“Our Beloved Alamo”

Racism and Texas Exceptionalism in Public Memory Systems

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Abstract

This paper examines the written, spoken, and performed texts at The Alamo to quantify and analyze the white narratives that are presented. Through the use of a content and discourse analysis, we evaluate the rhetorical strategies The Alamo uses as it communicates Texas history to visitors. Our findings indicate that Anglo/white people are labeled as heroes and Mexican people are labeled as enemies. Narratives of Indigenous, Black, and Tejano people are virtually nonexistent in spite of the vibrant community organizations like the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation who are fighting for an accurate and thorough rendering of the site.

Introduction

The 2020 Republican Primary Ballot Propositions lists the following item with 97.3% voting in favor of it: "Texans should protect and preserve all historical monuments, artifacts, and buildings, such as the Alamo Cenotaph and *our beloved Alamo*, and should oppose any reimagining of the Alamo site" ("2022 Republican," emphasis ours). Shortly thereafter, in July 2021, Lieutenant Governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, pressured the Bullock Texas State History Museum to cancel an event that discussed the book *Forget the Alamo.* The book, written by Brian Burrough, Chris Tomlinson, and Jason Stanford (2021), critically re-examines the role of slavery in the Battle of the Alamo. The authors argue that the dominant narrative in Texas entirely overlooks this important fact: The war was fought in part to ensure that slavery would be preserved in the territory and future republic. Since the Bullock Museum is operated by the State Preservation Board, it is chaired by Republican Governor Greg Abbott, and Patrick serves as a co-chair (Livingston & Zou, 2021). As a result of Patrick's influence on the Bullock Museum's events, the discussion was canceled. After being told of the event, Dan Patrick (2021) tweeted, "As a member of the Preservation Board, I told staff to cancel this event as soon as I found out about it. . . . This fact-free rewriting of TX history has no place @BullockMuseum." Such is the official response to anything that challenges the common story of The Alamo, or, more expansively interpreted, anything that challenges the ideology of Texas Exceptionalism–in the words of Governor Abbott, "Texans are the greatest people ever to inhabit the earth" (Tilove, 2017).

The power of public memory spaces to influence how we perceive events in history has been well noted, especially the idea that public memory spaces are "activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of

the present" (Blair et al., 2010, p. 7). Nowhere is this more evident than The Alamo. Practically from the moment the Texas Revolution was won in San Jacinto, the story of the Alamo has been propagated throughout Texas society in ways that reflected a growing Anglo-first culture within the future state. In fact, as John Emory Dean (2016) contends, Anglo Texan dominance and Mexican/Mexican American subservience coalesces at The Alamo. Along those lines, this rhetoric of Texas Exceptionalism simultaneously advances American Exceptionalism as it "fits well among other archival narratives of successful revolutions fought in the name of freedom against foreign invaders, oppressors, and tyrants" (p. 6). It was this mindset that influenced how to present the shrine. But why is the Alamo so important to Texans? Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) make the case that affiliation impacts which memories become important (p. 16). In Texas, affiliation is at the heart of the Texas mythos. If you can't be a native Texan (the best kind of Texan), you can become a Texan, and one is encouraged to do so at every turn. When someone becomes a Texan, whether by birth or by virtue of moving to Texas, The Alamo becomes important due to its proximity to the Texas mythos and ethos of standing up to tyranny and fighting for freedom. As Crisp (2005) puts it, the Alamo myth is the "ultimate symbol of courage and the frontier spirit of Texas" (p. 146). No truer symbol of that courage and that fight against oppression exists in Texas than The Alamo. And that history is told both to newcomers and to children as they come through Texas' K-12 public school system. Indoctrination into the story of Texas's birth starts early. Like many public memories in the South, what history is told and how it is told are largely controlled by a hegemonic system that has been in place since shortly after the fall of The Alamo. That hegemonic control over memory spaces in general, and The Alamo in particular, only serves to allow those in power to remain in power. O'Brien and Sanchez (2021) note that "those who have power in portraying

specific memories that portray them positively will fight to keep them intact" (p. 16). We can see these systemic power structures via the fierce pushback from the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) and the state government whenever it has been suggested that the story told at the shrine might not be the whole truth.

While groups like the DRT and Alamo Defenders Descendants Association maintain a hegemonic narrative, other community groups like the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation have worked to promote a more accurate and thorough narrative of The Alamo. The Tāp Pīlam, along with other community groups and activists, contend that the narrow focus of the battle in 1836 elides the significance of Native American, Black, Spanish, and Mexican people in the larger cultural narrative. As Linda Ximenes (2021), an elder in Tāp Pīlam says, "There were a lot more people than just Anglos at the Alamo. . . . But to include those people would change the entire story." As the first Tribal families of San Antonio, the Tāp Pīlam argue "that geographies are not simply places"; in the case of The Alamo, it is a sacred site where thousands of Native American, Mexican, and Spanish ancestors were buried (Barnd, 2017, p. 1; Piatt, 2019). Raymond Hernandez, an elder in the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation, recalls his grandfather taking him to The Alamo and telling him repeatedly: "They built all this on top of our *campo santo*" (Romero, 2021). In spite of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, lawyers for the Texas General Land Office, the custodian of the site, and the Alamo Trust, the nonprofit overseeing the development plan, rejected the Tāp Pīlam to take part in the decision-making process of how human remains should be treated (2021).

