

La Raza: Mexicans in the United States Census

In 1930, the United States Census for the first and only time included a “Mexican” category on the race variable. This racial classification appeared in other federal records during the 1930s and was not fully rejected until 1939. In the 1940 census, the “Mexican” race category had disappeared, with enumerators instructed that “Mexicans are to be regarded as white unless definitely of Indian or other nonwhite race.”¹

This article traces the rise and disappearance of the “Mexican” racial category between 1920 and 1940. Archival records suggest that it emerged from the Census Bureau itself, rather than being imposed by Congress, as other scholars have argued. From the late nineteenth century forward, bureau officials, influenced by hereditarian concepts and fixated on mass immigration, struggled over classifications for new population groups, debating whether their traits were permanent racial markers or impermanent ethnic characteristics. The wave of Mexican immigrants in the 1920s drew their attention. They realized that there were persons of purely European descent in Mexico, but that most Mexicans were *mestizos*, a mix principally of European and Indian ancestries that did not exist in the Census Bureau’s racial schema. Indeed many Mexicans and Mexican Americans saw themselves as racially distinct, taking significant pride in a mestizo identity.

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1 That pride was insulted, however, when Mexicans were linked—in official
2 statistics or in the public mind—with a *raza de color*, especially African
3 Americans. In New Mexico and, more critically, in Texas, Mexican American
4 leaders were also acutely conscious of what a nonwhite classification would
5 cost them in civil and social rights. In Texas, the League of United Latin
6 American Citizens (LULAC), challenged the Census Bureau’s new racial
7 classification of Mexican Americans, and it ultimately prevailed. LULAC had
8 allies among politicians increasingly dependent on Mexican American votes,
9 in the State Department and in the Mexican government. Still, by the late
10 1930s, it had to contend with a new group within the bureau and in the scientific
11 community. Many population and public health experts—including
12 those in Mexican agencies—thought a “Mexican” racial category useful,
13 indeed essential, to vital statistics. Even after their defeat and the removal of
14 the category in the 1940 census, bureau staff sought to identify persons of
15 Mexican background. Ironically, the Hispanic identifier first employed in
16 the census in 1970 was championed less by the bureau than by the Mexican
17 American organizations once resistant to categorization. That identifier
18 continues to evolve and may return in the 2020 census to a variable that
19 ambiguously mixes race and ethnicity.

21 MASS IMMIGRATION AND RACE CLASSIFICATION IN THE UNITED 22 STATES CENSUS

23
24 While Census Bureau officials rarely voiced openly racist views, they were,
25 like most intellectuals in the early twentieth century, influenced by an ascendant
26 belief in inherited racial distinctions that affected character and behavior.²
27 They were also sensitive to the effects of immigrants from new origins. Francis
28 Amasa Walker, director of the 1870 and 1880 censuses and the intellectual
29 patriarch of the bureau, had, like Henry Cabot Lodge and other restriction-
30 ists, begun to voice a neo-Lamarckian view of hereditary inferiority in Southern
31 and Eastern European immigrants. Joseph A. Hill, assistant director for the
32 1920 and 1930 censuses and a prominent figure in the bureau, epitomized
33 Walker’s legacy. In the first decades of the twentieth century, he and other
34 bureau staff engaged in a debate about the meaning of race that led to the
35 creation of the Mexican race category.³

36 Joel Perlmann provides close analyses of deliberations within the census,
37 a discussion influenced by the Dillingham Commission’s extensive and
38 politicized assessment of immigration.⁴ The debate did not result in a firm
conclusion: among bureau staff, race remained an ambiguous term, at times

1 a synonym for ethnicity subject to change, especially through assimilation,
 2 and at other times implying a more permanent, hereditary, and biological
 3 condition. Concern about high levels of immigration in the early twentieth
 4 century was manifest in bureau studies and in the private commentary of
 5 staff. Aware of the diverse populations within European territorial bound-
 6 aries, bureau staff resisted expansion of the race variable to include categories
 7 among white Europeans, but they did introduce a mother-tongue question
 8 in 1910 designed to identify ethnic or “racial” origins more accurately than
 9 country of birth. In planning the 1920 census, Hill saw as “more important
 10 than ever before” questions on nativity and language, the latter providing
 11 “fairly accurate racial classification of our white population of foreign birth or
 12 foreign parentage.”⁵ Still, until 1930 the census race variable remained reflec-
 13 tive of the widely accepted “grand divisions” of white, Indian, African American,
 14 and Asian origin categories.

15 Nothing in documents before the 1920s reveals a particular concern
 16 about Mexicans or their racial makeup. Daniel Folkmar’s influential
 17 *Dictionary of Races and Peoples*, produced for the Dillingham Commission,
 18 casually referenced Mexicans as largely of “Indian or mixed origin.” Census
 19 analysis of Indian groups in the Southwest did not lead bureau staff to
 20 speculate on the racial makeup of persons of Mexican origin in the region.⁶
 21 Indeed, the problem of classifying Mexicans came to the bureau in the
 22 1920s as an unwelcome surprise, sprung on them by the sudden arrival of
 23 large numbers of Mexican immigrants.

25 THE ORIGINS OF THE 1930 RACIAL CATEGORY

27 Mexican immigration in the nineteenth century had been modest. Individ-
 28 uals casually crossed an unmarked border, but more permanent entry was
 29 rare; census birthplace data indicate fewer than five thousand immigrants
 30 from Mexico per year before 1900. The only large concentration of native-
 31 born Hispanics, in northern New Mexico, clung somewhat successfully to an
 32 argument that they were of Spanish rather than Mexican origin. By the 1920s,
 33 however, immigration from Mexico had risen dramatically, exceeding eighty
 34 thousand per year in the data available to Census Bureau officials.⁷ While not
 35 equivalent to the flow of Europeans before restriction, the arrival of Mexicans
 36 in places where they had not previously settled incited a sharp nativist
 37 reaction. Given the rising influence of racial theory among intellectuals,
 38 the racialized conceptualization of European immigrants already embedded
 in immigration law, and the racist view of Mexicans in many locales in the

1 Southwest, it was axiomatic that xenophobia toward Mexicans would take on
2 a racial tone. It did. In 1921, former Congressman James Slayden concluded
3 that “in Texas the word Mexican is used to indicate the race, not a citizen
4 or subject of the country.” Persons born in Texas of Mexican ancestry “are
5 ‘Mexicans’ just as all blacks are Negroes though they may have five genera-
6 tions of American ancestors.” Eugenicians such as Charles Goethe warned of
7 the demographic and social calamity in the mass arrival of the “Amer-ind
8 (American Indian) peon.” Congressional attempts to extend restrictionist
9 quotas to Mexicans often used racial inferiority as a justification.⁸

10 Despite the standing position of the 1897 *In re Rodriguez* decision that the
11 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo made Mexicans eligible for citizenship (and
12 were therefore considered white for naturalization requirements), restric-
13 tionists sought their prohibition on racial grounds. Glenn E. Hoover, writing
14 in *Foreign Affairs* in 1929, argued that Mexicans were largely Indian in back-
15 ground and their immigration thereby violated the clause in the Immigration
16 Act of 1924 excluding the entry of immigrants racially ineligible for citizen-
17 ship, then available only to “free white persons and to persons of African
18 nativity or descent.”⁹

19 Attention to the indigenous origins of Mexican immigrants appeared
20 in both the English- and Spanish-language press. The *New York Times*
21 applauded Hoover’s analysis, agreeing that Mexican immigration might
22 well lead “to a new ‘race’ problem,” since “those who enter are largely Indian
23 in blood, with only a veneer of Spanish culture.” *La Prensa*, the San Antonio
24 paper with the greatest influence among the Spanish-reading population in
25 the Southwest, judged nearly all persons of Mexican origin to be primarily
26 Indian in ancestry (including New Mexicans). However, like most of the
27 Spanish-language press, *La Prensa* argued that admixture yielded virtues
28 rather than vices, publishing pieces by the Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos,
29 who celebrated the Mexican mestizo as a new and gifted race.¹⁰ The noted
30 anthropologist Manuel Gamio, a well-known scholar of Mexican immigra-
31 tion, had a less optimistic take on the Indian side of the equation, pointing
32 to educational, cultural, and economic deficiencies. But he and other post-
33 revolutionary intellectuals saw the integration of the Mexican population in
34 *mestizaje* as essential in *forjando patria*, the construction of a nation founded
35 on a unique and worthy race. Belief in the superiority of the “blended
36 bronze and iron” of the mestizo, an inversion of the idea that hybrid races
37 were degenerate, was firmly established in Mexico among intellectuals
38 and celebrated by the state. Mexican American civil rights activists regu-
larly voiced the same conviction.¹¹

1 In the bureau, intense concern with recent immigration can be seen
 2 in the generational boundaries placed on the 1930 Mexican-race category:
 3 “In order to obtain separate figures for this racial group, it has been decided
 4 that all persons born in Mexico, or having parents born in Mexico, who are
 5 not definitely white, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese, should be returned
 6 as Mexican.” Instructions to enumerators noted the mixed racial background
 7 of “Mexican laborers,” emphasizing that those “not definitely” of another race
 8 be entered as Mexican.¹² The limitation to two generations recalled attempts
 9 to define European “races” in the early twentieth century, in which assimila-
 10 tion and loss of ethnicity was conceivable.¹³ Still, a racial function appears
 11 manifest: census questions on birthplace and parental birthplace would have
 12 identified all those of recent Mexican immigrant origin. Officials knew most
 13 Mexican immigrants were mestizo in origin, but others appeared to be largely
 14 European: they wanted a measure of race within the population of Mexicans
 15 arriving in the United States.

