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Ethnicity and poetry: A systems theory approach to contemporary African American and Mexican American poetry

Antonio Paniagua Guzman
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ETHNICITY AND POETRY: A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN AND MEXICAN AMERICAN POETRY

A Thesis

by

ANTONIO PANIAGUA GUZMÁN

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Igor Ryabov
Chair of Committee

Dr. William Donner
Committee Member

Dr. Salvatore Restifo
Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

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Given the ongoing ethnic transformation of the current society of the United States, contemporary sociologists have extensively studied ethnic relations from diverse theoretical and methodological approaches. Despite the vast sociological research recently developed, the literary-based methodological approach remains partially uncultivated. This study explores motivations and patterns of minority groups' ethnic performance in contemporary poetry by analyzing inter and intra-group similarities and differences of diverse linguistic and cultural traits. From secondary data analysis, this study examines four hundred poems authored by forty contemporary African American and Mexican American writers experientially connected to the state of Texas. Grounded in systems theory, this study finds notable inter-group differences in ethnic performance through poetry and concludes that it becomes more intense either in regions with considerable high and low presence of such minorities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis work to my mother Mónica, who has been a constant source of inspiration, love, and unconditional support throughout my life. This work is also dedicated to my brother Francisco and grandmother María, who have always trusted in me and my dreams.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Given the growing race-ethnic diversity of the United States derived from the ongoing migration flows, it is claimed that the problem of the twentieth-first century in the United States is the increasing number of color lines[1] (Lee and Been 2004; Dixon 2006; Guenther, Pendaz, and Makene 2011). Although American sociologists have extensively studied the impact of racial and ethnic boundaries on modern American society from different theoretical and methodological approaches (Alba and Nee 1997; Dixon 2006; DeFina and Hannon 2009; Fox and Guglielmo 2012), the literary-based analysis has not been a common approach to studying ethnic performance. Grounded in systems theory, this research aims to answer the question of "how and to what extent do contemporary African American and Mexican American writers perform their ethnicity through poetry?"

From a secondary data analysis, I examine four hundred poems authored by forty contemporary African American and Mexican American writers to explore ethnic implications in inter and intra-group linguistic and discursive patterns of such minorities' poetry works. Considering that immigration experience and the assimilation process depend on the social context and demographic composition of each region (Jiménez and Horowitz 2013:865), I only

[1] W.E.B. Du Bois ([1903] 1994) argued: "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, — the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (p.9).

analyze poems by authors experientially connected to the state of Texas—which concentrates a balanced proportion of African American and Mexican American population.

Since the poetry-based analysis has not been a common approach in the studying of ethnic minority performance in Sociology, it is important to point out why poetry is an effective source of sociological data. Throughout history, societies have created and used communicational systems based upon poetic modes. Since poetry is developed by individuals immersed in social groups, poetic content is inevitably influenced by all kinds of social dynamics that affect and regulate social structures in particular contexts (Perry 1969:13). Aside from perceiving it as social data, poetry can be considered as a vivid depiction of the sociohistorical context in which it was created (Lowenthal 1961:141). Moreover, poetry has "the ability to provide reflective and linguistically negotiated understandings of personally meaningful events" (Hanauer 2010:55).

Even though some scholars have studied the link between the literary field and society from systems theory (Ohmann 1983; Clifford 1988; Guillory 1993), no poetry-based studies have focused on minorities' ethnic performance in contemporary American society from this approach. Based on Niklas Luhmann´s social systems theory, I examine the sample based on three central theoretical principles: (1) "Differentiation": to explore how African American and Mexican American authors develop ethnic-based mechanisms of linguistic distinction through poetry and for what purposes; (2) "Self-reference": to identify how authors give specific meanings to diverse aspects of social reality and what is the connection between the development of such meanings and their ethnicity; and (3) "Communication": to explore the impact of the shared social environment on the interplay between both groups' poetic expressions and how ethnicity influences the development of linguistic and symbolic elements implicit in this process.

Apart from providing an in-depth analysis of the African American and Mexican American ethnic performance in contemporary poetry, by using systems theory as theoretical framework, and poetry pieces as the primary source of data, this study attempts to contribute to the enlargement of the literary-based sociological research on race-ethnic relations in the modern United States society.

CHAPTER II

A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH

The systems theory has its roots in the early Talcott Parsons's studies of social action. Mainly influenced by Emilie Durkheim and Max Weber, Parsons developed a conceptualization of social systems based on the functional structuralism approach (Luhmann and Nafarrate 1996:33). Parsons (1951) defined social system as:

> [A] plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in situations which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the "optimization of gratification" and whose relations to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols (p.5). [2]

One of Parsons's theoretical concerns was the study of human action, so he suggested that "the act then becomes a unit in a social system" (Parsons 1951:24). In this sense, he argued that human actions are organized into three models: (1) social systems, (2) personality systems, and (3) cultural systems. From this view, all human actions in social life are driven by any of these systemic classifications.

Since Parsons based the systemic analysis of society in the human "act," he focused on the analysis of various forms of human interaction within society: (1) the structure of the social

[2] In modern societies, examples of social systems are the economy, the law, politics, literature, and so on.

system: empirical differentiation and variation in the structure of societies; (2) the learning of social role-expectations and the mechanisms of socialization of motivation; (3) belief systems and the social system: the problem of the "role of ideas"; and (4) expressive symbols and the social system: the communication of affect. Nonetheless, he paid particular attention to the study of the symbols that people, as components of social systems, use to interact. This symbolic interaction is given through "expressive actions":

> Expressive action, in our central paradigm, as a type of action, occupies a place parallel with that of the instrumental type. Like all action it is culturally patterned or formed. Expressive symbols then are the symbol-systems through which expressive action is oriented to the situation …[E]xpressive symbol systems may themselves be developed as the goal of a type of instrumentally oriented activity, which may be called "artistic creation" (Parsons 1951:384-85).

As the above passage points out, one of Parsons's main interests was to achieve an understanding of expressive actions as channels of interaction among social systems.

Additionally, from Parsons's perspective, there are implicit cultural elements in expressive artistic actions, which by using symbols, are oriented toward the transmission of specific ideas. Moreover, regarding collectivities and sub-units [3] of the social system he suggested:

> Symbols which are shared by the different sub-units of the social system, individual actors or sub-collectivities, without implying the existence of a bond of solidarity

[3] In systems theory, sub-units (sub-systems) are segments of specialization into which systems are divided; in literature (as system), literary genres are sub-units (sub-systems).

> between them. These may be said to constitute the "common style" of these units within what in this respect is a common culture (Parsons 1951:395).

In this passage, Parsons argued that the essence of a bond of solidarity is not the only element able to detect insights of a common style derived from common cultural traits; symbols can provide evidence of this common culture. Throughout Parsons's work, the conceptualization of "act" as the central component of social systems is a constant. In fact, it has been claimed that his approach can be reduced to the formula: *action is system* (Luhmann and Nafarrate 1996:37).

Instead of considering human action as the nucleus of social systems, Luhmann (1995:162) suggested that the way of production and reproduction of society as a social system is communication. For Luhmann, communication embodies the foundation of social systems because it is by reproducing communicational codes that systems evolve and interact with each other. Therefore, from Luhmann's perspective, social systems are not made up of individuals, but of "communications."

A second fundamental concept in Luhmann's systems theory is "differentiation." From his perspective, social systems are determined by their environment, and they cannot control the dynamics of change derived from it. Thus, the only way in which social systems can survive in a changing environment is by developing communication processes of "differentiation." These processes consist of setting coding differences between systems. In this sense, Luhmann (1995) argued that "communication necessarily operates by differentiating… [A]ll communication depends on its environment as a source of energy and information, and every communication indisputably refers via meaning references directly or indirectly to the social system's environment" (p.144).

To differentiate from other systems and environment, a social system develops a process called “system reference” that Luhmann (1995) defined as “an operation that, with the help of the distinction between system and environment, indicates a system” (p.442). Accordingly, by assigning singular interpretations to those phenomena derived from the environment, social systems “self-reference” to give individual meaning to the world. In this sense, Luhmann (1995) claimed that:

> Meaning forms the context in which all signs are determined… [T]aken as a sign, meaning would be able to stand only as a sign for itself, thus as a sign for the nonfulfillment of a sign’s function… [O]nly by social reflexivity, only in experiencing the experiences and actions of other social systems, does the specific form of meaning processing called “understanding” come into consideration (p.71-3).

Here, Luhmann highlighted the implication of meaning in the process of interpreting environment. According to this assumption, it is vital to analyze meanings and signs considering their particular contexts to understand the process of “communication” and “differentiation” of social systems.

In summary, from Luhmann’s social systems approach, “communication” embodies the unit of social systems, which influenced by certain changes in the environment, must develop a process of “differentiation” through “self-reference” to survive and reproduce. Another point worth considering is “communication” between systems. Since each system is different and assigns a specific meaning to the world, the only possible method of “communication” with others is through common symbols implicit in “communication” itself. In other words, “only communication can communicate” (Luhmann 1994:371).

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

The boundary between literary studies and Sociology is blurred in literary-based sociological scholarly works. The understanding of this bi-dimensional composition is vital to differentiate what is, and what is not a sociological study of literature. Regarding this difference Frow (2010) stated that:

> The concept of a sociology of literature implies some form of relation between knowledge of a domain formally constructed as "the social" and another domain formally constituted as "the literary" or as "writing" in the most general sense. The preposition posits the latter as the object of the former: sociology works upon the material of written texts in accordance with protocols that are specific to the social sciences—that is, the qualitative or quantitative analysis of an independent variable (literature or writing) in relation to the set of dependent variables that make up the domain of the social (p.237).

According to this conceptualization, literature becomes an object of Sociology by being the independent variable of a sociological study in terms of dependent variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, religiosity, and so on. However, depending on the methodological design and aim of the research, variables' positions and relevance may be changing—a variable or a genre can overrule each other.

Since the Sociology of Literature overlaps two disciplines methodologically and theoretically dissimilar, the effectiveness of its outcomes has been questioned. Some scholars

have claimed that art and sciences require the same creative effort and can converge under the same research criteria (Nisbet [1967] 2002; Abbott 2007). In contrast, others have questioned the feasibility of studying literary works from the sociological approach by arguing that while sociological research is oriented towards the understanding and interpretation of the present phenomena, literary studies attempt to understand the past ones (McGurl 2010). Regardless this disagreement, what is true is that there is a long-standing tradition of effective research behind the Sociology of Literature.

The interest in studying the link between literature and society can be traced back to Ancient Greece, particularly to Plato's studies of rhetoric (Harland 1999:1-2) and his critiques of poets' performances (Destrée and Herrmann 2011:23-5). However, it was not until the late nineteenth century that French positivist philosopher Hippolyte Taine proposed the application of the scientific method in literature in the book: *History of English Literature,* published in 1873. Apart from analyzing the evolution of English literature, Taine conducted an in-depth analysis of social, moral, and political dynamics of each stage of English history from the early Anglo-Saxon era to mid-nineteenth century. This analytical method was ruled by the formula *race, period, and environment*—three criteria that Taine used to conduct his research (Perry 1969:299). Taine focused on the examination of the authors` interpretation of their sociohistorical contexts and the impact of the social structures on their works' content. Given the scope of his contribution, many scholars consider him as the founder of the Sociology of Literature (Laurenson & Swingewood 1972; Sullivan 1973; Chalmers 1973; Lombardo 1990; Lanson, Rand, and Hatcher 1995).

Karl Marx's thought was likewise an important influence in the enlargement of the Sociology of Literature. Marx's materialistic conception of historical processes[4], strongly linked to conflicts between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, was the basis of his understanding of literature as a social gauge. From the Marxist perspective, literature must be understood in its social context as an indicator of societies' characteristics and social movements. Similarly, literature must be assumed as an accurate indicator of historical conditions that correspond to the materialistic historical evolution of societies (Hall 1979:2-4 see also 71 and 137-9). Furthermore, as a result of his understanding of the evolution of societies through the class struggle, Marx strongly believed in the bidirectional impact of society and literature (Marx and Rendueles 2012:11). Even though Taine and Marx's contributions were not the only works encouraging the development and advancement of the Sociology of Literature, both the viability of using the scientific method in literature—explored by Taine—and the proven capacity of literature to show social traits—pointed out by Marx—were central influences for early twentieth-century sociologists whose studies constituted the basis of contemporary literary-based research.

During the second decade of the twentieth century, sociologists began producing literary-based scholarly works more intensely. To identify and classify the most relevant periods in the development of the Sociology of Literature, Frow (2010:238) proposed four stands—based on the influence of diverse sociological theories—in which it is possible to categorize the most relevant works and approaches of the discipline. These stands include: (1) Marxist sociologies of literature, (2) a system or an institution, (3) "a technosociality in which the medium itself carries the burden of social meaning," and (4) cultural sociology and social capital. This classification is

[4] Although Karl Marx never used the term "Historical Materialism," it was coined by further philosophers and sociologists based on Marx's studies on history and social change.

supportive of identifying the different theoretical approaches used throughout the development of the Sociology of Literature.

Sociological studies of literature benefited from the dramaturgical metaphor implicit in Erving Goffman's theory of the self-presentation. Goffman ([1959]1990) labeled 'front stage' as "the part of the individual's performance which generally functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (p.22). In contrast, he conceptualized 'backstage' as a place where the performance is prepared before being presented to the audience (p.239). Considering Goffman's concepts of 'front stage' and 'back stage,' it is possible to make an analogy of the two dimensions in which the writing process is carried out; in the backstage, poets generate their discourse based on what they have faced in the front region. Moreover, Goffman ([1959]1990) argued that an individual can play two fundamental roles in society. On the one hand, he can be viewed as a 'performer': a person who fabricates impressions to other people. On the other hand, he can be considered as a 'character': person involved into social dynamics without being perceived (p.252). Both roles are interconnected in poetry due to the multiple positions that poets occupy in society. Goffman's contribution, in turn, is essential to identify both, the poet's role in society and the poet's interpretation of the social environment.

Drawing from Goffman ([1959]1990), Ward (1986) examined the main changes in Sociology throughout the seventies and eighties (Culler 1975; Hesse 1980; Ward 1981) that encouraged sociologists to analyze poetry as a source of social data—he labeled this transformation as "the new sociological realignment" (p.324). As a part of this chronological analysis, Ward (1986) examined the role of ethnicity in poetry, by assuming that:

> A third remarkable development in the sociological realignment has been the growth of literature of those held in oppressed groups… [S]tudies of race as well as the nationalist aspiration of small countries not necessarily (though commonly) ethnically different from those who dominate them (p.326).

Besides, Ward (1986) pointed out the importance of metaphor as a linguistic resource in the oppressed groups' poetic communication. He considered the relationship between ethnicity and poetry, and how minority groups express their identity and concerns through poetry:

> The oppressed groups we mentioned—women, ethnic groups, and nationalists—will pour into in the valley of metaphor very naturally because of the biological and territorial underpinnings of their positions, by which the materiality of what they experience really and simply is the very basis of their urgencies they want to convey, and so do not at all want to be transposed into insipid concept and abstraction (p.333).

Another important input provided by Ward (1986:324) is the "theory of the poem's resonance." The author suggested that poetry can communicate meanings, urgencies, and ideas. According to Ward (1986), the sociological analysis of poetic language can be beneficial for the understanding of the poem's intention (p.334). In other words, although poets recycle the same language, expressions, and poetic forms, each poem possesses its specific meaning based on the poet's intention and past experiences. Moreover, Ward (1986) explored the difference between narrative texts and poetry, and concluded that "the prose text's semantic sum is then subliminally measured against the deeper resonance the poem has earlier inculcated into the reader and which then cannot be removed" (p.335). This assumption supports the idea that, contrary to what is thought that narrative literature comprises more social information due to its larger extension and in-depth descriptive nature, the scientific analysis of poetry can be a viable alternative to get

accurate research outcomes because of its ability to describe social problems in a more concise way.

Since poetry is constantly used by minority groups as a way of resistance and protest against institutional and dominant groups' practices of segregation and social oppression, it is vital to examine this particular form of poetic functionality. Based upon critical race theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1984; Habermas 1975, 1984; Foucault 1979, 1980; Comaroff 1985), Scott (1990) conducted an extensive study on the social structures of domination and their implications on the subordinate groups' performance of resistance. He developed an in-depth analysis of different systems of social domination such as slavery, serfdom, and caste subordination. It is important to mention that the central aim of this study was to provide a rapprochement to the interpretation of the various forms of resistance that the powerless adopt against the powerful to promote social equality.

Scott (1990) broke down the various processes by which oppressed groups generate dissident discourses against oppressive systems, often through defiant conducts. Scott (1990) suggested that since the dominant group's language should be politically correct, by using euphemism, they hide the real connotation of the expression. For instance, "capital punishment" is used for state execution and "trade in ebony wood" for eighteen-century traffic in slaves (p.53). Similarly, to hide defiant discourses against the dominant group, oppressed groups use euphemistic expressions. This language is frequently used by minority writers who try to express resistance through poetry. Scott (1990) noted this constant by analyzing diverse passages of black poetry (p.154-56).

Another motivation for sociologists to analyze literary content is to explore the bidirectional impact of literature and social/political structures. Bourdieu (1991) examined the

connection between language and social life. Since linguistic exchange between social agents affects and modifies social structures and social domination systems, it is essential to consider the role of language as a catalyst for social change. In this regard, Bourdieu (1991) stated the following:

> To speak of *the* language, without further specification, as linguists do, is tacitly to accept the *official* definition of the *official* language of a political unit… [T]he official language is in bond up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social issues. It is in process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language (p.45)

As noted earlier, Bourdieu (1991) provided a precise analysis of the use of language as a way of power, domination, and social dealing. Taking into account that the unit of human communication is language, literary content is conditioned to the language possibilities. Even though language offers a broad array of expression possibilities, when the—official—use of language is controlled by the dominant group, oppressed groups' expression options are reduced. In this sense, Bourdieu (1991) showed how language restrictions could embody expression barriers for writers. Regarding this problem, Bourdieu (1991) suggested that "the need for censorship to manifest itself in the form of explicit prohibitions, imposed and sanctioned by an institutionalized authority, diminishes as the mechanisms which ensure the allocation of agents to different positions" (p.138). Taking into account that poets develop discursive content based on their previous social experiences, as long as dominant groups determine the rules by which the author should write, authors tend to use alternative linguistic resources to express disapproval of censorship practices.

