views her participation as an *Escaramuzas* just as important to the Charro tradition as Charro men and the *suertes Charras*. While Violeta is an outlier, her point regarding the treatment of *Escaramuzas* is valid. She stated, “My own brothers say that what we do is so easy... (laughs)... easy... like easy (laughs)... You try riding with your weight on one side.” Violeta’s frustration stems from years of hearing her brothers use the term *Escaramuzas* as tool of stigmatization. While some *Escaramuzas* may wish to be honored in the same way that Charro men are in the Charro community, a majority of *Escaramuzas* are “deal with” the reality that they will never be paramount to the Charro tradition.

Mexican Federation of Charros and their Relationship with Escaramuzas

As I argued in Chapter 1, the Mexican Federation of Charros has become the voice and keeper of the Charro tradition. The participation of *Escaramuzas* became a favorable addition to *charreadas* once former President Carlos Pascual and governing board of the Mexican Federation of Charros were encouraged by experienced *Escaramuzas* to form a council of judges. By 1989, the Mexican Federation of Charros had formalized a set of rules for competition that would be specific to *Escaramuzas*. Sands stated in her analysis of *Escaramuzas*, “Before these women drew up competition rules and certified judges, there were *Escaramuzas* competitions, but they did not lead to tournaments or titles. The informal competitions were organized and judged exclusively by Charros who had no consistent system of scoring” (Sands, 1994). The need for regulation and standardization lead to the emergence of the all-women *Escaramuzas* Council of Judges. This was an important step for *Escaramuzas* because it motivated *Escaramuzas* teams to perfect their skills. Former Vice President José Luis González of the Mexican Federation of Charros believed that the institutionalization of *Escaramuzas* competition was significant for the improvement of the quality of *Escaramuzas*’ performance.

Although there are a lot more options for competitions today, *Escaramuza* teams still prefer to compete alongside Charro men because of the lack of attendance of their performances when no Charro competitions are included in the scheduling. While there was a push for all-women judges, in my observations of *Escaramuzas* competitions, the majority of judges only included a singular female judge while the other judges were

usually older experienced Charros. The Mexican Federation of Charros incorporated *Escaramuzas* with Charro competitions because there are not as many *Escaramuzas* teams registered in the Mexican Federation of Charros. Once again, this is due to the cost and heavy financial burden associated with *Escaramuzas* teams. Charro teams with a wealthy Charro *jefe* tend to have a “sister” *Escaramuzas* team and travel with the Charro team when there is an opportunity to compete. This is due to the high cost to travel from one areas with *Escaramuzas* horses. This is because most Charro horses and *Escaramuzas* horses require different types of training.

Escaramuzas make *charreadas* even more festive and colorful to those in the audience. The Mexican Federation of Charros recognize that a profit can be made for exhibiting *Escaramuzas* alongside Charro men during major competitions. Owners of *lienzos* that are used for major regional competitions and championship competitions charge an additional fee to have *Escaramuzas* compete. They create incentive for *Escaramuzas* to compete by promising them money and equipment for first prize winners. Additionally, the top competitors are always invited back to major competitions that are highly advertised to the Charro community. This incentive is strong enough to motivate Charro *jefes* to fund *Escaramuza* teams alongside their Charro teams. Further, the scheduling of the Charro competition is also impacted by *Escaramuza* competitions. This is because *Escaramuzas* take a portion of time to perform their routines for the audience. During this downtime, Charro teams can prepare their horses for the latter part of the competition and get lunch or dinner with their teammates. The Mexican Federation of Charros is strategic with how they utilize the *Escaramuzas* in their major

competition. While they may present themselves as inclusive to *Escaramuzas*, they are motivated by profit and not compassion toward equality.

Escaramuzas are not aware of how their representation in the Mexican Federation of Charros is organized. Many do not know that they are not included in the ballots for major decisions centered on the preservation of the Charro tradition. Like many Charros, they do not question the authority of the Mexican Federation of Charros because they believe they have their best interests. *Escaramuzas* do not have formal representation in the Mexican Federation of Charros, but they do have a symbolic role. Every few years, the Mexican Federation of Charros elect a young *Escaramuzas* as the Queen of the Mexican Federation of Charros. These women are almost always wealthy, high status, and generational. The election resembles more of a pageant where women are up for display and they are evaluated on their beauty rather than their contributions to the Charro tradition. Their generational connections are play an important role in their selection, as well-known Charro families carry more weight in these decisions than other Charro families of less prestige. Here, the Mexican Federation of Charros can present the illusion that *Escaramuzas* are evaluated by their skills rather than their beauty.

Former Queens of the Mexican Federation of Charros are required to take many professional photographs in full *Escaramuzas* attire. They are present in major competitions to wave the flag of the Mexican Federation of Charros and they ride their horses alongside the President and Vice President of the Federation. They may take pictures with the competition winners but they do not any role in judging competitions. *Escaramuzas* believe that the queens of Federation represent them, but they are unsure

of her role. Out of the ten *Escaramuzas* that I interviewed, not one could tell me what the Queen of the Mexican Federation of Charros did with her title. The representatives that I interviewed from the Mexican Federation of Charros stated that the Queen of the Mexican Federation of Charros were suppose to serve at least two terms and their job was to “proudly represent the ladies of horsebacks, the Charros, and the national sport.” Their statements did not clarify her duties but rather what the Queen of the Mexican Federation of Charros symbolizes to their organization.

