The High Chamberlain of the Order of the Alamo has announced the arrival of the Queen of the Court of the Alamo, with a steady graceful walk she has reached the stage, decorated with a glorious Alamo backdrop. Now she must perform a physical endeavor she and her Court members have been practicing since they were first selected by men from the Order of the Alamo. Dressed in a glittering golden gown with a forty-pound fur-lined train, Her Gracious Majesty crouches down and dips her crowned head to the floor.\footnote{Interview by Author, December 14, 2011.} Spotlighted in this position with the most economically privileged realm of San Antonio society watching with admiration, the High Chamberlain of the Order of the Alamo announces, “No single story told and no dream slept upon can rival the magnificence of the coronations of the last century within the shadow of this historic redoubt – the Alamo.” The luxury of her gown and her position as she represents this highpoint in Alamo history are safely recorded in the 2009 Order of the Alamo yearbook, but there is no mention of the Court Bows performed by the Queen, Princess, and twenty-four Duchesses. However, on a grander scale, the Order of the Alamo omits a much larger realm of narratives, which they justify since none can “rival the magnificence or their coronations.” While that may be true, multiple narratives from the era of the Alamo have been left uncrowned and unrecognized in Alamo commemoration rituals.

The Order of the Alamo is just one of the associations created to preserve and honor their story of the Alamo. The San Antonio Conservation Society, the
Daughters of the Republic, and the Battle of the Flowers Association are a few of the other long-standing, Anglo-Texan organizations who have carefully monitored how their history is presented and understood.  

Today, many ethnically diverse organizations also contribute to commemorating history and identity. In April week of celebrations, known as Fiesta San Antonio, marks the moment for San Antonio to celebrate both Texas independence from Mexico and Mexican heritage.  

While many visitors and citizens of San Antonio sense the complications of this jointed celebration, the majority of Fiesta attendants do not. San Antonio’s popular memory of their history and identity excluded a multicultural narrative that recognizes cooperation and coexistence between Anglo-Texans and Tejanos. Rather, a Creation Mythology developed that enshrined fallen heroes from the Alamo and helped citizens to revise their history and memory of this event.

Today, Fiesta San Antonio is the annual city-wide cultural celebration that takes place in April to commemorate Texas history and heritage. The annual performance and celebration of history and identity in San Antonio reaps enormous economic benefits for the city. According to the Fiesta San Antonio website, the week has an “impact of almost $284 million for the city.”

This same economic study revealed more specific information about the demographic of the visitors. According to their studies, 88% of the visitors indicated they were Hispanic. Fiesta is comprised of numerous parades, various

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
coronations, and the vending of food and beverages that cater to the desires and entertainment of Fiesta guests. Since 1891, the citizens of San Antonio have recreated historic moments and celebrated history and identity.

Today, Fiesta also encompasses events honoring Tejano cultural achievements. In the years before Fiesta recognized ethnic Queens and Tejano cultural splendor, women and races omitted from the Creation Mythology and dishonored in public celebrations created their own forms of recognizing and celebrating their culture. San Antonio’s Chili Queens also became famous figures who provided hospitality with their cooking for a broad variety of customers with various economic and racial backgrounds. Mexican-American entertainment outside the realm of Fiesta also profited from the allure of their own culture and demand from tourists. Finally, gender and racial representation outside the graces of the Order’s Coronation became publicly acknowledged by the Fiesta Executive Committee and widely popular among San Antonio’s citizens.

When Texas became recognized as part of the United States, San Antonio became a focal point for state identity, which led to marginalized Mexican American participation and representation in history. In the period following the Alamo racial conflicts were political conflicts. The identity that emerged surrounding these sentiments shaped the identity of the San Antonio region as they began to envision themselves as Americans rather than Mexicans. By carefully constructing an ideal, genderized, racialized history of the birth of their nation, Anglo-Texan elite members of society, assert their possession of history and culture and their subsequent power to exclude alternative narratives that defy their definitions of class, race, and gender identity from public celebration. My research specifically focuses on the evolution of race
relations surrounding Alamo commemoration and the history of gender
construction and how sectors originally excluded from Fiesta managed to present
their history and identity as public queens, drag queens and queens of Tejano
entertainment.

Socio-Political-Racial-Psychological Context as White America Moves South

Anglo popular memory and common perceptions of history often are void of
Tejano experiences. When San Antonians began to embrace and emphasize their
American-ness, they consequently defined “American” as not “Mexican,” and began to
seriously shun Mexicans from their identity. These attitudes originated after the battle of
the Alamo and San Jacinto, after Texans had struggled to break free from Mexico. David
Weber, the author of The Spanish Frontier in North America, captures the immediate
politics and inter-racial conditions. His quote summarizes the perspective of Stephen F.
Austin, a prime political figure in the newly formed Republic,

Hispanophobia found its most strident and enduring rhetoric in Texas. Writing
from the United States in the spring of 1836, where he had gone to seek aid for
the cause of Texas independence, Stephen F. Austin drew the sides clearly. He
characterized the conflicts between Texas and Mexico as nothing less than ‘a war
of barbarism and of despotic principles, waged by the mongrel Spanish-Indian
and negro race, against civilization and the Anglo-American race,’ … bloodshed
hardened hatred toward Mexicans and their Hispanic forefathers.6

As part of his call for aid, Austin exaggerated racial disparities in San Antonio, claiming
that he needed help fighting a race war. This had been a common form of justification for
warfare as Americans spread West and laid claims to territories, acting out their Manifest
Destiny. The quote continues,

6 David J. Weber, The Spanish Frontier in North America (New Haven: Yale
… After their victory, Anglo-American rebels controlled not only Texas, but the writing of its history. They adopted the story line of their propagandists and added an additional twist – they portrayed themselves as heroic, a ‘superior race of men’” …a repudiation of the Spanish past became an essential part of Texans’ self-identity. The Alamo is a memorial to this period in time that was defined by racial and political division. The animosity and aggression, presented here, remained as a way of legitimizing their new American identity. These sentiments became widespread and soon led to “some 200 Tejano families were driven out of San Antonio. By 1856 the Tejano population, once the overwhelming majority in the city, was cut in half.” ⁸ While Anglos had previously participated in the Mexican and Tejano celebrations of the Virgen de la Guadalupe in December and other co-racial spaces and events, stricter racial segregation began to surface as San Antonio grew into its American identity and older generations disappeared. ⁹ As time lapsed from the days of Mexican reign, the Tejano place in Texan society and Texan memory declined. The generations following Texan independence were unaware or unconcerned with the history of the Tejanos who had fought on the Texas side at the Battle of the Alamo. In its entirety, Weber presents the racial reasoning that legitimized Anglo-Texans’ power to write their history and their future Texan identity. Anglo-Texans depicted themselves as heroes in a war of race that subordinated Mexico. With the opportunity to reinvent themselves with the writing of a new history and new origin, many Anglo San Antonians denied their Mexican political heritage, which also put strains on addressing the Mexican cultural heritage that had presided in

⁷ Ibid, 339.
⁹ Ibid, 4.
the area. All of these sentiments became wrapped up in their telling of history and still emerges in mythic narratives and celebrations today.