Apart from providing a valuable analysis of the social use of language, Bourdieu (1996) explored the connection between art and social structures. In this work, he focused on the analysis of the literary field from the sociological approach by providing an extensive analysis of the most notable pieces of world literature from the nineteenth century. Bourdieu (1996) pointed out that since social context largely determines the discursive composition of literary works, sociohistorical context must be one of the central analytical elements in sociological studies of literature.

Despite the fact that most sociological studies of literature focus on written-word analysis, Somers-Willett (2005) examined how spoken-word poets convey their identity through poems in slam poetry competitions[5]. The author concentrated on the analysis of minority poets' performances in different slam poetry contests throughout the United States. Somers-Willett (2005) argued that "self [identity] is the result of the performance, that subjectivities as they are expressed both in the world and on stage, come into being social practice" (p.56). Regarding this assumption, it is essential to understand that the authenticity that each poet tries to communicate is also a social practice. In other words, what the poet writes is the consequence of previous sociocultural negotiations in his/her particular social context that influence the content of the poem—and performance.

Furthermore, Somers-Willett (2005) suggested that "poetry slams are themselves generative sites of social practice from which these identities are performatively cited, recapitulated and questioned" (p.57). According to this assumption, spoken-word poetry performances are sites of negotiation between the poet and the audience, where the performance

[5] Slam poetry competitions are public contests where poets recite their original texts, usually related to everyday life issues, personal experiences, and political points of view. This is an American poetic tendency established in Chicago in the late 1980s. See Somers-Willett (2009).

of identity plays a central role in the successful, or unsuccessful, participation of the poet. Although Somers-Willett (2005) only examined poems performed in slam poetry competitions, her work pointed to the relationship between poetry and ethnic identity, as well as the significant role of poetry as an indicator of racial and ethnic relations.

Similarly, Porras (2011) studied the poetic discourse of the Afro-Colombian writer Candelario Obeso[6]. By identifying specific Afro-Hispanic linguistic features, this study examined Obeso's poetic forms and motivations to perform his identity through poetry, as well as resistance against linguistic and cultural discrimination during the post-Colonial period in Latin America. After an extensive examination of Afro-Caribbean Spanish's ties, Porras (2011) concluded that Obeso's ethnic performance served as a form of resistance against specific social stratification systems.

Other scholars have used their own literary works as units of analysis. Drawing from autoethnographic[7] rhizotextual[8] approach, Gardner (2014) examined the implicit socio-cultural information in two of his poems. This study explored how particular aspects of the author's socio-cultural context were integrated into his poems. Before proceeding to the analysis, Gardner (2014) pointed out the advantages of using poetry as a research tool by arguing that "poetry has the potential to reveal, not only the poet's subjectivity at the time of writing, but also the poet's socio-cultural positioning" (p.236). Since this study is an auto-literary analysis, Gardner (2014)

[6] Candelario Obeso (1849-1884) was a Colombian poet considered the founder of "Black poetry" in Colombia. Obeso was a pioneer in including cultural aspects of his African heritage in literature and established a long tradition of Afro-Hispanic poetry in Latin America (Porras 2011:263-64).
[7] The autoethnographic research approach focuses on the identification and study of the personalized accounts of the author/researcher's experience grounded in specific socio-cultural contexts (Gardner 2014:234).
[8] According to Honan (2010:182), "a rhizotextual analysis treats discourses as intersecting and overlapping, rather than linear or operating on planes. Within and across any one text, discursive lines can be mapped…[F]inding the moments when an assemblage of discursive lines merge to make plausible and reasoned sense to the reader." This was also cited in Gardner (2014:233).

suggested that "auto-ethnography requires reflexive interrogation of the 'outsider' with the advantage of 'insider' knowledge to reveal self-identity in its historical, socio-cultural, and political context" (p.237). Regarding race and ethnic relations, Gardner (2014) concluded that the ways of using words linked to racial concepts such as "black" and "white," were strong indicators of specific racial ideologies and self-racial identification that poetry can show if the poem is analyzed correctly. Gardner (2014) revealed that in his poem, these binary concepts worked in a particular way due to his conception of racism and racial ideology. Specifically, he stated:

> The binary of black and white, a racialized polarity, is reversed in the poem to disrupt the 'racist' semantic of the words and, therefore, the superordinate/subordinate relational power of white racism. In the poem, darkness is lyrical solace in the forms of peace, song, rest, comfort, love, and in the final stanza, freedom (p.243).

As noted in the above passage, the author demonstrated that conceptions and interpretations of race and ethnicity in poetry are subjective, and depend on the author's understanding of social reality. Thus, it is important to clarify that both the context and the author's interpretation of it, determine the poem's discursive content. Gardner (2014) provided evidence of the relationship between poetry and socio-cultural context, as well as the impact of this relationship on racial and ethnic relations.

To conclude this review of literature, it is worth noting that, although scholars have developed studies on the role of poetry as a social data (Ward 1986); language and social structures of domination (Scot 1990); art, power, and social structures (Bourdieu 1991,1996); ethnic identity/performance through spoken-word poetry (Somers-Willett 2005); ethnic performance as a way of resistance (Porras 2011); and socio-cultural expression through poetry

(Gardner 2014), no poetry-based studies have comparatively explored linguistic and discursive patterns of minority ethnic performance from the systems theory approach.

Given the absence of developed research from this theoretical approach, by conducting a poetry-based analysis on African American and Mexican American writers' ethnic performance from the systems theory approach, I can explore ethnic implications in linguistic and discursive patterns that have not been previously studied. The analysis of poetry works based on three theoretical principles from Luhmann's systems theory approach— "differentiation," "self-reference," and "communication"—will be supportive of providing a wider view and better understanding of this phenomenon, and hence, contributing to the enlargement of poetry-based sociological research on race-ethnic relations in the United States.

CHAPTER IV

DATA

Sample Selection Criteria

This research is based on a secondary data analysis approach which draws upon four hundred poems written in English by forty authors—twenty African American and twenty Mexican American, ten poems per author. To avoid analyzing narrative poetry, I only include poems written in verse, with ten verses minimum. Since gender is another relevant construct due to its impact on ethnic performance through poetry, I divide the sample into male and female authors. In consequence, the final sample comprises one hundred poems written by African American men, African American women, Mexican American men, and Mexican American women, respectively.

I consider four key aspects when selecting poems for inclusion. The first one is *Social Context*. I standardize the authors' experience within the state of Texas by considering two possible patterns of residence/experience in the state: (1) Texas-born and raised poets, and (2) non-Texas-born poets—only U.S.-born individuals—who had lived in the state for at least five years before publishing the work included in the sample.

The second aspect is *Quality and Neutrality*. Given it is easy to publish information on the Internet regardless of quality, content, and motivation, the boundary dividing formal and non-formal publications is often blurred. A significant amount of non-professional/amateur as well as professional poets, publish their work on the web using blogs and other digital platforms. To

avoid analyzing untrustworthy content, I only include poems published in chapter books—in physical or digital format—by reputable publishing firms, educational institutions, cultural organizations, and independent literary platforms. I ignore poems published in anthologies, journals, and magazines because most of them lead publication of poetry to specific topics, which could result in inaccurate outcomes. Finally, I exclude chapter books focusing on specific topics such as religion, politics, love, and so on.

The third aspect is *Self-identification*. All poets I include in the sample self-identified as Mexican American or African American in biographies, descriptions, or personal information found in their books and official websites. It is important to stress that although no more details regarding their ethnic and racial background are available, the fact that they self-identify as a part of one of these groups is pivotal to the internal validity of this research.

The fourth aspect is *Temporality*. Since this research focuses on the analysis of contemporary African American and Mexican American poetry, I only consider books published between 2000 and 2015. I selected this period based on the observed patterns of publication frequency; some authors are not exclusively poets—they work other genres too—and publishing poetry works sometimes takes many years, so that a period of fifteen years is adequate to encompass both poetry and multi-genre authors.

Geographic Distribution

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010a), 11.8 percent of total residents of Texas are black/African Americans, and 31.8 percent have Mexican ancestry. Differences in ethnic distribution of the population by region embody another relevant factor regarding data and sampling process. Historically, Texas has been a heterogeneous state regarding population

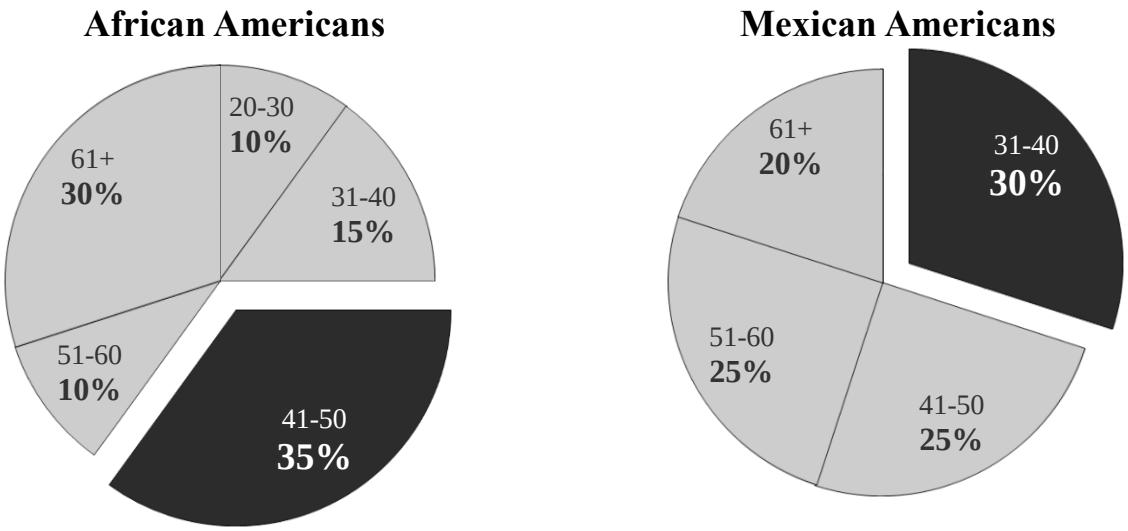
distribution. For instance, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010b), African Americans account for 25.0 percent of the total population of the City of Dallas, while the same group accounts for 9.4 percent of the entire population of the City of Austin. While African Americans have more presence in cities like Dallas and Houston, Mexican American population is larger in places like San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley. Figure 1 illustrates the geographic distribution of the forty sampled authors.

Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Sampled Authors by Ethnic Group

Age and Number of Publications

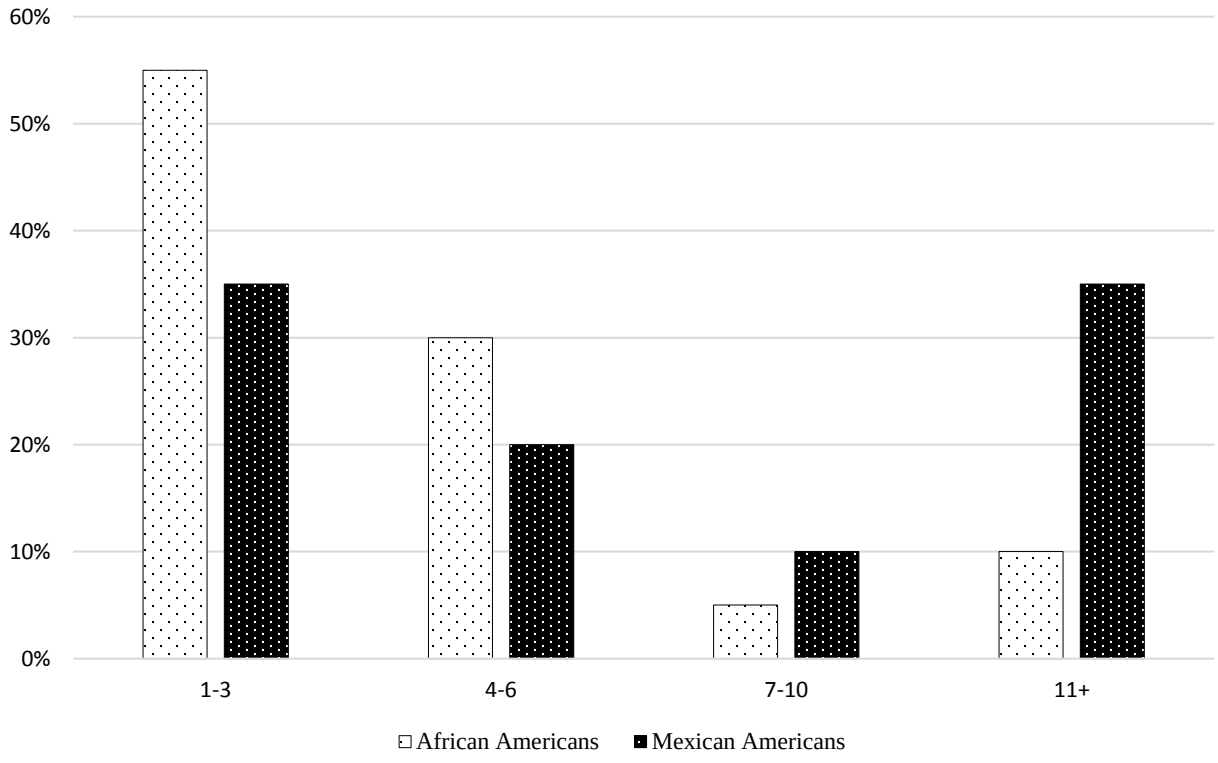
Both age of authors and number of published books are essential sets of information in this analysis, due to my interest in evaluating the relationship between the degree of ethnic performance and experience within the literary field. I divide the sample into five age groups: (1) "twenty to thirty," (2) "thirty-one to forty," (3) "forty-one to fifty," (4) "fifty-one to sixty," and (5) "sixty-one and over." It is important to mention that authors' ages ranged from twenty to seventy-eight years old at the time of publishing the piece included in this sample. As Figure 2 shows, the predominant age group among African Americans is "forty-one to fifty," while most Mexican Americans are most frequently between thirty-one and forty years old. Even though no Mexican American authors fall into the "twenty to thirty" group, there are twice as many authors than African Americans in the group "thirty-one to forty." Moreover, for both groups, most authors are 41 years of age or older, with 75.0 percent of African Americans, and 70.0 percent of Mexican Americas classified in any of the last three age-groups; "forty-one to fifty," fifty-one to sixty," and "sixty-one and over."

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Authors by Ethnic Group



Regarding number of published books, although most of the authors have published poems in literary magazines and journals, I only consider published chapter books for this category. I divide the sample into four groups: (1) “one to three,” (2) “four to six,” (3) “seven to ten,” and (4) “eleven and over” published books. As Figure 3 illustrates, on average African Americans tended to have fewer books published than Mexican Americans; while in the first two categories African Americans predominated, in the last two the pattern was reversed. Full information regarding geographic distribution, age, and published books per author can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 3: Distribution of Published Books by Ethnic Group



CHAPTER V

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

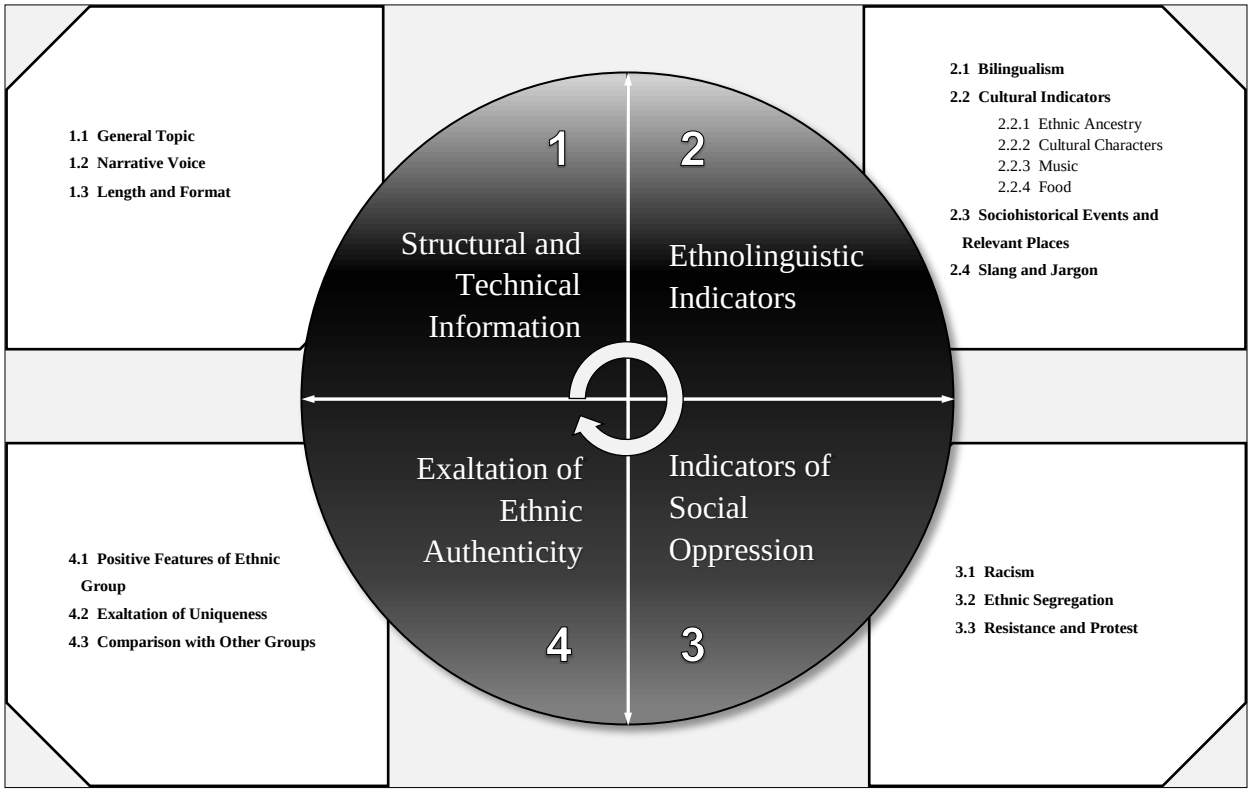
Given the complexity of the rhetorical language used in poetry, its interpretation is subject to the readers' particular views. Hence, there can exist multiple readings of the same work. To avoid unreliable outcomes, poetry-based sociological studies must be supported by clear and concise coding and analytical processes. I designed an analytical strategy made up of four categories to analyze the data through the three theoretical concepts derived from Luhmann's systems theory approach discussed in Chapter II—"differentiation," "self-reference," and "communication." As Figure 4 illustrates, each category comprises multiple areas of analysis designated to channel analytical efforts towards the specific theoretical concepts that I examine.

