Changing National Identities at the Frontier

Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850

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Introduction

This is a book about the shaping of national identities along Mexico's Far North during the tumultuous decades leading up to the Mexican–American War. It grapples with the extraordinarily slippery question of how Spanish-speaking frontier inhabitants, nomadic and sedentary Native American communities, and Anglo Americans who had recently moved to the area came to think of themselves as Mexicans, Americans, or Texans, or adopted some other national or ethnic identification.

This was a world of exceedingly fluid identities. Living at the dawn of various national projects in North America, the men and women residing in what is now Texas and New Mexico molded their national identities in the crucible of anticolonial movements, civil wars, intertribal alliances, utopian schemes, and harebrained land ventures. Just consider the case of the prominent Mexican politician Lorenzo de Zavala (1788–1836). Born a Spanish subject, he spent most of his adult life advocating the cause of Mexico's independence. Yet, having accomplished his lifelong goal, he acquired an enormous colonization contract in Texas, supported a secessionist movement there, and became vice president of the breakaway Lone Star Republic. Zavala helped found not one but two different nations. His difficult journey from Mexican patriot to Texas citizen was hard to fathom even by his own contemporaries, some of whom expressed nothing but contempt: "history will reserve a dark place in its pages for Zavala, the same place accorded to Count Julian, Monk, the American General Benedict Arnold, and Moreau . . . *Quis talia fando . . . temperet à lacrymis?*"[1]

[1] José María Tornel, *Tejas y los Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: Ignacio Cumplido, 1837), 57. The Latin quote was abbreviated in the original. The full quote, from Virgil's *Aeneid*, is as follows: "Quis talia fando Myrmidonum Dolopumve aut duri miles Ulixi temperet a lacrimis? Allen Mandelbaum translated this passage as "What Myrmidon or what Dolopian, what soldier even of the harsh Ulysses, could keep from tears in telling such a story?" Allen Mandelbaum, trans., *The Aeneid of Virgil* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), 29. Later

Yet Zavala's experience navigating the turbulent waters of alternative nationalities is far from unique. In fact, most inhabitants of contested frontier regions lived through similar dilemmas. Scores of Mexican-Texans went from Spanish subjects, to Mexican citizens, to Texans, and wound up as Americans, in the short span of a lifetime. To argue that these men and women paid scant attention to such "labels" given that their daily lives changed but little is to gloss over the texture of life in an era when national definitions mattered greatly. At the frontier, choosing one's identity could constitute an exciting business opportunity, a bold political statement, and at times it was quite simply a matter of survival. Not only did "Mexicans" become "Americans," but the reverse trajectory was also possible. Think of the very father of Texas, Stephen F. Austin (1793–1836), who gave up his American citizenship and became a Mexican national in order to validate a colonization contract awarded to his father. Furthermore, as Mexico's most successful colonization entrepreneur, Austin would encourage thousands of fellow Americans to settle in Texas, pledge allegiance to the Mexican constitution, and (at least on paper) convert to Catholicism. Indigenous peoples were just as adept at engaging different national projects, as I shall try to show. Pueblo Indians – let alone nomadic groups – could transmute themselves into fiercely independent peoples, loyal Mexicans, or true American citizens depending on the particular circumstances.

Studying identities is a rewarding but vexing enterprise, as many fellow academics can attest. The study is rewarding because identity is a gateway to many realms of human experience. A person's group loyalty has something to do with biology, religion, language, and shared historical memory; it may be influenced by pecuniary considerations or political preferences; and it may simply be a school lesson or family inheritance. In sum, it is an intricate sentiment borne out of the many wonders and mysteries of human experience. But this very richness makes identity ethereal and impossible to pin down with certainty.