In this article, through the use of a content and discourse analysis, we examine the Alamo in its written, spoken, and performed texts to quantify Ximenes (2021) and the Tāp Pīlam's argument about the

erasure of POC from The Alamo's overarching narrative. We begin with a brief background of The Alamo and its public memory issues followed by an explanation of the methods used during and after our several visits to the site for the content analysis. In the course of the analysis, we offer our interpretation of the data and show that there is not just an implied bias towards whiteness and away from non-Anglo people involved in the Texas Revolution, but an explicit bias as well. This distinction is important to the study of rhetoric in public spaces, especially those spaces in the South where the predominant hegemonic culture has a vested interest in putting forth a narrative history that necessarily puts white/Anglo actors and concerns in the forefront. And while it is unsurprising that The Alamo presents a white/Anglo centered story, quantifying the language through a content analysis and qualifying it via a discourse analysis presents the field of rhetorical studies, future scholars, as well as future decision-makers in San Antonio hard data from which to work. Finally, we contend that the rhetoric employed throughout The Alamo demonstrates the type of "nativist animosity" that has historically targeted Latinx immigrants (Beltrán, 2020, pp. 1-2). Beltrán, citing Joel Olson, W.E.B DuBois, and Pierre Van der Berghe, also notes that nativism is built by a particular ideology of whiteness: "Democratic for the master race but tyrannical for the subordinate groups" (Van der Berghe, 1978, p. 18). The elevation of white/Anglo actors and concerns at the expense of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation and others depicts how racist white nativism infiltrates public memory sites like The Alamo.

Since this article is written by two people with different positionalities, lived experiences, and varying geographical connections to/with Texas and The Alamo, we would like to note our positionalities. Author one, Brianna Hernandez, identifies as a queer transgender woman from a military, multi-ethnic home. While she and her mother are white, her adoptive father is Mexican

American, and her upbringing bridged the two cultures. Brianna has lived in Houston since 2002 after having lived in a variety of places across the globe due to military life. Since coming to Texas, she has taught in school districts where students are predominantly Hispanic and from low socio-economic status. The bulk of her work as an educator has been to address inequities that face the Hispanic populations of her community. Author two, April O'Brien, identifies as a white cis-gender woman. She has lived in Texas for over four years and has engaged with racism in Texas' public memory systems in her teaching and research. Each of the authors has, due to their positionalities, brought with them a desire to address the hegemonic structures in place in Texas that continue to marginalize large swaths of the population.

Priests and Priestesses of The Alamo

Milford (2013) suggests that the fight to keep the Texas myth intact can be viewed as a religious metaphor. Fittingly, in the words of a visitor on one of our tours: "Visiting The Alamo is a pilgrimage for me." In regard to the mythos of Texas (as with any myth), Milford posits that there are priests who affirm and reaffirm the myth and prophets who present countermemory to challenge, or negate, the myth (p. 115). And while many Texan households have one or two members who will locally act as a priest with a lower-case "p," there are those who act as Priests with a capital "P" on a higher and more profound level. When contemplating who in Texas society acts as the Priests, we need look no further than the governor's mansion and the Texas legislature.

The legislature orders that Texas History is to be taught in the 4th and 7th grades for all students in Texas public K-12 schools. The particular TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) or laws

which govern what is taught give us a bit of insight into what story is told. From 2010 until 2017, the TEKS read as follows (emphasis added):

- (3)(C) explain the issues surrounding significant events of the Texas Revolution, including the Battle of Gonzales, William B. Travis's letter "To the People of Texas and All Americans in the World," **the siege of the Alamo and all the heroic defenders who gave their lives there**, the Constitutional Convention of 1836, Fannin's surrender at Goliad, and the Battle of San Jacinto; and
- (3)(D) explain how the establishment of the Republic of Texas brought civil, political, and religious freedom to Texas