**MYTHOLOGY**

The racial divide becomes more visible and permanently communicated in popular memory with the development of Creation Mythology. Stehpen F. Austin’s rhetoric inspired the exclusion of a just Tejano representation in Anglo-Texas historic narrative. Revising the memory of the Alamo involved distancing citizens from the exaggerated demonic evils Austin spoke of and lessening the horror and loss that had been associated with the landmark since 1836. A mythologized version of the Alamo events helped achieve a new, more approachable public recognition of this history. Once this myth of the Alamo and its participants was established, it soon became referred to as Texas creation mythology. Though the Alamo was a place of defeat, it was a sacrifice that led to Texan independence and, thus, the creation of Texas. The sacrifice, creation, and birth bring forth vital moments that become associated with specific genders, races, and historical figures. Before Texans were able to recognize the Alamo as a celebratory setting, they infused the history with Christian symbolism and segregated themselves from their Mexican identity. By introducing Christian morals and structures into history, Christianity and Anglo-elitism affected how gender roles were shaped and established as models for today. Holly Brear, the author of *Inheriting the Alamo: Ritual and Myth*, specifically explores the reasoning behind how the history has been constructed (and society impacted), she shows the development of Anglo-American sexual and political preferences through mythology. More heritage-inclined Anglo-Texans emphasized

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certain narratives of the Alamo and also fit the story to suit their own cultural, religious, and racial beliefs. Anglo men became generally characterized as chivalrous, asexual, and dedicated to fighting to the death for Texan victory. White women became hallowed for their loyalty to white men and the state, asexuality, maternity, dependence, and inactivity. Meanwhile, both Mexican men and women are categorized as overly sexual, lazy, deviant, immoral, and violent. Thus, the exaggerated main figures from Texan creation mythology create a dichotomy designated by gender and race, each becoming associated with certain historic ideals and stereotypes.

Although the Alamo was a defeat for Texans, the bravery, morality, courage, and sacrifice have been mythologized to affirm white male superiority. The historically enshrined characters, William Barrett Travis, Bowie, and Davy Crockett, quickly became associated with the Holy Trinity. Holly Brear provides an extensive explanation of the links between history and religion and the ultimate development and acceptance of the Texan creation myth. Since the Alamo was viewed as a sacrifice necessary for obtaining independence, William B. Travis became associated with Jesus. Davy Crockett adopted the reputation of the Holy Spirit since he embodied older frontier traditions of the time. His own daring, adventurous reputation in the South carried older heroic traditions into Texan history. Jim Bowie became associated with the Holy Father since he had a notorious reputation of success and vivacious aggression in the Old West. Famous for his knife, Bowie fought his enemies in classic style: close range. He also converted to Catholicism and married a descendant of a Canary Islander, the earliest inhabitants of San

Antonio. He thus exhibited more traditional assimilation into Mexico, as opposed to Crockett and Travis who were in a position to devote themselves personally to achieving independence.\textsuperscript{13} It is important to note that this is a passing phase, for the degree of integration, seen by Bowie, was on its way out, according to myth. The religious symbolism associated with these characters further hallowed their identities, making them upstanding, morally righteous figures.

According to creation mythology, Anglo Texans attribute Santa Anna’s eventual loss at the Battle of San Jacinto to his promiscuous habits, whereas Travis was an asexual hero who preserved his passion for warfare. According to Brear’s research, mythology praises Travis for his focus and devotion to the welfare of Texas rather than a sexual fascination with a Mexican woman. When Travis refuses a renowned seductress, who later falls for Santa Anna, Brear notes the implications this has on his image in Texan mythology,

Travis… resists the unmanning seductivity of such sexual beings. He chooses to fight for Texas, which he professes to ‘love.’ The image of Travis is that of an intelligent and honorable man, investing his time, love, and energy in real estate, as opposed to Santa Anna, who falls prey to his own animal nature and consequently loses Texas.”\textsuperscript{14}

Travis’ abstinence and asexual, patriotic devotion becomes a very admirable characteristic, comparable to knighthood of the medieval era.\textsuperscript{15} These moral qualities of Travis became a model of masculinity. The creation mythology secures the reputation of white men as morally just, ideal American leaders and protectors, while placing

\textsuperscript{13} Holly Brear, “Texas in Her Birth,” in Inheriting the Alamo: Ritual and Myth (Austin: University of Texas, 1995), 40.
\textsuperscript{14} Holly Brear, Inheriting the Alamo: Myth and Ritual at an American Shrine. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995) 55.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 59.
considerable libel on Mexican men as a whole. In Stephen F. Austin’s earlier quote, he emphasizes the dichotomy between good and evil, the civilized race and the barbaric mongrels.

Mythology has emphasized the sexuality or asexuality of most of the characters enshrined by Alamo history: men and women, Mexican and Anglo. Women are categorized based on their relationship and behavior with men. Holly Brear summarizes these gender roles:

Women in the Texas creation mythology are either purely sexual beings who tempt men and bring the downfall of those who become involved with them or they are faithful, asexual beings who believe in the eventual victory of the Anglo male and reserve themselves to be valuable social wombs in the creation of a new Texas society\textsuperscript{16}

As for the personification of white women, Susannah and Angelina Dickinson are the prime female characters in the creation mythology. They serve to glorify the mother-daughter gender roles that accompany the birth of Texas and they proceed to embody this birth, while maintaining ideal gender roles of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The creation myth hallows white women for their reproductive abilities and degrades Mexican women for their sexual appeal. When Santa Anna had descended upon the Alamo with his army, Travis accepted the challenge with fervor, knowing that he would not survive the battle or have the opportunity to pursue his engagement to Rebecca. Before he went out to fight, he gave his promise ring to Susannah Dickinson’s infant, Angelina. In mythology, this act has been interpreted to symbolize, how

Anglo women bring social reproductivity. These social wombs are the asexual women idealized during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Travis’ act of passing the ring to a

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 48.
prepubescent female emphasizes the asexuality of Anglo women involved in Texas creation mythology.\textsuperscript{17}

The creation mythology directly focuses on “the violent birth of a new nation” and does not fail to distinguish how Angelina represents this womb and promise for future generations.\textsuperscript{18} Here, Brear further emphasizes the importance of Travis not involving himself sexually with anyone at the Alamo, but also the introduction and significance of asexual young women in creation mythology. Brear is also careful to point out how Travis’ relations with Angelina could in no way be sexual because of the age difference. The innocent, pure mother and daughter are trusted with reproducing a pure Texan race. These figures with their sexual associations have enormous implications for the genders and races involved that surface in Alamo rituals today.

