

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: 'HE LOVES THE LITTLE ONES AND DOESN'T BEAT THEM': WORKING CLASS MASCULINITY IN MEXICO CITY, 1917-1929

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This dissertation examines how Mexico City workers, workers' families, state officials, unions, employers, and others perceived, performed, and shaped masculinity during the period of the Mexican Revolution. I argue that Mexico City's workers, officials, and employers negotiated working-class gender beliefs in such a way as to express multiple, performed, and distinctly working-class masculinities and sexualities. Scholars who study gender in Mexico argue that during the 1930s a particular type of working-class masculinity became dominant: the idea of the male worker as a muscular breadwinner who controlled both machines and women. I agree with this claim, but the existing scholarship fails to explain how this "proletarian masculinity" developed prior to the 1930s. My dissertation studies the period right before this proletarian masculinity became dominant and explains the processes through which it gradually developed. During the 1920s, the state held a relatively unstable position of power and was consequently forced to negotiate terms of rule with popular classes. I demonstrate that

the 1920s represent a period when no one form of masculinity predominated. A complex range of multiple masculine behaviors and beliefs developed through the everyday activities of the working class, employers, officials, and unions. A Catholic union might represent a rival union as possessing an irresponsible form of manhood, a young man might use bravado and voice pitch to enact a homosexual identity, and a single father might enact a nurturing, self-sacrificing form of manhood. My sources include labor arbitration board records, court records, newspapers, plays, poetry, and reports by social workers, police, doctors, labor inspectors, juvenile court judges, and Divisions Department inspectors. Each chapter in this dissertation analyzes a particular facet of workers' masculinity, including worker's masculine behaviors among youth, within the family, in the workplace, in popular entertainment venues, and within unions.

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CLASS MASCULINITY IN MEXICO CITY, 1917-1929

By

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Introduction

In January 1920, two Vice Department officials, Inspectors Garduño and García, walked into La Republicana, a tavern in a poor neighborhood of Mexico City.¹ The inspectors reported they were “shocked” to discover that a woman had the temerity to be in the bar with male patrons and insisted she leave immediately.² While city ordinance banned women from bars, popular-class women frequently spent time in drinking establishments. The woman’s male companion “became passionately offended” and screamed at the inspectors. The records do not indicate what caused the male patron to be so upset, but he probably objected to authorities’ attempts to oust his female partner from the tavern. This male patron angrily insisted that the inspectors and he step outside to fight. The inspectors refused and instead summoned a police officer.

The police officer who arrived, Officer 1180, was a close friend (*cuate*) of the male patron. In the presence of the officer, Inspector García slapped the male patron and restrained the woman.³ Officer 1180 was in a difficult situation: He now had to choose between supporting fellow state employees or siding with his *cuate*. The police officer resolved the problem by suggesting they go to the precinct station to talk with his supervisor. As they walked towards the station, Officer 1180 began insulting the two

¹ All translations and all errors in this dissertation are my own. Report by DP Inspector Antonio Garduño G; report summary written by El Jefe de Inspectores Administrativos. The Jefe writes that he is excerpting the reports of two, Inspectores de Reglamentos, Antonio Garduño G. and Guillermo García; and letter from Jefe de la Sección de Gobernación, sent to the Jefe de Inspectores Administrativos, AHDF, IARD, Vol. 2432, Exp. 29, dated 2 January, 7 January, and 18 March 1920, respectively.

² City ordinance banned women from taverns unless they were employees, owners, or patrons who were purchasing carry-out alcohol.

³ The inspectors do not say why they felt the need to restrain her.

inspectors and told them he would report that Inspector García had not only struck the police officer's friend but also had thrown him to the ground.⁴

Upon arriving at the precinct, Officer 1180 informed his supervisor that his cuate, and not the inspector, had called him to the tavern while the inspector insisted he had been the one who had called the police officer to the bar. The supervisor, in an effort to discern whether the officer or the inspector was lying, interrogated both men and concluded that the police man had deceived him.⁵ The supervisor released the inspectors and promised them he would discipline his subordinate. The inspectors indicated to the supervisor they hoped he would fire Officer 1180 “so that he is no longer a threat to society due to his lack of honor and his inability to carry out his duty.”⁶ Subsequent reports do not reveal what happened to either the woman or the patron, but they did reveal that Officer 1180 did not report to work the next day. He had deserted his post, disappearing from police officials' grasp and from the written record.

This account raises several questions. What prompted the inspectors' initial reactions? Why did Officer 1180 flee? Why did the patron perceive fighting either or both inspectors as a legitimate option? Why did Officer 1180 choose to side with his cuate rather than with the inspectors? How did the environment in which this account began—a tavern frequented by the urban poor—affect events? Why did the state seem unable to impose its authority in this case? The account also prompts a series of broader

⁴ It is not clear from the report whether or not Gendarme 1180 was exaggerating or whether the inspector did, in fact, throw the patron to the ground.

⁵ John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 39, 45.

⁶ Report by DP Inspector Antonio Garduño G and letter from Jefe de la Sección de Gobernación, sent to the Jefe de Inspectores Administrativos, AHDF, IARD, Vol. 2432, Exp. 29, dated 2 January, 7 January, and 18 March 1920, respectively.

question for the gender historian: How did workers, officials, and others contest what workers' masculinity meant? What can workers and officials' beliefs and practices tell us about the historical construction of gender during a tumultuous, post-revolutionary period? What is the relationship between masculinity and violence? What was the role of state agents and employers in policing gendered behavior?

This dissertation examines how Mexico City workers, workers' families, state officials, unions, employers, church officials, and others perceived, performed, and shaped masculinity during the period just after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). I argue that, between 1917 and 1929, Mexico City's workers, officials, and employers negotiated working-class gender beliefs in such a way as to express multiple, performed, and distinctly working-class masculinities and sexualities. Scholars who study gender in Mexico argue that during the 1930s a particular type of working-class masculinity became dominant: the idea of the male worker as a muscular breadwinner who controlled both machines and women.⁷ I agree with this claim, but the existing scholarship fails to explain how this "proletarian masculinity" developed prior to the 1930s. My dissertation studies the period before this proletarian masculinity became dominant and explains the processes through which it gradually developed. During the 1920s, the state held a relatively unstable position of power and was consequently forced to negotiate terms of rule with popular classes. The state had the intention of creating a

⁷ Susan M. Gauss, "Masculine Bonds and Modern Mothers: The Rationalization of Gender in the Textile Industry in Puebla, 1940-1952," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 63-80; María Teresa Fernández Aceves, "Once We Were Corn Grinders: Women and Labor in the Tortilla Industry of Guadalajara, 1920-1920," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 81-101; and Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

new patriarchal relationship with labor, but, during this decade, did not strictly succeed in these efforts.

I demonstrate that the 1920s represent a period when no one form of masculinity predominated. A complex range of multiple masculine behaviors and beliefs developed through the everyday activities of the working class, employers, officials, and unions. A Catholic union might represent a rival union as possessing an irresponsible form of manhood, a young man might use bravado and voice pitch to enact a homosexual identity, and a single father might enact a nurturing, self-sacrificing form of manhood.

This project connects these masculine performances to broader historical transformations occurring in Mexico during the 1920s; the most significant transformation being respect for workers. Since the colonial period, members of the popular classes had attempted to legitimate and forge a plebeian cultural identity by presenting certain masculine behaviors and obligations as respectable. Yet, the Revolution finally brought their efforts to fruition. After the Revolution, officials sought to strengthen a weak, post-revolutionary state by courting and reforming the urban masses through stressing shared masculine ideals: valuing productive labor, control over women, and rationality. While new technologies such as streetcars and automobiles created new trades and these trades took on particular masculine connotations and while new cultural forms such as silent film and sports also served as crucibles through which residents of Mexico City contested the meanings of masculinity, the key causal engine that affected workers' masculine performances during the 1920s was workers' new-found masculine respectability.

This dissertation's findings can help contextualize and explain Officer 1180 and his compatriots' masculine performances in La Republicana tavern in 1920. The male taverngoer (and his female companion) enacted a gendered performance consisting of ignoring the city's laws prohibiting women from entering taverns and, on the male companion's part, willingness to brawl with the inspectors. Officer 1180 found himself in a tavern, where he was probably more comfortable expressing a different masculinity from that expected of him by the inspectors. Since Officer 1180 valued his ties to his friends over those to his employer, he enacted his own gendered performance, reflecting his decision to side with his male companion against his superior officer. Officer 1180 believed that by standing by his friend and by defying his employer, the state, he was performing a popular-class masculine honor that displayed his appropriate cultural masculinity. He, as well as many like him, believed that working-class masculinity encompassed a range of performances.

Inspectors Garduño and García sought to control the popular class' conceptions of masculinity. They expected Officer 1180 to conform to their ideal masculinity and his own masculine beliefs in which loyalty to one's *cuate* was subordinate to one's loyalty to the state or to one's employer. The inspectors considered Officer 1180 "a threat to society due to his lack of honor." These inspectors, as well as many other officials who belonged to the post-revolutionary state, actively sought to discipline members of the popular classes, yet their ability to do so was limited by the fragility of the state during the 1920s. The records do not indicate why Officer 1180 deserted. Perhaps he had other work options. Perhaps he had only been loosely recruited and did not fully identify with

being a police officer. Perhaps he felt slighted by the incident and valued his relationship with his cuate more than he valued his wages.

This dissertation investigates these performances within many contexts, including childhood, the family, the workplace, entertainment venues, and unions. Each of these figurative and literal spaces served as an arena where popular-class workers exhibited a particular relationship to masculinity, a relationship that was often uniquely working class. In spaces where officials, employers, and unions had less of an ability to discipline workers' gendered actions—the family, the entertainment space, the informal sector of the economy—then workers felt more comfortable breaking free of the recognized masculinity endorsed by employers or the state.⁸ In contrast, in the formal sector of the economy or within the walls of the juvenile court, workers' expressions of masculinity most closely resembled the state's ideal masculine behaviors.

My sources include labor arbitration board records, court records, newspapers, plays, poetry, and reports by social workers, police, doctors, labor inspectors, juvenile court judges, and Diversions Department inspectors. This rich source base enabled me to capture *capitalinos'* (residents of Mexico City) diverse performances, beliefs, and vitality. This dissertation examines popular-class children and adults, both men and women, and those who were homosexuals, heterosexuals, and bisexuals. It also examines corporatist and non-corporatist unions, Catholic officials, and various state officials, including social workers, judges, doctors, psychologists, police, vice inspectors, and

⁸ Robert Buffington argues that 1900s Mexican working-class newspapers sought to discipline workers' masculinity through their mocking of homosexuals. He quotes Judith Butler when she noted “femininity is...not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment.” He remarks that the same can be said of masculinity. Robert Buffington, “Homophobia and the Mexican Working Class, 1900-1910,” in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 222.

others. My sources reflect a broad spectrum of political perspectives, including those of anarchists and communists on the left; more corporatist and “pragmatist” unions in the center; and company owners, church officials, strikebreakers, and members of company and Catholic unions on the right.

Although some of my sources are petitions and letters written by individual members of the working class, the bulk of the sources are not written by workers themselves.⁹ Instead, most of my sources capture journalists’, social workers’, officials’, vice inspectors’, police officers’, and labor leaders’ perspectives. These groups viewed the working class with their own unique biases and internal logics. Consequently, a historian of the urban popular classes is faced with a difficult task. She or he must seek to overcome the power imbalances between the poor and the state, the journalist, or the union leader. Yet, one can still gain insight into working-class perspectives despite this power imbalance. Journalists, social workers, officials, vice inspectors, and labor leaders hardly held monolithic views on plebeian capitalinos and their range of perspectives provides the historians with an opportunity. Furthermore, the popular classes did not sit passively by while being interviewed by a social worker, a vice inspector, or a police officer. They disagreed with social workers, lied to them, mislead them, and pleaded with them. Workers injected a strong element of theatricality and performance in these testimonies and, in many cases, plebeians challenged the official with whom they spoke.

It is true that some officials neither understood nor wanted to understand the working class. For example, one social worker who was investigating a youth accused of

⁹ The most touching of these letters is a young woman’s letter to her ex-boyfriend after receiving a “Dear John letter” from him while she was incarcerated. Her letter drips with her sadness and sense of having been betrayed, yet she also injects the letter with a sense of hope, energy, and pride even while she begged him to return to her.

robbery spoke with the minor's neighbors and complained in his notes, "They say he was a good boy. But I believe that this is very exaggerated because, for this class of people, the code is to say nothing of a neighbor's defects and, on the contrary, to praise them as the most moral and honorable person in the world."¹⁰ This particular social worker had no understanding of working-class norms. Countless other social workers and police officers filled their reports with workers' complaints against their neighbors. It is far more likely that this particular social worker failed to understand or develop a rapport with his interview subjects, a rapport many of them did, in fact, build. It is also possible that the lad was, in fact, the respectable individual his neighbors claimed he was.

Period and Region and of Study

I chose to limit this study of working-class masculinity to the decade of the 1920s because, during this decade, three historical developments coalesced and created a chance for workers, the state, and unions to articulate visions of masculinity in ways which had not been previously possible. These three developments were: the rise of a post-revolutionary state, the growth of a newly-strengthened and newly-successfully labor movement, and the explosion of new cultural debates over the gendered implications of new technologies and transnational popular culture forms, including sports, film, and dance.

During the 1920s, the nation was recovering from a bloody and tumultuous war, the Mexican Revolution in which as many as a million or more Mexicans perished.¹¹ The

¹⁰ A social worker report by Manuel Hernández V., AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 41, 17 December 1928.

¹¹ Historical demographer Robert McCaa notes that scholars still dispute how many died during the Revolution. He argues that, from 1910 to 1920, Mexico lost 1.4 million to war-related deaths and from 350,000 to 400,000 due to migration. He includes Spanish Influenza casualties in his statistics, arguing that the war reduced the public health system's ability to cope with the pandemic. He also notes that most

Revolution was won by a faction lead by Venustiano Carranza. The faction constructed a government which, at least rhetorically, sought to help the peasant and the urban proletariat alike. My project periodizes the years from 1917 to 1929 as a distinct phase during which the Carrancista revolutionary faction became a government and during which two subsequent factions, the Obregonista and Callista factions, solidified the Carrancista's gains.¹²

This was a period during which urban workers exhibited a newfound degree of power, or at least received a newfound level of rhetorical respect from other sectors of society. With Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution, revolutionaries established a number of progressive reforms that legalized labor's right to organize and to state protection. The 1920s brought successes for unions: membership rose, strike activity increased, and government arbitration boards generally ruled in unions' favor. Some unions also enjoyed a fair degree of power relative to the state—especially since the centrist CROM was headed by Luis Morones, a man who was friends with the powerful Callista faction. President Calles even appointed Morones to his cabinet as Labor Department Secretary.¹³ However, by 1929, Morones was out of fashion, the CROM was in the process of imploding, and the state had gained significant power over workers' labor federations.

Powerful Mexico City unions such as the Federation of Federal District Workers (which

scholars drastically over-estimate the number of people who left the country as a result of the war. A 1920s newspaper, *Demócrata*, noted that the nation's population dropped from 16 million to 14 million as a result of the war. Robert, McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies* 19:2 (Summer 2003): 394-397.

¹² Obregonista refers to President Álvaro Obregón (1880-1828, r. 1920-1924), Callista refers to President Plutarco Elías Calles (1877-1945, r. 1924-2928—most scholars would agree that Calles continued to pull strings from behind the scenes from 1928 until 1935).

¹³ The Labor Department's title was Departamento de Secretaría de Industria, Comercio, y Trabajo.

represented hotel employees, municipal workers, and day laborers) abandoned the federation and became independent. Rumors of Morones' participation in the 1928 assassination of Obregón further discredited him. Consequently, the context in which unions framed broader debates through masculinity changed during the 1930s. The founding of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (the pre-cursor to the long-standing Partido Revolucionario Institucional) in 1929 was the most profound example of this evolving strength of the Mexican state.

The 1920s also featured fierce debates about heightened youth sexuality, a crisis of masculinity, and women's sexual freedom and entry into the public sphere.¹⁴ I assess how workers expressed gendered actions and beliefs in their streets, homes, entertainment venues, and workplaces and show why these gendered experiences represented lived negotiations with the state. I also explore how, during the 1920s, transnational ideas about sexuality, masculinity, and femininity (ranging from bodybuilders to flappers) flowed throughout the hemisphere, especially through silent film, cinema, radio, recordings, and sports and fitness crazes.¹⁵

This study focuses on Mexico City because the nation's capital was a demographic and labor hub. With a population of about 800,000 in 1921—about 6

¹⁴ See Alys Eve. Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta T. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, eds, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ During the 1920s, ideas related to fashion, women's independence, modern dance crazes, and heightened women's sexuality seeped into places like Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and China, to name a few countries. For an excellent discussion of *pelonas* (flappers) in Mexico, see Ann Rubenstein, "The War on 'Las Pelonas': Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924," in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 57-80.

percent of the nation's total population—the city was immense.¹⁶ Furthermore, the capital attracted rural Mexicans—between 1910 and 1921, the population of Mexico City grew by 17 percent, from 720,753 residents to 847,942 residents, as Mexicans fled the war-torn countryside. The city was also a political, cultural, and economic center and hosted the headquarters for the nation's two main labor federations, the Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos (Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers, CROM) and the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT).¹⁷ Due to this influx of migrants, Mexico City represented a microcosm of Mexico.¹⁸ As noted by John Lear in his study of Mexico City workers, “While Mexico City may not be paradigmatic of all urban and working-class mobilizations in Mexico in this period, it is a good place to begin to better understand these urban dynamics nationally and comparatively.”¹⁹

Hegemonic Masculinity, Cultural Hegemony, and Machismo

In her book *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell, one of the foremost scholars in the field of masculinity studies, introduced the idea of “hegemonic masculinity.” Hegemonic masculinity is the process through which a certain concept of masculinity becomes

¹⁶ DF stands for Distrito Federal (Federal District). Mexico City is Mexico's federal district and the city's residents refer to the city interchangeably as Mexico City or the DF. Note that the 1921 census lists the DF's population at 906,063 and the total population of Mexico at 14,248,971. México, *Censo General de Habitantes*, México: Departamento de la Estadística, Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1928, 55.

¹⁷ “Cuales Son Los Estados Que Han Sufrido Disminución en El Número de Sus Habitantes,” *Demócrata*, 9 January 1922, v. 7, no 1772, p. 1. Note that this population statistic of 847,942 is different from the statistic of 906,063 for the city's population given in the 1921 census.

¹⁸ Ann S. Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xxxvi.

¹⁹ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 7.

preponderant and other types of masculinity become subordinate.²⁰ A key part of her theory is that, over time, groups who practice subordinated masculinities eventually succumb to the dominant form of masculinity. Another component of her idea is that groups changed how they defined hegemonic masculinity; it was not a static concept. For example, yesterday's "gentry masculinity" of landowners gave way to today's "technocratic masculinity" in which most societal groups esteem bureaucratic male professionalism or yielded to "revolutionary masculinity" in which "the younger generations of all classes" admired the bearded, tough, leftist rebels of the Cold-War era.²¹

Hegemonic masculinity is one of the field's most influential concepts because it represents one of the first systematic efforts to explain how masculinity operated. However, some criticize hegemonic masculinity, noting that many groups rejected so-called hegemonic forms of masculinity and proposed alternate forms of masculinity.²² Critics also point out that Connell developed her explanatory model by analyzing practices in Europe, the United States, and Australia and they argue that the model may not work as well in African, Latin American, or Asian societies.²³

²⁰ For Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity, see Tim Carrigan, Robert Connell, and John Lee, 112-113.

²¹ Florencia Mallon, "Barbudos, Warriors, and Rotos: The MIR, Masculinity, and Power in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1965-1974." In *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 179-181.

²² For an excellent critique of hegemonic masculinity, see John Tosh, "Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender," in *Masculinities in Politics and War*, eds. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 44, 49-50.

²³ For more on this debate, see R.W. Connell, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19:6 (December 2005): 829-859.

I propose that Connell's hegemonic masculinity framework is extremely useful: it gives me a framework for understanding the processes at work during a period that precedes hegemonic masculinity. Scholars often interpret hegemonic masculinity in such a way as to gloss over instances where masculinity was not particularly hegemonic, but rather, still in the process of forming. During this period in Mexico City, officials and elites held relatively unstable positions of power and were consequently forced to negotiate terms of rule with popular classes. Given such a complex range of multiple masculine behaviors and beliefs, multiple masculinities developed through a series of negotiations manifested in the everyday activities of the working class, employers, officials, and union leaders. This project concentrates on the negotiation of masculinities at a period marked by struggles over hegemonic masculinity between many parties.

Another useful dimension of Connell's theory is the idea of process. Connell does not urge scholars to identify hegemonic masculinity at any given point and time. The point, she notes, is that masculinity and hegemonic masculinity are processes. Connell notes, "Rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioral average, a norm), we need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives."²⁴ This dissertation examines workers' masculinity as a process and the relationship between workers' masculinity and broader historical processes. Yet, just how these processes work needs some explanation and, for that, the idea of "cultural hegemony" is helpful.

Hegemonic masculinity is not the only form of hegemony I use in this dissertation; I see a process of Gramscian hegemony creation. processes of cultural

²⁴ Connell, *Masculinities*, 71.

hegemony also played out in interactions between workers and the state. Cultural hegemony is an idea derived from the work of Italian revolutionary and intellectual Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci conceived of hegemony as the processes by which the elites used culture and other non-state institutions to convince working classes to accept exploitation.²⁵ When a group of elites formed cross-class alliances with other groups Gramsci called this a “historical bloc.” T.J Jackson Lears notes that these historical blocks functioned because dominant and subaltern groups could reach “genuine consensus” and, since these groups’ economic interests were often in conflict, culture—especially through schools and churches—served as a key means through which these groups formed cross-class alliances.²⁶

Numerous scholars have adopted cultural hegemony as a framing device for their own work.²⁷ This dissertation follows suit. Cultural hegemony is particularly useful to this project because the idea of “proletarian masculinity,” in a very real sense, is a

²⁵ Gramsci envisioned an alternative in which Italian working classes implemented what he called a counter-hegemony by which the popular classes co-opt cultural institutions like schools and the media to initially resist and eventually replace elites as the hegemonic force in the nation’s culture. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers Co., 1971), 12.

²⁶ T.J. Jackson Lears, “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities,” *AHR* 90:3 (June 1985): 579.

²⁷ Many scholars, including Mary Kay Vaughan, Florencia Mallon, and William Roseberry, interpret cultural hegemony as a negotiated process between elites and the popular classes. Arguing that workers, the state, and the upper classes negotiated gender beliefs is far more credible than positing that elites controlled plebeian gender practices or claiming that workers formed masculinities independent of elites. For discussions of cultural hegemony, see Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 7, 22; William Sewell, *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 43, 50; William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, eds. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 357, 364; Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 4; and Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, “Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, eds. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press), 4-12, 22.

cultural belief that bubbled up from workers and their unions during the tumultuous 1920s. Proletarian masculinity is an ideal of masculinity paradigm consisting of skill, hard work, honor, honesty, responsibility (especially to family and to union), heterosexuality, sobriety, and the subordination of women.²⁸ By referencing proletarian masculinity in speeches, memos, labor and government newspapers and newsletters, and in images, some workers, employers, and state officials shared similar sets of values regarding what the ideal worker masculinity should resemble.

State officials, especially those in the Labor Department, recognized proletarian masculinity and began to integrate it into their own rhetoric. Proletarian masculinity worked as glue—a process of gendered cultural hegemony—that helped hold the popular-state consensus together. This was not a case of one segment, be it the popular classes, the state, the church, or employers conceding a cultural belief. Instead, some within each of these groups identified with proletarian masculinity as an appropriate working-class gendered ethos. Interestingly, anyone reading Mexican anarchist or mutual aid association literature from the 1890s through 1910s will quickly discern elements of proletarian masculinity in those sources. However, during these periods no cross-class consensus developed between officials and workers. Such a consensus would have to await the populist 1917 Constitution and the 1920s Obregonista and Callista alliances with the CROM.

²⁸ This dissertation adopts Robert Buffington's definition of elites, "'Elites' is an unavoidably and, in this case, deliberately ambiguous choice. Included in this category is anyone with enough political, economic, or social clout to take an active role in public debates over Mexico's future." Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 171, n. 7.

This project also serves as a corrective to scholarship, much of it performed by social scientists, that conflates masculinity with machismo.²⁹ Machismo indicates an attitude adopted by some (but not all) Latin American men and can be characterized as a faith in male superiority, aggressiveness, use of violence, and subjection of women.³⁰ The problem is that scholarly emphasis on machismo obscures other masculinities. Too often some scholars assume all men in Latin America are and always have been macho.³¹ Historians John D. French and Daniel James criticize scholars for using “an unexamined ‘common sense’ image of Latin American plebeian males as *machos*.”³² I do not intend to argue against machismo. Indeed, I note that many workers embraced machismo. Yet, I also explore how particular groups or individuals employed alternative expressions of masculinity.

Defining Working Class, Gendered Performance, and Patriarchy

This is a study of both the popular sectors of Mexico City and its organized labor movement. Like most historians of the urban poor in Mexico City such as Pablo Piccato, John Lear, Susie Porter, and Ann Blum, I use the terms worker, working-class, popular-

²⁹ For more on the limits of *machismo* as an analytical category, see Macías-Gonzalez and Rubenstein, 2-3.

³⁰ For a classic analysis of *machismo* (which conflates Mexican masculinity with *machismo*), see the following work by Mexican intellectual and Nobel laureate: Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (México: Fondo de la Cultura Económico de México, 1958).

³¹ For example, Carlos Monsiváis states “...*the masculine* is the living and singular substance of *the national* and *the human*, with *the masculine* understood as the code of absolute *machismo*...” Carlos Monsiváis, “The 41 and the Gran Redada,” in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, 142.

³² French and James also noted that “the history of masculinity is one of the least researched aspects of gender relations in the region.” John D. French, and Daniel James, “Squaring the Circle: Women’s Factory Labor, Gender Ideology, and Necessity,” in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box*, eds. John D. French and Daniel James (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 19.

class, and plebeian interchangeably.³³ However, most of the workers studied were not members of an industrial working class. Lear remarks, “Unskilled workers with precarious positions in the labor market far outnumbered skilled and factory workers.”³⁴ They tended to live in defined areas of the city called *colonias populares*. The city's popular classes, both men and women, earned very little, worked informal sector jobs, and constituted the vast majority of the city's population while the industrial working class, middle class, and upper class remained very small in number until the economic boom of the 1950s-1970s. Workers referred to themselves as “worker” (*trabajador*, *obrero*) regardless of whether they worked in the formal industrial or informal sectors of the economy so I feel comfortable referring to them as working class in addition to describing them as popular class, plebian, and urban poor.

I define masculinity as a socially constructed set of behaviors and obligations associated with the biological classification of a male. Individuals formed masculinity through performing, through, consciously or unconsciously, expressing gender through their physical actions.³⁵ Studying masculinity opens up particular avenues of inquiry. Gail Bederman notes that masculinity is a term that encourages historians “to ask

³³ For a superb discussion of how scholars' understanding of class has changed over time, see Julie Greene, Bruce Laurie, and Eric Arnesen, “Introduction,” in *Labor Histories: Class, Politics, and the Working-Class Experience*, eds. Julie Greene, Bruce Laurie, and Eric Arnesen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 3-4.

³⁴ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 8.

³⁵ Judith Butler describes performativity as “Acts, gestures, enactments...are considered *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute reality. [For instance]...the performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed....*In imitating gender*, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.” Italics by Butler. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 185.

particular questions—whether about human beings who are ‘men,’ or about human beings who are not ‘men,’ but whose gender performances destabilize commonsense assumptions equating male bodies with masculinity.”³⁶ Since her approach regards gender as a process rather than as any stable, descriptive category, it is an approach that many masculinity studies scholars and I find appealing.³⁷

Performance provides me with a very useful theoretical model because it allows me to discern and understand how Mexican workers adopted particular gendered behaviors. Workers often used scripts perceived as being masculine such as the phrase “let’s step outside,” which meant “let’s step outside to settle our differences with a fight.” Uttering this phrase indicated a long-standing masculine practice among the city’s workers who associated their masculinity with willingness to enact violence in the name of protecting one’s honor and/or settling a personal dispute. Performance also helps me explain how workers embraced multiple masculinities. Not all men embraced fighting. One newspaper vendor admitted he only did so because he believed brawling was what was expected of him.³⁸ Whether or not the worker realized, he was enacting a scripted,

³⁶ Gail Bederman, “Why Study ‘Masculinity,’ Anyway? Perspectives from the Old Days,” *Culture, Society, & Masculinities* 3:1 (2011): 15.

³⁷ Historians Macías-González and Rubenstein note Butler’s performance is the dominant approach used today among scholars who study gender in Mexico Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 15. For some excellent scholarship on Latin America that uses Butler as a frame of reference, see Gabriela Cano, “Unconcealable Realities of Desire: Amelio Robles’s (Transgender) Masculinity in the Mexican Revolution,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Sueann Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early-Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); and Erica Windler, “Madame Durocher’s Performance: Cross-Dressing, Midwifery, and Authority in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin Americas since Independence*, eds. William E. French and Katherine Elaine Bliss (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007): 52-68.

³⁸ Social worker report by R. Amezcua AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 22, 28 April 1928

gendered performance when he uttered that phrase. Workers connected to masculine scripts in a myriad of ways and they adopted, re-wrote, accepted, and composed entirely new scripts.

I adopt Stephanie Smith's definition of patriarchy "As a system of concentrated male power, patriarchy relates to how a particular division of power is created and reproduced."³⁹ Judith Bennett recently criticized scholars for no longer using patriarchy as a category of analysis.⁴⁰ This dissertation responds to Bennett by demonstrating, as do many scholarly works on masculinity, the historical connections between patriarchy and masculinity. Through myriad processes, including family relations, workplace customs, and union hall dynamics, masculinity and patriarchy were inextricably linked. Judith Halberstam notes "Masculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into the family; masculinity represents the power of inheritance, the consequences of the traffic in women, and the promise of social privilege."⁴¹ Each of this project's chapters explicitly or implicitly investigates how and why workers' masculinity related to patriarchal systems of male power.

Historiography

From the 1930s to today, Mexican intellectuals have contributed to an ongoing conversation about Mexican masculinity. In his 1934 book, *Profile of Man and Culture*

³⁹ Stephanie Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 6.

⁴⁰ Judith Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania University Press, 2006), 20-21. Some scholars criticized Bennett for refusing to take what is called the "cultural turn" or the "gender turn." For criticism of Bennett as well as her response to those criticisms, see the Summer 2008 issue of the *Journal of Women's Studies* (volume 20, no. 2).

⁴¹ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 2.

in Mexico, Samuel Ramos pondered the place of poor, urban men in Mexican national political culture. He characterized the urban male as being physically aggressive and as challenging the upper classes. This assertiveness took the form of swearing, brawling, and using slang. For example, he took the word “father,” and twisted it into a hyper-sexualized display of domination by stating “I’m your daddy!” (a colloquial phrase still in use today, implying the speaker has had sex with your mother and thus sexually dominates you).⁴² In 1950, Octavio Paz characterized Mexican men as being silent, as not willing to express their feelings.⁴³ He wrote, “the ideal ‘manhood’ consists of never opening up...” To do so is to be “weak.” In addition, since men cannot be emotional with each other, they adopt an “aggressive” and “violent” attitude when forming relationships with other men.⁴⁴ In 1987, Roger Bartra characterized urban, poor men as “urban campesinos who have lost their original innocence but have gained the factory: between two worlds, they have experienced the tragedy of the end of the agrarian world and the beginning of the industrial civilization.”⁴⁵ However, these intellectual conversations have not been historical.

⁴² To clarify, Ramos wrote his book in 1934, but all of his arguments regarding 1930s *pelados* could apply to 1920s *pelados*.

⁴³ Paz notes that Ramos’ book was a significant influence on his own ideas about Mexican masculinity. Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad, posdata, vuelta a el laberinto de la soledad* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997), 12, 14.

⁴⁴ Paz, 32-34. Contemporary scholars accuse Paz of over-generalizing and note that Mexican men can be as open about their feelings as women. Gutmann comments, “For better or worse, Ramos and Paz gave tequila-swilling machismo pride of place in the panoply of national character traits. Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 240 and Núñez Noriega, 148.

⁴⁵ Roger Bartra, *La jaula de melancholia: Identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano* (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1987), 175.

The most influential scholarly work on masculinity in Mexico is anthropologist Mathew Gutmann's *The Meanings of Macho*. Gutmann researched for his book by living from 1992 to 1993 in Colonia Santo Domingo, a popular-class neighborhood in the DF. Gutmann argued that Mexican masculinity is fluid and encompasses more than just "machismo."⁴⁶ He called the field of masculinity studies to task when he notes scholars are guilty of "capriciously glossing over significant differences among men based on class, generation, region, and ethnicity among other factors, such generalizations have come to invent and then perpetuate sterile ideal types and stereotypes."⁴⁷ Gutmann described Mexican men's masculinity during the 1990s: "Masculinity, like other cultural identities, cannot be neatly confined in boxlike categories like macho or *mandilón* (wimp). Identities make sense only in relation to other identities, and they are never firmly established for individual groups."⁴⁸ While one *obrero* (worker) may have abandoned his children and formed networks of friends in taverns, another worker might have abstained from drink and remained at home to nurture his children, sometimes even taking them with him on his rounds as an itinerant vendor. He illustrates how a careful study, influenced by performance and hegemonic masculinity, can reveal a range of masculine performances. Without Mathew Gutmann's contributions, I would not have been able to conceptualize a historical study of plebeian masculinity.

⁴⁶ Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho*, 2-3.

⁴⁷ Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho*, 2-3.

⁴⁸ Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho*, 238.

While Gutmann's book, *The Meanings of Macho*, is a ground-breaking study of popular-class masculinity in the Mexico City neighborhood of Colonia Santo Domingo, historian Rob Buffington identified a problem with his study:

Men and women alike distance machismo by locating it in previous generations or in rural areas and often in both. Gutmann sees the cultural transformation he reports as relatively recent, dating back to the 1970s land seizures that politicized the women of Colonia Santo Domingo. Nevertheless, the opinions and expectations voiced by Gutmann's informants sound suspiciously similar to those expressed to judges, bureaucrats, and social workers about by working-class men and women in the decade immediately after the Revolution.⁴⁹

All too often social scientists like Gutmann either present ahistorical arguments regarding masculinity or they ignore historical processes altogether. Some anthropologists and sociologists agree with these criticisms and agree that their oral history and survey methodologies, while rich tools for understanding contemporary masculinity, are not well-suited for viewing masculinity in the past. Anthropologists like Gutmann and Núñez Noriega and sociologists like R.W. Connell urge historians to contribute a historical perspective to the field of masculinity studies.⁵⁰ Historian Diego Pulido Esteva notes that the historiography on masculinity in Mexico is "little explored" and he urges historians to develop more precise understandings of machismo.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Buffington's excellent article analyzes femininity rather than masculinity. Robert Buffington, "La 'Dancing' Mexicana: Danzón and the Transformation of Intimacy in Post-Revolutionary Mexico City," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 14:1 (March 2005): 93.

⁵⁰ Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho*, 246-248 and Guillermo Núñez Noriega, *Masculinidad e intimidación: identidad, sexualidad y sida* (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género y el Colegio de Sonora, 2007), 109, 358; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities, Second Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 197; Gutmann, "Introduction: Discarding Manly Dichotomies of Latin America," in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 11.

⁵¹ Diego Pulido Esteva, "El 'cantinismo': Culturas del alcohol en la Ciudad de México a principios del siglo XX," Coloquio Internacional "Historia de Género y de las Mujeres en México," Colegio de Mexico, Mexico City, 13-15 March 2013.

This dissertation is part of a historiographical shift towards analyzing Mexican masculinity through a historical lens. Historians of Mexico, including the authors in the recently released collection edited by Victor Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, as well as Rob Buffington, Stephen Bachelor, Roberto Miranda Guerrero, and Rob Alegre are all helping move historical understandings of Mexican masculinity beyond machismo.⁵² Rob Buffington, has a forthcoming book, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man: Mexico City 1900-1910*, analyzing the relationship between modernity, masculinity, and the urban poor.⁵³

This project both builds on and diverges from previous scholarship by Anne Rubenstein, Rob Alegre, Roberto Miranda Guerrero, Diego Pulido Esteva, and Michael Snodgrass on the topic of working-class Mexican masculinity. Rubenstein analyzed how Mexican men and women interacted in 1930s-1940s movie theaters and she notes that men used theater halls to perform “rebellious assertions of masculine power” by flirting and fighting.⁵⁴ Alegre examines Mexican unionized railroad workers during the 1950s and 1960s and demonstrates how a “rough” sort of masculinity emphasizing skill, hard

⁵² Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, eds., *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012). One of the best historical interpretations of working-class masculinity analyzes Chilean miners. Tom Klubock, in his groundbreaking work on Chilean miners during the first half of the twentieth century, also demonstrates how Chilean workers appropriated masculine gender identities first promulgated by employers and eventually used these masculinities to oppose management. Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁵³ Buffington has also written scholarship demonstrating how the Mexico City penny press helped forge worker masculinity and illustrating how historical subjects form masculinity by rejecting femininity Robert Buffington, “Homophobia and the Mexican Working Class, 1900-1910,” in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 193-225; Robert Buffington, “Subjectivity, Agency, and The New Latin American History of Gender and Sexuality,” *History Compass* 5:5 (2007): 1652.

⁵⁴ Anne Rubenstein, “Theaters of Masculinity: Moviegoing and Male Roles in Mexico Before 1960,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 144.

work, physical strength, and toughness affected and influenced men's decisions in dance halls, union halls, and at home.⁵⁵ By analyzing fifty years worth of letters between the worker, Amado Hernández, and his wife, Adela, Miranda Guerrero's work argues against hegemonic masculinity and in favor of historians including family relations and life cycles in studies of masculinity.⁵⁶ Pulido Esteva, in his paper on masculinity in early-twentieth-century Mexico City drinking establishments, argues that taverns served as sites of male sociability, what he dubs "cantinismo," and he shows how the line between heterosexuality and homosexuality could become blurred in these spaces. Snodgrass' work on Monterrey steel workers during the first half of the century demonstrates how rightist brewery workers forged an identity based on masculinity and anti-communism, whereas leftist steel workers relied on patriotism and paternalist ties to the Cárdenas administration when forging their masculine ethos.

Rubenstein, Alegre, Miranda Guerrero, Pulido Esteva, and Snodgrass all have produced excellent works that have advanced historical understandings of masculinity. However, the two monograph-length works, Alegre's and Snodgrass', are primarily labor studies rather than gender studies and the three works that do focus on gender are limited, due to space constraints, to studying the topic in two arenas: in families and in entertainment spaces. Also, only two of these works, Pulido Esteva's conference paper and Miranda Guerrero's chapter, conceptually frame masculinity in relation to hegemonic

⁵⁵ Rob Alegre, "Contesting the 'Mexican Miracle': Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico, 1943-1959." PhD Diss, Rutgers New Brunswick, 2007; Rob Alegre, "Las Rieleras: Gender, Politics, and Power in the Mexican Railway Movement, 1958-1959." *Journal of Women's History* 23: 2 (2011): 162-186.

⁵⁶ Roberto Miranda Guerrero, "La Vida de un Obrero y la Construcción de la Masculinidad (1890-1940)," in *Orden social e identidad de género. Mexico Siglos XIX y XX*, eds. María Teresa Fernández-Aceves, Carmen Ramos-Escandón, and Susie Porter (Guadalajara: CIESAS-Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006), 299-321.

masculinity and none of these scholars emphasize multiple masculinities. Consequently, this dissertation contributes to the field of masculinity studies in Mexico by providing a monograph-length study that analyzes masculinity not only in the family, the workplace, and the entertainment space, but also among children and within unions, and it does so by conceptualizing masculinity through hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities.

Chapter Roadmaps

This dissertation's six chapters are organized as follows. "Chapter 1: Mexican Masculinities" explains the relationship between masculinity and broader historical processes in 1920s Mexico. I analyze each of the following processes: a perceived "crisis" of masculinity, the development of revolutionary masculinity, the relationship between masculinity and a changing popular entertainment culture, the masculine ties between unions and other institutions such as the state and the church, and tensions between upper-class concerns about the urban poor's perceived improper masculinity and working-class efforts to maintain a distinct plebeian culture.

The remaining five chapters each focuses on a particular facet of popular-class masculinity. "Chapter Two: Youth Masculinities" explores how new concepts about child welfare and childhood provided served as a facet through which the post-revolutionary state interacted with urban popular classes. It examines how Mexico City Juvenile Court social workers and the popular-class families with whom they interacted negotiated plebeian masculinity. I explore the subculture of gay youths in the city and demonstrate that popular-class masculinity encompassed both and homosexuality and heterosexuality. I also delve into aspects of youth street culture masculinity—movie

theaters and paperboys; analyzing these subcultures allows me to demonstrate how plebeian boys and young men developed their own masculine street subcultures.

“Chapter 3: Family Masculinities” explores masculinity with the family. It argues that capitalino families fought and negotiated over the implications of popular-class masculinity. Both women and men could be absentee, demanding, loving, nurturing, intoxicated, and/or cruel. It examines the role work and wages played in creating gendered tensions and gendered obligations within families. It shows how women and men used children as weapons in bitter family conflicts, others were *abnegados* or *abnegadas* (self-sacrificing), and some clashed over issues of faith within their relationships. Men could exert the ultimate demonstration of masculine power within the family by beating their wives. I also connect parenting practices within plebeian families to the idea that men manifested multiple forms of masculinity.

“Chapter 4: Leisure Time and Entertainment Culture Masculinities” explores the historical connections between leisure time, popular culture venues, and masculine performances. The chapter shows how popular-class capitalinos developed group and individual masculine identities through popular entertainment culture. It argues that the state’s ability to influence gendered behavior was relatively weak in these spaces—as it had been since colonial times. These venues served as spaces where workers and elites contested the meanings of popular-class masculinity. I illustrate that while male workers developed a sense of masculine camaraderie within drinking establishments, working-class women also frequented these establishments. Dance halls, cabarets, and public street dances were sexualized arenas in which male workers fulfilled masculine obligations and women workers challenged the patriarchal controls imposed on them by

their families. Theaters and street theater represented places where popular-class men both honored and laughed at themselves when they laughed at themselves and, through their behaviors, they connected masculinity to violence and aggressive actions.

Capitalinos embraced fitness and sports like boxing, basketball, and baseball as arenas in which to challenge as well as maintain ideas about race and masculinity.

In “Chapter 5: Union Masculinities,” I explore masculine performances within labor unions. I argue that unions successfully used speeches, marches, and ties to the state to discipline their members and limited their members’ masculine performances to one model: that of proletarian masculinity. Unions used masculinity as a weapon during fierce intra-union conflicts and as a shared framework with officials as they forged alliances with the state. Some union leaders also participated in staged debates with Catholic Church officials and, during these debates, used masculine rhetoric in an effort to discredit the Church. In my conclusion, I discuss possible future directions in researching Mexican masculinity, emphasizing potential transnational and digital history approaches.

“Chapter 6: Workplace Masculinities” examines the relationship between the workplace and popular-class masculinity. It argues that workers, employers, state officials, and the press used the workplace as an arena through which to contest masculine behaviors and obligations. This chapter explains how masculine subcultures developed through language, friendship networks, a shared sense of honor, and a willingness to perpetrate violence. It then analyzes, in turn, four different groups of workers: chauffeurs, tram drivers, and soldiers, and police. While some associated chauffeurs with improper masculine practices such as seducing women, perpetrating

crime, and recklessly mowing down passersby with their autos, choferes themselves embraced a masculinity based on honor and providing for one's family. Many criticized tram drivers as dangerous threats due to unsafe driving, whereas tram drivers themselves used violence and respectability as markers of appropriate masculinity. Soldiers and police presented a conundrum to post-revolutionary capitalinos. On one hand, many associated them with revolutionary masculinity; they were armed and entrusted with enforcing the Revolution's laws. On the other hand, many perceived them to possess dangerous masculine behaviors, viewing soldiers and police as brawling drunkards who often associated with criminals. The chapter fleshes out these clashing interpretations of soldiers' and police masculinity.

Conclusion

This dissertation contributes to the historiography in four ways. First, I demonstrate the importance of studying a fluid period during which masculinity is not hegemonic. Instead, employers and state officials' power was relatively weak and, consequently, masculinity was being negotiated by numerous capitalinos. Second, I provide a full-length historical gender and class analysis of masculinity, a topic which rarely receives in-depth treatment by historians. Third, I demonstrate that working-class masculinity was a fiercely contested topic: workers, unions, newspapers, church officials, writers, and government officials all had strong and diverging interpretations on what constituted proper and improper masculine behaviors and obligations. These groups' interpretations of popular-class masculinity clashed because each emphasized their own goals and interests in 1920s Mexico City. Workers faced with the crush of poverty and upper-class prejudices, sought to use masculinity to legitimate their lifestyles and their unions. Officials sought to court the popular classes into the post-revolutionary

fold. Employers, faced with mounting migration, uncertain economic prospects, and a rapidly transforming society, sought to quell anything they perceived as a danger to the social order, including masculine performances they deemed inappropriate. Fourth, I join with other scholars in moving understandings of Latin American masculinity beyond machismo.

Studying popular-class masculinity in 1920s Mexico City shows the relationship between gender, class, and power. Both state officials and male workers used masculinity as a tool as they interacted with other male workers, with women, and with employers to express a plebeian politics of gender. From emphasizing the masculine benefits of apprenticeship to asserting value of revolutionary workers' virility, capitalinos negotiated long-standing and new ideas about male adulthood and equality. Investigating working-class gender in Mexico City during this period helps scholars understand how gendered processes developed during the 1920s and how these processes affected workers, their families, and the post-revolutionary state.

Implied in this study, or any study of gender, is that long-held beliefs in what it means to be a woman or a man are challenged. As anthropologist Guillermo Núñez Noriega notes, "... the current politics of gender tries to keep silent or keep 'what it means to be a man' as something natural... The process of knowledge about men and masculinities is a process of social intervention in daily politics of masculine identity construction, it is thus an intervention in the current politics of gender and in the politics of manhood."⁵⁷ By demonstrating that individuals, and not biology, socially constructed

⁵⁷ Núñez Noriega, 208.

gender, I explain the many ways and varied contexts in which Mexicans practiced, represented, and personified their masculinity.

The dissertation's title suggests the variety of capitalino masculinities. The quote in the dissertation's title comes from a woman who was describing her live-in boyfriend, or *amasiato*. When she informed a visiting social worker that her man "loved the little ones and didn't beat them," she was expressing the contradictory reality of workers' gender relations. A plebeian *amasiato* believed he could beat a child just as easily as he could love the child (and often he would declare that he could do both at the same time!). By studying how masculinity is fluid and can change over time, I hope to dispel myths about any one type of masculinity being typical or being "normal."

Chapter 1, Mexican Masculinities

In 1920, Labor Department inspector Juan de Beraza interviewed a Mexico City factory owner and asked the employer what he thought about his male and female workers. Beraza did not provide the owner's name, but he did quote him at length. The owner believed:

I am of the opinion that when examining women workers it is important to look at the role that women play in business and industry, especially since men are full of defects and vice. According to a majority of factories owners, men are capable of enjoying low salaries; at least this is what my friends and I say. We pay them very small salaries, even salaries that are insufficient for their needs. This is because, sadly, when we pay them good salaries, they only do half the work and they don't do anything to improve themselves physically, morally, materially, or intellectually. Instead, they only concern themselves with knocking down the dreadful 'PULQUE' and then they come to work foolish, slow-witted, and shaking.¹

The employer also justified paying low salaries because his workers entered into common-law or informal (*amasiato*) relationships rather than marrying and they failed to “concentrate on only one woman.” As a solution to this problem, he supported government action and alcohol prohibition. He urged the Labor Department to “take seriously the task of educating these classes” as governments had done in Germany, England, and the United States. Only then could “the race” overcome this obstacle to progress. The factory owner concluded by expressing faith in Mexican manufacturing: he believed Mexican industry possessed the potential to produce superior products, if only the workers improved their social mores and work habits.

¹ Report found in a folder marked “Informe sobre algunos conceptos respeto a los trabajadores vertido por el Dueño de la Fábrica de Alpargatas,” AGN, DT, 208, Caja 224, Expediente 10, n.d. but probably 1920.

The employer's remarks speak to this chapter's topic: masculinities and their relationship to broader historical transformations in 1920s Mexico. On one hand, he presented a stereotype of Mexican male workers whose masculinity consisted of drinking, performing poorly on the job, and engaging in sexual liaisons with multiple women. On the other hand, the employer believed Mexican men also had the potential to reform themselves as had their European and U.S. counterparts. If they abandoned vice, they could help their nation to become the industrial power it deserved to be. The employer, in other words, envisioned multiple masculinities, while emphasizing a dominant one.

Also, the employer's beliefs reflected broader transformations in 1920s Mexican society: a rising post-revolutionary state's pursuit of an alliance with the working class, public and private reformers' attempts to socially "moralize" the popular classes, workers' struggles to preserve distinct plebeian cultures and institutions, and industrialists' efforts to promote a Mexican industry despite a severe post-war recession. Yet, the owner also connected these broader historical processes to masculinity. He encouraged the post-revolutionary state to assist and improve male workers, noting his female workers needed no such assistance. He gendered workers' binge drinking and their refusal to adopt upper-class marriage practices as masculine and not feminine. He symbolized Mexican industrialists' faith that they could transform Mexico into an industrial powerhouse if only the male workers reformed themselves.

Chapter 1 investigates this relationship between plebeian masculinity and broader historical transformations during the 1920s. By connecting masculinity to these broader historical processes, this chapter sets up the dissertation's subsequent chapters, each of

which focuses more narrowly on a particular facet of popular-class masculinity. This chapter's five sections each analyze one of the following processes: the tensions between elites' concerns about the urban poor's perceived immorality and workers' efforts to maintain a distinct plebeian culture, a perceived "crisis" of masculinity, the development of revolutionary masculinity, the growth of a cross-class popular entertainment culture, and the alliance between a nascent labor movement and a fragile post-revolutionary state. I connect these changes in society to a variety of masculine performances.

Clashing Views of Plebeian Masculinity

The Revolution followed a period known as the Porfiriato—named after the President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911).² Mexicans remember the Porfiriato for its significantly increased poverty, state-imposed order, high rates of foreign investment, and expansion of infrastructure. During the Porfiriato, elites and the working classes had long associated masculinity with honor (although many upper-class Mexicans did not believe that the working class could actually possess honor).³ In contrast, as a result of the popular classes' sacrifices during the Revolution, some post-revolutionary officials, journalists, and employers gradually recognized the working class could, in fact, be honorable. Some government officials replaced rhetoric denigrating workers' immorality with language respecting workers' revolutionary contributions while trying to use the newly-developed state welfare system to inculcate hegemonic modes of masculinity in workers. These officials had not achieved hegemony, they were struggling for it. Yet,

² Porfirio Díaz did not serve as president during the years 1880-1884 during which period Manuel González was president.

³ As noted in the introduction, the Porfiriato spanned the years 1876-1911. Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 92-93.

other wealthy capitalinos maintained long-standing prejudices against the poor, and conflated popular-class masculinity with immorality and crime.

Officials and workers contested what masculinity meant. Some authorities often had difficulty determining whether a given worker fell into the category of dishonest worker or honest worker. For these individuals, the line between respectable popular-class masculine performances and immoral reflections of Mexican manhood was often blurred. One official in charge of running a federal building complained both rateros (thieves) and workers (he used the word “peons”) filled his office building’s lobby.⁴ The workers had a legitimate reason for being in the building; they went there to collect their wages after a hard day’s labor repairing the city’s street. But the rateros loitered in the building to scam or steal the wages of city workers. The official complained “It is impossible to recognize or identify which are there to get their wages and which are there as observers.” Similarly, a railroad company official noted that his firm’s station was filled with “well groomed” and “honorable” shoe shines.⁵ Yet, his firm’s property was also occupied by shoe shines who were “dirty thieves.” A 1926 poem titled “Diatribes Against Boleros” expressed annoyance at shoe shines’ ubiquitous presence in the city, yet remarked that capitalinos should grant more respect to these ignored virtual “slaves.”⁶ Shoe shines, rateros, and peons all blurred the line between the plucky, hard-working male, and the delinquent, un-hygienic irresponsible male.

⁴ Letter from Consejero del Edificio de propiedad federal called the Ex-Market of Volador sent to the Director del Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3940, Exp. 780, 26 February 1924 (excerpted in a letter sent by the Secretary to the Presidente Municipal, 28 February 1924).

⁵ Letter from Sr. Ernesto Ocaranza Llano, General Director of FFCC Nacionales de México y Anexos addressed to Presidente Municipal, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3935, Exp. 478, 10 May 1923.

⁶ Mingo Revulgo, “Diatriba Contra Los Boleros,” *Demócrata*, 11 January 1921, v. 6, no 1410, p. 3.

Workers viewed their street “hustlings” as survival techniques and as a perfectly legitimate part of life and, in so doing, envisioned workers’ masculine practices as rightful and justified and not as delinquent and negative.⁷ One paperboy, Ismael García, reported that he engaged in fights, frequented prostitutes, avidly practiced sports, sometimes lived on the streets, had been arrested for knocking out another youth’s teeth, and dutifully paid his union dues.⁸ Ismael also exhibited a reticence to fight. Ismael reported to the social worker that “there were times when he did not want to fight but he had to because others provoked him.”⁹ Worker Agustín Mendoza Gutiérrez, who worked as a carpenter’s apprentice, told social worker Enrique Catalán that Agustín felt no shame at having perpetrated crimes such as petty theft. Catalán wrote in his notes that the minor “believes that robbery and going to prison are both a manly act (*una demostración hombría*).”¹⁰

In the communist newspaper *Machete*, leftist painter David Alfaro Siqueiros wrote an article in which he associated sober, clean masculinity with workers in contrast to a “fifi” lack of masculinity perpetrated by elite, capitalist dandies who think of Oscar

⁷ In her study of U.S. working-class families, Lillian Breslow Rubin used the term “hard livers” to describe a similar attitude. She notes “The hard livers are, in some fundamental way, the nonconformists—those who cannot or will not accept their allotted social status. They are the women and men who rebel against the grinding routine of daily life.” Lillian Breslow Rubin, *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family* (New York: Basic Books), 34.

⁸ Social worker report by Refugio Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 22, 28 April 1928. Though both elite and popular-class Mexican men frequented prostitutes on a regular basis, public health officials’ anti-prostitution campaigns only targeted prostitutes and popular-class men. Bliss notes that many factors contributed to vice campaign’s targeting the popular classes: officials’ class bias, elite men’s tendency to use condoms, and wealthier men’s ability to pay for venereal disease treatments. Bliss, 101-102.

⁹ Social worker report by Refugio Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 22, 28 April 1928.

¹⁰ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 21, 3 September 1927.

Wilde rather than the people.¹¹ He noted that upper-class Mexican society produced “eunuchs” who were so shallow as to associate with “hermaphrodite” silver screen stars. Siquieros contrasted fifis with the ideal working class which consisted of “virile” men. These workers acted collectively, used reason, and embraced heterosexuality.¹² Many within the labor movement identified worker masculinity with responsible, reproductive heterosexuality, an ideal proletarian masculinity.

Sources also defined ideal popular-class masculinity by contrasting it with certain masculine behaviors such as excessive drinking, carousing with and disrespecting women, avoiding family responsibilities, perpetrating wanton violence, and committing crimes. Marx developed a term which encompassed these performances: the lumpenproletariat. Marx describes the *lumpenproletariat* as consisting of “vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves . . . pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers.”¹³ To Marx, lumpenproletariats were not members of a true proletariat. In 1918, Public Diversions Department inspectors Fortunato Mora and Alfredo Gonzalez complained about a similar lumpen crowd at a dance hall. The inspectors conducted a regular inspection of a dance hall called the Alhambra, checking to see whether the owner was complying with the liquor license. The inspectors found “lost women,” prostitutes, dancing with two groups that Mexicans commonly associated

¹¹ David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Al Margén del Manifiesto del Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores,” *El Machete* (Primera Quinceña de Marzo 1924): 3.