17 THE BUREAU AND THE CATEGORY

18
 19 The origins of the Mexican racial designation appear to lie within the Census
 20 Bureau itself, although scholars have argued otherwise. In an influential
 21 piece, Jennifer L. Hochschild and Brenna Marea Powell conclude that “political
 22 pressure” from Congress, abetted by the “deepening depression,” forced the
 23 Census Bureau to create the category. Since the idea emerged and the ques-
 24 tionnaire was developed before the economic crisis, the latter could not have
 25 had an effect; moreover, Hochschild and Powell provide no direct evidence of
 26 Congress’s influence. Mark Reisler’s more careful account, based in govern-
 27 mental archival documents, also points to congressional pressure; he reports
 28 that the virulently restrictionist and racist Chair of the House Committee on
 29 Immigration and Naturalization (and a member of the House Committee on
 30 the Census), Albert Johnson, “convinced Secretary of Commerce, Robert P.
 31 Lamont, to have his census director classify Mexicans in a separate racial cat-
 32 egory in the 1930 census.” However, the correspondence cited refers to tabu-
 33 lation and publication of conventional data, not to the new racial category,
 34 nor is there documentary evidence of Johnson’s role. Margo Anderson’s
 35 authoritative history of the census states that the 1929 appropriation bill
 36 from the Congress “for the first time . . . did not specify in minute detail
 37 the questions to be asked.” Indeed Census Director Stuart, Lamont, and
 38 the Acting Secretary of Commerce, E. F. Morgan, successfully resisted the
 “elaborate plan” for racial schedules presented by Johnson and the eugenicists

1 Alexander Graham Bell and Harry H. Laughlin. Commerce officials also
2 opposed the restraints on Mexican immigration that eugenicists, racists, and
3 other nativists demanded.¹⁴

4 The bureau's role appeared first in February 1926, when Hill's office pre-
5 sented a topic for discussion at a weekly brainstorming meeting held by Sec-
6 retary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, under whom the bureau operated. The
7 unsigned memorandum posed the following question: "The immigration law
8 has greatly stimulated entrance into the U.S. of Canadians and Mexicans, to
9 whom it does not apply. Is there any possibility of being able to shut off the
10 Mexican whom many sociologists believe will be far more objectionable as
11 a national problem than most of the Europeans who are being excluded?"
12 Attached to the memorandum was a calculation of the difference between the
13 number of Mexicans returning to Mexico and those staying, with the note
14 that the sojourners were "Mostly Mexican race."¹⁵

15 The first official step toward a separate racial category can be found
16 in materials prepared for the December 1928 meeting of the (Joint) Census
17 Advisory Committee. This committee, made up of leading members of the
18 American Economic Association and the American Statistical Association,
19 provided counsel about the enumeration schedule and the publication of cen-
20 sus data. A staff memorandum dated November 23, 1928, listed eleven of the
21 "Most important questions for addition," to be taken up with the Advisory
22 Committee, including the "The color classification of Mexicans, especially
23 of recent immigrants from Mexico."¹⁶ The extant records do not show what
24 action the Advisory Committee took, nor do subsequent agendas mention
25 the Mexican race category. Reflecting in 1934 on the bureau's decision, Hill
26 recalled that "Mexicans were classified separately from the white population
27 because of the feeling that they were not strictly white."¹⁷ Unless convincing
28 evidence of outside pressure is discovered, it appears that the bureau was
29 responsible for the creation of the category.

30 It did of course meet with approval from restrictionists in Congress, who
31 regularly highlighted the racial threat Mexicans posed. Replying in November
32 1929 to a letter from Johnson, Secretary Lamont (who had testified against
33 restriction of Mexican immigration) assured him that
34

35 It is the intention of the Director of the Census to add "Mexican" to
36 the list of races making up the population of the United States. . . .
37 The great majority of the Mexicans who come to this country are
38 almost pure Indians or mixtures of white and Indian blood. The
instructions to enumerators will leave some leeway; those Mexicans

1 who consider themselves white, or who obviously are chiefly white,
 2 will be so reported. . . . The classification cannot be closely accurate,
 3 but in view of the very large number of Mexicans in the United States
 4 it seems desirable to make some effort to segregate them from the
 5 totals for the whites.¹⁸

6
 7 The 1930 census enumeration classified 1,431,473 persons as Mexican
 8 race. Nearly a fifth were native born and had native-born parents and should
 9 not have been so designated under the census rules. Area of residence strongly
 10 affected classification. In parts of Texas, the enumerator was highly likely to
 11 write “Mex” in the race column. In contrast, racial identification was low in
 12 northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, home to a large, politically
 13 effective population of “Hispanos” fervently opposed to being identified as
 14 Mexican. In Tarrant County, New Mexico, enumerator Sosteno Trujillo
 15 classified the entire Tapia family as white. While Mr. Tapia was born in the
 16 United States to U.S.-born parents, his wife was born in Mexico, so she and
 17 their six daughters met the census criteria for Mexican race.¹⁹

18 19 THE AMBIGUITY OF RACE

20
 21 Few protested the 1930 census classification. The only sharp reaction came
 22 from New Mexico, where the new immigrants rarely ventured and where
 23 Hispanic voters objected to any connection to Mexicans.²⁰ *El Nuevo Mexicano*,
 24 the leading newspaper in the state, strongly criticized the Mexican race cate-
 25 gory, advising its readers that they should inform the enumerator that they
 26 were “Americans and nothing less than Americans, the same as and equal to
 27 any other element of our citizenry,” and not to be classified as “Mexicans.” The
 28 paper’s editorials were reprinted in other Spanish-language newspapers in
 29 the state. On March 14, 1930, *El Defensor del Pueblo* of Socorro, New Mexico,
 30 urged its readers to remember that “we are American citizens of Hispanic”
 31 background, not Mexicans.²¹

32 Little to no opposition emerged from regions with large Mexican immi-
 33 grant populations, made up of persons unlikely to be citizens, still oriented
 34 toward Mexico, many of whom expected to return to their homeland. They
 35 may have been at ease with a sense of themselves as distinct from the *yanquis*
 36 they encountered north of the border. Those familiar with racial classifications
 37 in Mexico would not have been startled by the category; that country’s census
 38 inquiry on *raza* distinguished between Indians, whites, and mestizos. The
 racial perspective of the mass of Mexican immigrants to the United States is

1 ill understood, but Mexican American and Mexican intellectuals, like
 2 Vasconcelos, celebrated a separate, mestizo race.²² Indeed, Spanish-language
 3 papers in the United States published explicit support for the 1930 census
 4 category from the Mexican American attorney, diplomat, and civil rights
 5 activist, Alonso S. Perales. Born in Texas and educated in Washington, D.C.,
 6 and the chief architect in the creation of LULAC, Perales was by the early
 7 1920s vigorously protesting discrimination against persons of Mexican origin.
 8 Yet in testimony in congressional hearings on immigration on September 3,
 9 1929, he voiced pride in both the indigenous and Spanish contributions to the
 10 “mestizo” Mexican people, who descended from “Hidalgo and Cuahutémoc.”
 11 He and other Mexican American witnesses did not argue that Mexicans were
 12 white. In his testimony, LULAC co-founder J. T. Canales contrasted Mexican
 13 labor to “white labor.”²³ In 1930, Spanish-language newspapers published
 14 Perales’s stock explanation of the census in a column the bureau convention-
 15 ally sought in foreign-language papers to encourage census participation.
 16 Perales emphasized but did not criticize the “*clasificación separada*,” noting
 17 that this was “the first time the census will give to those of Mexican origin a
 18 separate classification.”²⁴

19 Perales’s lack of censure and the inclusion of his column in leading
 20 Spanish-language newspapers demonstrate the absence of immediate oppo-
 21 sition to a separate racial classification outside New Mexico.²⁵ Perales was,
 22 like most LULAC leaders, linked closely by family and culture to Mexico. In
 23 the mid-1930s, he wrote that the use of three categories in San Antonio’s vital
 24 statistics (“white, Mexican and colored” [i.e., African American]) had not
 25 previously prompted complaint “because we persons of Mexican descent,
 26 regardless of citizenship, are very proud of our racial extraction and do not
 27 wish to convey the impression that we are ashamed to be called Mexicans.” He
 28 and other LULAC founders were at pains to defend themselves against
 29 charges by Mexican critics that they had abandoned their racial identity, as
 30 had M. Flores Villar, a journalist who was a Mexican citizen. Flores attacked
 31 the LULAC founders as “renegades,” who denigrated “the Mexican race. . . .
 32 [I]nstead of saying with pride ‘We are Mexicans by race’ [they] state (without
 33 seeing for a moment in the mirror their bronze color and their totally Indian
 34 aspect) . . . ‘We are Americans.’”²⁶

35 Practical concerns, not a lack of belief in a distinct Mexican race, had
 36 led Perales and others toward the assertion that Mexicans were white and
 37 “Caucasian.” Texas had a large African American population, a history of
 38 slavery, and a legal system that mandated discriminatory treatment of non-
 whites. In that state (and in other parts of the Southwest), there were *de jure*

1 and *de facto* separate levels of citizenship for whites and for persons of color.
 2 Despite their racial pride, LULAC's leaders saw that racial classification in the
 3 census and other official statistics could mean a loss of rights. Perales and
 4 others therefore made what Neil Foley has called a "Faustian" bargain, insist-
 5 ing on a white identity in official statistics when the alternatives endangered
 6 equal treatment. In 1934, Perales elicited an opinion from James T. Allred,
 7 Texas attorney general, stating that Mexicans included "persons of Caucasian
 8 descent or of mixed Caucasian and American Indian blood"; Allred con-
 9 cluded that "'Mexicans' must be considered 'white citizens.'"²⁷

10 Faustian perhaps, intentional surely, but not simply calculated. The claim
 11 of white identity rested as well on a bedrock of racism in the Mexican origin
 12 population that mirrored that among non-Hispanic whites in the United
 13 States. The Spanish term, *la raza*, is as ambiguous as its equivalent in English
 14 in the early twentieth century, meaning, at times, mutable ethnicity, and at
 15 other times, an innate, largely unchangeable nature. *Las razas de color* (African
 16 or Asian origin) were clearly seen as racially distinct by persons of Mexican
 17 origin in the United States. In 1928, Mauro Machado, an early associate of
 18 Perales, decried the "the cowardly way in which [Box Committee witnesses]
 19 try to make us possessors of negro blood."²⁸ Hostility to African Americans
 20 and to Asians repeatedly erupted in local condemnations of any equating of
 21 Mexicans with these groups. In 1921, *El Heraldo de México* (Los Angeles) pro-
 22 tested the seating of Mexicans in theaters with "la raza de color." The New
 23 York newspaper *Gráfico* found it odd that American blacks saw Latin Americans
 24 as a colored race. In August 1925, the New York newspaper *La Prensa* noted
 25 the "indignant" reaction of Mexicans in Indiana Harbor, Indiana, to attempts
 26 to compel them to sit in areas of theaters given to "people of color." In 1929,
 27 the Mexican community in the copper mining town of Miami, Arizona,
 28 objected to the "disrespectful and degrading" policy of a "Greek" theater
 29 owner who required that they sit with "people of color." In the same year, the
 30 New York paper *La Prensa* reported the protest of children in Mexico against
 31 attempts in San Bernardino, California, to classify students of Mexican
 32 descent "with the black and oriental children" in that county. A similar seg-
 33regation in the theaters in Lockhart, Texas, was protested in 1932, and one in
 34 Galveston, Texas, was successfully undone in 1935. In 1939, "La Unión Hispano
 35 Americana de Texas" objected to the placement of persons of Mexican origin
 36 "with negroes" in the hospital in Austin, Texas.²⁹

37 Racially tinged views of African and Asian Americans guaranteed
 38 a quick reaction against any classification as "colored." It led Machado and
 others to declare themselves "white," and for registrars of vital statistics