The inclusion of *Escaramuzas* limits their participation to just beauty, grace, and respectability in the Charro community. There are some women in the Charro community that do wish to participate as equally to men, but they are a small minority that receive push back from the Mexican Federation of Charros. This is because many representatives of the Federation believe that women do not have capacity to carry out the Charro tradition in the manner in which it was intended. In the case of Lucero, a twenty-five-year-old with generational ties to the Charro community, she learned how to do the *suertes Charras* secretly when she was a kid. She is a former *Escaramuzas* and desires a space where she can compete alongside men. Lucero mentions that she can do anything that a Charro can do, but no one has given her the opportunity to display her skills. She said:

I have to be secretive about who I talk to about [my skills]. My father did not know about it for years and he caught me on the ranch one day...trying to do [Piales en Lienzo or Heeling of a running mare]. He was pissed...(laughs) but then he forgot about it. Mom tells me it is not right...it is not feminine. That is why I quit being an Escaramuza ... (laughs)... too feminine. I have tried to get other Escaramuzas to join me but no one seems to want to do this with me.

(Interview, 2014)

Lucero's family is not supportive but her brother, Marco has helped her practice. Lucero's case is not a common experience for many women who wish to participate alongside men. This is because many Charro men and women believe the Charro tradition should not be altered to be inclusive to women. Many express that this is why *Escaramuzas* were incorporated into *charreadas* in the first place. One will have document these changes as more women become verbal about wanting to participate in the Charro tradition. These changes, however, will not be easy and may take decades to be taken seriously.

Escaramuzas are not a Charro's equal. The division created by the Mexican Federation of Charros further coincide with these beliefs. *Escaramuzas* are women from high income, with strong generational ties to the Charro community, and highly respectable families. They are the elite of the Charro community because they can donate time and money to this very expensive activity. Unlike the Charro men who compete professionally, *Escaramuzas* view their participation as a hobby rather than a way of life. Their participation is a separate component in the Charro competitions and their character is often used by a tool of stigmatization by other Charros to demean their Charro skills. *Escaramuzas* are aware of the subordinate status and they recognize that their purpose is to replicate a form of decency and grace. The juxtaposition of Spanish aristocratic elements of decency and grace with Mexican symbols of revolution women distinctly reveal the contradictions within the Charro community. In addition, the

Mexican Federation of Charros inclusion of *Escaramuzas* remains symbolic and an opportunity for profit rather than a genuine attempt in inclusion.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Thorstein Veblen, a Norwegian immigrant, provides an important sociological perspective to the dynamics of rural traditions. Although neglected by the majority of sociology, Veblen's arguments centered on predatory and barbaric habits remain a relevant issue for analysis of the changing character of rural tradition and all agricultural-based societies. Although Veblen's analysis served to be important in the examination of American culture, his theoretical framework extends beyond the United States. Riesman (1953) extended Veblen's significance as a cultural theorist beyond the United States, therefore extending the potential of his theoretical framework in other areas of analysis. The Charro tradition presents itself as an acceptable case study of the barbaric and predatory habits that are taking over its practices. The examination of race, class, and gender was possible using a combination of sociological work. However, clarity was achieved through the use of Veblen's analysis of gradual changes in society due to capitalism and influences of modernity.

The Charro tradition in this dissertation was extended to four chapters. The first chapter analyzed the influence of business principles in the Charro community. The documentation of the standardization of the Charro tradition had a great impact in the manner which Charros enacted their equestrian skills and why they decided to compete in the Charro tradition. In this chapter, I analyzed the differences in generations of Charros that placed importance on trophies rather than solely the continuity of their

tradition. The second chapter analyzed the socialization of generational Charros and how they constructed their identity. I examined the class differences that revealed discrimination of lower class generational Charros due to their lack resources. Further, I looked at the experiences of Charro rookies and revealed that race-based discrimination played a role in the integration of these newcomers. These elements of discrimination revealed the contradictions with the very ideology of the Charro tradition. The third chapter focused on the ranking of women. Once again, I examined class, gender, and race-based discrimination that placed generational wealthy women at the top of the social hierarchy and lower class indigenous women at the bottom. A pattern of respectability and decency plagued the Charro women and failure to conform threatened their membership. In the last chapter, it was revealed that the inclusion of *Escaramuzas* in the Charro tradition remains symbolic and is a clear indicator that women in the Charro community remain subordinate to men.

In conclusion, future research on the Charro tradition should look into examining the increasing standardization of the Charro tradition by the Mexican Federation of Charros. The role of the Mexican Federation of Charros should be included in future research as it remains increasingly powerful and ever growing. Their power and profit centered agenda will continue to impact how the Charro community enacts, reproduces, and maintains the Charro tradition. In addition, the element of sexuality was only mentioned in this dissertation. Gay Charros do exist but remain marginalized and subjected to high levels of stigmatization if they disclose their identities to other members of the Charro community. Some gay Charros are threatened with violence by

other Charros while highly encouraged by others to remain silent about their identities. Research on sexuality and non-conforming members would be a crucial component on this complex rural tradition and would reveal contradictions within structures of hegemonic masculinity. The mechanisms in which social media is changing the mechanisms in which Charros share their tradition with others should also be evaluated in future investigations. Furthermore, the Charro community's desire to survive, regardless of a changing Mexico, should be investigated to document if survival is possible or if the Charro tradition will submit to a new and more modern Mexico.

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