Faced with this intractable problem, when I first embarked on this study, I decided to focus on the various rebellions of the 1830s and 1840s that rocked Texas and New Mexico. My reasoning was that these uprisings, together with the Indian wars and the Mexican–American War, constituted pivotal moments that left little room for ambiguity. Rebellions and wars were occasions when frontier residents faced stark and very public choices and were thus forced to act *as if they were* Mexicans, Indians, Americans, or

authors used this verse to express devastating sadness. Most famously – and possibly Tornel's source – Cervantes wrote:

Muerta, pues, la reina, y no desmayada, la enterramos; y apenas la cubrimos con la tierra y apenas le dimos el último vale, cuando, quis talia fando . . . temperet a lacrimis?, puesto sobre un caballo de Madera pareció encima de la sepultura de la reina el gigante Malambruno, primo cormano de Maguncia, que junto con ser cruel era encantador . . ." (Miguel de Cervantes, *Segunda Parte del Ingenioso Hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, ch. 39).

Texans, however uncertain they privately felt about these categories. Given that many of these uprisings involved matters of sovereignty, they provided brief but fascinating vistas of how different individuals and groups coped with all the contradictory forces swirling about them as they made loyalty decisions of far-reaching consequences.

Of course, such a research strategy assumes that deep within us, somewhere in the reptilian portion of our brains, we all belong to one group or another, however reluctant to take a public stance we may be. But after studying the behavior of numerous frontier Hispanics, Indians, and Anglo Americans, I grew less confident of such assumptions. The obvious finally dawned on me, namely, that identity choices almost always follow a situational logic. A person was not a mission Indian *or* a Mexican, a black slave in Mexico *or* an American, a foreign-born colonist *or* a Texan, but could be either depending on who was asking. Hence, judged from the Mexican archival record, the inhabitants of Texas and New Mexico appear as a rather loyal bunch. Ordinary Hispanics, Anglo-American *empresarios*, and indigenous leaders seeking land grants would all tend to represent themselves as loyal Mexican citizens when addressing higher-ups in the sprawling patronage system running from Mexico City to these northern communities. Yet these very same individuals were actively involved in numerous commercial and speculative activities that increasingly drew Mexico's Far North into the orbit of the economy of the United States. Accordingly, they occasionally imagined alternative collective identities that harbored the seeds of secession from Mexico or annexation to the United States.

While such seemingly superficial, situational answers may not have initially represented *identity* in any fundamental sense of self-representation, these answers – reiterated over and over in the course of years and decades – inevitably became entangled in crucial family, business, and political matters. What started out as opportunistic or optimizing choices over time acquired a life of their own, and perhaps in this way even seeped into the deeper psyche of frontier peoples. This same phenomenon has been documented in other contested frontiers. Peter Sahlins, who studied Cerdanya – a county in the Pyrenees that was literally split in two halves and divvied up between France and Spain in the seventeenth century – concludes that local peoples consciously appropriated French and Spanish identities, and in the end, as he put it, "their national disguises" wound up "sticking to their skin."[2] Similarly, the story of how Mexico's Far North became the American Southwest begins in this world of situational answers and alternative imaginations.

Two tsunami-like structural forces swept through this frontier area during the first half of the nineteenth century: state and market. My central argument is that these two forces conditioned the identity choices of frontier residents in

[2] Sahlins himself borrowed the phrase from Michel Brunet. Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 269.

certain fundamental ways. The workings of the Mexican state and American markets collided at the frontier, often pulling in opposite directions, and thus forced the frontier population to confront a remarkably consistent set of identity choices and tensions.

On one side, we have the unfolding of the Spanish and then Mexican national project. The Spanish Crown took possession of this region and slowly introduced institutions, words, and customs that gave a semblance of unity to this otherwise complicated tapestry of societies.[3] Although the Spanish colonial administration laid the groundwork for the process of national transformation, it would only be in the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century when this process proceeded in earnest. Mexican nationalists moved decisively to weave the Far North into the national fabric by building on preexisting imperial bureaucracies, promoting new civic and religious rituals, and generally forging an impressive and overlapping patronage network that included the civil administration and the military and Church apparatuses. To be sure, I do not claim that such a nationalizing blitzkrieg resulted in successful or uncontested dominance. But incomplete and fractious as this process of incorporation was, it nonetheless engaged the emerging loyalties of frontier society. This is the glue that kept the northern frontier attached to the rest of the nation, what I airily refer to as the power of the state.