For ethnic men, the mythology places significant weight on Santa Anna’s sexual ways, which play a large role in the outcome of their state. Stephen F. Austin also alluded to the barbaric ways of this race. Here, ethnic women only surface in accordance with their tempting, seductive behavior with men. According to myth Santa Anna was seducing the Yellow Rose of Texas, Emily Morgan, when Sam Houston’s troops ambushed the Mexican army during their siesta. The mythology does not miss the opportunity to scold Santa Anna, and his innate Mexican sexuality, for the inopportune and inappropriate act during a vital moment of war. When focusing on Emily Morgan, this act also has implications and symbolism for women. Emily Morgan does, however, receive some compliments for her seduction of the dictator Santa Anna. In historic narratives, Emily Morgan was a beautiful, young mulatto slave, who was taken from her

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 60.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 31.
Texan plantation by Santa Anna as he was moving east with his army. She supposedly told one of her fellow slaves to run ahead and give Sam Houston the location of their camp. This is one of the very few instances in Texas history where a woman is congratulated for her sexual actions and allure. Simultaneously, Santa Anna is made a national fool for his inability to withstand a woman’s sexual pursuit. Yet, if we dwell on Emily Morgan, Holly Brear reveals that, mythology aside, this Emily character was a free, black woman void of any proof of relations with Santa Anna, though she was captured by his army. The serious misalignment of racial identity and representation is especially interesting. Brear explains some of the possible reasoning behind changing Emily into Emily Morgan, the Yellow Rose of Texas. Brear explains how, as a mulatto, Emily Morgan was the product of Southern racial mixing, part desirable, due to her white genes, and part dismissable, due to her black identity.

1891 STATE OF EVENTS

When President Harrison arrived in the city in 1891, San Antonians were very concerned with impressing the President during his first visit to their city. The speech he gave these Texan citizens demonstrated the economic environment of the time as cities across the nation were bustling and growing. He encouraged San Antonio to advance economically, with the same nationwide fervor of other cities. President Harrison proceeded to encourage San Antonio to develop its resources and discover its economic potential. He praised San Antonio for “its quaint and diversified architecture [that gave] it charm that few other places possess[ed]. [He] believe[d] that San Antonio [was] destined

19 Ibid, 47.
20 Ibid, 51.
to be a great city in less than a decade.” In his speech, Harrison also commented on San Antonio’s new American identity, saying, “henceforth [he will] know no sectional distinction between this South Texas town and the rest of the nation.” This reassurance reveals that San Antonio was trying to establish itself as American, but furthermore, that their annexation was complete. San Antonians had reached a point in their civic history when new loyalties were formed that led to an adopted national narrative. In the formal introduction to the President, describes the enthusiasm for adopting a new President, “he ha[d] been welcomed by people who love their government and its grand democratic principles as well as any of their brethren in any of her other states of territories.” His visit was planned to coincide with the Battle of the Flowers parade, a demonstration that surely would have communicated Texan nationalism.

Early Fiesta and Women’s History Role in Paving the Way for Public Commemoration

As men like Harrison and other curious Americans made their way south, San Antonio’s elite prepared an identity and history to display. Tourists introduced a new demand for culture and its corresponding amusements just as San Antonio began celebrating their history and identity. The development of the railroad created an opportunity for tourism and the opportunity to present San Antonio to the rest of the nation. Both Anglo and Mexican-American San Antonians grew more conscious of their appearance and began to realize that American tourists expected San Antonio to be a

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21 “Near the Alamo President Harrison at Historic San Antonio,” *Galveston Daily News*, April 21, 1891.
22 Ibid, Col F.
quaint, quasi-Mexican small town, stricken by the Alamo. Within the earliest forms of Fiesta, citizens struggled to establish how they wanted to present themselves and the history of San Antonio. Amidst this, early fiestas introduced new a new role for women, excitement and anxiety about becoming American. Hernandez-Ehrisman takes a closer look at their unlikely role in the performance and organization of history, explaining,

At a time when the ideology of separate spheres (for men and women) continued to define political and civic activities as part of men’s public sphere, women created ways to assume a limited public role by carrying their custodial duties to the world outside the home. Women crafted their own conceptions of citizenship... They used the parade to place themselves in the center of the city’s public life.\(^{24}\)

While women in the 19\(^{th}\) century had not played vital roles outside of the domestic sphere, Hernandez-Ehrisman stresses the importance of women creating a realm for themselves outside their traditional gender role. In 1891, elite Anglo women decided to commemorate the Battle of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto with a reenactment of the Battle of the Flowers. Here, women impersonated soldiers and a historic defeat. Yet, this symbolic role-playing was floral and done within decorated carriages. The real action was for those not in carriages. The women organized a parade with a route through downtown to highlight the new American additions, such as the courthouse and the new city hall, and end in front of the Alamo, where the Battle of Flowers would take place.\(^{25}\)

The parade route was chosen to highlight new buildings, revealing further Americanization that was visible through the new architecture of a new San Antonio. The women first initiated the practice of observing the past.

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\(^{24}\) Ibid, 36.
\(^{25}\) Ibid, 25.
In “Women and Chile at the Alamo,” Suzanne Bost provides some important observations and ideas about the role women have played in bringing about Alamo commemoration. She writes, “Making the battle women’s business obscured the brutal violence at the Alamo and trivialized Mexican opposition to U.S. conquest.”

The appearance of women, fresh out of their domestic realm, distanced the pain from recent history, helping to make the commemoration a party. Originating in 1891, the prominent women’s association, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas created a position of responsibility that would ensure the continuation of honoring Texas history. Their motives affirm this claim and the following speech announces their responsibility as women. The president of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas also outlined the motives for women’s involvement in preserving history,

Texas’ future is in the hands of her sons. Daily they go forth to achieve great things, and we must not blame them if, strong in their own strength, dazzled by the splendor of the present, they have somewhat forgotten the heroic deeds and sacrifices of the past. But it is not so with woman. Her work lies at home. Surrounded by the history of the family life, it is her duty to keep alive the sacred fire of tradition ... At the fireside, and for the most part in the school room, the children are hers. Her influence can bend their young minds whither she will. And so it seems to me, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, our duty lies plain before us. Let us leave the future of Texas to our brothers, and claim as our province the guarding of her holy past... Let us love to study Texas history and teach it to her children.

This quote demonstrates, quite clearly, the sentiment and concern these women possessed for honoring the past and also their place in society. As of 1893, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas took the responsibility of teaching Texas history in domestic, educational, and occasionally public realms, but they firmly state that their work lays at

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27 My emphasis.
28 Quoted in Hernandez-Ehrisman, *Inventing the Fiesta City*, 86.
home, close to children. Though some of their beliefs have adjusted, this determination to
preserve history without stepping outside gender boundaries has remained.

Though women recognized the power of their influence on the next generations, they did not show interest in occupying an authoritative role. In early Battle of the Flowers photographs, the women who participated in the parade were displayed as decoration. The women photographed were always dressed in white, with hats and all their finery. The delicacy of flowery decorations reflect gender ideals and standards of the Victorian era. Despite their new role in the public realm that dealt with public memory, these women upheld a very traditional image of womanhood. In fact, an overbearing, confident parade figure, Queen LOCO, from 1917, demonstrated women’s domestically-inclinations of the time. Hernandez-Ehrisman notes that these women were not feminists, but preoccupied with demonstrating the “dangers of empowered women.”