It's important to note the use of the word "heroic." That the defenders of The Alamo be taught as heroes is literally written into law, and the word hero/heroic is prominently featured at the shrine itself. So, when school children are taught history from a heroic lens, it is likewise reinforced when those same school children go to The Alamo and observe the term repeatedly. Beyond the legislature, as noted in the introduction, the governor and lieutenant governor have often waded into the fray whenever any change to The Alamo is proposed or when new standards have been proposed in the curriculum or when "prophets" challenge the myth by presenting a countermemory. Between the legislated curriculum and the actions of leadership, a chilling effect on educators has been felt. In an interview with *Time Magazine*, Raul Ramos, a Professor of History at University of Houston, said, "You have to endorse that myth. You can teach a diverse history as long as it doesn't contradict the patriotic myth. That's been very clear all along. You can talk about Tejanos as long as you're talking about the Tejanos who fought on the Texan side—not the Tejanos who

fought on the Mexican side, or didn't fight at all" (Waxman, 2021). And while educators *can* talk about Tejanos who fought on the Texian side, usually they don't. It is noteworthy that in the original envisioning of this project, Author 1 attempted to partner with a 7th grade Texas History teacher from their campus. When it was proposed that we extend the research to write a unit plan that would include a more diverse and inclusive narrative, the fellow teacher said they would not feel comfortable doing so for fear of either real or imagined reprisal.

We also cannot forget the High Priestesses of the Alamo themselves, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT). In 1905, due to the work of women like Clara Driscol and Adina de Zavala, the state of Texas granted stewardship of The Alamo to the DRT. However, almost from the beginning of their tenure as stewards, there was a war within the DRT over the direction of the nature of the Alamo and how it was to be presented. Although Adina de Zavala and Clara Driscoll were united in saving the Alamo, they had two very different visions for how to present it to the public (Flores, 1995a, p. 101). De Zavala saw The Alamo as a point of shared history that all Texans could take part in and revel in. Her vision was one of inclusivity. Driscoll, on the other hand, saw The Alamo as a point in history that showed the greatness of the Anglos who fought there and the republic they built. The contributions of Mexicans, Tejanos, and African Americans were hardly mentioned, and if they were, it was brief with no background. Her vision was one of exclusivity (p. 103). It did not take long for Clara Driscoll to win this battle, and de Zevala's chapter of the DRT was expelled from any handling of the Alamo. The effects of enacting Driscoll's vision would be felt for the 105 years the DRT were in stewardship over the shrine (p. 112).

As a part of their stewardship, the DRT produced educational materials for public schools as well as two different educational

films, one that was shown from the 1980s through the late 1990s, and then another shown from the late 1990s through till 2012. As Flores (1998b) discusses, each of these films were skewed toward an Anglo telling of the history of The Alamo with the former film leaning heavily towards the idea that it was a racially motivated affair (p. 435). In 2012 the DRT was removed from their position as caretakers due to issues of transparency and a lack of response to the community calling for a more inclusive curation and presentation. And while there have been improvements since the removal of the DRT in both the choices of materials presented, there is much to be done still. As we show, The Alamo as it exists in 2022 is still deeply skewed toward Anglos and away from groups that are marginalized in Texan society.

Indeed, Texas has a long history of ignoring the actual history, the deeply interracial history, of The Alamo. In the jacket cover of *Forget the Alamo,* it is noted, "As uncomfortable as it may be to hear for some, celebrating The Alamo has long had an echo of celebrating whiteness" (Burrough et al., 2021). A result of Driscoll's vision of the Alamo promoting the myth of the heroic Anglo and many Texas historians promoting the same line of thinking, "The Heroic Anglo Narrative…was all that generations of Texans learned of their history" (p. 184). Richard Flores (1998b) recalls a story from his childhood of visiting The Alamo, and afterward his third grade best friend said, "You killed them! You and the 'mes'kins'" (p. 428). Flores expands on this narrative to argue that his story is not unique and asks if the "image of "treacherous Mexicans" constructed from the emergent memory-place of the Alamo continues to fashion their perceptions" (p. 443). He suggests that The Alamo as a memory place helps shape identities. For our initial research question, we asked: "Is there a bias towards whiteness presented at The Alamo?" As such, we endeavor to look at the site itself and

examine it for biases, not just *toward* whiteness but *away* from those who are not white males.

Public Memory Problems

Scholarship across rhetoric studies, history, tourism studies, and cultural geography illustrates a series of problems with public memory in the United States. These issues are likewise noted at The Alamo and include the following main concerns about sites and artifacts of public memory, which include museums, memorials, historical marker texts, and monuments: (1) They are often inaccurate and biased to highlight the accomplishments of white men; (2) They are racist, whether due to depictions of people of color or via the absence of narratives of people of color; and (3) They perpetuate an objectification and a lack of identification with people of color.

James Loewen (1999), in his comprehensive study of 91 public memory sites, uncovered many inaccuracies and lies, including markers and sites that refer to Native Americans by tribal names that are wrong or offensive, denying the fact that Willa Cather was a lesbian at the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, and rejecting that the soldiers fighting under Nathan Bedford Forrest massacred U.S. troops at Fort Pillow (pp. 2-3, 5). Scholarship that focuses on the historical marker texts in Tennessee demonstrates that there are more historical markers that highlight Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who also founded the Ku Klux Klan, than all markers about white women and Native Americans (Bright et al., 2020, p. 15). In addition to these issues with false information and bias towards white men, artifacts and sites of public memory also perpetuate racism due to actual racist language or to a lack of what

Bright et al. call "just representation," which would memorialize multiply marginalized groups in American history (p. 2).