On the other side, the economy of this Spanish/Mexican frontier region experienced a dramatic reorientation toward that of the United States in the early-nineteenth century. During colonial times, the peoples of Texas and New Mexico had been barred from trading with anyone outside of the Spanish Empire. In effect, the frontier population depended on markets and suppliers from the wealthier and larger towns farther south in states such as Durango, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Zacatecas, and San Luis Potosí.[4] Since the 1760s, the Bourbon monarchs began eliminating some trading restrictions, thus spurring the development of regional trading networks throughout northern New Spain. But these incipient, large-scale economic networks shifted dramatically toward the United States in the 1820s. The legal dykes that had kept French, Canadian, and American entrepreneurs more or less in check during the colonial era finally crumbled and gave way to a flood of *americanos del norte*. The newcomers ended up displacing most Spanish/Mexican suppliers and, together with entrepreneurial frontier residents of all ethnicities, launched a host of new economic activities. In

[3] For a recent work of synthesis, see David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), passim.

[4] For instance, Texas settlements had depended commercially on Coahuila – specifically on the town of Saltillo – since colonial times. See Jesús F. de la Teja, "St. James at the Fair Religious Ceremony, Civil Boosterism, and Commercial Development on the Colonial Mexican Frontier," *Americas* 57:3 (2001), 401–2. For New Mexico's commercial relations with Mexico's interior, see Ross H. Frank, *From Settler to Citizen New Mexican Economic Development and The Creation of Vecino Society 1750–1820* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 119–75.

the span of a few years, the frontier made the transition from economic backwater to dynamic crossroad of exchange. Communities in Texas and New Mexico no longer lay at the terminus of imperial trading routes starting from Seville and Mexico City but were transformed into strategic way stations between American and Mexican markets. Against the background of a generally stagnant Mexican economy, the Far North inevitably gravitated toward the American economy as frontier residents' livelihoods came to depend on keeping the lines of communication with the United States wide open. I use the term *market persuasion* to refer to this phenomenon, although Mexican nationalists would have been more likely to describe this as the market *nightmare*, as such economic developments in many ways hindered their efforts to fasten the Far North firmly to the rest of the nation.

Thus state and market *conditioned* the identity choices of early-nineteenth century frontier society. Spanish-speaking, indigenous, and Anglo-American peoples of Texas and New Mexico most certainly were not inert clay sculpted by superior forces. At every turn they had choices that they exercised. But frontier inhabitants were compelled to maneuver within powerful political and economic constraints. As they went about their everyday lives, the men and women of the frontier experienced the tensions between state and market in such diverse realms as the organization of ethnic/national spaces, the procurement and consumption of medicine and alcohol, the choice of marrying partners, or the tales that they told about themselves and about others. Time and again, as I will try to show, a person's agonizing identity choices intersected in numerous ways with these two vast structural transformations unfolding simultaneously at the border.

I would like to be very clear at the outset about what is at stake with this argument and what its implications are for the story of how Mexico's Far North became the American Southwest. First, by focusing on how frontier inhabitants interacted with the Mexican state and American market forces, I hope to move beyond simple-minded notions of American expansionism. Now that we live in an era in which the United States projects its influence on a global scale, it is well to examine how this power with its different facets has been deployed historically and what people's reactions to this have been in the past. There is no doubt that during the first half of the nineteenth century the United States expanded demographically, economically, and territorially in a dramatic fashion. United States expansionism *was* a fact of life for all the inhabitants of North America, whether in the United States proper or in Canada and Mexico. The problem is that expansionism is widely used in the contemporary historiography of the United States–Mexico borderlands as the explain-all notion that requires no further elaboration.[5] It is hardly

[5] I have made this point before. See Andrés Reséndez, "National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821–1848," *Journal of American History* 86:2 (Sep 1999), 668–88.

an exaggeration to say that America's *Manifest Destiny* – a catchy phrase invented by journalist John L. O'Sullivan in 1839 for partisan purposes – has remained the interpretive framework of choice among historians for more than a century and a half. And yet, Manifest Destiny – a most ahistorical construct – can hardly be expected to explain just how this process of expansion occurred.