Regarding the analytical process, I examine the sample in two stages. The first stage is a numerical quantification of the presence and density of mentions per poem in each area of analysis. I focus on three sets of measurement: (1) percentage of poems with presence of specific categorical patterns, (2) total mentions on specific categorical patterns, and (3) average density of mentions per poem among those with presence of specific categorical patterns. These sets of measurement can be seen in terms of sample by ethnic group (n=200) or sample by gender (n=100)—considering the distribution discussed in Chapter IV. This numerical information is vital to evaluate the degree of frequency of mentions in each area.

The second stage is the analysis and interpretation of content. Since this study is qualitative in nature, this stage is a central part of this process. Once evaluating frequency and

density of mentions of each category, I examine each piece individually to detect particularities, similarities, and disparities in intra and inter-group ethnic performance patterns. To illustrate the role of each level of measurement in terms of the research question proviously postulated—how and to what extent do contemporary African American and Mexican American writers perform their ethnicity through poetry?—the first stage considers the "extent" and the second considers "how."

Figure 4: Analytical Process: Categories and Areas of Analysis



Structural and Technical Information

I include this category to provide an accurate summary of the technical composition of the sample. I examine four features: (1) "General Topic," (2) "Narrative Voice," (3) "Length,"

and (4) “Format.” It is important to mention that this category serves only for reference purposes so that it does not pass through the two stages of examination described above.

General Topic

In order to achieve a precise topical classification of the sample, I categorize poems into nine thematic sortings: (1)“Love/Attachment,” (2) “Tragedy/Loss,” (3) “God/Spirituality,” (4) “Memories/Anecdotal Narrative,” (5) “Motivation,” (6) “Politics,” (7) “Social Problems,” (8) “Identity,” and (9) “Diversity.” This area is of particular importance because a correct understanding of the general topic of poems leads to a successful interpretation of their content.

Narrative Voice

I include this area to identify the authors’ position within their corresponding poems. The correct detection of the narrative voice is central to understand the authors’ role and their connection with the topics they address. Considering the most recurrent narrative voices used in poetry, I classify the sample into four groups: (1) “First Person,” (2) “Second Person,” (3) “Third Person,” and (4) “Mixed Voice.” It is important to clarify that I use the term “Mixed Voice” to categorize poems in which the author included more than one narrative voice.

Length and Format

Taking into account that the sampled poems are heterogeneous in length, I counted the total number of verses per poem—considering that verses are the units of length measurement in poetry. Regarding format, I extracted 82.5 percent of the poems from physical books and 17.5 percent from e-books. This information is also included in Appendix A.

Ethnolinguistic Indicators

Ethnolinguistic indicators are crucial to the analysis. I include this category to detect, measure, and analyze dominant linguistic resources that authors use to reaffirm and perform their ethnicity. Regarding systems theory approach, I include this category to identify how authors use "expressive symbols" in the processes of "self-reference" and "differentiation." Moreover, I focus on detecting cases in which these symbols—specifically shared symbols—have particular impact on inter-group "communication." Even though there are numerous resources that minority groups use to construct and perform ethnic identity depending on social, historical, and geographic circumstances (Fought 2006:21-3), I concentrate on four areas: (1) "Bilingualism," (2) "Cultural Indicators," (3) "Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places," and (4) "Slang and Jargon." These areas are based on the most recurrent symbolic elements I detected in preliminary readings.

Bilingualism

Despite the fact that bilingualism is more common in Mexican American than in African American literature due to the notable differences regarding native language and migration history, I incorporate this area for two central reasons. First, it is vital to recognize the role that bilingualism play in poetry for ethnic performance purposes. Two, by identifying patterns of bilingualism usage both in African American and Mexican American poetry, I can inspect the impact of the multiethnic composition of the state of Texas on poetry works.

Regarding coding, it is important to note that this is the only area of the entire analysis in which the first stage of examination varied. Instead of counting the net number of bilingual utterances per poem, I measure this element in terms of the number of verses with presence of

bilingualism, considering those verses in which the author included at least one word in a non-English language; languages founded in this part of analysis will be discussed in Chapter VI. Once I counted the number of verses with this characteristic, I compared them to the total number of verses to obtain an average presence of bilingualism per poem.

Cultural Indicators

Culture has been widely studied by social scientists, even before the establishment of Sociology as a formal science. In fact, such has been the relevance and presence of culture in scholarly sociological works, that it has recently been claimed that "Sociology is itself cultural, and triply so" (Hall, Grindstaff, and Lo 2010:2). Since it is difficult to assume a final or definitive conceptualization of culture given the vast variety of definitions that social scientists have proposed, culture can be simply understood as a "set of actions, material objects, and forms of discourse held and used by groups of individuals" (Fine 2010:213).

From systems theory, Parsons and Shils ([1953] 2001) defined cultural system as a "pattern of culture whose different parts are interrelated to form value symbols, belief systems, and systems of expressive symbols" (p.55). Thus, by identifying culture as a system of expressive symbols, I divide this area into four dimensions of cultural expressions: (1) "Ethnic Ancestry," (2) "Cultural Characters," (3) "Music," and (4) "Food." This category is supportive of getting as much information as possible regarding the connection between the authors' cultural manifestations and ethnic performance.

Ethnic ancestry. I include this dimension to explore how frequent and relevant is the usage of symbolic elements linked to either African ancient civilizations/tribes and Mexican pre-

Columbian cultures in the sample. The elements that I take into consideration are names, gods/deities, languages, phenotypic traits of the group, and relevant symbolic elements. Additionally, I examine mentions in which authors talk about their ancestry, regardless geographical or temporal locations; cases in which authors do not allude to any specific civilization/group, but to their "ancestors."

Cultural characters. I include this dimension to examine the authors' attachment to public characters who symbolically represent their corresponding ethnic groups. Additionally, by analyzing these mentions in their particular contexts, I can identify purposes and motivations in the usage of these characters as cultural, and sometimes moral symbols. I consider mentions linked to any relevant character from any social sphere such as politicians, artists, intellectuals, journalists, athletes, folk heroes, and so on.

Music. Since music represents one of the strongest cultural expressions in societies, I examine the connection between the authors' poetry works and certain musical genres with which their ethnic groups naturally identify. I consider mentions in which the authors manifest an inclination to identify themselves, or their ethnic groups with songs, genres, dances, singers, and so on. Moreover, I take into account cultural symbols and events linked to music such as traditional musical instruments, concerts and musical festivals, and social movements connected to music. I focus on identifying in what specific contexts they tend to include these elements.

Food. Given the strong association of food with ethnic, social, and cultural forces (Lu and Fine 1995:547), I incorporate this dimension to examine authors' usage of culinary culture

as a way of ethnic performance. Even though ethnic culinary customs have dramatically changed due to the process of assimilation and Americanization of both groups—in different ways and degrees—upon exploring this dimension as a cultural symbol linked to ethnicity, I can detect the meanings and motivations behind the inclusion of these symbols. I consider dishes and culinary elements with which the authors identify or are frequently mentioned.

Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places

I incorporate this category to examine authors' connection with their ethnic groups' history and geographic origin. I focus on three main components: (1) place/geographical location; (2) time/era or historical period; and (3) subject matter/ nature of the event regarding social impact (Tilly 1981:18). This three-dimensional examination allows me to identify sociohistorical events based on the geographical location where they took place, their temporality, and the social impact that they generated—all related to ethnic issues. I consider mentions linked to relevant historical processes throughout the history of each group either before or after migrating to the United States. Regarding relevant places, I only consider references linked to those sites connected to the ethnic groups' history before migrating to the United States.

Slang and Jargon

Jargon is understood as a specialized vocabulary used by a particular group. However, in linguistics, it is also linked to meaningless words or phrases that only certain groups understand and use. On the other hand, slang can be defined as a casual way of speech in which groups of people, by using euphemisms, assign special meanings to unrelated words. (Gaeng 1983:177).

Considering the notable dissimilarities between groups in patterns of language usage, I include this area to explore the use of slang and jargon in poetry as a resource in ethnic performance. Moreover, I focus on the contexts in which authors incorporated such linguistic forms to evaluate possible intra and inter-group parallels and evaluate to what extent their specific meanings are connected to ethnic and cultural symbols. Regarding the systems theory approach, this area is supportive of identifying usage patterns of slang and jargon for "differentiation" and "self-identification" purposes.

Indicators of Social Oppression

Even though the main aim of my research is not to address an analysis of the American racial stratification system or any source of social inequality, I include indicators of social oppression due to the considerable influence that segregation and racial/ethnic oppression have on the discursive content of minority literature. Given the complex historical evolution of racial relations in the United States, social scientists have profoundly studied different phenomena related to race and ethnicity. Recently, due to the fast and ongoing transformation of racial relations in the country, sociologists have explored diverse forms of ethnic and racial social oppression/segregation. To establish a clear differentiation of concepts, I divide this category into three areas: (1) "Racism," (2) "Ethnic Segregation," and (3) "Resistance and Protest."

It is essential to mention that apart from passing these three areas through the stages of examination above, I include another classification system based on discursive tone. I classify mentions into four tone degrees: (1) "Non-Aggressive": for mentions in which no verbal and/or explicit aggression against oppressors was involved; (2) "Moderate": for those mentions in which authors included any element of reproach and/or disapproval against oppressors with no

offensive language; (3) “Aggressive”: for mentions in which authors expressed reproach and/or disapproval against oppressors with offensive language; and (4) “Highly Aggressive”: for mentions in which authors included highly offensive language, threats, and apology for violence against oppressors.

Racism

Racism is “generally understood to refer to the hostility one group feels toward another on the basis of the alleged biological and/or cultural inferiority of that other” (Holt 2000:4). Given the vast diversity of theoretical approaches and classification systems of racism and racial oppression (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Hill Collins 1993), I consider two forms of racism: (1) micro/individual: refers to the instances in which race—or color line—was a clear source of inequality against the authors’ ethnic groups; and (2) macro/institutional: those cases in which the authors’ rights were infringed in the wake of any government initiative, law, policy, institutional act, or by any public institution or government official (Golash-Boza 2016:131).

From the systems theory approach, I take into consideration Luhmann’s concepts of “meaning” and “self-reference”—discussed in Chapter II—to explore the authors’ conception of racism and specific meanings that they attribute to it. I examine each reference in its context to get a correct understanding of the situation and, in consequence, its exact meaning. In this sense, I do not consider as expressions of racism those cases in which the author did not make an explicit reference to the criteria described above; words with derogatory implications such as “nigger” or “slave,” not necessarily have a racist connotation, it depends on each context.

Ethnic Segregation

Segregation can be understood as a "differential distribution of social groups among social organizational units" (James and Taeuber 1985:24). Another concept I consider for the examination of this area is social oppression, defined by Blauner (1972) as a "dynamic process by which one segment of the society achieves power and privilege through the control and exploitation of other groups…[A]nd pushed down into the lower levels of the social order" (p.22). Since none of the above conceptions include references to race, I use them as a central guide to examine this area. In consequence, I orient my analysis towards events in which authors' ethnic groups were socially relegated to disadvantaged positions within social structures based on ethnic motivations. I consider all kinds of ethnic segregation such as educational, residential, economic, and so on.

Resistance and Protest

Given their status as minority groups in the state of Texas, African Americans and Mexican Americans face notable obstacles to assimilate and integrate into mainstream social, economic, and poltical spheres. Considering that literature has been used by minority groups as a way of resistance against diverse kinds of social oppression, I include this area to examine the extent these groups use poetry to express disapproval against the expressions of racism and segregation that they face. Regarding the systems theory approach, I explore authors' patterns of "differentiation" as a way of resistance and protest against dominant groups.

Exaltation of Ethnic Authenticity

The concept “authentic” is automatically linked to “original.” Depending on the context, authenticity is understood in different ways. To locate the concept in this particular context, I allude to the notion posted by Van Leeuwen (2001), who claimed that “something can be called 'authentic' because it is thought to be true to the essence of something, to a revealed truth, a deeply felt sentiment, or the way these are worded or otherwise expressed” (p.393). Based on this assumption, ethnicity can be understood as something loaded of the essence, the truth, and the sentiment, that is shared by individuals who have the same ethnic origin. I include this category to explore a given author’s inclination to reaffirm and exalt specific features and values linked to their ethnic groups. Moreover, I divide this category into three areas: (1) “Positive Features of Ethnic Group,” (2) “Exaltation of Uniqueness,” and (3) “Comparison with Other Ethnic Groups.”

Positive Features of Ethnic Group

I include this area to examine the authors’ proclivity to include mentions linked to moral characteristics such as values, beliefs, and habits that they considered as strengths of their corresponding ethnic groups. Additionally, I examine how authors established a connection between these features with their daily life. The inclusion of this area is supportive of identifying authors’ interpretation and reflection on ethnic pride.

Exaltation of Uniqueness

I include this area to examine how authors set boundaries of differentiation between their ethnic groups and others. I only consider moral characteristics, excluding mentions linked to

physical or phenotypical particularities. I take into account mentions in which authors identified unique positive or negative particularities that distinguish them from others. Moreover, regarding the systems theory approach, I explore how authors linked these patterns of "differentiation" to their position within the American social stratification system as well as to their notion of uniqueness regarding common ethnic origin.

Comparison with other Ethnic Groups

This area is the counterpart of the first two areas. I include this area to examine ways that authors used to compare themselves—as a part of specific ethnic groups—with other individuals or groups with different ethnic origins. Unlike areas 4.1 and 4.2, I consider both moral and physical comparative elements to recognize all the possible forms of comparison that authors used. Moreover, I consider mentions in which authors paralleled their social position or historical development with other ethnic groups in current American society.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

Structural and Technical Information

General Topic

Based on the topic classification previously mentioned, results show two inter-group parallels. First, the predominant topic in both African American and Mexican American samples was "Memories/Anecdotal Narrative" with 38.5 and 41.5 percent of the total sample, respectively. Second, coincidently, the less recurrent topic in both groups was "Diversity" with 1.5 percent of the African American and 1.0 percent of the Mexican American samples. As Figure 5 illustrates, comparative results were notably similar. Nevertheless, while poems by African American authors were predominant in "Love/Attachment," "Social Problems," "Politics," "Motivation," and "Diversity," those by Mexican Americans referred to "Memories/Anecdotal Narrative," "Identity," "Tragedy/Loss," and "God/Spirituality."

As Table 1 shows, intra-group variations were notable. Among African Americans, the most uneven topic was "Social Problem," in which the poems authored by men tended to be more frequent. In contrast, although it was not a recurrent topic in this group, poems by male and female authors on "God/Spirituality" were equally frequent with 4.0 percent of the total sample of each group. The last remarkable peculiarity was the absence of poems authored by men on "Diversity"; while poems by female authors on this topic accounted for 3.0 percent of the total female sample. Concerning Mexican Americans, intra-group dissimilarities were less

noticeable. The most uneven topic was “Identity,” in which poems by female authors were seven percentage points more frequent than those by males. Poems by male and female authors on “Social Problems” were equally frequent with 10.0 percent of the total sample of each group. Lastly, while “Diversity” was absent in poems by female authors, this topic was present in 2.0 percent of poems by men.

Figure 5: Distribution of Topics by Ethnic Group

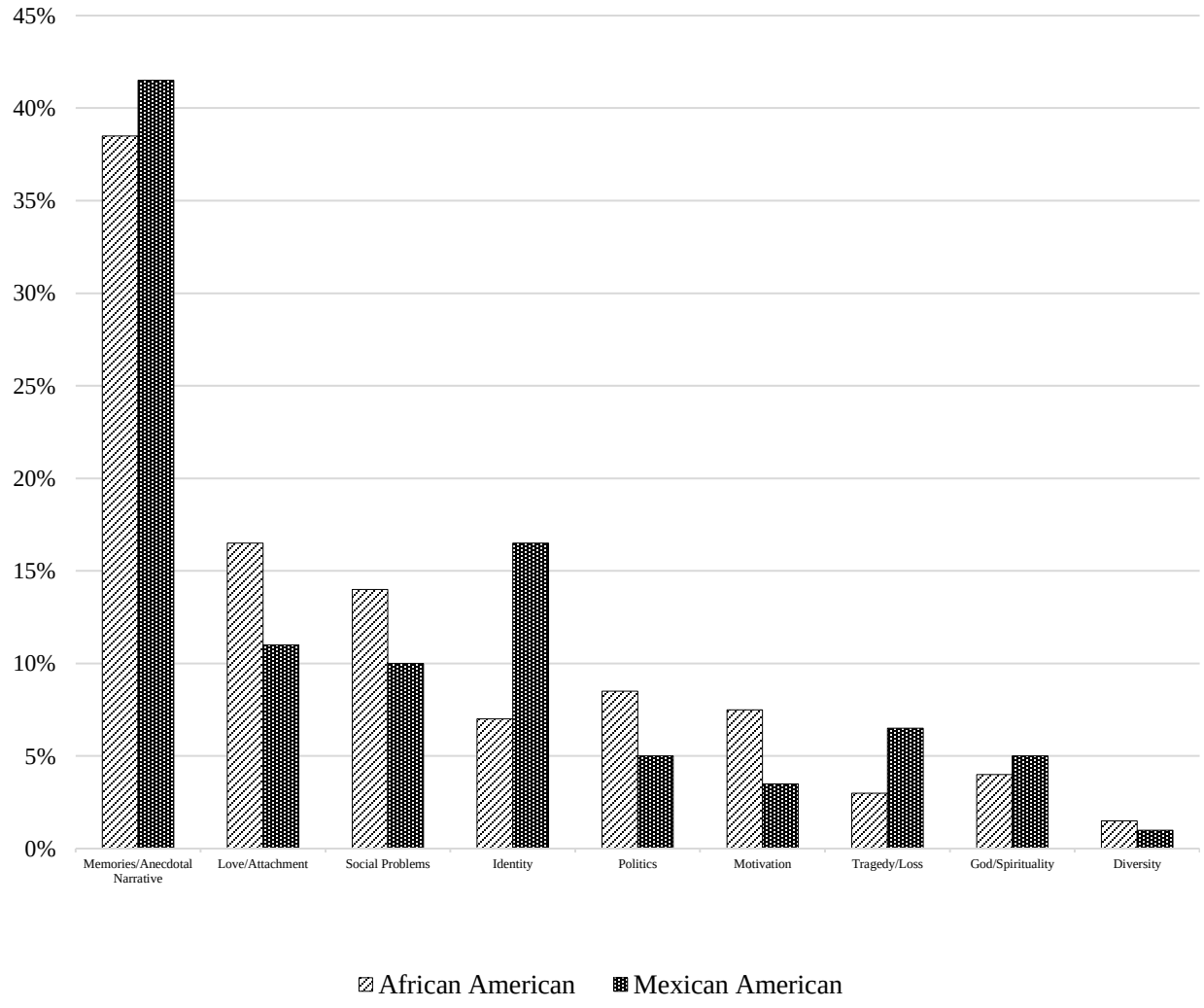


Table 1: Frequency of Topics by Ethnic Group and Gender

Topic	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Memories/Anecdotal Narrative	36.0%	41.0%	38.5%	43.0%	40.0%	41.5%
Love/Attachment	13.0%	20.0%	16.5%	10.0%	12.0%	11.0%
Social Problems	18.0%	10.0%	14.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Identity	5.0%	9.0%	7.0%	13.0%	20.0%	16.5%
Politics	11.0%	5.0%	8.5%	8.0%	2.0%	5.0%
Motivation	8.0%	7.0%	7.5%	2.0%	5.0%	3.5%
Tragedy/Loss	5.0%	1.0%	3.0%	8.0%	5.0%	6.5%
God/Spirituality	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	6.0%	5.0%
Diversity	—	3.0%	1.5%	2.0%	—	1.0%

Narrative Voice

As observed in Table 2, results show a similarity of topics touched upon by male and female African American authors. Both male and female African American authors used narrative voices in similar proportions, being "Mixed Voice" the most dissimilar, with four percentage points of difference between male and female authors. In contrast, gender-wise differences among Mexican Americans were quite noticeable. In this group, the most dissimilar narrative voice was "Mixed Voice," with twenty-five percentage points of difference between male and female authors. Additionally, results show that Mexican American female authors were more inclined toward the use of "First Person." Finally, "Mixed Voice" was the predominant narrative voice among both African American and Mexican American authors.