¹² Siquieros, 3. Rob Alegre found Mexican railroad workers emphasized heterosexual lifestyles, even to the point of forcing co-workers who they knew were not heterosexual into heterosexual situations like dancing with women. One worker described how railroad workers treated a co-worker by noting, “We knew he didn’t like women, so we made him dance with them.” Rob Alegre, “Contesting the ‘Mexican Miracle’: Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico, 1943-1959,” (PhD Diss, Rutgers New Brunswick, 2007), 65.

¹³ Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 137.

with improper masculine behaviors: the soldier and the *chofer* (chauffeur or taxi driver). The soldier symbolized an older model of improper masculinity, while the chauffeur embodied a newer paradigm of immoral masculinity. Mora and Gonzalez conflated vice with this trio of immoral masculine and feminine types: prostitutes, soldiers, and chauffeurs and accused all three groups of participating in a “bacanal.”¹⁴

Leftist labor organizations also promoted a particular brand of masculinity that was a more hyper-sexualized, hyper-virile, and anti-capitalist form of masculinity than the masculine images presented by more centrist, corporatist labor groups like the CROM. While both leftists and centrists within the labor movement adopted hypermasculine images of excessively muscled, bare-chested workers, leftist groups like the Mexican Communist Party and the CGT and fused these images with vitriolic, anti-capitalist rhetoric, promoting images of healthy, muscular, and defiant communist or anarchist workers. In contrast, CROM leaders sometimes urged locals to cooperate with capitalists. Leftists fused these hyper masculine images and allusions with condemnations of employers and the capitalist system. Journalist Miguel Hidalgo, writing in the anarcho-syndicalist newspaper *¡Luz!* praised workers by proclaiming, “Who am I? I am the man who, dressed in rags, produces the most beautiful cloth. I am the one who, while exhausted, sows the earth making it fecund with my sweat. I throw myself on her with the seed so that she germinates and is fruitful...I am action.”¹⁵ The journalist imbued workers with perceived masculine traits like physical strength, sexual

¹⁴ Report by public diversions inspectors Fortunato Mora and Alfredo Gonzalez AHDF, DP, Vol. 813, Exp. 1780, 18 January 1918.

¹⁵ Reid Gustafson, “We Proletariat are People Too’: Gender Representation in the Mexico City Anarchist and Labor Press, 1917-1922,” MA Thesis, Western Washington University, 2007, 61-62; original source is Miguel Hidalgo, “Unos y otros,” *¡Luz!* 19 September 1917, 4.

virility, abnegado-ness, and aggression. Historian John Lear notes that the woodcut art used by the communist newspaper, *El Machete*, frequently revealed similar themes. Lear states, “In these and other images, the skill, the musculature, and the strength of the workers was celebrated in the same way as were the workers’ suspenders, as symbols of class pride and identity.”¹⁶ In writings and in art, the Mexican left associated the ideal of the working male with the idea of hyper-masculinity.

Mexican intellectuals’ differing interpretations of the term *pelado* provide a glimpse into broader disagreements about what working-class masculinity meant. The word *pelado* initially referred to an impoverished Mexican. One of the earlier appearances of *pelado* was in novelist Guillermo Prieto’s posthumous memoirs in 1906.¹⁷ In this appearance, and in many other instances, including Mariano Azuela’s famous novel of the Revolution, *The Underdogs*, writers used *pelado* in a neutral, descriptive manner, synonymous with impoverishment. During the 1910s and 1920s, as discussed in Chapter 5, *carpas*, the penny press, and the poor themselves used the term to denote either a poor Mexican or an impoverished urban male, often a rural migrant. The *pelado* became a stock comedic character in many theater and street theater performances.

However, in the 1930s, some Mexican intellectuals re-envisioned the concept of the *pelado* as a way to criticize what they perceived as the worst aspects of plebeian

¹⁶ John Lear, “La revolución en blanco, negro, y rojo: arte, política, y obreros en los inicios del periódico *El Machete*,” *Signos Históricos* 10 (jul-dic 2007): 129, 142-143.

¹⁷ Santamaria, in his 1959 dictionary, uses the term *pelado* in a neutral, even positive, manner: He then provides usage examples from seven books published between 1906 and 1945. Most of the sources use the term in a neutral, descriptive manner, although a couple use the term in a pejorative manner. “Tipo popular de las clases bajas, harapiento, mísero e inculto, pero por lo común simpático.” In his 1898 dictionary, Félix Ramos I Duarte defines *pelado* in a more negative manner as “ruffian, sly fellow, rogue.” Francisco J. Santamaria, *Diccionario de mejicanismos* (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1959), 824. Félix Ramos I Duarte, *Diccionario de mejicanismos* (México: Herrero Hermanos, 1898), 397.

masculinity. In 1934, Samuel Ramos began presenting the pelado as a darker figure in his *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*.¹⁸ Ramos admitted his interpretation diverged from the more customary “picturesque aspect, which is wearily reproduced in popular theater.”¹⁹ According to Ramos, the pelado swore, engaged in fights, and appropriated words from the Spanish language, transforming them into subversive slang. While Ramos’ thoughts on the pelado reveal more about elite fears of the urban poor than they do about actual practices, they do hint at masculine performance that some working-class capitalinos probably exhibited at times.

Many of the themes underlying the elites’ fear of plebeian masculinity (propensity towards violence, disregard for upper-class mores) revealed the profound tensions Mexicans experienced during the tumultuous decade of the 1920s. Yet, workers adapted their own forms of masculinity to cope with the poverty and hardships of everyday life in the DF. These were capitalinos who knew they had to hustle to survive. If hustling meant operating outside the boundaries of the law or participating in the underground, informal economy, then they accepted that reality.

Crisis of Masculinity

During the Porfiriato (1870s to 1910), the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), and the post-revolutionary period (1920-1940), many elements of Mexican masculine culture remained constant.²⁰ Men continued to value honor, fighting prowess, and the masculine

¹⁸ Buffington calls the pelado, “a derogatory term for lower-class, mestizo (mixed-race) urban men.” Monsiváis remarks, “What is the pelado? The one who lacks everything, the prisoner, the one who lacks even the clothes a porter would wear, the companion to the leper...” Buffington, “Toward a Modern Sacrificial Economy;” Monsiváis, *Escenas*, 88-89.

¹⁹ Ramos, 270.

²⁰ The Porfiriato is commonly associated with elite Victorian morals, a development of industry and infrastructure, and an extreme gap between rich and poor. Note that historians of Mexico debate when

privileges bestowed by patriarchy. Poor men enjoyed masculine entertainment cultures based around drinking *pulque* (an alcoholic beverage) while wealthy men formed masculine subcultures around reading men's magazines and advice manuals.²¹ Indeed, many of these long-standing plebeian and elite gendered practices had persisted since the colonial period.

Yet, Mexican masculinity, or at least elite perceptions of Mexican masculinity, experienced a series of crises during the nineteenth century.²² Upper-class Mexicans had been humiliated by the United States (1846-1848) and French (1862-1867) invasions. These military defeats, combined with nineteenth-century racist European racial ideas, increasingly stigmatized Mexico as a non-white nation. They caused elites to believe Mexico suffered from "insufficient manliness."²³ Porfirian-era Mexicans witnessed what Victor Macías-González has characterized as "the emergence of a less aggressive, more emotive, urbane, middle-class masculinity."²⁴ One writer, Heriberto Frías, wrote "The

the Revolution ended and when the post-revolutionary period ended. For the purposes of this analysis, the Revolution ended in 1920 with the rise of the Obregonista faction and the post-revolutionary period ended in 1940 with the departure of populist president Lázaro Cárdenas.

²¹ Not just wealthy Mexicans read advice manuals. Victor Macías-González notes that middle-class and lower-middle-class readers also looked to these manuals so as to better resemble elite "honor, ethnicity, gender, and rules of consumerism." Victor Macías-González, "Hombres de mundo: la masculinidad, el consumo, y los manuales de urbanidad y buenad maneras," in *Orden social e identidad de género. Mexico Siglos XIX y XX*, eds. María Teresa Fernández-Aceves, Carmen Ramos-Escandón, and Susie Porter (Guadalajara: CIESAS-Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006), 267.

²² For an excellent discussion of how Porfirian elites believed masculinity was in crisis, see Robert Buffington, "Toward a Modern Sacrificial Economy: Violence Against Women and Male Subjectivity in Turn-of-the-Century Mexico City," in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 157-195.

²³ Macías-González and Rubenstein, 9.

²⁴ Victor M. Macías-González, "The Lagartijo at the High Life: Masculine Consumption, Race, Nation, and Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 236.

Porfirian dictatorship, sanctioned and supported by the rich, the military, and the clergy, systematically tried to abolish the virility of the middle class, particularly in the Federal District, where employees and professionals formed a corrupted court living in a state of serfdom.”²⁵ It is not clear exactly what Frías meant by the middle class—he might have meant professionals employed by the state. But what is clear is that he noticed wealthy Mexicans becoming concerned about a perceived "crisis of masculinity" in which the wealthy were becoming effeminate and the poor were becoming increasingly immoral and criminal.²⁶

By the twentieth century, some ads promoted an image of virile, heterosexual masculinity, other advertisers fused this image with fashion and modernity and sold clothes and lotions to young male dandies. Macías-González connected Porfirian virility ads with a growing middle-class male consumer culture.²⁷ 1920s ads for sexual aids emphasized how electric shock treatments and tonics would increase “virility.”²⁸ One ad presented an image of a muscled man wearing shorts and boots (akin to those worn by boxers), folding his arms across his chest.²⁹ Newspaper ads commonly advertised tonics and other products that promoted physical fitness and an end to sexual impotence, this growing male consumer culture contributed to some intellectuals’ fears that the nation’s men were becoming less manly. One deputy who attended the 1917 Constitutional

²⁵ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 22.

²⁶ Robert Buffington, “Toward a Modern Sacrificial Economy,” 160-161; and Macías-González and Rubenstein, “Introduction,” 9-11. A crisis of masculinity also developed in Europe and the United States during this period, see Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 9.

²⁷ Macías-González, “Lagartijo,” 236.

²⁸ “Enfermedades Secretas,” *El Demócrata*, 2 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 7.

²⁹ See “Toniquina,” *El Demócrata*, vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 4, 2 January 1920.

Convention in Querétaro asserted that the true revolutionaries were from the north and that soldiers from Mexico City were “fifis, gentlemen, fifis with decorated uniforms, who [do nothing] more than fill the cafés and houses of prostitution in the capital.”³⁰ Fifis were fashionable young men, often associated with new patterns of consumer spending and popular entertainment, including dance halls and films.³¹

Revolutionary Masculinity

Due to the extensive and prolonged violence during the Revolution, Mexicans came to associate masculinity with what one has called “bloody ostentation, action, and cruelty.”³² There was no shortage of warriors, especially leaders like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, who represented themselves in a violent, hyper-masculine manner.³³

Machismo increasingly achieved a new meaning—it connoted an aggressive, brave, and

³⁰ Katherine E. Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 76.

³¹ For a more detailed discussion of the term “fifi,” see Chapter 2 of this dissertation. See also, Susanne Einegel, “Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico-City’s Middle Class, 1890-1940,” (PhD Diss, University of Maryland, 2011), 120-121, 124, 127, 204, 207, 227 and Macías-González, “The Lagartijo at the High Life,” 227-249.

³² Carlos Monsivaís, “El Mundo Soslayado (Donde se Mezclan la Confesión y la Proclama),” in *Estadua de sal, Salvador Novo*. México: Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, 1998, 19. For an excellent study of the relationship between violence and masculinity, see Ana María Alonso’s work. She found that from the late eighteenth century through the early twentieth century, the colonial and post-colonial state used gender as a state policy in the highlands of Chihuahua. She notes that officials sponsored a “warrior spirit among *serrano* men.” Frontier warriors used gendered violence, such as castration, against Apaches. Alonso also posits that *serrano* men gained masculine prestige through their control of community lands their control of women. Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico’s Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 7, 74.

³³ Macías-González and Rubenstein, “Introduction,” 10. Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican Representations of Masculinity: From Sensuality to Bloodshed* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 55. Mexican revolutionary masculinity emphasized violence and admiration for the pantheon of revolutionary-era warriors. In contrast, in 1970s Chile, a revolutionary masculinity developed among the young which promoted what Florencia Mallon calls “a heroic, resistant, and romantic subjectivity.” Florencia Mallon, “Barbudos, Warriors, and Rotos: The MIR, Masculinity, and Power in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1965-1974,” in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 181-183.

misogynist warrior.³⁴ During the late 1910s and 1920s, the Mexican revolutionary heroes Francisco Madero, Álvaro Obregón, and Venustiano Carranza (the cults of Zapata and Villa would come later) became father figures and parades, speeches, and newspapers all eulogized these men. Madero was not, by any stretch of the imagination, associated with warrior masculinity. Instead, trained as a businessman and hacienda manager, he embodied technocratic masculinity. Presidents Madero and Carranza came from wealthy families and were seen by Mexicans as being civilians and strategists. In contrast, Obregón, Zapata, and Villa all came from humble origins and were seen as warriors as much as they were military strategists.³⁵

If the Revolution glorified masculine heroes and the rural men who fought, it emasculated those capitalino men who did not fight.³⁶ General Álvaro Obregón embodied a quintessential example of the masculine war hero combining military expertise (his faction won the war due in no small part to his tactical ability) and sacrifice (he lost his arm at the Battle of Celaya). During a 1914 speech in Mexico City Obregón praised Señorita María Arias Bernal, a schoolteacher who fought alongside

³⁴ Carlos Monsiváis, *Escenas de pudor y liviandad* (México: Grijalbo, 1988), 103-105; Ilene O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 61, 81, 101-104, 138-140.

³⁵ See John Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1968); Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Jürgen Buchenau, *The Last Caudillo: Alvaro Obregón and the Mexican Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). See also, Knight on rational vs. irrational revolutionaries, Alan Knight, "Peasant and Caudillo in Revolutionary Mexico," in *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, ed. David Brading (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 17-58.

³⁶ Ilene O'Malley speculates, "The caste hierarchy of the Porfiriato had deprived lower-class men of their masculinity, or personhood, in that it brutalized their physical existence and denied them socio-political equality with upper-class men." While she does not further develop this claim (she is more interested in analyzing how the Revolution developed a masculine cult of personality), her idea suggests why so many rural poor men in Mexico were willing to support the Revolution's challenge to the status quo—they viewed the Revolution as opportunity to assert their masculinity. O'Malley, 136.

Constitutionalist troops, and criticized capitalino men for not fighting. He proclaimed, “Men who can carry a gun and did not, for fear of leaving their homes, have no excuse. I abandoned my children and, as I know how to admire valor, I cede my pistol to the Señorita Arias, who is the only one worthy of carrying it.”³⁷ The war hero emphasized both Señorita Arias’ and his willingness to leave families behind as they fought for the revolutionary cause. Moreover, he lambasted those capitalino men who did not do likewise.

Mexicans never really associated the DF with revolutionary masculinity in the same way they did with Zapata’s of Morelos and the northern states of Mexico that produced Obregón and Villa. In fact, capitalino men acquired a reputation of not participating in the Revolution’s fighting and some Mexicans came to gradually associate urban Mexico City with effete non-masculine neutrality.³⁸ Demographics may also have contributed to the stereotype. Sex imbalance between men and women might have contributed to the idea that the city lacked appropriate masculinity. A majority of the residents in the capital were women (54 percent in 1895 and 55 percent in 1930) whereas men outnumbered women in the revolutionary north of Mexico.³⁹ At any rate, Mexican

³⁷ John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 299.

³⁸ Scholars generally recognize that Mexico City’s urban working class avoided the armed phase of the Revolution (with the exception of one labor federation, the Casa de Obrero Mundial, that sent between 5,000 to 12,000 workers to fight as part of the anarchist Red Battalions). Alan Knight, “The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, c. 1900-1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16 (1984): 68; and John Mason Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 135.

³⁹ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 22-23.

intellectuals' debates over whether revolutionary masculinity had dispelled the ghosts of the Porfirian crisis of masculinity continued into the 1920s.⁴⁰

Leisure Time and Entertainment Culture Masculinity

During the 1920s, popular culture transmitted ideas of sexuality, masculinity, and femininity to a Mexican audience as fans interacted with silent film, cinema, radio, and recordings. *Salones de baile* (dance halls) like the Salón México and the Salón Los Angeles were places where working-class men performed hyper-heterosexual masculinities through dancing and flirting. Jazz bands with names like Los Tacos de Jazz played in cross-class venues and offended conservative sensibilities. A transnational dance craze of edgy, sexualized, provocative, and music—the shimmy, the foxtrot, the danzón, and the Charleston—swept the nation. New masculine and feminine archetypes like the bodybuilders and the flapper became popular.⁴¹ Cabarets flourished, featuring highly “sensualized” shows like the bataclán burlesque genre.⁴²

Sports and physical fitness trends also affected capitalinos' masculinity. The “Cult of Hygiene,” as one physical fitness newspaper column was called, encouraged both Mexican men and women to develop leaner muscular bodies.⁴³ Health officials

⁴⁰ Robert Irwin McKee, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser., eds., “Introduction, Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901,” in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 15.

⁴¹ For an analysis of *pelonas* (flappers) in Mexico, see Ann Rubenstein, “The War on ‘Las Pelonas’: Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 57-80.

⁴² “Tragico Fin de Una Vida de Hampa y Orgia,” *El Demócrata*, 2 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 1, 10.; “El Comisario de la Tercera Está Complicado en los Sucesos del Salón Allende,” *El Demócrata*, 3 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1047, p. 2.

⁴³ This was a transnational craze. See Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

encouraged both women and men to exercise, but weight-lifting and team sports, including baseball and basketball, represented quintessential masculine activities and other sports, like tennis, acrobatics, and aerobics, increasingly became associated with women.⁴⁴ As such, sports sharpened the divide between men and women.

Labor and State Masculinity

Since colonial times, a subset of the Mexican popular classes had identified with and aspired to embody the masculine privileges associated with attaining artisan status. Only by undergoing a rigorous process of apprenticeship and journeyman labor could a man attain master artisan status. The artisan was a pillar of responsible, family-oriented manhood. In contrast, officials perceived younger apprentices who had not yet become journeymen or master artisans as being less responsible. One 1788 report noted “Those that are seen in pulquerías are all of the infamous plebeian or the lowest class of artisans.”⁴⁵ Artisan’s high status in guilds and mutual aid societies contributed to their embodying ideal plebeian masculinity. Carlos Ilades and Roberto de la Cerda Silva argue that by the end of the nineteenth century the formal guild system which allowed for the master artisan process no longer operated. The late colonial and republican governments had systematically eliminated guilds’ charters and monopolies. Furthermore, mechanization and de-skilling reduced the need for skilled artisans.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Anne Rubenstein, “The War on Las Pelonas: Modern Women and their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 59.

⁴⁵ Robert Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen*, 24.

⁴⁶ Carlos Ilades notes that in nineteenth-century Mexico the decline of the formal guild system forced apprentices, journeymen, and master artisans to realize they all had a set of common interests and, consequently, they formed the first Mexican mutual aid societies. Carlos Illades, “De Los Gremios a las

Artisans were often leaders in the mutual aid society movement of the nineteenth century and the union movement of the twentieth century. During the Porfiriato, mutual aid societies operated primarily as mutual-assistant organizations rather than unions. Many mutual aid associations enjoyed ties to the Porfirian state and also had financial ties to employers.⁴⁷ Some Mexicans asserted that mutual aid societies were less militant than unions. The newspaper *Obrero Mexicano* remarked, “It is time for our citizens to put their own interests before the music of parades, put the country before Bengal rockets; do some thinking instead of eating Salvatierra crackers. It is time our numerous workers’ associations stop wasting their goodwill by parading their banners before the National Palace . . . It is time for something more dignified and more practical.”⁴⁸ The writer perceived mutual aid societies as insufficiently assertive. By the 1900s, textile, oil workers, and miners’ unions had begun filling this void by increasingly striking, although most of these strikes failed.

While strikers’ pickets had usually failed during the Porfiriato and the Revolution, the 1920s marked a new chapter in the history of organized labor and the state in

Sociedades de Socorros Mutuos: El Artesenado Mexicano, 1814-1853,” 1814-1853,” *Estudio de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* 13 (2006), www.iih.unam.mx/moderna/ehmc/ehmc13/164.html.

Roberto de la Cerda Silva, *El movimiento obrero en México* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad Autónoma de México, 1961), 65; see also, Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 70. While a study of Mexican guilds’ gendered rhetoric remains to be done, William Sewell noted that French guilds praised artisans’ masculinity. Sewell noticed French workers used masculine language such as “fecund sweat” in their petitions. William H. Sewell Jr., *Workers and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 214.

⁴⁷ David Walker, “The Mexican Industrial Revolution and its Problems: Porfirian Labor Policy and Economic Dependency, 1876-1910,” M.A. Thesis, University of Houston, 1976.

⁴⁸ Tony Morgan, “Proletarians, Politicos, and Patriarchs: The Use and Abuse of Cultural Customs in the Early Industrialization of Mexico City, 1880-1910,” in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, eds. William Beezley and Cheryl English Martin (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 165.

Mexico.⁴⁹ The 1920s brought new power for union as wages rose, strikes often succeeded, and government arbitration boards ruled in unions' favor. Masculinity increasingly became associated with unions as union assertiveness increased. Workers also resisted owners' attempts to mechanize and "deskill" the workplace, albeit with less success.⁵⁰

By 1920, a populist government had emerged from the Revolution and this post-revolutionary state affected masculinity by seeking to help the peasant and the urban proletarian alike. By courting the popular classes the state invoked a new-found respect for the common male worker and peasant. Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution established progressive reforms that legalized labor's right to organize and to receive state protection. The state promoted the idea of the "New Man" and the "New Woman" in an effort to inculcate revolutionary ideals of appropriate masculine and feminine behavior. Officials conceived of the New Man as a sober, hygienic, family-oriented, revolutionary male.⁵¹ The government perceived the New Woman as a nurturing, hygienic, family-oriented, revolutionary woman. The state also embraced transnational ideas of child welfare and erected institutions, like Mexico City's Juvenile Court, to

⁴⁹ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of unions in Mexico City during the 1910s.

⁵⁰ Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 34-36.

⁵¹ Beatriz Urías Horcasitas, "El 'Hombre Nuevo' de La Posrevolución," *Revista Letras Libres* (May 2007): 8-61. Carlos Monsiváis, "El Mundo Soslayado (Donde se Mezclan la Confesión y la Proclama)," in *Estatua de sal, Salvador Novo* (México: Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, 1998), 19.

shape Mexican youths' masculinity.⁵² These efforts and institutions represented the nascent state's desire to establish a new masculine hegemony.

The state also used masculinity to reinforce existing patriarchal and heterosexual norms.⁵³ Masculinity granted men patriarchal privileges denied to women. Historian Mary Kay Vaughan notes that the 1920s and 1930s represent a period during which the post-revolutionary state sought to inculcate a type of responsible masculinity, what she calls a "modernization of patriarchy."⁵⁴ The Public Education Ministry organized athletics programs, wrote textbooks, and designed curricula that tried to shift rural men away from "an alcoholic, religious, and *machista* sociability" and toward a sober, responsible, virile, and secular masculinity. Officials were concerned that the urban poor lived in *amasiato* relationships rather than religious or civil marriages. In this process, government agencies, including the Public Education Ministry and the Labor Department, and workers' groups, including unions affiliated with the CROM and the CGT, operated within the same gendered framework.

By the 1920s, some state officials and many organized workers emphasized an idealized form of respectable masculinity, proletarian masculinity, that included traits like

⁵² For more on the state's efforts to shape Mexican youths, see Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Sexual Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1982); Ann S. Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Susan Sosenski, *Niños en acción: El trabajo infantil en la ciudad de México (1920-1934)*. (México: El Colegio de México, 2010); Patience A. Schell, *Church and State Education in Revolutionary Mexico City* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003); and Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁵³ For more on how various individuals and groups in Mexico perpetuated and challenged patriarchy (sometimes simultaneously), see Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women*; Robert Buffington, "Toward a Modern Sacrificial Economy," 157-195; and Kristina Boylan, "Gendering the Faith and Altering the Nation: Mexican Catholic Women's Activism, 1917-1940," in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 199-222.

⁵⁴ Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics*, 40-42.

skill, hard work, honor, honesty, responsibility (especially to family and to union), heterosexuality, sobriety, and, above all, productivity. Some of those who praised proletarian masculinity drew very arbitrary distinctions between workers. A city inspector, Hipólito Amor, praised those who went to street theaters (carpas):

The public that goes to these spectacles is generally from the lower class and these laborers and workers are a little better than the masses. They pay to spend two or three hours in carpas that are very low-class. But we must ensure these venues continue to operate because the carpa is always preferable to the tavern. They spend more money in taverns and taverns stultify them. While they don't become enlightened in carpas, they at least entertain themselves in a healthy and less immoral manner than the centers of vice.⁵⁵

Amor carved out a clear difference between more responsible workers and the less responsible and less sober “mass” of workers.

While many workers, union leaders, and officials alike associated proletarian masculinity with industrial, unionized, and skilled workers, most workers in Mexico did not belong to unions, although many still identified with the proletarian masculinity. It is possible that some workers only adopted a discourse of proletarian masculinity in order to solicit favors, rights, and protections from the state that promoted it. Nevertheless, internal union documents and the union press suggest that many workers valued proletarian masculinity. This type of masculinity had been present during the Porfirian period within the anarchist labor tradition, but by the 1920s, corporatist, Catholic, and even company unions emphasized proletarian masculinity as well. Despite the loss of skilled manufacturing jobs, the skilled factory worker of the 1920s retained the masculine prowess which had been associated with the independent artisan during the Porfiriato.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ City inspector report by Hipólito Amor, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1708, 22 August 1922.

⁵⁶ With the rise of manufacturing, the number of independent artisans declined in many sectors of the economy except for construction trades. Mexico's skilled textile artisan workforce dropped from

Government agencies, including the SEP and the Labor Department, and many unions, promoted a similar, gendered framework around the concept of proletarian masculinity, which was susceptible to negotiation by workers themselves. Both state agencies and unions presented a particular type of masculinity as ideal and, in so doing, tied gender beliefs and practices to their organizations' development.

Yet, some within the labor movement also expressed other masculinities including what might be called "abnegado masculinity." Abnegado manhood can be defined as workers representing themselves as being utterly self-sacrificing in their familial or union duties. It is a masculine corollary to the more common term *abnegada*, which refers to women who are more self-sacrificing than men, and in fact sacrificing to men and the family.⁵⁷ It is difficult to whether *abnegado* masculinity represented a belief, a rhetoric directed at the state labor hierarchy, or both. Yet, referencing *abnegado* masculinity was an option available to capitalino workers during the 1920s.

Some sources acknowledged that men could embody the *abnegado*. In an article in the *Revista de Policía*, writer Leandro Joseph called the police "abnegados." He praised "...the suffering police officer . . . the police officer is an individual full of good will and thanks to him the citizens can rest while he, the *abnegado*, serves."⁵⁸ In

41,000 in 1895 to 12,000 in 1912. Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 58.

⁵⁷ One group of women workers called themselves the "most exploited" by their employer and "forgotten" by government officials in a petition. Petition by Gremio de Los Empleados de Zapaterías to President Calles, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 724, Expediente 7, 16 March 1923. femininity is sometimes called *marianismo* due to its association with Mother Mary Madonna. For a good description of *abnegadas*, see Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 15-17. For an excellent analysis of how women workers used *abnegada* rhetoric in their petitions, see Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourse and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 119-124.

⁵⁸ Leandro Joseph, "Los Gendarmes y El Teatro Bufo," *La Revista de Policía*, año 1, tomo 1, no. 4, p. 6, 30 December 1925.

addition, a 1920 ad in *El Demócrata* celebrated the New Year by proclaiming that the periodical, “In the spirit of the New Year, wishes for peace and prosperity for the glorious and abnegado Army of the Republic.”⁵⁹ Obregón, for his service and wartime injury, also embodied abnegado masculinity. Police and soldiers were agents of the state, capable of using violence to establish order. Yet, through their sacrifice they could also encompass abnegado gendered meanings. Yet, when union workers claimed sacrifice, they were not sacrificing proletarian masculinity, but enacting socio-political hierarchies. They needed the protection they sought from employers, the state, and their own leaders.

Popular-class masculinity also encompassed duty to family. It was not uncommon for workers to reference family responsibilities when presenting workplace demands. When asking for a wage increases, shoe factory worker Pedro Zariñana told his employer that because he had two children, he desired a wage hike. The employer balked at this request and so Zariñana went to the Labor Department asking the state to intervene.⁶⁰ After the worker, the employer, and the Labor Department inspector met, the owner agreed to a one-time ninety-peso bonus. In another instance, a group of Mexico City railroad workers petitioned the Labor Department complaining the railroad company had unjustly taken away their jobs and that this job loss “meant nothing less than the loss of the resources that, with our honest labor, we need to support our families.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ “1920,” *El Demócrata*, vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 2, 2 January 1920.

⁶⁰ Report and covering letter from labor inspector Juan de Beraza sent to Jefe del Departamento de Trabajo Don Julio Pulat, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 222, Expediente 22, 26 March 1920.

⁶¹ Petition by Julio Hernández, Luis Pacheco, Anastasio Perles, and other companions to the DT, R6, 208, Caja 212, Expediente 8, 21 September 1920.

One textile union's petition also used the rhetoric of the suffering worker. In the petition, workers at the textile factory San Fernando de Soria identified the following workplace grievances: excessive work hours, poor wages, work without compensation, having to remain at work without pay while factory owners halted work while they tried to scrounge up materials, inadequate and inferior housing (the petition noted that their housing was "fit only for pigs"), and lack of education for their children (they complained "our children cannot learn about hygiene").⁶² The union's workers declared themselves "victims," insisting they had "endured all of this with patience." They asked the Labor Department to do whatever it could to assist them. The Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Board (JFCA) held a joint hearing between the union and the firm to resolve this dispute, but, unfortunately, the records did not indicate what happened after this hearing was held.⁶³ However, the textile union's actions represent a growing consciousness about rights—the right to clean living conditions and education.

Conclusion

This project is a historical study about shifts in gender and those shifts relationship to class during a very precise time period, beginning with the 1917 Constitution and ending with the PNR's formation in 1929. The five processes analyzed in this chapter demonstrate how this period was tied to previous and subsequent periods in Mexican history.

⁶² Petition from *Obreros y Obreras* de la Fábrica de San Fernando de Soria to the JFCA, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 29, Expediente 928/326, March 4, 1928.

⁶³ Fortunately, most JFCA records do include the board's final ruling. A group of fourteen men signed the petition, but no women signed the document despite the fact that women also were union members and worked at the factory. The union called itself *Obreros y Obreras* de la Fábrica de San Fernando de Soria. *Obrero* refers to a male worker and *obrero* refers to a female worker.

The 1917-1929 period represents a window in which working-class gendered practices manifested themselves in ways which were “new,” especially through transnational popular culture and through labor unions. Yet, many other plebeian gendered practices, including workplace masculine cultures and gendered family dynamics, were not new—they dated back to the colonial period. Consequently, this is a study of processes of contrasts, interactions, and exchanges between long-standing gendered practices and beliefs and newer 1920s gendered practices and beliefs. The fascinating tension between the old and new masculine dynamics underscores the tensions between hegemonic and alternate masculinities.

Chapter 2, Youth Masculinities

When we ask ourselves, “Who is a child?” or “What is childhood?” we often think the answer is self-evident. On reflection, however, we quickly realize that there is no single correct answer. Instead we come to understand that what we might view as immutable—the definitions of children and childhood—are, in fact, rich and complex ideas that go beyond simple reductions.¹

-Historian Ondina E. González

During the 1920s, a reformist, post-revolutionary government recognized new transnational ideas about childhood and child welfare, especially the concept that older children were not yet adults. Reformers viewed older children as being in a stage of emotional, physical, social, and psychological development. Child welfare experts such as doctors, psychologists, and social workers began viewing childhood as a unique “biological phase” during which minors’ development should be encouraged and influenced as well as nurtured. These officials forged new concepts about childhood and established new institutions such as the Mexico City Juvenile Court.

These child welfare reformers created opportunities for popular-class minors, their families, and the state to communicate, challenge, and share beliefs and practices about plebeian masculinity.² New ideas of childhood offered these groups a framework with which to adapt to and create new categories of masculinity and to refashion older masculine traditions. These children and young adults rejected, proposed alternatives to,

¹ Ondina E. González, “Introduction, Children of the Empire,” in *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*, eds. Ondina E. González and Bianca Premo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 3.

² Elsa Muñiz, “Los Jóvenes Eligidos: México en La Decada de Los Veinte,” in *Historias de los jóvenes en México: Su presencia en el Siglo XX*, eds. Islas Pérez, J. Antonio, y Maritza Arteaga (México: Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2004), 162; Susana Sosenski, *Niños en acción: El trabajo infantil en la ciudad de México, 1920-1934* (México: El Colegio de México, 2010), 37, 45, 155, 265-274; Ann S. Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xxi; Ann Blum, “Speaking of Work and Family: Reciprocity, Child Labor, and Social Reproduction, Mexico City, 1920-1940,” *HAHR* 91:1 (2011): 68.

or accepted middle-class masculine “hegemonic masculinity” norms advocated by the juvenile court’s officials. When a social worker sat down with a family during a home visit, she or he represented proof that the modern post-revolutionary state had begun to grant the popular classes a new-found respect (at least rhetorically). Yet, these state agents’ desire to reform the urban poor echoed attitudes elites had held towards the poor since the colonial period.

Youths and their families used the juvenile court system as an arena in which to represent themselves as responsible examples of working-class Mexican masculinity.³ Others used the court to present particular plebeian practices as legitimate despite elites’ complaints to the contrary. Parents manipulated the idea of the long-suffering mother or father and framed these sacrifices in gendered language in their petitions to the state. For some individuals, the goal might have been to achieve the symbolic legitimacy of respectable masculinity. Others sought to improve their material conditions by attaining an education or learning a trade.

This chapter poses the following questions. How did boys’ interactions with the state’s juvenile justice system shape their masculine beliefs? How did they perform gender in mixed-sex and same-sex entertainment spaces? How did adults’ and youths’ ideas about childhood, class, and masculinity affect youths’ everyday life experiences? To echo historian Joan Scott, how did these boys and young men engage in the “contestations, negations, or affirmations” of gender?⁴

³ The Juvenile Court generally targeted the working class. Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 184.

⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History, Revised Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 88.

Those who study childhood in Latin America initially focused on adult's disciplinary regimes. These scholars, influenced by Michel Foucault's work, studied how the state disciplined children through adult regimes of control.⁵ Subsequent studies still used this approach, but balanced it by also exploring children's lived experiences and how youths affected change.⁶ Regardless of their approach, historians of childhood characterize their field as nascent but growing. By analyzing how gender hierarchies affected children, this chapter joins a small but growing sub-field within childhood history historiography.⁷

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows: I start by analyzing how Mexico City Juvenile Court social workers and the popular-class families with whom they interacted negotiated what plebeian masculinity meant. I then shift to exploring the masculine street culture of urban, poor youths and demonstrate how these boys and young men sought to legitimate their masculine subcultures through their negotiations with the courts. I do this by investigating three facets of plebeian youths' street culture: I explore the subculture of homosexual youths in the city and move understandings of masculinity beyond a heterosexual framework, I demonstrate how movie theaters served

⁵ For an example of this second body of scholarship, see Barbara Potthast and Sandra Carreras, eds., *Entre la familia, la sociedad, y el estado: Niños y jóvenes en América Latina* (siglos XIX-XX) (Madrid: Instituto Iberoamericano, 2005).

⁶ Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 25-26; Tobias Hecht, "Introduction," *Minor Omissions: Children in Latin American History and Society*, ed. Tobias Hecht (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002): 5, 7-12.

⁷ Nara B. Milanich, *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 15; Erica Windler, "City of Children: Boys, Girls, Family, and State in Imperial Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," PhD Diss, University of Miami, 2003; and Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005).

as arenas for contests over masculinity, and, finally, I explore paperboys and how they developed their own masculine street subcultures.

The Mexico City Juvenile Court

Ideas of what constituted “childhood” or “youth” were very much in flux in the capital during the 1920s. Child welfare experts began perceiving that, while all stages of life’s cycle, from infancy to old age, affected an individual’s gender practices and beliefs, the formative years of puberty and young adulthood most strongly affected gender and sexuality.⁸ Consequently, reformers began perceiving childhood as including a stage called adolescence, an age group that Ann Blum defines as “a relatively new social category.”⁹ Psychologists, doctors, social workers, and others were increasingly using the term “adolescent” during this period in the U.S., Europe, and Latin America.¹⁰ Also, during the 1920s, parents, officials, and the press fiercely debated how to reduce young women’s—but not necessarily young men’s—sexual activity.¹¹ As historians Katherine

⁸ See Elsa S. Guevara Ruiseñor, *Cuando el amor se instala en la modernidad: intimidad, masculinidad, y jóvenes en México* (México, Distrito Federal: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, 2010), 56; and Sarah Chinn, *Inventing Modern Adolescence: The Children of Immigrants in Turn-of-the-Century America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

⁹ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, xxv-xxvi.

¹⁰ Two of my sources use the term adolescent: a Juvenile Court judge and an anonymous magazine writer. See Judge’s ruling, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 14, 27 November 1928; “La Policía Moderna,” *La Revista de Policía*, 25 July 1925, año 2, tomo 1, no. 18, p. 9. Katherine E. Bliss and Ann S. Blum, “Dangerous Driving: Adolescence, Sex, and the Gendered Experience of Public Space in Early-Twentieth-Century Mexico City,” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, eds. William E. French and Katherine E. Bliss (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 166.

¹¹ Officials and family members often promoted a sexual double standard in which it was acceptable for young men to experiment with sexuality, but young women who did so were strongly condemned and sometimes cast out of the home. Historian Franca Iacovetta argued that studies of masculinity must integrate “and seriously dissect men’s privilege and power.” Franca Iacovetta, “Defending Honour, Demanding Respect: Manly Discourse and Gendered Practice in Two Construction Strikes, Toronto, 1960-1961,” in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, eds. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell (Toronto: Oxford University

Bliss and Ann Blum note, “Parental and official concerns over adolescent sexual behavior reached new heights in this period of rapid cultural and demographic transformation of the capital.”¹² These changes also provoked debates among adults about adolescent sexuality and young women’s entry into dance halls and movie theaters.

In the 1920s, the post-revolutionary government began using education, the arts, and other social arenas—including child welfare—to promote its integrationist and reformist agenda. Many doctors, nuns, priests, Catholic lay activists, government officials, and teachers joined what Blum called “an army of experts” who worked to reform the child welfare system.¹³ Reformers organized conferences throughout the hemisphere and in May of 1920 the First Congress of the Child opened in Mexico City to great fanfare. Many attended the event, listening to presentations by various child welfare advocates.¹⁴ A subsequent congress took place in 1923.¹⁵ Both congresses were international in tenor as many European and U.S. child welfare activists attended. These reformers’ actions and the events they organized contributed to the founding of Mexico’s first juvenile court system.

Press, 1999): 200. For more on the role of patriarchy within the family, see Chapter 3, Family Masculinities.

¹² Bliss and Blum, 164-165.

¹³ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 134.

¹⁴ “La Primera Sesión del Congreso del Niño,” *Demócrata*, 4 January 1921, v. 6, no. 1403, p. 2. Also, on p. 3 in the regular “Glosa del Día” section there is also a report on the Congress.

¹⁵ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 138.

Using the Chicago Juvenile Court as a template, the federal government established the Mexico City Juvenile Court in 1926.¹⁶ The police would no longer return youths to the dangerous streets or place them in jails where adults could corrupt them.¹⁷ Instead, they could now transfer the youths to the court, housed in a former mansion surrounded by finely-groomed gardens, where officials would house, monitor, assess, educate, and moralize the youths, using the newest tools of psychology, medicine, and education. The states' clients were to be poor children, both girls and boys; approximately 70 percent of the court's clients were from the working class.¹⁸ The law defined a child as anyone under the age of fourteen or, if the minor had no parents or guardians, under the age of seventeen, although officials often committed fifteen-year-old or sixteen-year-old adolescents who had plebeian parents or guardians to the juvenile justice system.¹⁹ The court won praise from many. In the magazine *Revista de Policía*, a columnist pointed to the court as proof that Mexico City's police were modernizing along the same lines as those of other nations and, in the process, Mexico was throwing off a colonial legacy of inefficiency inherited from Spain.²⁰

¹⁶ Katherine E. Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 106; Blum, *Domestic Economies, 192-193*.

¹⁷ Federico Gamboa, "Clinica de Almas," *El Universal*, 18 November 1931. Since the mid 1800s, some reformers in Mexico had urged the state to create a juvenile justice system. Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 91.

¹⁸ Ann Blum, "Speaking of Work," 85.

¹⁹ La Ley sobre la Previsión Social de la Delincuencia Infantil en el DF y el Reglamento del Tribunal para Menores, see letter from Jefe de Oficina del DF named German Herrera sent to the President of the Trib.AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 23, 23 November 1929.

²⁰ Mauricio Magdaleno, "Por La Raza," *La Revista de Policía*, 25 July 1927, Año 2, Tomo 1, no. 32, p. 10.

Social workers were the juvenile court's foot soldiers. Formal social worker training had just begun in the 1920s. Most had not yet received formal schooling in modern case-management approaches and theories. Consequently, they used long-standing Catholic methods in which social workers envisioned themselves as charity workers providing moral uplift. Assuming the poor were poor because of some psychological weakness, they saw themselves as working with clients to cure the weakness.²¹ Only in the 1930s did Mexican state social workers begin to adopt U.S. training practices and case-management techniques. The profession opened an excellent career opportunity to popular-class and middle-class women. Bliss remarks, "...over time, the profession had attracted primarily young, unmarried, educated women, but counted some older widows and men among its members as well."²² Social workers represented the government's agents in the post-revolutionary state's efforts to "moralize" the population; the term *moralización* often appears in their notes.

A girl or boy who entered the juvenile court system had to weave her or his (26 out of 101 minors in my sample set were female) way through a bureaucratic maze.²³ First, a police officer detained an adolescent suspected of perpetrating a crime although,

²¹ Nichole Sanders, *Gender and Welfare in Mexico: The Consolidation of a Postrevolutionary State* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011): 117-120.

²² Bliss, 109.

²³ To obtain this chapter's statistics regarding male-female ratios and trade data, I analyzed a sample set of 100 case records. The sample set was random. I chose the first 100 cases in the first file starting with Box 1, Folder 1 (which started with the board's founding in 1927). However, I removed any records from the sample set which did not include a social worker report (most files did include such a report). This sample set is not representative of the working class as a whole because it only includes records from those families that interacted with the Juvenile Court. Nevertheless, it provides thumbnail sketches of this segment of the Mexico City working class. My set actually includes 101 youths because one of the cases—a rapto case—investigated two youths in the same case file. Rapto was the act of having sex with a woman after having promised to marry her and then renegeing on that promise. The criminal justice system considered this a crime.

in some cases, a concerned family member turned a minor into the police for suspected crimes or perceived immoral behavior. Next, a medical official would often assess the child's health, especially in cases of sexual violence.²⁴ The police then transferred the youth to an observation center. Observation House officials monitored the individual's activities and interactions with her or his peers. While the detainee remained in the holding area of the observation house, a social worker conducted a series of interviews with the youth and also visited the minor's family or guardians and neighbors. These interviews formed the core of the court records as they covered many aspects of a child's life: peer relationships; sexuality; relations with family; plans for their future employment; leisure activities including what types of films they enjoyed; and, if old enough to work, what they did for a living. Then an educational specialist conducted a series of tests with the detainee, including a literacy test, assessing the level of the individual's education. Finally, the three judges who served on the Mexico City Juvenile Court together produced a detailed ruling incorporating the entire body of evidence. The ruling determined whether or not the adolescent would enter into the juvenile justice system, consisting of various boys' homes, girls' homes, and industrial schools, or be returned to family or guardians.

Night school was arena in which the young, their families, and state officials negotiated masculinity. Youths and their families promoted a responsible proletarian

²⁴ These sources frequently criticized the poor for not having appropriate hygiene. Numerous reports record that a child's parents had syphilis or were alcoholics. Officials made these assessments even in cases when no official had conducted a home visit. In these cases, the medical officials either saw what they perceived to be congenital health defects, they wrote down verbatim the children's assessment about their parents, or the medical officials simply recorded their prejudices against the urban poor into the official records. For discussions of hygiene and eugenics in Latin America, see Nancy Leyes Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) and Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Reading in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

brand of masculinity by emphasizing their desire to attend night school. One young man, Jorge, told observation house staff he wanted to attend a night school to learn a trade and help his mother.²⁵ The board granted Jorge his freedom only if he agreed to attend night school, to live in the Public Dormitory, to allow regular visits by the Chief of Social Investigation and Protection, and to report to the courts every Sunday. Zeferina Cruz assured social worker Fernandina Poulat that if the courts released her son, J. Guadalupe, his stepfather and she would ensure he attended school at night while working during the day as a bricklayer and a shoeshine boy.²⁶ The parents of another minor, Gabino, also promised to send their child to night school if he was released. They noted they could not send Gabino to school during the day because they needed the money he gained selling gum as a street vendor.²⁷

In his memoirs, poet and playwright Ricardo Garibay also recalls that he could not attend school during the day because he had to help his mother out at home. He remarked, “Men, machos, charcoal sellers, chile sellers, shoemakers, and maids without husbands went to night school. Women and boys who were still in knee pants went to school during the day.”²⁸ He developed a peer group at night school and he remembers trying to convince his best friend that he was “just as manly” as their peers.²⁹ He

²⁵ CTMI Judges’ Ruling, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 6, May 26, 1927.

²⁶ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 71, June 2, 1927.

²⁷ Social worker report (social worker name not legible), AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 43, 24 September 1927.

²⁸ Ricardo Garibay, *Fiera infancia y otros años* (México: Ediciones Oceano, S.A., 1982), 15. Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 228. I learned of the Garibay through Patience Schell’s analysis of night schools, see Patience Schell, *Church and State Education in Revolutionary Mexico City* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 128-135.

²⁹ Garibay, 15.

developed a sense of pride in attending night school and he connected this pride to his masculinity.

Impoverished capitalinos often represented themselves as possessing a more sober, responsible masculinity featuring willingness to learn, respect for women, and hard work. For instance, Narciso promised that if the court released his younger brother, Candelario, he would be responsible in caring for Candelario and he would “...inculcate in him morals so that he would not return to delinquency.”³⁰ Another youth, Carlos, a fourteen-year old, objecting to his low wages, agreed with his mother to submit himself to the courts in order to learn a skilled trade—the desire to become an apprentice had long been part of plebeian masculinity.³¹ Carlos and his mother approached the Tribunal, hoping he would be admitted as a hardship case.³² To achieve their goals, these two families emphasized the same gendered traits that social workers sought to inculcate in their clients.

To manipulate social workers, those before the court could adopt middle-class gendered rhetoric. They might have known middle-class officials delighted in hearing stories in which plucky plebeian youths strove to get an education and, consequently, the poor crafted petitions referencing and aspiring to proletarian masculinity.³³ Recognizing

³⁰ Letter from Narciso Rodríguez to Escuela Directora, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 32, 6 November 1930. For a discussions of 1950s Mexican fears of youth delinquency, see Chapter 1 of Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 17-61 and Shari Orisich, “The Crucible of Youth: Juvenile Delinquency and the Making of Modern Mexico City, 1938-1968,” PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2012.

³¹ Social worker report by Bertha Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 6, 29 April 1927.

³² Unfortunately, the file ends with a copy of Carlos’ literacy exam rather than with the judges’ ruling. Carlos’ fate is unknown

³³ For an excellent analysis of this phenomenon in which popular groups in Mexico understood what the middle class wanted to hear and then directed a specific rhetoric at the middle class, see Chapter 5

that court records might represent rhetoric rather than reality, Steven Maynard notes that court records serve “as partial narratives rather than simply as the facts.”³⁴ Some children might have never fulfilled their promises to attend night school. Nevertheless, court records and the labor press suggest that the working class in Mexico City, or significant portions of it, valued education quite highly, even if workers did not have access to it. Minors and their families anticipated benefitting from the state’s new educational initiatives and they adopted a shared message endorsing proletarian masculinity linked to the promise of education. In this way, workers and the state shaped hegemony through shared interests.

Many of these youths who appeared before the court worked as apprentices.³⁵

The practice of employers apprenticing young men allowed apprentices to create masculine subcultures and support groups. Apprenticeships existed in both the formal industrial workplace and the less formal artisanal trades—especially the construction trades. Boys and young men told officials that they formed friendships with fellow apprentices and participated in the masculine pastimes of smoking, drinking, going to

of Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourse and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).

³⁴ Steven Maynard, “‘Horrible Temptations’: Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 78:2 (June 1997): 204.

³⁵ In the sample set, 12 of 101 minors were working or had worked at a factory in industries including textiles, cigarette processing, glazing, box making, and furniture construction. Four of the youths were listed as currently serving as apprentices, and four other youths had previously worked as apprentices. One scholar speculates that the number of minors employed in factories would probably have been higher than this, but the CTMI took in many younger children whereas factory jobs generally went to older children. It is possible that migrants had less access to skilled apprenticeships than did native capitalinos. Out of my sample set, only two non-native youths attained an apprenticeship in the DF, the rest were native capitalinos. Minors often gained apprenticeships as a result of kinship networks—especially through godparents and uncles—and it is possible that recent migrants lacked these contacts. See Ira Beltrán-Garibay, “Sex and the Nation: Sexuality and Criminal Justice in Revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1940,” PhD Diss, City University of New York, 2009, 165.

movie theaters and salons, and visiting brothels. Some apprentices clashed with employers and masters over appropriate values: apprentices stayed out late drinking and then performed poorly the next day, showed up late for work, and were fired for not following instructions.³⁶

In addition, many minors and their families valued the training minors received as apprentices. While John Lear and Susie Porter argue that most employers exploited apprentices, Susana Sosenski and Ann Blum posit some children benefited by receiving valuable training and decent wages while others languished in low-paying jobs that taught few skills.³⁷ For many Mexico City minors, apprenticeships served as opportunities for educational self-improvement and as arenas for all-male masculine performances. Narciso Ramírez wrote to the juvenile court, noting “I respectfully ask you to release my brother Candelario. If he is released I will take care of him in my home, train him in honest work [he worked as a candy maker], and inculcate in him good principles that will prevent him from returning to delinquency.”³⁸ The middle class also had long encouraged workers to pursue trades through apprenticeship, although workers’

³⁶ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 3, 21 March 1927; Social worker report by M. Hernández Velasco, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 67, 7 November 1927; and social worker report by R.M. de Uriarte, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 21, 14 May 1928.

³⁷ Porter, 36; John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 79; Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 38-85; Blum, *Domestic Economies*, xvii.

³⁸ Letter from Narciso Méndez Ramírez to Escuela Director, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 32, 6 November 1931.

valuing an apprenticeship probably reflected a much more plebeian rather than middle-class ethos.³⁹

Social workers held a range of views towards the families with whom they worked. Some described the working class as “degenerate” or “dirty” and were quick to characterize workers’ masculine performance as immoral. Others were more sympathetic and looked for causes for “misbehavior” in poverty or the catastrophic effects of the Mexican Revolution.⁴⁰ This attitude was captured in a slur social worker Hector Serna directed at a family when he stated, “Since the family belongs to the most base class in our society, it never occurred to them to send their children to school.”⁴¹ Social worker Bertha Navarro identified Jorge’s laziness, lack of ambition, and the susceptibility to his male co-workers’ peer pressure as factors influencing his decision to kill a dog.⁴² In contrast, a juvenile court judge wrote that “nothing could be expected of this boy because of these conditions” in which Jorge lived, referring to the intense poverty and minimal

³⁹ E.P. Thompson’s idea that working-class culture tends to develop largely independent of elite culture also applies to the Mexican context. See E.P. Thompson, “Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture,” *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974): 382-405.

⁴⁰ Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 278-279. Robert Buffington, “La ‘Dancing’ Mexicana,” 92; Nichole Sanders, *Gender and Welfare in Mexico: The Consolidation of a Postrevolutionary State* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 117-120; and Katherine Bliss, “The Science of Redemption: Syphilis, Sexual Promiscuity, and Reformism in Revolutionary Mexico City,” *HAHR* 79:1 (February 1999): 330-350. Karin Roseblatt notes a similar dynamic between clients and social workers in Chile. She demonstrates how social workers negotiated with and formed complex ties with their clients in relationships that she characterized as “hegemonic” rather than “one-way.” Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures & the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 14.

⁴¹ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Exp 70, April 10, 1928.

⁴² For his part, Jorge admitted to Bertha that he needed to have a stronger will so as to avoid vices. Social worker report by Bertha Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 6, 25 May 1927.

education Jorge had experienced.⁴³ Bertha represented the top-down approach of some social workers, while the judge proffered a more understanding interpretation, taking environmental factors into account, and recognizing possible proletarian potential in Jorge.

The social worker's home visit also represented a tool through which the government could integrate the working class into the state. Social workers had the power to conduct lengthy, one source described them as "careful," home visits and interviewed families, friends, neighbors, and even nearby businesses and asked them probing questions about hygiene, sexuality, and drinking habits.⁴⁴ Workers were not passive recipients during these visits. In one report, social worker Francisco Flores complained that one young man named Modesto had become corrupted by his workplace subculture of "tanners, bakers, and itinerant vendors." Modesto rejected such simplistic assessments and said he was the master of his own fate, "the minor denies such accusations saying that he is the only one responsible for his poor conduct."⁴⁵ In this account, the reader senses the tensions inherent in an interview in a social worker interview, with the state official providing one interpretation of Modesto's gendered performance and Modesto offering an alternate interpretation.

Some working-class youths and their families associated the Mexico City Juvenile Court's industrial schools, observation centers, and boys' homes with criminal

⁴³ The judge ordered Jorge be released to his family but only if Jorge's family agreed to send him to night school and agreed to periodic visits by social workers. Ruling by Judges 1 and 2, signature not legible, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 6, 26 May 1927.

⁴⁴ Court ruling, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 51, 30 December 1927.

⁴⁵ Social worker report by Francisco Flores, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 12, 16 March 1929.

masculinity.⁴⁶ One boy, Marcos, confided to a social worker that he was careful to only establish friendships with “new” detainees because older adolescents who had been in the juvenile justice system for some time had become very “bad.”⁴⁷ Parents sometimes expressed concern that the correctional school system was transforming their children into delinquents rather than reforming them. One mother visited her son at the Casa de Niño Correctional School and was horrified by the other youths’ behavior. She went to the Tribunal and petitioned for his release on the grounds that, if he were to remain incarcerated, he would become a “delinquent.”⁴⁸ Some minors objected to the system, seeing it as a prison, and voting with their feet. In 1921, a group of twenty-five boys perpetrated a dramatic breakout from a detention center/boys school.⁴⁹ They dug a tunnel, used wire cutter to get past fences, and scaled a twenty-one foot wall. Another adventurous lad, Gabino, escaped from the juvenile system twice before being hauled in by police for a third lockup.⁵⁰ To some families and the youths who attempted to escape, these institutions fomented criminal manhood or they were extremely unpleasant domiciles, yet to other families the system represented a chance to learn a trade and they associated boys’ schools with proletarian masculinity.

⁴⁶ Blum, “Speaking of Work and Family,” 77.

⁴⁷ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 13, 5 July 1928.

⁴⁸ The court’s judges rejected her request because she did not have the economic resources to care for her son. Social worker report by Refugio Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 62, 22 March 1928.

⁴⁹ “Fue Verdaderamente Escandalosa La Evasión de Los Corrigiendos de la Escuela Correccional de Tlalpan,” *Demócrata*, 11 January 1921, v. 6, no 1410, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Social worker report (social worker name not legible), AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 43, 2 July 1927.

Parents also sought to influence the court by referencing femininity in their appeals. María Ferrer Cardona, mother to Fernando, wrote an emotion-laden letter to the juvenile court. The police had arrested her son for stealing from a pharmacy where he had worked as an orderly. The beginning of his mother's letter resembled a standard petition. She represented her son as a former criminal who now embraced responsible masculinity because he "now understands his mistake" and he was "ashamed" for what he did. She also, though, writes of feeling betrayed by her son's actions: "His conduct hurts me deeply."⁵¹ In the course of the letter, she gave up representing her son as an example of responsible masculinity and argued his delinquent behavior required the state's moral intervention.