In this book, I try to be more precise about what American expansionism actually meant for those who lived through it in the early-nineteenth century. I try to show that frontier inhabitants experienced America's expansion first and foremost as a powerful economic/cultural phenomenon that ended up affecting their livelihoods and self-perceptions.[6] While the machinations of U.S. politicians to acquire portions of Mexican territory certainly played a role, it is my contention that the de facto economic integration of Mexico's Far North into the American economy during the 1820s and 1830s was far more relevant to the lives of ordinary frontier citizens. American markets provided the medium in which frontier interethnic alliances became not only possible but highly desirable. And more to the point, American markets exacerbated the tensions between Mexico City nationalists bent on control and frontier residents hoping to capitalize on economic opportunities coming from the North. Rather than a simple story of Anglo-American pioneers bent on aggrandizement and backed by their scheming government, I hope to contribute to the telling of a subtler tale in which all frontier inhabitants participated actively and in deeply human ways that did not necessarily conform to implacable national or ethnic lines.

The argument advanced in this book also has implications for the historiography of Mexico. Indeed, this project was conceived very much in dialogue with the recent flurry of works on Mexico's early decades as an independent nation. Long regarded as hopelessly chaotic and inhabited by sycophantic *caudillos*, Mexico's early- nineteenth-century history has come of age as scholars working in different localities throughout Mexico have shed new light on the transition from Spanish colony into independent nationhood. They have examined the articulations of local, regional, and national agents, and have recast liberalism and conservatism as credible, vibrant, and changing political movements, not as timeless ideologies. This scholarship is generally interested in exploring how the Mexican national project unfolded *on the ground*, emphasizing the ways in which colonial and early national institutions anchored the lives of local communities all across Mexico and, conversely, how community members sought to shape these structures

[6] What I mean by economic/cultural phenomenon is that I have tried to look at American markets rather broadly, exploring some of their cultural ramifications just as I have done with the Mexican state. My initial inspiration for this came from the pioneering work of Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

according to their wishes and interests.[7] My focus on the Mexican *state* and its impact on identity constitutes an attempt to bring some of these insights to bear on the history of Mexico's Far North at the same time that it seeks to reclaim this region for the overall history of Mexico.

Finally, it is my hope that some of the ideas in this book will further debate about frontier dynamics and their impact on identities around the world. In a work published twenty five years ago devoted to comparing the frontier experiences of the United States and South Africa, Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson proposed an ambitious agenda that one day would culminate in a grand synthesis – along the lines of the literature on comparative slavery – informed by frontier experiences drawn from around the world.[8] Their vision has yet to come true, but recent research on frontiers and identities along the Pyrenees, on the Ghana–Togo frontier, along the medieval Irish frontier, or in the Ohio valley – just to name a few – gives us a better sense of both commonalities and variation through time and space.[9] Here I will argue that the historical experience of the U.S.–Mexico borderlands in the early-nineteenth century, with state and market pulling in opposite directions, in fact represents a common type of frontier situation in the modern era. Our contemporary, nation-centric mind usually conceives the unfolding of national states and the intensification of capitalism as two complementary and mutually reinforcing developments. Scholars of nationalism have been quick to note that the birth of nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

[7] Peter F. Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800–1857* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico, 1821–1835* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press); Michael T. Ducey, "Village, Nation, and Constitution: Insurgent Politics in Papantla, Veracruz, 1810–1821," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79:3 (Aug 1999), 463–93; Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Mallon, "Peasants and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Morelos, 1848–1858," *Political Power and Social Theory* 7 (1988): 1–54; Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700–1850* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Guy Thomson, "Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism: The National Guard, Philharmonic Corps and Patriotic Juntas in Mexico, 1847–88," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22: 1 (Feb 1990): 31–68; Eric Van Young, "Moving Toward Revolt: Agrarian Origins of the Hidalgo Rebellion in the Guadalajara Region," in Friedrich Katz, ed., *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 176–204; Richard A. Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens: Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001); among several others.