Table 2: Distribution of Narrative Voice by Ethnic Group and Gender

Narrative Voice	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	Group Average	Male	Female	Group Average
First Person	14.0%	16.0%	15.0%	41.0%	17.0%	29.0%
Second Person	8.0%	9.0%	8.5%	9.0%	4.0%	6.5%
Third Person	10.0%	11.0%	10.5%	5.0%	9.0%	7.0%
Mixed Voice	68.0%	64.0%	66.0%	45.0%	70.0%	57.5%

Length

The sample—400 poems—comprised 17,771 verses in total. As observed in Table 3, results show a slight inter-group difference in length of poems. The poems by Mexican Americans were longer with an average of 39.5 verses per poem, contrasting to those by African Americans with 34.2 verses. Gender-based differences among ethnic groups were also broad. While poems authored by African American females were dramatically more extensive than those by male authors, among Mexican Americans this pattern was the opposite: male authors produced pieces that were considerably more extensive than those by female authors.

Table 3: Length of Poems by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	Group Average	Male	Female	Group Average
Total Verses	2,822	4,029	6,851	4,036	3,874	7,910
Average Verses	28.2	40.3	34.2	40.4	38.7	39.5

Ethnolinguistic Indicators

From the systems theory approach, results reveal strong inter-groups parallels in the development of ethnic-based mechanisms of linguistic "differentiation" in three areas of this category: (1) "Cultural Indicators," (2) "Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places," and (3) "Slang and Jargon." Even though both African American and Mexican American authors focused on different symbolic expressions, both groups were evidently prone to include cultural symbols linked to their corresponding ethnic origins—for instance, while African Americans focused on areas like "Cultural Characters" and "Music," Mexican Americans did on "Ethnic Ancestry" and "Food." This pattern shows that despite differences in areas, authors included a wide variety of ethnic-based cultural symbols to differentiate from other ethnic groups within their social environment.

Results show a relationship between authors' demographics and density of mentions linked to ethnic origin: the smaller the representation of an ethnic group in a region, the more intense "differentiation" process observed. This means that those authors experientially connected to Texas regions with a higher concentration of non-Hispanic white population were more likely to include these symbolic expressions in poetry. In these cases, authors included cultural symbols linked to their corresponding ethnic origin as a mechanism of resistance against racial/ethnic oppression. However, results show a relationship between authors' literary experience and use of ethnic-based symbolic expressions: the older/more experienced the author, the less intense "differentiation" process observed.

Furthermore, results show evidence of the use of ethnic-based symbolic expressions in "self-reference" processes in two areas of this category: (1) "Cultural Indicators"—in Cultural Characters—and (2) "Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places." In these areas, both African

American and Mexican American authors gave specific meanings to some aspects of their [current] social reality by evoking ethnic symbols, places, or people who influenced the course of the history either of their ethnic groups' pre-migration history or throughout the history of the United States. Moreover, results arising from the analysis of two areas of this category evidence a clear presence of inter-group "communication": (1) "Bilingualism" and (2) "Slang and Jargon." In these areas, results show an evident inter-group parallel regarding linguistic expressions derived from a shared social environment—the state of Texas. The following sections display detailed examples that support the above findings derived from the systems theory approach.

Bilingualism

Considering the Mexican Americans' rootedness in the Spanish language, their inclusion of non-English words in poems was dramatically superior. As Table 4 shows, while only 8.5 percent of the total poems by African Americans showed presence of bilingualism, 56.0 percent of those by Mexican Americans exhibited this characteristic. Additionally, results show notable intra-group dissimilarities. Meanwhile, among African Americans, female authors displayed less bilingual mentions than males, among Mexican Americans this pattern was the opposite.

Table 4: Presence of Bilingualism by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			**Mexican American**		
	Male	Female	**Group Summary**	Male	Female	**Group Summary**
Poems	10.0%	7.0%	8.5%	46.0%	66.0%	56.0%
Verses	15	11	26	297	370	667
Density	1.50	1.57	1.53	6.46	5.61	5.95

Furthermore, language-based variations were relevant. Meanwhile 98.9 percent of the bilingual mentions by Mexican Americans were written in Spanish and only 1.1 percent in Latin, poems by African Americans displayed a considerable wider range of languages: 4.5 percent in Arab; 10.1 percent in Portuguese; 13.3 percent in German; and 72.1 percent in Spanish. This dissimilarity reveals two central findings. First, although Mexican Americans were dramatically more likely to include non-English words in their poems, African Americans did it in a broader multilingual way. Second, despite the African Americans' variety of used languages, Spanish was the predominant one.

Finally, it is essential to highlight that African American female authors were particularly likely to include high concentrations of Spanish expressions per poem. These patterns respond to an inclination toward including complete phrases in Spanish instead of supporting specific ideas. The following passages written by two African American female authors exemplify this pattern: Harreyette Mullen (2002):

> … Californians say Yes
> to bilingual instructions on curbside waste receptacles:
>
> *Coloque el recipiente con las flechas hacia la calle*[9]
> Place container with arrow facing street
>
> *No ruede el recipiente con la tapa abierta*
> Do not tilt or roll container with lid open
>
> *Recortes de jardin solamente*
> Yard clippings only (p.10).

Hermine Pinson (2007):

> When I hear the piano or saxophone
> singing like a griot in a time
> signature consonant with a gifted

[9] In this passage, the bottom phrases correspond to the English translation of the top ones.

heartbeat, I think of Ntozake[10]
hija de las Americas, hermana en la lucha[11]
striding with lions… (p.41).

The above passages are particularly interesting due to the presence of complete phrases in Spanish rather than isolated words or concepts. In the first example, the inclusion of complete phrases in Spanish, followed by their translation into English, alludes the strong presence of bilingualism in some areas of the state of California—considering the context of the poem. Even though the author's motivation for including these bilingual resources is not clear, it is possible to infer that the bilingual expressions that she included reflect the ethnic composition of the place that she is talking about. In the second example, the motivation is clearer because the author talked about multiculturalism and bilingualism.

Cultural Indicators

In contrast to the inter-group differences regarding presence of bilingualism, results show smaller differences in cultural indicators. While 17.5 percent of the total poems by African Americans presented any category of cultural indicators, 33.5 percent of those by Mexican Americans did. As Table 5 shows, the gap of mentions linked to any area of cultural indicators among African Americans was considerable greater than the one among Mexican Americans. As proof of that, African American female authors were more likely to include cultural indicators and displayed a higher density of mentions per poem than males, with an average of 2.16 and 1.47 mentions per poem, respectively.

[10] Ntozake Shange (1948-) is a New Jersey born African American poet, novelists, and essayists whose work has had a notable impact on the Black community due to her activism against racial and gender discrimination. See Effiong (2000).
[11] Translation: "Daughter of the Americas, sister in the struggle"

Table 5: Presence of Cultural Indicators by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	15.0%	25.0%	17.5%	31.0%	36.0%	33.5%
Mentions	22	54	76	63	64	127
Density	1.47	2.16	1.81	2.03	1.78	1.89
Ethnic Ancestry	4.5%	13.0%	8.7%	27.0%	14.1%	20.5%
Cultural Characters	63.7%	44.4%	54.0%	22.2%	12.5%	17.3%
Music	27.3%	24.1%	25.8%	9.5%	6.2%	7.9%
Food	4.5%	18.5%	11.5%	41.3%	67.2%	54.3%

Ethnic ancestry. Aside disparities in frequency of mentions by cultural dimensions, results show three relevant peculiarities in mentions linked to ethnic ancestry. First, whereas African American male authors used fewer references to ethnic ancestry than the female authors, Mexican Americans registered the opposite; mentions by males doubled those by females. In this sense, aside from inter-group disparities in overall frequency, intra-group differences by gender were in opposite directions.

Second, while African Americans mentioned a wider range of cultural symbols linked to certain African ethnic groups, Mexican Americans included mentions connected to pre-Columbian cultures such as the Mayan and the Aztec. Despite these discrepancies, both groups presented notable concentrations of rhetorical figures when mentioning aspects of their ethnic ancestry—perhaps to place their mentions in imaginary/mythic scenarios. The following passage written by a Mexican American male author illustrates this feature:

Gabriel H. Sanchez (2015):

> …While Quetzalcoatl[12] sits
> Pleasantly above on his throne
> Of Aztec pyramid bases and bones
> Cemented with the flesh
> of modern-day human hearts… (p.4).

In the above passage, with the use of prosopopoeia[13] as a rhetorical figure, the author attributed human characteristics to an Aztec god to exalt his relevance and supernatural power. Likewise, this piece alludes to Aztec human sacrifices, but instead of mentioning them in their historical context, the author extrapolated that utopian situation to modern times. The following passage corresponds to an African American female author:

Harreyette Mullen (2002):

> …How muddy is the
> Mississippi compared to the third-longest river of the darkest
> continent? In the land of the Ibo[14], the Hausa[15], and the Yoruba[16],
> what is the price per barrel of nigrescence?... (p.19).

Besides the clear resistance against racism, the author mentioned three African cultural references. Additionally, she included references to the Mississippi River and compared it to some African rivers. In the last verse, the author included a rhetoric interrogation, which in this

[12] Translation: "Plumed Serpent." In many Mesoamerican civilizations, most deities were represented as snakes: *Quetzalcoatl* to Aztecs, *Kukulkán* to Mayans, and *Gucmatz* to Guatemalan Quichés. In Aztec culture, *Quetzalcoatl* was a god who "gave humans the knowledge of agriculture, scattering the seeds across the land for the rain god *Tláloc* to water" (Jones 2003:27). He also was considered god of wind.

[13] Prosopopeia is a rhetorical figure used to attribute human abilities to non-animated objects, fictitious characters, or dead people. Riffaterre (1985:108) argued that "prosopopeia in most cases merely lends a voice to a voiceless, or now silent, entity by a mere convention."

[14] The Igbo (Ibo) group is one of the largest West African ethnic groups. They are mostly concentrated in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon (Chuku 2013:7).

[15] Hausa is the largest ethnic group in Africa. They are mainly located in northern Nigeria, but the extended throughout diverse countries in Central Africa (Adamu 1978:1-9).

[16] Yoruba is an ethnic group from southwestern Nigeria. They are politically and socially organized into different kingdoms ruled by various monarchs. Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa and they are extended throughout more than five African countries (Smith 1976:9-15).

context is used as an ironic way to mention an unacceptable circumstance linked to racism and racial segregation.

Third, although the majority of mentions in both groups referred to specific cultural symbols connected to ancient civilizations or tribes, in some cases authors referred to their ethnic roots as "ancestors" and "genes." The usage of these concepts proves that regardless the authors' lack of precise information about their ancestry, they tend to locate themselves as part of the same history and origin. The following passage written by an African American male author exemplifies that pattern:

Harvey C. Jones (2010):

> Let's back to Black
> It's the truth, it's the fact.
> Let us think what it means,
> Like our ancestors' genes… (p.27).

Although the author did not mention any particular word linked to specific African cultural symbols, he alluded to his ancestors, apparently located in Africa given the context of the poem. The following passage written by a Mexican American female author reinforces this finding:

Emmy Perez (2011):

> …My calf´s tusks
> are attached to the skull
>
> of the sun. Ancestors
> run under our bellies
>
> like clans of mule deer
> sinking into sky´s velvet… (p.35).

Similarly, although the author did not include specific elements linked to any pre-Colombian Mexican culture, she alluded to "the ancestors"—her Mexican ancestors.

Cultural characters. Results show a dramatic inter-group disparity in frequency of mentions on cultural characteristics. While 54.0 percent of the total metions by African Americans on cultural indicators corresponded to cultural characters, 17.3 percent of those made by Mexican Americans did. Likewise, in both groups male authors were more likely to include mentions linked to relevant cultural characters. As Table 5 displays, since this is the dimension in which mentions by African Americans were substantially more abundant and denser, the first relevant finding corresponds to their clear inclination to include cultural characters more than other cultural symbols. The following passage written by an African American female author illustrates the density of mentions per poem:

April R. Neal (2013):

> … so we forget
> that before MLK[17] and sit-ins & marches just to get to equality at education […]
> THERE are GRANTS and SCHOLARSHIPS
> that 1 out of every 2,500 applicants will be able to receive.
> AIN'T I a woman…
> Ain't I a human
> Ain't I a citizen
> Sojourner Truth
> Harriet Tubman[18]
> Phillis Wheatley [19]
> Nikki Giovanni[20]

[17] Martin Luther King, Jr (1929-1968) was the most influential activist and leader of the African American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s in the United States. See Davis (1973).

[18] Araminta Ross (1822-1913), better known as Harriet Tubman, was an influential abolitionist and civil rights activist in the nineteenth century, noticeable during the American Civil War. She was born as a slave in Dorchester County, Maryland where after had escaped from her masters, helped other slaves to run away. Tubman had an active participation in the Civil War as she worked for the Union Army as a spy and scout. Her legacy inspired the African American Civil Rights Movement in the mid-twentieth century (Larson 2004: xiii-xxi).

[19] Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) was the first African American female poet to publish a book in the United States: *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773). This event is considered one of the most relevant moments in the history of the African American literature because it was during the slavery era in the United States when Wheatley could publish her work despite barriers resulting from racial oppression (Bader 2004:244-46)

[20] Yolande Cornelia Giovanni (1943-), better known as Nikki Giovanni, is a Tennessee African American poet, essayist, and editor. In the 1960s she became one of the central figures of the Black Arts and Black Power movements. Currently, Giovanni is one of the most acclaimed African American contemporary poets (Bader 2004:100).

Langston Hughes[21]
Oprah[22], Obama, Maya Angelou[23]
Frederick Douglass[24]
different decades
yet they saw the same exact thing…
AMERICA is not a racist country
until you try to succeed … (p.95).

In the above passage, the author mentioned nine relevant African American characters linked to diverse social dimensions such as politics, literature, and social movements. Besides the context and motivation of the poem, the fact that all characters mentioned belong to the African American community, is a clear indicator of the author's intention to proof the relevance of these people to the contemporary American society. In other cases, authors evoke fewer characters or concentrate only on one particular topic. The following passage written by an African American male author illustrates that way:

Jericho Brown (2014):

…I could be sick and sullen. I could
Sulk and sigh. I could be a novel character
By E. Lynn Harris[25], but even he'd allow me
Some dignity. He loved black people too

[21] James Mercer Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an African American writer born in Joplin, Missouri. He was one of the most representative figures of the "Harlem Resistance" literary movement in the 1920s, as well as in the African American Civil Rights movements in the 1960s. His vast work is a clear benchmark of the twentieth-century African American literature (West 2003:159).
[22] Oprah Winfrey (1954-) is an African American actress and talk-show host from Kosciusko, Mississippi. Winfrey started working in mass media in the early 1970s at WTVF—a CBS-affiliated channel. However, it was not until the 1990s when she emerged as one of the most iconic figures in the national media. Currently, she is one of the most influential people in American show business and has been considered as a "cultural phenomenon" due to her vast audience throughout the United States and other countries (Thompson 1997:225-27).
[23] Marguerite Annie Johnson (1928-2014), better known as Maya Angelou, was an African American poet, novelist, essayist, and civil rights activist from St. Louis, Missouri. Her work consists of more than thirty books of poetry, fiction, and autobiography. Angelou's contribution to American Literature was so notable that she received the National Medal of Art from President Bill Clinton in 2000 (Bader 2004:3-7).
[24] Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey (1818-1895), better known as Frederick Douglas, was an African American abolitionist, journalist, and writer from Talbot County, Maryland. Douglas was one of the most prominent leaders of the abolitionist movement in the mid-ninetieth century and one of the founders of the slave narrative genre (Bader 2004:67-9).
[25] E. Lynn Harris (1957-2009) was an African American writer from Flint, Michigan. His work comprises more than ten books, published between 1991 and 2009. Due to his open homosexual orientation, Harris addressed the problem of sexual oppression in contemporary American society in most of his books. Currently, he is considered one of the most representative gay authors in contemporary American Literature (Stratton 1996: 82-4).