1 (many of Mexican origin) to place Mexicans in the white category when the
2 only alternative was “colored.” Still, even these racially charged views among
3 Mexicans pointed to the nefarious effects of discrimination: it was the prac-
4 tical penalty of a nonwhite classification that provided the impetus for a sys-
5 tematic and successful protest movement.
6

7 **CIVIC PROTEST AND THE ELIMINATION OF THE MEXICAN RACIAL** 8 **CATEGORY** 9

10 The Mexican” racial category did not appear in the 1940 census, but it had not
11 died an easy death. While senior officials, including an aging Hill, clung to the
12 category, it was not they who most effectively championed its continued use.
13 New Dealers did bring to the bureau “an extraordinarily open, liberal view of
14 the diverse ways of life,” yet it was New Deal staff and the experts who advised
15 them who argued most strenuously to retain the Mexican category. During
16 the Roosevelt administration, the bureau increasingly hired staff with Ph.D.s
17 in statistics, sociology, or economics, among the first to identify themselves
18 as “population scientists” or “demographers.” The “Class of 1940” sought to
19 create the first scientific census.³⁰

20 These experts favored a cohort component model to generate estimates
21 of future population size and structure, an approach popularized in the late
22 1920s by Pascal Whelpton and Warren Thompson of the Scripps Foundation
23 for Research on Population Problems. They proposed that subdivision of the
24 population according to characteristics correlated with mortality and fertility—
25 such as race and urban/rural status—would yield more accurate population
26 projections. Mexicans and Mexican Americans had higher rates of fertility,
27 infant mortality, and adult mortality than non-Hispanic whites and public
28 health officials had by the 1920s begun to publicize the sharp differences
29 between Mexicans and other groups in vital statistics. Well aware of this litera-
30 ture, demographers sought to identify them separately in order to improve the
31 accuracy of projections. In 1936, Thompson explicitly called for separation of
32 Mexicans and other groups from the catchall “colored” category in vital statis-
33 tics, citing both socioeconomic and hereditary rationales.³¹

34 The initial lack of objection to the Mexican race category had led to
35 its expanded use within the bureau. Census documents and staff publica-
36 tions employed it through the mid-1930s, as did such influential studies as
37 President Hoover’s commissioned work, *Recent Social Trends in the United*
38 *States, 1929–1933*.³² But its most fateful application was in vital statistics. In its
annual reports for 1930 through 1934, following the 1930 rule, the bureau’s

1 Division of Vital Statistics stated that Mexicans “were not classified with the
 2 ‘white’ but tabulated with ‘other races,’” i.e., colored, though it was apparent
 3 that local registrars often did not follow this directive. Expressing concern as
 4 early as 1930, in 1932 Hill urged the bureau in his “Classification of Mexicans
 5 in Vital Statistics” to “instruct or educate the registrars” to enter Mexicans
 6 separately from whites.³³ In an Advisory Committee meeting in April 1934,
 7 Hill objected again to the inconsistency between vital statistics and the cen-
 8 sus, since the former did not effectively separate “Mexicans from the whites.”
 9 A rising figure in the bureau, Chief Statistician for Population Leon E. Truesdell,
 10 pointed to the problem in the field: in gathering vital statistics data, it was
 11 “not easy to segregate Mexicans as the Mexicans have a prejudice against
 12 returning themselves as other than white, and seventy-five percent of the
 13 local registrars in New Mexico and lower California are Mexicans who
 14 credit themselves with being white.” Census Director William Lane Austin
 15 “saw the same objection in the case of the population census, as in the same
 16 sections a large percentage of the enumerators and supervisors are Mexicans.”³⁴

17 In 1935, in a major bureau reorganization, Halbert L. Dunn became chief
 18 statistician in the Division of Vital Statistics, part of the shift toward more
 19 highly trained and demographically oriented staff. Dunn, a biostatistician
 20 credited with the establishment of a national vital statistics system in the
 21 United States, became a central figure in the struggle to retain a separate
 22 classification. Dunn and other advocates were well aware of the distinct charac-
 23 teristics of vital statistics in the Mexican origin population. As his office was to
 24 state in 1947, “The mortality rates for white infants” were powerfully affected by
 25 “the presence, in the white population of [Southwestern] States, of a large
 26 number of Mexican agricultural workers in low income groups, among whom
 27 the rate of infant mortality is extremely high.” At times, this distortion led the
 28 Division to remove these states when calculating comparisons in mortality
 29 between jurisdictions. Separate categories were crucial to the accuracy of popu-
 30 lation models the new staff wished to build. Including persons of Mexican
 31 origin distorted the rates for “white” populations. The instruction manuals for
 32 coding vital statistics from Dunn’s office listed Mexicans as a distinct race.³⁵

33 The attempt to classify Mexicans as nonwhite in vital statistics would
 34 ultimately spark broad protest against the Mexican race category in the cen-
 35 sus, but reaction sprang first from a different source, and in the most sensitive
 36 state, New Mexico. On February 18, 1935, Austin responded to protests sent to
 37 him on the 15th and 16th by New Mexican Republican Senator Bronson Cut-
 38 ting, who complained about the classification of farm operators as “Mexican”
 rather than white in the 1935 Census of Agriculture.³⁶ Revealing the link the

1 bureau had forged between Mexicans and Indians, he advised the Senator
2 that “there has been a good deal of discussion . . . concerning the proper
3 classification by the Bureau of ‘Mexican’ population and ‘Indian’ population.
4 There is quite a difference of opinion among statisticians and ‘race experts’
5 concerning the proper classification of the two ‘races’ mentioned, and it is my
6 intention to bring these questions up for discussion and final settlement pre-
7 vious to our next census of population.”³⁷

8 After renewed criticism, remarking that he was subject to “pressure from
9 various learned individuals and organizations,” Austin promised Cutting that
10 the agricultural census enumerators would not classify farm operators as
11 Mexican unless they had been born in Mexico. He had directed all “supervisors
12 and field representatives in New Mexico” to ensure that those of “Spanish”
13 descent “be reported as ‘white.’”³⁸

14 The next, and much more powerful reaction, came out of Texas as a
15 result of the removal of Mexicans from the white category in vital statistics.
16 Beginning with sheer indignation that Mexicans would be classified with
17 African Americans, protests soon revealed, as Paul Schor argues, the
18 driving, practical concerns in Texas that made emerging Mexican American
19 civic organizations hostile to any designation other than white in a state where
20 segregation of Mexican children in schools was a core issue. Shortly before the
21 election of 1936, a set of complaints came to Austin’s direct supervisor, Secretary
22 of Commerce Daniel C. Roper, a stalwart Democratic appointee. The epicenter
23 of the public debate, examined closely by the historian Mario García, lay in the
24 border city of El Paso, Texas.³⁹

25 The controversy had its roots in the extraordinarily high rates of infant
26 mortality in that city, which often placed El Paso in the unenviable position
27 of first in the nation, a notoriety due entirely to high mortality among infants
28 of Mexican origin. As the city’s health officers remarked, “The infant mor-
29 tality rate among American families . . . is way below the national average.
30 The numerous cases which occur among Mexican American infants of poorly
31 educated families, living in unhealthy and squalid conditions, are the ones
32 that increase our rate so rapidly.” In October 1936, City Registrar Alex K. Powell
33 announced that his office would join four other Texas cities “in classifying
34 Spanish-speaking residents as ‘colored,’” a category he claimed the Census
35 Bureau had approved. El Paso’s Health Department chief, Dr. T. J. McCamant,
36 stated that the State Registrar had permitted this classification and that L. P.
37 Bishop, his counterpart in San Antonio, “had been authorized by H. L. Dunn,
38 chief of statistics for the Department of Commerce in Washington to classify
Mexicans as ‘colored.’” The city officers argued for the need for more accurate

1 accounting of the sources of differential infant mortality so that it might be
 2 addressed, emphasizing the socioeconomic sources of the problem, rather
 3 than racial ones. García concludes that the main intent of the new category
 4 was to make El Paso's mortality rate more acceptable by identifying Mexicans
 5 as the source of the city's poor performance.⁴⁰

6 The decision ignited a firestorm of protest in El Paso. Most important, it
 7 centered the attention of Mexican American leaders, especially in Texas
 8 LULAC chapters, on racial classification in official statistics. On October 8,
 9 1936, Frank J. Galvan, the president general of LULAC, sent out circulars to
 10 all chapters reporting the attempt to classify "the members of the Spanish
 11 speaking race . . . as colored people." He identified the "Census Bureau of the
 12 Department of Commerce" as the source of the grave affront, calling on each
 13 council to ask their congressmen to insist that "our classification" be "white."
 14 Adolpho de la Garza, president of LULAC Council No. 5 in Mission, Texas,
 15 reported, "Councils all over the state of Texas, and some in New Mexico, pro-
 16 tested to Washington over this error."⁴¹ Complaints about the El Paso decision
 17 filled the pages of the Spanish-language press.

18 A core feature in the agitation, reflecting a new phenomenon outside
 19 New Mexico, was the capacity of middle-class Mexican American organiza-
 20 tions to persuade politicians to support their causes. The first to act, by his
 21 own account, was C. K. Quin, mayor of San Antonio. Quin claimed that he
 22 had immediately complained to both Texas senators about the classification
 23 of Mexicans among "other non-white races," unjustly categorizing "some of
 24 our best citizens as 'colored' when they are not in fact 'colored' as that term is
 25 commonly used." Cutting's Democratic successor in the Senate, Dennis Chávez,
 26 enthusiastically joined in the El Paso dispute, despite its being "outside my
 27 official jurisdiction." In the October 17 issue of *La Prensa*, the senator prom-
 28 ised that he "would do all in my power to make sure [the category] is changed
 29 as soon as possible."⁴² Roper's acting director, Ernest G. Draper, replied to
 30 criticism from Chávez, betraying his ignorance of census classifications, or
 31 a willful decision to ignore them:
 32

33 The classification objected to in your telegram of October twelve is due
 34 to an error made by the Division of Vital Statistics in not following
 35 Bureau of Census established classifications stop The Bureau of the
 36 Census has not classified as colored Mexicans in its population agricul-
 37 ture and business reports stop The error in classifying Mexican as
 38 colored in Vital Statistics will not be repeated stop Three classifications
 will be used whites including Mexicans stop Negroes stop and all other.