[8] Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 5–6.

[9] Kim M. Gruenwald, *River of Enterprise: The Commercial Origins of Regional Identity in the Ohio Valley, 1790–1850* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); James Muldoon, *Identity on the Medieval Irish Frontier: Degenerate Englishmen, Wild Irishmen, Middle Nations* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003); Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002); Sahlins, *Boundaries*.

coincided with the rise of industrialism.[10] But when we look closely, we find that states and markets are often out of sync with each other, giving rise to some of the most contentious frontier situations around the world.

Given that this book will tack back and forth rather promiscuously between Texas and New Mexico, I feel compelled to write a few lines about the bases for this comparison. This is all the more relevant given that modern-day readers perceive Texas and New Mexico as two very different areas and will naturally tend to project back such differences historically. This point was brought home to me quite unexpectedly while doing archival research in the mid-1990s. In repositories throughout the American Southwest, people would often ask about my research, to which I would offer a nutshell answer: "Mexican-era Texas and New Mexico." In Texas, my chosen topic came across as rather ordinary. That a Mexican should study Mexican-era Texas caught no one by surprise. But this was not the case in New Mexico. I remember especially one instance when, after hearing my stock answer, a well-meaning lady who was also conducting research at the state archives in Santa Fe patiently explained that New Mexico was largely *Spanish*, having been part of the empire for more than two centuries. By contrast, Mexico's influence had been *minimal* during barely two decades of erratic rule.[11] It is not my intention to read too much into a handful of casual conversations, but it is worth keeping in mind that Texas and New Mexico have indeed experienced strikingly different historical trajectories, especially after 1848, to the point where they now seem quite unrelated to each other.

Against the grain of modern perceptions,[12] in this book I treat Texas and New Mexico simply as two peripheral provinces of Mexico, both similarly exposed to the United States' designs. Of these two northernmost branches of the Spanish/Mexican tree, the one corresponding to New Mexico was

[10] Ernest Gellner, for instance, portrays nationalism as a consequence of mankind's passage from the stage of agrarian society into industrialism. He argues that the demands of an industrial social organization prompted the more advanced political and economic centers to incorporate surrounding peasant communities and less developed subgroups into the new economic order. Gellner's story seems to fit well the historical experience of many countries, including Great Britain, France, the United States, and the former Spanish colonies, to name just a few. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10, 39–40, 63, 76. Benedict Anderson uses the same logic when he argues that the rise of print capitalism and the codification of languages were key developments in the development of nationalism. Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*

[11] The italics are obviously mine, but I believe they accurately reflect oral emphases.

[12] Indeed, I must confess that I began comparing Texas and New Mexico assuming difference. With the supreme naiveté of a first-year history graduate student, my initial objective was to find a satisfactory explanation of why so much bloodshed had preceded the incorporation of Texas into the United States while the same process had been achieved far more peacefully in the New Mexican case. It did not take me long to find out that I was asking the wrong question. The more digging I did, the more violence I turned up in both areas. Instead, I came away impressed by the remarkably similar political, economic, and national dilemmas that New Mexicans and Texans had to confront.

the older, more established, and more extensive. Albuquerque and Santa Fe were by far the largest Spanish/Mexican settlements anywhere in the Far North. Moreover, the presence of a large sedentary indigenous population, the Pueblo peoples, not only rendered New Mexico superficially similar to Mexico's core provinces but also constituted a propitious substratum for the growth of the ecclesiastical, military, and civil apparatuses. Politically, New Mexico remained directly under the aegis of the federal government throughout the Mexican period as it was administered as a territory, an arrangement that surely contributed to a greater supervision from national authorities than in the case of Texas.