These historical actors all used masculinity and the nascent juvenile court apparatus as a way to frame the relationship between youths and the state. One girl's guardian, Isabel Morenos, wrote a letter to the courts, urging that the state take her boy Fernando and "make a man of him" (*se hacía hombre*).⁵² While the working class held a range of views regarding the relationship between manhood and the child court system, no worker would have disagreed with Isabel. What was at stake in these negotiations was forming proper men out of boys.

Homosexual Youth Subcultures

A subset of poor young men flirted with, had sex with, and fell in love with other poor young men. These youths manifested multiple sexualities and masculinities through

⁵¹ Letter from Sra. María Ferrer Cardona to the Pres. Of the Tribunal, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 59, 27 August 1928.

⁵² Letter from female guardian to CTMI, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 28, 22 October 1929.

their everyday behaviors. Men used physical comportment and voice pitch to perform homosexuality, as indicated by a medical official's report judging homosexuality on the basis of timbre of voice and body movement.⁵³ Carlos Monsiváis note that the homosexual subculture attracted both wealthy and poor men. Doctors, lawyers, mechanics, chauffeurs, soldiers, and waiters met each other clandestinely in *casas de asignación* (brothels) and in the Zócalo.⁵⁴ In addition to this cross-class homosexual subculture, Monsiváis notes a popular-class afeminado culture (often centered in parks and taverns) formed in Mexico City from the 1920s-1950s and that this culture helped isolated plebeian homosexuals find friends among other afeminados. This network of friendship assisted them in coping with society's prejudices.⁵⁵

Many Mexicans exhibited disdain or even intense hatred towards homosexuals. Capitalinos could not accept that afeminado men could passionately love each other. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo states that during this period "Mexican scientists also saw the homosexual as part of the chaos of the street."⁵⁶ Robert Buffington argues the Porfirian-era Mexico City working class condemned homosexuals and mocked both elites and

⁵³ The medical official wrote: "Aspecto físico femenino," "timbre de voz de mov.," and "deseos sexuales femeninos." Medical report by jefe de la sección médica, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 15, 5 November 1927.

⁵⁴ Famous intellectual and homosexual Salvador Novo often had male lovers who were bus drivers. Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican Representations of Masculinity: From Sensuality to Bloodshed* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33.

⁵⁵ Carlos Monsiváis, "De las variedades de la experiencia homoerótica," foreword to *Masculinidad e intimidad: identidad, sexualidad y sida*, by Guillermo Núñez Noriega (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género y el Colegio de Sonora, 2007), 24-25; Bliss, 53. See also the introduction and various essays in by Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser, eds., *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

⁵⁶ Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 304.

afeminados by representing only the wealthy as homosexuals.⁵⁷ Carlos Monsiváis notes residents of Mexico City were far less accepting of homosexuality, lesbianism, and bisexuality than contemporary Mexicans.⁵⁸

Fernando's story reveals one afeminado's life trajectory and illustrates officials' views of homosexuality. In June 1927, Mexico City police arrested fourteen-year-old Fernando Miranda "La Israela" for perpetrating "immoral degeneration."⁵⁹ He had a long rap sheet for robbery and his mother had previously complained that he was a miscreant and she knew "One day he would reap the fruit of his misdeeds." Yet, this time the police arrested him for perpetrating another sort of crime. An officer had caught him showing signs of having engaged in homosexual activities; the officer reported he approached Fernando and saw "signs of immoral degeneration." Such arrests were common in the nation's capital during the decade as police and officials often criminalized homosexuality. Officials frequently conflated homosexuality with sexual predation of children and police often thought they were arresting homosexual sexual predators—even in cases of what was probably consensual sex between two minors or between an adult and a minor.

⁵⁷ Robert Buffington, "Homophobia and the Mexican Working Class, 1900-1910," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901* eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 193-225. Note that Buffington is also working on a book examining Porfirian-era working-class masculinity, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man: Mexico City 1900-1910*.

⁵⁸ Monsiváis, "El Mundo Soslayado," 25-29.

⁵⁹ There is no indication of why Fernando was named "La Israela." The records do not specify whether Fernando's sexual partner was a boy, an adolescent, or an adult. The records also do not specify what the police meant by "showing signs" of having participated in sex with another man. Police report, Superintendent Leopoldo Lariva to CTMI President, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 15, 18 June 1927.

The police transferred Fernando to the Mexico City Juvenile Court where social worker Manuel Hernández interviewed the young man.⁶⁰ During his interview, Fernando confessed he was a runaway. He told the social worker that over the last six years he had befriended many homosexual men, had made love to numerous male sex partners, and twice had fallen in love with men. Manuel and other social workers commonly referred to these men as “afeminados” although officials also frequently used the term pederast—perhaps helping to create a new kind of manhood in the process. The social worker described Fernando as exhibiting the customs and lifestyle of the cities’ *afeminados*, although the official failed to specify what those customs and lifestyle were.

Fernando’s family and he had migrated to the city from the state of Michoacán. Since his father had died years before, his mother and sisters worked as seamstresses while Fernando began work as a tailor’s apprentice, earning the incredibly low sum of one peso every eight days. Roughly five years before his arrest, he ran away from home, abandoning his family and his apprenticeship.⁶¹ He had lived on the street for about a month before moving in with a male lover whom he had met in Alameda Park—still known as a gay cruising zone today.⁶² Fernando moved in with various boyfriends over the years, managing to remain off the streets. When arrested, he lived with a lover named “La Pelona,” or “flapper,” a nickname that suggested his lover was an *afeminado* who cross-dressed. It is not clear what Fernando did for a living, although Manuel, the social

⁶⁰ Social worker report, M. Hernández to CTMI Secretary, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 15, 11 October 1927.

⁶¹ Manuel deviated from normal procedure and failed to indicate why Fernando ran away from home.

⁶² Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 127.

worker, implied the minor prostituted himself. After completing the interview, Manuel transcribed this interview into a report and submitted it to a panel of three judges. A doctor who performed a medical inspection and the director of the Observation House where Fernando lived while awaiting sentencing also submitted reports. The doctor indicated Fernando “looked feminine” and “had female sexual desires.” The doctor finished the report by noting that Fernando’s “degeneration and feminine figure” might be caused by his “undeveloped testicles.”⁶³ The Observation House Director remarked “He appears to be a pederast. He likes interacting with the girls, who he treats with kindness by helping them do their chores. The only tasks he likes are cooking, washing, and ironing.”⁶⁴ Unfortunately, Fernando’s record (unlike most of the juvenile records) does not include a ruling by the court so we never learn whether the court returned the young man to his lover or whether the court sent him to a boys’ school or a boys’ home. In Fernando’s case, the social worker, observation house official, and doctor all strove to portray Fernando’s love for other men as abnormal behavior.

The same social worker who worked with Fernando, Manuel Hernández, decided to conduct his own investigation into this subculture to determine whether older homosexuals preyed on younger ones.⁶⁵ Both adults and youths embraced *afeminado*

⁶³ Medical report by el jefe de la sección médica, signature not legible, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 15, 26 Oct. 1927 and November 1927. For some reason, the medical official wrote two dates on the form.

⁶⁴ Casa de Observación Report, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 15, 20 August 1927. According to Historian Victor Macías-González, excessive grooming represented a marker of homosexuality. He notes, “In the collective mind, being clean, finicky, and an avid bather made one queer.” Victor M. Macías-González, “The Bathhouse and Male Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 40.

⁶⁵ Social Worker Report by M. Hernández, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 15, 11 October 1927.

masculinity and younger homosexuals were particularly vulnerable to older, wealthier men's taking advantage of their poverty and emotional immaturity. The social worker learned that recently the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Police Precincts had arrested a total of sixty young and older men for being *afeminados*. He criticized these wealthier homosexuals for not aiding their poorer counterparts. He noted that the homosexual community divided into two groups: those with money were called "high ones" (*altos*) and those without money were called "shawls" (*rebozos*)—a term that played off of their poverty and their effeminacy by derogatorily comparing them to elderly women.⁶⁶ The high ones practiced professions, including medicine and journalism. The shawls tended to work as newspaper vendors or lottery ticket sellers. Typically, after the police arrested a suspect for the crime of being *afeminado*, he would have to pay a fine. Manuel was angered by the fact that the high ones could afford to pay their own fines but rarely paid for the shawls'. The shawls languished in prison where fellow inmates beat them. Manuel does not explicitly state why they were beaten—Mexico City prisons were harsh, violent places indeed—but the shawls' status as *afeminados* may have triggered the beatings.⁶⁷

Popular-class young men often developed long-term loving relationships with each other. Fourteen-year-old Edmundo's family banned him from seeing his friend, Roberto, age sixteen, who had a reputation for "practicing sodomy" and for hanging out

⁶⁶ Manuel did not specify whether or not high ones were older than shawls, although, since he did state that many high ones were already established professionals, it is probable that most high ones were adults.

⁶⁷ Two decades earlier, criminologist Carlos Rougmagnac had noted that homosexual sex and even intimate love between male inmates did take place in Mexico City's Belem Prison, Pablo Piccato, "'Such a Strong Need': Sexuality and Violence in Belem Prison," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, eds. William E. French and Katherine Elaine Bliss (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 94-97.

in the Alameda.⁶⁸ However, the official record for Edmundo never explicitly states that Edmundo and Roberto were lovers. While we know that Roberto was homosexual, there is no direct indication that Edmundo was anything other than heterosexual or bisexual—Edmundo also frequented prostitutes in brothels. The two were “intimate” friends and to escape his families’ prohibition on their seeing each other, Edmundo and Roberto fled the city and moved to Puebla. The social worker’s notes include the annotation that, at this point, Edmundo “ceased being a good and honorable boy.” Edmundo’s older brother eventually fetched them back at which point the family contacted the juvenile court. Officials brooked no patience for Edmundo’s transgressions with his homosexual friend. The psychologist’s report indicates that Edmundo “looks for friends among depraved people” and the social worker, Aurelio Peña, noted that Edmundo had friends among “libertine” young men who worked as ticket collectors and assistants for taxi drivers.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, the records do not indicate what happened to Edmundo or Roberto. Another youth, Mario, participated in a long-term, live-in relationship with a male lover who sold popsicles for a living.⁷⁰ Mario noted that the first time he made love to another man was with a soldier and he described his relationship with his popsicle-selling lover as one of “good friendship” (*buena amistad*).

The words used to indicate homosexuality include: homosexual, sodomite, afeminado, pederast, and fifi. Sometimes officials simply used these words in neutral, descriptive capacities, and sometimes officials conflated sexual deviancy with

⁶⁸ Social worker report by Aurelio Peña, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 4, Expediente 17, 18 March 1929.

⁶⁹ Psychological report, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 4, Expediente 17, 18 March 1929.

⁷⁰ Social worker report by Aurelio Peña, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 6, Expediente 31, 8 April 1930.

homosexuality. Some sources used the term “homosexuality” almost in the same context we would use it today—as a term to denote men who loved and/or made love to other men. Other sources used terminology in a pejorative sense, as pederasts or sodomites. By far, the most frequent practice was to reference men who loved other men as *afeminado* (“effeminate”).

Since the sources used *fifi* to describe upper-class homosexuality, working-class homosexuality, and upper-class heterosexuality, this fascinating and multivalent term bears some analysis. The origins of the term *fifi* are unclear. The word might have been an allusion to French men who as clerks in many of the city’s department.⁷¹ Mexicans probably also associated the term *fifi* with consuming luxury items and one source associated it with snobbery.⁷² While “*fifi*” sometimes referred to homosexuals in some sources, Susanne Einegel argues that *capitalinos* generally used the term *fifi* to denote heterosexuals who were dandies (an effeminate heterosexual man often associated with fashion and consumerism).⁷³ Consequently, homosexuality and heterosexuality merged in the category of the “*fifi*.” The closest approximate meaning for the term *fifi* in English

⁷¹ Historian Steven Bunker notes that, during this period, Mexican women were beginning to replace French men as clerks in the city’s department stores. Steven B. Bunker, “Gender Construction and Consumer Seduction in Late-Porfirian Department Stores,” Conference Presentation, 2012 Rocky Mountain Conference on Latin American Studies, Park City Utah, March 2012.

⁷² *Confeti*, a satirical men’s magazine (1917-1918) proudly boasted it made fun of all *capitalinos* including “the exaggerated snobbism of the *fifi*.” (el exagerado snobismo del “*Fifi*”) Consolación Salas, “Las Revistas Masculinas Mexicanas a Principios del Siglo XX,” en *La prensa en México: Momentos y figuras relevantes (1810-1915)*, Laura Navarrete Maya y Blanca Aguilar Plat, coords. (México: Addison Wesley Longman de México, 1998), 175-176.

⁷³ Einegel analyzes plays referring to *fifis* as “elegant and “girl crazed.” Susanne Einegel, “Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico-City’s Middle Class, 1890-1940,” (PhD Diss, University of Maryland, 2011), 137, 214, 217. For an excellent essay on Mexican dandies, see Victor M. Macías-González, “The Lagartijo at the High Life: Masculine Consumption, Race, Nation, and Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico,” in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 227-249.

is “dandy,” any male luxury consumer who was somewhat frivolous in his attire and his outlook on life. Robert Irwin McKee, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser remark that Mexican upper classes probably believed dandies represented “civilization, modernization, and even patriotism for Mexican upper classes of the era, but he also became a symbol of bourgeois corruption and decadence for Mexico’s incipient revolutionary forces.”⁷⁴ *La Demócrata* represented fifis as a threat to families, although with a heterosexual rather than a homosexual connotation. The unnamed journalist noted, “In many cinematographic salons, a family will arrive with the healthy goal of having fun. But they are often exposed to a fifi in the adjacent seat who lacks respect for women or whose drunken actions are not repeatable here.”⁷⁵ The category of fifi reflected a contested terrain of varying masculine performances.

A 1920s magazine even bore the title *Fifi*. The magazine was mostly a literary one, featuring short stories, poems, and comments on contemporary politics and society. In 1919, the magazine ran a piece on the anniversary of The Great Raid (*Gran Redada*)—a famous police raid on a 1901 gay party attended by 41 homosexuals.⁷⁶ During the raid, the police arrested the attendees, forced some of them to sweep the streets, dressed as women, and sent some of them to prison for immorality. In the magazine article, a man

⁷⁴ Robert Irwin McKee, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser, eds., “Introduction, Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901,” in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 12.

⁷⁵ “Los Cinematografistas no Aguantaro en ‘Cierre’ que Ellos Mismos se Impusieron,” *Demócrata*, 12 January 1921, v. 6, no 1411, p. 10.

⁷⁶ The centennial anniversary of the event resulted in the publication of an excellent collection of essays on the event, see Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser, eds., *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003). See also, Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican Representations of Masculinity: From Sensuality to Bloodshed* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33-36, 67-68.

who insisted he was not a *mayate* (slang for homosexual), described being invited to and attending the party of the Famous 41.⁷⁷ In a playful tone he narrated how he was walking along the street one evening when he came upon a group of elegant homosexuals (*afeminados modales*) and they invited him to a party. He attended and described scenes of dancing and merry making by cross-dressed men with colorful monikers like “The Doll” and “Jasmine.” He did not explicitly criticize homosexuals in the article. Instead, his tone hinted at the secrets he learned at the party. The article probably whetted the appetites of curious readers. Robert Buffington has demonstrated that, despite the prevalence of homophobia, some capitalinos held fascination towards the Gran Redada and towards homosexuality.⁷⁸

In a 1921 satirical play, *La bandera rojinegra* (the black and red flag), by playwright Humberto Galindo, one of the main characters is a Russian anarchist agitator, referred to as “Propagandist.”⁷⁹ Propagandist traveled to Mexico City from the Soviet Union to organize the working class politically. In various scenes Propagandist repeatedly groomed his beard and, at one point, referred to himself as a being more “fifi” than another prominent organizer. The play’s other characters both mocked and also respected Propagandist so it is possible that the playwright intended the fifi comment to make fun of effeminacy, but not in a harsh way. Fifi qualities were not limited to characters in fictional plays. An Observation House official noted that an interned youth,

⁷⁷ “Otra Vez...La Más Amplia Información Sobre El Asunto de Los 41,” *El Fifi*, 1 March 1919, no. 6, 1.

⁷⁸ Robert Buffington, “Homophobia and the Mexican Working Class,” 194.

⁷⁹ Unionists and anarchists in 1920s Mexico City (and many other parts of the world) commonly used black and red flags, especially during riots, demonstrations, and strikes. Humberto Galindo, *La bandera roja*, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1413, 1921.

Roberto, “spends much time in the bathroom and is always primping and preening his clothing (siempre arreglada su ropa).”⁸⁰ Carlos Monsiváis poked fun at dandies’ incessant need to groom themselves and he described a type of Mexico City dance hall aficionado who would not leave his hair alone “not even for two seconds and if even one tuft of hair were out of place, others would disrespect him, and he would lose manhood (*a la disminución de la hombría*).”⁸¹

The *fifi* symbolized sexuality and gender’s instability. In 1919, the magazine *Fifi* ran cartoon in which two police officers have hauled three dandified men before a police superintendent.⁸² The two police officers appeared old and scruffy compared to the young dandies dressed in suits. In the foreground is a clerk with papers. The text at the bottom reads:

Comisario: Bueno, ya a ustedes por qué los traen?

Maricón: Pues por que dicen que SEMOS maricones [homosexuals]

Comisario: No se dice SEMOS sino ¡SOMOS!

Maricón: ¡Ay! Señor usted dispense, no sabemos que usted también era de los nuestros.

Police Superintendent: OK, what were you brought in for?

Homosexual: They say that we are homosexuals [in Spanish the verb “we are” is mis-spelled in the cartoon indicating that the homosexual is speaking with a lisp and thus mis-pronouncing the verb]

Police Superintendent: Don’t say we are [with a lisp] say we are [without a lisp]

Homosexual: Oh! Mr., I beg your pardon, we did not know that you were one of us.⁸³

As this piece humorously indicates, an afeminado masculinity featured a particular way of speaking (lisp). The cartoon also associates this type of masculinity with wealthier

⁸⁰ Casa de Observación Directora report, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 46, 13 April 1928.

⁸¹ “Carlos Monsiváis, *Escenas de pudor y liviandad* (México: Grijalbo, 1988), 193.

⁸² “Por Las Comisarias,” *El Fifi*, no. 8, p. 1, 12 March 1919.

⁸³ Speaking in such a manner is sometimes associated with gay culture in contemporary Mexico.

men since the cartoonist depicted the men as wearing fine-quality suits rather than workman's clothing. To summarize, "fifi" could refer either to homosexuality or a man who pursued the latest fashions, or both. Also, while some of the sources associated fifi status with wealth, it is possible that a man of any social class could be a fifi.

Social workers and Observation House officials made references to active-passive homosexual sex. Much has been written about these categories and what they meant to participants.⁸⁴ One official wrote in his notes that a homosexual youth had "many homosexual contacts, both active and passive."⁸⁵ Only one of my sources associated being *afeminado* with the act of being the "passive" partner, and another of my sources referred to the existence of both "active" and "passive" partners.⁸⁶ In my sources, it is not clear whether arresting officers distinguished between "active" homosexuals and "passive" homosexuals. Pablo Piccato and Guillermo Núñez Noriega note the active-passive model oversimplifies a complex set of dynamics.⁸⁷ As one contemporary Mexican man noted, "I don't know why they say one person is passive and the other is active. Both partners do everything, you touch, you seduce, you embrace, you kiss..."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ I would urge a reader who is interested in the active-passive debate in Mexican sexuality history to begin with Martin Nesvig, "The Lure of the Perverse: Moral Negotiation of Pederasty in Porfirian Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 16:1 (2000): 1-37.

⁸⁵ Report by Social Worker L Aural (name not entirely legible), AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 20, 15 August 1927.

⁸⁶ The two records I came across that use the active-passive model are social worker report by R.M. de Uriarte, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 21, 14 May 1928 and report by social worker Aurelio Peña, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 6, Expediente 33, 28 April 1930.

⁸⁷ Núñez Noriega, Mara Vigoya Viveros, and Pablo Piccato are all critical of the active-passive model, see Núñez Noriega, 285; and Mara Vigoya Viveros, "Contemporary Latin American Perspectives on Masculinity," in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press), 2000, 48. Pablo Piccato, "Interpretations of Sexuality in Mexico City Prisons," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 262.

⁸⁸ Núñez Noriega, 287.

The stories of young men like Fernando, Roberto, and Mario testify to the existence of a subculture of young men who loved other men. These working-class men formed masculine subcultures with other men and, while the sources describing this masculine subculture are scant indeed, those who analyze sexuality should not consider Mexican masculinity as being solely heterosexual. To do so is to limit the multi-faceted meanings of manhood during this period.

Movie Theaters

Plebeian youths performed their masculinities in a variety of popular entertainment venues such as dance halls, street theaters, and *pulquerías* (taverns). Movie theaters were also arenas for enacting gender. Records indicate that youths particularly liked going to the movies. Social worker reports invariably included gushing comments by boys and adolescents on whether they preferred comedies, romances, action movies, boxing films, or pornographic films. Youths often told social workers whether they had caught the latest Tom Mix or Zorro films. Not just young men, but many capitalinos, young, old, poor, and wealthy, loved going to the silent movies in the 1920s. A 1922 survey found that the city boasted 25 movie theaters featuring 33,098 seats in Mexico City, with a population of 906,000 in 1921.⁸⁹ Another 1922 survey located a total of 38 movie theaters with a total box office take of \$23,653.⁹⁰ Both surveys indicated a flourishing movie industry. Ticket prices varied but thirty centavos was a typical price which was still pricey but feasible for an evening's entertainment for a poor

⁸⁹ DP Inspector Report, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1732, October 1922 and México, Dirección General de Estadística. *Censo General, 1921*. México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación.

⁹⁰ Memo from the Jefe de la Mesa de Diversiones and the Jefe del Departamento de Recaudación to the Departamento de Trabajo, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 440, Expediente 8, 8 October 1922.

family.⁹¹ Five theaters, in particular, were priced more reasonably for the poor—Teatros Odeón, el Montecarlo, Rivoli, Barragan, and Briseño.⁹²

Movie theaters served as dynamic centers of workers' social life. Youths approached motorists outside the theater, offering to watch their cars while the owners watched the film. Vendors hawked their wares on the street outside. Audiences brought fruit into the theater where families sat together, couples smooched in the darkened theater halls, and boys threw objects off the balconies onto the audiences below. These youths could have been moving from one type of masculinity to another—behaving as nocturnal ne'er-do-wells and as daytime apprentices embodying proletarian masculinity at their workplaces.

Fathers often bonded with their sons (and daughters) through the ritual of going to the movies and to vaudeville acts. Taco seller Esteban Garza, a single father, took his two sons to the movies every Sunday.⁹³ Other youths reported fond memories of frequenting movie theaters with their families. Fathers taught sons how to express, or not express, emotions, how to conduct and behave themselves, and how to use, or not use, violence. Singer Chava Flores remembers the experience differently: as a child, he went to the movies with his mother and siblings and he enacted the role of responsible father in his own father's absence. In his memoirs he writes: "When we arrived at the cinema, I felt my responsibilities. For those moments I was the head of the family and I went to

⁹¹ Letter written by DF Secretary General addressed to Owner of the Cine Progreso AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1709, 18 August 1922.

⁹² Social worker report by Margarita J. de Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 5, Expediente 32, 31 October 1929.

⁹³ Social worker report by M R Chávez, AGN, CTMI, 2, Caja 2, Exp 7, 31 March 1928.

buy the tickets...My mother looked at me seriously and later I saw her laugh, commenting to my sister...‘clown!’”⁹⁴

It is difficult to ascertain how masculine performances within the movies affected working-class viewer’s own masculinity—my working-class sources overwhelmingly told police or social workers that they liked particular films or particular genres of films. However, they did not articulate why they liked those films and whether they identified with particular film stars such as playboy characters or war heroes. It is easier to ascertain what films they saw. A Diversions Department report listed the top ten box office films for the month of October, 1922:

Figure 1, Top Ten Box Office Hits in Mexico City, October, 1922⁹⁵

Film Title	Nation of Origin
<i>Aventuras Africanas</i>	N/A
<i>Nueve Segundos del Cielo</i>	N/A
<i>Caina</i>	Italy
<i>Eugenia Grandet</i>	U.S
<i>Fanny o el Robo de Los Veinte Millones</i>	Mexico
<i>Fulguración de Raza</i>	Mexico
<i>Memorias de Hindenburg</i>	N/A
<i>¿Qué Importa?</i>	N/A
<i>Queridos Ciudadanos</i>	N/A
<i>1810 o Los Libertadores</i>	Mexico

Many youths told social workers they had a particular favorite film genre; answers included “Texan” movies, boxing films, pornography, cops and robber films, romances, historical movies, and Tom Mix films.

⁹⁴ Anne Rubenstein, “Theaters of Masculinity: Moviegoing and Male Roles in Mexico Before 1960,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 148-149.

⁹⁵ A “Memorandum de las Cantidades recaudadas del 19 al 23 Octubre de 1922 por Derechos de Revisión de Películas,” written by Lerdo de Tejada, Jefe, de la Sección de Diversiones, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1738, 1 November 1922.

Films were an international phenomenon—newspapers included a mix of films made in Mexico, the U.S., and Italy. Newspaper coverage of film stars included on Hollywood stars, especially big-name stars like Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Charlie Chaplin—one Mexican reviewer called Fairbanks “the man of the eternal smile.”⁹⁶ But newspapers also praised and avidly covered Mexican film stars like Dolores del Río, Ramón Novarro, and Lupe Vélez. Some film’s international origins angered some capitalinos. One newspaper writer claimed most movies shown in the City were from abroad said and many of them were corrupting and exploitative. He accused Mexico City movie theaters of being a “foreign trust” and the writer urged the government to censor “foreign pulp.”⁹⁷ Another source directed racist anti-Semitism towards Hollywood and accused most film companies of being “Jewish trusts.”⁹⁸ Another writer, E. Herrera Castro, asserted that the few movies that had been made in Mexico had just been “imitations” of US or Italian films.⁹⁹ Castro expressed hope that Mexico would develop its own film industry. He identified a group of young directors and expressed hope that they could improve the “incipient” Mexican film industry. Castro viewed *En La Hacienda* and *Esteban* as being particularly Mexican, although the

⁹⁶ This characterization was included in a review of *Zorro* (1920) a film that some Mexican critics viewed as stereotyping Mexicans as bandits. In general though, Mexican audiences loved the film and President Obregón arranged a special showing at Chapultepec. Silvestre Bonnard, “La Exhibición de Una Gran Película, La Marca de Zorro,” *El Universal* vol. 7, tomo XXII, no. 1900, 1 January 1922, p. 10.

⁹⁷ The Diversions Department did sometimes ban films it viewed as being particularly unpatriotic or immoral. No author, “Los Cinematografistas no Aguantaron en ‘Cierre’ que Ellos Mismos se Impusieron,” *El Demócrata*, v. 6, no 1411, p. 10, 12 January 1921.

⁹⁸ No author, “La Plaga de los Cines,” *Demócrata*, p. 1 and 3 of v. 6, no. 1413, 14 January 1921.

⁹⁹ E. Herrera Castro, “El Primer Paso Hacia la Verdadera Cinematografía Nacional,” *Demócrata*, v. 7, no. 1791, p. 7, 30 January 1922.

writer ironically notes that *En La Hacienda's* star Elena Sánchez Valenzuela was from Los Angeles.

Nevertheless, it is highly probable that movie personalities were powerful models for masculinity. Both Sosenski and Rubenstein assert that plebeian youths appropriated from the movies, learning how to behave, dress, speak, kiss, and flirt.¹⁰⁰ Some capitalinos complained that the content of the films themselves featured pornography, taught poor manners, or depicted love scenes that induced male and female viewers to become sexually active.¹⁰¹ Going to the movies without one's family offered a prime opportunity to learn actions based on gender. As Anne Rubenstein notes, "Cinemas were theaters in more ways than one: men learned to use them as stages on which they could practice and perform their roles as men. (And women used them as stages for performances of femininity.)"¹⁰²

A cultural heterosexual intimacy existed that was centered on movie theaters where popular-class men and women flirted, kissed, and engaged in illicit behavior.

Worker Rafael used a movie theater's darkened hall as a venue in which to suggest to his

¹⁰⁰ Susana Sosenski, "Diversiones Malsanas: El Cine y la Infancia en la Ciudad de México en la Década de 1920," *Secuencia: Revista de Historia y Ciencias Sociales* 66 (sept.-dic. 2006): 62; Anne Rubenstein, "Theaters of Masculinity," 133, 144-145.

¹⁰¹ Letter from a citizen named Ricardo Palacios addressed to the Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1351, dated 30 November 1914; Letter, Manuel Pensado addressed to C. Gobernador, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1371, 3 September 1914.

¹⁰² Rubenstein, "Theaters of Masculinity," 133. Not all minors embraced this culture of sexuality. In 1934, a group of conservative youths jumped up at the front of a movie theater and began making speeches against sex education in the public schools. Anne Rubenstein argues that these youths chose to protest in the movie theater because many capitalinos perceived darkened movie theaters to be sexualized spaces. In addition, she also illustrates that their opposition to sex education programs really amounted to a patriarchal "defense of female purity." Anne Rubenstein, "Raised Voices at the Cine Montecarlo: Sex Education, Mass Media, and Oppositional Politics in Mexico," *Journal of Family History* 23:3 (July 1998): 318.

girlfriend that they return to his place after the show to have sex.¹⁰³ Officials frequently worried about the fact that young couples exploited the dark movie theaters to kiss and have sex.¹⁰⁴ Journalists even perceived the chaperones, often older siblings or parents, to be of limited usefulness in these situations due to the low-light environment and because the chaperones customarily did not sit near the young woman they were escorting.¹⁰⁵ Young men also used movie theaters as sites to solicit prostitutes.¹⁰⁶ They were also sites of gendered conflict between young men and young women. Young men blew their cigarette smoke directly onto young women, possibly in a flirtatious game that annoyed theater management.¹⁰⁷ A gendered double standard existed even in these theaters: boys could attend movies alone or with friends while girls went to the movies with mothers or older sisters.¹⁰⁸

The lobby of a movie theater served as a prime location for boys and young men to engage in various masculine behaviors. Elites perceived these behaviors to criminal and irresponsible behavior; the poor themselves, both adults and youths, viewed their activities as legitimate behavior. Fights between young men often broke out in movie

¹⁰³ Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMI, 2, Caja 2, Exp 7, 19 May 1928.

¹⁰⁴ Internal Memo, *Diversiones Bajas*, Volúmen 908, Expediente 4, n.d. but probably 1922; and letter from Ricardo Palacios addressed to the Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1351, 30 November 1914.

¹⁰⁵ “Los Cinematografistas no Aguantaron en ‘Cierre’ que Ellos Mismos se Impusieron,” *Demócrata*, 12 January 1921, v. 6, no 1411, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Social worker report, AGN, CTMI, 2, Caja 32, Exp 7, June 1928.

¹⁰⁷ *Diversiones Públicas* report by Inspector Avila, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1406, 24 August 1921.

¹⁰⁸ Sosenski, “*Diversiones Malsanas*,” 43.

theaters and frequently continued in the streets outside.¹⁰⁹ Groups of minors sometimes occupied the balconies, throwing garbage on theatergoers below.¹¹⁰ By refusing to remove their hats in the cinema, these young men enacted a plebeian masculinity in which they refused to bow to authority figures.¹¹¹ One report describes “muchachos afeminados” who loitered in movie theater lobbies, playing pranks on each other by stealing each other’s hats.¹¹² Eduardo Patino Ibarra, age fourteen, reported to one social worker that he particularly enjoyed frequenting the lobby of various movie theaters. The social worker called Eduardo and his friends nothing but a group of “thieves and vagabonds.”¹¹³

These youths used movie theaters as arenas for contesting masculinity. These were spaces where government officials and older family members exerted less control over youths. Whether they sought to use trips to the movie theaters with their families as opportunities to demonstrate a respectable, mature masculinity or whether they asserted an aggressive, sexual masculine performance by blowing cigarette smoke on young women, movie theaters’ lobbies and darkened halls served as spaces of expanded freedom.

¹⁰⁹ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 13, 5 July 1928.

¹¹⁰ *Diversiones Públicas* report by Inspector Avila, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1406, 24 August 1921.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Social worker report by Manuel Hernández Velasco, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 20, 15 October 1928.

¹¹³ Social worker report by Manuel Hernández V, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 3, Expediente 21, 19 October 1928.

Papeleros

To get a better sense of how working-class gender historically operated on the streets of Mexico City during this period, this section explores the masculine subculture forged by paperboys (*papeleros*). Most youths worked in a wide variety of informal jobs in the service sector of the economy as shoe shine boys, paperboys, lottery ticket sellers, vendors of small consumables, especially gum, and day laborers, and one of the better-paying jobs was that of lottery ticket seller. Lottery ticket seller jobs were not easy to attain because they required a license and a lottery ticket vendor had to work the streets for a considerable amount of time before building up a decent-sized client base. Some also served as apprentices in more skilled sectors of the economy, including barbering, blacksmithing, bricklaying, tailoring, carpentry, and glazing. Nevertheless, based on my sample set, the most common trade practiced was that of newspaper vendor.

Papeleros formed a masculine subculture: they played hard, worked hard, mocked the police, fought, drank alcohol, and engaged in liaisons with young women and other young men. After selling all their broadsheets and after working as many as fourteen hours in a given day, groups of adolescents who sold newspapers were free to loiter on street corners.¹¹⁴ The trades enjoyed relatively low startup costs and decent potential earning power if a youth hustled. Bliss and Blum note that, by working on the street, youths had an opportunity to “practice adult masculine roles among their peers.”¹¹⁵ These performances of masculinity often conflicted with upper-class ideas of correct behavior. Elites throughout Latin America became concerned with the young male *papelero* as both a victim and as a delinquent and sought to aid these youngsters by

¹¹⁴ The statistic of a fourteen-hour workday comes from Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 186.

¹¹⁵ Bliss and Blum, 172.

publicizing their plight in newspapers, sponsoring charity drives, and even constructing statues in their honor.¹¹⁶

These minors developed what historian Kathy Peiss calls a “homosocial institution,” an all-male cohort featuring “rituals of aggression and competition [which] became important mechanisms for male bonding.”¹¹⁷ One papelerero, a thirteen-year old named Jesús Méndez, commented he had no friends other than his fellow papeleros. Social worker, Margarita de Ramos Chávez, noted Jesús was a timid youth, not sure of himself, and masked his timidity by speaking aggressively.¹¹⁸ His aggression was an integral part of the subculture, he would at times break out crying.¹¹⁹

Groups of newspaper vendors developed colorful nicknames for each other like “La Llorona,” (the crying one), “El Burro,” (the donkey) “El Sapo,” (the frog), and “El Marinero” (the sailor).¹²⁰ One memoir of life in a popular-class neighborhood during this period included this recollection: “The little newspapers often had only two pages and they sold like hotcakes. They described atrocious crimes committed only hours before, here in this nearby corner, over there on that block, so close it felt like the crimes were taking place right up my nose...they spoke of women raped...seedy dives full of

¹¹⁶ In Brazil, Darcy Vargas, wife of President Getúlio Vargas, established a center to help paperboys. In Chile, young paperboys formed a union. Nara B. Milanich, *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 121.

¹¹⁷ Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 16-20.

¹¹⁸ Social worker report by Margarita Margarita de Ramos Chávez, to the Sec. Gen. del Trib, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 15, 5 June 1928.

¹¹⁹ For discussions of the significance of Mexican men crying, see Núñez Noriega, 165-167, 198 and Guevara Ruiseñor, 187.

¹²⁰ Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 3, Expediente 5, 18 September 1928 and Social worker report by Aurelio Peña, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 5, Expediente 8, 5 July 1929.

prostitutes...of pulquerías....”¹²¹ The contents of these boys’ newspapers dovetailed with this sensationalized masculine subculture.

Papeleros even formed their own labor union, The Union of Vendors and Newspaper Boys. The association functioned as a mutual aid society, offering boys and young men places to stay overnight and obtain meals at discount prices. Workers founded the Union of Vendors and Newspaper Boys on January 16, 1923, with the aid of other unions affiliated with the newspaper industry.¹²² An article in *Demócrata* reported that most of the city’s newspaper sellers joined the union. The union formed using funds raised from a 1922 charity bull fight and it rented a union hall so papeleros would have what the reporter of the article called a “refuge,” a place where newspaper vendors could relax and find company.¹²³

Some social workers also grumbled about what they perceived as a subculture of crime among young male newspaper sellers, shoeshine boys, and lottery ticket sellers. Social worker Enrique Catalán referred to shoe shines and papeleros as “vagrants and vicious rats” who corrupted honest youth and did nothing but “frequent cantinas, pool halls, and, cabarets.”¹²⁴ In one instance, the police had arrested a lad named Gerónimo

¹²¹ Garibay, 10.

¹²² The union elected a papelero named Atilano Bautista to serve as the paperboy union’s first leader. The *Demócrata* stories on the union did not specify the union’s federation affiliation. It is possible that *Demócrata* helped sponsor/organize the union. *Demócrata* hoped that this union will become the fourth large union within the newspaper industry, but fails to name the other three unions. “Los ‘Papeleros’ del Distrito Federal Organizaron Ayer Su Agrupación.” *Demócrata*, 17 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2789, p. 9, 11; “Enorme Entusiasmo Hay Entre Los Papeleros por La Organización de Su Gremio.” *Demócrata*, 18 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2790, p. 9, 13.

¹²³ It is not clear whether homeless papeleros could spend the night at the union hall.

¹²⁴ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 4, 27 April 1928.

for vagrancy immediately after he had completed selling his newspapers.¹²⁵ Perhaps they would not have arrested him if he had been holding a stack of unsold newspapers.

Authorities put merit on work, indicating approval for working hard while punishing the working class for being idle. In an effort to counter accusations that they were immoral, the papelerero union announced a campaign of moralization and regeneration; those plans suggest that the group, on some level, shared elite criticisms of papeleros as being immoral and criminal. Not everyone associated papeleros with inappropriate masculine behaviors. A 1922 *Demócrata* article praised its papeleros for their hard work and the newspaper provided their newspaper vendors with blankets to help them weather a cold wave that had inundated the capital.¹²⁶ Regardless of these views, a papelerero's trade helped many families survive during very hard times.

Young male papeleros embodied broader societal tensions over popular-class masculinity. On one hand, they were the plucky symbols of children of the streets who fended for themselves and even used their earnings to help tide their families by until the next pay packet. On the other hand, through their sometimes criminal behavior and assertiveness, they sometimes crossed the line into performing what upper-class Mexicans perceived as harmful, dangerous masculinity.

Conclusion

This chapter examined multiple youth subcultures—those within the juvenile justice system, those who used the system to learn a trade and perform responsible

¹²⁵ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 38, 9 November 1927.

¹²⁶ “El Demócrata’ Obsequio Ayer a Sus Infatigables Voceadores Frazada para Cubrir Sus Miembros Aterridos por el Crudo Inverno que Los Azota,” *Demócrata*, 17 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1780, p. 8.

proletarian masculinity, those who embraced homosexual masculinity, those who performed various masculinities in movie theaters, and those who formed a subculture of newspaper vendors. Analyzing the stories of minors in 1920s Mexico City reveals that popular-class youths gendered ways of expressing and comporting themselves. All these practices underscore how these masculine youth subcultures formed through fluid processes spanning many types of masculine performances.

A single youth could participate in many of these subcultures. These recorded accounts of youths loving, fighting, or befriending other adolescents illustrate how interpreting working-class manhood must consider masculinity's varied natures. These boys and young men revealed a range of sexualities and embraced a variety of masculine behaviors forged and practiced in workplace subcultures, sexualities, and entertainment spaces. Due to the post-revolutionary state's new interest in child welfare, minors and their families disclosed a rich tapestry of masculine gendered practices in interactions with social workers, judges, and medical officials. When the mother of a youth, speaking of her boy's friend, said, "He is neither a boy, nor is he a man." she captured netherworld between childhood and adulthood in which these boys were caught.¹²⁷ In this context, their conceptions and practices related to masculinity were fluid and multiple.

¹²⁷ Social worker report by A. Polanco, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 72, 5 November 1928.

Chapter 3, Family Masculinities

In 1926, fifty-six-year-old Jesús Valencia migrated with his family to Mexico City from Cuernavaca.¹ He was the father of three children, Rosa, Teresa, and Pedro, and the husband of Isabel Carrión, who, at twenty-four, was much younger. Jesús began working as one of many itinerant vendors in the city, selling fruit from a small stand situated along the Avenida Insurgentes. Despite his long hours, he earned little. On a good day the most he could hope to earn was a single peso. Isabel began suffering from epileptic seizures and she was admitted to the Castañeda Hospital. These circumstances meant that Jesús became sole childcare provider. In an interview with social worker Fernandina Poulat, Jesús admitted that he had found juggling the demands of working full time and taking care of three children difficult. Jesús had turned to his only son, eight-year-old Pedro, and tasked Pedro with the responsibility of caring for his sisters, three-year-old Rosa and four-year-old Teresa. During the day, Jesús sold fruit while Pedro provided child care. That solution seemed to be working adequately.

One day, however, Mexico City police arrested and incarcerated Pedro for seizing a newspaper vendor's newspapers and tossing them into the gutter. After this incident, Jesús found himself in a difficult position. In one blow, the father had lost his son and his childcare provider. Jesús petitioned the Mexico City Juvenile court to release Pedro. Fernandina investigated Jesús' petition by performing a home visit. The social worker assessed Jesús' character as being upstanding. She noted the fruit seller had good

¹ In my records, men were generally older than their partners, but only a few years older. Isabel and Jesús' age difference is larger than most. Report by social worker Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 55, 7 January 1928.

manners, cared for his children, and was interested in their upbringing. The court recognized his good character and released Pedro to him.²

This account provides a glimpse into workers' masculinity and reveals one of this chapter's themes: the tensions and complexities underlying gendered obligations between adults and children within plebeian families. Jesús believed that caring for children was woman's work. Yet, Jesús also believed asking his son to provide childcare fell within the bounds of acceptable gendered masculine behavior. It was acceptable for a young man to fulfill a role as a nurturer. However, Jesús did not willingly accept the role of nurturer himself. Instead he called this family responsibility "an inconvenience."³ Despite Jesús' complaints about the burdens of fatherhood, the social worker, Fernandina, described Jesús as a "caring" father.

Jesús' story poses questions about the relationship between working-class masculinity and the family. What was the plebeian family of the 1920s like and how did varied types of family circumstances affect masculinity? What sort of relationships did men form with romantic partners, whether they were girlfriends, legal wives, or *amasiato* (common-law) wives? How did men and women in these relationships divide labor and power? Lastly, what did fatherhood mean to these women and to these men?

I argue that masculinity within the family was an arena in which men enacted a range of performances within the context of patriarchy and male-female power relations.⁴

² Judges' ruling, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 55, 31 January 1928.

³ Report by social worker Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 55, 7 January 1928.

⁴ This dissertation adopts Stephanie Smith's definition of patriarchy: "a system of concentrated male power, patriarchy relates to how a particular division of power is created and reproduced." Stephanie Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 6.

This chapter helps flesh out my overall argument that workers adopted multiple gender and class identities through masculine performances and they did so by negotiating the terms of an official hegemonic masculinity norm—in this case, that of the nuclear, heterosexual, patriarchal family in which the man and wife had been married by the state. Impoverished women and men developed partnerships ranging from relatively stable arrangements between equals to relationships wracked by domestic violence. Both women and men could be absentee, demanding, loving, nurturing, intoxicated, and/or cruel. Also, both men and women could find untapped reserves of love and energy as single parents just as both men and women could abandon their families. Plebeian fatherhood and motherhood consisted of gendered practices and beliefs that were fluid.

As previously noted, working-class manhood was not merely a “dumping ground” for all negative aspects of masculinity (fatalism, propensity for violence, disrespecting women). It could also encompass worker assertiveness and a class recognition that their culture and practices were as legitimate as those of elites. Conversely, proletarian masculinity was not solely represented by positive aspects (duty to family and to union, working hard). A part of proletarian masculinity was the right to perpetrate violence on women and children, a deeply-embedded practice within workers in the DF.

Fatherhood profoundly framed many men’s sense of self. Judging by the actions of many popular-class men, many men truly valued their roles as father and as partners. Yet, many men developed their sense fatherhood by subordinating women, be they partners or children. In some cases, men sought to dominate, subjugate, and disrespect women, and, at worse, abuse them physically. Women responded in a variety of ways. Some left, taking their children with them, while others remained, creating excuses that

their men were “honest and hardworking” even in cases when these men were unemployed, were drunk on a regular basis, and beat them and the children.⁵

The previous chapter emphasized how the new juvenile court and new ideas of childhood merged to create new arenas for workers and the state to contest masculinity and it explored how changes in technology and culture allowed for performances in new spaces like movie theaters. Nevertheless, during the 1920s, popular-class masculine performances were still heavily influenced by previous colonial and nineteenth-century practices and customs. The previous chapter demonstrated how the presence of state social workers created a space in which families could use gendered language to advocate on their sons’ and daughters’ behalf. In a similar vein, this chapter also shows how the increased presence of state social workers in the home created a new forum in which the popular class could present their gendered performances and family practices as legitimate. Yet these families also continued long-standing gendered performances, including forming large extended families and entering into *amasiato* relationships. In contrast, beginning in the 1930s and subsequent decades, Julieta Quilodrán’s scholarship suggests these families gradually became more nuclear and more willing to enter into civil marriages (a marriage performed by the state).

The historiography has reached a consensus on how the Revolution affected gender relations within the family; the consensus is that, while women made some gains, the net effect of reforms during the 1920s and 1930s was to keep patriarchy intact. Mary Kay Vaughan notes that the state’s “intent was not to emancipate women and children but

⁵ Report by social worker Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 27, 5 September 1927.

to subordinate the household to the interests of national development.”⁶ Vaughan also demonstrates how the post-revolutionary government attempted to reform Mexican manhood and fuse it with national pride, hard work, sobriety, health, and responsibility, a process Vaughan has called “modernizing patriarchy.”⁷ Katherine Bliss demonstrates that many government programs, “idealized the father as household head and mediator between the family and the new state, strengthening male authority in public and private spaces alike.”⁸ Jocelyn Olcott also grants that women made gains as a result of 1917 and 1928 legal reforms, but profound limits to these gains existed.⁹ The historiography also explores reformers’ attempts to regulate motherhood; these reformers fomented a patriarchal “cult of domesticity” that domesticated women by subordinating them to the household but also granted women power within the domestic sphere.¹⁰

While historians of Latin America have long recognized that workers shaped gender within the workplace, only in the last two decades have scholars begun

⁶ Mary Kay Vaughan, “Modernizing Patriarchy: State Policies, Rural Households, and Women in Mexico, 1930-1940,” in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, eds. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 194.

⁷ She calls this process an attempt at “restructuring male productive practices and sociability.” Vaughan, “Modernizing Patriarchy,” 199.

⁸ Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 8-11.

⁹ For example, a husband could still prevent his wife from attaining outside employment a job if he perceived that employment to endanger her “mission” as a mother. Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 19.

¹⁰ For scholarship on the post-revolutionary Mexican cult of domesticity, see Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughan, eds., *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990: Creating Spaces, Shaping Transitions* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994); Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining la Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Stephanie Mitchell and Patience A. Schell, eds., *The Women’s Revolution in Mexico* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007).

investigating how workers performed gender in the home.¹¹ According to Nara Milanich, “Although the connection between class and family has been deeply embedded in Latin American cultures and histories, the historiography has not systematically probed this relationship.”¹² Ann Blum and Roberto Miranda Guerrero have begun exploring the working-class Mexican family and this chapter adds to their scholarship by demonstrating how multiple models of masculinity existed within the family.¹³

In this chapter, I examine family structure and gendered wage obligations. I then investigate power flows within married and amasiato arrangements. Next I explain how breakups and divorce affected a families’ gender dynamics. I also analyze domestic violence and how families coped with abuse. Finally, I examine popular-class parenting and what fatherhood meant to a 1920s plebeian capitalino family.

¹¹ For some works that look at gender relations in the workplace, see Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourse and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), María Teresa Fernández Aceves, “Once We Were Corn Grinders: Women and Labor in the Tortilla Industry of Guadalajara, 1920-1920,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 81-101; and Heather Fowler-Salamini, “Gender, Work, and Working-Class Women’s Culture in the Veracruz Coffee Export Industry, 1920-1945,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 102-121.

¹² Nara B. Milanich, *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 6. Besides Milanich, some excellent works that do investigate both home and workplace dynamics are Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Columbia’s Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile’s El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Daniel James, *Doña María’s Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Ann Varley, “Women and the Home in Mexican Family Law, in *Hidden Histories of Gender at the State in Latin America*, eds. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 238-261.

¹³ Roberto Miranda Guerrero, in an excellent essay on masculinity within a working-class Jalisco family, also argues that scholarship on masculinity within the family is scarce. Roberto Miranda Guerrero, “La Vida de un Obrero y la Construcción de la Masculinidad (1890-1940),” in *Orden social e identidad de género. Mexico Siglos XIX y XX*, eds. María Teresa Fernández-Aceves, Carmen Ramos-Escandón, and Susie Porter (Guadalajara: CIESAS-Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006), 314-316; Ann S. Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

Plebeian Families

A variety of family structures existed in Mexico City during the 1920s; one could identify extended families, nuclear families, and one-parent families and a child's parent or parents could be birth parents, step parents, older siblings, godparents, aunts, uncles, grandfathers, grandmothers, or simply friends of the family.¹⁴ If there were two partners in the family, those partners might enjoy an *amasiato* arrangement, a civil marriage, a religious marriage, or both. Analyzing the data, one senses a dizzying array of family arrangements: godparents took in children when their parents died or abandoned them, older siblings adopted young offspring when parents abandoned them, parents lived alone with children, and domestic servants who were close to their employers sometimes felt themselves fortunate enough to have two families. No "normal" family structure existed among capitalino workers. One 1930 study of over 1,000 DF households found that 31 percent of the couples interviewed had participated in a civil marriage, 30 percent had entered into a religious marriage, and 25 percent had participated in *amasiato* relationships.¹⁵

Social workers, who were often middle class, tended to frame their reports in such a way that they favored the nuclear family. They only briefly discussed whether aunts, uncles, and grandparents were present in a home and, instead, focused on the mother/stepmother and father/stepfather unless the extended family members were primary caregivers. Despite officials' biases in favor of nuclear families, extended families often lived close to or with the nuclear family. Historians should not let the social workers' prejudices erase the fact that masculinity operated far more within

¹⁴ Olcott, 34.

¹⁵ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 160.

extended family networks among capitalino workers than it did among small nuclear families.

The most pronounced feature of life in 1920s Mexico City was the extreme degree of poverty in which most families lived. A recovering post-war economy, a dearth of jobs, and miserable wages meant life was a struggle. The Labor Department conducted detailed cost-of-living studies revealing these hardships. A typical unskilled worker earned between one and two pesos a day in 1920s Mexico City, while slightly skilled workers like textile shop sewing machine workers might earn \$2.75 pesos and carpenters could earn \$3.00 pesos.¹⁶ A 1920 Labor Department report noted that the average wage for workers in the DF was \$2.52 pesos a day.¹⁷ Typical workdays were six days a week, so a carpenter might make about \$62.00 pesos a month provided that worker was not ill or injured during the month (injury and illness frequently plagued capitalino workers). The following 1923 cost-of-living report reveals a range of staples totaling \$167.69 pesos a month, well more than the possible daily wage of 2.52 pesos. Consequently, a plebian family could not depend solely on one individual for support.

¹⁶ In contrast, a 1925 study reported the following monthly incomes for federal working-class *obreros*: At the high end of the spectrum, mechanics employed by the federal government made, on average, 156 pesos, bricklayers made 72 pesos, carpenters made 104 pesos, and general laborers made 80 pesos. Note that these figures are much higher than those reported in Labor Department surveys of the private sector indicating that the federal government “took care of its own.” Jesús Silva Herzog, *Costo de la Vida en México* (México, Distrito Federal: Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de México, 1931), 27. Labor Inspector questionnaires of managers/owners of private sector firms, DT, Caja 223, Expedientes 1-39, Jan-April 1920. One questionnaire reported the following wages: minor/helper, 1 peso; carpenter, 3 pesos; foreman, 7.75 pesos; weaver 3 pesos; sewers who used machinery, 2.75 pesos; sewers by hand, 2.50 pesos; those who prepared the thread, 2 pesos, custodians, 1 peso. Labor Inspector Questionnaire by Inspector Isidro L. Lagunas, AGN, DT, Caja 223, Expediente 1, 20 April 1920.

¹⁷ Labor Department Report, no title, AGN, DT, Caja 182, Expediente 1 and 11, n.d. but probably 1920.

Figure 2, Federal District Data: Monthly Cost of Food for a Family, In Pesos, 1923¹⁸

Corn \$ 9.00	Bread \$ 6.00	Beans \$ 6.09	Rice \$ 6.42
Beef \$ 73.48	Milk \$ 35.08	Sugar \$ 6.94	Coffee \$ 02.76
Butter\$ 9.66	<i>Chiles</i> \$ 5.80	Lentils \$ 6.00	Salt \$.46

To many officials, the ideal was a family structure featuring a “hard-working, responsible,” and married male adult breadwinner and a female adult homemaker.¹⁹ A 1921 Labor Department survey of bakery employees reflects this philosophy. The inspector, Aureliano Dorante, collected data from bakery owners and noted 886 male bakery workers were single, about twice as many as were married.²⁰ He also noted that many unmarried men had families, so, for the purpose of his study, he annotated that the state considered men to be “married” if they were “heads of families.” Workers’ casual attitudes towards marriage forced government officials to redefine conservative attitudes against *amasiato*; the state was unsuccessful in establishing a hegemonic masculinity framed around marriage and was forced to recognize long-standing popular-class marital practices. The Labor Department even framed their surveys with the assumption of a single breadwinner, the male head of household. An undated survey asked the following question of a female worker, Margarita López: “Number of people who depend on the head of household?”²¹ This report included a caveat that belies the gendered nature of

¹⁸ *Boletín del Departamento del Trabajo*, “Costo de la Vida Enero de 1923,” Tomo 1, #1, May 1923, 33-37.

¹⁹ Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 45.

²⁰ Labor Department Report by Aureliano Dorante, AGN, R6, 208, Caja 320, Expediente 13, December 1921.

²¹ Labor Inspector Questionnaire of a worker named Margarita López, AGN, DT, Caja 279, Expediente 8.

some of the department's statistics gathering and the gendered nature of using the head-of-household concept. The caveat stated, "The chart that follows is inserted by this department as per the Constitution's Article 123...it considers a male worker (*obrero*) as a family head, a family for whom he has the obligation to provide basic necessities..."²²

Despite the ideal of the male breadwinner, most working-class families pooled income from as many family members as possible. Also, women often found themselves employed when their male partners were ill or unemployed. During the economic chaos of the 1920s both partners often worked at wage labor, but once the economy began to stabilize and improve, from the 1940s on, more women abandoned wage labor and plebeian men frequently contributed up to three quarters of a family's income.²³ Also, despite elite criticisms of and campaigns against child labor, the Mexico City working class had long relied on child labor to supplement the family income.²⁴

Despite official rhetoric to the contrary, some popular-class families in Mexico City were headed by women.²⁵ A 1921 Labor Department study found that most working women had "parents, younger siblings, or children they had to support."²⁶ No mention was made as to whether male workers also had dependents. Mexico City and newspaper articles represented single mothers as being caring, sacrificing, and hard-working. Since

²² *Boletín del Departamento del Trabajo*, May 1923, 1.

²³ Lanny Thompson, "Households and the Reproduction of Labor in Mexico, 1876-1970," PhD Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1989, 218.

²⁴ Ann Blum, "Speaking of Work and Family: Reciprocity, Child Labor, and Social Reproduction, Mexico City, 1920-1940," *HAHR* 91:1 (2011): 65-66. Susana Sosenski, *Niños en acción: El trabajo infantil en la ciudad de México (1920-1934)* (México: El Colegio de México), 68-77.