While these women may have taken initiative for the public commemoration of the Battle of the Alamo, they did not mean to assert themselves politically. While considered revolutionary for their time due to their participation in the recreation of warfare, their degree of public proactivism was deemed appropriate, delightful, and respectable at the time. The role of women in the organization of Fiesta did diminish in the 1930’s when men began to recognize the commercial potential of Fiesta. Today, events that highlight Anglo history and prestige are fronted by the men of the Order of the Alamo. In this way, the Daughters of the Republic have remained true to their beliefs that “Texas’ future is in

30 Hernandez-Ehrisman, Inventing the Fiesta City, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 70.
the hands of her sons.” These women have held true to their desire to help preserve Texas behind the scenes, in a traditionally feminine way.

The Battle of the Flowers contained a procession of bikes, donkeys, and decorated carriages split and passed by each other, providing a mock battlefield of flying flowers in front of the Alamo. In 1897, the Battle of the Flowers parade was described in *The Galveston Daily News* as a spectacle for its overwhelming activity and beauty and compares the decorated Alamo façade to “some fantastic opium vision,” “a kaleidoscope of changing colors and shifting scenes, and a medley of beauty and grotesquerie.” Rich, vibrant language further described the social frenzy:

The columns continued to move past each other, and at every successive point of contact new fusillades broke out, until there were two mutually revolving circles of flying flowers and shimmering colors. Lovely women, radiant with merriment became amazons for the nonce. They pelted each other and the men with unerring aim and they withstood onslaughts with courage and fortitude.³²

The gender descriptions above still reflect traditional roles of the time. According to news accounts of the time, the event was successful enough for the women decided to make it an annual affair. In *Inventing the Fiesta City*, Hernandez-Ehrisman’s research includes vibrant details about the battle, describing how the reenactment evolved to become a battle between those participants seated in carriages and the largely Mexican participants at street level. She discusses a fascinating article from the *San Antonio Light*, saying that the carriage-men defended themselves with their whips.³³ Hernandez-Ehrisman’s accounts give more insight into the particulars of race relations and the evolution of identity.

**MEMORY, TOURISM, AND TEJANO**

³³ Quoted in *Inventing the Fiesta City*, 21.
From Fiesta’s early roots, party planners were hesitant and reluctant to accept Mexican participation. In contrast to the beauty and excitement of the battle, the article describing the early Battle of the Flowers also describes other participants with the following viewpoint, “The burro riders formed guerilla bands and gathering the scattered ammunition did some very effective but rather indiscriminate pelting.” Here, the tone is more skeptical and critical of the burro riders, claiming that their grouping in the parade was a guerilla formation. They also note that these originally unarmed participants fought back with the ammunition they found, implying devious, malicious undertones for Mexican Americans present. This article reveals racial disunification in the 1890’s and disdain for the dark spot on their celebratory parade. Other negative documentation refers to “the brigade of uncurried, sinister-eyed burros and their sombreroded young riders” as “a striking foil to all the pomp and pageantry of the spectacle.” This quote captures the attitude toward including Mexicans and recognizing their cultural presence in the history and celebration of the Alamo. The Mexican-Americans present at the parade were considered an unfortunate, evil sidenote to the festivities, which perhaps reveals lingering self-consciousness about defeat. Hernandez-Ehrisman observes how (San Antonio’s) “vehicle for entering modernity was a commemoration. All of this is done while simultaneously ‘playing Mexican.’” In its roots, Fiesta celebrated the new border with themes and décor central to Mexican identity, but they were unable to recognize the Tejano role in history or their right to participate. These descriptions echo the overall disdain and racial attitudes that are expressed in the Creation Mythology. This gray area

exists today and continues to reveal race relations and the development of history. These faint descriptions of Mexican-American participation in commemoration introduce a much larger pattern of segregating, antagonizing, and belittling Mexican heritage and history before and during and after the famed Battle of the Alamo.

**CORONATION**

As Texans began to develop their perspective of the Alamo and its implications on Texan identity, Anglo Texans carefully designated who has the authority to oversee the commemoration, preservation, and presentation of Alamo history and consequently, led to the development of a relationship between Alamo identity, class identity, and racial identity. The Order of the Alamo is an organization exclusively for elite white men with long-standing San Antonio heritage. These associations uphold a specific perspective that stems from creation mythology. These Anglo associations demonstrate a true change of hands in terms of establishing and cultural historical practices, which further symbolized Anglo victory. The age difference, purity, and promise of reproduction from the myth all come into play at the Coronation hosted by the Order of the Alamo. Preserving the honor and loss of these men becomes a focal point of this association that only accepts the wealthiest Anglo men with the most dense family heritage in San Antonio. The Order of the Alamo still maintains and values the chivalry of the heroes who died and also uphold their responsibility to protect the daughters who exemplify ideal feminine qualities discussed in the mythology. In Fiesta ceremonies and general debutante affairs, men channel the masculine qualities introduced in the creation mythology.

In their eyes the Alamo, itself, becomes recognized as the womb of Texas and still serves as a spiritual location for mythological preservation and continuation today. The
most prevalent symbol of Anglo prestige, purity, and reproductivity is the Queen of
Fiesta and her Court of Duchesses who are annually elected by the Order of the Alamo.
Within the sacred walls of the Alamo, the Order of the Alamo specifically anoint a Court
of twenty-four young women to represent their Anglo elite socioeconomic status. Twelve
girls from San Antonio and twelve girls from out of town are honored at the event. This
small number reveals just how elite this collection is since they are the most well-
situated, wealthy white girls in the city whose fathers are members in the Order. Yet, this
selection also embodies the celebration of the gender roles from the creation mythology
that empowers and defines Anglo-Texans as model citizens. The Coronation exalts
bejeweled versions of gender roles. By careful selection, this system of social
management symbolically controls women, their sexual roles, and their sexual partners as
a way to oversee the continuation of an Anglo-Texan race. These women physically
represent the womb of the future Anglo elites. Hernandez-Ehrisman explains,

As the queen and her duchesses were introduced to San Antonio society, they
became vessels for something outside themselves, bodily representatives of their
family heritage, race, and class…The walk to the coronation stage was a precise
exercise in self-control and thus social control of the female body.\(^{37}\)

The majority of women involved are born into this practice. They have fathers in the
Order of the Alamo and grow up expecting to participate in the Coronation. The queen is
paired with a King who is a member of the Order and they not supposed to symbolize an
actual couple.\(^{38}\) This is important to note since the gender symbolism coincides with
Travis and Angelina Dickinson, as he passes on the future of Texas to a young girl. In
this way, the Coronation avoids sexual allusions with these featured women. The pairing

\(^{38}\) Interview by author on October 29, 2011.
is considered more hereditary and father-daughter-oriented. With the selection of a
Queen, the Order of the Alamo carefully elects the most promising female reproducer of
elitist society members, based on San Antonio heritage and socioeconomic prestige.