The Texas branch, in contrast, was a more recent and incipient extension into the Far North of Spanish/Mexican peoples and institutions. San Antonio, the Texas capital and the largest Mexican town, was less than a third of the size of either Santa Fe or Albuquerque. Given its more precarious condition as well as its immediacy to settled portions of the United States, it is not surprising that local leaders would conclude early on that the survival of Texas depended on establishing a working partnership with foreign-born colonists. This was a fateful decision that in the 1820s resulted in a rapid and profound Anglo-Americanization of Texas, more so than in New Mexico. Suffice it to say for now that Texas at first emerged as Mexico's most daring, tolerant, and successful colonization scheme. I want to emphasize one final point: In carrying out this unprecedented political and economic experiment, Texans enjoyed considerable freedom of action. Unlike New Mexico, Texas became an autonomous state in 1824 – in partnership with neighboring Coahuila – a political coup that afforded Texans a measure of independence from national authorities that New Mexicans could only dream of attaining.

Some key differences between Mexican-era Texas and New Mexico are especially relevant for our purposes. But the preceding discussion should not obscure the fact that at bottom both Texans and New Mexicans were subjected to very similar pressures from state and market forces and faced "the national question" in remarkably similar ways.

Because Texas and New Mexico were liminal, frontier areas in the past, they are now situated at the crossroads of various academic pursuits. Scholars of Mexican history, historians of the American West, and specialists on Native Americans and Mexican Americans have long dug side by side along the same trenches. In addition, recent scholarly fascination with boundaries, frontiers, and contact zones has generated work beyond the traditional bounds of history and anthropology in such disciplines as sociology, literary criticism, and immigration studies.[13] While this attention across disciplinary

[13] For just a handful of recent appraisals, see Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104:3 (June 1999), 814–41; David G. Gutiérrez, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Wilmington,

boundaries has resulted in a large scholarly output, it is still unclear whether these different approaches to the "frontier" will ultimately engage one another. Whatever the final outcome, the present state of scholarly fragmentation forced me into a risky eclecticism. I gathered information and shaped my thinking from bits and pieces culled from different fields, and I ended up conceiving an argument with legs that stand on different historiographical traditions. I would like to acknowledge briefly the different intellectual traditions that have contributed to this book.

Trained as a Mexicanist in Mexico and the United States, I first approached the stories of these remote communities in Texas and New Mexico from the south, following the *caminos reales* leading from central Mexico to these outposts. As I pointed out previously, this book has been greatly influenced by the recent historiography of nineteenth-century Mexico. In many ways the insights from this literature also echo and reinforce what historians of Texas and New Mexico were already finding out in the archival record. Their works have also guided my thinking.[14] In addition, American western history furthered my interest in identity – national, ethnic, and otherwise. The widely publicized debates around "old" and "new" western history and its protracted aftermath have underscored the convoluted and nuanced relationships among the different peoples, empires, and nations that have coexisted there.[15] Indeed, one of the strengths of American western

DE: Scholarly Resources, 1996); David G. Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," and additional discussion in the *American Historical Review* (December 1999).

[14] Just to cite a few works, see Nettie Lee Benson, *La diputación provincial y el federalism mexicano* 2 ed. (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1994); Gerald E. Poyo, ed., *Tejano Journey, 1770–1850* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996); Andrés Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag, 1821–1836* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1994). Recent work has highlighted the importance of colonial institutions in the daily lives of frontier residents. See Jesus F. de la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); de la Teja, "St. James at the Fair"; Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, eds., *Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991). For New Mexico, see Charles R. Cutter, *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Frank, *From Settler to Citizen*, passim; among others.