²⁵ Ann S. Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 12.

²⁶ Draft of an article bound for use in the DT's *Gaceta de Trabajo*, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 332, Expediente 2, n.d. but probably 1921.

these households lacked the support of a male adult, single women often had to work longer hours and therefore did not have time or energy to contribute much in educating their children. This resulted in higher illiteracy rates among children of single mothers.²⁷ While the Education Ministry (SEP) believed the ideal family structure was that of a husband who worked outside the home and a wife who stayed home, circumstances compelled the agency to aid female-headed households. The SEP established vocational education classes for women emphasizing skills such as reading, arithmetic, mathematics, cooking, typing, accounting, and crafts production.²⁸ The agency also established local schools and literacy programs for the children of single mothers. By recognizing a reality and trying to address it, state officials made concessions and backed down from their gendered hegemonic ideal.

When both a mother and a father had to perform wage labor outside the home, such situations not only violated patriarchal ideals of the male breadwinner, they also created a childcare crisis.²⁹ Some parents, including those who worked as market vendors, often had the luxury of bringing their children to work with them. In contrast, those who worked in more formal settings, including factories and shops, often had to leave children at home with younger siblings, with neighbors, or with relatives.

²⁷ “La Labor de Desanalfabetización, Emprendida Sobre Bases Nuevas, Ajenas a Los Viejos Metodos Tiranicos, es Ya Un Feliz Éxito,” *Demócrata* 16 January 1922, v. 7, no 1779, p. 9, 12.

²⁸ Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1982), 178, 202-211; Patience Schell, *Church and State Education in Revolutionary Mexico City* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 129.

²⁹ For a very useful and incredibly detailed analysis of popular-class families and wages, see Lanny Thompson, “Households and the Reproduction of Labor in Mexico, 1876-1970,” PhD Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1989. CTMI Tribunal Ruling, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 56, 27 May 1927.

Men who failed to relinquish pay packets to their wives (women often ran the household economy) were criticized by elites and officials for not fulfilling masculine obligations. Worker Agustín Rodríguez sometimes lapsed into drinking binges, neglecting to give over his wages to his lover, María, causing her difficulties for family finances.³⁰ The figure of the irresponsible male who fails to turn over his wage packet became a stereotype and a butt of social satire mocked by singer Chava Flores' song *La Bartola* and Cri Cri's song *La Patita*. Social worker Hector Serna describes one unemployed popular-class father as "a kind, sober person who fulfills his promises," but also as one who "lacks foresight, squanders money, and only contributes to the household income intermittently."³¹ Thus, Serna underscored an inherent contradiction. This father fused elements of an individual's personality, a propensity to be irresponsible with money, with elements of proletarian masculinity: caring for one's family and fulfilling his promises.

Control over wages was also often a source of gendered conflict between youths and their parents or guardians. One youth, Joaquín, clashed over control of wages with his aunt.³² She believed his spending on drinking to be frivolous, whereas he viewed it as an integral way of fulfilling plebeian masculine social obligations. He pointed out that his male peers expected him to stop at the tavern after work to drink, and maintaining this gendered culture of drinking could be expensive! Eventually his aunt and he agreed he would surrender half his wages to her. Blum noted similar tensions in other families,

³⁰ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 10, 16 October 1928.

³¹ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 1, 27 October 1928.

³² Social Worker Report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 4, Expediente 11, 18 March 1929.

stating that many parents or guardians regarded beating children to be completely justified actions if the minors refused to contribute their pay packets to the household income.³³ Children who earned wages were in danger of being forced out of the home if a mother or father thought that a child was not contributing all of her or his wage packet.³⁴ Low pay and the fact that entire families had to work often lead to gendered conflict over wage packets as men, both adults and youths, demanded masculine privileges and women sometimes balked at these demands.

Men as Partners: Marriage and Amasiato

Popular-class men interacted with romantic partners as lovers and boyfriends, husbands, and amasiato partners. While the nature of their relationships varied, all of these couples were operating under the aegis of a new set of post-revolutionary, family-related legal reforms. In theory, men and women were now supposedly equal as a result of the New Law of Family Relations (1917) and the 1923 Civil Code.³⁵ Vaughan argues the Revolution opened up opportunities for women to obtain numerous legal rights (rights that included divorce, child custody, right to litigate, property ownership, and maternity protections as workers) and also provided expanded opportunities for them to operate in

³³ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 202; Blum, "Speaking of Work and Family," 88.

³⁴ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 202. Blum, "Speaking of Work and Family," 72, 74, 87-88. Nan Enstad and Kathy Peiss also discuss similar tensions over wages among the working class in New York during the early twentieth century. Nan Enstad notes that in working-class households the person in charge of finances was generally the mother. Daughters who worked had to turn pay packets over to their mothers. However, fathers and sons could open their packets before surrendering them. See Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 23-24; Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 63.

³⁵ Elsa S. Guevara Ruiseñor, *Cuando el amor se instala en la modernidad: Intimidad, masculinidad, y jóvenes en México* (México, Distrito Federal: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, 2010), 86.

consumer culture.³⁶ Historian Gregory Swedburg characterizes this new set of laws as permitting “women the space to question men’s power.”³⁷ Many women actively participated in the Revolution and actively challenged patriarchal norms. As Smith notes “Women participated in the liberal projects by exploiting ambiguities in liberal ideology, making demands for increased opportunities, and creating crosscutting alliances with male political allies.”³⁸ Despite these liberating changes to existing legal codes, Stephanie Smith, Swedburg, Vaughan, and others conclude that patriarchy remained intact; many men, especially judges, resisted the new laws and profound gendered tensions persisted.

Most capitalinos viewed marriage as a match made between companions hoping for happiness. Kristina Boylan remarks most Mexicans believed, “that marriage should contribute to personal happiness, and can and should be reshaped if it does not.”³⁹ Despite these positive views of marriage, civil or religious marriage was not the norm among workers; most couples lived together unmarried.⁴⁰ Plebeian couples could express profound love for each other. In one family, Ana María Trujillo, widow, remembered the character of her deceased husband as “good and honorable.” Ana María believed that he

³⁶ Mary Kay Vaughan, “Introduction, Pancho Villa, the Daughters of Mary, and the Modern Woman: Gender in the Long Mexican Revolution” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23-24.

³⁷ Gregory Swedberg, “Divorce and Marital Equality in Orizaba, Mexico, 1915-1940,” *Journal of Family History* 34:1 (January 2009): 118.

³⁸ Smith, 10.

³⁹ Kristina Boylan, “Revolutionary and Not-So-Revolutionary Negotiations in Catholic Annulment, Bigamy, and Divorce Trials: The Archdiocese of Mexico, 1929-1940,” in *Truth and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico*, ed. Matthew Butler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 178-179.

⁴⁰ Nara B. Milanich, *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 124.

was still influencing and aiding her from beyond the grave.⁴¹ One social worker reported that María and Nazario were a married couple and that they seemed to be in a very loving relationship, stating “The couple has both a civil and an ecclesiastical marriage and they are not controlled by vice. They live in perfect harmony.” (Despite the husband’s having fallen ill after a jilted ex-lover had poisoned him).⁴² Another woman, Adela Alvarez, jumped into the middle of a knife fight to save the life of her amasiato lover and, in the ensuing turmoil, she was stabbed to death.⁴³ Yet popular-class couples also exhibited intense feelings of hatred toward each other. Juana Rodriguez engaged in fistfights with a woman named Amparo Noriega when Amparo stole Juana’s amasiato lover.⁴⁴ Cases like this were typical. In another instance, one young woman reported to social worker Margarita Ramos Chávez that her mother’s amasiato had exhibited more interest in his lover’s daughter, than he had in his lover and that fear of sexual predation caused this young woman to run away from home.⁴⁵

The most significant change in Mexican, as well as Latin American, marriage practices during the post-independence period was the shift from religious to civil

⁴¹ Social worker report by Elena Bringas, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 65, 25 February 1928.

⁴² Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 6, Expediente 20, 23 October 1928.

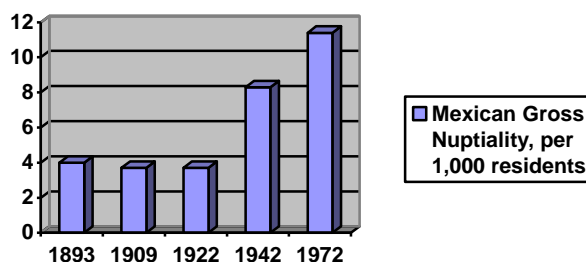
⁴³ Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 49, 20 July 1928.

⁴⁴ “Una Hazaña de Brutalidad.” *El Liberal*, 17 Febrero 1920, año 1, tomo 1, no 1. p. 10.

⁴⁵ Social worker report by Margarita Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 27, 24 May 1928. Note that Ann Blum and Katherine Bliss also discuss this and similar cases in their excellent essay, Katherine E. Bliss and Ann S. Blum, “Dangerous Driving: Adolescence, Sex, and the Gendered Experience of Public Space in Early-Twentieth-Century Mexico City” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, eds. Bill French and Katherine E. Bliss (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 163-186.

marriage.⁴⁶ Although many popular-class couples viewed civil marriage as a mere “legal duty,” they valued church marriages above civil marriages,⁴⁷ Nevertheless, plebeian couples rarely had the funds to pay for the expensive church ceremony. While Mexican liberals had been pressing for secularizing marriage since the 1850s, civil marriage rates did not increase until the 1930s.⁴⁸ The figure below from Julieta Quilodrán demonstrates this.

Figure 3, Mexican Gross Nuptiality, 1893-1972⁴⁹



Only one record explicitly records what workers thought about marriage. In 1929, social worker Hector Serna performed a home visit to Señor Santiago González, who had previously been living in an amasiato relationship with Señora María de los Angeles Esamilla. She had died of tuberculosis six months before the interview. After

⁴⁶ Demographer Julieta Quilodrán bases her analysis on “gross nuptiality.” Gross nuptiality is the total number of legal civil marriages in a given year divided by the total population for that year. During the 1920s, civil marriage rates resemble those of the 1890s and civil marriages were still relatively rare. They increased in the 1930s when about half of all couples in Mexico City were married. Julieta Quilodrán, “Un Siglo de Matrimonio en México,” In *La población de México: tendencias y perspectivas sociodemográficas hacia el siglo XXI*, coords. José Gómez de León and Cecilia Rabell (México: Conapo-FCE, 2001), 249-251, see also Marian Viridiana Sosa Márquez, “La Nupcialidad en México vista a través de las estadísticas vitales de matrimonios y divorcios,” UNAM, Biblioteca Jurídica Virtual, <http://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/libros/7/3067/11.pdf>. Of my 100 cases, 23 sets parents had been formally married (either civil or religious marriage) at the time they had children.

⁴⁷ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 114.

⁴⁸ Guevara Ruisenior, 137.

⁴⁹ Quilodrán, 249-251.

speaking with Santiago as well as some of Santiago's children, Hector reported that Santiago and María had lived in amasiato and had not gotten a civil or a religious marriage because their respective faiths differed. Hector reported:

The couple was not legally married because their religious ideas did not comply with civil laws. Those ideas were also the cause of a great many quarrels, which Señor González, a fervent Catholic, always lost. Meanwhile his woman adopted spiritualism as a religion and practiced devoutly and with faith. When they argued she called him unfaithful, a heretic, and dishonorable because he laughed at her spiritual practices and called them stupid.⁵⁰

Historians have long argued Mexicans frequently associated faith with femininity.⁵¹

There is no way to know, for instance, whether María and Santiago supported or opposed the government's anti-clerical war during this period.⁵² However, both partners were very religious yet their tensions arose from the fact that their faiths were so different and this difference prevented their union. This was not an instance of masculine anti-clerical

⁵⁰ "La pareja no fue casada legalmente, porque sus ideas sectarias se oponían a acatar las leyes civiles. Esas ideas eran causa también de que con mucha frecuencia tuvieran fuertes disgustos, en los que siempre salía perdidoso el señor González, quien es ferviente católico, mientras su mujer adoptó como religión la práctica del espiritismo con toda devoción y fe. Cuando discutían estos puntos ella lo llamaba infiel, hereje, e infama, y más se enojaba porque se reía de las prácticas espiritistas que califica estúpidas." Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 20, 15 April 1929.

⁵¹ Certain groups in 1920s Mexico, especially anarchists, socialists, communists, and those who participated in the government's assault on the church before and during the Cristero War, frequently depicted women as perpetrating what Olcott calls "feminine fanaticism." Olcott, 41; Reid Gustafson, "We Proletariat are People Too": Gender Representation in the Mexico City Anarchist and Labor Press, 1917-1922," MA Thesis, Western Washington University, 2007, 86-90. It is important to note that a continuum of anti-clerical perspectives existed in Mexico City during this period: an anti-clericalism practiced by liberal elites, a "vanguardist" (a term denoting one is of the masses but also leading the masses) liberalism practiced by labor leaders, and a more "popular" anti-clericalism practiced by some segments of the working class. John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 266.

⁵² Religion was a sensitive topic because, during the 1920s, Mexico experienced great upheavals as secular forces and Catholic groups struggled against each other. President Obregón shrewdly prevented the situation from getting too extreme. In contrast, President Calles was not known for being conciliatory. Thus, from 1926 to 1929 the Cristero War broke out in which the Cristeros, a group viewing themselves as Catholic religious freedom fighters, united under the motto "Long Live Christ the King!" The Cristeros fought a vicious war with federalist military forces who viewed themselves as a secular check to the power of a Catholic church which had grown too powerful. Both sides perpetrated horrific human rights violations during this conflict.⁵²

beliefs clashing with feminine Catholic beliefs, but rather a case of two competing visions of belief, spiritualism, and Catholicism.

Worker presses throughout much of the industrialized world, including Europe, frequently commented on whether or not the institution of marriage benefited both female and male workers. Many within the leftist press (especially the anarcho-syndicalist press) rejected marriage, seeing it as philosophically patriarchal, an outdated institution in which men behaved like beasts and exploited their wives.⁵³ In the labor press, both male and female writers frequently criticized marriage, supporting more informal common-law arrangements for a variety of reasons. Federico Stackelburg, writing in the anarchist newspaper *¡Luz!* proclaimed, “With regard to marriage, there is no reason for it to exist in a true social republic . . . the people will choose free unions rather than subject themselves to a yolk that does not offer them an advantage for wives, husbands, or children.”⁵⁴ Such attacks against marriage were common in the working-class press and writers proposed free-love, common-law relationships as an alternative and suggested that, if a woman could freely leave a relationship, she would be liberated from patriarchal oppression.

Some women writers in more mainstream newspapers also echoed this anti-marriage perspective, although they did not necessarily advocate common-law arrangements. In an article in *El Liberal*, Writer Ana Maria Valverde de Gomez Mayorga called herself a “feminist” and stated that women “in these modern times” did not need to marry to provide for themselves. Instead, “they could have their own jobs in

⁵³ For more on this topic of the Mexico City working-class press’ views on marriage during this period, see Chapter 4, *Religiosity and Marriage*,” in Gustafson, 91-93.

⁵⁴ Federico Stackelburg, “La Mujer y la Revolución,” *¡Luz!*, 17 April 1918, 1-2.

shops, factories, businesses, and offices, and even own their own businesses.”⁵⁵ However, this feminist *Liberal* writer quickly distanced her perspective from that of some “socialists” who merely wanted women to be “*marimacho*.” *Marimacho* was a derogatory term denoting a woman who was perceived to be mannish or lesbian (what would be called a “dyke” or “butch” in contemporary language); capitalinos often labeled women who challenged gender norms as *marimachos*.⁵⁶ The writer also stated that women could “still be women” by emphasizing their feminine nature and their beauty and be unmarried. The writer also advocated women forming equal relations with men by remarking “today women are strong and energetic companions of men.”⁵⁷ Unmarried women could be assertive and men’s equal, yet they could still be feminine because they rejected lesbianism and socialism.

Some officials and women’s organizations viewed *amasiato* arrangements as haphazard and prone to sudden dissolution. Such criticism has a long history, dating back to the colonial period. Mexico’s urban poor often entered into common-law marriages, although the practice was technically illegal.⁵⁸ Social worker Margarita de Ramos Chávez had some forceful words to say about *amasiato*, equating it with “adultery,” and social worker Fernandina Poulat was aghast when Antonio Toraya exploited his *amasiato* status, abandoning his familial obligations after twenty-five years

⁵⁵ Ana Maria Valverde de Gomez Mayorga, “Higiene de la Belleza, Nuestra Misión,” *El Liberal*, 17 March 1920, año 1, tomo 1, no. 5, 7.

⁵⁶ Olcott, 17.

⁵⁷ Ana Maria Valverde de Gomez Mayorga, “Higiene de la Belleza,” 7.

⁵⁸ See Michael Scardaville, “Crime and the Urban Poor: Mexico City in the Late Colonial Period,” (PhD Diss., University of Florida, 1977), 24.

of living with Concepción Díaz.⁵⁹ Antonio did not move very far though—he moved in with the woman next door! In 1923, a women’s organization called the League for the Elevation of Women wrote to the Mexico City government, noting that men in amasiato relationships tended to abandon women with more frequency than did men in marriages.⁶⁰ They urged women to “solidify the family” rather than adopt causes such as feminism or politics.

Other officials did not consider amasiato as negatively. The 1917 Family Code even granted common-law couples the same benefits as married couples, although they had to wait five years to be considered in amasiato status.⁶¹ Key word analysis of my data set ascertained that out of nineteen references to “amasiato,” only four sources viewed common-law relationships as immoral or disreputable. The remaining fifteen sources used the term in a neutral, descriptive manner, recognizing that amasiato relationships were a reality of plebeian life.

In one instance, Josefina Jiménez Pineda, a seventeen-year old homemaker who lived in an amasiato relationship with her boyfriend, Adolfo Sánchez, accused a police officer of making sexual advances toward her while she walked on the street.⁶² The police officer, accused Josefina of being a prostitute and arrested her. Police supervisors

⁵⁹ Social worker report by Margarita de Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 32, date is not legible, but probably June of 1928 and social worker report by Fernandina Poulat AGN, CTMI, 2, Caja 2, Exp 8, 29 March 1928.

⁶⁰ The letter contended that urban migration harmed impoverished families. Torres painted a rosy and rustic picture of women in rural nineteenth-century Mexico and blamed industrialization, men’s immorality, and migration to the cities as the cause of women’s present problems. Letter from Esther Torres, Liga para la Elevación de la Mujer, al Presidente Municipal, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3938, Exp. 696, n.d., but probably 1923.

⁶¹ Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 253.

⁶² Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 36, 11 June 1928.

summoned a social worker, Enrique Catalán, to investigate the situation. Catalán concluded the police officer was probably corrupt. More interesting was the fact that Enrique repeatedly had referred to Josefina's live-in boyfriend as both her husband and her amasiato. Unless this was a typographical error in the report, the two categories were not that different in Catalán's mind, although his indifference and the error might be because Josefina had indicated that she "would be willing to be married by civil authorities." This instance, when combined with the high rates of amasiato relationships and the low marriage rates, indicates a general attitude on the part of both the Mexico City working class and on the part of many city officials in which amasiato was considered the norm. Another factor is that amasiato was a system of male privileges—popular-class men had no legal requirement to support their partner or children and could abandon them at leisure. Married men, at least in theory, had legal obligations to spouses and offspring.

Yet, these performances also could be framed by unequal power relations and male-vs.-female power tensions within the family. The labor press and mainstream press promulgated differing views on what marriage should mean. Marriage and amasiato were unstable categories that underscored that plebeian performed masculinity in ways that demonstrated both equal and unequal power flows within the family.

Breakups and Divorce

Both men and women reacted to the end of relationship with a range of responses: violence, anger, weeping, pleading, despair, nonchalance, drinking, and, in some cases, relief, elation, and happiness. Breakups can be viewed as times when women and men, freed from former relationships, forged new gender identities as the sole caretakers of the

family. Those abandoned men and women who had responsibility for the children had to work harder to put food on the table, especially if they had no added support, and could adopt the mantle of *abnegado* masculinity or *abnegada* femininity. Those who left relationships and abandoned children never represented themselves as deserters but instead as having been forced to make difficult decisions in dire circumstances (an excuse which indicates a sense of responsibility abandoned). As reported earlier, while far more men abandoned children than women, family members scorned these women for the “libertine” behavior of abandoning their partner and child. Given the patriarchal system’s double standards between men and women, a man who abandoned family and children often faced less of a stigma.⁶³

Parents sometimes used children as weapons against the former partner after a breakup. Following the end of their relationship, José’s mother, Ignacia, poisoned her son against his father, Rafael, influencing her child to treat his father with disrespect. Soon the boy was taunting his father about being old, overweight, and having a “spare tire” (*viejo panzón*) and calling his father a “greasy fat man” (*panza que sebo*).⁶⁴ Rafael and Ignacia had dissolved their relationship because Ignacia could no longer tolerate Rafael’s infidelity. The social worker report represents a rich glimpse into the how a working-class family’s tensions intersect with gender beliefs and practices:

The father is rebellious, because at work he is always a malcontent and spreading ideas of strikes and revolutions. As a result of this rabble rousing he is lazy, late for work, and disobedient. It was rumored that he swindled the taxi company for which he worked as a driver and as a result they fired him. At one point Ignacia

⁶³ The sample set indicates that thirty-nine women versus eight men served as guardians and seven fathers abandoned children whereas five mothers abandoned children.

⁶⁴ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 44, 12 December 1928.

got so mad at Rafael that she threatened to rip up his clothes, beat him up, and kill him. On this occasion, el Señor [Rafael] Sandoval was actually prudent and ignored her actions and swearing. When the two were together before their breakup, he acted like a despot. He was a ‘man’ who shouted and beat her when she did not do what he wanted.”⁶⁵

In his behavior, Rafael fused an ideal proletarian sensibility of promulgating strikes and revolutionary rhetoric with a criminal tendency to steal and also to beat Ignacia. In his report, social worker Hector Serna placed the word “man” in quotes. Perhaps it was a typographical error, or perhaps it was the social worker’s middle-class values and Hector had intended to imply that true men do not behave so deplorably, or perhaps he was quoting his informant.

After his mother died, thirteen-year-old Antonio was in misery, frequently crying because he had to live with Rafael. Officials reported that Antonio’s mother had “passed her hatred” for his father onto Antonio.⁶⁶ As a result, because his mother had instructed him never to respect his father, Antonio slipped from being an obedient and well-behaved youth living with his mother to being a rebellious youth who embodied aggressive, irresponsible masculinity once he began living with his father.

The end of a relationship often meant the end of a father’s, and in some cases a mother’s, feelings of obligation to their children. However, this was not always the case, and many parents, even those who moved out of the home, continued to support their children even after a relationship had ended. Some men exhibited an attitude similar to that expressed by José Franco Pimentel. José continued providing monetary aid to his

⁶⁵ Note that the masculine subculture of taxi drivers is analyzed in the subsequent chapter. Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 44, 12 December 1928.

⁶⁶ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 20, 15 April 1929.

former girlfriend with whom he had a child even after he had left. José then married another woman. When his former girlfriend entered into a relationship with another man, José stopped the assistance, reasoning “he no longer had any further material obligation to his girlfriend or their children.”⁶⁷ The records do not reflect why José believed this to be the case. However, he probably considered it was no longer his responsibility to provide support now that there was a new live-in lover to fulfill the role of father to his children.

Also, remarriage could be devastating to some family members. A young boy named Wenceslao León González, who sold gum for a living, became despondent and jealous when his father, Jesús León, married only two and half years after his mother had died.⁶⁸ Wenceslao objected to Jesús’ treating his new bride with respect and love when, in contrast, he had frequently become inebriated and had beat his previous wife. The court’s ruling stated that Jesús had been, “a drunkard who mistreated his [previous] wife in the most cruel manner.” When she died the father remarried he treated his new wife with great care. Wenceslao still loves his departed mother a great deal and he is sad to see the difference with which his father treats his current wife.”⁶⁹ Also, in an understatement, social worker Esperanza Azcón described one couple’s frequent fights as a situation in which “the greatest harmony does not reign,” and she believed these

⁶⁷ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 3, 21 March 1927.

⁶⁸ Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 5, 18 September 1928.

⁶⁹ Tribunal Ruling, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 5, 2 October 1928.

conflicts had a profound negative moral effect on the couple's children.⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that while children sided with either parent in these conflicts, more often than not they tended to side with the mother.

Divorce also serves as another window onto workers' gender relations. The 1917 Family Law legalized divorce and the 1928 Civil Code expanded divorce rights. The 1928 DF Civil Code, for instance, established eighteen specific grounds for filing for divorce and included a detailed discussion of alimony procedures. In some instances, the document generally treats both men and women equally. Both men and women could cite infidelity, abuse, or abandonment as grounds for ending a marriage. The language is generally neutral, referring to "conjugal party" (*conyuges*). Nonetheless, the code does, at various instances, deviate from this egalitarian tendency by drawing stark differences between men and women. For example, if a husband "prostituted" his wife, she had grounds for divorce; if the woman became pregnant and the man was not aware that she was pregnant, then he could file for divorce; impotence, defined as an inability to copulate but not sterility, meant that a conjugal party, presumably the woman, could file for divorce; and, if the marriage had produced a child, the man could remarry someone else once the divorce was finalized whereas a woman had to wait 300 days unless the child or children had preceded the marriage.⁷¹

Exploring couples' gendered post-relationship interactions is most revealing. Breakups and divorces represent points where individuals were most vulnerable. Women

⁷⁰ Social worker report by Esperanza Azcón, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 23, 10 April 1929.

⁷¹ See Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, *Código Civil para el Distrito Federal en Materia común y para toda la República en Materia Federal (1928)* (México: UNAM, 1987), Chapter 10, Articles 266 to 291, 179-180, 182, 184, 204.

and men used children as weapons in a war-like family conflict, others were abnegados or abnegadas, and some clashed over issues of faith within their relationships. Also, men could exert the ultimate demonstration of masculine power within the family by beating their wives or children.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence was common in 1920s Mexico City. While most abusers were male, some mothers and stepmothers also beat younger family members. In my sample set, male abusers beat partners and children whereas female abusers tended to abuse children. It is difficult to determine the scope of domestic violence in the DF during the 1920s. Yet, it was so common that, as this dissertation's title "He loves the little ones and doesn't beat them" indicates, a mother perceived violence to be so frequent that she felt the need to comment that her male partner did not actually beat her children.⁷²

According to the Mexico City press, men's aggression was due to maintaining honor whereas female workers' use of violence stemmed from expressing emotions. Pablo Piccato has demonstrated the fallacy of such claims and shown instead that both women and men perpetrated violence due to a desire to maintain honor as well as to demonstrate to family, friends, and the community that the perpetrator had power over the victim.⁷³

In one particularly egregious case, Benito Rendón Ramos' stepfather and mother both beat him on a regular basis, often when inebriated. The violence was so severe that

⁷² Among my sample set of 100 cases, 26 youths of them reported being abused by parents, stepparents, or others Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Folder 13, 24 June 1927.

⁷³ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 92-93, 111, 113.

social worker Enrique Catalán described Benito's body as being covered in scars.⁷⁴ Enrique noted he found Benito's mother's behavior particularly egregious and commented that she treated both her children and her partner with equal disrespect. The juvenile court sent Benito to the Correctional School and subsequent records indicate that officials refused to return him to his family despite the family's repeated requests.

Workers, officials, and newspapers all viewed domestic violence against women as a significant problem during this time period; their criticisms against such violence also reflect their views on masculinity.⁷⁵ Columnist José Joaquín Gamboa, writing in *Universal*, condemned what he called "masculine bestiality," the propensity for Mexican men surrendering to their base desires by beating and killing women.⁷⁶ One observer simultaneously linked domestic violence to popular-class drinking customs by noting that workers only beat their wives when no *pulque* was to be found.⁷⁷ Some such as anarcho-syndicalist writers in the Mexico City newspaper *¡Luz!* associated such violence with class and gender inequalities within marriage and domestic partnerships. A *¡Luz!* writer argued that when a woman no longer depended on a man because she was able to earn equal wages, then that man would no longer feel he had the right to "hit her in the face."⁷⁸

However, in a spirit of contrariness typical of the *revista* (review) genre of theater, the play *Bandera rojinegra* treated domestic violence in a tongue-and-cheek

⁷⁴ Social worker report by Enrique Catalan, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 36, 11 November 1927.

⁷⁵ Humberto Galindo *La Bandera Rojinegra*, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1413, July 1921.

⁷⁶ José Joaquín Gamboa, "La Bestia Masculina," *El Universal*, 2 January 1924, año 9, tomo 30, no. 2,628, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 95.

⁷⁸ "La Gran Cuestión de la Familia," *¡Luz!*, 16 January 1918, 1.

manner. In this play, a pair of anarchist bombers bragged about how many people each had killed. Then one anarchist proclaimed, “When I find a girl I’m going to capture her and take her to my hovel.” The other anarchist asked, “What will you do with her then?” The first replied, “I’ll throw her to the floor and then dynamite her too.”⁷⁹ The revista commentary argued that a plebeian’s penchant for committing violence against women was akin to the anarchists’ traditional tendency to perpetrate bombings. The play thus fused two very different types of terror together, probably in an effort to mock, if not criticize, both.

When an abused woman named Angelica María wrote to a *Demócrata* advice columnist and complained that her partner beat her, she was advised “Wait until your daughter grows a little older, have patience for a few months and then demand a separation.”⁸⁰ The columnist then remarked, “The man who hits his wife, even if the reason is justified, does not deserve to be called a man, and even less in your case when the abuse is entirely unwarranted.” The columnist clearly sought to establish that a man’s beating his female partner was outside of the bounds of accepted behavior; the columnist sought to fuse appropriate Mexican masculinity with the concept of respecting women. Nevertheless, the columnist did state that there might be instances when a husband could justifiably beat his wife or partner. The newspaper *Universal* exhibited a similar mixed view toward domestic violence in an article about three separate attacks against women made by their lovers or ex-lovers. The writer stated, “Among our common classes (*bajo pueblo*), and even in higher classes that are supposedly cultured, very little respect exists

⁷⁹ Play called *La Bandera Rojinegra*, by Humberto Galindo, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1413, July 1921.

⁸⁰ “Consultas Sobre el Porvenir,” *Demócrata*, 14 January 1920, v. 6, no 1058, p. 2.

for women. However, it is certain that in some cases women do not deserve respect.”⁸¹ In all three of these abuse cases the women had to be hospitalized. This article represented domestic violence as a severe social malady, but also remarked that women victims of domestic violence did not act in a way which merited men’s respect.

Others dealt with violence by running away from home. A young woman, Lucia, ran away from home to avoid being beaten; she then moved in with her boyfriend because, according to her, he was so small that he did not hit her!⁸² Other capitalinos responded to violence by becoming violent themselves. One youth, Miguel, reported his stepfather frequently beat him.⁸³ Consequently, Miguel, began to get into streetfights with friends. This suggests that Miguel’s stepfather’s actions instilled a proclivity for violence in his stepson.

Female family members, especially young women, were vulnerable to sexual predation by male family members—especially stepfathers. Of my sample set of 101 youths, 3 young women expressed fear that their mothers’ boyfriends or their stepfathers would attempt to rape them. In all three instances, the young women left home.⁸⁴ All too often, when young women told other family members about advances made or rapes perpetrated by male relatives, their family members did not believe them. Elvira, who worked as a maid, tried to tell her mother that her employer had raped her—another all

⁸¹ “Los Golpeadores de Mujeres,” *El Universal*, v. 7, Tomo XXII, 2 February 1922, Section 1, p. 11.

⁸² Social worker report by Josefina Vergara, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 47, 3 December 1927.

⁸³ Social worker report by Manuel Hernández, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 67, 7 November 1927.

⁸⁴ In one case, a young woman was told to not spread “rumors” when she told her mother about her stepfather’s sexual interest in her. Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 28, 19 May 1928.

too common occurrence.⁸⁵ Her mother refused to believe her and beat Elvira for seemingly telling lies.

Violent plebeian masculine gendered practices and beliefs could devastate families. While a worker could enact many traits of responsible, proletarian masculinity by being upstanding and respected, that same worker could also commit horrific acts of violence against his family. Perpetrating violence was intertwined with multiple popular-class models of masculinity, and it resulted in psychologically scarred and injured family members, and, in some cases, in death.

Men as Fathers: Working-Class Parenting

Fatherhood was a shifting, dynamic continuum of behaviors and attitudes that encompassed many masculine practices, including binge drinking, nurturing one's children, working hard, and fighting. Fatherhood was also the arena in which plebeian families passed masculinity from one generation to another. Mothers, fathers, and other family members "masculinized" their sons through sharing rituals, father-son bonding, swearing, and using violence.⁸⁶ Men instilled masculine practices in male family members and performed masculinity by bragging about their own manhood and questioning each other's masculinity, by admitting fallibility to each other, and even by crying together.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Social worker report by R. Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 73, 20 March 1928.

⁸⁶ For more on the role various family members play in inculcating masculinity in children, see Chapter 2. See also Guillermo Núñez Noriega, *Masculinidad e intimidad: identidad, sexualidad y sida* (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género y el Colegio de Sonora, 2007), 243; Elsa S. Guevara Ruiseñor, *Cuando el amor se instala en la modernidad: Intimidad, masculinidad, y jóvenes en México* (México, Distrito Federal: Universidad Nacional), 147, 165-166; and Gutmann, 65, 75-83, 85-86.

⁸⁷ Núñez Noriega, 241-241.

The sources show the situational and fluid nature of masculinity. Workers exhibited many types of fatherhood, some of which operated within the accepted norms of hegemonic masculinity and some which transgressed these norms. Mara Vigoya Viveros remarks that, in contemporary Mexico, men express many approaches to fatherhood. Over the course of their lives these men change how they enact fatherhood, ranging from being absent to “loving.” As she notes, fatherhood is “an ambivalent and contradictory sphere for many men.”⁸⁸

Authors who study masculinity in Latin America often generalize that today men are more willing to shoulder the responsibilities of parenting. This line of thinking sees today’s Latin American males as being more present on a day-to-day basis: in helping their children grow and develop psychologically by playing with them, instructing them, and modeling behavior for them.⁸⁹ This behavior supposedly represents a shift from previous generations of Latin American men who were not involved in parenting. The common argument posits that currently a generational divide exists in Latin America. Older fathers were less willing to serve as nurturers, but younger fathers, those who came of age during the Lost Decade (in Latin America the Lost Decade refers to the 1980s—as well as the 1990s—a period of extreme poverty and difficulty for working-class and middle-class families alike) and later, have a different mindset and are willing to “pitch in,” change diapers, attend after-school events, and otherwise be there for their children.

⁸⁸ Mara Vigoya Viveros, “Contemporary Latin American Perspectives on Masculinity,” in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 39.

⁸⁹ José Olavarría, “Men at Home? Child Rearing and Housekeeping among Chilean Working-Class Fathers,” in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 333, 336-337; Stanley Brandes. “Drink, Abstinence, and Male Identity in Mexico,” in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, ed. Matthew Gutmann (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 168.

However, such interpretations are not historical. My sources reveal a more complicated picture of historical fatherhood, and the argument that Mexican men today are more nurturing than previous generations were is simplistic and needs to be contextualized. Previous generations of popular-class men were also caring, nurturing fathers—but such fatherhood would have taken a different form. Historians should question these assumptions and endeavor to flesh out the historical nature of Latin American fatherhood.

Fathers and mothers inculcated their daughters and sons with values, skills, and gender norms, especially since most of these youths received little or no primary-school education.⁹⁰ Working-class and middle-class fathers commonly transferred ideas of masculinity by teaching skills related to a father's respective trade or profession. A son's learning his father's trade established a masculine tie between the two that both reinforced the father's authority and also brought father and son closer together.⁹¹ Fathers also sought to teach their sons to value hard work (*ser trabajador*). One stepfather, Luis, berated his thirteen-year-old son, José, for not working and for being a burden on the family. In his own way, when Luis asked José, "Why am I feeding you if you don't have a job," Luis sought to inculcate a sense of manly discipline in José.⁹²

⁹⁰ Psychologists Shelly Marmion and Paula Lundberg-Love examined contemporary case studies and noted that, on a cross-cultural basis, parents inculcate gendered behavior in their children, starting at a very young age. Parents pass on gender beliefs by playing with their children, describing their children, assigning chores, and communicating to their children. Guevara Ruiseñor notes that in her contemporary case studies, both mother and father contribute to their children's ideas of masculinity although the father's role is frequently through father-son bonding rituals whereas the mother's role is to inculcate gender norms to male offspring through instructing. Shelly Marmion and Paula Lundberg-Love, "Learning Masculinity and Femininity: Gender Socialization from Parents and Peers across the Life Span," in *The Praeger Guide to the Psychology of Gender*, ed. Michele A. Paludi, 2004, 2-14, 14. See Guevara Ruiseñor, 147, 165.

⁹¹ Guevara Ruiseñor, 166.

⁹² Social worker report by B. Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 47, 1 July 1927.

This illustrates that child labor meant more to plebeian families than just a wage, and, as Ann Blum notes, that parents and children “...shared the assumption that children should work and they understood that work to represent respect and affection.”⁹³ Fathers could also be harsh on their sons. As a result of a public scolding and beating by his father in Chapultepec Park in front of friends and his girlfriend, one youth was so shamed that he attempted suicide.⁹⁴ Police discovered the young man later that day as he was attempting to kill himself by plunging a razor into his chest—fortunately the police stopped him in time.

Social workers described some fathers, as well as some mothers, as being nurturing and very loving.⁹⁵ After work, some fathers came home, spending their evenings with their children.⁹⁶ Taco seller Esteban Garza, a single father, took his two sons to the movies every Sunday.⁹⁷ Agustín Rodríguez lived in amasiato with María de Jesús. María’s son and daughter from a previous relationship also lived with the couple. Agustín went on drinking binges and had sex with María in the same bed as the children since their apartment was small and because they did not own much furniture. A social worker described Agustín’s attitude toward his children as “attentive,” “respectful,” and “loving,” and Agustín worked hard as a railroad mechanic, earning twenty pesos a

⁹³ Blum, “Speaking of Work and Family,” 67.

⁹⁴ Note that this account is one of the few in the records regarding a middle-class, rather than a working-class, family. The father accused the son of leaving the house without permission. Social worker report by Luis Arenal, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 33, 8 October 1927.

⁹⁵ In my sources, officials describe a working-class man as being loving once, they describe a plebeian woman as being loving once, and, on two occasions, officials characterized both parents as loving.

⁹⁶ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Folder 13, 24 June 1927.

⁹⁷ Social worker report by Margarita Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMI, 2, Caja 2, Exp 7, 31 March 1928.

week.⁹⁸ For his stepson Salvador, Agustín also tried to find an apprenticeship as a blacksmith. Other family members also contributed to raising children. Agustín Mendoza Gutiérrez, lived together with three of his uncles while his parents remained in Piedras Negras in the north.⁹⁹ Based on social worker reports, the three uncles were a very caring, nurturing, trio of men, and one uncle was teaching his nephew the carpentry trade.

A common pastime for poor and wealthy fathers alike was going to movie theaters with one's family, as indicated in a petition requesting to set up a merry-go-round in the Alameda, a large park in Mexico City. The petitioner commented, "It is a well-known fact that children and parents of poor families have no other form of entertainment other than cheap cinemas." The petitioner then argued that films were immoral and unhealthy whereas merry-go-rounds were "practical, useful, and pleasant."¹⁰⁰

Alternately, some men were not present in their children's lives and did not serve as nurturers, but were willing to help out when prompted. When Jesús Rubio Fernández's mother died, he initiated a city-wide search with the aid of the police for the father he had never known. He finally found his father, working in a Mexico City garden. His father had been living with another woman for fifteen years. After Jesús told his father about his mother's death, his father brought Jesús into his family's life. The

⁹⁸ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 10, 16 October 1928.

⁹⁹ Police report by Salvador Galindo and social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 21 08 July 1927, 3 September 1927.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Manuel Pensado to the DF Gobernador, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1371, 3 September 1914.

youth moved in with them and secured a job as a tailor's apprentice. His father also began teaching Jesús how to read and basic math. This situation did not last. Jesús eventually ran away because he felt that his father was not taking care of him out of love, but rather out of a sense of "humanity."¹⁰¹ Jesús recoiled at the thought that his father was acting out of obligation rather than affection. Jealousy might have been a factor, too, because he had to move in with step-sisters, with whom he had to share his father's attention.

Particular dramatic and sudden changes—a job loss or the birth of a child—could force a working-class man to adopt different and new expressions of his masculinity. A man thrust into the role of being a single father or a man who lost his job subsequently sometimes identified more with his role as a father. His sense of worth would no longer be associated with what he did for a living, but with what he did for his family and, without an income, he would perceive himself as not being able to do much for the family. Alternately, some single fathers worked even harder to support children and more strongly identified with his worker role than before he had been thrust into single fatherhood, especially if he had to be away from home to support his family. In these instances, older offspring and other family members sometimes were able to help in providing child care for younger offspring. After his wife died, Francisco Gallardo found himself a single father to his sixteen-year-old daughter, María.¹⁰² While he displayed the classic proletarian masculine traits of dedication to family and hard work because he

¹⁰¹ Social worker report by Margarita Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 6, Expediente 37, 6 October 1928.

¹⁰² No author specified. "Embrutecido por el Alcohol, un Hombre Mutilo a Su Hija, Pobre Niña que Vivirá Invalida si Quizá para Ser Eterno Reproche Su Padre," *Demócrata*, v. 8, no. 2782, p. 1, 7, 10 January 1923.

spent long hours walking the streets as an itinerant vendor to support María, he also exhibited elements of irresponsible masculinity by sometimes drinking too much and by carrying a pistol. Sadly and traumatically, merging the two masculinities did not help in Francisco's case, as one night he came home in a drunken stupor and accidentally shot and killed his daughter María.

Lucindo Collado was an indigenous former Army officer and former employee with the National Road Commission. He may have been a middle-class man at one point, but Lucindo had lost his job due to his penchant for binge drinking.¹⁰³ While we can speculate as to whether his irresponsible masculine behaviors developed over time, the loss of class status tormented him. He did not symbolize a stellar example of fatherhood. The social worker described him as frequently abusing his children, shouting and swearing at his wife, Marta Urgel, and disrespecting her, treating Marta as if she were a "prostitute." Unlike most plebeian couples, Sr. Collado and his wife were formally married rather than living in a common law relationship. They frequently fought and it is probable that the social worker used the term "prostitute" to convey the idea that Sr. Collado was not treating Marta with the respect to which she was due. (Mistreated men were never referred to as male prostitutes in the records).¹⁰⁴ In this case, the responsibilities of fatherhood saved Lucindo's life. He admitted to a social worker that he had considered committing suicide and would have done so had he not had his children to consider. Determining the degree to which Lucindo associated his

¹⁰³ Social worker report (social worker name not legible), AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 51, 15 December 1928. Sr. Collado is not the only former Mexican Army officer who slipped into poverty, such was also Carlos Domínguez's fate. Social worker report by Margarita Ramos Chávez. AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 15, 13 April 1928.

¹⁰⁴ Social worker report by (social worker name not legible), AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 51, 15 December 1928.

masculinity with fulfilling the obligations of his role as father is difficult. Ascertaining how losing his job or how his drinking influenced his conduct within his family is also difficult. Nevertheless, Lucindo's downward mobility—especially the fact that he was no longer the family's breadwinner—probably affected how he viewed himself as a man.

By abandoning their families, both women and men ceased to be nurturers.¹⁰⁵ More often than not, men and women abandoned a family because they had entered into relationship with another person; these cases indicate that leaving one's family was not necessarily a masculine or a feminine behavior among the working class. Some children were unfortunate enough to be abandoned by both mother and father, this was the situation for Guillermo, whose father went to the United States and whose mother deserted him.¹⁰⁶ His aunts assumed responsibility, serving as Guillermo's guardians. The aunts accused Guillermo's mother, and not the father, of abandonment, even though both parents had left the child.

Fathers transferred notions of masculinity to their sons. As noted in the previous chapter, 8 of 101 minors served or had served as apprentices and, more often than not, they served as apprentices for fathers, stepfathers, or uncles. Officials recognized the value of father-son apprenticeships. The juvenile court tribunal mandated that twelve-year-old J. Guadalupe was to be released to his stepfather on the condition that he work as the stepfather's apprentice in the bricklaying trade "so that he might be given training that would guide him in a better direction."¹⁰⁷ Sons sometimes learned the trades of

¹⁰⁵ In my sample set, seven of these youths' mothers had been abandoned by the fathers and five of these youths' fathers had been abandoned by the mothers.

¹⁰⁶ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Exp 68, 8 March 1928.

¹⁰⁷ CTMI Tribunal Ruling, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 71, 11 July 1927.

deceased fathers, as was the case with Joaquín, who became a mechanic. His father had practiced the same trade before he had been killed during the Revolution.¹⁰⁸ Some boys and young men refused to take up the same trades as their father or stepfather. Salvador refused to be apprenticed to his stepfather in a tool shop and Abraham explicitly did not want to take up his father's trade of selling sheets and bedspreads on the street.¹⁰⁹ These young men intentionally distanced themselves from older relatives' teachings of skills and gendered behavior. In both Salvador's and Abraham's cases, the parents were either very strict or had exhibited inappropriate parenting by drinking excessively.

Male relatives sometimes worked together in factories. Father Ramón Balcázar and son Alfonso Balcázar worked the fine thread machines at textile factory La Providencia.¹¹⁰ The two lived together as well. Alfonso and his wife lived with Ramón. Ramón acquired his job before Alfonso, likely indicating that Alfonso had used family ties to secure his job. Using kinship networks to gain employment was a common practice among the twentieth-century working class in Latin America.¹¹¹ Another man, Joaquín, briefly worked in the same mechanic's shop as an older brother. Joaquín found his brother to be a taskmaster. He complained that his older brother never allowed him any time to lighten the work pace.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 11, 18 March 1929.

¹⁰⁹ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 10 16 October 1928 and Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 2, 6 August 1927.

¹¹⁰ JFCA Meeting Minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 60, Expediente 927/1065, 27 September 1928.

¹¹¹ See Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Columbia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 64-65.

¹¹² Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 11, 18 March 1929.

Single fatherhood was another facet of working-class parenting. Out of my sample set of 101 children, 39 of the youths remained with their mothers when the relationship broke up and only 8 of the offspring remained with their fathers at the end of the relationship. When Petra Macías left her husband, Esteban, she was initially planning to take her two sons, Leopoldo and Antonio, with her.¹¹³ However, the sons wanted to remain with their father. Social worker Margarita Ramos Chávez describes Esteban as a hard-working single father who cared for his children. Since he worked long days as a taco seller, he could not watch over the boys. Esteban told the social worker, Margarita, that he wanted the two boys to live with his sister who would do a better job of attaining an education for them and watching them (*vigilarlo*). Similarly, Francisca and her father, Luciano, were abandoned by her mother when she was eight months old. When she was six, she met and briefly went to live with her mother, but quickly returned to Luciano due to her mother's demeanor and lack of responsibility, saying that "she no longer recognized her mother."¹¹⁴ Single fathers Luciano and Esteban, demonstrate that popular-class masculinity also could encompass nurturing traits.

Single motherhood provides insight into gendered beliefs and practices involving masculine traits. Some strove to depict all mothers as nurturing and self-sacrificing, as evidenced by the promoting of Mother's Day in Mexico City initiated by *Excelsior*, in May of 1922. The conservative newspaper's motive was to pre-empt socialist and leftist

¹¹³ Social worker report by Margarita Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMI, 2, Caja 2, Exp 7, 31 March 1928.

¹¹⁴ Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 45, 4 August 1928.

attempts to promote birth-control programs and May Day celebrations.¹¹⁵ However, working-class mothers, just like their male counterparts, exhibited a range of gendered practices that complicate stereotypes of the *abnegada*. While many women deserved such adulation, at times plebeian motherhood also encompassed women who ignored or, worse, abused their children. Social worker Hector Serna wrote that he “respected” the mother and that she was a “good person” (*buena ser*) who, unfortunately, was neither respected by her partner nor by her sons.¹¹⁶ Some mothers ignored the fact that their *amasiato* partners were expressing sexual interest in their young teenage daughters, and some mothers sometimes were as habitually alcoholic as fathers (one mother even appeared, while intoxicated, at a police station).¹¹⁷

Older brothers often straddled two worlds. Some older brothers embraced parenting, working, and forming stable relationships, and shouldering the family responsibilities when both parents had either died or were absent. Others declined to shoulder masculine responsibilities and instead inculcated younger siblings into subcultures featuring crime and aggressive displays of bravado. Other older brothers jumped fluidly between masculine performances, sometimes adopting masculine obligations and sometimes eschewing them. Carlos Leal, took his younger sister, Raquel,

¹¹⁵ Sarah Buck, “El Control de la Natalidad y el Día de la Madre: Política feminista y reaccionario en México, 1922-1923,” *Signos Históricos* 5 (enero 2001): 34-39; Ilene O’Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 8. The idea of Mothers’ Day was a transnational phenomenon. See Karin Hausen, “Mother’s Day in the Weimar Republic,” in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Mario A. Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 131-152.

¹¹⁶ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 1, 31 March 1928.

¹¹⁷ Police report by Superintendent Samuel Marín and social worker report by Bertha Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 14, 12 June 1927 and 5 July 1927; Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 38, 9 November 1927.

into his home to live with his family when their mother died. A social worker described Carlos as “more of a father than a brother” because he rose to the task of protecting and aiding Raquel so admirably.¹¹⁸ However, the official did state that Carlos could be stubborn and occasionally violent. Another juvenile court official who monitored two brothers in custody noted that the older brother, Agustín, “loved his little brother and was always ready to protect him and give him advice.”¹¹⁹

Not all older brothers could smoothly transition to the role of father figure. When their mother died, Jesús and his older brother Arnulfo moved in with their grandmother. Given the patriarchal nature of Mexican law and practice, as the eldest male, Arnulfo became the “head of household.”¹²⁰ Arnulfo turned to cruelty, frequently beating both Jesús and his grandmother. Eventually both fled to live with a neighbor, leaving Arnulfo alone in the home. Another older brother, Abundio Díaz, at first glance resembles the “poster boy” for responsible, proletarian masculinity. He had a family and an honest job as a school’s orderly. Social worker Fernandina Poulat described him as “honorable and without vices.”¹²¹ However, Abundio turned his younger sister over to the courts for living an immoral, “libertine” lifestyle, though this action was against the wishes of their mother—who was his sister’s legal guardian. She remained in juvenile facilities for four

¹¹⁸ Social worker report by Refugio Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 19, 28 April 1928.

¹¹⁹ The younger brother was arrested for breaking and entering into a dentist’s office. The records do not state why the older brother was in the Juvenile Court system. La esquina de las Calles de Guatemala y Argentina. Social worker report, name not legible, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 37, May 1928, specific day not legible. Report by Casa de Observación Directora Luis González, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 12 1 July 1927.

¹²⁰ Social worker report by Refugio Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 19, 28 April 1928.

¹²¹ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 5, 28 March 1928.

years and was released only because she had obtained a factory job. Abundio may have seen his actions as those of a responsible paternal figure, but others might have seen his actions as a dishonorable and underhanded betrayal of his mother and his sister.

Abundio's actions infused his masculinity as a caring brother with elements of multiple facets of masculine behaviors, at times nurturing and, at other times, aggressive and criminal.

Mexican males often learned gendered practices from older brothers. Many older brothers, such as José's, indoctrinated their younger siblings into practices including drinking, carousing with women, stealing, and hanging out in movie theaters.¹²² Such actions sometimes sparked officials' ire as was the case when social worker Hector Serna blamed one youth's older brother for corrupting his younger brother Guillermo by noting, "he is the true one responsible for Guillermo's actions, he has taught his younger sibling how to steal and to run away from home."¹²³

Plebeian families' parenting practices illustrate the processes through which men manifested multiple masculinities. Be they absentee, nurturing, abusive, single, married, or amasia fathers, masculinity offered these workers with scripts to use when relating to children. Also, older brothers often stepped in and served gendered roles similar to those of fathers, especially in homes with absentee fathers.

¹²² Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 49, 20 July 1928.

¹²³ Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 68, 8 March 1928.

Conclusion

This chapter's accounts of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and other family members underscore how family members framed their actions and beliefs in masculine terms. Fatherhood and gendered behaviors, including using domestic violence, reveal how family members and others used masculinity in managing the stresses and obstacles placed upon working-class families during the tumultuous decade of the 1920s.

Despite the diversity and varying masculine performances within these workers' families, these families were all one disaster, one job loss, one injury, or one death away from slipping deeper into poverty. Unfortunately, for a working-class family in the precarious economy and society of post-war Mexico City, a male breadwinner's losing a job or becoming ill was too often a question of "when" rather than "if." Social worker J. Rondero wrote of one family, "The family was in a good class before the death of the father," implying that as a consequence the family had descended into poverty.¹²⁴ A parent's abandoning a family could be devastating, and the parent who abandoned her or his family often renounced financial responsibilities to offspring or former partners—a decision that undoubtedly psychologically and financially affected those left behind.

¹²⁴ Social worker report by J. Rondero, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 59, 2 February 1928.

Chapter 4, Leisure Time and Entertainment Culture Masculinities

The phenomenon that we are observing in the public with regard to art is truly saddening. We do not refer to the economic crisis that threatens the middle class' ability to attend theaters. Nor do we refer to the upper-class' problem of showing off their wealth and how this harms theaters and movie theaters...we refer...to the lack of artistic taste due to the great public mass' profound spiritual decadence. This phenomenon dates to the end of the war; we do not know if other countries also experience this decadent phenomenon, but in the case of our public, it is perfectly perverted...The public's desire is completely wicked. Truly artistic and noble events quickly become extinguished due to lack of an audience. And this is truly sad."¹

-Anonymous writer, *Revista de Policía*

In 1926, an anonymous critic for the magazine *Revista de Policía* deplored the decline of Mexico City's high culture. The writer blamed this decline on the city's masses.² The critic complained, "I have seen the country's bataclán shows and *carpas* [street theaters] filled and I have seen bullfighting arenas and (more or less legal) boxing exhibitions exploding with large audiences."³ The writer claimed that poor attendance

¹ *Revista de Policía*, "La Decadencia del Pueblo," año 2, tomo 1, no. 22, 25 September 1926, 29. This police department magazine frequently wrote about the city's culture. The *Revista* covered theater, film, and sports; it often ran spreads covering the Department's volunteer sports teams.

² This chapter adopts Carlos' Monsiváis' definition of popular culture. He describes popular culture as "... the sum of tendencies, characteristics, attitudes, devotional practices, informal institutions, marginal ways of life, communal predilections, oral cultures, activities initially thought of as typical and later as idiosyncratic, musical trends, foodways: in summary, it is everything which lacks prestige and which elites have rejected as vulgar and lacking status... (it is everything) that stimulates daily life and sentimental outbursts." Carlos Monsiváis, "La Cultura Popular en la Revolución Mexicana," en *El siglo de la Revolución Mexicana, Tomo II*, coords. Jaime Bailón Corres, Carlos Martínez, y Pablo Serrano Álvarez (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 2000): 143.

³ *Revista de Policía*, "La Decadencia del Pueblo," año 2, tomo 1, no. 22, 25 September 1926, 29. Ageeth Sluis describes bataclán as a theater style featuring semi-nude or fully nude female performers and "a mix of classical ballet, Ziegfeld Follies chorus lines, and tableaux vivant." The Ziegfeld Follies were a series of New York productions featuring elaborate chorus lines and female performers who were a fusion of spectacle, sex object, and empowered woman. Tableaux vivant was a French artistic genre consisting of a "living picture" of actresses and actors frozen in particular provocative poses. Ageeth Sluis, "BATACLINISMO! Or, How Female Deco Bodies Transformed Postrevolutionary Mexico City," *The Americas*, 66:4 (April 2010): 470.

caused “artistic and noble shows” to fail while the popular classes flocked to carpas, boxing, and movies.⁴

For a writer to vilify popular culture while extolling the virtues of upper-class culture was not unusual.⁵ What was unusual was how the *Revista de Policía* observation emphasized how new forms of popular threatened “artistic and noble” culture. The writer’s comments serve as a way to look at popular culture from the perspective of working-class masculinity. During this period, the working class enthusiastically flocked to and spent its leisure time in entertainment venues including *pulquerías*, cantinas, dance halls, theaters and street theaters, and sports venues. In these venues they drank, joked, gossiped, flirted, formed friendships, and fought—all plebeian practices dating from the colonial period. This chapter asks “How did perceptions about dance, fitness, and sports intersect with workers’ ideas about masculinity?”