During the Coronation the members of the royal Court wear elaborate gowns with
fifteen-foot long trains that cost up to $35,000. As the women walk down a runway, they
physically drag their wealth and status behind them. At the front of the stage they
perform the court bow, or Texas dip. It requires physical skill, balance, and grace, as the
women crouch down and nearly touch their heads to the ground. This is the most
important part of their Coronation, yet it also is a direct symbol of female subordination
(and compliance with mythology). In all their splendor, these young, wealthy college
graduates bow to the high members of society. The ceremony is very extensive and the
entire week of Fiesta is scheduled with public and private parties and appearances where
women are encouraged to mingle with the finest young Texans on the finest guest lists.

The women involved are college-aged except for the Mistress of the Robes who
designs the theme for the dresses and organizes fittings. She oversees the visual
extravagance of the ceremony. The costumes are organized by a Mistress of the Robes,
an older woman, who has often been involved or featured in the Coronation herself.39 She
works with the President of the Order to plan the visual splendor of the Coronation. Over
the century, the themes that have dictated the featured womens’ gowns are based on
elaborate, wealthy cultural influences that are void of political relevance. Most years, the
women represent inanimate flowers, dazzling adornments, mythical sea creatures, and
also certain culturally influential time periods or periods of power. Over the century there

(New York: Berg, 1998), 44.
has not been an evolution of themes, but rather they have remained similar to the earliest Coronations. In the past years, Duchesses embodied Crowned Brilliance, Artistic Ornament, Halls of Royalty, Influential Empires, Splendor of Spain, British Monarchy, Russia, India, the Hapsburg Dynasty, Italian Enlightenment, Adventurous Africa, and Napoleonic Grandeur. The women chosen to participate in the Coronation are limited by these themes that are void of political substance and also lack allusions to these women’s individuality, accomplishments, and occupations. Once these women are featured in the Order’s yearbook, there is no personal information given. Their family name is the only individual designation since the rest of the text gives some historical or visual context for the gown and industriously describes the luxury of their gowns and trails. The women featured merely represent their secured wealth and status in society.

At the Coronation in 2009, the Order of the Alamo themed the event as a commemoration to the Court of the Century. For this highly anticipated event, the High Chamberlain impersonated William B. Travis and proceeded to host the 100th Coronation. In this instance, the Coronation history is a substitute for historic reality. The Coronation becomes a source of pride as well as a celebration of liberty. The evening begins with Travis on stage with a war-torn Alamo setting as the backdrop. Travis invites all of the living past presidents of the Order to join him on stage as they introduce their chosen royalty. With Travis in the center of the long line of past presidents, he honors the work of The Order and their efforts to commemorate past heroes and celebrate Texas independence during Fiesta. Following this, Travis announces, “Let us venture beyond the walls of this historic fortress and draw upon the wonder of coronations.” At this point,

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the scrim changes and reveals the glorious, restored state of the Alamo. The President of
the Order also gives an introduction, announcing,

Each recurring springtime The Order of the Alamo, a patriotic organization of
loyal Texans, celebrates the birthright which is theirs, by choosing as their Queen
a daughter of San Antonio, to rule over time and this city, in a kingdom of
happiness and joy.\textsuperscript{41}

From the words of the President, uplifting the most elite, young woman to royalty is a
celebration of their birthright. Patriotism, loyalty, and royalty summarize the ceremony.
The Order’s President welcomes the next century of Coronations, “ever remembering the
past, but soaring to reach the heights of our imagination.” Here, the Order of the Alamo
acknowledges their power to celebrate a continued imagined history.

Yet, in the Court of the Century, some women dressed to theme that actually
honored certain points of heritage and periods in history among other decorative themes.
The Duchess of Floral Beginnings commemorated the Battle of Flowers and the earliest
stages of Fiesta. The Duchess of Victory at San Jacinto wore a train with all six flags of
Texas elaborately embroidered with sequins. Another Duchess represented Fiesta
appreciation and cherished the gift of Celebrated Missions. The historical statement for
the Duchess of San Antonio Heritage reads, “Fiesta is our annual salute to the past, an
‘abrasto’ of our inheritance, a loving bequest from the earliest settlers, missionaries and
soldiers that we must not forget.” Here, the ceremony articulates how Fiesta is a loving
embrace between Mexican heritage and Anglo prominence of today. Cultural Heritage is
addressed once more with another Duchess, but many other duchesses distance the Court
from San Antonio’s Mexican heritage. The most historically concrete references are to
the Duchess of Voyages Extraordinaire, the Duchess of Mexican Rivalry, and the

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
Duchess of American Legacy. The Duchess of Voyages Extraordinaire has an imperialist tone that romanticizes exploration. Her historical context reads,

Representing that spirit within us all, many coronations have glorified the ceaseless journeys of mankind. Each crossing has led us to untold wonders and forbidden pinnacles in distant worlds, leaving only the sublime memory of glory and pageantry in its wake.\textsuperscript{42}

Here, the text that accompanies the bodily representation of imperialism acknowledges the Order’s replacement of history for pageantry and the glorification of their status. This embodies a huge dynamic that bridges race, class, and conquest. The women featured in the Coronation are all the products of an aristocratic privileged lifestyle, who can afford to dismiss history and focus on the splendor of their gowns. This annual ritual, held by the Order, upholds the mythology and glory. During Fiesta, the Order of the Alamo recognizes the past with a celebration of the present. This celebration consists of exalting young women who dress to symbolize conquering the New World and perform their status in history and society.

Mythology and race relations also surface later in the Coronation when the following duchesses make their bows. Another pair of duchesses published across from each other touch on relations between Mexico and America. The Duchess of American Legacy flaunts liberty while alluding to military actions taken to secure freedom and break from Mexican control. Her text reads:

Gazing upon the Flame of Freedom America was thrust upon the world by those who believe that ‘God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to guard and defend it.’ Cherished among all who know her, our youthful nation has woven a cloth of liberty and union.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} My emphasis of yearbook.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
This text is full of allusions of American expansion, since they did, indeed thrust themselves upon the frontier and interact with numerous border peoples as they moved west. This duchess embodies the celebration of conquest and expansion. If this text substitutes American superpower for God, the text clearly describes the annexation of most of the American West with the Treaty of Hidalgo Guadalupe, it also verifies military might, but veils warfare, violence, and aggression with love, passion, and Christianity. The fervor of this text also echoes Alamo enthusiasm for defense. On the opposite page, the text provided for the Duchess of Mexican Rivalry reads:

> Saluting our Cultural Influences In this City built outside the walls of the Alamo, the traditions of the past delightfully intertwine with our customs. In this land, which was once part of Mexico, many civilizations had come and gone, but Mexico left behind a colorful heritage of music. Its mark on this city and this state still provide a unique beauty that speaks to us long after the age-old conflicts melted away.\(^{44}\)

By framing Spanish influences among many civilizations that have come and gone, this paragraph belittles Mexican influences on Texas. The unique beauty and heritage of music that this paragraph does address further subordinates Mexico and its national validity. The paragraph also assumes that the conflicts between Texans and Mexicans have subsided, which reveals a harsh dualism. Since cultural conflicts remain, the Coronation and the Order of the Alamo deny multiculturalism during its attempt to honor multicultural history. The simultaneous presentation of these two women demonstrates the struggle to tell a cohesive narrative that affirms white superiority and addresses multiculturalism. The text for the Duchesss of Mexican Rivalry acknowledges musical heritage, but does not recognize the possibility for a joint Tejano-Anglo-Texan historical narrative, since it is still a Rivalry, though it is long gone. While this Coronation honors

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
Duchesses who symbolize various sources and signs of wealth, some of the Duchesses do acknowledge actual history or historic relations that existed over the past century.\(^ {45}\) As the Order secures their position with crowned women, this event demonstrates the possession of history and wealth and the way that elite acknowledge their heritage and inheritance.