1 On October 19, Secretary Roper himself responded to a similar protest from
2 Senator Tom Connally of Texas, as he did to other politicians, making the
3 same promise. He maintained again, and quite falsely, that the vital statistics
4 “classification referred to is not in accordance with the established classifications
5 of the Census Bureau in its report on population, agriculture, etc.”⁴³

6 Texas politicians were especially sensitive to the political implications.
7 Maury Maverick, a House member from the San Antonio area, had also sent
8 Austin a telegram and a letter protesting the classification. Like Quin and a
9 select few Texas politicians (including Vice President John Garner), Maverick
10 had close ties with a Mexican American constituency upon which he depended
11 for reelection.⁴⁴ Maverick described the “deadly insult” implied when “citizens
12 in Texas of Spanish and Mexican extraction or descent are classified as
13 ‘colored.’” In his view, Mexicans were like “Italians in New York City.” Maverick
14 suggested officials provide a category “Other Whites—Mexican.” Austin reit-
15 erated the new bureau position in a letter to Maverick: “It was unfortunate, of
16 course,” he wrote, “that an error was made by our Division of Vital Statistics
17 in classifying Mexicans along with the ‘colored.’” He assured Maverick that
18 such would “not occur again in any public information given out by the
19 Bureau of Census. Mexicans will be classified as ‘white.’”⁴⁵

20 Allies south of the border also reacted to implied linkages to African
21 Americans. The El Paso newspaper *El Continental* reported that Masons in
22 Ciudad Juárez had sent a protest to the Grand Lodge, denouncing the
23 classification of Mexicans as a “colored race, that is to say, black,” and peti-
24 tioning their Grand Master to lodge a protest with the Mexican Ambassador
25 in Washington. Representatives to Mexico’s Chamber of Deputies, joined by
26 the Mexican Chamber of Commerce, called for official protests that Mexicans
27 would be classified as “negroes” and “an inferior race.” *La Prensa* reported
28 that the Mexican ambassador had contacted the U.S. Department of State
29 urging that Mexican elements in the U.S. population “be included in the
30 white race in any official Government document.”⁴⁶

31 The controversy prompted persons of Mexican origin who viewed Mexicans
32 as a race distinct from whites to shift from that view. In letters to public offi-
33 cials in November 1936 that record his pride in his “racial extraction,” Perales
34 judged the threat of being classified as colored sufficient to justify changing
35 San Antonio’s three-part classification to two categories, “White, including
36 Mexicans,” and colored. In order to “avoid confusion or incidents like that
37 which has just occurred in El Paso,” there should be no “intermediate status
38 of ‘mexicans.’” Such “is in accord with the Laws of Texas, which consider res-
idents of Mexican origin to be of the white race.” Perales’s unhappy transition

1 from one racial identity to another can be followed in his drafts of an article
 2 prepared in 1939. Not mentioning his own endorsement, he argues that the
 3 1930 census classification “did us great damage . . . , achieving very evident[ly]
 4 what the intention was—that we would not be considered as ‘Whites,’” with
 5 grave social consequences.⁴⁷

6 Dunn’s effort to get local registrars to classify Mexicans separately, in
 7 accord with the 1930 census category and essential to projection models,
 8 came to an end. Schor reports that, on October 15, 1936, Austin sent a sharp
 9 memorandum to Dunn announcing a strict policy:

10 One of the most serious situations the Bureau has had to face
 11 recently was your classification of Mexicans as “Colored.” The
 12 classification by race . . . is not only very difficult, but is a very deli-
 13 cate matter to the United States Government, and our classification
 14 must always be in accordance with the policy of the Federal Govern-
 15 ment. Please observe to the letter the following instructions. . . . The
 16 text and the tables . . . must state definitely that the classification
 17 “White” includes Mexicans. (3) Mexicans are Whites and must be
 18 classified as “White.” This order does not admit of any further dis-
 19 cussion, and must be followed to the letter.⁴⁸

20
 21 In less than two weeks, wide protests and the mobilization of political
 22 power by middle-class Mexican American groups had resulted in a seeming
 23 capitulation by the bureau. Schor concludes that the success of the Mexican
 24 American protest in 1936 was both “complete” and “remarkable,” since theirs
 25 was “the only case in which a group obtained a modification of their
 26 classification.”⁴⁹

27 It was, however, not yet complete. Bureau staff greatly regretted Austin’s
 28 concession to political rather than supposedly scientific standards; experts
 29 inside and outside the bureau remained convinced of the value of a separate
 30 classification. They were to mount a campaign to bring the category back for
 31 the 1940 census.

32 33 THE LAST CAMPAIGN

34
 35 In 1937, as Patrick Lukens notes, Dunn complained to Assistant Secretary of
 36 State Wilbur J. Carr, that “carrying into effect the decision with respect to
 37 Mexicans means the virtual destruction of the census of vital statistics insofar
 38 as concerns their scientific use in determining certain facts in regard to
 health, length of life, birth rate and other important matters.” Dunn argued

1 that there were “fundamental biological differences between the average
2 American and the average Mexican in the way in which they react to disease.”
3 He cited a set of federal agencies that classified Mexicans separately, adding
4 that insurance companies did the same. According to Lukens, Dunn thought
5 a designation engineered by State Department staff of “White,” “White—
6 Mexico,” with similar white categories for other Latin Americans, would
7 function.⁵⁰

8 It was planning for the 1940 population census, however, that prompted
9 a coordinated campaign. A “General Memorandum on Changes Under
10 Consideration for the 1940 census of Population,” dated February 6, 1939,
11 revealed the staff view. The memorandum lamented the imminent removal
12 by “accidental circumstance” (i.e., political interference) of a classification
13 that had “produced statistics of considerable value, since the Mexicans form
14 a distinct social and economic class in those areas where they are numerous.”⁵¹
15 In June 1939, in the “Recommendations of the Central Statistical Board”
16 for the 1940 Population Schedule, the first of eighteen recommendations
17 from the staff proposed a solution close to the one that Dunn had found
18 reasonable: “1. Mexicans. There is general agreement that the information
19 regarding Mexicans obtained in the 1930 census was of great value. A desire
20 for similar information from the 1940 census is wide-spread. It is urged,
21 therefore, that steps be taken in some way to meet this need, perhaps by sub-
22 heads under the category ‘white’ in column 13, named ‘white except Mexican’
23 and ‘Mexican.’”⁵²

24 In seeking to reestablish the category, the bureau faced a new and for-
25 midable opponent. Austin’s 1936 dictum had used intriguing language,
26 noting that racial classification was “a very delicate matter to the United
27 States Government and our classification must always be in accordance
28 with the policy of the Federal Government.” In 1939, Under Secretary of
29 State Noble confirmed what the Spanish-language press had reported in
30 the controversy over vital statistics: the Mexican government had com-
31 plained to the Department of State.⁵³

32 Opposed in the 1920s to quotas on Mexican immigrants, and in the
33 1930s to any other action that imperiled good relations with a neighbor
34 still teetering on its revolutionary axis, the State Department had become
35 wary of any potential insult. Lukens’s analysis of the little-known Andrade
36 court case of 1935, which threatened to make Mexican immigrants ineligible
37 for naturalization based on their Indian ancestry, details the State Depart-
38 ment’s efforts to thwart such racial classification. Privately conceding that
most Mexicans were Indian, the department’s preemptive legal strategy

1 was to set a wide precedent by pressuring all federal government offices to
2 classify Mexicans as white.⁵⁴

3 Census staff was aware of the State Department position. Truesdell
4 and Austin sought the support of the Advisory Committee to win over
5 that department: “1. Mexicans. Dr. Truesdell expressed the opinion, with
6 which the Director agreed, that the Bureau’s policy with regard to the
7 Mexican classification must be guided by the attitude of the State Depart-
8 ment, although he felt it desirable to have an expression from the Com-
9 mittee as to whether it was believed the retention of the 1930 classification
10 was urgently desirable, or slightly desirable, or undesirable. . . . After fur-
11 ther discussion, Dr. Thorp moved that the 1930 classification be retained.”⁵⁵

12 Thorp’s view was not easily ignored, since it represented that of the
13 Commerce Department itself. Austin asked George Wythe of that depart-
14 ment to facilitate an appeal to the State Department for the 1930 classification,
15 admitting but regretting that he had “issued an order that all Mexican
16 statistics were to be classified as white.” In September 1939, Under Secretary
17 Noble appealed directly to Secretary of State Cordell Hull: “The Bureau of
18 the Census has requested me to enlist your cooperation in working out a
19 racial classification of the population data relating to Mexicans . . . which
20 will satisfy the needs of the various Government agencies and other users of
21 the population data without giving offense to the Mexican Government.”⁵⁶

22 It was “natural that protests should have arisen from Mexican groups
23 against such a classification since the word ‘Colored’ was misinterpreted
24 to signify Negro.” Nonetheless, Austin’s decision “to classify all Mexicans
25 as ‘White’” was “hasty and unfortunate and . . . the policy of classifying
26 Mexicans as ‘White’ should be reversed for the . . . 16th decennial census,
27 which will be taken in April of 1940.” He justified separate classification
28 on the far higher birth and death rates of Mexicans living in the same areas
29 as whites; public health agencies would be “handicapped if they cannot have
30 separate data for Mexicans.” Moreover, “From sociological, cultural and eco-
31 nomic standpoints, . . . the Mexicans are different from the other racial
32 groups. The solution of many labor problems throughout the Southwest thus
33 depends on a knowledge of their numbers and geographic distribution. . . .
34 The Public Health Service, the Department of Labor, and the Social Security
35 Board are particularly concerned, and, to a lesser degree, the War Depart-
36 ment and the Department of Agriculture.”

37 Noble maintained that the State Department itself, as well as the
38 Mexican government, might find reason to want to know about “the Mexicans
residing in this country.” He claimed that visiting staff from Mexico’s census

1 bureau, including Emilio Alanís Patiño, Mexico's director general of sta-
2 tistics, had a positive view of the category.⁵⁷ Noble concluded with a pro-
3 posal that hardly solved the domestic and international problems of a
4 racial identification, since it extended its range, as a racial measure ought,
5 beyond the 1930 limitation of two generations. Moreover, it discarded the
6 solution Carr and Dunn brought forward to classify Mexicans as a cate-
7 gory within whites. Instructions to enumerators would be: "Mexicans.
8 Persons of Mexican birth or parentage who are of unmixed White blood
9 are to be reported as 'White.' It will be found, however, that many persons
10 of Mexican origin are of a racial mixture usually well recognized and
11 known as 'Mexicans' or 'Spanish Americans' in the localities where they
12 are found. Such persons, including both those born in Mexico and those
13 whose parents or earlier ancestors were born in Mexico, are to be returned
14 as 'Mexican.'"