I argue that popular-class capitalinos developed masculine identities through leisure time and popular entertainment culture and that this entertainment culture represents a point of failure for officials’ efforts to establish a hegemonic masculinity. To some officials and some in the press, the popular classes represented an uncultured and masculine phenomenon because, in these venues, workers often enacted gendered behavior which officials deemed inappropriate. Workers shouted threats at performers,

⁴ *Revista de Policía*, “La Decadencia del Pueblo,” año 2, tomo 1, no. 22, 25 September 1926, 29.

⁵ For scholarship analyzing elite criticism of the popular classes in colonial-era and nineteenth-century Mexico, see Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico* (Wilmington: SR Books, 1997) and William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). For an essay on the relationship between Mexican popular culture historiography and the broader historiography of the Mexican Revolution see Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920-195* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000): 8-12.

screamed at referees, and fought during and after matches. They drank and committed crimes in arenas despite official prescriptions against such behaviors. While the state's power was limited it could still help frame the discursive and gendered framework for gendered actions within these spaces. By using inspectors who had the power to shut down any performance which displeased them, the state sought to use culture to shape workers' practices and beliefs. Yet, in many instances, this analytical model of agency and resistance misses the broader point of the 1920s: a weak federal state sought to grant respectability to and form alliances with the urban poor. In many instances, especially the most-advertised fights and the most popular dance halls, the popular classes, the middle classes, and the upper classes all participated in the same forms of popular culture.

Men used popular culture venues to forge identities consisting of friendship, physical actions, and feelings of obligations. Men who worked together often quaffed drinks or attended sporting events after work. Ageeth Sluis notes low-cost hotels (*casas de citas*), brothels, and night clubs “helped the new modernist male subject come into being.”⁶ Victor Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein note that all-male sites, including bathhouses, cantinas, and movie theater balconies, served as arenas where men created their sense of “masculine identity.”⁷ Drinking establishments, especially cantinas, represented settings where men felt more comfortable expressing and communicating their emotions and even touching each other in a friendly, congenial, or sometimes

⁶ Ageeth Sluis, “City of Spectacles: Gender Performance, Revolutionary Reform, and the Creation of Public Space in Mexico City, 1915-1939,” (PhD Diss., University of Arizona, Tucson, 2005), 203.

⁷ Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 7.

sexual, manner, for, in these venues, men felt more willing to “*se rajan* (open themselves up).”⁸ Writer Luis G. Urbana complained that male capitalinos could only interact comfortably when they were in their cups and he coined the term “cantinismo” to describe this phenomenon.”⁹

John Lear posits that, for the poor, the urban environment of Mexico City was much more liberating than the countryside from which many of them had migrated.¹⁰ In the countryside, close kinship ties and other institutions such the church ensured everyone monitored everyone else’s behavior. In contrast, in the booming urban environs of the capital, employers, foremen, kinship networks, and priests had only limited ability to monitor workers, allowing those workers to use urban popular culture venues in ways that had not been possible for their rural counterparts. Since the state and the press exerted less control in these spaces, men and women formed relationships with each other through behaviors like close dancing. Pulquerías like the Brave One (*Atrevida*) and *salones de baile* (dance halls) like the Salón México or the Salón Los Angeles represented places where working-class women and men could dance closely together and drink together in what Susanne Einegel refers to as “a new type of physicality between the sexes in public space.”¹¹ These venues represented both a continuity and a change: movie theaters; dance halls; and cross-class enthusiasm for fitness, team sports,

⁸ Guillermo Núñez Noriega, “Cantina Culture,” in *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, ed. George E. Haggarty (New York: Garland Press, 2000), 169.

⁹ Diego Pulido Esteva, “‘El Cantinismo’: Culturas del alcohol en la Ciudad de México a principios del siglo XX,” Coloquio Internacional “Historia de Género y de las Mujeres en México,” Colegio de Mexico, Mexico City, 13-15 March 2013, 1.

¹⁰ John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 96.

¹¹ Susanne Einegel, “Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico-City’s Middle Class, 1890-1940,” (PhD Diss, University of Maryland, 2011), 119.

and boxing and fitness were new during this period whereas drinking establishments, carpas, and theaters enjoyed long histories dating to the colonial period.

Also, popular classes, and not just the middle classes and upper classes, were consumers. Rodney Anderson and Stephen Bunker disagree as to whether or not Porfirian-era urban popular classes participated in the same consumerism trends as wealthier Mexicans. But both would agree that, by the 1920s, workers avidly embraced a range of products including beer, clothing, and cigarettes.¹² Manufacturers increasingly recognized the market potential of this growing population and marketed to the rural and urban popular classes because this market was much bigger than that of the nascent middle class or tiny upper class.¹³ The working-class press filled their newspapers' and magazines' pages with advertisements targeting workers—especially unionized workers because they were often better paid. Workers used and consumed many of these products through gendered actions. Even hats could assume gendered or class significance when men threw hats from theater balconies onto young women seated below or when young men defiantly refused to doff their hats to some individuals. Wearing a dapper Tardan hat could distinguish an urban capitalino from urban counterparts who wore sombreros.¹⁴

To examine the historical connections between popular-class masculinity and popular culture entertainment spaces, each section analyzes a particular type of venue. I

¹² Bunker emphasizes that workers were consumers during the Porfiriato while Rodney Anderson argues that, until 1912, Mexican workers were not significant consumers, see Rodney D. Anderson *Outcasts in Their Own Land: Mexican Industrial Workers, 1906-1911* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 29; Stephen B. Bunker, *Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Díaz* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 2.

¹³ Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 29.

¹⁴ Tardan hats were and still are named after the Mexico City firm which manufacture the stylish hat. For over a century, the firm has also been on the cutting-edge of modern advertising techniques.

begin by providing a sketch of the agency responsible for controlling worker morality in these spaces: the Public Diversions Department. Then I examine drinking establishments and how they helped forge masculine identities. Next I demonstrate how workers used dance venues to express distinct plebeian gender beliefs. I then show how carpas and theaters helped workers develop a popular-class masculine sense of irreverence. I finish by showing how the state used sports to promote a responsible masculinity while fans and athletes presented alternatives to these masculinities.¹⁵

Mexico City Public Diversions Department

Mexico City's Department of Public Diversion was the agency responsible for enforcing cultural, safety, and morality laws in the city's entertainment venues. While the Department existed was established during the Revolution, only in 1921 did the city hire enough inspectors and implement sufficient reforms, including using detailed logbooks to track proprietors who violated the law.¹⁶ The Department's head, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, justified his agency's existence by insisting that without his inspectors' vigilance, discipline, and regulation, the city's cultural venues would descend into "anarchy, arbitrariness, capriciousness, and perniciousness."¹⁷ Lerdo de Tejada was also the leader of a popular orchestra that played traditional *música típica*. Inspectors could intervene if a movie theater lacked ventilation, a pulquería owner sold liquor to women, or a theater owner presented a play that the inspector perceived to be immoral or

¹⁵ While this chapter references movies and movie theaters, Chapter 2 provides a much more in-depth look at the relationship between movies, movie houses, and working-class masculinity.

¹⁶ Letter from DP Section Chief to the DP Commission, AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1589, 10 January 1922.

¹⁷ Note that Miguel Lerdo de Tejada was also the name of a famous liberal Mexican treasury secretary during the mid 1800s. Sluis, "City of Spectacles," 113.

subversive. Lower-ranked inspectors monitored plebeian venues and higher-ranked inspectors mingled with Mexico City's upper crust in the higher-priced theaters and movie halls. Intellectual Salvador Novo worked as a high-ranking inspector while establishing a name for himself as a poet and journalist.¹⁸ In 1922, this department had fifty-three officials responsible for monitoring and inspecting over eight establishments.¹⁹ The following graph specifies the number of inspectors in 1922 and demonstrates the agencies' wide reach into many types of venues:

Figure 4, Diversions Department Inspector Assignments, 1922²⁰

#/Type of Venue	Number of Inspectors
12 theaters	12
38 movie theaters	19
8 carpas	8
1 rooster fighting plazas	1
13 ball courts	1
4 baseball fields	3
4 Movie theater re-inspectors	4
2 theater re-inspectors	2
2 carpa re-inspectors	2
1 baseball field re-inspector	1
Total	53

In 1921, the Department initiated a “closeness” effort between city officials and venue owners to reduce crime and immorality in these spaces.²¹ Inspectors sought to

¹⁸ Sluis, “City of Spectacles,” 120. Some criticized Novo for being openly homosexual, as did the Communist newspaper *El Machete* in an article implying homosexuals were fascists. “Los Rorros Fachistas,” *El Machete* # 10, 21 to 28 August, 1924, p. 2. Novo was not officially “out of the closet” but, as Francisco Barrenechea noted, “Novo never came out of the closet, but he put glass doors on it.” Francisco Barrenechea, *Café Break Series: Tragic impostures: Greek tragedy and Aztec Myth in the theater of Rodolfo Usigli and Salvador Novo*, University of Maryland, College Park, April 16, 2014.

¹⁹ Letter from DP jefe, signature not legible, to DP Commission, AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1588, 2 January 1922.

²⁰ DP chief's memo, AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1588, 2 January 1922.

“persuade” owners to adhere to code instead of confronting owners and issuing fines.²² Despite these efforts, the relationship between popular culture venue owner and Public Diversions inspector was fraught with tension. Some business owners accused inspectors of being corrupt since inspectors sometimes threatened to issue fines unless owners paid them bribes; one owner complained, “The gendarme wants money and we will not give it to him so the he fined us.”²³ The owner of the Carpa Jesús Torres remarked upon sighting an inspector, “You! What the hell are you looking for?!” Some inspector-venue owner relations were so tense that inspectors requested police escorts when they visited the venues.

Workers also expressed disdain towards inspectors. One inspector noted, “the low class (*gente de la clase baja*) of people who attend this theater (the Teatro Hidalgo) make the police very necessary,” indicating the inspector felt so threatened by the audiences that he brought a police escort along during his inspections.²⁴ Interestingly, in 1920, owners complained of a rash of instances in which popular-class capitalinos pretended to be inspectors so they could obtain free entry into movie theaters and carpas.²⁵

²¹ Letter from DP Section Chief to the DP Commission, AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1589, 10 January 1922.

²² Letter from DP Section Chief to the DP Commission, AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1589, 10 January 1922. For an excellent analysis of DP inspectors, see Sluis, “City of Spectacles,” 113-120.

²³ Letter from Felix Trajo, the owner of the Cielo at Av. Brasil # 105, Presidente Municipal, AHDF, IP, Vol. 2394, Exp. 3, 1 September 1919.

²⁴ Inspector report, signature not legible, sent to the DP Jefe, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1406, 5 September 1921.

²⁵ Letter written by Jefe de Inspectores Administrativos to the Procurador de Justicia del Distrito, AHDF, DP, Vol. 813, Exp. 1808, 19 October 1920.

Drinking Venues

Pulquerías, cantinas, and fondas (small tavern-restaurants) were arenas where workers forged masculine identities.²⁶ Imbibing alcohol together has long served as a masculine rite through which men form bonds and drinking establishments have long been some of the only spaces in Mexico where it is acceptable for heterosexual men to touch each other in both congenial and intimate ways.²⁷ Particularly seedy establishments were spaces where workers could disregard the state's or employers' attempts at discipline. One play, "Illusion and Reality," depicted a pulquería as a den full of foul-mouthed underworld denizens who brawled as they consumed large amounts of liquid from their *catrinas*, the clay pots in which *pulque* was traditionally served.²⁸ Tavern fights gave men opportunities to display their masculinity. Rob Alegre remarks, "Fights offered another opportunity for men to flaunt their physiques, flashing aggressive poses that signaled a masculine persona."²⁹ For these workers, a healthy, muscular body signified proletarian masculinity.

Pablo Piccato proposes another explanation of why drinking venues mattered so much to Mexico City's working class. He notes that pulque and other drinks like *tepache*

²⁶ The relationship between taverns, including pulquerías, and race is difficult to determine. While none of my sources on taverns referenced race, Mauricio Tenorio remarks. "Pulquerías stood for indigenous people, backwardness, tradition, drunkenness, and delusion..." Tenorio-Trillo, 178. Daniel Nemser echoes this idea and notes that upper-class concerns about pulque "would provide a language for talking about race mixing (mestizaje) and racial categorization, while at the same time constituting pulque consumers as (seditious) collective subjects..." Daniel Nemser, "'To Avoid This Mixture': Rethinking Pulque in Colonial Mexico City," *Food and Foodways* 19:1-2 (2011): 99.

²⁷ Núñez Noriega, "Cantina Culture," 118-119; Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 177.

²⁸ DP inspector report, name not legible, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1661, 1 November 1922.

²⁹ Rob Alegre, "Contesting the 'Mexican Miracle': Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico, 1943-1959," (PhD Diss, Rutgers New Brunswick, 2007), 67.

and infusions (fermented pineapple juice and alcoholic tea, respectively) had a low alcohol content, allowing members of the working-class to leisurely sip these drinks and mingle with friends for hours or even all day.³⁰ Many of these individuals were migrants from rural regions and these venues offered them more freedom in which to relax and drink than they had previously enjoyed in their former close-knit, highly-monitored rural communities because neighbors, relatives, and priests watched campesinos' every move. These urban venues often were well decorated and some even featured attractive hand-painted murals. They also featured evocative and witty names like "The Machine Gun" (La Ametralladora) and "The Hearty Laugh" (La Carcajada) and were often located in workers' neighborhoods close to housing and factories.³¹ Unions even sometimes held their meetings at bars.³² Also, one of the reasons people liked these establishments was because they served food. In contrast, due to reformers' desire to convince men to go home, in many U.S. cities, taverns prohibited were prohibited from serving food.

Authorities classified liquor vendors using various criteria, including the type of license requested, whether the proprietor had a grease trap, the quantity and type of food sold on premises, whether there was music, and the operating hours. Cantinas featured live music, food, and a "night club" atmosphere. *Fondas* were small restaurants that also sold alcohol. *Pulquerías* sold mescal and pulque, a sweet fermented beverage made from

³⁰ Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 29-30.

³¹ Letter from a DF Oficial Mayor sent to the DT, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 440, Expediente 12, 26 October 1922.

³² For example, during two union marches the marchers stopped at the Salón Rojo. "Mañana No Habrá Pan en el Distrito Federal," *Demócrata*, 17 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1780, p. 1, 2; "La Manifestación Obrera de Protestada Efectuada Ayer," *Demócrata*, 3 January 1921, v. 6, no 1402, p. 1, 3.

the leaves of the maguey plant.³³ In many ways, taverns formed a key part of a working-class neighborhood's sense of community. When one social worker, Elena Bringas, needed more information about a family she was investigating, she went to Señora Refugio Ramírez, the owner of a local pulquería, La América. Ramírez knew the family well and provided Bringas with a great deal of gossip about what neighbors thought of the family.³⁴

Michael Scardaville and Pamela Voekel note that, during the colonial period, the city's plebeians used pulquerías as more than just taverns.³⁵ In these vibrant venues the urban poor, both adults and youths and both women and men, went to drink, eat, relax, find jobs, borrow money, pay back money, make contacts, gossip, flirt, and fight. In the

³³ This drink signified and still signifies considerable host of class, ethnic, racial, and cultural pride as well as carrying racist and classist stigmas—similar to that of a “forty” or “a malt” in the contemporary U.S. Mezcal is a strong liquor made from the agave plant. Stephen Bunker remarks that elites avoided plebeian drinks, including *pulque* and *mezcal*. Instead, as a marker of class, the wealthy drank beer crafted in the European style. But, in large part due to massive advertising campaigns by beer manufacturers like Cervecería Cuauhtemoc in Monterrey and Cervecería de Toluca y México in Mexico City, many workers gradually abandoned pulque in favor of beer. Steven Bunker, “‘Consumers of Good Taste’: Marketing Modernity in Northern Mexico, 1890-1910,” *Estudios Mexicanos/Mexican Studies* 13:2 (Summer 1997): 263. Haber, 54, 85-86.

³⁴ Social worker report by Elena Bringas, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 20, 9 October 1928. Elsewhere, when some neighbors complained that the pulquería, La Mexicana, was a den of “scandal,” the Mexicana’s neighbors submitted a letter indicating the tavern had the neighborhood’s support. Nineteen of the owners’ neighbors signed the letter, attesting to the fact that no scandals or impropriety had occurred at La Mexicana. Letter written by the owner of La Mexicana to the Presidente Municipal, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3938, Exp. 677, 26 June 1923.

³⁵ Michael C. Scardaville, “Alcohol Abuse and Tavern Reform in Late Colonial Mexico City,” *HAHR* 60 (1980): 643-671; Pamela Voekel, “Peeing on the Palace: Bodily Resistance to Bourbon Reforms in Mexico,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5:2 (June 1992): 183-202. See also, Daniel Nemser, “‘To Avoid This Mixture’: Rethinking Pulque in Colonial Mexico City,” *Food and Foodways* 19:1-2 (2011): 98-121. There is also an abundance of scholarship on the working class and drinking establishments in U.S. historiography. For example, Roy Rosenzweig, in his study of working-class culture in Worcester, Massachusetts, argues, “the culture of the Worcester saloon was *alternative*—separate and distinct from the dominant society—but not *oppositional*—not a direct challenge to that society.” Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 23. See also, Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998) and Madelon Powers, *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Working Man’s Saloon, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

late colonial period, the poor repeatedly ignored local ordinances banning gambling and limiting drinking in taverns; the poor also used the streets as a space where comedians, clowns, and puppeteers mocked authorities through “biting social commentary.”³⁶ When city officials demanded tavern owners tear down their walls so that their customers’ activities could be easily seen by officials, the proprietors largely ignored those orders. Pamela Voekel notes that, over time, wealthier capitalinos gradually grew distant from the city’s masses. In the 1600s, the upper classes had maintained close ties with the poor through family and apprenticeship networks. These relationships had largely declined by the mid 1700s. Thus, by the later 1700s, upper-crust culture was drastically out of touch with the popular culture surrounding taverns.³⁷

Nineteenth-century writers frequently complained of workers’ ill-mannered behavior in pulquerías and one Porfirian-era study posited a direct correlation between crime and pulque consumption.³⁸ In the 1890s, *científicos* (científicos were a group of technocrats who supported dictator Porfirio Díaz) began an anti-pulquería morality campaign and, not coincidentally, many of these corrupt, wealthy men were also shareholders and officers in the Compañía Expendedora de Pulques. This private firm managed to establish a *pulque* vending monopoly in the city center as the moralizing campaign forced competitors out of business.³⁹

³⁶ Viqueira Albán, 121-123, 163.

³⁷ Voekel, 191-192.

³⁸ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 51-52, 82-83.

³⁹ John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 41. A pulque monopoly still existed during the Revolution. In 1911, the newspaper, *Microbio*, criticized Madero for not breaking up the pulque monopoly. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 400.

During the 1920s, in these drinking establishments, both men and women gathered, ate and drank immoderately, pawned goods, and perpetrated petty theft—all habits that the state condemned. Newspapers ran articles titled “The Pulque Tragedy,” unions described *pulquerías* as “cemeteries for workers,” and, in their reports, social workers constantly complained about the working class’ frequenting *pulquerías*.⁴⁰ Newspapers frequently blamed alcohol as an underlying cause of many fights, especially fights involving workers or soldiers and officials routinely closed these venues following fights.⁴¹ In 1922, Inspector Antonio E. Barbosa described popular-class taverns as “half cesspool” that had been “abandoned” by the city’s Health Board. These dives ignored the city regulations since they continued selling drinks to inebriated individuals (both men and women), and they allowed the intoxicated to remain on premises all hours of the night.⁴²

Barbosa’s rather damning view of plebeian taverns contrasts sharply with another official’s assessment. Labor Department Medical Inspector C. Manuel Fernando Campos reported that “. . .the worker finds greater satisfaction by being in a pulquería, it is an environment that is more agreeable than their homes. At least there the walls are painted red or green and the worker can hear music, as opposed to his home which is humid,

⁴⁰ *Las Noticias*, 16 January 1922, v. 1, #532, page 1, “Las Tragedias del Pulque;” article titled “Labor Social Obrera: La Unión de Empleados y Obreros del Buen Tono, S.A.” to be published in the *Boletín de Trabajo* (May 1923, vol. 2, no. 1) AGN, DT, 208, Caja 700, Expediente 1, May 1923.

⁴¹ “Risa Entre Militares,” *Demócrata*, 19 January 1920, v. 6, no 1063, p. 8; “Soldados Ebrios Se Dedicaron a Cazar a Cuanto Gendarme Se Acercaba a Ellos;” *Demócrata*, 1 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2773, p. 1, 4; letter from City Secretary to City Treasurer, AHDF, JLIC, Vol. 3147, Exp. 16130, 3 December 1918.

⁴² Report by labor inspector Antonio E. Barbosa, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 482, Expediente 12, 14 October 1922.

dark, and full of parasites.”⁴³ Inspector Campos added that, in moderation, drinking *pulque* did not harm an individual. Campos saw pulquerías as enjoyable, warm, and healthy places for workers, recognizing a legitimate, positive tavern subculture existed among workers.

Some patrons frequented drinking establishments before work, but most records indicate that workers congregated in tavern after a day’s work.⁴⁴ A newspaper reported workers commonly stopped at pulquerías after work “to drink a cup.”⁴⁵ An official characterized silversmiths and tinsmiths frequenting cabarets after work as “natural.”⁴⁶ Additionally, officials noted that apparently being a baker “obligated one to get drunk,” and complained that some workers even interrupted their shifts by imbibing at nearby taverns and then returning intoxicated to work.⁴⁷

Afeminado masculinity also found acceptance in workers’ taverns. One pulquería was named “Fifi’s Surprise” (“La Sorpresa de los Fifis”).⁴⁸ The moniker might have

⁴³ Report from quarterly DT meeting on health written by DT Inspector Medico named C. Manuel Fernando Campos addressed to all inspection personnel, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 810, Expediente 5, 22 January 1924.

⁴⁴ Labor Department Chief Ricardo Treviño wrote to the Department’s lawyers asking if any action could be taken against a tavern because “the vendor is established only a short distance away from other workplaces, including the factory ‘The Pump,’ and this results in workers going to work in a state of inebriation. Consequently, they don’t do their jobs and they damage equipment.” DT jefe Ricardo Treviño, to the DT Legislative Section, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 440, Expediente 12, 6 September 1922.

⁴⁵ M. Escalante, “La Criminalidad y Los Pequeños Hurtos en la Ciudad de México,” *La Revista de Policía*, 25 March 1926, año 2, tomo 1, no. 12 p. 24.

⁴⁶ Social worker report by Aurelio Peña, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 38, 16 May 1929.

⁴⁷ Board ruling, the Tribunal sent a letter to the Sec. Gen. del Gob. del DF, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 55, 28 Feb. 1928; letter from DT jefe Ricardo Treviño, his signature is a stamp, to the DT Legislative Section AGN, DT, 208, Caja 440, Expediente 12, 6 September 1922.

⁴⁸ Inspector citation form for the pulquería “La Sorpresa de los Fifis” located AHDF, IP, vol 4715, exp 293, 26 June 1920.

served as a tongue-in-cheek reference to homosexuality since, as previously noted, capitalinos sometimes used the term “Fifi” used to denote homosexuality (although the term could also refer to heterosexual dandies). Also, “surprise” was a term commonly used by the police when they came upon and arrested men for having sex with each other (e.g. “José was surprised in the act”). Monsiváis notes that, from the 1920s to the 1950s, homosexuals regularly met in these establishments to play bridge or poker and the alcohol they imbibed while there helped transform these meetings into a “confessional” where they could openly express their homosexuality.⁴⁹ Núñez Noriega also posits that a homosexual culture developed in Mexican drinking venues, especially in cantinas.⁵⁰

An account of an altercation explores this afeminado tavern subculture more deeply. Three choferes were drinking in the Cantina Santa Rita after work. Another group sitting nearby invited the youngest of them, Arturo, over to drink with them. Then, at three in the morning, this group left with Arturo. One of the waitresses, Irene, came over to the two remaining choferes, Pascual and Baltasar, and told them that these men were “jotos” so the two immediately left in an effort to rescue Arturo. They found these men kissing their friend and heading toward the Hotel Pino Suárez. Pascual began berating the group of men and police reports indicated that he challenged one man to a fight by saying “If he was a man, he would step up.” (si era hombre, que viniera.) Both groups began fighting and police intervened. One of the supposed jotos, Manuel, was a former military man and, while he did not deny being afeminado, he later told officials

⁴⁹ Carlos Monsiváis, “De las variedades de la experiencia homoerótica,” foreword to *Masculinidad e intimidad: identidad, sexualidad y sida*, by Guillermo Núñez Noriega (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género y el Colegio de Sonora, 2007), 24-25.

⁵⁰ Núñez Noriega does not specify when homosexuals began frequenting cantinas, Núñez Noriega, “Cantina Culture,” 169.

that he took umbrage at Pascual's insults. Manuel reported his aggressor [meaning Pascual], 'had called him a maricón and a son of a bitch and his insults wouldn't stop, so then he [Manuel] took a stick and beat his aggressor in the face,' giving him a lesson in respect and demanding satisfaction for compromising his honor."

The Santa Rita account underscores the limits and strengths of hegemonic masculinity. On one hand, some workers and elites' efforts to use hegemonic masculinity to limit and stigmatize homosexuality failed to prevent men like Pascual from adopting a fluid sexuality. While Pascual's fellow choferes did not think of him as a homosexual, Pascual certainly embraced a sexuality that involved kissing and having tryst with other men. On the other hand, some workers and officials' efforts to use hegemonic masculinity to endorse a culture of masculine camaraderie succeeded. Afeminados who participated in this tavern subculture valued the masculine subculture of drinking with friends in taverns as much as did heterosexuals. Both groups enacted similar masculine performances. Diego Pulido Esteva noted this account reveals the power of hegemonic masculinity, noting of the homosexual men, "While the actors only partially fit the model of hegemonic masculinity, that is to say, heterosexuality and virility, they were still men who participated in the culture of drinking."⁵¹

Women frequently drank in working-class taverns. In these spaces popular-class women could earn a respectable living as waitresses and even as owners, as was the case with María García, owner of a pulquería named My Love (*Mi Cariño*) and Concepción Beciez, owner of a tavern named The Brave One (*La Atrevida*).⁵² Women were also

⁵¹ Pulido Esteva, "Cantinismo," 15-16.

⁵² Letter from Owner María García, to the Pres. Municipal, AHDF, IP, Vol. 2394, Exp. 1, January 7, 1920. License request form from Concepción Beciez [or her representative] addressed to C. Pres.

customers. Despite city codes and elite mores—one telephone company manager said of his female telephone operators, “No señorita is going to go into a cantina”—many taverns were mixed-sex spaces and had been since the colonial period⁵³ During the 1920s, women could legally purchase carryout alcohol at many establishments, but they had to take the alcohol to a private residence and could not consume it in these venues. Nevertheless, female capitalinos often ignored these restrictions and drank “carryout” alcohol on the premises before or after a long day’s work.⁵⁴ When police or inspectors accused these women of drinking on the premises the women would respond by saying that the alcohol was, in fact, carryout alcohol and, by the way, they were just about to leave the premises. In one booklet containing city citations of pulquería owners for violating various health and morality laws, 46 percent of the violations cited were for owners allowing women onto the premises for purposes other than buying carryout alcohol.⁵⁵ One newspaper article noted that so many women frequented taverns that the existing ban on women in pulquerías and cantinas was a “dead law.”⁵⁶ When owners told

Municipal, AHDF, JLIC, Vol. 3147, Exp. 16124, 25 October 1917. During the colonial period, the majority of *pulquería* owners were women. Scardaville, 647, 653.

⁵³ Transcript of a conversation between workers and the manager representing the Compañía de Teléfonos y Telegráfica Mexicana. AGN, DT, 208, Caja 440, Expediente 2, n.d. but probably June to August 1922. Scardaville, 647.

⁵⁴ Letter from Juan Rosas, owner of a *fonda* named El Rey, addressed to the Pres. Municipal, AHDF, IARD, Vol. 2432, Exp. 47, 20 July 1920. License form filled out by Concepción Beciez, AHDF, JLIC, Vol. 3147, Exp. 16124; Citation, AHDF, IP, Vol. 2394, Exp. 1, 17 November 1919.

⁵⁵ There were 260 infractions against women being in pulquerías out of a booklet containing 565 infractions. *Infracciones Book*, AHDF, IP, Vol. 2394, various dates in 1920.

⁵⁶ DP report by Antonio Barbosa, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 482, Expediente 12, 14 October 1922; M. Escalante, “La Criminalidad y Los Pequeños Hurtos en la Ciudad de México,” *La Revista de Policía*, 25 March 1926, año 2, tomo 1, no. 12 p. 24.

women to leave the premises, women often refused and sometimes mocked the proprietors, revealing a gap between the state's reach and its grasp.⁵⁷

Minors also frequented drinking establishments despite city codes to the contrary. Genaro Rivera Neris' relatives sent him to purchase alcohol.⁵⁸ Juan Vázquez González's older brother introduced him to tavern culture.⁵⁹ Others, including Manuel Cervantes García and Benigno Huerta Gutiérrez, frequently slept in pulquerías overnight when they were homeless.⁶⁰ Another youth, J. Guadalupe Cruz, was arrested for fighting in a cantina.⁶¹ He reported that as he had entered the cantina, a friend had slapped him resulting in a heated argument in which they exchanged insults. The altercation then escalated from a shouting match into a fist fight and then both pulled out their weapons—one carried a long pin and the other a knife. Police intervened when Cruz cut his friend. Youths also practiced masculine initiation rituals in taverns. They encouraged each other to smoke and drink and, as writer José Juan Tabla remarked, they would taunt each other with homophobic phrases: “Before the timid epithets of ‘joto,’ ‘marica,’ ‘poco hombre,’ (fag, queer, hardly a man) etc., the neophyte must succumb to the physical and moral

⁵⁷ In 1920, pulquería owners approached the city as a group and asked the city to “arrest all the women who are found drinking inside of pulquerías and take them to jail because it is obvious that these women introduce scandal to pulquerías and fondas.” “Una Comisión Pulquera ante el Presidente Municipal,” *Demócrata*, 18 January 1920, v. 6, no. 1062, p.7. Letter from Felix Trajo, owner of El Cielo, to the Presidente Municipal, AHDF, IP, Vol. 2394, Exp. 1, 1 September 1919.

⁵⁸ Social worker report by León Lara, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 39, 7 December 1927.

⁵⁹ Social worker report [social worker name not legible] AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 44, 7 June 1929.

⁶⁰ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 4, 27 April 1928 and social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 40, 20 August 1928.

⁶¹ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 71, 2 June 1927.

nausea of tobacco and alcohol.”⁶² These experiences demonstrate taverns were sites of culture where young men learned how to perform masculinities.

Kathy Peiss argues that U.S workers forged a masculine sense of camaraderie in taverns, “...the interlocking network of leisure activities strengthened an ethos of masculinity among workingmen” applied to Mexican workers.⁶³ These Mexico City venues also served as spaces where workers and elites contested the meanings of popular-class masculinity. State officials sought to enforce morality standards in these spaces. Yet, the sources suggest that drinking venues represented spaces where officials and employers exerted minimal discipline on workers’ gendered performances. Yet, the popular classes, men, women, and children used these spaces to embrace multiple sexualities, perform gendered initiation rituals, fight, and relax.

Dance Halls, Public Street Dances, and Cabarets

During the 1920s, men and women used music genres and dance trends to perform highly sexualized behaviors in new public spaces. Bliss and Blum remark, “In the aftermath of revolution and in response to trends in entertainment styles popular in the United States and Europe, cabarets, dance academies, and salones de baile (dance halls) proliferated.”⁶⁴ These were highly sexualized spaces where couples met, courted, and sometimes clashed. Edgy, sexualized, and provocative transnational music and dances: the shimmy, *danzón*, foxtrot, blues, Charleston, and cha cha—emerged as

⁶² Pulido Esteva, “Cantinismo,” 9-10.

⁶³ Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 20.

⁶⁴ Katherine E. Bliss and Ann S. Blum, “Dangerous Driving: Adolescence, Sex, and the Gendered Experience of Public Space in Early-Twentieth-Century Mexico City,” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, eds. William E. French and Katherine E. Bliss (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 174-175.

capitalinos' tastes shifted.⁶⁵ The *danzón*, in particular, promoted intimate, physical dancing; Carlos Monsiváis described the *danzón* as “an erotic flight affixed to the floor.”⁶⁶ Cabarets started featuring highly “sensitized” shows including the fashionable *bataclán* burlesque genre. What was most enticing about these spaces is their lack of chaperones.⁶⁷ Young men and women could sometimes interact without the presence of chaperones and this lack of control promoted a wider range of gendered performances.

This lack of control caused officials and newspapers to associate these dance venues with crime and immorality. A newspaper account described a litany of masculine archetypes found at one cabaret, “In these places one sees fierce ruffians, sinister criminals, courting gallants from the slums, with huge mustaches, mixed with sad victims of vice, the women waitresses...”⁶⁸ Many dance venues, especially *salones de baile*, had weapons-check policies demanding that patrons check pistols and knives at the door. However, inspectors noticed that patrons often ignored these policies and brought their weapons with them into these establishments.⁶⁹ Consequently, 1920s newspapers are

⁶⁵ Jesús Flores y Escalante, *Salón México: Historia documental*, 106. For an analysis of the significance of the working-class *danzón* style of dance, see Robert Buffington, “La ‘Dancing’ Mexicana: *Danzón* and the Transformation of Intimacy in Post-Revolutionary Mexico City,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 14:1 (March 2005): 87-108.

⁶⁶ Carlos Monsiváis, *Escenas de pudor y liviandad* (México: Grijalbo, 1988), 51. In a similar vein, Kathy Peiss, describes the relationship among sexuality and a dance craze called the “tough dance” among 1900s New York working class couples. She notes, “...the essence of the tough dance was its suggestion of sexual intercourse.” Peiss, 101-102.

⁶⁷ Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 84.

⁶⁸ “Los Dramas Canallescos de la Taberna,” *Demócrata*, 24 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2796, p. 15, 17.

⁶⁹ Inspector report, name not legible, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1694, 24 July 1922.

filled with tragic tales of gunfights at the city's dance halls.⁷⁰ The papers' coverage was particularly dramatic whenever they covered shootouts in which unlucky bystanders died due to errant bullets.

Jazz music upset those with more conventional and conservative tastes. One inspector, Carlos Samper, complained about a performance by a group named Los Tacos de Jazz, worrying that the band's "grotesque contortions" would "subvert art and social order."⁷¹ In another report, Samper described the "shimmy" style of dancing as "pectoral gymnastics" in which a man and a woman exhibited a "lewd display of their posteriors."⁷² Another critic wrote, "In this period of the shimmy and the jazz band the 'cabaret' has replaced the home, among the upper classes women are entering these establishments and the *ménage a trios*, as the French say or, triangles, as the Yankees say, are becoming more common."⁷³

What was a typical dance hall like to a plebeian patron? A Labor Department inspector who conducted a street-by-street survey noted that he came across dance halls in "every neighborhood" he visited and that they all advertised having orchestras.⁷⁴ City regulations articulated that the ideal salón de baile should be well lit, clean, spacious, well ventilated, and staffed by bouncers, but many proprietors failed to achieve those

⁷⁰ "Tragico Fin de Una Vida de Hampa y Orgia," *El Demócrata*, 2 January 1920 vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 1, 10.; "El Comisario de la Tercera Está Complicado en los Sucesos del Salón Allende," *El Demócrata*, 3 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1047, p. 2.

⁷¹ Report by Inspector Cronista Carlos Samper, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1661, 13 October 1922.

⁷² Report by Inspector Cronista, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1661, 21 November 1922.

⁷³ José Joaquín Gamboa, "La Bestia Masculina," *El Universal*, 2 January 1924, año 9, tomo 30, no. 2, 628, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Report by Labor Department inspector Eliseo, first name not legible, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 279, Expediente 10, November 1921.

standards.⁷⁵ The most famous dance hall was the Salón México, celebrated by a 1948 film of the same name and by a 1936 Aaron Copeland composition. The Salón México first opened its doors in 1920 in a working-class neighborhood described as “a rough neighborhood consisting of narrow streets, allies, nooks, and little plazas.”⁷⁶ While dance halls attracted people of all classes, Jesús Flores y Escalante comments, “the majority of the crowds that went to the Salón México and other dance halls, were often working people, including choferes, workers, waiters, and clerks from small clothing shops. After they had put in their hours of work, at five in the afternoon they arrived to dance.”⁷⁷ The Salón México’s management did, however, divide the floors by class.

Women faced obstacles in attending these dance venues. Many working-class women often adopted the bobbed flapper or *mujer pelona* hairstyles of the 1920s when they went to dance halls such as the “Lux” or the “Goya.” Some young women who lived with relatives stealthily sneaked out of the house to attend these events or created cover stories about where they were going and then changed into dance clothing once they were out of the house.⁷⁸ A social worker noted that Raquel García García, a factory apprentice, was “a fan of movies and sees them regularly, she particularly likes romantic movies and “fight” movies (*películas de lucha*). She also likes *carpas* because of the jokes she sees there. She is a fan of public dances, but doesn’t go because her brother

⁷⁵ Motion written by Carlos M. Patiño and M.F. Reyes with the Comisión de Reglamento AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1369, 26 Feb. 1915.

⁷⁶ Flores y Escalante, 99.

⁷⁷ Flores y Escalante, 100. Tenorio-Trillo also remarks that the “urban proletariat would dance *danzones*” in the Salón México.” Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 108.

⁷⁸ Social worker reports by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 28, 19 May 1928.

only allowed her to go once with her boyfriend and she had to come back early.”⁷⁹ In this account, Raquel clearly faced the power of male patriarchy as it sought to prevent her from entering public dance venues and, consequently, she embraced alternate forms of popular culture including carpas and movies. In contrast, young men (or young women who did not live with older family members) often had more freedom and could go to dance venues at their leisure although some capitalinos perceived women as being “libertine” if they exercised this freedom.

Carlos Monsiváis quotes Novo saying that the Salón México exposed rural migrants to more urbanizing influences: “These workers were rescued from pulque (a malt beverage) and found beer, from servitude and found trades, from sandals and found shoes...”⁸⁰ Novo envisioned salones de baile as spaces in which recently urbanized members of the popular classes intermingled with long-urbanized members of the popular classes and became more sophisticated and urbanized as a result. Novo’s perspective reveals as much about upper-class views of the popular-class migrants as it does about the varying class levels of the dancers, yet one does get a sense of how dance halls might transform a recently-migrated worker.

Jesús Acosta Mendoza demonstrates how dance halls and working-class masculine obligations were linked. Jesús was an eighteen-year-old lottery ticket seller who frequented the famous Salón México.⁸¹ His friends began bringing prostitutes there. Jesús told social worker Enrique Catalán that often he was the one who paid for the

⁷⁹ Social worker report, name not legible, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 37, May 1928.

⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Monsiváis does not specify the Novo writing from which this quotation comes. Monsiváis, *Escenas*, 51.

⁸¹ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 30, 23 May 1928.

prostitutes, taxis, and beer, and those costs were quite high for a simple lottery ticket seller to sustain. Consequently, after a few days, he was broke, and forced, as he told the social worker, to turn to theft to continue this lifestyle (police arrested him for stealing \$105 pesos worth of lottery tickets from a cantina). Jesús opted to resort to crime rather than fail to fulfill what perceived as his obligation to pay for these trips to the Salón México.

In contrast to dance halls, public street dances were less permanent in nature (an organizer had to obtain a one-time event liquor license and pay a fee) and featured less mingling among classes. Public dances often took place in a given neighborhood's nearby plazas or gardens and these neighborhoods tended to be class segregated.⁸² One citizen noted that, during the revolution, public street dances became more popular than the cinema as the city filled with "a floating population of civilians and military men."⁸³ At public street dances, plebeian women and men met who were "mechanics and carpenters," became friends, danced, relaxed, and, in some cases, lost their virginity.⁸⁴ These street dances could also promote conflict. When she recognized a former boyfriend dancing with another woman, María Guadalupe doused him with the contents of her glass of beer.⁸⁵

⁸² For an excellent analysis of how the geography of class changed in the downtown area during this period, see Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 27-46. Letter written by a Abraham Chávez addressed to the DF Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1347, 7 December 1914.

⁸³ December Letter written by a Abraham Chávez addressed to the DF Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1348, 11 December 1914.

⁸⁴ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 5, 28 March 1928.

⁸⁵ "Los Escándalos del Salón Allende," *Demócrata*, 3 January 1921, v. 6, no 1402, p. 5.

Cabarets were quite different from dance halls or street dances. While both dance halls and cabarets offered live music, alcoholic refreshments, variety shows, and dancing, cabarets also featured a classier atmosphere.⁸⁶ *Demócrata* described the Gambrinus Cabaret (possibly named after a brand of Mexican beer of the same name) and its patrons:

The green and red fairy lights of the cabaret were the only notes of color, meanwhile outside the grey asphalt reflected the lights behind those who left the sordid place. This is where the shantytown and misery combine to make the most abominable fruit... The noisy band of musicians, a 'jazz' orchestra let their notes fall from a raised platform. The band played the fashionable 'shimmy' and 'the chato'—a name by which a dancer moves like a "Hawaiian" dancer and plays the tambourine, cymbals, castanets... and this music was the basis for happiness in the cabaret...⁸⁷

The décor in working-class cabarets often consisted of Chinese paper lanterns, Mexican tiles, and blue and white tile floors.⁸⁸ Cabarets were generally divided by class, but many wealthier men and women "slummed" by going to cabarets in workers' neighborhoods where wealthy and poor danced alongside each other.

Cabarets had a reputation as all-male sexualized masculine spaces and cabarets' shows often featured burlesque styles like the bataclán. However, in reality, cabarets were relatively mixed-sex spaces. Women sang as performers, danced with male patrons, and ate as patrons and women called *ficheras* encouraged men to buy drinks, receiving a

⁸⁶ Sophia Koutsoyannis, "Immoral but Profitable: The Social and Cultural History of Cabarets in Mexico City (1920-1965)," (PhD Diss, York University, 2010), 7, 39. Buffington, "La 'Dancing' Mexicana," 102. Another way to distinguish between dance halls and cabarets is that cabarets generally had full-service kitchens while salones de baile rarely offered food. Katherine E. Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 170.

⁸⁷ "Los Dramas Canallescós de la Taberna," *Demócrata*, 24 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2796, p. 15, 17.

⁸⁸ Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 170.

share from the sale. While ficheras also often worked as prostitutes, Sophia Koutsoyannis argues that Mexico City cabarets granted women economic opportunities as places of employment and also were leisure sites that increasingly allowed women to enter the public sphere.

Cabarets were a key reason elite Mexicans worried about an increasingly sexualized Mexican society. One inspector complained about a show in which “a woman rides mounted on the leg of a man, and they begin to make the most immoral movements, with man and woman shaking their shoulders and chests.”⁸⁹ A newspaper criticized a male cabaret patron for having sexual relations with a female waiter and noted, “The poor girl was scarcely eighteen years old.”⁹⁰

Dance halls, street dances, and cabarets served as places where popular-class men and women could be somewhat free of the watchful eyes of older family members. The state had only a limited ability to monitor workers’ performances in these venues. These were sexualized arenas in which male workers fulfilled masculine obligations and women workers challenged the patriarchal controls imposed on them by their families.

Carpas and Theaters

Carpas, the word *carpa* refers to the tarps street theaters used, were places where a masculine plebeian culture of irreverence and fun developed independently of upper-class culture. Theaters were, as Merlin Socorro notes, cross-class places where “the ‘pelados’ exercised their recently acquired freedom.”⁹¹ While theaters were more expensive than

⁸⁹ Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 88.

⁹⁰ “Los Dramas Canallescos de la Taberna,” *Demócrata*, 24 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2796, p. 15, 17.

⁹¹ Socorro Merlin, *Vida y milagros de las carpas: La carpa en México, 1930-1950* (México: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Centro Nacional de Investigación y Documentación Teatral Rodolfo

the movies or carpas, movies did not really supplant the theater among the popular classes in Mexico City until the late 1930s.⁹² Private Citizen Ricardo Palacios and Ayuntamiento official Lauro López each wrote letters to the Diversions Department in which they complained of theater's immorality.⁹³ Yet, Palacios and López both remarked that a theater serves as “a social escape valve” (one used the term *la válvula reguladora* and the other *válvula escape*) for the popular classes. While both sources neglected to articulate exactly what sort of societal steam these escape valves would release, both conceived of these valves as masculine—women should be banned from such venues. Ironically, each criticized the theater as immoral while recognizing the theater as having a societal value that could release the urban workers' pent-up masculine frustrations.⁹⁴

Carpas and theaters shared many similarities: both commonly included reviews and comedies, both featured live music and singing, and both offered fairly affordable ticket prices (although the affordable seating in theaters was located in the upper galleries).⁹⁵ The only profound difference between the two was that carpas (the word

Usigli, 1992), 17. Note that Merlin's book contains a rich set of oral interviews with carpa singers and actors from the 1930s and later periods.

⁹² Sluis, “City of Spectacles,” 78. While of theaters sold very affordable balcony seats, the poorest of the poor could still not afford to go. One unemployed working-class singer noted he enjoyed going to the theater (he said he never went to carpas), but, unfortunately, could only afford to go rarely. Social worker report by Manuel Hernández V., AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 5, 27 September 1928.

⁹³ Letter written by a Ricardo Palacios addressed to the Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1351, 30 November 1914; letter written by Lauro López, last part of name not legible, who I assume from context is an Ayuntamiento official, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1351, 15 December 1914.

⁹⁴ López even remarked on this irony when he wrote there was a “contradiction” (*contra sentido*) in the act of trying to “moralize a vice.”

⁹⁵ Carpa seats cost about ten centavos and theater gallery seats might cost between twenty and fifty centavos. DP inspector report by Hipólito Amor, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1669, 11 August 1922; Monsiváis, *Escenas de pudor*, 77. A handbill for the Teatro Principal for an zarzuela and revista Española called “Velasco” scheduled to take place on Jueves 15 de Mayo 1919. AHDF, ITC, Vol. 2406, Exp. 107 and Exp. 133.

carpa refers to the tent under which the stage was set) took place under the stars and sun while theaters were brick-and-mortar establishments with large marquees. Both types of theaters could often be found in plazas, near main avenues, and near markets.⁹⁶ Both were thronged with ticket vendors, street musicians, and popular musicians and singers—one worker remarked the reason he went to the carpas was because he admired the performers' singing.⁹⁷ Food vendors worked the crowd and police tried to keep pickpockets and miscreants at bay. A network of vendors and regulars developed around carpas and theaters and everyone knew everyone (and knew everyone's business). One official reported that carpas tended to have a lower police presence even though officials perceived them as being more immoral than theaters.⁹⁸

The entertainment content of carpas and theaters varied greatly, although comedy was a strong theme. Monsiváis describes carpa shows as featuring “comedy, tap dances, china poblana dancers, bearded ladies, and, in general, drama, comedy, and zarzuelas [a Spanish theater genre blending music and comedy].”⁹⁹ One writer called the zarzuela genre “unsuitable” for decent people and communist David Alfaro Siqueiros remarked he would rather see “human theater” that teaches children “kindness” and “virile brotherhood” rather than “zarzuela theater” that, by implication, was elite and effete.¹⁰⁰ Muralists like Siqueiros were often too dogmatic in their communism to understand

⁹⁶ Sluis, “City of Spectacles,” 121-122.

⁹⁷ Social worker report by Manuel Hernández V., AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 14, 25 October 1928.

⁹⁸ Report written by DP Section Jefe, AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1589, 14 July 1921.

⁹⁹ Monsiváis, *Escenas*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Letter written by a Ricardo Palacios addressed to the Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1351, 30 November 1914; David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Al Margén del Manifiesto del Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores,” *El Machete* (Primera Quinceña de Marzo 1924): 3.

revistas' subtext and preferred to emphasize their own notions of pure, virile, militant proletarians free of vice. In general, showings at carpas and theaters offered what Mexicans referred to as *teatro chico* or *género chico*—a catchall term used to describe comedies, zarzuelas, and revistas.¹⁰¹ Koutsoyannis states the Mexican *revista* (review) genre “reflected the effects of rural-urban migration in the form of comedic sketches, lewd songs, and dances. Sketches with stock characters like the country bumpkin, city slicker, corrupt police officer, and harlot, provided satiric reflections of everyday life in the capital.”¹⁰² Merlin notes that “there was no political or artistic event that revistas did not ridicule.”¹⁰³ The revista genre was more analogous to a vaudeville show or cabaret show in that it tended to feature a series of performances and skits rather than a single dramatic narrative.¹⁰⁴ Carpa musicians played many types of music, although the bolero and tango were especially popular.¹⁰⁵

The revista was especially well-adapted to developing stock characters that played off of existing masculine archetypes. One of the classic stock archetypes was the working-class buffoon, also called the *pelado*. Sluis specifically defines the *pelado* as “the country bumpkin who has come to the city.”¹⁰⁶ Cantinflas (Manuel Moreno), a popular Mexican film star during the 1930s through 1960s, captured the spirit of *pelado* irreverence as a carpa performer in poor neighborhoods that included La Merced, Tepito,

¹⁰¹ Sluis, “City of Spectacle,” 80.

¹⁰² Koutsoyannis, 42.

¹⁰³ Socorro, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Sluis, “City of Spectacle,” 87-88.

¹⁰⁵ Socorro, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Sluis, “City of Spectacle,” 87-88.

Colonia Guerrero, and Balbuena in the 1920s. He commonly played characters who used wordplay, vernacular speech, and physical comedy to embody the impoverished yet picaresque urban Mexican male.¹⁰⁷ Roger Bartra suggests that Cantinflas' film and *carpa* (street theater) characters depicted the pelado as a transitional figure caught between rural and urban settings.¹⁰⁸

My sources' use of pelado masculinity echoes Cantinflas' use of the term. "Pelado" only appears twice in my sources, and both instances illustrate the word's ambiguity as well as the term's probable origins in Mexico City street theater. In the first instance, a city theater inspector, Carlos Samper, was uncomfortable with a zarzuela that used what he called a "hybrid" of Mexican stereotypes.¹⁰⁹ The play featured a cross-dressing character named Colombiana whom the inspector disliked. Samper might have objected to Colombiana's cross-dressing or he might have objected to her wearing clothing associated with multiple racial and ethnic identities (*sombrero charro y falda china poblana*). Samper also criticized the playwrights for deviating from the pure Mexican *charro* (the archetypal Mexican horseman) paradigm of masculinity, and he condemned the play, declaring it a "gross displays of lepers and 'pelados' that you can

¹⁰⁷ Intellectuals Roger Bartra, Monsiváis, and John Mraz have all written about Cantinflas' manipulation of the pelado archetype and all argue that Cantinflas' portrayals represent the quintessential pelado. Roger Bartra, *La jaula de melancholia: Identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano* (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1987), 176-180; John Mraz, "Today, Tomorrow, and Always: The Golden Age of Illustrated Magazines in Mexico, 1937-1960," in *The Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 132; John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity*. Durham, North Carolina (Duke University Press, 2009), 121-134.; and Roger Bartra, 178.

¹⁰⁸ Bartra remarks that the pelado represents an "urban campesino" who has been ripped from his rural roots and slammed into the chaos and isolation of the modern city, an experience causing him to be cynical and violent and to suffer from a massive inferiority complex. Mraz, *Looking for Mexico*, 132.

¹⁰⁹ Department of Public Diversions inspector report by Carlos Samper, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1661, 13 October 1922.

see in the plaza or the pulquería.” In his critique of the play, Samper still used the term *pelado* in the context of the theater, yet he also applied it so as to reference workers outside of the context of the theater. He observed two masculine archetypes, the *afeminado* and the *charro*, merge, and this fusion made him uncomfortable. He referenced *pelados* to underscore his dislike of the fusing of two masculine performances.

The second instance of the term *pelado* also reveals the term’s slipperiness. Leandro Joseph, a writer for the Mexico City police magazine, *Revista de Policía*, lambasted a theater for representing police officers as buffoons who befriended “*pelados*” rather than arrest them as a responsible police officer should.¹¹⁰ Joseph urged playwrights to depict officers of the law as professionals who work hard to protect society. In neither of these examples was the *pelado* a dangerous, fatalistic, aggressive, or sexualized individual, but rather one who was poor and who resided on the street. Also, both sources, at least initially, referenced *pelados* in the context of the theater.

Working-class *carpa* goers adopted a culture of drunkenness and wild behavior, and mocked the *carpa* inspectors and the police. The chief of *carpa* inspectors noted that while he could assign a single inspector to monitor multiple movie theaters, he always had to assign an inspector to each *carpa*—and that inspector often had to make the rounds without police protection.¹¹¹ Another official became alarmed when a riot nearly broke out in a *carpa* located in the popular-class barrio of Tepito.¹¹² The official was alone, not

¹¹⁰ Leandro Joseph, “Los Gendarmes y El Teatro Bufo,” *La Revista de Policía*, Año 1, Tomo 1, no. 4, p. 6, 30 December 1925.

¹¹¹ Carta written by the Jefe de la Sección de Diversiones addressed to the Comisión de Diversiones AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1707, 5 September 1922.

¹¹² This *carpa* was named *María Conesa*, after the much-beloved Mexican diva and theater actress.

bringing a police officer along as was customary. He had found holes in the tarp and ordered the carpa closed due to public safety concerns. Then, according to the report:

The artists, when they learned of my order advised the spectators to not accept my suspension order. Because of the lack of police and because of the class of the attendees it was possible for them to ignore the order. When the *tanda* (show) ended, the public refused to leave and then the show ran again because of the artists' advice. They were able to avoid my closure.¹¹³

While the official attempted to expand the state's authority, free-spirited carpa performers (in the spirit of Cantinflas) ignored the official's demands and encouraged the crowd to ignore them as well. The gender makeup of the crowd is impossible to determine, but irreverence toward authority was a hallmark of plebeian masculinity as well as femininity; irreverence also underscored the absence of hegemony.

The Teatro Lírico had a reputation as a particularly rough theater. Located in the Tepito barrio, the street in front of the building and the gallery of the Lírico were both popular gathering spots for young working-class men and youths. These individuals, in a show of masculine bravado, often egged each other on to perform violent acts as was the case when three young men brutally stabbed a dog to death in front of the Lírico.¹¹⁴ (In contrast, in a rather heart-warming story, another young boy saved his dog from capture by a dog catcher in front of the Cine Alcazar).¹¹⁵

¹¹³ A report written by the Secretario General addressed to Propietario de la Carpa María Conesa, Plazuela Bartolomé de las Casas and dated 18 August 1922. The letter contains an excerpt from a DP inspector's report written by Juan Benavente on 17 August 1922; AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1667, 17-18 August 1922.

¹¹⁴ Social worker report by Bertha Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 6, 25 May 1927.