**Alternatives to Creation Mythology**

By taking a closer look at how food and gender dynamics further reflect white dominance, Bost absorbs the racial sentiments of the Creation Mythology and applies them to the history and role of ethnic female outcasts. She argues that just as “films and fiction have engendered and racialized a mythic Alamo that satisfies Anglo-American expansionist fantasies,” Mexican food also caters to this racial dynamic. Her main point concerns the consumption and therefore conquest of culture. By making food, and other aspects of Mexican culture, a commodity, Americans are able to consume “the other.” Bost relates this consumption dynamic to food, sex, blood, salsa, and other forms of cultural plunder and enjoyment.\(^ {46}\) The Gebhardt Chile spice is one of her main examples of commoditization for assimilation purposes. She argues that the mass production of the chile spice allows Americans to spice up their food and satisfy their desire for another culture. She claims that assimilation and conquest revolves around sex and eating, a theory, which once understood, surfaces in many instances of neocolonialism, tourism, and multicultural entertainment. In a larger context, as Americans moved West and created settlements along borders, many integrated women from the other side of the


border into their families. As American economic interests surged in these border regions, Americans insisted upon assimilation and ultimately annexation. Bost’s argument refers to tourism, imperialism, and colonialism as appropriate contexts for cultural consumption and the quest for enjoyment and foreign desires. By obtaining the exotic, Americans get what they want without suffering or enacting suffering, but still economically supporting historic racial roles.

The public appearance and role of Mexican food and song also complements the colonial perspective of conquest and independence. Yet, within San Antonio society, there were mixed feelings about embracing and neglecting Mexican aspects of their culture. Tourists delved into Mexican crafts sold on the streets, Mexican food, and the historic site of the Alamo. Fiesta originated when San Antonio citizens were aware of the power of presentation and the marketability of their culture. Some Tejana women were able to challenge the creation mythology and use the tourist market to their advantage.47

The cultural and racial development of the Chili Queens created a space for Mexican American women to thrive without the guidance of Anglo narrative. The famed chili stands were located in the numerous downtown plazas where they had been conveniently stationed for military personnel and passing armies. Mexicana women served spicy chili and frijoles for 10 cents until late in the night.48 This affordable meal created a public realm for racial and socio-economic mixing that also served as a Mexican form of cultural expression and identity. The Chili Queens created a multicultural space where they could present their culture and profit from their work.

Photos of these chili stands illustrate their place within San Antonio society. The most startling part of these photographs is the setting of these stands. Over time, tables and benches organized like an outdoor picnic began to starkly contrast the newer city official building in the background. The pictures accurately depict the changing times and incongruence between the size of San Antonio and its older, more small town identity. Chili stands and the creation of other Mexican food restaurants gave Mexican American women the opportunity to profit from their cultural identity. As their popularity grew, these chili stands with their chili queens became a famous part of San Antonio’s tourism. Yet, their popularity was controversial, as Hernandez-Ehrisman reveals a startling insight into how these Queens were viewed by Fiesta organizers. In 1915, a mock Duchess of Chili Con Carni was displayed in a parade with her Court of men in gowns. To further contextualize her presence and the politics involved a mock police department also appears with black-faced negroes and chickens. In 1930, these stands were banned for hygienic purposes, as city officials hoped to diminish the public presence and national awareness these women had amassed. Some Mexican women simply moved their businesses inside. They took advantage of the public’s expectations and desire for their culture. As the authors of Las Tejanas explain:

Drawing on the human attraction to enticing food, many Tejanas turned their knowledge of Mexican cuisine into a successful business. Moreover, by becoming owners of restaurants, they ultimately stationed themselves in the manager’s office rather than in front of the hot stoves in the restaurant’s kitchen.

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In these cases, the women remained in control of their own cultural products and managed to benefit fully from their work and the identity that accompanied it. Yet, if this did not occur, Bost argues that these Chili Queens soon became victims of the larger theme of colonialism and imperialism of Anglo dominance. When their labor becomes incorporated into the Fiesta event, *Night in Old San Antonio*, the Chili Queens become another usurped aspect of Mexican heritage that promoted Texan independence.

Fearing the loss of this famous cultural aspect of San Antonio, but also recognizing the need to fill this cultural void and appease the surrounding economic demand, women from the San Antonio Conservation Society were able to lift the 1930’s ban for the Centennial Fiesta with the intention of preparing the food in a more sterile environment. However, these women actually relocated the chili stands into their own kitchens, which failed to achieve the authenticity of the chili stands and the environment they provided. With this act, the San Antonio Conservation Society had designated themselves as the preservationists of Mexican food. Laura Hernandez-Ehrisman argues,

> White women physically and symbolically depended on nonwhite women for their own independence, even as they denied their participation as social equals … These white women spent much of their public lives constructing and representing ideas of *Mexicanness*, yet their presentation depended upon Mexican labor.  

Hernandez-Ehrisman explores how the San Antonio Conservation Society was able to construct an identity for themselves that also entailed rescripting a racial identity of Mexico. Hernandez-Ehrisman notes that these women selectively preserved aspects of San Antonio with actions that were “more constructive than restorative.”


53 Ibid. 82.
of mythology and race relations described by Bost, Mexican-American women become more associated with Mexican food and providing enjoyment for Anglo-Texans. The women who actually made the food were still of Mexican descent, but they were uncredited by these women. The San Antonio Conservation Society still hosts a Night In Old San Antonio that honors San Antonio’s multi-ethnic heritage. This fiesta dinner party is held in La Villita, a very old section of downtown San Antonio that was occupied by impoverished Mexican Americans until the neighborhood was razed and refurbished for public access.\(^{54}\) On this night, members of SACS wear traditional Mexican dress and set up food stalls that represent different segments of Texan heritage, Mexican being the most popular. With modernization and the rise of tourism and racial fears, Chili Queens lost their public footing and were forced to find other ways of selling their food, whether they worked independently or under the surveillance of Anglo women in the Conservation Society.