Much to write about a wife whipping her rival
One night people in Louisiana call cold (p.27).

Unlike some African American authors who concentrated exclusively on a few characters, most Mexican American authors tended to include a vast variety of characters. Mentions linked to Mexican artists and national heroes in the history of Mexico were the most frequent ones. The following passages written by two Mexican American authors, male and female, respectively, exemplify recurrent references to Mexican artists:

Trinidad Sanchez Jr. (2006):

…Frida Kahlo[26], y Jose Antonio Burciaga[27]
were celebrating your date of birth
with a Tequila Sunrise on cloud nine,
they invited me to join them, but the pilot
would not stop, allow me to deplane (p.19).

Victoria Garcia-Zapata Klein (2009):

…Now Frida,
exposed to me

Her eyebrows
connected like
her and Diego[28]
her and her roots
her and the earth

[26] Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) was a prolific Mexican painter in the twentieth century. Instead of painting murals, as most of twentieth-century Mexican artists did, she developed a vast number of small paintings. Her work is considered as an iconic representation of Mexican culture and Mexico. In 1984 the Mexican government recognized her work as national patrimony. Currently, Kahlo is worldwide acknowledged as a Mexican and Latin American cultural icon (Jones 1993:11-8)

[27] José Antonio Buriciaga (1940-1996) was a Mexican American writer from El Paso, Texas. Burciaga's multidisciplinary artistic work—novel, poetry, drama, painting, etc.—has had a strong influence on Chicano/a Movement from the decade of 1970 (Burciaga, Gladstein, and Chacón 2008:2).

[28] Diego Rivera (1886-1957) was one of the most representative Mexican painters in the twentieth century. Inspired by the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), and the Russian Revolution (1917), he developed a particular painterly style mostly loaded with political and social criticism. In the United States, Rivera painted frescoes in the School of Fine Arts of San Francisco, the New Workers' School of the City of New York, and the Detroit Institute of Arts. He married the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo in 1929 (Vázquez Chávez 1937:221-22). See McMeekin (1985).

I can no longer
laugh

at this beautiful Mexicana… (no pagination).

As evidenced in the previous passages, mentions referring to Frida Kahlo were extremely common among Mexican Americans. Interestingly, most of the poets who mentioned Kahlo, included themselves in the context of the poem through rhetoric figures to have an imaginary interaction/conversation with her.

Finally, Mexican American male authors were likely to refer to characters of the history of Mexico. Some of the most recurrent characters were those linked to the Mexican Revolution—remembered for their social sensitivity and commitment to marginalized population sectors. The following passages written by two Mexican American male authors exemplify this inclination:

Rodney Gomez (2014):

…Better to sing a war ballad. When I was a kid
All I wanted was to nurse a bloody rifle
Between my thighs. I could've galloped
With Villa[29], a flask of pulque slung across my waist… (p.33).

David Tomas Martinez (2014):

…No matter if all the murals decay
And the statue of Zapata[30] falls,

[29] José Doroteo Arango Arámbula (1878-1923), better known as Pancho Villa, was one of the military leaders of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). He formed and led a military force called "Division of the North" that fought against the dictatorship of Victoriano Huerta and created an alliance with Emiliano Zapata's army during the conflict. He also was governor of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, and assaulted the American town of Columbus, New Mexico in 1916 (Krauze and Heifetz 1997:305-333).

[30] Emiliano Zapata (1979-1919) was one of the military leaders of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). He formed and led a movement called "The Revolution of the South," that contributed to the abolishment of Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship and embodied one of the most important movements within the Mexican Revolution. His ideological legacy was the basis of the formation of several social and political movements in Mexico over the course of the twentieth century (Krauze and Heifetz 1997:274-304).

More months pile to be swept, and years
Ironed, folded, and put away in drawers… (p.37).

Although not all the mentions on these characters were circumscribed in particular historical context or events, authors highlighted their symbolic relevance for Mexican Americans and the intrinsic interaction with these characters in different moments of everyday life.

Music. Similarly to the previous dimension, results reveal that African Americans were more prone than Mexican Americans to include mentions linked to musical symbols. While 25.8 percent of the total mentions by African Americans on cultural indicators included references to music, 7.9 percent of those by Mexican Americans did. Additionally, in both groups, male authors were slightly more likely than female authors to include these mentions. It is worth pointing out that the vast majority of mentions were related to musical genres with which both groups feel identified. While recurrent genres among African Americans were jazz, blues, and hip-hop, among Mexican Americans were *mariachi* and *ranchera*[31] music.

African American authors' references to jazz music and some of its leading exponents were the most frequent both in mentions by male and female authors. In most of the poems by African Americans, authors compared themselves to musical genres and attributed special features to musical symbols. The following passages written by two African American authors, male and female, respectively, illustrate this pattern:

Jericho Brown (2014):

…Like a man from my mother
And me. And my mother's sobs

[31] *Ranchera* is a traditional Mexican musical genre with roots in the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

Are the songs of Bessie Smith[32]
Who wears more feathers than

Death. O the death my people refuse
To die. … (p.22).

Ebony Stewart (2013):

… that we were loop loop loopin, but couldn't agree on a rhythm
or style,
Tell them,
You were Jazz, while I paid the price of hip-hop
Tell them
that you thought in traps
while I learned how to bottle it up… (p.57).

In the first passage, the author identified himself and some members of his family with the songs of a relevant jazz singer. Although he did not mention any link between African Americans and jazz, he intrinsically referred to this relationship by making the comparison above, together with the fact that the singer was African American. In the second passage, the author compared herself, and another person, to jazz and hip-hop music. Aside from the context and topic of the poem, what is interesting is the fact that the author mentioned two of the most representative musical genres for African Americans in the same verse, and at the same time, she made that particular comparison.

Another important finding is that mentions of music by Mexican Americans were not comparative—like those by African Americans—but rather contextual. In other words, while most African American authors compared themselves with a given music genre, song, or singer, Mexican American authors tended to include these elements as additional contextual components

[32] Bessie Smith (1894-1937), better known as "The Empress of the Blues," was an African American blues singer from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Besides her successful musical career as a performer and singer in the early twentieth century, Smith's most significant contribution was the introduction of Blues music into the American mainstream culture during the 1920s. Even though she was not acknowledged during her lifetime, her legacy strongly influenced the twentieth-century American music (Barlow 1997:232-39).

in poems. Thus, they did not relate intensely to art and music at the identity level as African Americans did. The following passages written by two Mexican American male authors exemplify this pattern:

Trinidad Sanchez Jr (2006):

> … Beauty is on the side. How could they see it!
> The *mariachi* music in the foreground
> was the type my grandfather
> always listened to when he felt sad… (p.94).

Rodney Gomez (2014):

> I thrum a *bajo sexto* [33]in the shallow Rio Bravo
> A threnody, a war cry, bristle on the Rio Bravo… (p.2).

In the first passage, the author linked *mariachi* music with his family history and assumed that it had been a relevant component of his family life. This example is particularly interesting because, apart from establishing a sentimental bond with *mariachi* music, the author accepted that it was present in his family's history. In the second passage, although the author mentioned neither a musical genre nor Mexican Americans as a minority/ethnic group, he mentioned a traditional musical instrument among northern Mexican musicians, directly linked to a Mexican American musical genre. Again, the author located a musical element as an additional component of the context; in this case, the *Rio Bravo* and the difficult situations that some Mexican Americans face while being undocumented migrants in the United States.

Food. Results show a huge inter-group gap regarding mentions of food. While 11.5 percent of the total mentions of cultural indicators by African Americans referred to food, 54.3 percent of those by Mexican Americans did. Moreover, in both groups female authors were

[33] Translation: "Sixth Bass," is string musical instrument used in northern Mexico to play diverse musical genres such as *Norteña* and *Corridos*.

considerably more prone to include that cultural symbol. This pattern contrasts to the first dimension of this category, in which mentions made by Mexican Americans were more frequent, and on average, male authors in both groups made the majority of mentions. The first finding corresponds to African Americans, who despite gender-based disparities in frequency of mentions, displayed a notable parallel in terms of elements included. The following passages written by three African American authors, one male, and two female, respectively, illustrate this concurrence:

Roger Reeves (2013):

> …This is America speaking in translation, in glitter
> In gold grills and fried chicken … (p.7).

Ai (2003):

> … His father, Charles's silence at dinner,
> biscuits and a basket of fried chicken … (p.41).

Hermine Pinson (2007):

> When you are all dressed up
> And eating chicken fried,
> I am glad you are not wearing lipstick… (p.7).

As noted in the previous examples, the three authors mentioned fried chicken[34]. Even though these mentions were circumscribed in different contexts and situations, this concordance responds to a common symbol derived from the strong historical load this dish has for African Americans; this was the most recurrent culinary element among this group.

[34] Fried chicken is one of the most representative dishes of the African American cuisine. Although it became popular in the United States by the mid-nineteenth century, its roots can be traced back many decades before, when American black slaves were allowed to raise chickens, so that they had to develop new cooking methods to preserve food for a long time without refrigeration. Currently, fried chicken is a popular dish in the South, region with a high concentration of African American population (Dilday and Gill 1996:1008).

Regarding Mexican Americans, results show a similar pattern. Although the gender-based difference in frequency of mentions accounts for more than twenty-five percentage points, this was the predominant dimension in the cultural indicators category. Contrary to results in the "Cultural Characters" dimension, Mexican Americans mentioned a broader variety of dishes/culinary symbols than African Americans, being "taco" and "tortilla" the most frequent elements among references made. The following passages written by four Mexican American authors, two male and two female, respectively, illustrate this pattern:

Benjamin Alire Saenz (2006):

> … My mom will cook
> Something tortillas simple frijoles [35]
> You can taste her hands
> In the food in your mouth you are
> Sitting on your front porch the one
> You built with your own hands… (p.57).

Daniel Garcia Ordaz (2006):

> Boy!
> How good it do smell!
> Dem tortillas—flour ones, you can tell—
> Fresh on de' griddle!
> Mm! Good stuff!
> Dem Spanish folks makes 'em, you know?
> Mm! Mm! Mm!... (p.57).

Ire'ne Lara Silva (2010):

> ay pero mamacita you know you're in trouble
> when you want to do his laundry
> and iron his jeans
> and make him taquitos
> and make him tortillas… (p.9).

Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2011):

> "Anyone want my enchi-lady?"
> Sarita says, picking up an enchilada

[35] Translation: "Beans."

with her fork and showing it to
a groups of our friends…

…I shake my head
and take a bite of my burrito…

…Sarita glances at me sideways,
holds up a taco, and says,
"How about a tay-co?
Anyone want a tay-co?"… (p.78-9).

Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places

On average, African Americans were slightly more likely to mention sociohistorical events and relevant places linked to their ethnic origin. As Table 6 shows, 17.5 percent of the total poems by African Americans presented this type of references, and 15.0 percent of those by Mexican Americans referred to such events. However, intra-group disparities were greater. While Mexican American female authors were less likely than male authors to include these mentions by six percentage points, African American intra-group disparities were of only one percentage point.

Additionally, results show disparities in distribution of mentions. While most mentions by African Americans focused on sociohistorical events, those by Mexican Americans alluded to places, with 66.9 and 57.1 percent, respectively. Regarding Mexican Americans, 60.5 percent of their references to places were linked to Mexican states and cities. With respect to sociohistorical events, results show presence of references made to the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Mentions on this event in the history of Mexico accounted for 15.8 percent of the total mentions made by Mexican American authors.

Table 6: Presence of Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	17.0%	18.0%	17.5%	18.0%	12.0%	15.0%
Mentions	26	21	47	25	13	38
Density	1.53	1.17	1.34	1.39	1.08	1.27
Events	76.7%	57.1%	66.9%	32.0%	53.8%	42.9%
Places	23.3%	42.9%	33.1%	68.0%	46.2%	57.1%

The following passages written by two Mexican American authors, one female and one male authors, respectively, exemplify the above mentioned tendency:

Carmen Tafolla (2004):

> …Of noble ancestry, for whatever that means, I was sold
> into slavery by MY ROYAL FAMILY—
> so that my brother could get my inheritance.
>
> … And then omens began— a god, a new civilization,
> the downfall of our empire.
>
> And you came
> My dear Hernan Cortez[36], to share your "civilization" —
> to play a god,
>
> … and I began to *dream*…
> I saw,
> and I acted!
>
> I saw your world
> And saw yours
> And I saw—
> another… (p.22).

[36] Hernán Cortés Monrroy Pizarro Altamirano (1485-1547) was a Spanish conqueror who led and held a military campaign against diverse Mexican pre-Columbian groups to create a Spanish colony in current Mexican territory. This colony was called "New Spain" (López de Gómara and Simpson 1964:3-21).

Gabriel H. Sanchez (2015):

> …Moctezuma[37], believer of myths,
> Rest your soul in your in your wandering
> Lament no more, for what occurred here
> Was not your doing, nor God's but men…
>
> …It is true you could have spared us all
> This pain of agonizing loss
> By a mere swapping away of the vision of Cortez as a god
> And let us see you walk again and be a man among men…(p.9).

In the first passage, the author alluded to the fall of the Aztec empire, and suggested that as of that moment, "another" world emerged. In that context, the new world is the result of the crash of the Spaniards and the Aztec Empire, which made up the foundation of modern Mexico. Additionally, the author described how the Aztec empire was defeated due to the alliance of Spanish conquerors and other groups oppressed by the Aztec colonialist system[38]. It is important to mention that in this poem the author took the role of *La Malinche*[39], speaking directly to Hernan Cortés to describe some relevant aspects of the Spanish conquest. In the second passage, the author recounted how the Aztec's religious dogmatism[40] was one of the factors that allowed

[37] Moctezuma II (1466-1520) was the *tlatoani*—emperor or ruler—of the Aztecs from 1502 to 1520 when Spaniards fought him to take the control of Tenochtitlan, capital of the Aztec empire, currently a part of Mexico City. He belonged to the Aztec royal family and was the ninth Aztec emperor; the last one was Cuahutémoc, removed in 1525 (Eggleston 1908:11-33). See Hassig (2006).

[38] Motivated by economic and political interests, Aztecs established a colonialist system of domination to control and take advantage of surrounding groups' resources by implementing a system of taxation and tribute. To take revenge of Aztec oppression, some of these groups allied with the Spaniards to fight Aztecs. Ultimately all groups felt under Spanish rule (Smith 2012:165).

[39] Malinalli Tenépatl, better known as *La Malinche* or *Doña Marina*, was born in southern Mexico sometime between 1496 and 1501 and died in 1529. After being offered with nineteen other women to Hernán Cortés by the Tabascans —a group from the current territory of the state of Tabasco, Mexico—Malinalli became the Cortés's official translator and mistress (Cantu 1966:68). *Doña Marina*, as named by Spaniards, played a central role in the conquest of Mexico as she established communication between them and Mexican Indian groups. Indians stigmatized Malinalli due to her close relationship with Cortés, in fact, was considered treasonous. In today's Mexican Spanish, the word *Malinchista* is used to allude to people who give preference to foreign people, customs, or culture to the detriment of the national ones. See (Paz 1961).

[40] According to an old Aztec legend, the great god *Quetzalcoatl* was going to return to the Aztec territory to rule the empire and abolish the practice of human sacrifices as a way of religious worship. When Moctezuma had the first contact with Spaniards, he innocently compared the Spanish phenotype and military gear with physical characteristics of some Aztec gods. Since Aztecs believed that this legend had come true, Spaniards took advantage of this Aztec religious dogma to conquer them (Cantu 1966:78).

the Spaniards to take control over them. Moreover, speaking directly to *Moctezuma*, the author encouraged him not to feel guilty about the Spanish conquest by arguing that human nature —specifically human ambition of political and territorial expansion—was the cause of the fall of the Aztec civilization. It is central to note the position of the author within the context. Since the author had a conversation with *Moctezuma*, he played an active role in the historical context.

Turning to African Americans, Table 6 shows that this group was more prone to include poems with references to relevant sociohistorical events, mostly to historical moments in which they gained recognition as a minority with equal civil rights. Unlike Mexican Americans, they included mentions linked to their history as an oppressed minority group in the United States instead of events linked to their pre-migration history. The following passages written by two African American poets, one male and one female, respectively, exemplify this feature:

Van A. Jordan (2004):

> When a man wants to talk about love,
> But he can't because there's so much hate
> Around him, when he realizes life
> Is a ride meant for two, but people—
> And, I want to be clear, white people
> And some Negroes alike— want to make life
> A fight built on a foundation of hate
> And turmoil, it's hard to even think about love… (p.89).

Drea Brown (2015):

> … phillis[41] whose name meant slave
> and sounded like sorrow song. nothing about her was her own. Name
>
> body tongue god. how to become this new thing when you have already
> learned you are a human? (p.34).

[41] This poem is dedicated to the African American poet Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784).

The first passage corresponds to a poem titled "Asa Philip Randolph[42]." In this poem, the author alluded to efforts made by the activist A. Philip Randolph during the African American Civil Rights Movement to abolish racial oppression and segregation against this group. On top of that, one of the most notable particularities of mentions by African American authors in this area is the lack of literal references; instead of providing specific historical details of these events, they tended to evoke the ideological principles of such movements and their leaders. Similarly, in the second passage, the author referred to Phillis Wheatley, whose unprecedented presence in the American literary arena with the publication of her first book in 1773, was one of the first achievements of African Americans during their long struggle against racial oppression. This event, coupled with the notable work of Wheatley, is clear proof of the relevant influence and contribution of African Americans to the development of American literature.

Slang and Jargon

Despite the fact that both groups included similar proportions of slang and jargon, results show a notable inter-group dissimilarity in total mentions. While African Americans reached a total of 56 mentions, Mexican Americans made such references 159 times. In consequence, poems by Mexican Americans were denser regarding presence of slang and jargon than those by African Americans. Additionally, in both groups female authors wrote the majority of poems with presence of slang and jargon. Nevertheless, as Table 7 shows, among Mexican Americans, male authors included a greater number of mentions than female authors.