¹¹⁵ A homeless youth named Juan Suárez Suárez, age 13, was standing near the Cine Alcazar. He had just given his dog named "Alli" a bath and Alli was drying in the sun. Then along came a truck filled with dogs in the back (it turned out to be city dogcatcher/Health Inspector Enrique Carrillo). Enrique grabbed Alli, tossed him in the back, and drove off. Juan was too far away to prevent this from happening so he ran after the truck. The truck and Juan reached the Plaza San Juan at the same time. Juan got to the

Displays of masculine aggression took place inside the theater as well. In one case, a woman slapped a sexually aggressive man in the Teatro Lírico because the man tried to sit in the woman's lap.¹¹⁶ One young man who worked as a newspaper vendor remarked that the María Guerrero theater and the Lírico were his two favorite venues, and he often went to the theater with a prostitute he had hired for the evening.¹¹⁷ Another popular theater among workers was the Teatro María Guerrero, described as “bawdy” characterized as having a “grave reputation.”¹¹⁸

These were spaces where men and women sought to escape the pressures of employers and the disciplining eye of state officials. Carpas and the theaters served as spaces where the urban poor fused identities with a sense of working-class irreverence and mockery. In these spaces, popular-class men exerted physical aggression against each other and against women. They laughed at themselves when they laughed at the *pelado*, yet they also identified with the male *pelado* figure as a transitional icon who connected rural and urban Mexico.

truck, saw Alli, and opened the back, freeing all fifteen dogs. Enrique noticed the contents of his truck being emptied, jumped out of his truck, and grabbed hold of Juan. A woman bystander noticed all this and shouted at Enrique, criticizing him for capturing the dogs in the first place. Juan became angered at being held by Enrique and the youth hit the dogcatcher at which point Enrique promptly hauled Juan off to the police station. Enrique was sentenced into the child welfare system. The city suffered from an excessively high population of more than 30,000 stray dogs. Mexico City animal rights activists complained that city officials killed captured dogs in an inhumane way—by beating or garroting. Social worker report written by Margarita Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 55, 9 May 1928. Carta from Pres. F. Gamboa with the city's Consejo Cultura y Artístico sent to the Pres. Municipal, AHDF, GOB, vol 3932, Exp 129, 23 June 1922. Tenorio-Trillo, 288.

¹¹⁶ Inspector report, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1383, 10 August 1921.

¹¹⁷ Social worker report by J.J. Lima AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 13, 13 January 1928.

¹¹⁸ Bliss and Blum, 174-175; social worker report by M. Hernández Velasco, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 67, 7 November 1927.

Sports and Fitness

Most officials, journalists, and fans developed similar attitudes towards the relationship between sports and fitness and masculinity. Most perceived sports and fitness as helping to promote a healthy, fit, and disciplined form of popular-class masculinity. Yet, boxing represents a fascinating divergence from this hegemonic approval of sports and fitness. Unlike gymnastics, swimming, football, baseball, or basketball, some writers and officials were quite concerned that boxing brought out a dangerous level of violence, or at least impropriety, in both athletes and fans.

This is probably due to the relative newness of sports and fitness. During the Porfiriato, only the wealthy expressed interest in sports; baseball was for gentlemen's clubs and only the wealthy attended boxing matches.¹¹⁹ In contrast, both rich and poor attended older spectator sports such as bullfighting and cockfighting. By the 1920s, throughout much of Europe, the United States, and Latin America, sports were becoming increasingly popular among the popular classes and Mexico was no exception.¹²⁰ Teams and athletes crossed national borders to participate in events such as international exposition games and boxing matches. In 1925, U.S. citizen Jimmy Fitten moved from Los Angeles to Mexico City to manage boxers.¹²¹ These promoters represented part of

¹¹⁹ Keith Brewster, "Patriotic Pastimes: The Role of Sport in Post-revolutionary Mexico," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2:2 (March 2005): 144 and Joseph L. Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," *Journal of Sport History*, 18:3 (Winter 1991): 351, see also William Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 13-66.

¹²⁰ Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning noted that elites initially embraced sports in England and then the English working classes gradually acquired and affinity for sports like rugby and football. The characterize these shifts as a "calming down of the cycle of violence," as men replaced warfare with sports. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 43.

¹²¹ Social worker report by G. Jiménez Posadas, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 2, 18 January 1928.

the broader transnational flow of sports. However, as David LaFevor argues, while some Mexicans embraced imported sports cultures, others were deeply hesitant to adopt cultural practices from abroad.¹²²

In a 1921, a journalist described a visit to an athletic club that was hosting both a boxing class/demonstration and a gymnastics class. The writer called boxing, “This virile and beautiful sport.”¹²³ The reporter noted that boxing requires “precision, agility, and an ability to balance one’s weight between one’s feet” and remarked that boxing “helps to diminish the fatigues of work and improves men’s capability and personal motivation.” The writer then visited the gymnastics class, stating “The gymnastics that one practices in this system of international sports is an exercise that regularly develops a man’s body.” After the class, the journalist and a companion looked at sports articles in illustrated magazines from Spain, the U.S., France, and Germany and proclaimed, “these young men [were] strong, muscular, and of good character.”

To some Mexicans, sports represented all that was modern and appropriately masculine. Some officials in the post-revolutionary state sought to use sports to promote a responsible, sober, and moral masculinity. Historians of sports in Mexico demonstrate the political implications of the post-revolutionary state’s efforts to socially engineer peasants and workers through sports.¹²⁴ Officials promoted modern team sports like

¹²² LaFevor writes, “It is on the unstable border between elite and popular culture, however, that the importation of American tastes and behaviors clearly visible in the growing popularity of modern sport produced a profound ambivalence about these more ambiguous symbols of modernity.” David D. LaFevor, “Forging the Masculine and Modern Nation: Race, Identity, and the Public Sphere in Cuba and Mexico, 1890s-1930s,” PhD Diss, Vanderbilt University, 2011, 37.

¹²³ “Por el Club Deportivo Internacional,” *Demócrata*, 10 January 1921, v. 6, no 1409, p. 9, 10.

¹²⁴ Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 42; Alan Knight, “Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910-1940,” *HAHR* 74:3 (August 1994): 409-410; Arbena, 350-364; and

baseball and basketball in efforts to abolish what the government perceived as “barbaric masculine traditions” associated with blood sports, including cock fighting and bullfighting.¹²⁵ The federal government used its rural education programs to advertise the long-distance running skills of the Tarahumara in the 1928 Olympics, set up a physical education school in the DF (the Escuela Elemental de Educación Física), and used team sports that included basketball and baseball to promote what Mary Kay Vaughan referred to as “the panacea for masculine degeneration...”¹²⁶ The education administration set up basketball leagues among campesinos that “...celebrated male physical prowess and dominance...”¹²⁷ Some criticized the state for not doing enough to promote team sports. A *Universal* columnist lambasted the Mexican government for taxing sporting events too highly and hindering the growth of sports as a pastime—tax rates on tickets to such events could be as high as twenty percent of the ticket price. The writer noted “Sports not only make better men, sports make better citizens.”¹²⁸

Brewster, 139-157. The historiography analyzing the relationship between masculinity and sports in Latin America is less robust than it is in Europe and the United States. The field generally argues that a crisis of masculinity—a perceived lack of manhood—existed among elites and these elites perceived sports as a solution to this problem. See Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and J. a. Mangan, ed., *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

¹²⁵ Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 18-19.

¹²⁶ Arbena, 353, and Vaughan, 42. The Escuela was defunct by 1930, but, during the 1930s, the Carranza administration the government was much more effective at promoting sports and physical fitness. The state established more permanent schools and implemented school curricula emphasizing sports. The Tarahumara are an indigenous group in Durango and Chihuahua in northern Mexico and they are known for being excellent distance runners.

¹²⁷ Vaughan, 94.

¹²⁸ Sator, “Los Deportes y Sus Remorsas,” *El Universal*, 3 March 1924, año 9, tomo 30, section 1, p. 4.

Some viewed team sports as being far healthier than fighting, drinking, or older sports. During this decade, Mexican fans shifted from attending long-standing sporting events like bullfighting and began frequenting new individual sports like boxing or new team sports like baseball. In an article entitled “Bulls vs. Sports,” a writer remarked that bullfighting had long been Mexico’s “national spectacle.” Nevertheless, team sports increasingly overtook bullfighting in popularity. The article noted:

Among the many things that have arrived to our good country via the country to the north and via Europe, there is one that our nation has welcomed more than others. I refer to sports. That is to say, the sports games of Saxon origin: boxing, baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis, golf, polo, etc...a Mexican neighborhood will someday produce the Baby Ruth of tomorrow.¹²⁹

At this point the article takes a surprising turn. Rather than lamenting bullfighting’s decline, the writer praised the advent of new sports and did so through the lens of masculinity. The article remarked that Mexican youths no longer tried to imitate the “effeminate posturing of the fashionable bullfighter (las afeminados posturitas del torero de moda).” Instead, children were “now a generation of strong and agile young boys who chase down soccer balls or baseballs.” This shift also involved the masculine individual putting the team before oneself, a sense of collective masculinity was developing; a message with particular cachet in post-revolutionary Mexico.¹³⁰

It is difficult for a historian to ascertain which sports capitalinos preferred and the degree to which plebeians embraced sports. Newspaper ads mostly only advertised bullfighting, but newspapers’ sports sections reported on games, ran spreads on star players, and provided statistics for football, baseball, and boxing in fairly equal amounts.

¹²⁹ “Toros vs. Deportes,” *La Revista de Policía*, 25 September 1926, Año 2, Tomo 1, no. 22, p. 33.

¹³⁰ Brewster, 146-147.

Some newspapers included limited coverage of basketball. I analyzed a set of 101 records of young boys and young girls in the city's juvenile justice system and these records indicate some interest in sports on the part of the urban poor. While these records are not representative the working class as a whole, it is interesting to note that three individuals identified themselves as boxing fans and/or boxers—during the twentieth century, the barrio of Tepito became known for producing both avid boxing fans and skilled boxers. Three youths stated they were baseball fans and/or players, and two indicated they were football fans and/or players.¹³¹ No youths identified themselves as being basketball fans or said they played basketball. Among this sample set, slightly fewer than one in ten indicated an interest in sports. In contrast, almost one in three (twenty nine) indicated they liked to go to the movies.

Mexico City's poor could probably afford to participate in sports and attend sporting events. Fans attending sporting events usually paid between fifty centavos and a peso and a half to see a cockfight, basketball game, baseball game, bullfight, or boxing match. The price would have been steep but feasible for unskilled workers.¹³² Playing

¹³¹ Records about boxing: Social worker report by A. Polanco, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 3, Expediente 47, 5 November 1928; Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 1, 27 June 1927; and social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 11, 18 March 1929. Records about baseball: Social worker report by J. Rondero, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 59, 2 February 1928 and social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 20, 15 April 1929. Records about soccer: Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 56, 28 December 1928. Records about both baseball and soccer: Social worker report by Hector Serna, 3 October 1929.

¹³² A typical unskilled male adult worker made between one and two pesos a day in 1920s Mexico City. Jesús Silva Herzog, *Costo de la Vida en México* (México, Distrito Federal: Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de México, 1931), 27. Labor Inspector questionnaires of managers/owners of private sector firms, DT, Caja 223, Expedientes 1-39, Jan-April 1920. One questionnaire reported the following wages: minor/helper, 1 peso; carpenter, 3 pesos; foreman, 7.75 pesos; weaver 3 pesos; sewers who used machinery, 2.75 pesos; sewers by hand, 2.50 pesos; those who prepared the thread, 2 pesos, custodians, 1 peso. Labor Inspector Questionnaire by Inspector Isidro L. Lagunas, AGN, DT, Caja 223, Expediente 1, 20 April 1920. A playbill advertising an upcoming soccer game lists admission prices as \$1 peso for general admission and fifty centavos for field seating. A playbill for the match, 4 teams listed (Guerra y Marina, Asturias, Germania, and España), AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3935, Exp. 406, 25 January 1923.

sports was much less expensive. While pick-up games were free (other than the cost of a ball and even that could be improvised), more organized play in the form of intramural leagues was probably affordable. One youth, Francisco Castañeda Ramírez, lamented that he could not afford to play soccer. A social worker reported Francisco's plight: "he likes to play 'football' a lot and he was at the point of joining a team organized by a local man, but he had difficulty paying the twenty-cent-a-week fee."¹³³ Given prevailing wages for unskilled labor in Mexico City, twenty centavos might be perhaps an hour or two worth of work for a male adult or about three or so hours' worth of work for a child.

Historians have argued a "cult" of physical fitness developed in parts of the world during this period.¹³⁴ Mexico joined this physical fitness and hygiene trend. Sports clubs like the Club Atlético de México, the Club Olímpico, and the Club Ugartechea de Cultura Física urged the city government to approve sporting events.¹³⁵ The Labor Department issued an article praising the benefits of sports for children by calling it "the manifestation of an excess of energy that is spent by movement that contributes a normal chemical-morphological balance while also developing the individual."¹³⁶ Advocates of fitness framed their efforts in terms of race. A columnist with the pen name "M.V.A." remarked: "Mexicans do not show the greatest enthusiasm, love, and dedication to

¹³³ Social worker report by Hector Serna, to the Sec. Gen. del Tribunal, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 56, 28 December 1928.

¹³⁴ Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) and Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1986).

¹³⁵ LaFevor, 52.

¹³⁶ Article intended to be added for the Gaceta de Trabajo about play. Notes indicated this article was excerpted from a newspaper called *Ideas y Doctrinas*, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 332, Expediente 1, n.d., probably 1921.

muscular exercise that other races possess, especially those of the north.”¹³⁷ However, M.V.A. did believe physical exercise was increasing and bemoaned the state of physical education programs. The columnist asserted that Mexicans did not “possess an instinctive or inherited racial repulsion for physical exercise.” Instead, the state failed to provide adequate athletic training and proper facilities. The columnist urged the government to fulfill its duty by developing these programs, thereby fusing ideas of physical fitness with racialized, positive, and national pride.

Judging from newspaper articles about basketball, the sport was very new to Mexico in the 1920s. A 1926 article trumpeted how a recent exhibition basketball game in Fort Worth, Texas, gave the Mexican team a chance to prove that Mexicans were transcending the existing racist stereotypes. The Mexican Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) team—the Protestant organization had a fairly minimal presence in the Catholic nation—had beaten the Ft. Worth team and the writer fused this victory into a broader commentary on both race and class in post-revolutionary Mexico. The article noted, “Our cousins [meaning the Americans] only thought of the Mexican as someone who wore large sombreros and covered himself in colorful ‘Mexican sarapes’ that covered his gnarled body as well as his pistol that he was only too eager to use.”¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the Americans’ defeat at the hands of the Mexican YMCA basketball players challenged this racist assumption. The arrival of sports in Mexico in general, and this basketball game in particular, gave the Mexican team a chance to prove they “were

¹³⁷ M.V.A. “Los Mexicanos No Somos Enemigos de Ejercicio Físico,” *El Liberal*, 18 March 1920, año 1, tomo 1, no. 6, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Francisco Rojas González, “La Policía y La Cultura Física,” *La Revista de Policía*, 25 December 1926, año 2, Tomo 1, no. 26, p. 7.

forging a new race, strong, and beautiful.” The writer added that, “Not long ago, the masses considered sports to be an exercise only practiced by the privileged class. Modern sports were only practiced in aristocratic colleges. To workers and campesinos, tennis was a ‘delicate and feminine’ entertainment.” By implication, workers and campesinos now conceived of sports as masculine. The article concluded with an “indigenista” boast: even the Tarahumara ran in long-distance races—implying that the modern reformist capacity of sports had reached the most remote and most indigenous regions of Mexico.¹³⁹

Some capitalinos viewed baseball as a “virile” sport. *Excélsior* reported that “affection for baseball increases every day among us” and stated that the members of some baseball clubs “hoped that this virile and energetic sport keeps increasing among us.”¹⁴⁰ In 1922, a Cuban baseball team visited and played the Mexican Club Reforma team. The Mexicans won six to two and a *Demócrata* article proclaimed “Baseball has lifted our heads and our enthusiasm for the virile sport has arrived, demonstrated by the fact that there are many fans in Mexico.”¹⁴¹ The newspaper noted the sport was at a nascent stage in Mexico and hoped that baseball experienced a “resurgence” in Mexico.

¹³⁹ Indigenismo was an intellectual tradition that arose in Mexico during the 1920s. Indigenistas argued that indigenous peoples were a valued part of the Mexican people and that their heritage contributed to Mexico’s rich “*raza cósmica*” (cosmic race). Indigenismo became a popular idea among some circles of Mexican elites and government officials during the 1920s. The idea also developed in Peru among the left during the 1920s and 1930s. However, indigenismo also viewed the indigenous peoples as part of Mexico’s past far more than it viewed them as part of Mexico’s future. For a superb book on this topic which posits that a continuum of perspectives on race and ethnicity developed among Mexican intellectuals, see Rick López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹⁴⁰ “Interesante Juego de Béisbol,” *Jueves de Excélsior*, 10 July 1924, v. N/A, no. 109, p. 11.

¹⁴¹ “La Presentación del ‘Habana’ Fue Un Acontecimiento Deportivo,” *Demócrata*, 6 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1769, p. 9, 12.

Mexicans' fascination with baseball crossed class lines. One mechanic's apprentice, Antonio González Escamilla, told social worker Hector Serna he was so "enthusiastic" about baseball that he quit work so his friends and he could form a baseball team.¹⁴² Antonio's dedication to sports over labor did not impress Hector. At one point, the social worker described Antonio's pastime as "frivolous." Antonio's choice of abandoning work in favor of baseball demonstrated a workers' enthusiastic support for popular culture clashing a state officials' belief that his true masculine duty was to contribute towards the families' income.

Football (referred to as "football" or "foot-ball" in the sources) was another sport that served as an arena for concepts about Mexican manhood.¹⁴³ The sport was quite recent—a cultural feature brought over by English merchants during the late nineteenth century—and growing in popularity—one source called it "fashionable."¹⁴⁴ In the 1920s, the sport largely consisted of amateur and small professional leagues. City records include many license requests for football events and the newspapers regularly covered games. Football exhibited positive and negative effects on society. The specter of football hooliganism, crowds perpetrating violent behavior at events, prompted organizers to ask the city for security.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, other promoters attempted to

¹⁴² Social worker report by Hector Serna, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 20, 15 April 1929.

¹⁴³ For an excellent historical analysis of the relationship between class and soccer in 1920s Uruguay, see Steve Stein, "Miguel Rostaing: Dodging Blows on and off the Soccer Field," in *The Human Tradition in Latin America: The Twentieth Century*, eds. William H. Beezley and Judith Ewell (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1987), 15-25.

¹⁴⁴ "Los Peligros del Deporte de Box," *La Revista de Policía*, 15 April 1926, Año 2, Tomo 1, no. 14 p. 29.

¹⁴⁵ Letter written by R. Gallejo with the Federación Mexicana de Foot-Ball Association sent to the Pres. Municipal, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3935, Exp. 406, 22 March 1923.

convince Mexicans that football possessed the ability to “physically and mentally develop” Mexico’s youth and noted that the sport prevented the poor from participating in “harmful diversions.”¹⁴⁶

In 1919 and 1920, Jack Johnson, the famous African American boxer, spent time in Mexico while avoiding the Mann Act.¹⁴⁷ Gail Bederman argues that Jack Johnson taunted white America by defeating white boxers, sleeping with white women, mercilessly promoting himself, and by refusing to conform to Jim Crow laws. He prompted broader debates “about the relative manliness of the white and black races.”¹⁴⁸ While in Mexico City, Johnson fused new and old sports pastimes by participating in both boxing matches and bullfights. He had trained as a *toreador* (bullfighter) while spending time in Barcelona in 1916.¹⁴⁹ Mexican newspapers loved Johnson so much they celebrated the fact that he had defeated white U.S. boxer Marty Cutler but bemoaned that had failed to “destroy” Cutler in a September 1919 bout.¹⁵⁰ Johnson also took advantage of the post-revolutionary government’s criticisms of U.S. Jim Crow policy. He visited a Sanborn’s restaurant with his European-American wife in 1919, but a manager (who was

¹⁴⁶ Pedida de licencia, Laureano Migoya, presidente del Club “Real Club España, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 821, Exp. 1, 2 Dec. 1921; letter written by the president of the charity/community organization Real Club España addressed to the Pres. Municipal, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3940, Exp. 833. 5 March 1924.

¹⁴⁷ He fled the U.S. to escape from the Mann Act, a racist piece of federal legislation arguably written to target Jackson personally. The law outlawed transporting women of ill repute across state lines.

¹⁴⁸ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

¹⁴⁹ See Johnson’s memoir, Jack Johnson, *Jack Johnson in the Ring and Out: The Classic Autobiography by the First Black Champion* (Chicago: National Sports Pub. Co, 1927), 83, 90-98.

¹⁵⁰ Tenorio-Trillo, 212. Race may have been a factor in Johnson’s popularity. In a similar vein, Envir Casimir argues that one of the reasons for Cuban boxer Kid Chocolate’s popularity was his ability to defeat white American boxers in the ring. Envir M. Casimir, “Contours of Transnational Contact: Kid Chocolate, Cuba, and the United States in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Journal of Sports History* 39:3 (Fall 2012): 489.

American) denied him service.¹⁵¹ Johnson left the restaurant, found the police, and they returned. The police forced the manager to personally serve Johnson and his wife.¹⁵² President Carranza even befriended Johnson during his visit and attended his fights. Johnson quickly left the city and the country when Obregón, Calles, and de la Huerta's coupe against Carranza broke out in 1920. Johnson was but one example of a broader phenomenon: what LaFevor calls "inter-racial cultural intermediaries," white, black, mulatto, and mestizo boxers from Cuba, the United States, and Mexico who traveled throughout the hemisphere on circuit.¹⁵³ These boxers helped make boxing a transnational phenomenon.

The first national radio broadcast over the Mexican airwaves was a broadcast of a New York fight. In September, 1923, U.S. boxer Jack Dempsey fought Argentine Luis Firpo and promoters billed the event as the American against the Latin.¹⁵⁴ A list of event license requests provides the names of some of the boxers who appeared at popular fights: Kid Payo, Patricio Martínez Arredondo, Billy Murphy, and Battling Duddy. These names, as well as newspaper articles and handbills, reveal that some boxers, especially featherweights, were Mexican, but many boxers were from the U.S. on

¹⁵¹ Sanborns was, at that time, a U.S.-owned business. Today it is owned by Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim. This altercation took place in the famous House of the Tiles Sanborns restaurant downtown, which had just opened up in 1919.

¹⁵² Tenorio-Trillo, 112-113.

¹⁵³ LaFevor, 42.

¹⁵⁴ Dempsey won the fight. Marvin Alinsky, "Early Mexican Broadcasting," *HAHR* 34:4 (1954): 519-520.

exhibition tours.¹⁵⁵ While license requests and handbills indicate that most promoters were Mexicans, some U.S. promoters were part of the Mexico City boxing scene.¹⁵⁶

During this period boxing increased in popularity among both men and women in Mexico City.¹⁵⁷ Boxing was also a cross-class phenomenon during the 1920s and both the popular classes and the upper classes boxed and attended fights.¹⁵⁸ Crowds flocked to various boxing venues and boxing movies were a popular film genre. Most sources referred to the sport using “box” or “asaltos de box” and boxing terms began seeping into the national lexicon. A 1920 article about an attack by two passengers on a tram driver described an assailant’s blow to the driver’s head as a “box.”¹⁵⁹

Linda España-Maram and Kevin White have demonstrated how the working class used boxing to forge a plebeian culture and establish a sense of honor.¹⁶⁰ Boxing

¹⁵⁵ It appears as if Marquis of Queensbury rules—a Victorian-era code of conduct for boxers meant to encourage fair play—applied in many bouts, especially those in which one or more boxers visited from another country. Copy of the *Marquis of Queensbury Rules*, typed out on letterhead of the Club Atletico Internacional, Donceles # 89, n.d. but probably 1922. AHDF, DP, Vol. 811, Exp. 1637, n.d. but probably 1922.

¹⁵⁶ Many thought of boxing promoters as scalawags. Some officials complained corrupt promoters often charged excessive ticket prices, falsely advertised for known and respected fighters and then actually booked boxers “in a lamentable physical state,” and generally lacked professionalism. Letter from Pedro, full name not legible, Inspector General de Policía to the Presidente del Ayuntamiento, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3935, Exp. 366, 3 February 1923.

¹⁵⁷ Boxing crowds were probably at least somewhat mixed sex, as indicated in a letter sent by a city official to the owner of a boxing venue called the Frontón Nacional A letter from the city Sec. Gen, signature not legible, to the owner of Frontón Nacional, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1722, 4 October 1922.

¹⁵⁸ Stephen Allen notes, “By the early 1930s, however, the middle and upper classes stopped boxing, and the sport became the refuge for the lower classes.” Stephen Allen, “Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism, 1946-1982,” PhD Diss, Rutgers New Brunswick, 2013, 45.

¹⁵⁹ “Deben Armarse Los Conductores de Tranvías,” *Demócrata*, 16 January 1920, v. 6, no 1060, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Linda España-Maram argues boxing helped working-class Filipinos in 1920s Los Angeles forge a respectable, virile manhood, in the face of race- and class-based obstacles. Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 74, 94. In the U.S., boxing created an arena in which the working class created an alternate masculinity based upon what one scholar calls an “ethos of

matches served as spaces where popular-, middle, and upper-class men could exert an aggressive form of masculinity by drinking, shouting at referees and fighters, and by threatening to riot. A police inspector remarked that at these events he feared the crowd would revolt and he worried the police would not be able to stop the mob.¹⁶¹ One inspector reported that boxing “crowds vent their protests in an improper manner.”¹⁶²

Some criticized the sport as brutal and unhealthy because of the repeated blows to the body.¹⁶³ Others, echoing the *Revista de Policía* diatribe at the beginning of this chapter, complained that low-class culture was dethroning high-class culture because theaters booked boxing events rather than comedies. An official complained, “...this gives the space over to a public that is more used to bullfights and cockfights and this is a grave detriment to high culture (*espectáculos cultos*).”¹⁶⁴ He asked his superiors to investigate whether the city could legally deny boxing promoters’ requests for licenses, or, at the very least, restrict those promoters’ events to venues they were already using.

Yet, others in Mexico, including some promoters and journalists, believed boxing contributed to a healthy masculinity and that boxing was, or at least had the potential to become, a respectable sport. The newspaper *Universal Gráfico* noted boxing “was one of

braggadocio, masculine prowess, and violent defense of honor.” See Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 8, 12.

¹⁶¹ Letter from Pedro, full name not legible, Inspector General de Policía to the Presidente del Ayuntamiento, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3935, Exp. 366, 3 February 1923.

¹⁶² Report written by DP Jefe, signature not legible, addressed to Comisión de Diversiones AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1587, 9 January 1922.

¹⁶³ The writer did not oppose sports and noted that there were very healthy sports for children, but did not view “fashionable sports” as boxing and soccer to be healthy “physical education” for children.” “Los Peligros del Deporte de Box,” *La Revista de Policía*, 15 April 1926, año 2, tomo 1, no. 14, p. 29.

¹⁶⁴ Report written by DP Jefe, signature not legible, addressed to Comisión de Diversiones AHDF, DP, Vol. 810, Exp. 1587, 9 January 1922.

the best ways for youths to better themselves physically and mentally.”¹⁶⁵ Boxing promoters were well aware of their sports’ controversial nature. The Club Atletico submitted a request for a license to host a boxing match. The promoters noted that they would hold their event to “increase the fan base for this virile sport” and also remarked that they were trying to “clear the good name of boxing in Mexico.”¹⁶⁶

One official’s reports indicate that the spectacle of a boxing match held him in thrall as much as it did the crowd. Retelling a boxing match at length, provides an idea of what a worker would have experienced as a boxing fan in 1920s Mexico. Diversions Department Inspector Heliodoro Vargas’ report gives a detailed blow-by-blow account of a boxing match at the Frontón Nacional between Kid Savage and Battling Duddly. Vargas refers to Savage as, *el blanco*, and Duddly as, *el negro*, indicating that the pair were probably visiting European-American and African-American *yanquis*. Both fought vigorously in the first two rounds. In the third round Duddly slowed and stopped using his right fist. Vargas reported, “The crowd grew impatient and with good reason because they thought he was mocking them [because they thought Duddly was ‘sand-bagging,’ or not giving the fight his full effort].”¹⁶⁷ Duddly stopped the match, asking that a doctor look at the bruised right side of his head. The police insisted Duddly keep fighting. In round seven Duddly fell to the ground and stayed down for the ten count. Reportedly, throughout the fight, Savage seemed to be a “dirty fighter” and also did not respect the referee or the crowd.

¹⁶⁵ Newspaper clipping from the *Universal Gráfico*, titled “Reglamentación del Box en México” and dated 17 July 1922, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1690, 27 July 1922-28 July 1922.

¹⁶⁶ A letter written by Romero, full name not legible, on Club Atletico Internacional letterhead addressed to Pres. del Ayunt. AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1752, 6 April 1922.

¹⁶⁷ DP Inspector report by Heliodoro Vargas AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1722, 4 November 1922.

Following the match, Inspector Vargas and the police checked whether Duddly was hurt. His right arm was swelling and his left hand had cuts. Duddly's handlers took him to the Hospital de la Roja. Vargas noted that the next day the press denigrated the fight, complaining it had been a travesty because they perceived Duddly as having sandbagged the fight. The inspector downplayed such reporting and noted that Duddly had simply been hurt as he might have been in "any other" fight. Vargas said Savage had won because of his larger size. The inspector completed his report by urging that promoters use national boxing regulations. Many reporters and officials encouraged Mexican boxing organizers and participants to adopt the Marquis of Queensbury rules. A newly-formed Mexican Boxing Commission sought to enforce national boxing regulations similar to those implemented by the Cuban Boxing Commission.¹⁶⁸

Sports and fitness provided Mexican officials, fans, and athletes with a means through which they could interpret what popular-class masculinity meant. Boxers like Savage, Duddly, and Johnson presented their masculinity as intertwined with athletic prowess. Many fans viewed fights as spectacles where they could enact less-disciplined forms of expression. While some officials criticized boxing as dangerous, many other officials, promoters, and journalists argued the sport made men more virile and contributed to efforts to improve Mexico's fitness.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the working class developed their own culture and enacted masculine identities through leisure time and entertainment culture, through drinking, dancing, theater going, sports, and fitness. Workers in Mexico fashioned

¹⁶⁸ Newspaper clipping from the *Universal Gráfico*, titled "Reglamentación del Box en México" and dated 17 July 1922, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1690, 27 July 1922-28 July 1922.

masculinities that emphasized traits such as assertiveness, athleticism, and playing hard. The line between these various forms of popular culture blurred as workers' sung soccer songs in taverns and watched sports movies. One youth commented "I like sports in general, but my favorite pastime is watching boxing movies."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Social worker report by A. Polanco, Delegado to the Sec. Gen. del TribAGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 3, Exp. 47, 5 November 1928.

Chapter 5, Union Masculinities

During the 1920s, some unions tried appropriating political power from the church, employers, and rival unions. Much of the power these institutions wielded was patriarchal power (the patriarchal ability to protect, provide for, and direct workers), and unions also sought to usurp their patriarchal power. Unions often did so with the approval and support of the patriarchal state, particularly unions most amenable to forming alliances with the state. This chapter investigates how Mexico City's leftist, centrist, and (to a lesser extent) Catholic and company unions rhetorically used masculinity to gain power and prestige during these years. By representing union violence as manly, by adopting aggressive male-gendered language, and by enshrining the virile, male artisan as the ideal worker, both labor federations and unions framed their ties to the state, other unions, and employers through masculine group identities emphasizing proletarian masculinity.¹ Also, some local unions and federations articulated alternative and competing understandings of union masculinity. Moreover, not all locals and federations attempted to seize paternal power from company owners, for some sought to share paternalism with employers and some *libre* (or company) unions ceded paternal power to employers as long as those employers took care of their workers. Even these *libre* unions, though, adopted some of the assertive tone and gendered language of the more aggressive labor organizations.

By emphasizing how unions used masculinity as a tool as they struggled for power with employers and with rival unions, this chapter contributes to the Mexican

¹ A labor federation is a collection of member unions, or locals.

historiography about negotiations among unions, employers, and the state.² Five historians have studied masculinity within Mexican labor unions. Susan Gauss examined 1940s Puebla textile unions and found that their associated labor organizations inculcated a sense of “union masculinism” that valued strength, honor, violence, and solidarity and used this masculinity to exert power over employers, rival unions, and women workers.³ Michael Snodgrass shows how two Mexican unions developed competing visions of worker masculinity, one based its manhood on revolutionary masculinity allied with the state and, on the other, on anti-communism and what Snodgrass calls “conservative patriotism.”⁴ Rob Alegre examines Mexican unionized railroad engineers, line repairmen, and mechanics during the 1950s and 1960s and demonstrates how workers enacted a “rough” sort of masculinity, emphasizing skill, hard work, honor, physical strength, and toughness.⁵ Stephen Bachelor examines the masculine subcultures formed by those working on the assembly line in 1960s Ford and General Motors plants—he argues they developed masculine identities based on hard work, opposition to management, and gendered language.⁶ Christopher Boyer illustrates how members in

² Since the 1990s, the dominant view among historians of Mexico has been that the post-revolutionary federal state had limited ability to effect change and, as a result, negotiated with state governments, political factions, employers, and labor. For an excellent discussion of this school of thought, see “Mexico’s New Cultural History: ¿Una Lucha Libre?” special issue of the *HAHR* (May 1999).

³ Susan M. Gauss, “Masculine Bonds and Modern Mothers: The Rationalization of Gender in the Textile Industry in Puebla, 1940-1952,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 68.

⁴ Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵ Rob Alegre, “Contesting the ‘Mexican Miracle’: Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico, 1943-1959.” PhD Diss, Rutgers New Brunswick, 2007; Rob Alegre, “Las Rieleras: Gender, Politics, and Power in the Mexican Railway Movement, 1958-1959,” *Journal of Women’s History* 23: 2 (2011): 162-186.

⁶ Steven J. Bachelor, “Toiling for the ‘New Invaders’: Autoworkers, Transnational Corporations, and Working-Class Culture in Mexico City, 1955-1968,” in *The Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics*

two rival unions in the state of Michoacán defended, as well as controlled, their daughters' sexual honor from perceived predations by men from the opposing union.⁷ All five of these historians revealed how workers integrated a sense of personal honor into their gendered performances as men. My findings concur with these scholars' interpretations and I build on these findings by examining the ways in which unions used proletarian masculinity to assert themselves in contests with rival unions and employers; unions often did so with support from the patriarchal state.

Since the post-revolutionary period, Mexican labor historiography has followed an orthodox, revisionist, and post-revisionist trajectory. Beginning in the 1930s, orthodox scholars, like Marjorie Clark, argued that the labor movement, while nascent and plagued with corruption, represented a true social revolution within a revolution because the movement improved obreros' standard of living and granted them a voice in post-revolutionary politics.⁸ Following the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre, in which soldiers and police gunned down hundreds of student protesters, revisionist scholars became skeptical of the Revolution's merits. Revisionist historians like Jorge Basurto, Rocío Guadarrama, and Barry Carr concluded that the labor movement had been a nascent attempt at legitimate proletarian class formation that the corporatist state subsequently co-opted through charrismo (corrupt practices).⁹ During the 1990s and 2000s, post-

of Culture in Mexico Since 1940, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 273-326.

⁷ Christopher Boyer, "The Threads of Class at la Virgen: Misrepresentation and Identity at a Mexican Textile Mill, 1918-1935," *American Historical Review* 105:5 (December 2000): 1576-1598.

⁸ Marjorie Ruth Clark, *Organized Labor in Mexico* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1934). Also published as Clark, Marjorie Ruth (*La organización obrera en México*. México: Ediciones Era, 1979).

⁹ Jorge Basurto, *El proletariado industrial en México (1850-1930)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975); Rocío Guadarrama, *Los sindicatos y la política en México:*

revisionist labor historians John Lear, Norman Caulfield, Susie Porter, Kevin Middlebrook, and others show how processes of cultural and political hegemony, rather than co-optation, better explain union-state interplay.¹⁰ Lear notes that recently historiography has emphasized popular-class experiences and pays closer attention to language and gender relations.¹¹ This chapter embraces this scholarly shift towards cultural, gender, and linguistic turns in Mexican labor history.

I begin this chapter by characterizing Mexican labor history from the Porfiriato to the Revolution, and I then analyze how unions performed masculinity through interactions with other unions, employers, the church, and the state (including how labor and the state each referenced plebeian masculinity as they jockeyed for power during a 1922 taxi driver riot).

The Mexico City Labor Movement: Porfiriato to the 1920s

During the Porfirian period, some company owners adopted industrial paternalism; they provided compliant workers with housing, loans, and funding for their mutual aid societies (loose voluntary organizations that often published newsletters and collected funds to aid ill members' families).¹² Police and the military repressed workers

la CROM (1918-1928) (México: Colección Problemas de México, 1981) and John Mason Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

¹⁰ John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourse and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003); Norman Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998); and Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press).

¹¹ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 6.

¹² Morgan, 158-159.

and the state halted mutual aid associations' strikes.¹³ During the 1900s, two particularly violent strikes (at Cananea and Río Bravo) resulted in troops and management paramilitaries gunning down workers. These two incidents galvanized the labor movement and, by the mid 1900s, more and more mutual aid associations became unions, indicating they were now more willing to reject employer paternalism and to use what they called "direct action" (strikes, occupations, marches, and sabotage).¹⁴

During the Revolution, unions insisted they would not return to the days of Cananea, or Río Bravo; they had gained too much strength and recognition since those days.¹⁵ The Revolution devastated Mexico City's economy—currencies and bank notes became worthless, factories lacked raw materials, transportation networks collapsed, and consumer markets withered. This economic crisis, especially workers' desire to be paid in gold rather than worthless paper script, spurred workers to form unions and labor federations during the 1910s. These organizations held a city-wide tram driver strike in 1911 and two general strikes in 1916. The latter strikes were organized by the Casa de Obrero Mundial, an anarchist labor federation that, by the middle of the decade, had become a significant force in labor politics.

¹³ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 112.

¹⁴ Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *Labor and the Ambivalent Revolutionaries, Mexico, 1911-1923* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 19.

¹⁵ Cananea took place in Sonora in 1906 at the U.S.-owned Cananea Consolidated Copper Company. A crowd of workers killed two U.S. Cananea employees and so management summoned Arizona Rangers and rurales (federal police) who exchanged fire with worker and then captured and immediately hanged the strike leaders. Río Bravo took place in Orizaba, Veracruz, in 1907 and resulted in the death of over 200 workers and 25 soldiers (both sides fired upon each other). Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 97 and Raúl Trejo Delarbe, "Historia del movimiento obrero en México, 1860-1982," en *Historia del movimiento obrero in América Latina*, coordinado por Pablo González Casanova (México : Siglo Veintiuno Editores : Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la UNAM, 1984), 19.

During this period, various revolutionary factions courted Casa's leaders, telling them that the government sympathized with the obreros' plight. In particular, the Carrancista faction's General Obregón and Benjamín Hill befriended Casa's leaders, especially Luis Morones. The Casa leadership was so convinced as to Obregón's legitimacy that they even sent at least one "Red Battalion" to fight in the trenches on the Carrancista side—a significant change for an anarchist organization that had previously resisted forming alliances with any government. In spite of Casa's support, the Carrancistas betrayed this labor-state alliance and violently crushed the 1916 Mexico City general strike. The authorities jailed Casa's leaders, disbanded the organization, burned its records, and forced the Casa from its union hall, the famous Palace of Tiles—now a Sanborn's restaurant—which the Carrancistas had given earlier to the Casa, granted as part of their alliance.

In 1917, leftists within the Carrancista faction managed to push through a Constitution that enshrined a number of broad social reforms. While Carranza, Obregón, and subsequent presidents failed to fully enact many of the Constitution's promises, for the first time in Mexican history the 1917 Constitution's Article 123 guaranteed serious labor reforms. Alan Knight has dubbed Article 123 as "labor's Magna Carta."¹⁶ Article 123 established an eight-hour workday, banned child labor, and guaranteed the right to strike.¹⁷ Yet, Article 123 also significantly gendered wage labor as masculine and subtly sought to diminish women's presence in the workplace. Susie Porter has

¹⁶ Alan Knight, "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, c. 1900-1920," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16 (1984): 75, 78.

¹⁷ México. *Constitución política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (México, D.F.: Imprenta de la Cámara de Diputados, 1929), 83-87.

criticized the Constitution's gendered effects by noting that Article 123 "was ostensibly gender neutral," but, in reality, the law gendered wage labor as masculine by preventing women from working in hazardous trades and by prohibiting women from working the night shift.¹⁸

During the late 1910s and 1920s, unions and federations reappeared on the national scene. Labor historians point to the 1919 accord signed between CROM and Obregón as the pivotal moment for both a nascent organized labor movement and an equally weak but rising central state.¹⁹ They benefitted from improved labor-state relations and a (slightly) improved post-war economy. Union membership skyrocketed as did the number of successful strikes and many employers reluctantly recognized unions by agreeing to sign contracts. At one factory, union members even took paid breaks on the floor to have discussions about the history of unionism and to discuss how individuals like anarchist Enrique Flores Magón had contributed to the labor movement, a practice that would have been inconceivable before the Revolution.²⁰ In 1916, revolutionary military authorities, according to a *Demócrata* writer, "almost gunned down" a prominent electrician union's leader during a strike.²¹ In contrast, in 1922, city authorities sat down at the same table with the leader of the same union and served as neutral arbitrators for negotiations between the tram company and the union. Unions had

¹⁸ Porter, 174.

¹⁹ Leticia Gamboa Ojeda, "La CROM en Puebla y El Movimiento Obrero Textil en Los Años 20i" in *Memorias del encuentro sobre historia del movimiento obrero, tomo II*, ed. Martín Pérez Zenteno (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 36-38.

²⁰ Enrique Flores Magón was a famous activist, anarchist, and critic of Díaz, best known for publishing the 1900s newspaper *Regeneración*. Report by DT Labor Inspector Alfonso Labastida, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 532, Expediente 8, 18 January 1924.

²¹ "Huelga de Tranviarios," *Boletín Financiero y Minero de México*, 13 June 1922, vol. 22, no. 6508, p. 1 and p. 8.

acquired a state-sanctioned legitimacy they had not enjoyed during the previous decade; they were encouraged to mobility, organize, support the state, and seek state support.

Three types of labor organizations existed in 1920s Mexico City: corporatist (corporatism is a political alliance between labor and the state), leftist, and pro-business.²² The corporatist CROM was the largest labor federation with over a million members at its peak.²³ The second-largest labor federation, with about 80,000 members at its height, was the anarchist-leaning CGT.²⁴ Lastly, a handful of workers affiliated themselves with either company unions or with conservative Catholic unions such as the Gran Círculo de Obreros Católicas (affiliated with the Archbishop of Mexico City and other church organizations). Each of these three groups had descriptive nicknames.²⁵ CROM union members were known as “cromistas” or “yellows” (amarillistas), CGT-

²² Barbara Weinstein noted that today’s scholars no longer “dwell” on the subject of corporatism. Barbara Weinstein, “The New Latin American Labor History: What We Gain,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Fall 1989): 26-27. For three excellent studies on the relationship between Mexican unionism and corporatism, see Jorge Basurto, *El proletariado industrial en México (1850-1930)* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975); Norman Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998); and, especially, Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), 1995.

²³ In terms of members, the yellows’ labor federation dwarfed that of the reds, having almost two million members at its peak, although scholars and the CGT accused the CROM of overstating their membership statistics. The CROM’s membership rose from 50,000 in 1920 to 1.2 million in 1924. John Lear, “La revolución en blanco, negro, y rojo: arte, política, y obreros en los inicios del periodico *El Machete*,” *Signos Históricas* 10 (jul-dic 2007): 114; Clark, 60.

²⁴ While CGT never approached the CROM’s membership figures, the labor federation did represent between 15,000 and 80,000 workers from its founding in 1921 until its disbanding in 1932. Marjorie Clark states that the CGT claimed 60,000 members, whereas the CROM claimed the CGT only had only 15,000 members. Hart puts the figure at 80,000. Clark, 73. Hart, 175.

²⁵ While primary sources frequently used these terms, secondary sources that used the terms include Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, “El Sindicalismo Católico en México, 1919-1931,” *Historia Mexicana* 34:4 (1986): 633-635, 640-641; Leticia Gamboa Ojeda, “La CROM en Puebla y El Movimiento Obrero Textil en Los Años 20,” in *Memorias del encuentro sobre historia del movimiento obrero, tomo II*, ed. Martín Pérez Zenteno (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 49; David Malpica Uribe, “Las Juntas de Conciliación y Arbitraje en Puebla, 1931-1940” in *Memorias del encuentro sobre historia del movimiento obrero, tomo II*, ed. Martín Pérez Zenteno (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 131; Caulfield, 52.

affiliated workers were “*cegetistas*” or “reds” (*rojos*), and company-union obreros or Catholic-Union workers were “whites” (*blancos*) or “free workers” (*libres*).²⁶

A group of disaffected unionists with ties to the Carrancista revolutionary faction formed the CROM in 1918. The CROM’s locals in the DF represented workers in the electrical, building trades, transport, and textile sectors of the economy. In 1919, Luis Morones signed a pact with Obregón, an up-and-comer within the Carrancista faction. This alliance catapulted the nascent labor federation into prominence.²⁷ Yellow leaders maintained groups of *pistoleros* (gunmen) who conducted armed assaults on workers affiliated with rival unions, on employer’s security guards, on Catholic activists, and on Delahuertistas (a complicated, cross-class, cross-region, anti-Calles faction within Mexican politics, which many *cegetistas* supported).²⁸ Pistoleros represent a contradiction—non-state actors who were a key part of the state’s efforts to build hegemony. Due to these attacks, critics accused the yellows of serving as the government’s foot soldiers. Amarillos responded by insisting they simply used violence as a means to defend obreros’ interests. In 1924, President Calles promoted Luis Morones, CROM’s leader, to the Calles cabinet as the Labor Department minister. This promotion granted the cromistas a significant advantage over rival *cegetistas* because Morones used his influence to convince the labor arbitration boards to rule against the

²⁶ Some anti-union employers also called blancos “free” workers, implying they were free from what one Catholic organization called a “union’s tyranny” (although these workers were usually in company unions controlled by management).

²⁷ Gamboa Ojeda, 36-38.

²⁸ Gregory S. Crider, “Material Struggles: Workers’ Strategies during the ‘Institutionalization of the Revolution’ in Atlixco, Puebla, Mexico, 1930-1942,” (PhD Diss, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1996), 104-106.

rojos.²⁹ While critics also accused the yellows of being corporatist and corrupt, the amarillos improved workers' wages and living conditions and provided the popular classes with a respect and a legitimacy they had never previously enjoyed. Historians Jean Meyer, Enrique Krauze, and Caetano Reyes remark, "The truth—as always—is situated between the two extremes because the CROM does not deserve as much praise as it receives nor does it deserve as much criticism as it receives."³⁰

By 1920, many leftists had abandoned the CROM because of that federation's corporatism and corruption. In 1921, many of these disaffected unionists formed the CGT labor federation.³¹ Many locals quickly signed on to the CGT, including those representing the working class in the textile, telephone, printing, streetcar, and department store sectors of the economy.³² Many bakery unions also affiliated with the CGT—one Labor Department survey of bakeries found that 49% of workers were reds, 16 % were yellows, and 35 % were libres.³³ Some cegetistas had anarcho-syndicalist tendencies and many of its members had been leaders of the Casa de Obrero Mundial during the 1910s, including Rosendo Salazar and Rafael Quintero.³⁴ While the rojos' leadership initially included many anarchists, other factions within the labor federation gradually purged the anarchists from leadership roles during the 1920s. The CGT's

²⁹ Caulfield, 6.

³⁰ Jean Meyer, Enrique Krauze, y Caetano Reyes, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, 1924-1928: Estado y sociedad con Calles*. Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, Tomo 11 (México: Colegio de México, 1981), 77.

³¹ Carr, 91; *Lear, Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 115.

³² Hart, 159.

³³ Since the Porfirian period, bakeries had been a hotbed of leftist labor activism. Report by Labor Department labor inspector, name not legible, DT, 208, Caja 811, Expediente 24, 30 April 1924.

³⁴ Clark, 72.

rhetoric often embraced class struggle and international solidarity themes and the amarillos sang union songs lines like, “Up with the world’s poor! Up with those without break! Up with the disinherited! Long live the international!”³⁵ Reds rejected forming formal ties to government, what one founding member called “undignified tutelage.”³⁶

Catholic workers had an abysmally small presence in Mexico City. In the entire nation they never had a large presence—at their peak their membership reached about 30,000 members with only a few thousand of those members in Mexico City.³⁷ The main Catholic labor federation, the la Confederación Nacional Católica del Trabajo, only had four Mexico City locals.³⁸ Nevertheless, Catholic workers did not regard their movement as insignificant and they often faced persecution by the CGT and CROM.

Despite the presence of yellow, red, and Catholic unions, the vast majority of capitalinos did not belong to a union; many of these nonunionized individuals worked in the informal sector of the economy. The three most unionized sectors of the nation’s economy (“textile factory workers, skilled trade workers in rapidly changing industries, and strategic workers in new infrastructure and transport industries”) represented only 12 percent of the city’s work force in 1911—although the numbers of unionized workers in Mexico increased by mid decade with the Casa’s rise.³⁹

³⁵ “El Congreso Panamericano Ahondara Las Divisiones que Existen Entre Obreros,” *Demócrata*, 10 January 1920, v. 6, no. 1409, p. 1, 5.

³⁶ Rosendo Salazar and José G. Escobedo, *Las pugnas de la gleba* (México: Comisión Nacional Editorial, 1972), 315.

³⁷ Ceballos Ramírez, “El Sindicalismo Católico,” 656.

³⁸ Ceballos Ramírez, 335.

³⁹ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 72-73.

Union-Union Relations

The cegetistas and cromistas integrated masculinity into two competing visions of the Mexican labor movement, one corporatist and the other anarchist. Yellows, reds, and Catholic unions all used proletarian masculinity as a weapon by claiming to possess it and by asserting rival unions lacked it. Both the corporatist yellows and anarchist reds' labor organizations directed their most vitriolic—and most gendered—language at those they perceived as being outside of their labor movements. They often did so by questioning libres' independence and masculinity. Catholic obreros, in turn, questioned red and yellow workers' ties to the state. One petition submitted by Catholic lay members on behalf of Catholic workers complained about “persecution of Catholic workers by revolutionary syndicalism” and noted that “the Catholic workers feel abandoned.”⁴⁰ Catholic union activists viewed the yellows and reds as excessively violent and corrupt—as exhibiting improper masculinity. An *obrero* with the textile factory La Aurrera lamented that a small minority of extremists within the factory urged violence. The same *obrero* complained that this minority group had recently migrated to the DF from Atlixco, Puebla, for many obreros and employers in Mexico City tended to view Puebla's textile industry as a hotbed of union-related violence, management exploitation, and union corruption.⁴¹

Libre and Catholic workers rejected claims that they lacked masculinity and they responded by using masculinity as a rhetorical weapon. Catholic propaganda argued that the Calles regime wanted to turn Mexico into a nation of “cowards and non-men” (*a una*

⁴⁰ Memo from representantes de Las Asociaciones Católicas de México (los sres. Gabriel Fernández Somellera y Miguel Paolmar y Vizcara) presentado a Roma, UDCM, Caja 1, Expediente 10, September 1925.

⁴¹ For analyses of Puebla labor union violence and corruption, see Gregory S. Crider, “Material Struggles,” and Gamboa Ojeda, “La CROM en Puebla,” 33-61.

nación de cobardes, de no hombres). At La Colmena textile factory, a workplace that included both a yellow union and a libre company union, the libre union presented a petition complaining that someone had called it “weak” and accused it of being less “militant” than the CROM union.⁴² Workers associated physical strength and virility with proletarian masculinity and, consequently, the question of who perceived the libres to be weak would have mattered greatly. While the libres’ petition did not specify who perceived the libres as being weak—such beliefs might have been expressed to the libres by the cromistas, by management, by the state, or by the libres’ members themselves, the libres emphasized that their union was, in fact, strong. The libres pointed out that they actually had more members than the rival amarillo union at La Colmena and proclaimed that to prove they were stronger than the cromistas, they would exert their strength by filing a grievance against the CROM with the labor arbitration board. In so doing, the libre local demonstrated the ideal masculine trait of assertiveness and yet they were careful to direct this assertiveness towards rival unions and not towards the state.

At a street-cleaning company, a libre union criticized a rival CROM union for corruption, for not protecting or caring for its workers. The libre union also accused the government (both city hall and the federal labor arbitration board) of “being biased in favor of the other union (the CROM)” and complained that these governing bodies refused to hear the libre union’s case.⁴³ This company union also adopted a very *abnegado* (self-sacrificing) tone by remarking, “We are poor and conscientious men, and

⁴² Letter from the Sindicato de Obreros y Obreras de “La Colmena,” sent to the President of the JFCA, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 45, Expediente 928/718, 11 October 1928.

⁴³ Letter by the Sindicato Libre de Limpia y Transportes sent to the Palacio Nacional, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 441, Expediente 3, 7 December 1922.

very different from them [referring to the cromistas], we have never supported their violence and their unreasonable strikes.”⁴⁴ The libre union presented itself as being more abnegado, and less violent, than the CROM rival.

Unions manipulated concepts, including those about virility, honorable manhood, and paternal control, in their rivalries with other unions as much as they used similar masculine markers in their dealings with employers. One capitalino characterized this internecine union strife by noting, “. . .while earlier there was war between industrialists and workers, now it is between workers and workers.”⁴⁵ Many Mexicans became tired of this struggle between the various labor organizations. One playwright even penned, “The reds and yellows, they are going to make me green (meaning sick to his stomach).”⁴⁶ This internecine fighting reinforced some elements of masculinity—particularly virility, militancy, violence, and patriarchal adherence to group hierarchy.

Employer-Union Relations

During the 1920s, many unions parleyed their newfound strength by attempting to seize the paternal position previously held by company owners. One union member remarked, “The company hates the union and looks with sympathy towards those (workers) who are not unionized and who want everyone to have a paternal character.”⁴⁷ These unions criticized both management and blancos for wanting to maintain the old paternal labor-employer arrangement in which employers, and not unions, protected

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ JFCA minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 23, Expediente 928/72, 20 January 1928.

⁴⁶ Humberto Galindo, “La Bandera Rojinegra,” by AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1413, July 1921.

⁴⁷ Letter from the Sindicato de Obreros y Empleado de la Empresa de Teléfonos Ericsson to the JFCA AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 32, Expediente 928/400, 25 April 1928.

obreros. Protection was a powerful term connoting patriarchal subservience—to be protected, one had to surrender a degree of power to another.

To many locals and federations, employer paternalism meant employee subservience. One Mexican worker's comments (from the 1950s) capture the problem with paternalism: "A lot of workers hate their boss and don't feel loyal, but in this respect I am well off because I know my boss holds me in high esteem. To show his appreciation he allows me to work seven days a week and all holidays, so I can increase my earnings. For years I've worked on Wednesdays, my day off. I respect my boss and I do my best. He is like a father to me."⁴⁸ Statements like this would have deeply offended Mexico City unionists in the 1920s—such a comment emphasized employee subservience to an employer. In contrast, unionists believed employers should pay a fair wage so that workers would not need to deferentially ask to work extra shifts! Unionists perceived the post-revolutionary period of the 1920s as a chance to use their ties to the state and direct action to break free of the fatherly, paternalistic hold of employers.

Employer paternalism consisted of both a "hard" approach in which employers blacklisted union activists, constantly supervised obreros, and attempted to discipline workers with fines and other punishments and a "soft" approach in which employers provided education, housing, and petty cash loans.⁴⁹ Since the colonial era, employers in Mexico City had sought to discipline workers by firing unruly workers and promoting

⁴⁸ Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York, Vintage, 1961), 5-6.

⁴⁹ Knight, "The Working Class," 68. A blacklist is a list of workers with ties to unions. Employers collude and agree to not hire these workers.

complacent obreros whose behavior conformed to upper-class ideals.⁵⁰ From the 1890s to the 1930s, Mexico's manufacturing sector gradually shifted from family-owned businesses to publically-owned corporate businesses.⁵¹ Yet as small family firms and large corporate employers became increasingly industrialized, both attempted to improve workplace efficiency by instilling discipline in workers.⁵² Buen Tono Factory director L. Vaughan described his firm as a "philanthropic society because of the many benefits that the workers receive and because the Directorship is concerned with doing everything possible for its workers."⁵³ Buen Tono's programs included providing a school, church, doctor, and modern bathrooms. For these employers, providing for obreros represented a continuation of longstanding practices dating to before the Porfirian period.