Many scholars and critics have noted the irony and nostalgia embedded in Fiesta, the celebration of conquest with the recreation of Spanish colonial times. In a book review of *Inventing the Fiesta City*, one scholar was perplexed by the celebrations of the American acquisition of Texas and Mexican loss when the music, food, and dancing are clearly of Mexican influence. She observes, “the ironic practice of stigmatizing Mexican populations while using their cultural practices as a part of a larger Anglo imagination.”\(^{55}\) The imagined history becomes apparent with the celebration of the Alamo. Even though it was a defeat, Hernandez-Ehrisman realizes the symbolism of this landmark has become more complex. While the Order’s Coronation compliments her observation, other

\(^{54}\) Ibid. 32.
\(^{55}\) Ibid. 84.
vivacious coronations, Fiesta events, performers, and tourist attractions serve to represent and celebrate excluded narratives. “The city built outside the Alamo” prospered even though segments of San Antonio’s population were excluded and subordinated in Anglo mythology. One woman, in particular, demonstrates multi-cultural representation and the construction of her own public Mexicana identity.

The Tejana singer, Rosita Fernandez, the Tejana singer, Rosita Fernandez, became one of the earliest female radio stars in San Antonio while also devoting her career to developing an audience for Mexican American cultural appreciation. However, she also managed to thrive from the stereotypes tourists and San Antonio citizens expected and desired. Through the radio, nightly performances, and local advertising, Rosita Fernandez served as one of the earliest negotiators who achieved success among English-speaking Americans and Spanish-speaking Americans. One scholar, specifically, has credited Rosita with accomplishing the following:

Rosita’s musical career involved constant play between dual languages and between audiences of varied ethnicities and social classes…It is this fluidity across culture, time, and geography, as well as the staunch of ever-present marking of Mexicanidad upon Texas land, that have been foremost in Rosita’s cultural work and in her philosophy about what her performances have contributed to public culture.56

Through her career, Rosita insisted upon being an image of San Antonio, but also an image of Mexican culture. Through her songs and devotion to San Antonio, Rosita battled the racial barriers of the time and ultimately became a nationally recognized icon.

She and her family moved to San Antonio in the early 1930’s from Monterey, Mexico. As a very young girl she began performing in little tent theatres with her uncles

in West Texas and in small towns around San Antonio. Rosita managed to distance herself from the sexual stereotypes that accompany race as seen with Emily Morgan. When Rosita first entered the public realm, she was under the protections of her uncles, which helped prevent her from becoming associated with sexual allure while performing. As her popularity grew, Rosita accomplished her dreams of cementing herself as the instigator of a new cultural appreciation for Mexican American culture. By translating popular American songs into Spanish and also adjusting some of the lyrics, Rosita attracted Anglo and Mexican audiences. Vargas describes Rosita’s alteration of Bob Will’s “San Antonio Rose” that significantly added to her public recognition. She explores the symbolism of Rosita’s work as,

exemplifying the complexity of how she negotiated race and gender within a public sphere shaped by Anglo-Texan popular song. Rosita takes one of the most popular Texan songs, imbued with a legacy of racism and sexualization of Mexicanas, and changes the lyrics (also translating them into Spanish) in order to express her love for the city of San Antonio.\[^{57}\]

Here, Rosita takes possession of a song already part of Anglo culture and remolds its message, giving voice to the Spanish-speaking population of San Antonio.

While Rosita managed to become a popular figure in San Antonio, this was not done without appeasing white economic requirements and gender expectations. Her career began when she won a radio station talent contest sponsored by Gebhardt Chili, winning her daily radio performances that included singing Frito Lay corn chip jingles.\[^{58}\] Rosita became a spokesperson of her race and was used to appeal to Spanish-speaking markets. Bost would argue that her association with large corporations makes her susceptible to larger colonial sentiments and entertainment racial issues of the time. In

\[^{57}\] Ibid. 172.
\[^{58}\] Ibid, 173.
terms of cultural appropriation, her success can be recognized as dependent on white support as seen in her early career. Rosita was also asked to model for a tourist promotion postcard and act in John Wayne’s *Alamo*. Here, Villareal specifically explores how Rosita struggles with stereotypes and previous victims of racial profiling. This compliments Bost’s argument that other women known for their cultural products, like cooking, became susceptible to the Anglo-racial hierarchy, usurpation, and restriction.

She also gained popularity due to her own desire to pursue and honor her familial responsibilities as a mother. She also decided to only perform in San Antonio. Her loyalty to San Antonio and her family echo the prime feminine qualities of the Creation Mythology and contribute to her popularity. Much as women involved in the Battle of the Flowers and the Coronation were valued and presented as traditional females, Rosita’s popularity is partly due to her belief in fulfilling her family role within San Antonio. While her career and public persona promote mexicanidad and multiculturalism, she cannot fully succeed without support from Anglo-Texans and her position within their set of morals and ideals.

Although Rosita’s popularity had reached the national level and she had many invitations to tour around the country, Rosita declined the offers, preferring to stay in San Antonio and fulfill her role as a mother. Rosita’s familial priorities also boosted her popularity in San Antonio. Many of her fans were exceedingly proud of Rosita’s ability to carry on a lively career while also maintaining her role in the home. Rosita was determined to remain loyal to her city and her family. When she performed for President

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59 Ibid, 90.
Johnson and his wife, Lady Bird Johnson named Rosita “San Antonio’s First Lady of Song.” She also became known as la Rosa de San Antonio. While titled La Rosa, she was not associated with other ethnic roses like the Yellow Rose of Texas. In fact, Rosita’s maternal qualities and loyalty to San Antonio won her positive feminine qualities from the Creation Mythology. Rosita’s public persona also compliments the Creation Mythology in that she remained politically silent. Regarding her presidential performance, scholar Villareal- includes quotes from Rosita Fernandez that demonstrate her non-political motives. Villareal remarks how,

She made it clear that she did not act as spokesperson for any political party or candidate … Fernández carefully sold “Rosita” as an entertainer with cultural value, not political views. 61

Rosita Fernandez’ motives were musical, personal, and cultural, but not meant to serve a political purpose.

However, due to the conditions of the time, Rosita is also praised for using her appeal to succeed in hard conditions for an ethnic star. Vargas notes that, at this point in San Antonio history, all of the radio stations were owned by Anglo Texans and the first Spanish-speaking station was not established until 1947. These conditions affected Rosia’s public role and representation since she was forced to cater to large corporations while also acquiring personal fame. Gebhardt Chili and Frito Lay corn chips became two prime sponsors of Spanish-speaking radio programs. They rented hourly programming in order to advertise their product to the Spanish-speaking population of San Antonio. While on air, Rosita became a spokesperson of these corporations and also of her own race and gender.

She did not fail to use this publicity to her advantage, however. As tourists came to San Antonio to witness specific gender and racial expectations, Rosita used the popularity of these stereotypes to her benefit, verifying certain expectations as authentic. In 1957, she helped initiate the *Fiesta Noche del Río*, a nightly music performance that took place downtown on the river.\footnote{Mary Ann Villareal, “Becoming San Antonio’s Own Reinventing ‘Rosita,’” *Journal of Women’s History* Vol. 20 No. 2 (2008), 95.} She performed here for years and used her fame to bring tourists and renowned figures to San Antonio. In the opinion of another scholar, Much like the Aunt Jemima and the Chiquita Banana images, which gave products an authenticity (albeit one layered in stereotypical images), Rosita put her name and image behind bread, tortillas, cigarettes, beer, Frito-Lay chips, and Gephardt chili. In this case, however, there was an actual person behind the persona. Rosita sold her name as a figure that people could trust regardless of the product she represented, like cigarettes and beer, which she claimed to never touch. Fernández’s decision served as a process of reinventing her song-stress identity, legitimizing her public persona through a domestic lens.\footnote{Ibid. 89.} Because Rostia was well-recognized vocally and physically by citizens of San Antonio, her presence in advertising is more personal and authentic and not an outright nameless icon of her race and social standing. She worked to have her music recognized by the whole of San Antonio, thereby diminishing some racial attitudes towards the Mexican heritage of San Antonio. Rosita Fernandez managed to broadcast a love for San Antonio while serving as an exportable icon and also remaining an authentic representation of herself.