[42] Philip Randolph (1889-1979) was a Florida African American civil rights activist and leader of diverse movements throughout the twentieth century. Randolph is considered one of the creators of the modern civil rights movements in the United States. He participated in the "March on Washington," where Martin Luther King, Jr delivered his historical speech "I have a dream" (Pfeffer 1966:6-14).

Table 7: Presence of Slang and Jargon by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	14.0%	25.0%	19.5%	17.0%	27.0%	22.0%
Mentions	18	38	56	99	60	159
Average	1.28	1.52	1.43	5.82	2.22	3.61
Slang	61.1%	73.7%	67.4%	71.7%	48.3%	60.0%
Jargon	38.9%	26.3%	32.6%	28.3%	51.7%	40.0%

The first finding corresponds to the usage of jargon expressions. Although the predominant source of slang in poems by Mexican Americans was Spanish, English played a vital role especially in jargon, accounting for 20.1 percent of their total mentions in this area. Moreover, results show an inter-group similarity in jargon usage. The following passages, written by one African American female author, and one Mexican American male author, respectively, exemplify this:

ReShonda Tate Billingsley (2012):

> In this dog-eat-dog[43], crab-in-a-bucket[44], backstabbing world,
> There are very few people you can count on and say 'that truly is my girl'… (no pagination).

Daniel Garcia Ordaz (2006):

> …I tried to make a run for it,
> But somebody spilled the beans
>
> That`s when I knew I was toast![45]

[43] *Dog-eat-dog* refers to the survival of the fittest within society. People should take care of themselves and protect their property to not be abused by others.
[44] *Crab-in-a-bucket* is an expression used to describe the voracious competitiveness within society. This metaphor illustrates that when a crab is about to get out from a bucket, the others obstruct its escape because of their selfish mentality.
[45] The word *toast* is used to describe a difficult situation that a person is going through. It is similar to destroyed, devastated, damaged, or cracked.

Just like that, my whole existence
Came to a grinding halt… (p.41).

As the above comparison reveals, Mexican Americans incorporated jargon expressions in English that not necessarily exist in Spanish, for instance "Dog-eats-dog" and "I was toast." This similarity embodies a clear evidence of the inter-group common usage of jargon linguistic expressions in English.

In contrast, the second finding reveals inter-group difference in usage of slang expressions. While Mexican Americans used regional/local words in Spanish, most of them with pre-Colombian etymological origins, African Americans used meaningless or unintelligible words to outsiders. Even though these expressions are not exclusively used by these ethnic groups, this pattern shows how diverse can the usage of these linguistic resources be. The following passages written by one African American female author and one Mexican American male author, respectively, exemplify this diversity:

Harreyette Mullen (2002):

For your tête-à-tête [46]
With a headhunter, or chat with a shrink,
Zombie hat's the right think (p.85).

Paul Pineda (2015):

I can tell that my *camaradas*[47] dread it
Pero[48] not me. This is time I`m ready

y en chinga[49] I raise my hand.
"Miss, Miss, pick me" (no pagination).

[46] *tête-à-tête* refers to having a private/secret conversation.
[47] Translation: "Friends."
[48] Translation: "But. "
[49] In this context, the word *chinga* means: "Quickly."

Given the strong inter-group language-based differences displayed in these passages, together with the absence of common words/expressions between them, it is possible to infer that there is no association between African Americans and Mexican Americans regarding slang usage patterns and its semantic roots.

Indicators of Social Oppression

Regarding the systems theory approach, just as "communication" patterns found in the second category—Ethnolinguistic Indicators—results arising from the analysis of two areas of this category evidence a clear presence of inter-group "communication": (1) "Racism" and (2) "Ethnic Segregation." Given their position as minority groups in the state of Texas, both African American and Mexican American authors develop similar symbolic expressions to interpret their position within the social stratification system. Results show that while inter-group "communication" through poetry is strong in areas linked to a shared experience as minority groups, it is weak in those linked to the interpretation of ethnic origin. This pattern is explained by the fact that although both groups have a different ethnic origin, both are immersed in a social environment in which they constitute minority groups. This specific finding shows the relevant role that social environment play in the "communication" process from the systems theory approach.

Racism

On average, African Americans were more prone to include mentions linked to experiences of racism. While 19.0 percent of the total poems by African Americans mentioned racism, 11.0 percent of those written by Mexican Americans did. Moreover, mentions of racism

in poems by African Americans were denser, with an average of 1.7 mentions per poem contrasting to 1.15 in pieces by Mexican Americans. Finally, as Table 8 shows, male authors' frequency of poems with presence of mentions linked to racism, as well as the total number of mentions on this area, were higher than in those presented by female authors.

Regarding tone of mentions, while all the mentions by Mexican Americans ranged from "Non-Aggressive" to "Moderate," 8.5 percent of those by African Americans were "Aggressive." Even though none of the groups included "Highly Aggressive" mentions, the African American posture was more defiant. Additionally, inter-group differences show that Mexican Americans included mentions in similar proportions between "Non-Aggressive" and "Moderate." In contrast, while African American male authors tended to use "Non-Aggressive" as their predominant tone, female authors used predominantly "Moderate" tone and used "Aggressive" tone more than twice often than males.

Results reveal a particular inter-group similarity. Both, in mentions by African Americans and Mexican Americans, the predominant type of racism included was "Institutional," with 65.6 and 76.9 percent of their total mentions in this area, respectively. Despite the dramatic inter-group differences in total mentions, both groups constantly related skin tone with segregation exerted by governmental authorities, mostly law enforcement officers. Although their racial segregation experiences have been considerably different, this finding supports the idea that regardless the degree and context of each event, the association between dark skin tone and institutional racism is a constant characteristic among both groups.

Table 8: Presence of Racism by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	22.0%	16.0%	19.0%	12.0%	10.0%	11.0%
Mentions	33	31	64	15	11	26
Density	1.5	1.9	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.15
Non-aggressive	54.6%	37.5%	46.1%	66.7%	63.7%	65.2%
Moderated	40.9%	50.0%	45.4%	33.3%	36.3%	34.8%
Aggressive	4.5%	12.5%	8.5%	—	—	—
Extremely Aggressive	—	—	—	—	—	—

The following two passages written by one African American male author and one Mexican American female author, respectively, exemplify this constant:

Christopher Michael (2015):

> …Having a black president has not stopped the cops from taking our lives
>
> Too bad bullets aren't made of seeds,
> So every time a black man wrongfully catches one
> He could be the foundation from which it springs
> Instead of air dancing beneath its leaves… (p.26).

Victoria Garcia-Zapata Klein (2009):

> … And what of the brown boys' y
> brown boys' blood spilled for oil, greed, power
> for fear
> both the soldiers' and the boy's
> who's folks were shoot dead
> alongside him
> for not stopping at the roadside checkpoint
> where all the brown faces look the same… (no pagination).

In the first passage, the author clearly alluded to frequent police shootings of African Americans. By arguing that despite the fact that the current president of the United States is an African

American decent, institutional violence—in this case police violence perpetrated against this group—has not diminished since President Barak Obama is in office. This poem evidences the strong concern of African Americans about institutional racism in society. Similarly, in the second passage the author exhibited her perception of racial discrimination against Mexican Americans. In this case, as in the first example, the author referred to skin color during abuses perpetrated by members of governmental institutions. In this case, no specific institution is mentioned. Nevertheless, since she mentioned "soldiers" and "checkpoint," it is possible to assume that, again, this reference alluded to law enforcement agents.

As mentioned above, African Americans were the only group who included "Aggressive" mentions. Although they only account for 8.5 percent of total mentions in this area, this is a variation that cannot be overlooked. Additionally, as displayed in Table 8, female authors were more likely to include "Aggressive" mentions. This intra-group disparity reveals the inclination of female authors to include mentions linked to racism with this degree of tone. The following passage written by an African American female author supports this finding:

Erika R. Land (2014):

> …Set back after generations,
> Excuse me products from 400 years of incest, molestation,
> Kidnappings, beatings, degradation, forced illiteracy.
> And I shouldn't be political…
>
> […]
>
> …Don't fucking judge me.
> My soul left with the rest of us
> Somewhere between the years 1619 and 2014
> From the beginning of slavery until this very day, we are bound by shackles of human indecency because we have chosen to be non-political. Money over power. It's a disease (p.29).

The above passage was taken from a poem called “Non-Political.” In this poem, out of the evident burden of protest, the author detailed crimes and abuses that some members of the non-Hispanic white community have perpetrated against African Americans throughout the history of the United States. Besides descriptive and contextual aspects, it is important to note the tone that the author used to talk about racism. Clearly, it is considerably vigorous and to some extent rude. This style was a constant among “Aggressive” mentions by African American female authors in this area.

Ethnic Segregation

On average, Mexican Americans were considerably more likely to include mentions linked to ethnic-based segregation. While 21.0 percent of the total poems by Mexican Americans mentioned ethnic segregation, 8.0 percent of those by African Americans did. Although Mexican Americans presented more poems in this area, those by African Americans were slightly denser with an average of 1.29 mentions per poem contrasting to 1.25 in those by Mexican Americans. Contrary to racism, females concentrated the majority of poems with this sort of mentions.

Regarding tone of mentions, results show no considerable inter-group disparities in “Non-Aggressive” and “Moderate” mentions. However, Mexican Americans were slightly more likely than African Americans to include “Aggressive” mentions. As Table 9 shows, African American male authors constituted the only group that did not include “Aggressive” mentions. In consequence, the 12.6 percent of the “Aggressive” mentions by African Americans were covered by female authors, which means that only mentions by African American female authors represented almost as equal number of ¨Aggressive¨ mentions as both Mexican American male and female authors overall.

Table 9: Presence of Ethnic Segregation by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	7.0%	9.0%	8.0%	18.0%	24.0%	21.0%
Mentions	9	12	21	24	29	53
Density	1.28	1.3	1.29	1.3	1.2	1.25
Non-aggressive	77.7%	41.6%	59.6%	54.2%	62.1%	58.2%
Moderated	22.3%	33.3%	27.8%	29.1%	24.1%	26.6%
Aggressive	—	25.1%	12.6%	16.7%	13.8%	15.2%
Extremely Aggressive	—	—	—	—	—	—

As said above, the fact that African American female authors concentrated the total "Aggressive" mentions in this area cannot be overlooked. Considering the notable amount of "Aggressive" mentions made by African American female authors, it is possible to assume that, although male authors presented more poems with presence of mentions on ethnic segregation, on average, mentions by female authors were considerably stronger in tone. Moreover, female authors were particularly likely to include mentions that linked the kind of segregation they face with their ethnic origin. The following passage written by an African American female author exhibits this pattern:

ReShonda Tate Billingsley (2012):

> …Hidden behind their sheets, their mantra they'd repeat,
> "Go back to Africa. Go back home."
> And all along, I'm wishing they'd leave me alone
> cause I barely been out of Texas and ain't seen no part of the motherland… (no pagination).

In the above passage, the author evidenced a clear ethnic-based episode of segregation. While other people asked her to go back to Africa, a continent where they supposed she might have her origins, she highlighted her attachment to the state of Texas, being that she has rarely been out of that territory. In other words, she alluded to her belonging to Texas—and consequently to the United States—regardless her ethnic origin and race.

Contrary to African Americans who made a wide variety of mentions regarding ethnic segregation, Mexican Americans tended to make more extensive and homogeneous references to this issue. The vast majority of them focused on the Mexican American experience throughout their assimilation into the American society. It is important to note how this was a regular pattern, in which Mexican American authors concentrated on exposing specific episodes of segregation in everyday life. The following passage written by a Mexican American male author exemplifies this pattern:

Daniel Garcia Ordaz (2006):

> …in the land of "No Mexicans Allowed"
> inside the restaurant,
> in the land of "Order your 'chicken-in-a-
> basket' and *Coca-Cola*
> through the window in the back!"-burner
> of 1950s…
> Victoria…
> Texas...
> America… (p.38).

In this passage, the author contrasted some stereotypes of the American culture with a phrase that represents the recurrent rejection of Mexicans by some sectors of the American society. The inclusion of the phrase: "No Mexicans Allowed," embodies a clear indicator of ethnic segregation present in several Mexican American poetry pieces. This kind of ironic contrasts prevailed in mentions made by this group.

Resistance and Protest

On average, African Americans were more likely than Mexican Americans to write poems linked to resistance and protest. Although the total number of mentions by African Americans was higher, poems by Mexican Americans were slightly denser with 1.09 and 1.17 mentions per poem, respectively. Regarding intra-group differences, while among African Americans male authors were more likely to include poems with these sort of mentions, among Mexican Americans this pattern was reversed; females presented more poems in this area.

Regarding tone of mentions, as Table 10 displays, there is a notable inter-group parallel in "Moderate" mentions. Nonetheless, while African Americans were more likely than Mexican Americans to include "Non-Aggressive" mentions, the proportion of the "Aggressive" ones was inverse. Just like in the last two areas, none of the groups made "Highly Aggressive" mentions.

Table 10: Presence of Resistance and Protest by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			**Mexican American**		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	26.0%	19.0%	22.5%	12.0%	18.0%	15.0%
Mentions	27	22	49	14	21	35
Density	1.03	1.16	1.09	1.17	1.17	1.17
Non-aggressive	59.3%	50.0%	54.7%	50.0%	52.4%	51.3%
Moderated	33.3%	31.8%	32.5%	35.7%	28.6%	32.1%
Aggressive	7.4%	18.2%	12.8%	14.3%	19.0%	16.6%
Extremely Aggressive	—	—	—	—	—	—

Apart from the similarities above, as well as the intra and inter-group disparities regarding tone and frequency of mentions, results show another relevant peculiarity regarding

content. As seen in areas like “Racism” and “Ethnic Segregation,” while African Americans were more likely to exhibit resistance and protest against racial inequality and institutional racism, Mexican Americans mostly included mentions regarding ethnic segregation and migration issues. In both groups, mentions that ranged from “Non-Aggressive” to “Moderate,” pertained to every-day situations and touching stories that the authors included to criticize the American racial stratification system. The following passage written by a Mexican American female author exemplifies this pattern:

Sarah Cortez (2000):

> …your mom owns a bakery
> in a part of town I don’t go in
> One night we drive by it—
> a large, white, clapboard house
> painted with Spanish words
> I can’t read. It’s dark
> inside. Your mom doesn’t wait up
> for you. You never mention your dad.
> You say the cops stop you
> often, alone,
> to see if you drive a stolen car.
>
> You are so polite
> always. You kiss me
> good night in hard-lipped concentration.
> Inside, I count the flowers
> on my dress, knowing I
> cannot want you. Unable to forget
> you’re Mexican (p.32-3).

In the above passage, the author told the story of a Mexican American young man who probably lived in a Hispanic neighborhood in an American city. The author took the role of a non-Hispanic white woman who explained that regardless the generous and kind behavior of the young man, no way she could have a relationship with him for the simple fact of his ethnicity and social class. This poem embodies a good example of a “Non-Aggressive” way of protest and at the same time, a strong criticism of ethnic segregation and stereotyping.

In a similar vein, the following poem written by an African American male author provides further evidence concerning the impact of ethnic segregation on romantic relationships: Van A. Jordan (2004):

> Asks the questions that stings
> More than the truth of the situation:
> *You don't think they did that to you*
> *Just because you are Negro, do you?*
> And then she answers herself
> Knowing my response simply would
> Not be: *I don't think they would have*
> *Let you get that far just to set you up.*
> An electric breath fills my chest.
> For the first time
> I notice how blonde her hair flows,
> How blue her eyes, how thin her lips,
> Which have just separated us forever (p.120).

Similar to the passage previously cited, in this poem the author reflected on the strain of having a relationship with a non-Hispanic white woman. In this case, after an evident interchange of thoughts linked to the fact of being African American, the author concluded that racial issues would make impossible that relationship—as written in the last verse of the poem. As noted above, both groups tended to use narrative resources circumscribed in sentimental situations to express resistance against ethnic/racial segregation and oppression.

Exaltation of Ethnic Authenticity

Regarding the systems theory approach, results reveal strong inter-groups parallels in processes of "self-reference" in two areas of this category: (1) "Positive Features of Ethnic Group" and (2) "Exaltation of Uniqueness." Even though results show notable inter-group dissimilarities regarding content—while Mexican Americans focused on the relevance of their pre-Columbian heritage, African Americans did on their social and historical role throughout the

history of the United States—both groups used linguistic and discursive elements derived from their ethnic origins to interpret and give meaning to their social reality. In other words, results arising from the analysis of these areas reveal that the ethnic implications of both groups' understanding and interpretation of their social reality is equally present but come from two different directions; for Mexican Americans from their pre-migration history and for African Americans from their post-migration history and their role in the development of the United States as a country. This pattern matches the one observed in the second category —Ethnolinguistic Indicators. The following sections display detailed examples that support the above findings regarding the systems theory approach.

Positive Features of Ethnic Group

On average, African Americans were more likely to mention positive features of their ethnic group. Despite the intra-group differences, in both cases female authors presented more poems with presence of this kind of mentions. Moreover, African American male authors constituted the group with the lowest number of poems with mentions linked to this area with only 8.0 percent of their total ones. Finally, as Table 11 displays, there is a marginal inter-group difference in density of mentions, in which African Americans included 1.15 mentions per poem, while Mexican Americans 1.25.

Table 11: Presence of Positive Features by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	8.0%	17.0%	12.5%	10.0%	11.0%	10.5%
Mentions	9	20	29	15	11	26
Density	1.12	1.18	1.15	1.5	1	1.25

Results show substantial inter-group differences regarding content. While Mexican Americans highlighted positive features such as bilingual communication skills, cultural diversity, and significance of their pre-Columbian heritage, African Americans focused on their position within the social and historical development of the United States, as well as the social prestige of some members of the black community in the American society. As a central finding in this area, it is possible to assume that there were no inter-group parallels neither in content nor in context of mentions; while Mexican Americans focused only on their past, African Americans included mentions of their present.

The following passages written by one Mexican American male author and one African American female author, respectively, exemplify these differences:

Paul Pineda (2015):

> …Thank God for my family heritage
> that having been there before me,
> left the bilingual legacy
> that connects me with my present self
> as it entwines me in my past (no pagination).