[15] Even now it is hard not to begin with the foundational essay by Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington, DC, 1894), 199. Recent critiques and new perspectives include, among many others, William Cronon, "Revisiting Turner's Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (1987); Cronon et al., eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992); Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987); Limerick et al., eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 1991); Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University

history is that it is a portmanteau term for various scholarly fields with similar concerns – most relevantly for our purposes, the histories of Native Americans and Mexican-Americans. Group identity has been one of the overriding concerns of the scholarship on Native Americans, as it grapples with the multiplicity of ethnonyms that appear and disappear in the historical record and traces the trajectory of indigenous polities that assume different configurations.[16] To give but one example, in his detailed monograph on the Comanches, Thomas W. Kavanagh emphasized the enormous fluidity and dynamism of Comanche political organizations understood as on-the-ground manifestations of cultural structures by people organized in groups to exploit particular resources. His detailed analysis shows how eastern and western Comanches pursued radically different strategies to obtain state and market resources. His work jibes admirably well with the kinds of tensions explored in this book.[17]

This work has also been decisively influenced by the literature on Mexican Americans. From inception this scholarship has been chiefly concerned with the relationships between Mexican Americans and the dominant Anglo-American society and all the intricacies involved in preserving a cultural heritage while engaging the American economic and political system. I have been greatly influenced by works that, while cognizant of the power of a distinct

Press, 1991); David J. Weber anticipated many of the tenets of the New Western history in his landmark book, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1982). For more recent appraisals, see Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769–1936* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Kerwin L. Klein, "Reclaiming the 'F' Word, or Being and Becoming Postwestern," *Pacific Historical Review* 65 (1996), 179–215.

[16] I have found especially useful the following works on Native Americans: Jack D. Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 2 ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); William B. Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio, 1750–1858* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Thomas W. Kavanagh, *The Comanches: A History, 1706–1875* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); the encyclopedic Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1962); Cheryl Walker, *Indian Nation: Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); White, *The Middle Ground*.

[17] Kavanagh discusses the contrasting arrangements of the two main Comanche divisional organizations. He argues that by the 1830s, Comanches had divided permanently into a western or New Mexico Kotsoteka divisional organization and an eastern division also known as Texas Kotsotekas. Interestingly, the former polity was geared toward furthering the lucrative Comanchero trade with the Pueblo and Hispanic communities of New Mexico. Keeping amicable relations with New Mexican authorities and having access to these markets and other state resources and gifts was central to this group's lifestyle and underpin its collective organization. Meanwhile, the Texas Kotsotekas, unable to secure a comparable stream of supplies from the considerably smaller Texas communities, mined the opportunities afforded by contraband horse trade with merchants from St. Louis and Louisiana and on the basis of a raiding economy focused on Mexican towns. Kavanagh, *The Comanches*, 478–91.

ethnic identity, also consider the layered nature of the Mexican/Mexican-American society.[18] More specifically, I have drawn on the analysis of the insertion of Mexican/Mexican Americans within the American economy. George J. Sanchez, for instance, explores how Mexican immigrants *became* Mexican Americans in Los Angeles by focusing on things like their changing employment and consumer patterns and how these adaptations affected their perception of collective self.[19] I believe that such discreet adjustments, whether among twentieth-century angeleños or among Texans and New Mexicans a century earlier, get us close to the group's longings, plans, dreams, and tribulations as its members go about their everyday lives.

Clearly, I have not mastered all of these fields; but I know enough about them to realize that they are ultimately concerned with some of the same processes and advance similar explanations. This book is an attempt to further an incipient crossdisciplinary dialogue; whether it succeeds in this purpose or falls through the cracks of organized knowledge remains to be seen.

The organization of this book is geared toward advancing along three axes simultaneously: 1) fleshing out the argument, 2) exploring a different facet of frontier life in each chapter, and 3) moving chronologically from the early to the mid-nineteenth century. This structure has caused me many headaches and forced me into difficult compromises, but I hope it makes the book more readable by eliminating repetition. Such a structure also allows readers to move easily from one part of the argument to another, from one topic to another, or from one period to another, although on the last point I confess to considerable backtracking.