15 The Department of State instructed Ambassador Josephus Daniels to
16 ask the Mexican foreign office for its view. Daniels simply copied Noble's
17 appeal to Hull, which described the 1930 category, the 1936 protests against
18 it, and the desire of the Census Bureau to reinstate it, primarily for its utility
19 in vital statistics. Mexican officials then asked its leading demographers for
20 advice.⁵⁸ Noble had been correct about their view. Manuel Gamio, direct-
21 ing the "Departamento Demográfico de la Secretaria de Gobernación,"
22 approved of a separate category. A firm believer in the distinct status of the
23 mestizo, he thought it "not only to the interests of American statistics but
24 also to the majority of Mexican workers resident in the United States that it
25 be indicated which of them are white and which mestizo." He opposed
26 placing Mexicans in a category with African Americans, but approved of
27 distinguishing between Mexicans of "European origin" who had a "higher
28 standard of life and cultural index" and those of "Indo-European origin,"
29 with lower levels of both. Alanís Patiño agreed: "I am of the opinion that the
30 classification that the [U.S. Census Bureau] intends to make in relation to
31 the Mexicans resident in the country ought to be accepted." Patiño (whose
32 views likely came too late to have any influence) thought that even those
33 Mexicans classified as white were usually mestizo. Prompted perhaps by a
34 renewed request from the Embassy, the Mexican foreign office sent a mem-
35 orandum to Daniels, quoting Gamio's approving opinion word for word,
36 without further elaboration.⁵⁹

37 Whether Daniels had this view in hand or not, it was to no avail.
38 On November 16, 1939, Noble wrote Sumner Welles, under secretary of state,
acknowledging Welles's letter of November 9:

1 We fully understand the position taken by the Mexican Government, as
 2 indicated in Ambassador Daniel's [*sic*] telegram, and we have therefore
 3 decided not to include "Mexicans" as a separate category in our racial
 4 classification. In keeping with the desires of the Mexican government
 5 and the recommendation of the State Department, Mexicans will be
 6 classified as "White" in our census statistics. . . . [While the proposal
 7 was] based entirely on our desire better to serve the interests of the
 8 Mexican population in this country and to meet the needs of
 9 Government and business statistics," [it was] "not of sufficient impor-
 10 tance to warrant risking unfavorable reaction either on the part of the
 11 Mexican Government or of the Mexican groups within this country."⁶⁰

12 On November 22, the Mexican ambassador to the United States,
 13 Castillo Najera, informed his government that there would be no separate
 14 classification. No record of the official position of the Mexican govern-
 15 ment has yet been produced, but the final decision fit well their earlier
 16 stance in the Andrade case.⁶¹

18 THE PENULTIMATE STEP: THE HISPANIC IDENTIFIER

19
 20 In February 1940, Spanish-language newspapers printed copies of a letter that
 21 Welles had written to E. D. Salinas, the general president of LULAC. Welles
 22 assured Salinas that "there would be no separate classification of Mexicans in
 23 the 1940 Census." Secretary Hopkins also denied the rumor that Mexicans
 24 were not to be classified as white, stating that Mexican American leaders
 25 "who had expressed this fear were completely misinformed."⁶²

26 The decision was not well received by the experts who advised the bureau.
 27 Advisory Committee member Dr. Murray R. Benedict, professor of agricul-
 28 tural economics at Berkeley, found it inexplicable, given the prominent role
 29 of Mexicans in farm labor. Truesdell suggested to the members that sample
 30 line inquiries on mother tongue and country of birth offered a partial solution,
 31 and the bureau continued to seek other ways to identify Mexican Americans
 32 as a distinct population group.⁶³ In 1950, it inaugurated an analysis of persons
 33 of Spanish surname in five states in the Southwest, using the regular census
 34 schedule, an assessment expanded in 1960 and 1970. In 1970, the census intro-
 35 duced a new question in the 5 percent sample, asking a person's "origin
 36 or descent," listing the categories Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or
 37 South American, "Other Spanish," or none of these. This self-identification as
 38 Hispanic (that term first appearing in 1980) has now become a regular part of
 the full enumeration schedule, next to but separate from the race variable.

1 The new Hispanic identifier was made possible, indeed mandated, not
2 by bureau ambitions but by pressure from the Mexican American commu-
3 nity. Federal legislation and policy attentive to minorities changed the
4 ground rules. As Harvey Choldin demonstrates, Mexican American leaders,
5 like those of other minority groups, became aware in the 1960s that reme-
6 dying discriminatory conditions and gaining access to federal resources
7 depended on census counts. Disappointed to find that vital statistics data
8 did not list persons of Mexican origin separately despite patent mortality
9 differentials, these leaders called for a new category, some arguing that it be
10 racial. Mexican American organizations pressured the bureau for separate
11 identification “in order to take advantage of opportunities resulting from
12 the new federal legislation.”⁶⁴

13 The bureau resisted this political interference, objecting especially to
14 self-reported data they thought unscientific, but to no avail. Even though the
15 full census forms had already been printed, the Nixon White House insisted
16 on compliance with Mexican American leaders’ demands and the bureau
17 placed the identification question on the form for the 5 percent sample. The
18 item devised was placed separately from the race variable, but like that vari-
19 able, it was not bound by generational limits. It suggested a permanent con-
20 dition.⁶⁵ Continued political pressure led to the appointment to special census
21 advisory committees of leaders of Hispanic organizations with no social
22 science or statistical expertise (a practice evident for other interest groups).
23 The eventual result was the placement of the Hispanic identifier on the
24 main enumeration form, and to a variety of procedures in government and
25 census statistics designed to increase the count of Hispanics.⁶⁶

27 CONCLUSION

28
29 While the State Department played a pivotal role in the 1939 debate, the polit-
30 ical pressure exerted by Mexican American civil rights organizations consti-
31 tuted the single most important factor in resisting racial categorization in the
32 1930s. Such pressure was a remarkable phenomenon, given the previous
33 political weakness of the Mexican-origin population, as well as evidence that
34 members of that population saw themselves as racially distinct. The 1930s had
35 witnessed a rapid shift from the *México Lindo* generation’s strong orientation
36 toward Mexico, which celebrated a distinct identity, to the Mexican American
37 generation’s embrace of the United States and its racial norms. Protests
38 emerged from the deleterious consequences of being labeled nonwhite on the
northern side of the border, these enlivened by the racist view of African

1 Americans that many persons of Mexican origin held.⁶⁷ In the Census Bureau,
2 what had begun as a category natural to the rising hereditarianism among
3 intellectuals in the early twentieth century evolved into one deemed essential
4 to the emerging science of demography. In the 1920s, Joseph A. Hill and other
5 officials, startled by sudden increases in Mexican immigration, thought it
6 obvious that most were not white but were largely Indian in origin. They
7 believed that racial distinction sharp enough to merit measurement. In the
8 1930s, advocates of a separate category were New Deal statisticians, demogra-
9 phers, and public-health officials who saw the failure to identify persons of
10 Mexican origin as a hindrance to scientific analysis. Their perspective retained
11 elements of hereditarian thinking, as Dunn's remarks about biological differ-
12 ences imply, but its primary defense was startling differences in rates of
13 fertility and infant mortality. Refusing to identify the populations subject to
14 such differences seemed a politically driven obstacle to the achievement of
15 scientific goals. Defeated by political forces, bureau officials persisted in
16 seeking ways to measure Mexicans separately. It was their erstwhile political
17 adversaries who achieved that goal in the Hispanic identifier.

18 The history of the census category reflects, in part, a "project" undertaken
19 by state officials to distribute "power along racial lines," a textbook example of
20 the social construction of race by one group in order to define and relegate
21 another.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, these officials were not weaving out of whole cloth,
22 since those of Mexican origin often thought of themselves as racially distinct,
23 a proposition encouraged by the Mexican state and the leaders of their commu-
24 nity in Mexico and the United States. Moreover, the project failed. The 1930
25 census racial category disappeared and the Hispanic identifier was created,
26 largely because persons of Mexican origin in the United States were able to
27 construct their own history.

28 The story is not over, and may yet circle back to its beginnings. In recent
29 censuses, Mexican Americans have again exhibited a tendency to see themselves
30 as "some other race," rather than white. Faced with ambiguous responses, the
31 bureau contemplates restructuring the race and Hispanic Origin questions
32 into a single variable for the 2020 census. In this fractured race and origin
33 construction, Hispanic "origin" would be one choice alongside the conven-
34 tional racial categories.⁶⁹ Should this occur, the 1930 category would, after
35 ninety years of tortured history, return in a new guise to its old home in the
36 United States Census.

NOTES

1. Steven Ruggles et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis, 2010), <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1940.shtml> (accessed 16 January 2015).

2. As George Frederickson states, “racism” requires belief in inherited “innate, indelible, and unchangeable” traits. See George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, 2003), 54. Ethnocentrism connotes cultural, not biological, differences, subject to change.

3. Francis A. Walker, “The Restriction of Immigration,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1896, 822–29. For Walker’s influence on the bureau, see folder “The Coming Census (1930),” box 147, *Memoranda and Notes of Joseph H. Hill, 1905–1940*, Record Group 29.4.2, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Records of the Office of the Assistant Director for Statistical Standards 1850 to 1990, Records of the Chief Statistician (hereafter Chief Statistician), National Archives, Washington, D.C. Walter F. Willcox, “The Development of the American Census Office since 1890,” *Political Science Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (September 1914): 438–59; Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 2015), constitutes the standard source for the history of the bureau. Chapter 6, “The Tribal Twenties,” discusses Hill and other major figures. Paul Schor is attentive to Hill and to debates over racial and ethnic categories. *Compter et classer: Histoire des recensements américains* (Paris, 2009), 218–19, 223–26 (all translations from French and Spanish are by Brian Gratton); Schor’s “Mobilizing for Pure Prestige: Challenging Federal Census Ethnic Categories in the USA (1850–1940),” *International Social Science Journal* 57, no. 183 (May 2005): 89–101, provides select material in a translation from the French. Mai M. Ngai discusses Hill in *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, 2014), 30–32.

4. Most recently in “Views of European Races among the Research Staff of the US Immigration Commission and the Census Bureau, ca. 1910,” *Working Paper No. 648*, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College (January 2011), http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/wp_648.pdf (accessed 13 April 2015).

5. Folder “Foreigners,” box 2, Chief Statistician. Folder “I-8 Immigration and the Census,” box 148; folder “P12 Population Country of Birth,” box 150; folder “P 12 Population Group of Foreign,” box 151; folder “P-31,” box 152, *Memoranda and Notes of Joseph A. Hill 1905–1940*, Chief Statistician. Folders “Director” and “Geography,” box 1, *Office File of Joseph A. Hill, 1920–1940*. Chief Statistician. The quotation is taken from Hill’s “Scope of the Fourteenth Census,” n.d. (c. 1920). Hill revealed his anxiety about the rise of a polyglot, urban nation in “The Census—Facts and Fancies,” dated 12 March 1921, an unsigned type-script address. Folder “Papers Written by J. A. Hill,” box 4, *Miscellaneous Records of Joseph A. Hill, 1910–1940*, Chief Statistician.

6. Daniel Folkmar, *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* (Washington, D.C., 1911), 96. Folder “Indians Not Taxed 1910,” box 148. *Memoranda and Notes of Joseph A. Hill, 1905–1940*, Chief Statistician.