**The Cornyation**

The Cornyation event gathers its supporters from a broader spectrum of the population and directly defies constructed class and gender roles from Anglo mythology. The Cornyation defies gender, gender roles, history, and stiff social standards while

\footnote{Mary Ann Villareal, “Becoming San Antonio’s Own Reinventing ‘Rosita,’” *Journal of Women’s History* Vol. 20 No. 2 (2008), 95.  
Ibid. 89.}
inventing a public, vocal, bold, vulgar, presence and identity performance that is very popular and set in current events. Since 1947, the Cornyation has become an opportunity to critique the Coronation. The Cornyation has become one of the most popular events at Fiesta and the shows are always completely sold out. San Antonio’s gay community hosts the event with acts that mock present day politics and social stereotypes. It originated as part of the four-day block party in Night In Old San Antonio sponsored by the San Antonio Conservation Society, but was discontinued after 1966 questionably due to accidental genital exposure.\textsuperscript{64} By this point, the San Antonio Conservation Society was less amused by local political mocking.\textsuperscript{65} The Cornyation resurfaced in 1985, but was not largely recognized by the Fiesta Executives or much of San Antonio’s population. By 1987, the Cornyation was very prevalent in San Antonio and achieved repeated sold-out shows. In 1990, the Cornyation became an official Fiesta event and in 1997, the President of SACS invited the Cornyation King/Queen to participate in the parade with the NIOSA, King Antonio, and Rey Feo. As the Cornyation became more involved with these recognized figures, they gained acceptance into the wider public realm and also more formal banquet invitations.

In last year’s Tacos and the Tarnished Tiara Cornyation, two gaudy judges dressed in elaborate American flag apparel judged the appearance of a court honoring, the Duchess of Eternal Entrepreneurial Enterprises, the Empress of Pat-Downs and Pin-Ups, the Duchess of Phat Ho, the Duchess of Failin Palin, the Vice-Empress of Tiger Moms, Toddlers, and Tiaras, the Duchess of Mary Military Marketing, and the Queen of Arizona A La Mode. Together this extravagant group of royalty in drag collectively commented

\textsuperscript{64} Cal Sumner, Interview by author on November 20, 2011.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
on conditions of the time. The Queen of Arizona A La Mode represented restructured immigration laws recently passed in the state and was accompanied by a cast of drag tango dancers. The Empress of Pat-Downs and Pin-Ups personifies nuns and catholic boys re-enacting strip-searches in security, while simultaneously commenting on promiscuity within the church. The King of the Cornyation is King Anchovy XLVI. His costume consisted of a space suit and an elaborate cape with six packs as shoulder pads. The only stage decoration is an enormous sparkly beer bottle. The show is very much a vibrant drag show highly attended by enthused supporters. 66

While some parts of Fiesta involve economically privileged social classes steeped in tradition, Fiesta has expanded to include and acknowledge a broader spectrum of society and heritage. Fiesta has grown to incorporate and publicly acknowledge more variety in San Antonio’s civic population with characters like Rey Feo, A Day in Old Mexico and Charreada, Tejano Explosion and many other events. Rey Feo developed as a means of representing the people who are not recognized by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas of the Order of the Alamo. Presently, Rey Feo and King Antonio appear publicly together and also attend each other’s banquets. A Day in Old Mexico and Charreada is an event that honors and exhibits Mexican folklore that revolves around horsemanship. 67 Performers wear traditional dress and authentic foods and beverages are ever present. The League of United Latin American Citizens also sponsors an event

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66 Ibid.
67 Fiesta Executive Committee.
http://www.fiesta-sa.org/events/event/?page=olme1.
honoring Tejano heritage. This event features multiple Tejano musicians who perform throughout the entire week of festivities.\textsuperscript{68}

**CONCLUSION**

Following state annexation, citizens of San Antonio struggled to define themselves as Americans while still living in territory with a long history of Spanish occupation. While Anglo Texans began to aggressively assert their possession of the city, Mexican Americans and Tejanos also continued to assert their own identity and history of the land. Anglo-Texans created a mythic narrative that idealized the history of the Alamo and used Christian themes to immortalize admirable qualities of martyred heroes and demonic qualities of Mexican-Americans. This narrative became a domineering rhetoric that continues to shape gender and racial identity. In process of recognizing Alamo history as a positive, overall victory for Texans, Anglo-Americans lost the memory of their multicultural past. This exclusion becomes strikingly apparent in the parts of Fiesta, the annual commemoration of the Battle of the Alamo. Fiesta San Antonio demonstrates many aspects of San Antonio’s popular memory and history and current vision of their city and how the evolution of Texas history and the performance of Texas history reveal a struggle to establish cultural and political identity. As a major tourist attraction, it feeds tourist’s expectations by providing an outdated border town feel with a mixed race identity. On a national scale, San Antonio had become popular for its Mexican proximity and heritage.

Although Anglo elites have carefully established their identity apart from Mexican Texans, they still rely upon their labor and use their vibrant culture to illustrate

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\textsuperscript{68} Fiesta Executive Committee. \url{http://www.fiesta-sa.org/events/event/?page=teja1}. 

the strength and vivacity of American victory. At the Order of the Alamo’s Coronation, extravagant efforts to define elitism and Anglo dominance complicate the popular memory of the Battle of the Alamo and the racial make-up contemporary with this event. The very involvement of girls in this ritualistic pageant honors warfare and sheds light on the complicated symbolism of Fiesta, an event dually celebrating and antagonizing Mexicanness. As described by an upcoming duchess, the debutante seasons in San Antonio are comprised of the German and the Fiesta. The same white girls often debuted at both extravagant, elite. Thus revealing how elite German descendents have come to symbolically and literally rule San Antonio and its celebration of a carefully constructed multiculturalism.

However, in the past decades, new Fiesta events have been introduced into the city’s traditions that celebrate the ethnic diversity of San Antonio. There are examples of Mexican-American women who have managed to work around the strict racial distinctions and categories embodied in the Creation Mythology. The popularly attended Cornyation also serves as a popular example of gender, racial, and socio-economic rebellion. Fiesta has come to represent diversity although some Old San Antonio citizens strictly attend only the most traditional events and closely monitor those that are included. Fiesta San Antonio inspires both Anglo Texans and Tejanas to present their ever-evolving identities to the public.

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