Disgruntled employees at the Buen Tono cigarette factory formed a union (The Union of Employees, Female Workers, and Male Workers of the Cigarette Factory El Buen Tono) as a "resistance" organization to champion workers' interests.⁵⁴ In the 1920s, the union briefly went on strike, demanded a 50% pay hike, sabotaged factory machinery, and demanded the release of jailed strikers. Union leaders criticized employers for being too greedy and for refusing to consider the needs of obreros. One

⁵⁰ Susan Deans-Smith, "The Working Poor and the Eighteenth-Century Colonial State: Gender, Public order, and Worker Discipline," in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, eds. William Beezley and Cheryl English Martin (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 47-75.

⁵¹ Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 3, 59.

⁵² Haber, 34-46.

⁵³ LI Juan de Berara's report on the El Buen Tono tobacco factory, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 211, Expediente 38, 17 Jan 1920.

⁵⁴ DT letters and reports, union memos and petitions, Buen Tono company "Reglamento General," AGN, DT, 208, Caja 211, Expediente 25, Apr- Sep 1920.

union leader noted in a speech that this type of capitalist employer “negated progress, they wanted all the world’s riches for themselves, these men are not men of good will, they are not men with good hearts, they are men who are good for nothing.”⁵⁵ The unionist ended his speech with an argument that capitalists who were too greedy were simply not men.

While unions and employers struggled over paternal power, a shared patriarchy sometimes developed between labor organizations and employers, for sometimes neither labor nor employers had sufficient power to dominate the other. Many, then, within each camp found cooperation more beneficial, albeit it was a fragile cooperation often made tense by union strikes and employer attempts to blacklist unionists. The union at the El Recuerdo textile factory did not protest wage-related issues or workplace conditions, but rather demanded managers rehire some workers and fire other workers.⁵⁶ Obreros at the Ericsson telephone company asked management to change rules mandating that a woman quit working once she became pregnant or married.⁵⁷ The union at the Argentina Bedspread Factory agreed to an accord with management that, among other things, mandated that the union must review and approve any disciplining actions administered to obreros and obreras by management.⁵⁸ Unions achieved shared paternalism by

⁵⁵ Speech transcript, Luis Morones, La Convención Industrial y Obrera del Ramo Textil, FAPECFT, MFN 4789-54, Expediente 101, 1925-1925, 6 October 1925.

⁵⁶ “Huelgistas y Rompe-Huelgistas se Batieron a Pedradas.” *Demócrata*, 6 January 1921, v. 6, no 1405, p. 1, 6; “Las Peticiones Formuladas por Los Obreros de ‘El Recuerdo’ y Los Tratamientos de Que Son Víctimas,” *Demócrata*, 7 January 1921, v. 6, no 1406, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Letters, minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 27, Expediente 928/528, 21 December 1927 to 3 March 1928.

⁵⁸ Copy of the accord, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 58, Expediente 927/1033, 18 February 1929.

demanding a say in control-of-the-workplace issues, including hiring and firing of employees.

Some employers and workers even established their own arbitration boards, called mixed commissions (*comisiones mixtas*). Both employer and labor representatives sat on these mixed commissions. These private workplace boards attempted to resolve issues at the factory level before escalating them to the government arbitration board. The comisiones balked at ruling on larger issues like pay increases because they were considered too contentious—such issues generally went to the labor arbitration board. The comisiones effectively resolved many smaller issues, including worker demands for back pay or management requests that individual workers treat machines with more care.⁵⁹

The Labor Department consistently endorsed this shared patriarchy model. Robert Quirk characterized President Obregón by noting, “He favored conciliation and compromise, wherever possible.”⁶⁰ President Obregón’s moderate views and conciliatory approach influenced the Labor Department’s middle-of-the-road stance on labor-employer relations. In a press release, the Labor Department mocked employers who set themselves up as the “jefe o patrón” (boss or patron) while praising employers who sought to cooperate with unions.⁶¹

⁵⁹ A letter signed by a Herminia Márquez and a Felicitas Olvera and sent to the JFCA, 10 August 1928, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 52, Expediente 928/889, 10 August 1928; JFCA Meeting Minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 60, Expediente 927/106526, September 1928.

⁶⁰ Robert Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 113.

⁶¹ Seven-page article titled, “Labor Social Obrera: La Unión de Empleados y Obreros del Buen Tono, S.A.” to be published in the *Boletín de Trabajo* AGN, DT, 208, Caja 700, Expediente 1, May 1923.

Yet, the state often lacked the power to directly challenge employer's paternal power. Instead, some state agencies manipulated an employer's desire to be the patriarch. A Labor Department official exploited the idea of the owner as paternal patron by urging an employer to raise wages and literacy rates and to "keep in mind their love for you as the patron."⁶² The Labor Department also expressed contradictory, or rather, pragmatic, views on employer paternalism, at times criticizing such practices and, at other times, praising employer paternalism when such language promoted the agency's goal of worker protection.

Shared paternalism was by no means the only model of labor-management relations in the tumultuous 1920s—unions often formed picket lines, occupied factories, went on strike, and beat strikebreakers (scabs) who crossed picket lines. In 1921, a factory owner for the Hormiga (Ant) Factory described how one group of workers acted during a strike, declaring, "In the rear of the factory, a group of male workers had hoisted a rojinegra (red and black flag), armed themselves with sticks, and shouted threats and insults, and prevented other employees from entering the factory."⁶³ The owner then used a phrase which a contemporary reader would recognize. He complained these labor activists were "limiting his employees' right to work." The following year, a representative for the Santa Teresa textile factory complained that a small group of obreros declared a strike and then "stationed an armed guard at the factory gates, with a

⁶² DT letter to employer El Fenix factory, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 236, Expediente 2, 3, 4, 5, 42, 45, n.d. but probably 1921.

⁶³ Letters from employer Leonard A., rest of the name is not legible, owner of La Hormiga to the District Governor, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 303, Expediente 16, 30 August 1921 and 1 September 1921.

red and black flag that impedes the entrance and exit of factory personnel...”⁶⁴ In both accounts, aggressive obreros on the shop floor and at the factory gates adopted proletarian masculinity consisting of using assertive language and implied violence. Also, in both accounts, workers adopted this masculine profile, using the red and black flag as a rallying symbol.⁶⁵

Throughout the decade of the 1920s, both labor and employers participated in a balancing act involving cooperation and *comisiones mixtas*, but also consisting of vitriol, recriminations, lockouts, and strikes. Yet, a significant shift of paternal power dynamics had occurred. Employers no longer dominated the workplace as they had before the Revolution—there would be no return to the days of Río Bravo or Cananea.⁶⁶

State-Union Relations

The Labor Department was the state’s main interlocutor with employers and labor unions. Established in 1911 as one of President Francisco Madero’s reforms, the labor department spent much of its first years attempting to control labor. Ramón Eduardo Ruíz found many departmental correspondences to unions that consistently favored management and sought to prevent unions from going on strike.⁶⁷ In contrast, 1920s missives to labor rarely struck this tone and instead encouraged workers to actively

⁶⁴ Letter written from a “Francia Marítima” (the factories’ street address) representative to the DT Secretary, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 442, Expediente 2, 18 March 1922.

⁶⁵ The flags had long served as symbols of socialist, anarchist, and labor movements throughout the Americas and Europe and Mexican plebeian culture paid homage to these *rojinegras* through plays and place names.

⁶⁶ Bortz, 282.

⁶⁷ Ruíz, 31-33.

contest employer exploitation and to file grievances if employers violated labor laws.

1910s unions were, quite understandably, not impressed with the agency.

During the Obregón administration, the agency changed. While the agency still held a paternalist view toward workers, the agency shifted more towards a worker-oriented approach rather than a management-oriented approach. It viewed taking care of obreros as its primary mission.⁶⁸ The Labor Department achieved this goal by operating an employment agency; by cajoling employers into implementing Article 123's labor reforms; by speaking with employers on behalf of unions; by assisting with labor-employer negotiations; by studying worker conditions and labor departments in Europe, the U.S., and Latin America; by working with the Labor Arbitration board to ensure employers paid indemnities to workers; and by collecting productivity, strike, and unemployment statistics throughout Mexico.⁶⁹ The inspectors carried identity cards proclaiming, "The bearer of this card is authorized to inspect all industries in the nation and can intervene in all labor conflicts."⁷⁰ The department's investigators had broad powers to investigate any workplace at a moment's notice to determine whether or not employers complied with federal labor laws.

Some Labor Department officials saw themselves as weaning workers away from dependence on employer paternalism. One official commented that the Labor Department existed in order to help obreros overcome their own limitations: "Workers' ignorance and timidity stems from their resigned nature and their blind obedience to

⁶⁸ Personnel files for Official Señorita Margarita Salcedo, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 229, Expedientes 9 y 13, 1921; budget and personnel data, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 240, Expediente 19, 1922.

⁶⁹ DT memos, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 182, Expediente 1 and 11, 19 May 1920 and n.d., respectively.

⁷⁰ Personnel file for DT Inspector Juan Paga, AGN, DT, R6, 208, Caja 178, Expediente 29, 1920-1923.

authority.”⁷¹ Yet, the Department also symbolized the limits of the post-revolutionary state’s power and the limits to state paternalism. The Labor Department, unlike the Labor Arbitration Board, had virtually no enforcement ability—inspectors and their supervisors could only cajole employers into improving wages and working conditions.⁷² Also, the Labor Department had its critics—*Excélsior* accused it of hurting businesses and failing to truly help workers—and many company owners complained the agency infringed on their ability to make a profit.

During the post-revolutionary 1920s, the Labor Department sought to become the workers’ paternal protector and unions, especially corporatist yellow labor unions, generally did not challenge the state’s efforts to become patriarchal. However, unions sometimes did challenge other state and federal agencies, viewing these agencies’ as usurping union’s traditional power. Obregón had operated as a middle man between employers and labor during the two Mexico City General Strikes of 1916. As president during the 1920s, Obregón continued to see the state’s role as that of the middleman and his Labor Department consistently considered itself to be the arbiter between employers and labor. Yet, numerous state governors, labor arbitration boards, and city governments, including the DF’s Ayuntamiento (city hall), also sought this role.

Many business owners were often very diplomatic in their dealings with the Labor Department. Whereas dance hall, tavern, and cantina owners often accused the city’s Diversions Department inspectors of corruption and incompetence, other business owners rarely accused federal Labor Department inspectors of these failings. Instead, when some

⁷¹ DT Memo, “Memoria de los Trabajos Realizados por el Departamento del Trabajo,” AGN, DT, 208, Caja 227, Expediente 5, n.d. but probably July 1920.

⁷² DT memo to El Fenix. AGN, DT, 208, Caja 236, Expediente 4, 16 June 1921.

employers disagreed with a Labor Department official, the other proprietors often used diplomatic language and suggested that since the inspector had probably not been able to fully study the workplace and suggested that the inspector had mistakenly arrived at an inaccurate assessment of workplace conditions and/or wages. Even in cases where individual employers sometimes complained about a particular inspector's incompetence or corruption, company owners generally did not question the Labor Department's or the arbitration board's right to intervene in conflicts between employers and labor.

Individual workers or unions criticized the state labor apparatus for unfairly allying with a rival union (red and libre workers often accused the state of being too friendly with yellows), but workers and unions never challenged the Labor Department's role as protector and arbiter of labor disputes. The Labor Department did take sides in internecine union rivalries and officials' pro-yellow biases angered many unionists. One Labor Department inspector commented in a report that the CGT should stop raiding a CROM shop's obreros and that the workers should all "return to YELLOW LABOR (regresaran al LABORITA AMARILLO)."⁷³ When another Labor Department inspector visited a cegetista-dominated bakery, a baker informed the inspector, "We are all reds!"), and according to the report, the workers had threatened the inspector with bodily injury and had "distorted Government's impartiality toward workers."⁷⁴ The cegetista obreros perceived the Labor Department as being biased in favor of the CROM and against the CGT, reacting by threatening physical violence. Such reports addressed a pro-CROM

⁷³ The inspector used capital letters in the report. Labor Inspector Labastida to the DT jefe, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 532, Expediente 8, 8 February 1924.

⁷⁴ A report written by Labor Department labor inspector, signature not legible, addressed to C. Gobernador del DF, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 811, Expediente 24, 30 April 1925.

bias within the labor department. Nevertheless, most locals and labor federations did not question the state's paternalism.

However, unions did sometimes object to other federal and local agencies' desire to project paternal power over workers. While unions generally approached the Labor Department with respect and a degree of what might be called subservience, many labor unions approached other government agencies, especially city government, far more assertively. In 1921, a baker's union complained that the government had "unjustly" arrested and imprisoned a union member in the Islas Marias penal colony. The union declared itself honorable, referencing a key marker of proletarian masculinity, and demanded Governor Gasca release their member.⁷⁵ In 1924, the CROM objected when the federal Secretary of Public Education department sought to increase vocational training for working class jobs.⁷⁶ The labor federation saw this government effort as taking away a practice—training workers—that master artisans had always controlled.

Workers—especially obreros belonging to the city's tram drivers' union—frequently participated in street fights with police and soldiers. One official remarked, "the tram drivers' strikes frequently become altercations between strikers and police or federal troops, it is possible that the workers could enter the Municipal Palace if we are not vigilant, and if this were to happen they would be aided by disgruntled city

⁷⁵ "Los Obreros Están Muy Quejosos del Gobdor. del Distrito," *Demócrata*, 7 January 1921, v. 6, no 1406, p. 6.

⁷⁶ Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1982), 194-195.

workers.”⁷⁷ The official indicated soldiers or police should form a security cordon around the government building to prevent workers from seizing the Palace.

Some unions symbolically challenged the state’s foot soldiers, police, and soldiers, especially when the government used gendarmes and soldados to break up picket lines. Others balked at challenging the state. Knight notes, “The CROM represented the culmination of a long, hesitant process of *détente* between labor and the state . . . one that required the workers’ repudiation not only of anarcho-syndicalism . . . but of the pristine liberalism promised by Madero.”⁷⁸ Corporatism, the political alliance of labor and the state, required that both sides contribute something; corporatism did not take the form of a one-way street for either labor or the state.⁷⁹

1922 Chofer Riot

By 1922, profound tensions had developed between the Mexico City governor and a taxi drivers’ (*choferes*) union. City officials believed that many *choferes* worked illegally without a city license and that these unlicensed drivers robbed and assaulted patrons. The *choferes* denied these accusations and accused the city government of corruption and favoritism. In response to newspapers and elites’ accusations that *choferes* perpetrated rape, theft, and hit-and-run accidents, *choferes* sought to recast those in their trade as moral, responsible, and professional. The drivers’ union filed legal petitions, wrote letters to state officials, and held demonstrations. In a similar manner, many other much-maligned plebeian groups, including prostitutes and criminals, asserted

⁷⁷ Letter from vice president of the Pres. Mun. Lic. Jorge Carregha, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3935, Exp. 339, 5 January 1923.

⁷⁸ Knight, “The Working Class,” 78.

⁷⁹ Knight, “The Working Class,” 70-71, 73.

that they were industrious and moral individuals forced to make a living during very trying circumstances.⁸⁰

A 1922 chofer riot illustrates that unions challenged the Mexico City government's ability to serve as the workers' paternal patron.⁸¹ During that year, Celestino Gasca, the DF governor tried to force drivers to buy new metal plates, indicating that they did, in fact, possess legitimate taxi licenses.⁸² The governor hoped that, by forcing choferes to display the plates that proved they had paid the license fee, more drivers would actually pay the taxi driver license fees. The new rule would have affected 20,000 taxi drivers and many drivers balked at purchasing the new licenses, perceiving them as an unnecessary expense and as an increase in state control over their trade.⁸³ While the union objected to the program, both the *Universal* and the *Excélsior* newspapers believed the government would only persecute nonunionized drivers for not purchasing the new plates and these newspapers viewed the program as a corrupt way for the city to punish nonunionized drivers for not belonging to a union.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ For excellent discussions of how prostitutes and others attempted to reshape elites' views of them, see Katherine E. Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 147-151, and Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 154-170.

⁸¹ "Un Proyecto para Lohrar La Moralización de Los Choferes," *Demócrata*, 27 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1788, p. 9, 12; "Las Placas de Honorabilidad de los Choferes," *Demócrata*, 6 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1769, p. 8.

⁸² Gasca had been a unionist during the previous decade but was now an opponent of Morones and the CROM.

⁸³ "Los Choferes Hicerion Ayer Una Tumultuosa Manifestación," *El Excélsior* Año VI, Tomo I, no. 1,781, 31 January 1922, Section 1, p. 1, 5, 8.

⁸⁴ "Los Choferes Hicerion Ayer Una Tumultuosa Manifestación," *El Excélsior* Año VI, Tomo I, no. 1,781, 31 January 1922, Section 1, p. 1, 5, 8; "Otra Conferencia de Los Choferes con El Gobernador del Distrito," *El Universal* V. 7, Tomo XXII, no. 1901, 1 February 1922, Section 1, p. 7.

Despite these problems with the proposed plan, *Universal* supported the license program, viewing it as “justified.”⁸⁵ The newspaper depicted a fictional conversation between a driver and a fare to demonstrate the campaign’s benefits:

-Driver: Are you ready, sir (*patrón*)?

-Fare: Are you an honorable driver?

-Driver: Yes sir. You can see the posted license and you can see that I’ve paid the Department of Patents and Licensing, you can go to your grave knowing that I am an honorable taxi driver.⁸⁶

In this fictional conversation, *Universal* considered it entirely appropriate for a fare to ask a chofer whether he was honorable. As Pablo Piccato has demonstrated, the popular classes held a profound sense of honor, but many upper-class members of Mexican society questioned whether members of the working class could possess honor.⁸⁷

Universal also interviewed a driver who claimed to be loyal to the union. He remarked, “I am unionized and I think that these *rateros choferes* are different from us. However, my union is shameless in this matter and tries to say that all drivers are with the union, but we probably don’t need these plates that they [the governor] wants us to buy.”⁸⁸

While this chofer established boundaries between the nonunionized *rateros choferes* and the more “responsible” unionized drivers, the driver did not entirely comply with the

⁸⁵ “Los Choferes de Autos y Camiones de Alquiler Declararon Una Huelga, Negándose a Recibir El Patente de Honorabilidad Ordenada Por El Gobernador,” *El Universal* V. 7, Tomo XXII, no. 1900, 31 January 1922, Section 2, 1, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 1, 8.

⁸⁷ Piccato posits that the *capitalino* working class possessed a profound sense of honor. Porter makes the same claim for working-class *capitalino* women. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 80, 87-89; Porter, 121.

⁸⁸ “Los Choferes de Autos y Camiones de Alquiler Declararon Una Huelga, Negándose a Recibir El Patente de Honorabilidad Ordenada Por El Gobernador,” *El Universal* V. 7, Tomo XXII, no. 1900, 31 January 1922, Section 2, p. 1, 8.

union policy. He expressed his belief that the union did not represent all drivers and he seemed only mildly opposed to the government's campaign.

The controversy over the proposed license program prompted the drivers' union to hold a march to protest the licenses. However, for unknown reasons, the protest march became a riot as choferes smashed windows, threw rocks, damaged parked cars, stopped traffic on many city streets, and used pistols and rocks to drive back advancing police officers and firemen. Some taxi drivers even ripped the new taxi license plates from the cars of drivers who had obeyed the unpopular law and paid the new fee. It is not entirely clear whether the rioting choferes belonged to a union or not and the categories of popular-class urban criminal masculinity and proletarian masculinity blurred during the riot. The choferes' union and *Demócrata* claimed that nonunionized drivers rioted while unionized drivers aided and fought alongside firefighters in an effort to calm the disturbance. In contrast, *Universal* and *Excélsior* asserted that both unionized and libre obreros rioted (although the *Excélsior* did state that a majority of the rioters had been nonunionized choferes).⁸⁹

The Cromista choferes criticized the DF governor and his license scheme for causing the entire riot. The riot ended with the police regaining control of the city's streets but, the following day, the drivers' union requested that the Second Supernumerary Judge of the DF issue an "*amparo*" against the police and Governor Celestino Gasca.⁹⁰ The Ayuntamiento sided with the cromista chofer union rather than

⁸⁹ "Los Choferes Hicieron Ayer Una Tumultuosa Manifestación," *El Excélsior* Año VI, Tomo I, no. 1,781, 31 January 1922, Section 1, p. 1, 5, 8; "Otra Conferencia de Los Choferes con El Gobernador del Distrito." *El Universal* V. 7, Tomo XXII, no. 1901, 1 February 1922, Section 1, p. 7.

⁹⁰ An individual, under Napoleonic (and thus Mexican) law, can submit an *amparo* to a judge, requesting an exception to a law that they claim violates their Constitutional rights. One scholar defines *amparo* as "the legal process by which the rights of an individual can be reclaimed by an authority. María

with Gasca and told the police and Gasca to stop harassing chauffeurs with the proposed law's additional fees and paperwork burden (the drivers might also have been required to pay a bribe). This is a good example of the intricacies of hegemony—a less than legal system was emerging. Instead the post-revolutionary state and unions were developing a system based on privilege, clientelism, and pressure. During the Revolution, Gasca had been a member of the anarchist Casa de Obrero Mundial and he even served as a commander in the famous unionist Red Battalions during the war, but, after the war, he became an enemy of both the CGT and the CROM.⁹¹ It is not clear how the controversy surrounding the proposed morality license plates ended but the event reveals how the union, various state factions, and newspapers all framed their actions and rhetoric through plebeian masculinity.

In 1923, the cromista taxi drivers' union, CROM-affiliated Federación de Sindicatos del Distrito Federal, joined with the tram workers union and formed a powerful transit workers union allied with CROM leader and Labor Minister Morones and President Calles.⁹² The new union clashed with police again that year. The union cooperated with a taxi drivers' and chauffeurs' (choferes) mutual aid society, the Centro Social de Chauffeurs, by holding a combined funeral procession/protest march publicizing the murder of fellow chauffeur Isidro Nuñez. The two labor organizations

José Rhi Sausi Garavito, "Las Primeras Tres Décadas del Juicio de Amparo: Notas en Torno a la Percepción de un Nuevo Instrumento Jurídico," en *Actores, espacios, y debates en la historia de la esfera pública en la ciudad de México*, coords. Cristina Sacristán y Pablo Piccato (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas-UNAM y Instituto Moro, 2005), 121-144.

⁹¹ Hart, 163.

⁹² The new union was called the Alliance of Urban Bus and Tram Workers and Employees. Clark, 94. Note that while Carr says the union formed in 1923, Caulfield reports the union formed in 1925. Caulfield, 56.

accused the police of bumbling the murder investigation.⁹³ The choferes' march included at least 500 taxis, and *La Demócrata* noted that the event "profoundly moved the working classes." During the parade, the labor organizations encouraged the public to demand that the police reopen the investigation. At one point, a group of drunken police tried to stop the procession. These drunken police officers almost clashed with workers, but the chauffeurs told the officers they had received permission from city hall to hold the rally. The police officers' actions turned the conventional perception around because they, not the unionists, had been the assertive, almost-violent parties during this incident. In contrast, the drivers sought to disassociate themselves from being linked to crime and instead redirected criticism towards the police for their drunken performance and for their inability to conduct an appropriate, responsible investigation of the crime.

During the 1920s, both labor and the state were relatively fragile, weak institutions and needed the support of each other. Unions benefited from a friendly labor arbitration apparatus, a system that regulated the workplace (or at least sought to regulate the workplace), and a union leader, Luis Morones, who attained a cabinet-level position in the new government. The state benefited from a loyal unionist power base and from having available labor federations' pistoleros to intimidate and perpetrate violence against the state's perceived enemies. Consequently, if unions wanted patriarchal power over workers, they had to share this capacity with the federal government.

⁹³ "Una Muda Manifestación de Protesta por el Asesinato del Chofer Isidro Nuñez se Efectuó Ayer en la Metrópoli," *Demócrata*, 25 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1786, p. 9; "Consternación por El Asesinato del Chofer Isidro Nuñez," *Demócrata*, 25 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1786, p. 11; "No Es Ninguna Garantía de Honorabilidad una Placa que recuerda el Presidio," *Demócrata*, 2 February 1922, v. 7, no. 1793, p. 1, 8. "Recuerda el Presidio," *Demócrata*, 2 February 1922, v. 7, no. 1793, p. 1, 8.

Church-Union Relations

In conflicts between the church and labor, both groups relied on ideas of masculinity. The 1920s post-revolutionary Mexican state viewed the church as an enemy. The Obregón and Calles regimes considered the Catholic church an institution that, at best, opposed most government policies and, at worst, brainwashed the popular classes into committing outright rebellion against the state, especially during the Cristero War (1926-1929). Factions of the post-revolutionary government even established an alternate, secular “schismatic” church, although the project quickly failed.

Organized labor also participated in the state’s anti-church efforts, and the Church and organized labor frequently clashed during the 1920s. Quirk has characterized the yellows as “frankly antireligious” while CROM publications referred to Catholics as “fanatics.”⁹⁴ At one point, the CROM even supported Calles’ policy of exiling priests, an extreme act in a nation as Catholic as Mexico.⁹⁵ During the Cristero War (1926-1929), the CROM even helped in the war effort by sending a CROM militia to garrison the Baja, freeing regular army forces to battle the pro-Catholic Cristero rebels.⁹⁶ The CGT’s magazines and correspondence also expressed anti-clerical views and CGT members conducted street battles with Catholic youths from the Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana, and with conservative members of the Knights of Columbus.⁹⁷ In turn, the Church printed handbills urging Catholics to boycott theaters and cinemas because

⁹⁴ Quirk, 28, 127. Cecilia Sheridan Prieto, *Mujer obrera y organización sindical: el Sindicato de Obreras Demanchadoras de Café, Coatepec, Veracruz: un estudio histórico-monográfico* (Hidalgo: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1983), 37-38.

⁹⁵ Carr, 199, 221.

⁹⁶ Letter from the CROM’s Ricardo Trevino, hojas 135-136, FAPECFT, MFN 4789-54, Expediente 101, 28 July 1926.

⁹⁷ Carr, 216-218; Hart, 162.

CROM members staffed the movie theaters. The handbills proclaimed, “Each cent that you spend in cinemas and movie theaters goes to the CROM to aid their war against Catholics.”⁹⁸ The Church warned its parishioners of the dangers of class warfare and declared cromistas “Bolsheviks” while some priests excommunicated parishioners for belonging to a union.⁹⁹

Despite sharp church-union tensions, in 1926 both the CROM and the Archbishop’s office agreed to a series of debates between union leaders and church leaders. The debates took place before live theater audiences and radio stations broadcast some of these debates.¹⁰⁰ After four such subsequent debates (one every Sunday), tensions between the two parties had reached a heightened state—a CROM leader threatened violence during the fourth debate—and the event organizers canceled the remaining debates.¹⁰¹ During the second debate, the CROM representative had used gendered language when he mocked the Catholic official, René Capistrán Garza, a well-known leader of the Catholic youth organization (the Catholic Association of Mexican Youth), for seeking to prove he was a “man” but for failing to do so because he did not offer any “facts” to support his assertions.¹⁰²

Amarillo leader Luis Morones participated in the third debate. He accused priests of threatening workers’ women and the labor federation leader objected to church

⁹⁸ Ceballos Ramírez, 654-655.

⁹⁹ Quirk, 127; Sheridan Prieto, 37-38.

¹⁰⁰ Carr, 223.

¹⁰¹ Quirk, 129.

¹⁰² Versión taquigráfica, de la cuarta controversia, organizada por la CROM, en el Teatro Iris, AHAM, Caja 148, Expediente 4, 9 August 1926.

doctrine that urged workers to avoid retaliating rather than actively resisting.¹⁰³ Morones referred to Capistrán Garza, the church's representative during the previous week's debate, and questioned Garza's manhood by stating, "He used women to defend himself."¹⁰⁴ The labor movement and the post-revolutionary state often argued that women were more religious than men and more vulnerable to the influence of priests (both in terms of sexual vulnerability and in terms of priests' ability to sway women's opinions). Morones continued by asking, "Are any Catholics true men?" He answered his own rhetorical question by stating, "Yes, some are, but not many."¹⁰⁵ During the debate, Morones also praised rationalism (a tactic used by 1920s labor activists throughout Europe and the Western Hemisphere), implicitly asserting that men in the government and in unions were real men because they relied on reason and science rather than on faith.

The CROM questioned Catholic men's masculinity in the same fashion they questioned reds' and whites' masculinity. The reds and yellows also sought alliances with the state and sharing the state's anti-clerical views probably facilitated such alliances. However, many urban Mexico City workers tended to be devout during this period and so it is difficult to determine whether rank-and-file obreros embraced their leaders' anticlericalism.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ For a discussion of labor criticism of the Catholic Church and, especially, of how the labor press represented priests as a threat to women, see Gustafson, 79-90.

¹⁰⁴ Versión taquigráfica, de la cuarta controversia, organizada por la CROM, en el Teatro Iris, AHAM, Caja 148, Expediente 4, 9 August 1926.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 221; Gustafson, 90.

Women in Unions

This chapter's analysis of masculinity within unions and labor federations in 1920s Mexico City is remiss in the sense that it omits a significant historical subject in the period's labor movement: working-class femininity within unions. Working women actively participated and voted in many locals, especially red locals, and their presence should be noted.¹⁰⁷ To associate all instances of unionism or even unionized violence with masculinity would be to misinterpret the historical role gender played in the labor movement within the DF. Women sometimes participated in violence on behalf of collective union goals, including the 1916 General Strike and the 1922 rent strike.¹⁰⁸ In 1921, a cross-gender crowd of both male and female workers vociferously protested a contract made between the Mexico City textile factory, El Recuerdo, and scab workers. Both male and female unionized workers went on strike, forming a picket line. Female workers employed very aggressive language while on the picket line at El Recuerdo. These women workers, according to a newspaper report, told fellow workers that if fear kept these workers from marching in the picket line, then the women workers would burn the factory down.¹⁰⁹ Both male and female workers eventually began throwing rocks at the factory. Police, management representatives, and scabs then fought back, scattering the crowd that had formed. The newspaper reported that "the little women workers"

¹⁰⁷ María Teresa Fernández Aceves, "Once We Were Corn Grinders: Women and Labor in the Tortilla Industry of Guadalajara, 1920-1920," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 81-101; Susan M. Gauss, "Masculine Bonds and Modern Mothers: The Rationalization of Gender in the Textile Industry in Puebla, 1940-1952," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 63-80; Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance*.

¹⁰⁸ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 362.

¹⁰⁹ La Situación Obrera Continua muy Grave en la Región Norte del País," *Demócrata* 27 January 1921, v. 6, no 1425, p. 1, 10. "Huelgistas y Rompe-Huelgistas se Batieron a Pedradas," *Demócrata*, 6 January 1921, v. 6, no 1405, p. 1, 6; "Las Peticiones Formuladas por Los Obreros de 'El Recuerdo' y Los Tratamientos de Que Son Victimias," *Demócrata*, 7 January 1921, v. 6, no 1406, p. 5.

(using the diminutive term “obreritas”) protested the management-government crackdown vociferously but could not prevent the end of the picket line’s dissolution.¹¹⁰

Some officials and unionists perceived this active female participation in the union movement as the exception. The CROM’s own publications downplayed female unionism by representing men as unionists and workers and women as homemakers and fashion models in the pages of its publication, *The Revista CROM*.¹¹¹ When women exhibited a willingness to participate in unionism, many fellow unionists perceived them as being manly, instead of as embodying assertive femininity. During one meeting between Carranza and members of the 1916 general strike committee, Carranza accused the two female members of the committee for being mere dupes for the men (*mujeres complicadas*). One of the women unionists, Angela Inclán, responded, “No Señor, we *are* conscious of our acts.”¹¹² Nevertheless, as Susan Gauss notes, working-class femininity became “associated with home-based domesticity and the rationalization of women’s reproductive capacities.”¹¹³

Conclusion

Unions viewed proletarian masculinity as a tool and debates over proper masculinity as an arena in which to compete with rival unions, forge alliances with the state, and oppose the Church. During the 1920s, unions took advantage of a new pro-labor atmosphere by attempting to usurp patriarchal power previously held by employers.

¹¹⁰ La Situación Obrera Continua muy Grave en la Región Norte del País,” *Demócrata* 27 January 1921, v. 6, no 1425, p. 1, 10.

¹¹¹ Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 354.

¹¹² Porter, 108.

¹¹³ Gauss, 76.

While these efforts were sometimes successful, they sometimes resulted in employers and labor sharing patriarchal control over workers. For its part, the state strived to increase paternal power over workers through the auspices of the Labor Department and unions were more than willing to acquiesce to the Labor Department, seeing the agency as an ally. Nevertheless, unions did question other federal and state agencies' right to control workers. In internecine conflicts between red, yellow, and libre unions, all factions held up proletarian masculinity as a gender ideal and accused their rival unions of lacking proletarian masculinity. In debates between the Church and Labor, both sides referenced proletarian masculinity as the recognized, accepted form of gendered behavior. Even Morones represents the fluidity within concepts about masculinity and how different groups within the Mexican labor movement manipulated masculinity in diverse ways—he urged his members to adopt proper proletarian masculinity and accused church-affiliated men of lacking masculinity while his critics accused him of being an effeminate dandy.

Chapter 6, Workplace Masculinities

In December 1927, Román Sandoval was working as a machine operator at the El Angel textile factory. He applied for a promotion to work in a higher-paying job in the factory, but his foreman, José Coscio, denied the request. Upon learning he had been rejected, Sandoval confronted Coscio and cried out, “Hasn’t my work always been distinguished before?” The foreman replied, “Go to hell and don’t get all worked up.”¹ Sandoval became angered and his hand went to the penknife at his belt, though he drew the weapon he did not flip out the blade.² His co-workers surrounded the two men and encouraged Sandoval to curb his anger. Sandoval backed down and everyone went back to work.

However, the next time Sandoval reported to work, El Angel declared him an undisciplined employee and fired him. Sandoval then filed a grievance with the Federal Arbitration Board demanding he be reinstated to his job. During the board’s hearings, he emphasized he “had a wife and two daughters” to support and he stressed he had consistently demonstrated his competence as a machine operator.³ Two of Sandoval’s co-workers also testified at the hearing, stating Sandoval had kept the pen-knife at his side rather than thrusting it in front of himself. They added that, contrary to management’s claims, Sandoval had always been a well-disciplined and competent

¹ Letter from Román Sandoval to the JFCA, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 16, Expediente 927/379, 26 December 1927.

² Capitalino men commonly carried knives for self protection and as a badge of masculine honor. In 1910, a woman mocked called her husband unmanly (*poco hombre*) because he went about unarmed. Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 90.

³ The arbitration board was called the Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Board (Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje, JFCA). I briefly discuss the organization in more detail later. The incident took place December 10, 1927, and the JFCA conducted the hearings on 10 January 1928. JFCA hearing meeting minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 16, Expediente 927/379, 10 January 1929.

worker. A week following the hearing, Sandoval learned that his attempt at reinstatement had failed because the arbitration board had decided in management's favor. The Board determined that Sandoval did brandish a weapon when he had confronted Coscio and ruled that this act constituted a serious discipline problem. The state deemed El Angel's firing of Sandoval to be justified.

This account reveals that Sandoval represented himself as possessing particular masculine traits. He was a diligent, competent worker and a responsible family man and his co-workers had backed his claims. In contrast, management represented Sandoval as exhibiting aspects of improper masculinity—disrespect for authority and, worse, a penchant for violence. Throughout the city, employers and state agencies sought to impose discipline and inculcate new conduct in workers. El Angel participated in this phenomenon and perceived Sandoval as a challenge to its efforts at controlling workers. The account inspires this chapter's overarching question: "What were the dynamics of masculine practices in the workplace in 1920s Mexico City?"

I argue that the workplace was a crucial arena in which workers, employers, state officials, and the press contested what working-class masculinity meant. Existing studies of workplace masculinity have demonstrated the relationship between violence and masculinity in factory and shop settings.⁴ This chapter complements these studies but it also diverges from the historiography by analyzing less commonly studied trades that were associated with the street: tram drivers and taxi drivers. It also diverges from the

⁴ Rob Alegre, "Contesting the 'Mexican Miracle': Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico, 1943-1959," (PhD Diss, Rutgers New Brunswick, 2007); Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Gregory S. Crider, "Material Struggles: Workers' Strategies during the 'Institutionalization of the Revolution' in Atlixco, Puebla, Mexico, 1930-1942." PhD Diss, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1996.

historiography by examining masculinity among soldiers and police, two groups who were decidedly plebeian and whose masculinity was directly affected by the state's efforts to professionalize them.

During the colonial period and nineteenth century, workers' masculine subcultures had developed within small artisans' shops and informal workplaces. In colonial Mexico City, firm owners, who would have also been master artisans, sought to shape workers' masculine behaviors and small shop sizes made this task more feasible.⁵ In the mid 1920s, 84 percent of manufacturing was accomplished in small shops with ten or fewer employees and those smaller firms tended to pay lower wages than did the larger shops.⁶ It is highly probable that, in these small shops, owners continued to discipline workers. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, these subcultures also developed within formal factory settings and the rapidly expanding informal service sector.

Yet, by the 1920s many informal and factory workers were not artisans; many, but not all, worked in less-disciplined environments. Consequently, workers' masculine workplace performances consisted of an amalgam of old and new gender practices and beliefs. Mexican workers had long formed masculine workplace subcultures involving the use of violence against other workers or management, using tough and vulgar language, and expressing a profound sense of pride in one's masculine identity and in

⁵ Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 94.

⁶ Susana Sosenski, *Niños en acción: El trabajo infantil en la ciudad de México (1920-1934)* (México: El Colegio de México), 96; Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourse and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 32.

one's abilities as a worker.⁷ Also, men befriended each other in the workplace and after work extended those friendships into bars and street corners.

The masculine workplace subculture of the 1920s also experienced profound changes. During the late Porfirian, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary periods, new technologies including electricity and the automobile spawned entirely new job categories, including those of electricians, streetcar drivers, and taxi cab drivers. Many elites and officials sought to characterize these new trades as bastions of improper and dangerous masculinity. Also, officials increasingly sought to professionalize and reform police and soldiers, transforming them into more responsible state agents. In contrast, streetcar drivers and taxi cab drivers perceived the beliefs and practices of their masculine workplace subcultures to be legitimate.

This chapter explores shop-floor gendered relations. It examines what men thought of each other as co-workers, friends, enemies, and as men. This project is part of a broader labor and gender history historiography that seeks to break down the walls between workplace and home.⁸ Men and women rarely worked alongside each other in many workplaces during this decade. Yet, in some cases men and women did work alongside each other. As this chapter demonstrates, some male workers shaped their masculine identities through forming unequal workplace power relations with women workers—especially by disrespecting and mistreating women co-workers. Other male workers developed a sense of masculinity through forming friendships and romantic

⁷ William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

⁸ Alice Kessler-Harris, "A New Agenda for American Labor History: A Gendered Analysis and the Question of Class," in *Perspectives On American Labor History: The Problems of Synthesis*, eds. J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 226.

relationships with women in the workplace. The diversity of these mixed-sex workplace relationships reveals that workers did not always form masculinity in opposition to femininity.

This chapter also examines hierarchical power relations between workers and employers. Employers' and individual workers' views on employer paternalism was tied to their understandings of masculinity. Some workers considered employers as an "other," and they adopted an "us-against-them" mentality when dealing with company foremen, managers, and owners. This attitude was often explicitly class and gender based. Other workers adopted more paternalist relationships with management, viewing company owners as patrons to be respected and perceiving management as "father figures." These sorts of relationships often assumed patriarchal patterns and these company owners, in turn, often viewed themselves as caretakers who protected their workers.

Yet the "lateral" relationships workers formed with each other are just as historically significant as the "vertical" relationships workers formed with employers. Prior to the 1970s, labor historians in Latin America focused mostly on labor leaders' decisions and "top-down" actions.⁹ Since then, historians who examine the dynamics of the workplace in Latin America have chosen a more "bottom-up approach" by studying workers' lives. Nevertheless, historian Ann Farnsworth-Alvear cautions scholars to not study solely using "top-down" or "bottom-up" frameworks. She encourages labor historians to respect these approaches, but to also move beyond them to study "lateral"

⁹ Emilia Viotti de Costa, "Experience versus Structures: New Tendencies in the History of Labor and the Working Class in Latin America—What Do We Gain? What do We Lose?" *International Labor and Working Class History* 36 (Fall 1989): 4.

worker relations. She notes, “At issue is the concept of resistance. Does showing a workmate somehow transgress against the constraints of factory labor? Does flirting resist industrial discipline? These are ‘sideways’ questions. They cut against the grain of both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ perspectives on labor history.”¹⁰ Bottom-up approaches alone cannot provide sufficient analysis.

For the last two decades, many labor historians specializing in Latin American history have emphasized both “lateral” relations as well as hierarchical relations.¹¹ Still, scholarship on workplace masculinity is much more limited and those few works that do address the topic tend to emphasize hierarchical workplace relations.¹² This chapter seeks to correct this knowledge gap.

¹⁰ Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, “Talking, Fighting, Flirting: Workers’ Sociability in Medellín Textile Factories, 1935-1950,” in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box*, eds. John D. French and Daniel James (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 158.

¹¹ See, for example, Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

¹² Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein remark that in Latin American scholarship, “... very few scholars of masculinity have taken up the topic of work and the workplace.” Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 6. Macías-González and Rubenstein do note that Stephen Bachelor is a fine exception to this gap in the scholarship. See Steven J. Bachelor, “Toiling for the ‘New Invaders’: Autoworkers, Transnational Corporations, and Working-Class Culture in Mexico City, 1955-1968.” In *The Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001, 273-326. Other fine examples include Bill French, Michael Snodgrass, and Roberto Miranda Guerrero, see William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Roberto Miranda Guerrero, “La Vida de un Obrero y la Construcción de la Masculinidad (1890-1940),” in *Orden social e identidad de género, Mexico Siglos XIX y XX*, eds. María Teresa Fernández-Aceves, Carmen Ramos-Escandón, and Susie Porter (Guadalajara: CIESAS-Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006, 299-321.

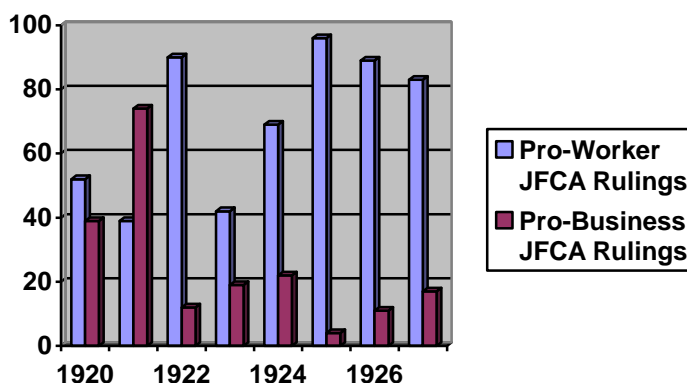
The Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Board's records represent a significant source.¹³ The board's mission was to reconcile, if not unite, workers and employers under the auspices of the state. One board official remarked he hoped the organization could serve as a forum through which workers and employers "can peacefully resolve conflicts in a manner which is acceptable to all parties."¹⁴ Regional arbitration boards operated throughout the country and generally consisted of three members: a worker representative, an employer representative (often someone from a key industry like textiles or oil or an associated manufacturers' organization member), and a government representative—always from the Labor Department.¹⁵ During a dispute, a worker or a management representative submitted a grievance. With the goal of resolving the grievance, the arbitration board then convened a hearing. The hearing allowed each party to air its perspective and the board then voted on a solution. Any party, if not pleased with the regional ruling, could escalate the dispute to a federal arbitration board judge. Also, during the 1920s, workers won a majority of rulings before the labor arbitration board, as indicated by the chart below.

¹³ For studies of how the board operated, regionally and legally, see, respectively, David Malpica Uribe, "Las Juntas de Conciliación y Arbitraje en Puebla, 1931-1940," in *Memorias del encuentro sobre historia del movimiento obrero, tomo II*, coord. Martín Pérez Zenteno (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 127-147; and William J. Suarez-Potts, "The Mexican Supreme Court and the Juntas de Conciliación y Arbitraje, 1917-1924: The Judicialisation of Labour Relations after the Revolution," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41:4 (2009): 723-755.

¹⁴ Draft of article to be published in *El Boletín DT*, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 501, Expediente 2, n.d. but probably 1922.

¹⁵ As per the introduction, *cromista* indicates a CROM-affiliated union. Juan Manuel Herrera Huerta y Victoria San Vicente Tello, Coordinadores, *Archivo General de la Nación, México, Guía General* (México, DF: Eduardo Molina y Albiñales, 1991), 308.

Figure 5, Pro Worker vs. Pro Business Arbitration Board Rulings, 1920-1927¹⁶



The remainder of Chapter 4 is organized in the following manner. I begin by examining masculinity within workplace subcultures. I then examine how particular masculine workplace subcultures developed among chauffeurs and chauffeur's assistants, streetcar drivers, and police and soldiers. Finally, I examine workplace interactions between men and women, ranging from romantic to vitriolic.

Workplace Subcultures

Within all-male workplaces, a masculine subculture existed, featuring aggressive language, violence, networks of friendship, and willingness to adopt numerous strategies to survive the crush of poverty. One element of plebeian culture was using language that the middle class considered improper. Workers developed their own workplace vocabulary of slang phrases and swear words. Changing the meaning of words and developing new words was not an unknown tactic adopted by workers. Elites long chastised the working class for using language perceived to be vulgar—one theater owner

¹⁶ Carr posits that the arbitration board's pro-business tilt during 1921 was a temporary exception to the norm. Barry Carr, *El movimiento obrero y la política en México, 1910-19129* (México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1987) 135; Marjorie Ruth Clark, *La organización obrera en México*. México: Ediciones Era, 1979), 92.

griped that a Diversions Department inspector had spoken to him, using “words more appropriate for a plebeian (*plebeyo*).”¹⁷ Also, officials complained that a group of taxi drivers used poor language and that a clique of porters possessed a “vocabulary of dirty words.”¹⁸ The Ayuntamiento (city hall) even proposed a rule prohibiting chauffeurs from swearing while on the job and recommending fining those who violated the rule.¹⁹

Some workers and officials drew distinctions between informal and formal labor, associating informal labor with inappropriate masculinity and formal factory labor with proletarian masculinity. In 1922, the Guadalupe textile factory suffered from a series of mysterious thefts. When someone began stealing pipes and cloth, workers conducted their own investigation. They caught two laborers, Antonio Hernández and Feliciano Alcántara, and turned them over to local authorities. *Demócrata* referred to the guilty workers as laborers (*albañiles*) and to the workers who caught them as workers (*obreros*).²⁰ To the newspaper, a worker represented honorable manhood whereas a laborer signified the opposite. A mother remarked that her son had behaved himself while he was a factory, but when he quit working and became a lottery ticket seller she characterized him as a petty criminal.²¹ And a social worker noted that another youth’s

¹⁷ Letter from Teatro Virginia Fabregas representative to Sr. D. Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, AHDF, DP, Vol. 811, Exp. 1607, 4 February 1922.

¹⁸ Social worker report by Hector Serna AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 3, Expediente 44, 12 December 1928 and social worker report by Margarita J. de Ramos Chávez, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 5, Expediente 37, 28 November 1929.

¹⁹ “Un Proyecto para Lobar La Moralización de Los Choferes,” *Demócrata*, 27 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1788, p. 9, 12; No author, “Las Placas de Honorabilidad de los Choferes,” *Demócrata*, 6 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1769, p. 8.

²⁰ “Robo Descubierto en Una Fábrica, por los Trabajadores,” *Demócrata*, 27 January 1922, v. 7, no. 1788, p. 12.

²¹ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 56, 15 May 1927.

life was more “ordered and his peers were better behaved when he worked in a factory,” as opposed to when he also stopped working in the factory also to sell lottery tickets on the street.²² One official noted, “...when they [youths] work in a shop, they are good and honorable, but when they stop working there and dedicate themselves to playing cards, selling gum, serving as newspaper vendors, they begin to steal and swear...”²³ Working in a factory represented a proletarian, responsible masculinity whereas laboring on the street embodied a vice-ridden masculinity.²⁴

Masculine workplace subcultures also featured strong networks between friends and willingness to adopt various survival strategies. Workers, especially those in the informal sector, often had numerous workplace contacts. They often held multiple jobs and abandoned and took up new ones with fluidity. Like many members of the working class, Daniel worked in many trades, including shoe shine, porter, gum vendor, and servant.²⁵ Capitalinos used the term used *una persona de mil usos* (a jack of all trades) to describe such workers. For instance, Cabino, while a *papelero* (newspaper vendor), also spent time with other men and older boys who worked as taxi drivers and taxi drivers’ assistants. He embroiled himself in a masculine automobile culture consisting of chauffeurs and chauffeur’s assistants as indicated by the fact that he stole a tire jack, was

²² Social worker report by Bertha Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 6, 25 May 1927.

²³ Sosenski, 91.

²⁴ Studying a period four decades later, Stephen Bachelor also found similar divides between informal sector labor and formal sector labor in his study of 1960s Mexican autoworkers. He comments, “In constructing this identity, autoworkers sharply distinguished themselves from those in la calle (on the streets), who worked in the informal sector and lacked training and technical skills. It mattered little, however, that many autoworkers themselves has once been en la calle and without a trade.” Bachelor, 292.

²⁵ Social worker report by J. Mangino AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 2, Exp 11, 26 April 1928.

turned in for the theft by a chauffeur, and also was indebted to a truck driver's assistant.²⁶ Family networks were also another facet of masculine workplace subcultures. A young man named Agustín followed in his brother's footsteps as a baker. It is possible that Agustín's brother helped him acquire that job as such practices were quite common among the working class throughout Mexico.²⁷

Sometimes workplace friendships crossed the divide between management and worker, and both groups formed strong ties with each other. A group of workers at a messenger company complained that one of their members, Cornelio H. Figueroa, was promoted solely due to "the rights of friendship" which he had cultivated with a foreman.²⁸ They also complained about a clique of workers that had "formed due to their friendships" and implied managers favored this clique in its day-to-day decisions.

Some workplace subcultures emphasized elements of proletarian masculinity, such as pride in one's work. At the La Pasamaneria Francesa textile factory, a group of five men and two women workers criticized another worker for perpetrating an act of larceny—an obrero named Moto had stolen some thread from the firm. Also, the workers expressed anger at Moto's forging of their names on a false petition proclaiming his innocence to the arbitration board. The workers each said they had thought of him as an "honorable worker" before the incident but not afterwards. Moto claimed the company had fired him because he was on a blacklist of labor organizers. (Some Mexico City employers commonly placed employees who sought to organize unions on blacklists—

²⁶ Social worker report by J.J. Lima AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 2, Exp 13, 13 January 1928.

²⁷ Alegre, 65.

²⁸ Thanks to Susie Porter for bringing this source to my attention. Letter from a José González Garza with the Alianza de Empleados de Express sent to the JFCA, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 2, Expediente 927/38, 6 October 1927.

lists of workers shared between employers who all agreed to not hire workers whose names were on the lists). All seven denied this claim and said that the company had fired him for theft. The arbitration board testimony reveals that workers as well as management frequently shared similar values: hard work, honor, and honesty.

The newspaper *Demócrata* described violence as being “constant” and the journal reported that, during 1922 alone, the city suffered 502 deaths due to instances where weapons were used.²⁹ Firearms caused 166 of these deaths, the remaining fatalities were the result of attacks using other weapons including knives. Piccato notes that while the Revolution caused plebeians to increasingly use guns, firearms were still expensive and less accessible than were knives.³⁰ The following table gives a sense of the scale of violence in the city.

Figure 6, Violent Crimes in the Federal District, 1917-1929³¹

Year	Battery		Homicide	
	Accused	Sentenced	Accused	Sentenced
1917	N/A	2,474	N/A	57
1918	N/A	2,851	N/A	101
1919	N/A	2,685	N/A	70
1920	N/A	2,363	N/A	55
1927	6,669	N/A	305	N/A
1928	10,801	N/A	492	N/A
1929	7,569	N/A	547	N/A

During the previous decade, large armed revolutionary contingents occupied, abandoned, and re-occupied the city (the police often wisely fled whenever a new revolutionary faction entered the city) and this legacy of armed men roaming the streets

²⁹ The Ayuntamiento was the source of this data, releasing it to the newspaper. “Más de Diecisiete Mil Personas Murieron en la Capital Durante el Año de 1922,” *Demócrata*, 12 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2784, p. 9.

³⁰ Piccato, 99, 213.

³¹ Note that statistics were unavailable for much of this period. Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 229.

survived into the 1920s. That most dance halls had a weapon-check policy illustrates that many working-class men walked the city streets armed.³²

This violence often spilled over into the workplace. Individual workers often tried to instigate fights with factory foremen or managers, but usually were not successful. Managers' and foremen's refusal to fight invalidated and challenged workers' belief that brawling bespoke of a valid popular-class cultural, class, and gender identity. Employers objected to workplace violence on the grounds that it interrupted a firm's efficiency by destroying workers' sense of camaraderie and by disrupting workers' ties with managers.

During the 1920s, popular-class men frequently fought each other in order to defend their masculine honor as individuals.³³ Plebeian honor prescribed a strict set of rules regarding fighting. One rule being that a fight should be conducted in a neutral space, preferably outside. Piccato comments, "Contenders interrupted disputes that started inside a cantina or *pulquería* and moved to the streets, where force could be openly used. 'Let's go outside' amounted to a formal invitation to fight."³⁴ Alegre comments on brawls between workers: "These fights offered another opportunity for men to flaunt their physiques, flashing aggressive poses that signaled a masculine persona...By challenging each other to fights on the street or by pushing each other to

³² See, Inspector de Diversiones report written by Bernardo, last name not legible, addressed to Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Jefe de la Sección de Diversiones, AHDF, DP, Vol. 812, Exp. 1694, 24 July 1922.

³³ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 88-97.

³⁴ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 88-89.

work efficiently on the job, men displayed their assertiveness and combative character...”³⁵

Sometimes sources represented violence as masculine, even when women perpetrated it. Felipa Valdés and Vicente Hernández (whose relationship to each other was not specified) started an argument while on the street. Vicente slapped Felipa, an act that, according to the *Universal* reporter, “made her so angry that Felipa acted as if she were of the hairy chest gender (*hembra de pelo en pecho*).”³⁶ She whipped out her knife, thrust it into Vicente’s stomach and killed him. The newspaper represented a woman’s countering violence with violence as being a masculine, and not a feminine, response.

An incident at the Santa Teresa factory illustrates such an instance of workplace violence. In 1922, a Labor Department inspector reported that rumors had reached him of an altercation in the Santa Teresa textile factory so he rented a horse, and raced to the factory to investigate. Upon arriving, he found the workers congregated at the factory’s gate.³⁷ When they refused to give him any details he entered the shop. The factory administrator, Señor Leautaud, told the inspector that he had chanced upon a weaver, a Señor Chávez, in a part of the factory far removed from the weaver’s workstation. When the administrator ordered Chávez to return to his workstation, the weaver refused. Leautaud responded with an ultimatum: return to your workstation or be fired. Since Chávez again refused, the administrator took Chávez by the arm and dragged him to the

³⁵ Alegre investigated the culture of railroad workers in Mexico during the middle of the century, although, in this context, he was analyzing cantina fights rather than workplace bouts of fisticuffs. Alegre, 67.

³⁶ “Una Hembra de Pelo en Pecho,” *Demócrata*, 13 January 1920, v. 6, no 1057, p. 6.

³⁷ Labor Inspector report [name not legible], sent to DT jefe Francisco Sanchez de Tagle, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 222, Expediente 4, 19 January 1920.

factory entrance. Before crossing the threshold, Chávez drew a knife and stabbed at Leautaud, who avoided the blow, striking back at his attacker. It is not clear what happened at that point, but fellow workers and management representatives probably intervened to prevent either party from being injured. The altercation ended with Chávez outside the factory shouting insults at Leautaud and taunting the foreman to come fight him. Local authorities arrested and imprisoned Chávez for pulling a knife. Later, workers were more willing to talk to the Labor Department inspector. They remarked that while they did not like Chávez, they were not fond of Leautaud either. Thus, Chávez, in inviting his foreman to step outside, was enforcing a strict masculine plebeian code about fighting. The sources do not report what happened to Chávez, but after three days of striking in protest of his unjust firing, the workers ended the strike and returned to work.

Workers developed masculine workplace subcultures consisting of language, networks of friends, a sense of honor, and use of violence. By enacting a masculine performance a worker could adopt a masculine group identity such as that of a baker or a chofer. While employers and officials often decried such violence, workers often saw its use as a legitimate tool in maintaining one's masculinity.