7. For these statistics, see Brian Gratton and Emily Klancher Merchant, “Immigration, Repatriation, Deportation: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States, 1920 to 1950,” *International Migration Review* 47, no. 4 (December 2013): 944–75;

1 and Gratton and Merchant, “An Immigrant’s Tale: The Mexican American Southwest, 1850
2 to 1950,” *Social Science History* 39 (2015): 521–50.

3 8. Goethe’s letter to Representative John N. Garner (dated 16 January 1930) was posted in
4 U.S. Congress, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Hearings on “Western
5 Hemisphere Immigration,” 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 29 January 1930, 165. Congressional hearings
6 also show that employers supporting Mexican immigration used racial arguments, pointing
7 to Mexicans’ suitability as docile, nonthreatening, and temporary workers. James Slayden,
8 “Some Observations on Mexican Immigration,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political
9 and Social Science* 93, no. 1 (1921): 25. Mexicans suffered substantially greater violence in
10 Texas than in other states. See William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob
11 Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848–1928* (New York, 2013).

12 9. *In re Rodriguez*, 81 F. 337 (W.D. Tex. 1897). Glenn E. Hoover, “Our Mexican
13 Immigrants,” *Foreign Affairs* 8, no. 1 (1929): 99–107. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924
14 extended citizenship rights to indigenous persons born in the United States.

15 10. “Mexican Immigration,” *New York Times*, 13 October 1929, E4. José Vasconcelos,
16 “Raza Pura o Raza Mezclada,” *La Prensa*, 13 December 1926, 3; Rodolfo Uranga, “Glosario
17 del día,” *La Prensa*, 1 November 1929, 1. The core text is Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica:
18 Misión de la raza iberoamericana* (Paris, 1925).

19 11. Manuel Gamio, *Forjando patria* (1916; reprint Mexico, 1960), 98. For the “deep
20 ties to Vasconcelos” among Mexican American leaders in the United States, see Benjamin H.
21 Johnson, “The Cosmic Race in Texas: Racial Fusion, White Supremacy, and Civil Rights
22 Politics,” *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 411. Gamio’s racial ide-
23 ology remains subject to debate. In “Race, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*,” Alan Knight
24 concludes that most Mexican intellectuals, including Gamio, believed to some degree in
25 innate, biologically determined racial characteristics; *The Idea of Race in Latin America,
26 1870–1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin, 1990), 71–113. Compare Casey Walsh, “Eugenic
27 Acculturation: Manuel Gamio, Migration Studies, and the Anthropology of Development
28 in Mexico, 1910–1940,” *Latin American Perspectives* 31, no. 5 (September 2004): 118–45; Pablo
29 Yankelevich, *¿Deseables o inconvenientes? Las fronteras de la extranjería en el México pos-
30 revolucionario* (Mexico City, 2011), David Fitzgerald and David Cook-Martin, *Culling the
31 Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Cambridge,
32 Mass.), 218–19, 233–48; and for the strongest racial view, Alexandra Stern, “Mestizofilia,
33 biotipología y eugenesia en el México posrevolucionario: Hacia una historia de la ciencia y
34 el estado, 1920–1960,” *Relaciones* 21, no. 81 (1999): 59–91. Mara Loveman’s recent treatment
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36 in Latin America* (New York, 2014), 217–20.

37 12. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the
38 United States Taken in the Year 1930*, vol. II: *Population 1930: General Report, Statistics
39 by Subjects* (Washington, D.C., 1933), 27. For enumerator instructions, see Ruggles et al.,
40 *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series*, <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1940.shtml>
(accessed 21 April 2015).

41 13. U.S. Immigration Commission member W. W. Husband recommended a two-
42 generation race question for Europeans in 1909 testimony before the Senate, on the grounds
43 that the third generation would assimilate. Joel Perlmann, “Race or People: Federal Race
44 Classifications for Europeans in America, 1898–1913,” *Levy Economics Institute Working
45 Paper*, no. 320, January 2001.

1 14. Jennifer L. Hochschild and Brenna Marea Powell, "Racial Reorganization and
 2 the United States Census, 1850–1930: "Mulattoes, Half-breeds, Mixed Parentage, Hindoos,
 3 and the Mexican Race," *Studies in American Political Development* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008):
 4 59–96 (81). An example of the common use of its conclusions is Cybelle Fox and Thomas A.
 5 Guglielmo, "Blacks, Mexicans, and European Immigrants, 1890–1945," *American Journal of*
 6 *Sociology* 118, no. 2 (September 2012): 353. Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican*
 7 *Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900–1940* (Westport, Conn., 1976), 137. Anderson,
 8 *The American Census*, 156. Congressional demands might influence the bureau, but staff
 9 successfully resisted those they thought unreasonable. See the comments of the Chairman
 10 of the House Committee on the Census, the Hon. J. Hart Fenn, in "Provisions of the Census
 11 Bill," *Congressional Digest* 8, no. 2 (February 1929): 45–64, and copious archival evidence
 12 in the records of the Census Advisory Committee. See, for example, folder "Minutes
 13 Joint Advisory Committee October 18 1929," Minutes of Meetings Correspondence and
 14 Reports April 16 and 17, 1926, to October 1932. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record
 15 Group 29.3.2, Entry 148, Administrative Records of the Bureau of the Census, Records
 16 of the Census Advisory Committee (hereafter Census Advisory Committee). See as well,
 17 U.S. Congress, "Western Hemisphere Immigration," 18–19 April 1930, and folders "67102,"
 18 "67102 (Part 3)," "67102/8" "Fifteenth Census of Population," and folder "75303/26–75315/29,"
 19 box 141. Record Group 40.2, General Records of the Department of Commerce, Office of
 20 the Secretary General, General Correspondence, 1903–50 (hereafter Commerce), National
 21 Archives, College Park, Md.

19 15. On stationery of the Office of the Chief Clerk of the Census Bureau, dated
 20 5 February 1926. Folder "Secretary's Saturday Morning Conferences 1922–1927."
 21 Correspondence of Joseph A. Hill, 1911–32 S-Z. Chief Statistician.

22 16. On the Committee's history, see "Fiftieth Anniversary of Census Advisory
 23 Committee," *American Statistician* 23, no. 4 (October 1969): 20–22. Diana Lynn Magnuson
 24 reviews the committee's work in "The Making of a Modern Census: The United States
 25 Census Population, 1790–1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1995). Folder
 26 "Advisory Committee, 14 and 15 December 1928, "List of Topics to be Taken up with the
 27 Advisory Committee (preliminary)," Minutes of Meetings Correspondence and Reports 16
 28 and 17 April 1926, to October 1932, Census Advisory Committee.

27 17. "Minutes of . . . April 21, 1934." Folder "ACMeeting, April 21, 1934," box Census
 28 Advisory Committee . . . 17–18 March 1933 to 13–14 November 1936, Census Advisory
 29 Committee.

30 18. Lamont's text copies a memorandum sent him by E. Dana Durand on 2 November
 31 1929. (Durand, director of the 1910 census, served in a variety of statistical positions in
 32 the Department of Commerce). Folder "Minutes . . . JAC October 18 1929," "Minutes of
 33 Meetings Correspondence and Reports April 16 and 17, 1926 to October 1932," Census
 34 Advisory Committee.

34 19. John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish American*
 35 *Identity in New Mexico, 1880s–1930s* (Albuquerque, 2004); Brian Gratton, Emily Merchant,
 36 and Myron Gutmann, "Race and Deportation: Mexicans in the 1930 and 1940 Censuses,"
 37 paper delivered at meeting of the Science History Association, October 2008.

37 20. "Cutting Works for box Bill," *La Estrella* (Las Cruces, N.M.), 4 May 1929, 2.

38 21. "¿Mexicanos o Americanos que somos?," from *El Nuevo Mexicano*, reprinted
 in *La Estrella*, 1 March 1930, 1, and 29 March 1930, and "En Cuanto al Censo," reprinted

1 in *La Estrella*, 5 April 1930, 1. “Hay que estar bien de acuerdo con los enumeradores,”
 2 *El Defensor del Pueblo*, 14 March 1930, 2. In contrast to his New Mexican colleagues,
 3 Rodolfo Uranga advised readers to report that they were Mexicans. “Glosario del día,”
 4 *La Prensa*, 1 November 1929, 1.

5 22. *La Prensa* reported census results on 5 August 1931 (“La población Mexicana
 6 de E. Unidos aumento ciento por ciento en diez años,” 1), describing the Mexican race
 7 classification without comment, as did *El Tucsonense* on 6 August 1931 (“Cuántos Mexicanos
 8 hay en los Estados Unidos según el censo federal,” 1). F. Arturo Rosales, “Shifting Self
 9 Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness among Mexicans in Houston 1930–1946,” *Aztlan*
 10 16, no. 1–2 (1985): 82–84. Beginning in 1930, the Mexican census replaced racial categories
 11 with language inquiries. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, <http://www.inegi.org.mx/> (accessed 23 March 2014).

12 23. Perales’s papers make clear his critical role in LULAC: Alonso S. Perales Papers,
 13 Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries (hereafter Perales
 14 Papers). Partial accounts of this transformative, controversial, and complex figure can be
 15 found in *In Defense of My People: Alonso S. Perales and the Development of Mexican-American*
 16 *Public Intellectuals*, ed. Michael A. Olivas (Houston, 2012); Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans,*
 17 *Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin,
 18 2009); and Perales’s *En Defensa de mi Raza* (San Antonio, 1936–37), in two volumes, or
 19 “Tomos.” Family records in folder 1, box 1, Perales Papers. For Congressional testimony,
 20 U.S. Congress, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Hearings on
 21 “Western Hemisphere Immigration,” 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 29 January 1930, 169–70, 179–89
 22 (Canales as “J.C. Canales”). Perales and others commonly noted the dual origins of
 23 *mestizaje* (see draft of an article dated October 1924, folder 12, box 8, Perales Papers); reference
 24 to a bronze race draws on Valconcelos’s phrase *la raza de bronce*.

25 24. “El censo que se levantara el mes de abril próximo dará a los mexicanos una
 26 clasificación separada,” *La Prensa*, 19 March 1930, 1. Under various titles, the piece was
 27 published widely: *El Defensor* (Edinburg, Tex.), 28 March 1930, 1; *El Heraldico Mexicano*
 28 (San Antonio), 30 March 1930, 1; *El Tucsonense*, 22 March 1930, 2. Perales’s census piece
 29 followed on the heels of articles praising his defense of persons of Mexican origin in con-
 30 gressional hearings. See, for example, “El Lic Perales defiende enérgicamente a los mexi-
 31 canos,” *El Defensor*, 7 February 1930, 1. Schor cites a letter from Hill to Perales asking that
 32 he carry out publicity for the census, following a recommendation from Paul S. Taylor.
 33 See Schor, *Compter et Classer*, 254 and n. 36.