Loretta Diane Walker (2011):

> …A peoples' dignity slain, not with sword and gun,
> but with chains choked until freedom drains invisible.
> My ancestors' anguish filled cotton purses,
> helped build a nation who thought them less,

and in the Mississippi muddied feet were bound
by the South's deep hatred of their black souls (p.57).

In the first passage, the author highlighted his bilingual heritage as a positive aspect of his ethnic origin. Although he did not mention any pre-Columbian civilization or Mexican cultural symbol, the fact that he recognized himself as a Spanish speaker is directly linked to the history of Mexico—particularly the Spanish conquest. It is also important to note the fact that he related his ancestry to the present reality. Conversely, in the second passage, the author stressed how important her ancestors were for the development of this country. As already mentioned, she did not locate her ancestors in Africa, on the contrary, considering the context of the poem, she found her ancestors in the United States during the slavery period.

Exaltation of Uniqueness

As compared to African Americans, Mexican Americans were more likely to include mentions to exalt the uniqueness of their ethnic group by seven percentage points. Moreover, Mexican Americans included almost twice the number of references than African Americans, whose density of mentions per poem was slightly lower. Intra-group differences in frequency of mentions linked to exaltation of uniqueness are minimal among African Americans. In contrast, Mexican American intra-group differences accounted for nine percentage points. Table 12 shows that Mexican American female authors constituted the group with the highest number of poems with presence of mentions linked to exaltation of uniqueness—23.0 percent of the total sample. In contrast, the other three groups—African American male and female authors, and Mexican American male authors—displayed frequencies of poems ranging from 11.0 to 14.0 percent.

Table 12: Presence of Exaltation of Uniqueness by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			Mexican American		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	11.0%	12.0%	11.5%	14.0%	23.0%	18.5%
Mentions	11	16	27	19	28	47
Density	1	1.33	1.16	1.35	1.21	1.28

Similarly to last area—Positive Features of Ethnic Group—results show inter-group disparities regarding content. While African Americans focused on highlighting common physical and phenotypical characteristics of their group, the so-called racial physiognomies, Mexican Americans tended to point out values and traits of their family and community structures. The following passages written by one African American male author and one Mexican American female author, respectively, exemplify these differences:

Harvey C. Jones (2010):

> …Never say goodbye, just say hello,
> We are the color Black, not red, green or yellow.
>
> Keep going on the path intended for us,
> Not argue berate and make a big fuss (p.27).

Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2011):

> … "Being Mexican
> Means more than that.
> It means being there for each other.
> It's togetherness, like a *familia*[50]
> We should be helping one other,
> Cheering our friends on, not trying
> To bring them down" ... (p.83).

[50] Translation: "Family."

In the first passage, the author referred to the uniqueness of his group by mentioning his color while contrasting it with others. The fact that he mentioned other colors does not mean that they are related to other groups, it is just a pun. In contrast, in the second passage, the author pointed out the Mexican conception of family as a social nucleus. Moreover, he distinguished the relevance of solidarity for the Mexican American community in the United States.

Comparison with other Ethnic Groups

On average, African Americans were more likely to include mentions with comparisons with other groups by two percentage points more than Mexican Americans. However, density of mentions in poems by Mexican Americans was slightly higher than the one in poems by African Americans. Even though this area represented the less recurrent pattern of the entire analysis regarding frequency, both African American and Mexican American authors included a considerable amount of mentions, 21 and 17, respectively. As Table 13 shows, another relevant aspect is the fact that African American female authors presented the greatest number of poems with mentions linked to comparison with other ethnic groups with 11.0 percent of their sample. In contras, the other three groups—African American male authors and Mexican American male and female authors—displayed frequencies of poems ranging from 5.0 to 7.0 percent.

Table 13: Presence of Comparison with other Groups by Ethnic Group and Gender

	African American			**Mexican American**		
	Male	Female	**Group Average**	Male	Female	**Group Average**
Poems	5.0%	11.0%	8.0%	7.0%	5.0%	6.0%
Mentions	6	15	21	12	5	17
Density	1.2	1.36	1.28	1.71	1	1.35

The most recurrent minority group was Native Americans, mentioned by both Mexican American and African American authors in 64.7 and 76.2 percent of total mentions, respectively. Coincidentally, in both cases authors focused on events of abuse and segregation perpetrated against Native Americans. The following passages written by one African American female author and one Mexican American female author, respectively, exhibit this parallel:

April R. Neal (2013):

> … In some history books you see how pilgrims and Indians ate together
> right before they were scalped, raped, and plucked of all their land and their feathers
> *and the land of the free*
> brought over ships
> full of sick
> men that had survived not being tossed over-board
>
> or beaten lawd
> but slavery was *"so long ago"* … (p.95).

Amalia Ortiz (2015):

> … the Lipan Apache[51], Kickapoo[52], Tigua[53], and Karankawa[54]
> weep with amputated arm extended
> sing legal documents with feather and blood
> sing legal documents with river reed and mud… (p.19).

In the first passage, the author alluded to the extermination and displacement of Native Americans after the American Revolution. Using an ironic language, she assumed a strong critic posture regarding this period of the American history. Similarly, in the second passage, the author mentioned four Native American groups that suffered violence and persecution. Although

[51] Lipan Apache is a Native American group whose territory comprises northern Mexico, New Mexico, and southeastern Texas. Currently, Lipan Apache live in reservations in Arizona and New Mexico (Cole 1994:44-7).
[52] The Kickapoo are a Native American tribe. The author alludes to the Kickapoo group of the state of Texas whose territory extends along the south Texas border, from Eagle Pass to *Piedras Negras* Mexico (Stull 1994:287-88).
[53] Tigua people are a Native American group that belongs to the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. Although they mainly concentrated in Northern New Mexico, their territory extends until El Paso, Texas (Waldman and Braun 1988:206-9).
[54] Karankawas are a Native American group from the coasts of southeastern Texas, from Corpus Christy to Galveston Bay (Schilz 1994:640).

she did not refer to any historical detail or period, she criticized the fact that Native Americans have been abused throughout the history of the United States.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

As discussed earlier, by answering the question of "how and to what extent do contemporary African American and Mexican American writers perform their ethnicity through poetry?" this research explores ethnic implications in inter and intra-group linguistic and discursive patterns in African American and Mexican American contemporary poetry. Based on the empirical evidences derived from the analysis of the sample, addressed from three theoretical principles by Niklas Luhmann`s systems theory approach—"differentiation," "self-reference," and "communication"—I have come to three conclusions regarding ethnic performance of contemporary African American and Mexican American authors experientially connected to the state of Texas.

First, it is possible to assume that both African Americans and Mexican Americans have overall similar patterns of ethnic performance in contemporary poetry. Despite substantial differences regarding ethnic origin and history in the United States, results show strong inter-group parallels in the development of ethnic-based mechanisms of linguistic "differentiation" through poetry; both groups displayed similar frequency and density of mentions connected to their ethnic origin. Results arising from areas such as "Cultural Indicators," "Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places," and "Slang and Jargon" support this assumption—where both groups were evidently likely to highlight cultural traits connected to their corresponding ethnic origins to differentiate from other ethnic groups.

Additionally, among both groups, there is a strong relationship between the authors' demographics and strength/intensity of ethnic performance. Even though both groups constitute an ethnic minority in almost all the Texas regions in which poems were collected, the smaller the representation of an ethnic group in the region, the more intense "differentiation" process observed. In consequence, I conclude that authors experientially connected to Texan regions with higher non-Hispanic white population are more prone to include a higher density of differentiator elements—cultural symbols connected to their corresponding ethnic origin—in poetry as a mechanism of legitimation and defense against racial-ethnic oppression.[55] However, in those cases in which authors were older or had published more books, this pattern was reversed; the older/more experienced the author, the less intense "differentiation" process observed.

Second, based on the symbolic expressions linked to ethnic origin, it is possible to assume that both groups display dissimilar patterns of "self-reference" as they give meanings to social reality in different ways. For instance, while African Americans express their ethnic authenticity by exalting their historical relevance throughout the development of the United States as a nation, Mexican Americans highlight values and moral practices derived from their Mexican heritage. Given the intense process of miscegenation that Mexico went through during the Spanish colonial period, it would be inaccurate to assume that Mexican Americans constitute a monolithic ethnic group, unlike African Americans whose cultural boundaries tend to be more blurred. Thus, this dissimilarity can be explained by three factors: (1) unlike most Mexican Americans, African Americans do not preserve their pre-migration language; (2) the

[55] The only exceptions were the cases of the Rio Grande Valley and El Paso. Even though these border regions concentrate high Mexican American population, Rio Grande Valley and El Paso poets were highly likely to include these elements.

geographical proximity between Mexico and the United States; and (3) and differences in migration experience.

Even though I have no information regarding the authors' individual experiences/contact with their ethnic roots, I conclude that while African Americans play a "self-reference" by giving meaning to social reality based on their experience in the United States, Mexican Americans do so as well by re-interpreting their ethnic roots from their position within American society. Results arising from the analysis of areas such as "Cultural Characters," "Sociohistorical Events and Relevant Places," "Racism," "Positive Features of Ethnic Group," and "Exaltation of Uniqueness" support this conclusion.

Third, although results do not show notable inter-group ethnic-based parallels in linguistic expression, there is enough evidence to assume that given the similar experience of both groups as minority groups in the state of Texas, there is a bi-directional "communication" and influence. Inter-group "communication" shows how, despite substantial differences in "self-reference" content, there are shared symbolic expressions linked to the authors' positions within the social stratification system revealed in the results resulting from "Indicators of Social Oppression." In consequence, I conclude that inter-group "communication" through poetry is strong in areas linked to a shared social experience as minority groups. Nevertheless, "communication" is weak in areas linked to symbolic interpretation of ethnic origin — "Ethnolinguistic Indicators." Results arising from areas such as "Bilingualism," "Slang and Jargon," and "Ethnic Segregation" support this conclusion.

Besides the three central conclusions above, it is important to point out the impact of gender on the outcomes of this research. Gender-based ethnic performance patterns were slightly dissimilar mostly in areas related to representation and interpretation of ethnic origin. For

instance, while African American male authors were more likely than female authors to include references to "Ethnic Ancestry," among Mexican Americans this pattern was reversed; mentions by male authors doubled those by female authors. Aside from some sporadic patterns, results show no constant gender-based ethnic performance variations, so that I conclude that gender does not appear to offer any clear or consistent patterning.

It is important to mention that works reviewed in Chapter III benefited the outcomes of this research in diverse aspects. First, regarding the relationship between poetry and society, works by Ward (1986) and Frow (2010) allowed me to understand the ability of poetry to provide information of a wide variety of social dynamics. Second, works by Goffman ([1959]1990) and Scott (1990) showed me the importance of the author's role and position within the poem, which was a critical part of the analysis throughout this research. Third, works by Bourdieu (1991,1996) allowed me to understand the relationship between diverse forms of art and social structures as well as the relevance of language in the construction of social relations. Last, works by Somers-Willett (2005), Porras (2011), and Gardner (2014) were crucial to understanding the diverse forms in which ethnicity can be performed through poetry, and how to detect and interpret those patterns.

From Niklas Luhmann's systems theory approach, "communication" is the unit of social systems and they must develop processes of "differentiation" and "self-reference" to reproduce and survive. By using these three theoretical principles to explore minority ethnic performance in contemporary poetry, this research shows that contemporary African American and Mexican American authors, influenced by social environment, give specific meanings to social reality through poetry and create inter and intra-group channels of communication that allow them to reproduce specific messages and survive as groups of individuals who share the same ethnic

origin. Besides offering the possibility to use poetry-based sociological research to contribute to understandings of changing ethnic dynamics in the United States, this study demonstrates the utility of systems theory in sociological studies of literature. Findings resulting from this study embody new opportunities for further research projects, which should focus on the study of other minority groups' ethnic performance through literary works using complementary sources of data/research methods.

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APENDIX A

APPENDIX A

SAMPLED POEMS AND AUTHORS' INFORMATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE AUTHORS						
	Author		Poems		Pg.	Reference
1.	Detrick Hughes	Region	1	Listening for a Cricket at the Edge of Night	p.3	Hughes, Detrick. 2012. *Sugar-tooth Confession*. Buffalo, NY: Nebo Media Group.
		Beaumont	2	Sunday Mornings, St. Luke	p.9	
			3	Know No Nigger	p.10	
		Age Group	4	A Moment on a Pale Horse	p.17	
		41-50	5	Loosen Them Chains	p.28	
			6	Hotel Oldsmobile	p.37	
		Published Books	7	I´d Like to Say When It´s Time to Rest,	p.42	
		4-6	8	Faux Love	p.47	
			9	Field Negroes Don't Have to Pick Cotton	p.53	
			10	Bare Bodies	p.60	
2.	Harvey C. Jones	Region	1	Together as One	p.14	Jones, Harvey C. 2010. *Life's Reality: Everyday Poetry.* Austin, TX: Xlibris. Corp.
		Buda	2	Unification	p.15	
			3	Keep It In Check	p.21	
		Age Group	4	Frustration At It´s Worse	p.26	
		51-60	5	Back to Black	p.27	
			6	Perfection Anyone?	p.28	
		Published Books	7	Color Blind World	p.29	
		1-3	8	Peaceful Peace	p.34	
			9	Gods Choice	p.41	
			10	Life is a Brief	p.57	
3.	Van A. Jordan	Region	1	"Mercy, Mercy, Mercy"	p.15	Jordan, Van A. 2004. *M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A: poems*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
		Austin	2	Looking for Work	p.32	
			3	In Service	p.36	
		Age Group	4	Infidelity	p.41	
		41-50	5	I'm Trying	p.52	
			6	Morena	p.87	
		Published Books	7	Asa Philip Randolph	p.89	
		4-6	8	My Dream Charon	p.108	
			9	N-e-m-e-s-i-s Blues	p.118	
			10	My One White Friend	p.120	
4.	Roger Reeves	Region	1	Pledge	p.3	Reeves, Roger. 2013. *King Me*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.
		Austin	2	Cross Country	p.6	
			3	Some Young Kings	p.28	
		Age Group	4	Thinking of Anne Frank in the Middle of Winter	p.32	
		41-50	5	After Love	p.35	
			6	1987	p.37	
		Published Books	7	Brazil	p.44	
		1-3	8	Exit Interview	p.47	
			9	In Adjuntas	p.67	
			10	Romanticism (The Blue Keats)	p.72	

5.	Cyrus Cassells	Region	1	There Are No Children Here	p.5	Cassells, Cyrus. 2012. *The Crossed-out Swastika*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.
		Austin	2	Riders on the Back of Silence	p.12	
			3	Dove's Arc	p.20	
		Age Group	4	A Lover's Invocation	p.34	
		51-60	5	Youth	p.37	
			6	The Recurring Roll Call	p.43	
		Published Books	7	The Ravine	p.53	
		4-6	8	Escape to Budapest	p.61	
			9	A Great Beauty	p.69	
			10	Auschwitz, All Hallows	p.77	
6.	Christopher Michael	Region	1	#bringbackourpens	p.15	Michael, Christopher. 2015. *Persona non grata*. Austin, TX: Austin Slam Poetry Publishing.
		Austin	2	Working Tile for Mom Poem	p.20	
			3	Seeds	p.26	
		Age Group	4	Fire hose	p.29	
		41-50	5	Beautiful Man	p.49	
			6	Bare Naked City	p.60	
		Published Books	7	Zombie Love	p.73	
		1-3	8	Crackhead Poet	p.88	
			9	Job	p.94	
			10	We Ride	p.97	
7.	Jericho Brown	Region	1	Romans 12:1	p.6	Brown, Jericho. 2014. *The New Testament*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.
		Houston	2	Labor	p.10	
			3	The Interrogation	p.11	
		Age Group	4	Langston's Blues	p.21	
		41-50	5	The Ten Commandments	p.27	
			6	Homeland	p.28	
		Published Books	7	Willing to Pay	p.36	
		1-3	8	I Corinthians 13:11	p.46	
			9	Angel	p.58	
			10	At the End of Hell	p.67	
8.	Van G. Garrett	Region	1	Friday: in fours	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Garrett, Van G. 2011. *ZURI: Selected Love Songs.* Newport News, VA: Cap & Sneakers Studios, LLC. Retrieved March 12, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		Houston	2	I met buddy guy		
			3	Like snow birds		
		Age Group	4	A Valentine's day poem: for Africa		
		41-50	5	Here: shout-out to unorthodox teachers (including Taylor Mali)		
			6	After *tuji*		
		Published Books	7	Mariachis		
		4-6	8	For Mel		
			9	Operating me Smoothly		
			10	More than passion		
9.	Joschua Beres	Region	1	Spontaneously Combusting at the Wonder of it all	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Beres, Joschua. 2014. *Revolutions.* Bloomington, IN: Booktango. Retrieved March 18, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		El Paso	2	Behold a Son of Revolution		
			3	#Oil		
		Age Group	4	God		
		31-40	5	We should all Live like at the Atomic Bomb		
			6	The Cult of Democracy		
		Published Books	7	At Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport		
		1-3	8	I Dream Sometimes of Sending the Moon back in pieces		
			9	Shouting at a Tornado		
			10	Sun-Fed Stone		
10.	Jonathan Moody	Region	1	Doomy's Hallucination Blues	p.10	Moody, Jonathan. 2012. *The Doomy Poems*. Brooklyn, NY: Six Gallery Press.
		Fresno	2	During the Obama Administration	p.20	
			3	The O	p.26	
		Age Group	4	The Idiosyncrasies of Irina	p.31	
		31-40	5	Blitzed	p.35	
			6	Girl Talk: The Moon Puts Irina in Check	p.45	
		Published Books	7	Viva Pedro! The Almodovar Retrospective Series (Harris Theater, Downtown)	p.49	
		1-3	8	Cocaine Sugar Sandcastles	p.55	
			9	Anthracite	p.56	
			10	The Only Moment We Wore Alone	p.75	

AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE AUTHORS						
	Author			Poems	Pg.	Reference
1.	Ai	Region	1	Dread	p.15	Ai. 2003. *Dread*. New York: W.W. Norton.
		Albany	2	Family	p.39	
			3	Disgrace	p.48	
		Age Group	4	Grandfather Says	p.59	
		61+	5	Intercourse	p.66	
			6	True Love	p.69	
		Published Books	7	Rude Awakening	p.72	
		11+	8	Gender/Bender	p.75	
			9	The White Homegirl	p.90	
			10	The Psychic Detective: Identity	p.101	
2.	Ebony Stewart	Region	1	Mosaic Woman	p.2	Stewart, Ebony. 2013. *Love Letters to Balled Fists*. Austin, TX: Timber Mouse Publishing.
		Austin	2	Tomboy	p.7	
			3	A Human Being Lives Here	p.19	
		Age Group	4	The Jip is Up!	p.22	
		20-30	5	The First Time I Saw You	p.30	
			6	The Pretender	p.35	
		Published Books	7	The Science of Kissing	p.46	
		1-3	8	Tell Them	p.57	
			9	Double Entendre	p.60	
			10	Blinks	p.77	
3.	Drea Brown	Region	1	Dream in which the girl takes shape	p.13	Brown, Drea. 2015. *Dear Girl: a Reckoning*. Los Angeles, CA: Gold Line Press.
		Austin	2	Sonet/ conjure: tongue unite	p.15	
			3	When a body begins	p.21	
		Age Group	4	Bop: passage in smile 2	p.23	
		20-30	5	For days and days	p.27	
			6	Mercy visits the schooner phillis	p.31	
		Published Books	7	Phillis land ho!	p.37	
		1-3	8	The girl for prod and purchase	p.39	
			9	Rememory: on sea monsters mermaids and salvation	p.41	
			10	Rememory: questions after transit	p.43	
4.	Hermine Pinson	Region	1	A Chick Poem	p.7	Pinson, Hermine. 2007. *Dolores is blue, Dolorez is blues*. Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: Sheep Meadow Press.
		Beaumont	2	Entropy I	p.20	
			3	Malignant Tenant	p.27	
		Age Group	4	Dolores is Blue / Dolorez is Blues	p.35	
		31-40	5	Skywalking	p.41	
			6	A Girl	p.65	
		Published Books	7	All-Purpose Vampires	p.84	
		4-6	8	Indigo Bunting	p.95	
			9	La Linea Nigra	p.114	
			10	Texas Poem	p.118	
5.	Harryette Mullen	Region	1	Any Lit	p.6	Mullen, Harryette. 2002. *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
		Fort Worth	2	Bilingual Instructions	p.10	
			3	Denigration	p.19	
		Age Group	4	Elliptical	p.23	
		41-50	5	Ted Joans at the Café Bizarre	p.71	
			6	We Are Not Responsible	p.77	
		Published Books	7	Why You and I	p.78	
		7-10	8	Xenophobic Nightmare in a Foreign Language	p.81	
			9	Zen Acron	p.84	
			10	Zombie Hat	p.85	

6.	Erika R. Land	Region	1	Lost Identity	p.5	Land, Erika R. 2014. *Georgia's DAM*. Athens, GA: Ezarie Publishing.
		San Antonio	2	You Remind Me	p.9	
			3	Ceiling Fans	p.19	
		Age Group	4	I'm Sleepy	p.21	
		31-40	5	Michael Jackson	p.23	
			6	Black Cats	p.28	
		Published Books	7	Non-Political	p.29	
		1-3	8	Dime a Dozen	p.33	
			9	Cycles	p.37	
			10	Untitled	p.40	
7.	Loretta Diane Walker	Region	1	Word Ghetto	p.1	Walker, Loretta D. 2011. *Word Ghetto*. San Francisco, CA: Blue Light Press.
		Odessa	2	Why I Shall Not Angry a Poem	p.13	
			3	East Texas	p.20	
		Age Group	4	Soaking In Shame	p.42	
		41-50	5	Go Back to Africa	p.53	
			6	One Hundred Sixty-Nine Pancakes Later	p.57	
		Published Books	7	Black Feathers	p.83	
		4-6	8	Reflection	p.88	
			9	Bouty	p.94	
			10	At Memorial Garden Park	p.102	
8.	ReShonda Tate Billingsley	Region	1	The Epitome of a Woman	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Billingsley, ReShonda T. (2012). *Something to Say: Poetry to motivate the mind, body and soul.* St. Paul, MN: Paradigm Publishing Retrieved March 18, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		Houston	2	The Consummate Friend		
			3	I am a Black Woman		
		Age Group	4	Loving Myself		
		41-50	5	Colorstruck		
			6	Ugly Ways		
		Published Books	7	Remember the Fallen		
		11+	8	I Rise Up		
			9	White Death		
			10	If I Knew Then…		
9.	Gloria Edokpa	Region	1	Mystery	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Edokpa, Gloria. 2012. *Soliloquies: A Poet's Odes on Love, Life & God.* Seattle, WA: Amazon Digital Services LLC. Retrieved March 12, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		San Marcos	2	My Love		
			3	Mind		
		Age Group	4	Chaos		
		31-40	5	In the Shadows		
			6	This Generation		
		Published Books	7	Ignorance		
		1-3	8	Spirit, Soul & Body		
			9	Finding the Almighty		
			10	Dear Dad		
10.	April R. Neal	Region	1	They Ask Me to Write	p.8	Neal, April R. 2013. *Some Things Just Sound Better On Paper: A collection of Poems, Convos, and Letters the stage may never see…* Middletown, DE: CreateSpace.
		Waco	2	Yours	p.12	
			3	Sis. Kim	p.37	
		Age Group	4	WWJD	p.48	
		20-30	5	Convinced through Conviction	p.49	
			6	Adoration Alphabet	p.60	
		Published Books	7	Dear Mother	p.66	
		1-3	8	Today	p.79	
			9	Product Buildup	p.90	
			10	Black History 101	p.95	

MEXICAN AMERICAN MALE AUTHORS

	Author			Poems	Pg.	Reference
1.	Gabriel H. Sanchez	Region	1	To Man	p.4	Sanchez, Gabriel H. 2015. *The Fluid Chicano: poems*. Kyle, TX: Slough Press.
		Rio Grande Valley	2	Moctezuma's Ghost	p.9	
			3	After the End of Time	p.23	
		Age Group	4	I am the Bridge	p.33	
		31-40	5	Fluix	p.34	
			6	Father	p.37	
		Published Books	7	I Wait	p.47	
		1-3	8	Aztec Love	p.50	
			9	Love in Rigor Mortis	p.65	
			10	24 Hours	p.74	
2.	Rodney Gomez	Region	1	Rio Bravo	p.2	Gomez, Rodney. 2014. *Mouth Filled with Night: poems*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
		Rio Grande Valley	2	Milpa Verde	p.3	
			3	What Happened to Fire	p.8	
		Age Group	4	Fest Day	p.12	
		31-40	5	Cornelio Smith	p.13	
			6	Escutcheon for Pochos	p.17	
		Published Books	7	Riot	p.19	
		1-3	8	Prospective Title for a Border Thesis	p.25	
			9	A Mereology of Coyolxauhqui	p.28	
			10	Baedeker for a Life Cut with Danger	p.33	
3.	Luis Omar Salinas	Region	1	Here and Now	p.4	Salinas, Luis O. 2005. *Elegy for Desire*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press.
		Robstown	2	Ode to the Night Air	p.7	
			3	Pacific Wind Tossing Pebbles	p.9	
		Age Group	4	Men at Sea	p.19	
		61+	5	Poets in Exile	p.30	
			6	On the Front Porch	p.36	
		Published Books	7	Angry Lady	p.43	
		11+	8	Dreaming Under Gray Clouds	p.57	
			9	On This Energetic Day of Autumn	p.68	
			10	The Sentiment	p.84	
4.	Paul Pineda	Region	1	A Guide to My Desert	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Pineda, Paul. 2015. *El Valle de las Lagrimas:Valley of Tears*. San Antonio, TX: CreateSpace.
		San Antonio	2	Prayers and Words		
			3	My Names		
		Age Group	4	What I did this Summer		
		51-60	5	Hello, my name is Pablo and I'm Chicano (so, I can be) Alcoholic		
			6	Easter Morn '57		
		Published Books	7	Isabel		
		4-6	8	Dejalo ir (Let it Go)		
			9	When I Grow Up		
			10	Olfactory Memories		
5.	Trinidad Sanchez Jr.	Region	1	Love Poem No.50	p.18	Sanchez Jr., Trinidad. 2006. *Jalapeño Blues*. Mountain View, CA: Floricanto Press.
		San Antonio	2	American Eagle Flight No. 40	p.19	
			3	The Night I Danced with Etta James	p.29	
		Age Group	4	You ask me…	p.50	
		61+	5	A Poem for Valencia	p.51	
			6	Cup of Rain	p.74	
		Published Books	7	Beware of the Dog	p.77	
		11+	8	No, I am Not Suicidal	p.80	
			9	Considering my Mortality	p.81	
			10	The Train	p.94	

6.	Ray Gonzalez	Region	1	Speak Easy	p.13	González, Ray. 2005. *Consideration of the Guitar: new and selected poems, 1986-2005*. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions.
		El Paso	2	The Carved Hands at San Miguel	p.14	
			3	Runway Train	p.20	
		Age Group	4	Fierce God	p.21	
		61+	5	The Light at Mesilla	p.29	
			6	Immediacy	p.39	
		Published Books	7	Celestial Longing	p.42	
		11+	8	Fever	p.47	
			9	The Mask	p.63	
			10	My Brothers	p.69	
7.	Benjamin Alire Saenz	Region	1	Do not mind the Bombs	p.3	Alire Saenz, Benjamin. 2006. *Dreaming the end of War*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.
		El Paso	2	The First Dream: Learning to Kill	p.6	
			3	The Second Dream: Killing and Memory and War	p.15	
		Age Group	4	The Third Dream: The Names and their Gods	p.22	
		61+	5	The Fourth Dream: Families and Flags and Revenge	p.27	
			6	The Sixth Dream: Animals, Food, Aesthetics	p.37	
		Published Books	7	The Eight Dream: Summer (and a Dog of My Own)	p.43	
		11+	8	The Ninth Dream: War (In the City in Which I Live)	p.46	
			9	The Eleventh Dream: Fathers and Other Gods	p.56	
			10	The Twelfth Dream: This Is How It Will End, Is This How It Will End?	p.60	
8.	Albino Carrillo	Region	1	Silver Sun Winter Dream Overcoat	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Carrillo, Albino. 2015. *Uranium Days*. Raleigh, NC: Lulu. Retrieved April 2, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		El Paso	2	San Luis Valley Blues		
			3	Part Time Nights and Weekends		
		Age Group	4	I Live the Darkness		
		50-61	5	The Bureaucratic Dangers		
			6	Wither		
		Published Books	7	From the Silent Hallway		
		4-6	8	But God Loves the Wind		
			9	The Mexican Astronauts: Huitzilopochtli in "Neskyeuna"		
			10	NM HWY 185		
9.	Daniel Garcia Ordaz	Region	1	Admonition from Prosperity	p.14	Garcia Ordaz, Daniel. 2006. *You Know What I'm Sayin'? Poetry, drama*. Donna, TX: Zarape Press.
		Houston	2	I am as a Tulip	p.26	
			3	Jazz Beat	p.31	
		Age Group	4	Affirmative Action	p.34	
		41-50	5	Securing the Blessings	p.37	
			6	Black like me	p.41	
		Published Books	7	A Mexican tortilla in Harlem	p.57	
		7-10	8	These are a few of my favourite "Che's"	p.62	
			9	Doña Lucha's all night café	p.66	
			10	Los Mariachis	p.70	
10.	David Tomas Martinez	Region	1	5.	p.12	Martinez, David T. 2014. *HUSTLE : Poems*. Louisville, KY: Sarabande Books.
		Houston	2	6.	p.15	
			3	7.	p.17	
		Age Group	4	California Penal Code 266	p.35	
		31-40	5	In Chicano Park	p.37	
			6	The Only Mexican	p.39	
		Published Books	7	Innominatus	p.41	
		1-3	8	Small Discoveries	p.51	
			9	The King Sofa	p.53	
			10	Apotropaic	p.54	

MEXICAN AMERICAN FEMALE AUTHORS

	Author			Poems	Pg.	Reference
1.	Amalia Ortiz	Region	1	A river, a bridge, a wall	p.18	Ortiz, Amalia. 2015. *Rant. Chant. Chisme*. San Antonio, TX: Wings Press.
		Rio Grande Valley	2	Old Colossus Resurrected	p.22	
			3	Down Home	p.30	
		Age Group	4	100 Words About 10 Texas Music Legends	p.32	
		41-50	5	VIA Bus Bingo	p.33	
			6	Women of Juarez	p.80	
		Published Books	7	Call Cats	p.88	
		1-3	8	La Matadora	p.91	
			9	Do Not Go Silent	p.95	
			10	Unnamed	p.105	
2.	Emmy Perez	Region	1	For los Muertos	p.5	Pérez, Emmy. 2011. *Solstice*. Sacramento, CA: Swan Scythe Press.
		Rio Grande Valley	2	Soft-Gelled Capsule	p.13	
			3	After Revolution	p.18	
		Age Group	4	Self-Portrait with Frida	p.22	
		31-40	5	Without Whitewash	p.25	
			6	I am Looking	p.26	
		Published Books	7	Ysleta, Tejas	p.29	
		1-3	8	When Evening Becomes Stellar	p.35	
			9	Where the Sun Rises	p.37	
			10	History of Silence	p.39	
3.	Victoria Garcia-Zapata Klein	Region	1	Graciano	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Garcia-Zapata Klein, Victoria. 2009. *Another waterbug is murdered while it rains in Texas, or, Among the dead new and selected poems*. San Antonio, TX: Wings Press. Retrieved April 1, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		San Antonio	2	Dominic		
			3	Since I've Been Home		
		Age Group	4	Metropolitan Methodist Psych Ward, 4th Floor		
		41-50	5	Death Box		
			6	Room 423		
		Published Books	7	We Pray for Peace While We Ponder Fear, Humbled by Your Sacrifice		
		4-6	8	Frida in the Nude		
			9	My Vegetable Garden		
			10	Another Water Bug is Murdered While It Rains in Texas		
4.	Celeste Guzman Mendoza	Region	1	Tio Chucho would have you believe	NO PAGINATION (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)	Guzman Mendoza, Celeste. 2013. *Beneath the Halo*. San Antonio, TX: Wings Press. Retrieved April 10, 2016 (http://www.amazon.com/).
		San Antonio	2	Pool		
			3	Stopping a Run		
		Age Group	4	House of Crosses		
		41-50	5	Saint		
			6	About Faith		
		Published Books	7	La Pisca		
		7-10	8	Her Fruit		
			9	Mexican Wife		
			10	Marriage Multiply		
5.	Laurie Ann Guerrero	Region	1	Yellow Bird	p.14	Guerrero, Laurie A. 2013. *A Tongue in the Mouth of the Dying*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
		San Antonio	2	Babies Under the House	p.17	
			3	Esperanza tells her friend the story of La Llorona	p.22	
		Age Group	4	Ode to El Cabrito	p.24	
		31-40	5	Morning Praise of Nightmares, One	p.27	
			6	Breast	p.37	
		Published Books	7	Ode to my Boots	p.38	
		1-3	8	Black Hat	p.42	
			9	Stones	p.52	
			10	My Mother asks to be Cremated	p.55	

6.	Carmen Tafolla	Region	1	La Gloria	p.10	Tafolla, Carmen. 2004. *Sonnets and Salsa*. San Antonio, TX: Wings Press.
		San Antonio	2	Two Workers Who Build Our Nation	p.13	
			3	This River Here	p.18	
		Age Group	4	La Malinche	p.22	
		61+	5	Farmer's Market	p.28	
			6	Something	p.38	
		Published Books	7	We Never Die	p.56	
		11+	8	Around Us Lie	p.63	
			9	Right in on Language	p.78	
			10	In Love with People	p.107	
7.	Ire'ne Lara Silva	Region	1	Love me	p.6	Lara Silva, Ire'ne. 2010. *Ani'mal: Poems*. Austin, TX: Axoquentlatoa Press.
		Austin	2	From the Independent Chicana Tex-Mex Feminista in Love	p.9	
			3	Hungry	p.11	
		Age Group	4	Tierra	p.12	
		31-40	5	Remember when in a Dream We Lost the Moon	p.14	
			6	Fingers/Hands/Limbs	p.15	
		Published Books	7	Trembling Makes the Earth Speak	p.28	
		4-6	8	Lament	p.29	
			9	Curandera Love	p.32	
			10	Mi Vida He Says my Brown Man	p.36	
8.	Sarah Cortez	Region	1	By the Airport	p.19	Cortez, Sarah. 2000. *How to Undress a Cop: Poems*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press.
		Houston	2	Reunion	p.21	
			3	Las Tias Speak	p.25	
		Age Group	4	Johnnie	p.32	
		51-60	5	Tuesday Afternoon Invite	p.38	
			6	Matinee	p.40	
		Published Books	7	Late Night Torta	p.50	
		11+	8	The First Time	p.56	
			9	Ode to my Body Armor	p.70	
			10	Attempt to Locate	p.74	
9.	Guadalupe Garcia McCall	Region	1	Thorns	p.9	Garcia McCall, Guadalupe. 2011. *Under the Mesquite*. New York: Lee & Low Books.
		Eagle Pass	2	Something's Different	p.13	
			3	Uprooted	p.35	
		Age Group	4	En los Estados Unidos	p.38	
		51-60	5	Elotes	p.56	
			6	Señorita	p.73	
		Published Books	7	To be or not to be a Mexican	p.78	
		1-3	8	On the Way	p.92	
			9	Mother, May I	p.117	
			10	Making Tortillas	p.120	
10.	Pat Mora	Region	1	Weird	p.5	Mora, Pat. 2010. *Dizzy in your Eyes: Poems about Love*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
		El Paso	2	Revenge x 3	p.9	
			3	Doubts	p.11	
		Age Group	4	To-do List	p.17	
		51-60	5	Mariachi Fantasy	p.21	
			6	Back Then	p.27	
		Published Books	7	Valentine to Papi	p.29	
		11+	8	The Silence	p.67	
			9	Please	p.71	
			10	Spanish	p.75	

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Antonio Paniagua Guzmán was born in Mexico City on September 26, 1989. He graduated from *Universidad Iberoamericana* (IBERO), Mexico City, in 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication, and from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) in 2016 with a Master of Science in Sociology. Contact: antoniopaguzman@gmail.com.