Chauffeurs and Chauffeur's Assistants

Mexicans had a long history of associating certain types like the vagrant and the thief with over-sexed and irresponsible violent masculinity, but elite complaints about chauffeurs were new, brought about by the rise in the number of automobiles and the concomitant increase in accidents and in the nation's capital. Between 1924 and 1930, the number of automobiles registered in Mexico increased by 93 percent from 32,537 to

63,073.³⁸ During the 1920s, newspapers frequently bemoaned the rise in fatal traffic accidents brought about by reckless automobile drivers. Mexican's concerns about auto culture also fused with fear of crime. In 1915 a notorious crime gang used military uniforms, authentic search warrants, and a gray Fiat to rob wealthy families' homes. Authorities eventually arrested the gang and, four years later, they became infamous figures when a number of Mexican feature films came out about the crime gang, one of which, the Grey Automobile (*El automóvil gris*), beat all existing box office records.³⁹ A 1923 *Demócrata* article snidely remarked that deaths due to auto accidents rose dramatically in the DF the previous year "thanks to truck drivers' brutality."⁴⁰

Taxi cabs and trams greatly expanded plebian mobility; *Demócrata* proclaimed that the new technology greatly benefitted the popular classes:

No more must the lowly peon or mechanic and his wife watch from the sidewalk the supercilious auto rider, leaning back against the soft cushions. The seats of the jitney may not be so soft and luxurious, but the vehicle runs side by side with those of the aristocracy, and 'gets there just the same,' to the huge manifest content of the occupants, who for a few centavos now find themselves enjoying a luxury once supposed to belong peculiarly to the wealthy.⁴¹

Yet, technology also brought social tensions. Chauffeurs and chauffeurs' assistants (*choferes* and *ayudantes de chofer*) and their work served as a crucible through which

³⁸ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 100-101.

³⁹ Charles Ramírez Berg, "El Automóvil gris and the Advent of Mexican Classicism," in *Visible Nations: Latin American Cinema and Video*, ed. Chon A. Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3, 6.

⁴⁰ Although the newspaper's characterization of auto deaths was more hyperbole the truth because, according to the Ayuntamiento, the total number of deaths due to auto accidents in 1922 was 205 which was a 4 percent decrease from the 1921 total of 194 deaths. "Más de Diecisiete Mil Personas Murieron en la Capital Durante el Año de 1922," *Demócrata*, 12 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2784, p. 9.

⁴¹ A jitney was a taxi owned and operated by an independent chofer. *The Mexican Review*, 2:12-13 (September-October 1918), 18, quoted in, John Brian Freeman, "Transnational Mechanics: Automobility in Mexico, 1895-1950," PhD Diss, City University of New York, 2012, 69-70.

capitalinos contested the meaning of masculinity. Choferes formed a plebeian masculine subculture in which they embraced the new technology of the automobile by playing together, working together, and sometimes committing crimes together. A chauffeur was an individual who drove for a living, either as a licensed taxi driver or in the employ of a wealthy individual. Many Mexican officials and journalists sought to portray choferes as embodying dangerous or improper masculine traits.

In private, some perceived choferes as a threat to young women's sexuality as indicated by a *corrido* (song) describing a young male driver as a seducer. Part of the corrido lyrics noted that the chofer frequently went to parties and described him as being: "Sweet on all the girls. Attending the gathering, kindly offering to take them for a spin. Yes, there was one girl who took up his invitation. Later he took her with satisfaction."⁴² The corrido implied automobiles gave young Mexicans a space in which to be sexually active and some capitalinos linked this new technology of automobiles with fears of increasing adolescent sexuality.

Journalists and government officials associated drivers with a host of social ills and a range of improper masculine performances. Choferes had a reputation for engaging prostitutes and for corrupting youths.⁴³ Social worker Fernandina Poulat described an ayudante de chofer, "He has had many friends among chauffeurs and, generally, they are without scruples and they frequent bad places."⁴⁴ One man proclaimed that taxi drivers

⁴² Katherine E. Bliss, and Ann S. Blum, "Dangerous Driving: Adolescence, Sex, and the Gendered Experience of Public Space in Early-Twentieth-Century Mexico City," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, eds. William E. French and Katherine E. Bliss (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 164.

⁴³ Sosenski, *Niños en acción*, 177.

⁴⁴ Social worker report by Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 42, 14 November 1927.

hung out in brothels in the red-light district or *zonas de tolerancia*.⁴⁵ Also, a writer in *Demócrata* commented: “We constantly report on automobile accidents and in every case the only ones responsible for the accidents are the choferes...these individuals tend to convert the streets into race tracks.”⁴⁶ Chauffeurs’ masculine subculture included petty theft and lingering on particular street corners (one report indicated that the corner of Mesones and Bolívar was a common spot).⁴⁷ Taxi drivers brandished weapons in street fights and shootouts and acquired a reputation for seducing young women.⁴⁸

Some accounts accused choferes of assaulting or attempting to rape women. A 1921 *Demócrata* article reported that a young taxi driver had driven his fare to a dark, secluded area near Chapultepec Park, climbed into the back of his Ford taxi, and attempted to strangle the young woman. She fought back but then fainted, and the chauffeur thought he had killed her. He drove back to the city, dumping the body in a street. The newspaper then made some telling generalizations about choferes:

We all know chauffeurs, well hopefully not everyone has had a personal experience with them, to be depraved people. They are individuals without a

⁴⁵ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 4, Expediente 21, 6 October 1928. For a discussion of city call’s battle with working-class neighborhood organizations to establish *zonas de tolerancia*, see Katherine E. Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 153-162, 201.

⁴⁶ “Atropellado por Un Automovil” and “Un Barrendero Atropellado,” *Demócrata*, 14 January 1920, v. 6, no 1058, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Report by social worker Navarro, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 1, Expediente 8, 25 May 1927; Social worker report by Hector Bravo, AGN, CTMI, 203, Caja 1, Exp 72, 12 April 1928.

⁴⁸ “Tragico Fin de Una Vida de Hampa y Orgia,” *El Demócrata*, 2 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 1, 10; “El Comisario de la Tercera Está Complicado en los Suces del Salón Allende,” *El Demócrata*, 3 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1047, p. 2; report written by DP inspector Eduardo Abad addressed to Sr. Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Jefe de Inspectores de Diversiones, AHDF, DP, Vol. 808, Exp. 1383, 30 May 1921; social worker report by C.J. Posadas AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 51, 24 December 1927, and social worker report by R. Amezcua, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 73, 20 March 1928.

single humanitarian sentiment, as people who enjoy speeding behind the wheel, who hit many people on a regular basis. We know this because the police often identify chauffeurs as the perpetrators and as thieves and bandits because of atavism. Many choferes have mixed with their more honorable fellows so as to better carry out their deeds with less risk and more security. However, we are not familiar with choferes who become enamored with their passengers and, instead of taking their fares to the intended destination, instead, take them by force to the Temple of Love.⁴⁹

The article presented some capitalinos' general fear of choferes and infused that fear with the threat of rape. *Demócrata* also underscored the fact that choferes formed their own mutual support group of sorts. This was not an act committed by just one lone chofer, but by a young chauffeur and his younger assistant, who the newspaper described as a "youth with an evil and perverse face." Not only did working-class chauffeurs enact violence on elite young women (the woman had hailed the cab in the wealthy Colonia Roma district), but they corrupted minors as well. The sources also reflected broader upper-class fears, not just of workers, but of the dangers of automobiles as a new form of technology.

Choferes' unions and mutual aid organizations endeavored to combat these claims. In 1923, the Union of Chauffeurs of the Mexican Republic issued a handbill challenging the claims that taxi drivers and chauffeurs were immoral. The handbill insisted, "When they disrespect choferes doesn't it make your blood boil? It's our job to be moral, not just for ourselves, but also for our families, today people think being a chofer is a shameful thing. We need to use our voice so that society understands their

⁴⁹ "Por Salvar su Honra Estuvo a Punto de Ser Estrangulada," *Demócrata* 28 January 1921, v. 6, no 1426, p. 1, 10. A similar story about a taxi chauffeur who also drove a Ford who took a young, innocent woman (*de tipo agradable y cara bonita*) on a trip not in the intended direction was printed in the January 5, 1922, edition of the newspaper, pages 1, 5; 5 January 1922; v. 7; no. 1768. Fortunately, when this young woman screamed for help, her *chofer* assailant fled.

judgments about choferes are wrong.”⁵⁰ The handbill used masculinity, the masculine obligation to provide for one’s family, to combat negative stereotypes. By asking whether these stereotypes angered choferes, the handbill also referenced emotion, another supposed hallmark of Mexican masculinity.

The practice of hiring a member of the working class to drive an automobile, either as a taxi driver or as a chauffeur, was a fairly new phenomenon in 1920s Mexico City. Consequently, newspapers, corridos, officials, and choferes contested what chofer masculinity meant. Some associated choferes with improper practices such as seducing women, perpetrating crime, and recklessly mowing down passersby. Choferes themselves embraced a proletarian masculinity based on honor and providing for one’s family. These tensions reflect both the class tensions of post-revolutionary Mexico and the fact that technology itself was changing how the popular classes moved about the city and how workers behaved.

Tram Drivers

Trams and tram drivers embodied elites’ fascination with modern technology and disdain for the popular classes’ masculine performances. Throughout Latin America, private firms installed tram networks in major cities including Mexico City, Montevideo, Uruguay, and Buenos Aires. While many viewed this technology as the epitome of modern progress, some Latin Americans also voiced concern over tramcar drivers’ dangerous, aggressive driving.⁵¹ Piccato notes that in Mexico City “the penny press

⁵⁰ Handbill from la Gran Unión de Choferes de la República Mexicana, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3938, Exp. 689, n.d. but probably 1923.

⁵¹ Mexicans today still accuse bus drivers of reckless driving. Uruguayans levied similar accusations against streetcar drivers, see Anton Rosenthal, “The Arrival of the Electric Streetcar and the Conflict over Progress in Early Twentieth-Century Montevideo,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27:2 (1995): 321, 331.

called tramway drivers *mataristas* (from the verb *matar*—to kill), instead of *motoristas*.”

⁵² Even though company policy forbade it, tram drivers often carried weapons because criminals often preyed upon them. Some sympathized with streetcar drivers. An article in *Demócrata* urged the tram company to lift its weapon ban, arguing the ban was unrealistic. Many drivers already flouted company policy and wore pistols while behind the wheel.⁵³

Armed tram drivers are at the center of an account between two tramcar drivers, Eulogio Rivas and Angel Camacho. The account sheds light on the relationship between popular-class masculinity, violence, and workers’ membership in multiple workplace subcultures. Rivas and Camacho had what one witness described as “a long-standing feud.”⁵⁴ Their mutual animosity peaked one day when Rivas’ shift had ended and Camacho relieved Rivas as driver on the line heading to the southern suburb of Coyoacán. At this point, accounts vary.

According to Camacho, at one of the stops, Rivas suddenly entered the tram and began berating him and “threatening him with the pistol that Rivas claimed he carried on him.”⁵⁵ In contrast, according to Rivas, Camacho had replaced him on his shift and as Rivas was leaving the train to go home, Camacho suddenly began cursing, yelling “obscenities, calling him a son of a bitch and telling him to go screw his mother.” Rivas

⁵² Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 24-25.

⁵³ “Deben Armarse Los Conductores de Tranvías,” “*Demócrata*, 16 January 1920, v. 6, no 1060, p. 2.

⁵⁴ JFCA hearing meeting minutes, testimony by Carlos Díaz, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 36, Expediente 928/511, 7 June 1928.

⁵⁵ Testimony by Angel Camacho, JFCA, 211, Caja 36, Expediente 928/511, 7 June 1928.

remained on the tram and responded to these insults by reminding Camacho that he, Rivas, was a reserve officer with the Coyoacán police force. Camacho said he could care less and that the police were all “sons of mothers who were whores and bandits.”⁵⁶

Both stayed on the tram until it reached Coyoacán, at which point Rivas hailed a fellow officer, asked him to detain Camacho, and then drove the tram back to the Mexico City depot.⁵⁷ The arresting officer reported that, as Rivas drove away, Camacho was directing “obscene words towards Rivas.” The Coyoacán police held Camacho for two hours and then released him. Rivas admitted to carrying a sidearm, but not to threatening Camacho with the weapon, and he remarked that he did not usually carry a sidearm while driving a tram. The tram company, La Compañía de Tranvías de México, fired Rivas for abusing Camacho, for possessing a firearm on duty, and for having a tram driver arrested and thus unable to drive one of their cars.⁵⁸ Five co-workers were called to testify, and they all supported Camacho’s assertion that Rivas “had it out for him” and that Rivas often came to work armed. In the end, the arbitration board ruled the company’s firing of Rivas was just. The institution sided with the firm in its efforts to discipline a worker for performing a classic facet of working-class masculinity: bearing a weapon.⁵⁹

The questions in the Rivas-Camacho case hinge on issues of honor, violence, language, and manhood. Each tried to represent himself as a responsible, proletarian

⁵⁶ “...eran unos hijos de su chingada madre puta de bandidos,” testimony by Eulogio Rivas, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 36, Expediente 928/511, 14 April 1928.

⁵⁷ Testimony by Tomás Hernández, the arresting officer, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 36, Expediente 928/511, 7 June 1928.

⁵⁸ The Compañía de Tranvías de México had a monopoly on Mexico City’s tram lines. In 1920, the firm owned all 345 kilometers of the city’s tram tracks. Picatto, 24.

⁵⁹ JFCA ruling, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 36, Expediente 928/511, 2 August 1928.

worker set upon by a violent, angry plebeian. Rivas may or may not have used his sidearm to intimidate Camacho, but both men clearly used aggressive language—Camacho, at one point, insulted both Rivas' mother and the Coyoacán police force. Each party depicted himself as possessing a particular type of manliness, trying to denigrate the other party by representing that person as possessing another type of masculinity. Camacho tried to characterize Rivas as a member of the police, a group which many capitalinos associated with dangerous and improper behavior. Rivas felt the need to remain on the tram, despite the fact that his shift had ended, so that he could protect his integrity by arguing with Camacho and, eventually, arranging for a fellow officer to arrest Camacho. In a sense, Rivas embodied a worker who embraced a hegemonic masculine ideal of non-violence and discipline.

Tram worker Procopio Castañeda also entered into an argument, in this instance not with a co-worker but with his supervisor, J. Moreno, insisting his boss step outside with him so they could fight. The tram company fired the driver for insulting a superior. In a rare glimpse of a worker's own perspective, Castañeda wrote a letter to the arbitration board, requesting that he be reinstated:

For the past 11 years, my bosses found my services absolutely satisfactory and my service record was completely clean. However, at the beginning of 1924, after 12 years of giving my labor I got a new boss in the dispatch office, a Señor J. Moreno. This man, due to the various friendships he had developed with upper-management figures, committed a number of arbitrary acts with his subalterns (*subalternos*) that we did not like. For instance, he would ask his workers for loans which he would take out of our paycheck, and since I did not want to comply, I refused to loan him money. Mr. President, you know that we workers live from day to day on our wages and it pains us greatly to lose even one cent from our wages. Anger over his demands caused me to reach my limit and, on one occasion, he offended me so much that only a man without any conscience would not have gotten mad. He remained silent as I directed insults at him. This

was the opportunity he had been waiting for. He immediately went to upper management and told them so many lies that they fired me.⁶⁰

The tram driver finished by arguing that this was an unjust separation and requested reinstatement. Yet, Moreno reported events differently. He claimed that Castañeda had refused to accept an order to drive the Atzacapotzalco tram line and instead had screamed “hateful and bitter words at me, calling me a son of a bitch (*tisnada*)” and “he challenged me to step outside so we could fix things.”⁶¹ Castañeda perceived himself as operating on behalf of all the tram drivers. They were all fed up with their boss’ corruption, he simply saw himself as embodying a proletarian sense of masculinity that involved individual violence on behalf of collective proletarian honor.

Unlike with choferes, the sources did not associate tram drivers with criminality or with immorality. However, tram drivers did evince elites and officials’ fears of new technology. Many criticized tram drivers as dangerous threats to capitalinos due to unsafe driving. Also, violence served as a tool for men in the popular classes to protect individual honor, in the case of Rivas and Camacho, as well as to aid one’s co-workers, as in the case of Castañeda.

Soldiers and Police

Soldiers and police represent another arena for clashing versions of masculinity.

During the 1920s, the Obregón and especially the Calles administrations implemented reforms designed to decrease the military’s power while simultaneously professionalizing

⁶⁰ As discussed in the introduction, government, newspaper, and even union records generally obscure workers’ own voices and, at best, paraphrase them. Letter written by Procopio Castañeda addressed to the arbitration board, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 55, Expediente 927/967, 31 August 1924.

⁶¹ Company memo, written by Dispatcher Number 835 to the Jefe de Estación Trafico, Sr. Amado Macías G., AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 55, Expediente 927/967, 29 January 1924.

the institution. Tom Rath has characterized these reforms as “an ambitious series of administrative and organizational reforms including the drafting of new regulations on discipline and pensions, the reopening of the Military College, the creation of the Superior War College and Service of Intendancy, and the slimming of the army from 80,000 men to about 60,000.”⁶² Many Mexicans associated soldiers with improper or dangerous masculinity and viewed barracks as centers of vice. Capitalinos even coined the term *carrancear* (to steal) after Carranza’s forces invaded and pillaged the city.⁶³ These reforms sought to alter Mexican soldier’s masculinity. Accounts abound of soldiers displaying aggressive and criminal masculine behavior.⁶⁴ Some soldiers, especially officers, had a reputation for being corrupt.⁶⁵ Ironically, despite these negative views of soldiers, they were the men invested with the task of honorably defending the city against rebels and criminals. These were men who the state entrusted with enforcing Revolution’s laws, quelling revolts, and stopping banditry.

Both during and after the Revolution, the number of armed and violent men on the city’s streets rose dramatically and, as a result, Mexicans associated soldiers with

⁶² Thomas Rath, “Army, State, and Nation in Postrevolutionary Mexico,” PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2009, 17. Note that Rath also has a forthcoming book, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960* (forthcoming, University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁶³ Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 411.

⁶⁴ For example, two officers engaged in a drunken shootout (prompting criticism of the prevalence of firearms in the city), a lieutenant lived with a fourteen-year-old prostitute for a few days, taking advantage of her, and then left after paying only ten pesos, and a group of sergeants and privates gang raped a young woman while officers nearby ignored her screams. “¿Vuelve La Capital a Esta Bajo el Imperio del Revolver?” *Demócrata*, 4 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2776, p. 1, 8; social worker report by Margarita, last name not legible, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 32, 7 May 1928; and “Una Muchacha y Un Delito Cometido Por Quince Soldados,” *El Liberal*, 17 March 1920, año 1, tomo 1, no. 5, p. 1, 2.

⁶⁵ Rath, 89.

excessively violent behavior on a scale unknown before the War. In 1914, citizen Abraham Chávez wrote a letter to city hall in which he complained that soldiers were flooding the capital's streets. He associated soldiers with inebriation, crime, and disorderly conduct and thus with dangerous masculine behavior.⁶⁶ Chávez complained "The military bodies in the DF are losing their military discipline." Soldiers had a reputation for spending time with prostitutes and strippers.⁶⁷ Soldiers raped women at gunpoint, formed criminal networks with pimps and prostitutes, and they harassed and pistol-whipped transients on the city's streets.⁶⁸ In one case, a soldier even instigated a riot. A soldier named Paulino Morales responded to being pelted by fruit by pulling out his pistol and shooting the offending fruit vendor in cold blood. A mob gathered and began to pelt Paulino with stones; they were on the verge of lynching the soldier when police intervened.⁶⁹ Soldiers drank, fought, and instigated gun battles on the city's streets. In a telling show of masculine bravado, one soldier prefaced a street fight by provoking another soldier, "I am braver and more of a man than you and I'm going to show you."⁷⁰

Such behaviors were neither new to Mexico City nor unique to Mexico.

Nevertheless, by the late 1910s and the early 1920s, many capitalinos had become sick of the constant revolutionary violence and the presence of large numbers of soldiers in the

⁶⁶ Letter from citizen Abraham Chávez to the DF Ayuntamiento, AHDF, DP, Vol. 807, Exp. 1348, 11 December 1914.

⁶⁷ Carlos Monsiváis, *Escenas de pudor y liviandad* (México: Grijalbo, 1988), 193.

⁶⁸ Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 45.

⁶⁹ "Un Subteniente Estuvo a Punto de Ser Linchado," *El Universal*, 4 March 1924, año 9, no. 2,690, no. 5, Section 2, p. 6.

⁷⁰ "Risa Entre Militares," *Demócrata*, 19 January 1920, v. 6, no 1063, p. 8.

city streets. One newspaper writer called Mexican armed groups “parasites” and remarked that those who used “machine guns, cannons, and rifles” caused the nation’s precious resources “to turn to smoke.”⁷¹

The state’s attempts at reforming and professionalizing the military were also attempts to imbue military men with appropriate masculinity. Many capitalinos conceived of the city’s army barracks as centers of vice and Army reformers began banning families and prostitutes from barracks and began inculcating, as Rath notes, “new masculine habits of sobriety, self-discipline, cleanliness, and physical fitness.”⁷² For example, the government developed a series of morality and hygiene classes for soldiers to “combat their customary vices.”⁷³ The press also contributed to these efforts. In articles about the new or newly-opened military colleges, one journalist commented the ideal officer “was a wise man, saying much, but speaking little” and another remarked that the ideal officer excelled at both athletics and academics.⁷⁴

During the 1920 presidential campaign, *El Liberal* opposed the presidential candidacy of General Álvaro Obregón. The newspaper declared all soldiers to be

⁷¹ El Lic. Eduardo Pallares, “Desconfiad de Los Hombres que Andan Demasiado Aprisado,” *El Universal*, 6 March 1924, año 9, no 2,692, p. 3.

⁷² Rath, 18. Peter Beattie demonstrates that 1910s Brazilian reformers implemented similar barracks reforms. Beattie relies heavily on Roberto DaMatta’s argument that elite nineteenth-century Brazilians associated honor and order with the house and they associated danger, poor hygiene, and lumpen with the street. To establish a draft in 1916 Brazilian military reformers had to clean up the image of the barracks to “move the barracks, figuratively and literally, out of the dangerous world of the street.” Peter Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 12. Roberto Da Matta, *A casa e a rua: espaço, cidadania, mulher, y norte no Brasil* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985), 35-42.

⁷³ “Se Combatirán Los Vicios Entre Los Individuos de Tropa,” *El Demócrata*, 12 January 1920 vol. 6, no. 1057, p. 9.

⁷⁴ “Moral Militar,” *Demócrata*, 23 January 1920, v. 6, no 1067, p. 6; “Fibra, Ritmo, y Color en el Colegio Militar,” *Jueves de Excelsior* 14 August 1924, v. no. 114, p. 7.

“melancholy,” “emotional,” and “violent” and announced it opposed the general.⁷⁵ The newspaper depicted soldierly masculinity as a twisted, warped, and damaging force. *El Liberal*'s references to emotion played off of a dominant paradigm of ideal soldierly masculinity: cool rationalism. By emphasizing that Obregón suffered from emotional extremes, *El Liberal* emphasized he possessed indecorous masculine traits. The newspaper urged citizens to vote for its preferred candidate, Don Ignacio Bonillas, a civilian, suggesting he was more capable of carrying out the duties of the President in a responsible, non-melancholy manner. Thus, *El Liberal* sought to convince readers that it was best to cast aside the past decade's legacy of militarism, a common trope among Latin American liberals during this period, and to rebuild Mexico by endorsing a type of civilian masculinity characterized by professionalism, civility, peacefulness, and reason.

Despite these common negative connotations of soldiers' manhood, Mexican politicians and newspapers heaped accolades upon soldiers for being revolutionary heroes and for being self-sacrificing possessors of proletarian manhood. A newspaper ad celebrating the New Year proclaimed “In the spirit of the New Year, *Demócrata* hopes for prosperity for the glorious and self-sacrificing (abnegado) Army of the Republic.”⁷⁶ This ad applied the abnegado archetype to the Mexican army and infused it with national pride. Other manifestations of proletarian masculinity were more complex, as was the case with a fictional soldier, Pedro, in a newspaper's short story entitled “The Deserter.” In the account, Pedro is stationed at a Mexican Army barracks in a remote combat zone following the Revolution. Banditry and revolts were common during the early 1920s,

⁷⁵ “Un Rasgo Psicológico del Militarismo,” *El Liberal*, año 1, tomo , no. 5, p. 2, 17 March 1920.

⁷⁶ “1920,” *El Demócrata*, 2 January 1920, vol. 6, no. 1046, p. 2.

forcing the army to remain on a war footing throughout much of the decade. He learns that his wife and children are starving without his presence so he deserts in order to help support them. The story ends with the Army capturing Pedro and executing him as a deserter. While this short story represented him as a nurturer who placed duty to family above duty to country, the story also questions the legitimacy of his decision. One of Pedro's barracks mates tries to discourage him from deserting by saying, "Besides, is this how you fulfill your word?"⁷⁷ This line refers to a soldier's oath to defend his nation and reveals the complicated decision with which the fictional Pedro and many actual soldiers were faced.

During the 1920s, many capitalinos also associated police with improper masculine behavior. Gendarmes frequently drank while on duty, harassed the public, and even fought each other. A newspaper ran a story with the headline "Another Gendarme Commits a Crime," indicating that the press perceived such practices to be commonplace.⁷⁸ One drunken gendarme brawled with other police and soldiers who sought to restrain him—even to the point of trying to draw his pistol on fellow gendarmes and soldiers.⁷⁹ As noted in Chapter 1, one playwright even used the term "pelado" when describing a police officer in a play.⁸⁰

As with soldiers, capitalinos often associated the police with improper masculine behaviors. This was not a new phenomenon. During the Porfirian era, Mexico City

⁷⁷ Salvador F. Resendi, "El Desertor," *Demócrata*, 17 January 1920, v. 6, no 1061, p. 6.

⁷⁸ "Otro Gendarme que Perpetra un Crimen." *Las Noticias*, 2 January 1922, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Report written by Oficial Mayor de la Secretaria General, addressed to the Municipal President, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3942, Exp. 1198, 23 October 1923.

⁸⁰ Leandro Joseph, "Los Gendarmes y El Teatro Bufo," *La Revista de Policía*, Año 1, Tomo 1, no. 4, p. 6, 30 December 1925.

attempted various reforms aimed at professionalizing the city's police force by raising wages, increasing training, and adopting modern police practices.⁸¹ The city badly needed these reforms because many capitalinos perceived their police to be corrupt, underpaid, and ineffective.⁸² One of the reforms even mandated that officials use the “modern” French word for police, *gendarmes*, but many kept using the terms *guard*, *police*, and *technician* (*guardia*, *policía*, and *técnico*).

Post-revolutionary officials also sought to implement similar police reforms. In 1922, the DF's Governor Gasca admitted the city's police force suffered from discipline problems and he announced plans to end inspectors' “lazy” investigations. Henceforth, all police investigators would use modern policing practices. However, the governor also explicitly stated he did not want to “militarize” the police force.⁸³ It is not clear why Gasca would add this caveat. Perhaps he did not want to defame the police force with the same negative stigma that surrounded soldiers. In contrast to Governor Gasca, that same year President Obregón considered militarizing the police. Picatto posits that Obregón's reforms for the police, which were never implemented, would have encouraged the police to use “decorations, uniforms, and guns similar to those used by the army.”⁸⁴ Regardless of these reform attempts, judging from how some capitalinos lambasted the police in the 1920s, these reforms largely failed.

⁸¹ For an discussion of these Porfirian-era reform attempts, see Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 41-42, and 163-188.

⁸² Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 42.

⁸³ “La Policía Va a Mejorar de Modo Notable,” *El Excelsior* Año V, Tomo VI, no. 1,754, 4 January 1922, Section 1, p. 1, 5.

⁸⁴ Piccato, *City of Suspects*, 185.

A 1928 account shows a not uncommon view of gendarme masculine behavior. One evening, a gendarme arrested a woman named Josefina, charged her with prostitution, and transported her to the police station. Josefina's amasiato partner came to the police station and, according to the investigating social worker's report, "accused the police officer of trying to take advantage of the minor [Josefina was seventeen]. He said the gendarme's words were all lies and this is not the first time he had abused his post. Many people in the Colonia Obrera complain about his behavior."⁸⁵ In a similar instance, a police officer arrested two young women for prostitution. The women responded by saying that the real reason for the arrest was not that they were prostitutes—they denied the *técnico's* claim to this effect and said they were merely walking home after going to the movies. The women said the *gendarme* had arrested them because they rejected his sexual advances.⁸⁶ Police and soldiers often fought each other on the city's streets. A *Demócrata* writer commented, "For some unknown reason, it is very common for fights to break out between soldiers and police and these quickly degenerate into street battles that take place at all hours."⁸⁷ These events merged soldier and police masculinity into violent dramatic events that could interrupt the city at any moment.

Soldiers and police represented a paradox of post-revolutionary masculinity. Journalists and state officials commonly accused soldiers and police of perpetrating masculine practices deemed inappropriate by the upper classes, yet these revolutionary

⁸⁵ Social worker report by Enrique Catalán, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 36, 11 June 1928.

⁸⁶ Social worker report [name not legible], AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 37, 22 May 1928.

⁸⁷ "Soldados Ebrios Se Dedicaron a Cazar a Cuanto Gendarme Se Acercaba a Ellos," *Demócrata*, 1 January 1923, v. 8, no. 2773, p. 1, 4.

soldiers and police also, paradoxically, were also praised for embodying revolutionary nationalism, abnegado masculinity, and heroic revolutionary masculinity.

Women and Men in the Workplace

Men and women in mixed-sex workplaces sometimes formed friendships and some romantic relationships.⁸⁸ It was not easy for workers in the 1920s to form romantic and sexual relationships at work. Many workplaces were same-sex although even in workplaces which were mixed-sex overall, employers often segregated male and female workers in separate parts of the workplace.⁸⁹ Employers often fired men and women whom they caught hobnobbing together. For instance, one employer fired a worker, stating “male workers (*obreros*) should not have intimate friendly relations with female workers (*trabajadoras*) because they are in different departments.”⁹⁰ The employer also hinted that the worker had not respected women.⁹¹ If men and women did come in contact with each other, they were often monitored. This monitoring was done by a foreman or forewoman whose job was to observe and oversee workers’ moral behavior as much as it was to supervise workers’ performance. Yet workers could still meet, especially in hallways and outside of work. Also, some jobs, including those of cleaners and mechanics, allowed men and women access to all spaces despite factory owners’ attempts to create gendered divisions of space. Lovers would meet in the hallway of their

⁸⁸ Susie Porter’s *Working Women in Mexico City* is a superb analysis of women’s interactions with men in the workplace during this period. She argues used femininity, specifically men’s social constructions of working-class femininity, as subtle weapons. She demonstrates how foremen, forewomen, and managers exerted strong sexual control over working women.

⁸⁹ Porter, 24, 49.

⁹⁰ The employer also hinted that the worker had not respected women in some fashion. JFCA Meeting Minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 3, Expediente 927/73, November 1927.

⁹¹ JFCA Meeting Minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 3, Expediente 927/73, November 1927.

factory and workers would keep on the lookout for each other.⁹² It was not just formal workplaces where workers entered into relationships, since informal spaces like markets brought market vendors, porters, lottery ticket sellers, *papeleros*, and shoeshines together.⁹³

Male workers' and male managers' disrespect for women workers was an unfortunate reality in many of these workplaces. The Ericsson Telephone Company was a Dutch-owned company that provided much of the city's telephone services. The firm employed many working-class men as line workers and many working-class and lower-middle-class women as telephone operators.⁹⁴ A male worker (whose job category is not known), Sr. Rost, mocked a female co-worker, Señora Consuelo Salazar, for being pregnant.⁹⁵ When management heard about the mocking, they promptly fired Consuelo for being pregnant. The records do not report what Sr. Rost said, but one individual present at the hearing chided Sr. Rost for making Señora Salazar "a victim of his jokes."⁹⁶ In the 1920s, Mexican employers commonly fired women for being pregnant, arguing that women with children should remain at home to nurture children. Firms often maintained that they had the right to fire pregnant or married women, but did not

⁹² Ocurrió Un Drama Pasional Entre Conocidas Personas," *El Liberal*, 17 February 1920, año 1, tomo 1, no. 1, p. 1, 8; Porter, 127. Farnsworth-Alvear found similar instances of workplace romance in twentieth-century Colombia. Farnsworth-Alvear, 147-175.

⁹³ Bliss and Blum, 166.

⁹⁴ Susie Porter's forthcoming book, *From Angel to Office Worker: Women, Work, and Class Identities in Mexico, 1890-1950*, will analyze the gender and class experiences of these women telephone operators in much more detail.

⁹⁵ Note that the class status of the individuals involved in this case is not clear. The woman in this case was probably middle class or upper lower class, because it would be highly improbable for Ericsson to hire a working-class woman into one of the positions of operator or secretary. These were customarily jobs for the middle-class or the lower-middle class.

⁹⁶ Union memo, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 3, Expediente 927/73, 31 October 1927.

always do so (and unions sometimes, but not always, questioned the fairness of this practice).⁹⁷ Señora Salazar was a member of the Union of Workers and Employees of the Ericsson Company. The union advocated on her behalf, challenging Señor Rost's alleged lack of respect for women. A union memo stated, "Señor Rost acted in a manner totally outside of the bounds of how courtesy says a man should treat a woman, especially when she is in such a state [i.e. her pregnancy]." The union embraced proletarian masculinity's respect for women and chided Señor Rost for disrespecting women.

Workplace romances were opportunities for men and women to drink, carouse, fight, flirt, and engage in sex. A manager's assistant found shoe factory workers Eduardo and Margarita drinking some bottles of beer inside the factory, revealing that working-class women and men could engage in illicit actions on the job. Management fired both workers over the incident, but the arbitration board intervened and convinced management to agree to a compromise. Management agreed to rehire them and not perpetrate reprisals. The workers admitted they had wrongly brought alcohol to the workplace.⁹⁸ One couple met at the woman's place of employment. Teresa worked at an ice cream and popsicle stand where she met and entered into a relationship with Pedro, an older, married man who worked as a technician—the record does not specify, but it is

⁹⁷ As stated in a letter from Flyckt, an Ericsson management representative, in this file dated 4 November 1927. See also, various memos from Ericsson and from the Sindicato de Obreros y Empleados de la Empresa Ericsson, JFCA meeting minutes, AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 3, Expediente 927/73, October to November 1927. Susie Porter's forthcoming book will analyze pregnancy and working, and middle-class women office workers. For a superb discussion of the middle-class, office work, and gender, Susanne Einegel, "Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico-City's Middle Class, 1890-1940," (PhD Diss, University of Maryland, 2011), 122, 153-154, 201-204.

⁹⁸ Letter written by Eduardo Moneda, an official with the Comisión de Previsión; letter from the DT to the JFCA, AGN, DT, 208, Caja 212, Expediente 14, letters dated 8 and 12 November 1920, respectively.

probable that Pedro frequented the stand as a customer.⁹⁹ Antonio, a machinist, met Virginia, a factory worker, at their workplace, La Central, a coat factory. The two began dating and having sex. Unfortunately, she was less serious about the relationship than he. Rafael took her to meet his family, and he proposed to her in front of them. Virginia declined, telling her suitor “I don’t love you and both you and your family have poor character (*mala voluntad*).”¹⁰⁰

Male workers sometimes treated women co-workers violently. Rafael and María became acquainted with each other at a textile factory, the “Fábrica Nacional de Vestuario.”¹⁰¹ They had been dating for many months and the rumor at the factory was that they would soon be married. Unfortunately, their relationship became strained and, eventually, María broke up with Rafael. In despair, he returned to his home state of Zacatecas for four days to recover. He then returned to the DF and went back to the factory. The first day back he confronted her in the hallway outside of her work area. Factory workers soon heard four shots fired. Their co-workers rushed to the scene to find Rafael had perpetrated a murder-suicide. Rafael lay dead, a 25-caliber pistol at his side. María was in critical condition and died that night in the Juarez Hospital. Not only men, but also women could initiate violence with co-workers. Guadalupe Castillo entered into a fight with a *compañero* who worked at the same factory, La Perfeccionada, and who

⁹⁹ Police report by Coronel Salvador Galindo sent to the Pres. of the Trib. on 19 July 1927; Social worker report by L. Navarro, dated 5 August 1927, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 1, Expediente 22.

¹⁰⁰ The social worker who recorded this account described Virginia as a “flirt.” Social worker report by J. Mangino, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 29, 19 May 1928.

¹⁰¹ “Ocurrió Un Drama Pasional Entre Conocidas Personas,” *El Liberal*, 17 February 1920, año 1, tomo 1, no. 1, p. 1, 8.

belonged to the same union.¹⁰² Guadalupe was fired from her job as a result of this incident.

Men and women co-workers forged a range of lateral relationships in the workplace consisting of friendship, love, and animosity. Plebeian masculine performances in the workplace encompassed both respecting and disrespecting women. Sometimes employers successfully imposed sufficient workplace discipline to separate men and women in mixed-sex workplaces and, in other instances, employers had very limited ability to prevent women and men from interacting on the job. By entering into relationships, discarding social convention regarding appropriate workplace behavior, and, tragically, by perpetrating homicide, workers demonstrated the significance of workplace gender relations. This range of gendered interactions underscore that, while masculinity is often shaped by ideas of femininity, these relationships are not always oppositional.

Female Masculinity

Gender scholar Judith Halberstam argues that masculinity should include what she calls “female masculinity.”¹⁰³ Female masculinity is the set of practices associated with manhood which are perpetrated by women. The classic example, which she is careful to note is not the only example, is that of the “butch” lesbian found in European culture from the 1800s to the present day. Halberstam is also critical of hegemonic masculinity’s ability to erase other forms of masculinity. She introduces the idea of

¹⁰² Gaudalupe’s relationship to her co-worker is not known. Carta from an *ex-obrera* at La Perfeccionada, Guadalupe Castillo, dated 8 October, 1928; JFCA Meeting Minutes, 24 January 1929; and court documents from the Juzgado Tercero Correccional AGN, JFCA, 211, Caja 62, Exp 927/1128.

¹⁰³ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 1-13, 269.

female masculinity into the field of gender theory in the hopes that people stop associating masculinity only with men.¹⁰⁴ She notes that dominant, white, heterosexual, male culture has sought to exclude female masculinity from popular culture and language. Hegemonic masculinity has been successful in this task. She asks “Why is there no word for the opposite of ‘emasulation?’ Why is there no parallel concept to effeminacy?... Why shouldn’t a woman get in touch with her masculinity?”¹⁰⁵ Female masculinity can help us understand that there are no intrinsic notions of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity were social constructions and capitalinos associated particular behaviors with men, despite that fact that some working-class women such as hospital orderlies, maids, and soldaderas also exhibited these behaviors.

While I only came across a handful of sources involving “butch” women (as noted in my discussion of marriage in a previous chapter, feminists were called masculine when they exercising what was socially thought to be masculine behavior), in 1920s Mexico City, some working-class women embraced a workplace culture that resembled men’s workplace culture. These working-class women were aggressive, fatalistic, and violent and disregarded the law. Women workers at the Hospital Juárez enacted female masculinity by going to dances and carousing. One worker’s mother reported that once she went to the hospital at the time when her daughter, Gudelia, was getting off of work and she saw Gudelia get into a car and take off to “who knows where.” The investigating social worker noted that Gudelia had friends who were nurses and they remarked that they were a bad influence on her—frequently taking her to dances where she would

¹⁰⁴ Halberstam, 49.

¹⁰⁵ Halberstam, 269.

mingle with men of questionable character. Gudelia countered these accusations of impropriety by insisting the men with whom she danced were just friends not boyfriends. Yet Gudelia still ended up in the juvenile justice system and remained there for two years. Officials released Gudelia when her mother moved to the southern state of Oaxaca. Officials noted that in Oaxaca she would have “less exposure to bad things.”¹⁰⁶

Many sources referred to these women as “libertines” (*libertinas*).¹⁰⁷ Police officials and social workers repeatedly used the word “libertine” to refer to women who drank excessively, went dancing with men, and practiced excessive sexuality.¹⁰⁸ Also, social workers commented that in working-class homes, women often drank as much as their male counterparts. Also, as discussed in a previous chapter, city public diversion inspectors frequently complained that women hung out in the city’s taverns and pulquerías as much as men did, despite official city laws prohibiting women’s entry into such places. A social worker described one woman Asunción, who worked as a waitress in a cantina prior to her arrest for robbery.¹⁰⁹ Asunción drank frequently and often did not return to the home to care for her nephew Benjamín because she was with the “La Golondrina” Cantina’s clients.

¹⁰⁶ Social worker reports by social worker reports by Margarita Ramos Chávez and E. Azcón, AGN, CTMIDF, 203, Caja 2, Expediente 27, dated 24 May 1928 and 28 April 1930, respectively.

¹⁰⁷ “Libertine” appears fourteen times in my sources, thirteen of those instances refers to a female and one, interestingly, refers to a male who behaved in a way that perceived to be immoral and sexualized.

¹⁰⁸ These “libertines” and their clashes with their families, especially with their fathers, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁹ Note that a subsequent report by a second social worker, Fernandina Poulat, reported six months later that the aunt exhibited proper behavior. Social worker reports by Enrique Catalán and Fernandina Poulat, AGN, CTMIDF, Caja 2, Folder 5, dated 28 March 1928 and 5 September 1928, respectively.

Some *soldaderas* also embodied female masculinity. A *soldadera* was a woman who fought in the Mexican Revolution and/or served as a nurse or camp follower during the Revolution.¹¹⁰ Just as deserters complicated warrior masculinity, *soldaderas*' expressions of female masculinity shows the limits of only ascribing masculine characteristics to male soldiers. One woman, Petra, was described by herself and others as a former federalista *soldadera* who during the Mexican Revolution had been briefly captured by the Zapatistas.¹¹¹ Once the war ended, she moved to Mexico City, abandoned her child, frequently became drunk, and became a prostitute. This *soldadera* mother was a hard-drinking type who neglected her children. In addition, following the Revolution, the city tried to ban *soldaderas* from the Municipal Palace, calling them "dirty."¹¹²

The definition of *soldadera* was fluid, meaning both female soldier and camp follower. The army routinely let camp followers and their children stay in barracks during the night, but ejected them from of the barracks during the day.¹¹³ Historian Mary Kay Vaughan posits that, in a sense, 1910s *soldaderas* were forerunners to 1920s *chicas modernas* (flappers) and Macías-González and Rubenstein briefly note that The Revolution provided an opportunity for Mexican flappers "to lay claim to the category of

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of *soldaderas*, see chapters 4 through 6 of Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

¹¹¹ A Zapatista was the follower of the revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata.

¹¹² Letter from Ayuntamiento's Secretario General sent to ciudadano Teniente Comandante de la Guardia de la Gendarmería Montada, AHDF, GOB, Vol. 3932, Exp. 120, 26 May 1922.

¹¹³ Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 123.

masculine.”¹¹⁴ Petra and the Cities’ attempts to oust soldaderas from barracks represent the fact that women could also embody female masculinity. Their behavior complicates the category of masculinity and illustrates gender’s instability.¹¹⁵

These women were, in a very real sense, perpetrating female masculinity. In many ways, their practices represent contradiction at the heart of masculinity. This contradiction makes sense if you accept Judith Butler’s proposition that historical actors socially construct gender. Butler remarks:

Acts, gestures, enactments...are considered *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. [For instance]...the performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed....*In imitating gender*, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.¹¹⁶

In this context, “libertine” women who embraced masculinity performed their gender in a way that belies the fluidity in the categories “masculine” and “feminine.” The very existence of these women belies limitations inherent in attempting to categorize particular types of behavior as “masculine” or “feminine.” The fact that the sources used “libertine” to describe, essentially, the same type of activity performed by men indicates that a profound sexual double standard existed in Mexico City—men could exhibit

¹¹⁴ Mary Kay Vaughan, “Introduction, Pancho Villa, the Daughters of Mary, and the Modern Woman: Gender in the Long Mexican Revolution,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 21-23; Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 12.

¹¹⁵ For an excellent essay on the problems caused by associating masculinity or femininity with the category of warrior, see Gabriela Cano, “Unconcealable Realities of Desire: Amelio Robles’s (Transgender) Masculinity in the Mexican Revolution,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, eds. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 35-56.

¹¹⁶ Italics by Butler. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 185.

behavior which many considered entirely inappropriate for women (although many elites and unions also criticized men for promiscuity and infidelity).

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how the workplace affected plebeian masculinity. In different workplaces, men practiced different masculine behaviors. Masculine subcultures existed based on skilled labor, camaraderie, and violence, as they had in urban Mexico City since the colonial period. Yet, these cultures also took on new gendered meanings. With the arrival of new technologies including the streetcar and the automobile, new trades such as the tram driver and the chofer developed, and old trades like soldiering took on new meanings and maintained older masculine connotations. By studying “lateral” relations between workers, the chapter illustrates how such approaches can complement long-standing methods such as studying either “top-down” or “bottom-up” relations between workers and management.

Individual workers often embroiled themselves in multiple masculine workplace subcultures. Choferes’ masculine subculture sometimes fused with that of soldiers. In one account, two drivers were with a young woman on the street.¹¹⁷ They were using cocaine and offered her some of the narcotic. When she refused, they threatened to kill her and, when she still refused, they dragged her into a hotel where they tried to remove her clothes. She screamed and two gendarmes and a hotel employee heard her and came to her aid. They approached the two chauffeurs, demanding their surrender. The choferes opened fire with pistols, fled the hotel, and carjacked a passing automobile. The police gave chase and pursued the choferes to a nearby Army barracks. The police then

¹¹⁷ “Crimines Sensacionales En El Último Año,” *El Excélsior*, Año V, Tomo VI, no. 1,751, 1 January 1922, Section 3, p. 1.

cornered the drivers and arrested them in the barracks. It is not clear why the chauffeurs fled to an army barracks, but many capitalinos associated both choferes and soldiers with dangerous and improper masculine behaviors and they would probably not have been surprised that one masculine subgroup was protecting the other.

Conclusion: Working-Class Masculinity in 1920s Mexico City

The end of the decade represented a change in the historical context in which workers could articulate masculinity. 1929 marks the end of this dissertation's period of study because, by this point, the Calles regime had gained significant power over workers' unions. By 1929, the nation's largest labor federation, the CROM, had begun imploding (because its leaders challenged rather than allied with President Calles). By the early 1930s, the remaining large labor federation, the CGT, had succumbed to what Raúl Trejo Delarbe calls "a collaborationist attitude towards government."¹ During the 1930s, labor-state alliances developed by emphasizing gender hierarchies to a much greater degree than they had during the 1920s.² The space no longer existed for the 1920s panoply of competing labor unions that presented more diverse—and slightly less patriarchal—versions and visions of popular-class masculinity. Hierarchies were now solidified or solidifying—hierarchies between unions and the state, workers and union leaders, and women and men. During the 1930s, the state's schools and owners of mass media more effectively perpetrated hegemonic masculinities.

This dissertation explores working-class masculinity in a decade of open struggle and fluidity between 1917 and 1929. I demonstrate that the 1920s represent a period when masculinity was not hegemonic, but rather, in the process of forming. Through studying a phase during which workers, the state, and other agents were negotiating

¹ Raúl Trejo Delarbe, "Historia del movimiento obrero, 1860-1982." In *Historia del movimiento obrero in América Latina*, ed. Pablo González Casanova (México : Siglo Veintiuno Editores : Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la UNAM, 1984), 21, 32.

² María Teresa Fernández Aceves, "Once We Were Corn Grinders: Women and Labor in the Tortilla Industry of Guadalajara, 1920-1920," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 81-101; Susan M. Gauss, "Masculine Bonds and Modern Mothers: The Rationalization of Gender in the Textile Industry in Puebla, 1940-1952," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (Spring 2003): 63-80; Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance*.

masculine behaviors and beliefs, I argue that multiple masculinities developed through a series of negotiations which manifested in the everyday activities of the working class, employers, officials, church officials, and union leaders. This dissertation investigates these gendered behavior and beliefs within the contexts of childhood, the family, the workplace, entertainment venues, and unions. Workers attempted to legitimate and forge a plebeian cultural identity by presenting certain masculine behaviors and obligations as respectable. I also move beyond the notion of machismo (the belief that masculinity in Latin America is characterized by male superiority, apathy, aggressiveness, use of violence, and subordinating women) as a hegemonic framework that has characterized some social science and historical writing on Latin America.

One of the more significant outcomes of these negotiations was proletarian masculinity; workers developed this set of masculine behaviors and languages in response to employers and the states' efforts to control them. In addition, workers were able to enact these performances because the post-revolutionary 1920s created new ideas (like childhood, hygiene, and sports) and created newly-invigorated institutions (like the Labor Department and the Diversions Department) which opened up opportunities for workers to interact with the state by emphasizing particular types of masculinity. This was a process of Gramscian hegemony of elite and popular cultures intertwining.

Workers reacted to and took advantage of newly opened cultural, political, and social opportunities through their gendered performances. Popular-class capitalinos enacted these gender performances for many reasons including nurturing a family member, opposing an unjust dismissal at work, convincing a social worker to release a beloved family member from the child welfare system, exerting patriarchal control over

the family or over employers, or embracing a workplace culture consisting of playing hard and working hard.

This analysis of the stories of plebeian men and their families in 1920s Mexico City is a mere foray into the rich possibilities of studying working-class masculinity. Scholars should investigate other regions of Mexico, other time periods, and other themes like the masculine gendered consumer and transnational masculinity.³ A possible avenue for future investigation would be to examine how workers' masculine practices and beliefs change in the capital during the 1930s and subsequent time periods. The 1930s brought a series of additional populist reforms that revamped the child welfare system and the decade also saw the rise to power of populist president Lázaro Cárdenas; his programs did much to aid the Mexico City working class. Also, the subsequent decades saw the city's population boom as waves of migrants flocked to the capital for jobs and amenities.⁴ Scholars should study the historical relationships between internal migration in Mexico and popular-class masculinity.⁵

³ Historians are beginning these investigations, see Mexico Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein, "Introduction," in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, eds. Victor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012) and the forthcoming book by Robert Buffington, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man: Mexico City 1900-1910*.

⁴ Stephen Bachelor's work on Mexico City factory workers and masculinity during the 1950s and 1960s is an example of work that studies this period. Steven J. Bachelor, "Toiling for the 'New Invaders': Autoworkers, Transnational Corporations, and Working-Class Culture in Mexico City, 1955-1968," in *The Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 291-293.

⁵ Historians who study migration during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, focus on external migration to the U.S. For example, see Julia Young "Mexican Emigration during the Cristero War, 1926-1929," PhD Diss, University of Chicago, 2009; Jorge Durand, *Braceros. Las miradas mexicana y estadounidense. Antología (1945-1964)* (México: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas y Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2007); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Manuel Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life Story* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1930); and Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

This study, like any other has its limitations and these limitations can provide an opportunity for subsequent scholarship. Since the sources largely ignored race as a category of analysis, this study fails to explain the relationship between race, ethnicity, and popular-class masculinity. It did not directly assess how transnational forces affected plebeian masculinity; instead it tangentially investigated how transnational forces like child welfare reforms, film, technology, and police and military reforms affected masculinity. Also, while the chapters on youths, the family, the workplace, and entertainment culture integrated workers' own views, the chapter on unions fails to include rank and file perspectives. Instead this chapter examines how union leaders promulgated their own visions of worker masculinity.

Scholars can move beyond Mexico City to assess how workers performed masculinities in other regions. The industrial north can serve as a prime location for historians to study Mexican masculinity—Hermosillo and Monterrey both served as centers of industry and urban labor. Michael Snodgrass' work on workers in Monterrey and Guillermo Núñez Noriega's work on rural and urban homosexuals in Hermosillo and Sonora would be very useful jumping off points similar masculinity studies.⁶

Another potentially rich avenue of investigation is to study the male worker as gendered consumer. Aside from work by Steven Bunker, historians of Mexican consumers tend to see Mexican consumerism as an upper-class phenomenon heavily influenced by U.S. consumer patterns. A more effective approach would be to focus on

⁶ Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Guillermo Núñez Noriega, *Masculinidad e intimidación: identidad, sexualidad y sida* (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género y el Colegio de Sonora, 2007).

the popular classes' own tastes and to see Mexican consumer trends as a process influenced by transnational trend but as being largely Mexican in origin.⁷ These studies can also explore the relationship between masculinity and consumer technologies like radio, television, and the internet.

Scholars can also pay closer attention to transnational union masculinity. Studies can assess how and whether transnational networks of migration and hemispheric union ties affected gender in Mexico and elsewhere. Unions like the CROM and the CGT were plugged into broader international currents of unionism. For example, the CROM actively formed ties with the United States labor federation the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Both actively worked on the Pan American Federation of Labor Project—AFL leader Samuel Gompers even attended a 1921 conference in Mexico with Calles and the legendary Mother Jones! The AFL and CROM worked together to help Mexico gain recognition by the U.S. government but the existing scholarship focuses heavily on U.S. sources rather than Mexican sources.⁸ Also, the gendered processes through which Mexican child welfare experts participated in a transnational exchange of practices and

⁷ Steven Bunker, *Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Díaz* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2013) and Steven Bunker, "'Consumers of Good Taste': Marketing Modernity in Northern Mexico, 1890-1910." *Estudios Mexicanos/Mexican Studies* 13:2 (Summer 1997): 227-269. Victor M Macías-González, "The Lagartijo at the High Life: Masculine Consumption, Race, Nation, and Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico City, c. 1901* eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 227-249; Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home! Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003; and Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining la Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

⁸ Gregg Andrews, *Shoulder to Shoulder: The American Federation of Labor, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

theories needs to be better explained.⁹ Such approaches would contribute to the current trend of “transnationalizing labor history.”¹⁰

This dissertation does not seek to find and identify stable, static models of masculinity. The chapter explores how men, in their homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and their unions, shifted back and forth among multiple forms of masculine behaviors and beliefs. Some which the state did not tolerate (like the more anti-state socialist brand of proletarian masculinity) and some which allowed workers and the state to negotiate a shared gender belief, like proletarian masculinity.

This dissertation began with an anecdote set in a tavern involving Police Officer 1180, his popular-class male cuate, his cuate’s female companion, and two Diversions Department inspectors. The parties argued over whether or not the woman should be in the bar and the inspectors even came to blows with the cuate. This account prompted a series of questions including “How can masculine performances in popular culture venues reveal what the working-class and the state thought about masculinity?” “What is the relationship between place and gendered performances?” And “How can masculinity serve as a conceptual tool for historians?” In other words, “how can historians make masculinity work for them?”

This dissertation’s findings can help explain Officer 1180 and his compatriots’ masculine performances in La Republicana tavern in 1920. Officer 1180 found himself in a physical entertainment space, a tavern, where he was probably more comfortable

⁹ Nichole Sanders, *Gender and Welfare in Mexico: The Consolidation of a Postrevolutionary State* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Marcel van der Linden, “Transnationalizing American Labor History,” *Journal of American History* 86:3: (December 1999): 1078-1092.

expressing multiple masculinities. As noted, in spaces where employer and union discipline was not enforced, then workers felt more comfortable breaking free of hegemonic masculinity. As a result, Officer 1180 valued his ties to his friends over his ties to his employer and he enacted a gendered decision to side with his male companion against his superior officer. The inspectors expected Officer 1180 to conform to the ideal and were an instrument through which the state tried, and in this case failed, to instill a hegemonic masculinity in workers. The male and his companion enacted plebeian disregard for the city's laws prohibiting women from entering taverns and the male companion was willing to fight the inspectors—a classic marker of popular-class masculinity. The inspectors later reported that Officer 1180 was “a threat to society due to his lack of honor.” Officer 1180 would probably have seen otherwise. By standing by his friend and by standing up to his employer, the state, he was performing a popular-class masculine honor that presented an alternative working-class understanding of honor. He and many like him believed that working-class masculinity encompassed more than machismo, compliance with one's boss, or obedience to the state; plebeian masculinity encompassed a wide range of possibilities.

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