34 25. His ally and close friend, H. (Hector) T. Manuel, did warn Perales in 1931 of poten-
 35 tial consequences. Manuel to Perales, 30 June 1931, folder 6, box 2, Perales Papers.

36 26. Perales to Cleofas Calleros, 10 October 1936, folder 41, box 4, Perales Papers.
 37 Perales sent similarly worded letters to John W. Brown, Texas State Health Officer and to
 38 C. K. Quin, mayor of San Antonio, on 28 November 1936: folders 9 and 32, box 4, Perales
 39 Papers. Villar made the attack in the newspaper *Mexico en el Valle*, published in Mission,
 40 Tex. Folder 24, box 1, Perales Papers; Perales’s reaction can be seen in a letter to *La Prensa*
 41 publisher Federico Allen Hinojosa, 23 October 1927, folder 9, box 4, Perales Papers.

42 27. Neil Foley, “Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and the Faustian Pact with
 43 Whiteness,” *Reflexiones 1997*, ed. Neil Foley (Austin, 1998), 53–70. For a forthright critique
 44 of Foley’s position, see Johnson, “The Cosmic Race.” Allred’s opinion cited the seminal
 45 case *In Re Rodríguez*. Perales to David Casas, 34 April 1941, folder 25, box 1, Perales Papers.

1 The terminology found its way into the 1943 Texas legislature's resolution asserting that
 2 "all persons of the Caucasian Race" had equal rights. Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for
 3 Caucasian Rights," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1212–38.

4 28. Machado to Perales, 27 March 1928. Folder 29, box 4, Perales Papers.

5 29. "La inutilidad de los consolados de facción," *El Heraldo de México*, 27 January
 6 1921, 4. "Página Editorial," *Gráfico*, 2 October 1927, 10. "Los mexicanos en Indiana Harbor
 7 se encuentran disgustados," *La Prensa*, 14 August 1925, 12; "El Embajador Morrow envi-
 8 ara la protesta de los niños mexicanos a Washington," 16 May 1929, *La Prensa* (New York
 9 City), 1; "Miami odiosa distinción a nuestros compatriotas," *La Prensa*, 18 October 1929, 6.
 10 "Lockhart, Tex. Una protesta por el maltrato a los mexicanos," *La Prensa*, 14 March 1932, 8;
 11 "Galveston, Tex. Se exhiben películas mexicanas," *La Prensa*, 15 September 1935, 16;
 12 "La Protesta Presentada a Morrow," *La Prensa*, 20 May 1929, 1; "Se insiste en que no se
 13 ha hecho separación . . ." *La Prensa*, 24 May 1929, 2; "Protesta de la Unión Hispano
 14 Americana," *La Prensa*, 26 June 1939, 2. These remarks appeared side by side with protests
 15 against racial discrimination against those of Mexican origin. A graceful attempt to bridge
 16 this gap is "Las clasificaciones raciales," *La Prensa*, 15 October 1936, 3. It is noteworthy that
 17 newspapers reported hostility to *razas de color* in Mexico itself, as in that country's immi-
 18 gration policy: "No se permitirá la inmigración de los negros . . .," *El Heraldo de México*
 19 (Los Angeles), 9 February 1923, 3; "Restricción para que vayan Sirios, Turcos y Arabes a
 20 Méx.," *El Heraldo de México*, 26 July 1927, 4; "En Queretaro y San Luís Potosí ya no quieren
 21 más chinos," *El Heraldo de México*, 15 January 1927, 1; and "No vendrá más inmigración
 22 mexicana a este país," *El Tucsonense*, 13 January 1921, 3.

23 30. Anderson, *The American Census*, 180. Jan van der Tak, *Demographic Destinies: Interviews with Presidents and Secretary-Treasurers of the Population Association of America* (Population Association of America, 1991), quotation, 34.

24 31. Pascal Whelpton, "Population of the United States 1925 to 1975," *American Journal of Sociology* 34 (1928): 253–70. Locales, such as San Antonio, that reported Mexicans separately provided the first clues to differences. During the 1920s, the Los Angeles County Public Health Department published rates by "nationality" with Mexicans as a separate category with high rates of infant mortality and tuberculosis. See Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879–1939* (Berkeley, 2006), chap. 3, esp. 92. Most public health literature emphasized socioeconomic rather than racial reasons for differences in mortality rates. Compare Benjamin Goldberg, "Tuberculosis in Racial Types with Special Reference to Mexicans," *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health* 19, no. 3 (March 1929): 274–84; to Godias J. Drolet, "Discussion," *ibid.*, 285–86; "Significance of Infant Mortality Data in Appraisal of an Urban Community," by A. D. H. Kaplan, *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health* 2, no. 10 (October 1932): 1037–49; and n.a., "Child Hygiene," *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health* 22, no. 2 (February 1932): 214–17. Despite such evidence, the secondary literature asserts that racial views dominated. See Molina, *Fit to be Citizens*, and Emily K. Abel, *Tuberculosis and the Politics of Exclusion: A History of Public Health and Migration to Los Angeles* (New Brunswick, 2008), 68. The 1930 census category promised the first separate data for the national population. Mark Ellis, "What Future for Whites? Population Projections and Racialised Imaginaries in the U.S.," *International Journal of Population Geography* 7 (2001): 213–29 (219). Warren S. Thompson, "The Field of Demography," *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health* 26, no. 5 (May 1936): 499–501.

32. Edward J. Noble, Under Secretary, Department of Commerce, concluded in 1939 that “no objection was made to [racial classification] in the 1930s Census reports, either at the time these reports were issued, or for several years thereafter.” Noble to Secretary of State [Cordell Hull], 14 September 1939. Folder “67104–67104 (Part 1A),” box 141, Commerce. United States, President’s Research Committee on Social Trends, *Recent Social Trends in the United States* (New York, 1933).

33. Folder “Vital Statistics Division,” box 1, and T. T. Murphy, Chief Statistician for Vital Statistics, to Hill, folder “Vital Statistics Division,” box 3, *Office File of Joseph A. Hill, 1920–1940*, Chief Statistician. *Vital Statistics of the United States 1939*, Part 1. Prepared by Halbert L. Dunn, Chief Statistician for Vital Statistics (Washington, D.C., 1941), 2. For inaccuracy of recording, see U.S. Department of Commerce, *Mortality Statistics 1931* (Washington, D.C., 1935), 9.

34. “Minutes of . . . April 21, 1934,” folder “AC Meeting April 21, 1934,” “Census Advisory Committee . . . March 17 and 18 1933 to November 13 and 14 1936,” Census Advisory Committee. See Schor’s similar treatment of this document and additional communication between Hill and the vital statistics division, especially regarding difficulties in New Mexico, *Compter et Classer*, 255–66 n. 40.

35. Halbert L. Dunn, “Development of Vital Statistics in the Bureau of the Census,” *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation’s Health* 25, no. 12 (December 1935): 1321–26. Federal Security Agency, U.S. Public Health Service, National Office of Vital Statistics, *United States Life Tables and Actuarial Tables 1939–1941* (Washington, D.C., 1947), by Thomas N. E. Greville but under Dunn’s supervision, 104. For Dunn’s influence, see “Halbert L. Dunn,” in the official bureau history page, http://www.census.gov/history/www/census_then_now/notable_alumni/halbert_l_dunn.html (accessed 21 April 2015). Folder “V-2 Vital Statistics Coding,” box 159, *Memoranda and Notes of Joseph A. Hill, 1905–35*, Chief Statistician.

36. Cutting’s biographer shows that the senator’s sympathies, as well as the votes necessary to his success, lay in the Hispanic population. Richard Lowitt, *Bronson M. Cutting: Progressive Politician* (Albuquerque, 1992), 171–72, 213, and 323.

37. Folder “Field, 1934–1935,” box 6, Record Group 29.3.1, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Administrative Records of the Bureau of the Census 1860–1990, Records of the Office of the Director, General Records Maintained by William Lane Austin, 1922–41 (hereafter Austin), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

38. Austin to Cutting, 21 February 1935. Folder “Field, 1934–1935,” box 6, Austin.

39. Schor, *Compter et Classer*, 253–54. Such a defense had to maintain that Mexicans were not persons of color, who, under Texas and other state laws, could be or had to be segregated from whites. On this characteristically LULAC strategy, see Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin, 1993), 32–33, and Craig Allen Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans and National Policy* (College Station, Tex., 2005). Mario García, “Mexican Americans and the Politics of Citizenship: The Case of El Paso, 1936,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 59, no. 2 (1 April 1984): 187–204.

40. “El Paso Baby Death Figure Found Highest,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 4 June 1935, 1. “Indigent Cases Increase Death,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 18 July 1935, 3. “Birth Record Changed,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 5 October 1936, 2. Reaction was immediate, as can be seen in “C.C. Protests Death Record System,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 7 October 1936, 1–2, expressing a diverse set of complainants, including the El Paso Chamber of Commerce.

1 The dismay over extremely high rates of infant mortality in poor sections of the city is
 2 visible well before the controversy: "E.P. Health Officer Will Advocate . . . to decrease
 3 death rate," *El Paso Herald Post*, 26 July 1933, 1; and "Multiplying Our Death Rates," *El Paso*
 4 *Herald-Post*, 28 July 1933, 4. Staff accounts stressed poverty and excessive birth rates as the
 5 causes, both considerably higher in the Mexican-origin population of the city. McCamant
 6 repeatedly insisted that better housing, wages, and living conditions for Mexicans were
 7 needed to reduce high death rates. "Las protestas se llevarán hasta la C. de Washington,"
 8 *El Continental* (El Paso), 8 October 1936, 1. See also "El mexicano es raza de 'color,'" *El Continental*, 6 October 1936, 1.

9 41. Folder 10, box 4, Perales Papers. Galvan, "A Fair, True, and Unbiased Explanation
 10 of the Colored Classification," *LULAC News* 3, no. 8 (December 1936): 8–9, and see, in the
 11 same issue, Cleofas Calleros, "Facts about the 'Colored' Classification," 9–10.

12 42. Quin, folder 32, box 4, Perales Papers. F. I. Montemayor, 12 October 1936, to
 13 Perales from Ladies Council No. 15 of LULAC (Laredo, Tex.), box 2, folder 7, Perales
 14 Papers. Garza to Chávez, 29 October 1936, folder 48, box 1, *Series I: Correspondence*.
 15 *General Materials, 1923–1963. General Correspondence, 1934–1936*, Dennis Chávez Papers,
 16 Center for Southwest Research, General Library, University of New Mexico (hereafter
 17 Chávez Papers). *La Prensa* published numerous articles on the controversy in October
 18 and November 1936; Chávez's instrumental role can be seen in *El Continental*, 13 and
 19 18 October 1936 ("Enérgica Queja del Senador Chávez . . .," 1, and "Se da fin al asunto de
 20 la clasificación . . .," 1); "Protesta de un Senador por Nuevo México," *La Prensa*, 17 October
 21 1936, 1.