Chapter 1 focuses on the alternative conceptions of space coexisting in Texas and New Mexico, thus broadly introducing the topic of loyalty and identity. I briefly survey the different frontier inhabitants and their spatial

[18] For an insightful introduction, see Alex M. Saragoza, "Recent Chicano Historiography: An Interpretive Essay," *Aztlan* 19:1 (1990), 7–10. See also Albert M. Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). In his study of Anglo–Mexican relations in southern Texas, David Montejano pays particular attention to the ways in which class structures of both Mexican and Anglo communities were related to one another, thus underscoring that affluent and poor tejanos chose very different strategies and had very different experiences in dealing with Anglo society. David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836–1986* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987). Other works that pay particular attention to gender, class, and immigration cleavages within the community are Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734–1900* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); among others.

[19] George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

imaginings to underscore the multifarious understandings of space not only between different ethnic groups but also within them. This chapter also prefigures the importance of state intervention and market forces in how space is conceived and organized.

Chapter 2 explores the Spanish institutional background and highlights the continuities and transformations during the early Mexican period. While considerable ink has been devoted to this subject, my specific goal here is to explore how this institutional framework impinged on peoples' loyalties and identities. More specifically, I study how the administrative structure that grew out of the parceling of land in Texas and the Catholic administration in New Mexico influenced frontier residents' notions of collective self. This chapter also highlights the first leg of my argument laying out how state power intersected with peoples' notions of Mexicanness.

Chapter 3 moves from the workings of the Mexican state machinery to the market revolution unfolding in the 1820s and early 1830s along Mexico's Far North. It documents the spread of a commercial ethos not only among Anglo-American residents but also among Spanish speakers and indigenous peoples. This market revolution dramatically changed how frontier peoples procured and consumed vital goods like medicine and alcohol. By showing the extent to which this market revolution impinged on the livelihoods and ultimately the identities of the frontier society, this chapter presents the second leg of the argument.

Chapter 4 illuminates the pull and push of state and market and the characteristic dilemmas faced by frontier residents by focusing on crosscultural marriages. Intermarriages entailed a peculiar set of circumstances. On the one hand, the families involved in such unions could derive tangible benefits by enhancing their political influence, facilitating access to land grants or markets, or consolidating trading partnerships. On the other hand, cross-cultural marriages required a special church dispensation and merited official scrutiny. The particular attractions and difficulties of these marriages shed light on how state and market sought to influence personal and family choices and identities.

Chapters 5 and 6 move squarely into the political arena by examining the pitched ideological battles between federalists and centralists. In Chapter 5, I address the political tensions that culminated in the Texas Revolution of 1835–6, putting special emphasis on how this political fray was inextricably entangled with more profound struggles over national identity. The Texas Revolution was the most successful secessionist movement in the Far North and thus altered politics throughout the region in years to come. As a counterexample, I look at the 1837 Chimayó Rebellion in New Mexico in Chapter 6. The Chimayó Rebellion had its origins in similar tensions that triggered the Texas Revolution, but its outcome was vastly different. My goal in these two chapters is not so much to produce a blow-by-blow account of these events, although I present some new information especially

from Mexican and Native American viewpoints, but rather to trace shifting loyalties in the crucible of these tumultuous affairs.

Chapter 7 explores the literary cultures of Hispanics, Kiowa Indians, and Anglo Americans along the frontier. I center my analysis on the many narratives that originated out of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. This was an expeditionary force launched from the Texas Republic in the summer of 1841, whose mission was to cross Comanche territory to open a direct line of communication with New Mexico. Its objective was to annex a portion of this Mexican province to the Lone Star Republic. The Texan Santa Fe Expedition was so daring and ill-fated that it prompted many tales written in different media revealing the different literary worlds inhabited by frontier peoples.

Finally, Chapter 8 focuses on the "peaceful" military occupation of New Mexico at the start of the Mexican–American War in 1846 and the "Mexicanist" rebellions of 1846–7 aimed at overthrowing the established government by the United States. These dramatic episodes not only mark the end of an era, and thus constitute a fitting end to the book, but also furnish an excellent example of the kinds of national dilemmas faced by the frontier society as the entire area tottered between Mexico and the United States.