22 43. Folder "67103 (part 2)," box 141, Commerce. Although on leave, Roper wired
 23 Chávez on 14 October, assuring him that an investigation was under way. This folder
 24 contains the correspondence linked to Draper's and Roper's hurried telegrams of
 25 apology.

26 44. Folder "67103 (part 2)," box 141, Commerce. See Perales's use of this telegram in
 27 *La Prensa*, 26 November 1936: Alonso S. Perales, "La clasificación de los mexicanos como
 28 blancos," 2. For additional evidence of Maverick's attention to the Mexican American con-
 29 stituency (and his uneven relationship with Perales), see folder 9, box 1, and folder 1, box 5,
 30 Perales Papers. "El representante Maverick, agasado," *La Prensa*, 18 December 1936, 1,
 31 and "Hoy tendrá lugar el banquete al representante Maverick," 21 December 1936, 2. See
 32 Cynthia E. Orozco, "In Defense of My People: Alonso Perales and the Moral Construction
 33 of Citizenship," in Michael A. Olivas, ed., *In Defense of My People*. Perales described Garner
 34 as "a very good friend of our people." Perales to Roberto E. Austin, 15 March 1932, folder 9,
 35 box 4, Perales Papers.

36 45. Maverick to Austin, 15 October 1936. folder 23, box 1, Perales Papers. Austin replied
 37 to Maverick on 26 October, blaming local officials for racial categorization. Maverick made
 38 sure that Perales had copies of this correspondence. Maverick to Perales, 19 October 1936.
 Austin to Maverick, 28 October 1936. Folder 1, box 5. Quin to Perales, 2 December 1936.
 Folder 32, box 4, Perales Papers.

46. "Nueva protesta por el caso de McCamant," *El Continental*, 1 November 1936, 2;
 "La clasificación de mexicanos," *La Prensa*, 20 October 1936, 1. "Gestiones de la Embajada
 Mexicana en el caso de la clasificación," *La Prensa*, 2 December 1936, 1, the last referring
 to a subsequent controversy over Social Security forms. Perales, *En defensa de mi raza*,
 Tomo 2, 39.

1 47. Perales to Brown, 28 November 1936, folder 9, box 4. Perales to Quin, folder 32,
 2 box 4, Perales Papers. Quin replied that the Health Department had never “classified
 3 our Mexican people as colored.” The principal leader in the El Paso protest, Cleofas
 4 Calleros, was instrumental to Perales’s conversion. folder 41, box 4, Perales Papers. See
 5 also *En Defensa*, Tomo 2, 41, without date, under the title “Mas Gestiones en pro de los
 6 mexicanos . . . El Represente Maverick Propone el Medio de evitar nuevos incidentes” (The
 7 article appeared in *La Prensa*, 21 October 1936, 1). Perales’s draft dated 22 January 1938 of
 8 a letter to Señorita Estelle Ripley Hudson. Folder 7, box 5, Perales Papers. For a forthright
 9 assertion of his newly minted convictions, see Perales’s letter to “The White Man’s Union
 10 Association,” of Wharton, Tex., 5 July 1937, Tomo 2, 93–94.

48. Schor cites Director of the Census to Dr. Halbert L. Dunn and a similarly
 emphatic message from Austin on 3 December 1936. *Compter et Classer*, 257.

49. Schor, *Compter et Classer*, 258, 338.

50. Patrick D. Lukens, *A Quiet Victory for Latino Rights: FDR and the Controversy
 Over “Whiteness”* (Tucson, 2012), 162–63. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez also mentions Dunn’s
 position in “Good Neighbors and White Mexicans: Constructing Race and Nation on the
 Mexico-U.S. Border,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 25–26.

51. The unsigned memorandum appears to be the work of Truesdell. Folder
 “Population, 1940,” box 6, Austin.

52. Folder “Census Advisory Committee 6/16/39,” “Census Advisory Committee . . .
 March 17 and 18 1933 to November 13 and 14 1936 [*sic*],” Census Advisory Committee. See
 Magnuson, “Making of a Modern Census,” for a general discussion (101–5); and Schor,
Compter et Classer (256, 260), for a variant of the board’s recommendation.

53. Noble to Secretary of State [Cordell Hull], 14 September 1939. Folder “67104–
 67104 (Part 1A),” box 141, Commerce.

54. Secretary of State Henry Louis Stimson saw immigration restriction as serving
 only to “anger” Mexico and other Latin American nations. See [Stimson] to Lamont,
 15 February 1930. Folder “75303/26–75315/29,” box 141, Commerce. In chaps. 3 and 4 of
A Quiet Victory, Lukens demonstrates the State Department’s early opposition to restric-
 tion and the pro-Mexican orientation of Assistant and Under Secretary of State Sumner
 Wells and other State Department officials. His key argument for linkage to the race vari-
 able in the Andrade case is presented on pages 143–44; see, generally, chaps. 7 and 8. For
 the confusion of race and nationality in naturalization regulations, see the series by Marian
 L. Smith, “Race, Nationality, and Reality,” *Prologue Magazine* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2002):
 91–105.

55. Folder “Advisory Committee Meeting June 16, 17, 18 1939,” Minutes of Meetings
 Correspondence and Reports 17–18 March 1933 to 13–14 November 1936, Census Advisory
 Committee.

56. After Secretary Hopkins fell seriously ill, Thorp claimed he became the unofficial
 director of the department. Oral History Interview with Willard L. Thorp, Amherst, Mass.,
 10 July 1971, by Richard D. McKinzie and Theodore A. Wilson. Harry S. Truman Library,
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/thorpw.htm> (accessed 21 April 2015). Lukens, *A Quiet
 Victory*, 166–67; initial and subsequent quotations from Noble are in folder 67104–67104
 (Part 1A), box 141, Commerce.

57. Folder “M,” box 3, Index to correspondence 1935–38 of the Statistical Research
 Division, Chief Statistician.

1 58. Lukens, *A Small Victory*, 167–68, citing *Race Classification in the 1940 U.S.*
 2 *Census*. File III-411–35. Archivo Histórico de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores,
 3 Mexico City. Professor Lukens has courteously provided us with copies of these archi-
 val documents.

4 59. Patiño's undated memorandum stated that his office received Daniels's request
 5 on 22 November, after the decision was made. Lukens concludes that the Mexican experts
 6 did not fully support the idea of a separate classification, a view with which we disagree.
 7 See Lukens, *A Small Victory*, 168–69. Gamio had, by this time, become insistent that cul-
 8 tural markers be used to distinguish between indigenous, mestizo, and European groups.
 9 Loveman, *National Colors*, 236–37. His memorandum indicated this preference; since it
 10 could not be carried out in the United States, a racial category would be better than no
 distinction.

11 60. Folder “67104–67104 (Part 1A),” box 141, Commerce.

12 61. Lukens argues reasonably that its role in the Andrade case implies that the
 13 Mexican government would have rejected a racial category. Guglielmo shows that that
 14 government lobbied strenuously for antidiscrimination and “Caucasian” rights bills in
 Texas in the early 1940s. See “Fighting for Caucasian Rights.”

15 62. “Los Mexicanos Incluidos en la Raza Blanca . . .,” *La Prensa*, 11 February 1940, 1.
 16 “En la clasificación racial del censo . . .,” *La Prensa*, 13 February 1940, 1. “La Última Barrera,”
 17 *La Prensa*, 19 February 1940, 3. Hopkins asserted that the 1930 classification had been the
 18 result of the desire of health officials for a special study of persons of Mexican origin.
 19 Overmyer-Velázquez, “Constructing Race,” finds evidence in U.S. government archives of
 active public protest (and support) of a separate category.

20 63. Folder “Census Advisory Committee, Jan. 5 and 6, 1940,” Minutes of Meetings
 21 Correspondence and Reports 18–18 March 1933 to 13–14 November 1936, Census Advisory
 22 Committee. Schor notes this document (259–60) but does not treat closely the attempt to
 23 reinstate the category.

24 64. “Statistics and Politics: The ‘Hispanic Issue’ in the 1980 Census,” *Demography* 23,
 25 no. 3 (August 1986): 403–18 (406). Benjamin Francis-Fallon covers this political history
 26 more sympathetically in “Minority Reports: The Emergence of Pan-Hispanic Politics” (Ph.D.
 27 diss., Georgetown University, 2012). His account demonstrates the advocacy among cer-
 28 tain Mexican American leaders of a racial category. See chaps. 5 and 10. For a fuller account
 29 of the attempt of minority groups to increase their counts in the census, see Peter Skerry,
 30 *Counting on the Census? Race, Group Identity, and the Evasion of Politics* (Washington,
 D.C., 2000).

31 65. As David Hollinger remarks, a “race equivalent.” *PostEthnic America: Beyond*
Multiculturalism (New York, 1995), 29. See Francis-Fallon, “Minority Reports,” 340.

32 66. A. Robbin, “Classifying racial and ethnic group data: The politics of negotiation
 33 and accommodation,” *Journal of Government Information* 27, no. 2: 129–56. Anderson
 34 discusses these lobbies in *The American Census*, chap. 10, “Census Undercount and the
 35 Politics of Counting,” esp. 230–33.

36 67. O. Douglas Weeks, “The Texas-Mexican and Politics of South Texas,” *American*
Political Science Review 24, no. 3 (August 1930): 606–27. Rosales's “Shifting Self Perceptions”
 37 most eloquently describes the shift of perspectives between the generations.

38 68. Mark Ellis, “What Future for Whites?” 216; Michael Omi and Howard Winant,
Racial Formation in the United States (New York, 1994).

1 69. Clara Rodríguez, *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity*
2 (New York, 2000). For results in the 2010 census, see <http://www.census.gov/population/>
3 [www/documentation/twps0102/twps0102.pdf](http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0102/twps0102.pdf) (accessed 21 April 2015). For the new,
4 combined variable, see [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/14/u-s-census-](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/14/u-s-census-looking-at-big-changes-in-how-it-asks-about-race-and-ethnicity/)
5 [looking-at-big-changes-in-how-it-asks-about-race-and-ethnicity/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/14/u-s-census-looking-at-big-changes-in-how-it-asks-about-race-and-ethnicity/) (accessed 21 April 2015).
6 Kenneth Prewitt discusses this potential variable in *What Is Your Race? The Census and*
7 *Our Flawed Efforts to Classify Americans* (Princeton, 2013), 174–76, 201–7.

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Author Queries

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