Loewen (1999) identifies several instances of racist language used for Chinese Americans, Native Americans, white women, and Black Americans, including uses of the n-word and references to Native American women as "squaws" (p. 119). Many historical markers in Texas refer to Native Americans in terms of "Indian scares," "Indian violence," "hostile Indians," or massacres with almost half of the markers about the Comanche Nation derogatory in nature (O'Brien, 2021, p. 7). Furthermore, out of the more than 16,000 historical markers in Texas, none depict the violent string of lynchings that occurred during the Reconstruction Era (p. 7). Likewise, Tim Gruenewald's (2021) research about the museums on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. also illustrate how even sites that ostensibly memorialize a group of people, as is the case with the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), are designed in such a way to avoid making connections between slavery to current issues with mass incarceration and police brutality. In the pursuit of continuing the tale of American Exceptionalism, the NMAAHC focuses on progress and hope by highlighting former President Obama and Oprah Winfrey in the large main floor and keeps stories of slavery, lynching, segregation, and Jim Crow laws below ground (p. 145).

Another final concern with sites and artifacts of public memory centers around *how* people of color are depicted. In particular, Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki's (2006) study of the Plains Indians Museum (PIM) portrays the Plains Indians as a community to revere. Rather than identifying with the Plains Indians or implicating white visitors about their historic role in the murder and displacement of Indigenous people, the curators created the PIM to encourage visitors to form a "rhetoric of reverence" (p. 28). A

rhetoric of reverence appears at face value to be respectful and thoughtful, but as Dickinson et al. argue, this use of language and visual effects actually emotionally distances white visitors so they maintain an objective gaze. The same rhetoric of reverence is apparent at The Alamo, but in this case, it is not targeted at Indigenous people. Ironically, when visitors enter the chapel, they are encouraged to show reverence for the site, but this reverence does not extend to the Tāp Pīlam, whose ancestors are buried beneath the building. In our study of The Alamo, we contend that many of these problems we have noted with public memory are evident in its written, spoken, and performed texts.

Methods

The data we draw from in this article comes from a mixed-methods study, which includes a content and discourse analysis. These methods helped us answer the following research questions:

- How is whiteness centered via Anglo narratives at The Alamo?
- What similarities and differences exist in the narratives communicated via the audio tour, the guided tour with a historical interpreter, and the informational text on exhibits and statues? What are the implications of these similarities and differences?
- What rhetorical strategies does The Alamo use as it communicates Texas history to visitors?

The mixed-methods approach allows us to gather two different data sets that help highlight both the amount of times certain words are used and also the context in which they are used. By analyzing the differences and similarities in the narrative across

various verbal and written platforms at The Alamo, we were able to get a deeper understanding of how The Alamo communicates aspects of Texas history. Hence, discourse analysis became a way for us to consider the different experiences visitors might have based on what type of tour they had taken. Likewise, the larger set of data from the content analysis gave us quantifiable data of how often and in which locations on the tour various ethnicities are mentioned. Understanding the context of how often groups were mentioned created a foundation for us to better understand how rhetorical strategies were used to communicate Texas history at The Alamo. There were two phases to data gathering. Phase one was to gather the data from all written forms of communication at The Alamo. Brianna visited The Alamo on March 5, 2022, and April 2, 2022. As it happens, the first visit occurred during part of the annual celebration of the Battle of the Alamo. On the second visit, she saw the Long Barracks exhibit that had not been opened on the previous visit. She took pictures of every place of written text, including inscriptions, plaques, and informational displays. She also took pictures of all statuary and their marker texts. Brianna also obtained a written transcript of the audio tour. Not included were various signage, statuary, and explanations that were available off-site in the surrounding area, as we wished to contain the data set to The Alamo proper.

The next phase was Brianna and April taking the guided tour on separate days. The audio tour and guided tour differ in the following ways: 1) The audio tour is $9, and the guided tour is $40; 2) The guided tour is led by a historical interpreter. By taking a guided tour, we were able to add to the quantitative data set and gather qualitative data regarding the context of the verbal texts from the tour guides. We determined that in the combination of the written and verbal texts, there were 256 distinct instances of people, general or specific, or race mentioned at the site. Also included

were instances of the concept of hero/heroic. Each instance was coded using 14 categories that included race/nationality, gender, and whether there was a direct quote associated with them. All instances had multiple codes associated with them. Along with the codes, each item had a description/explanation entered so a discourse analysis could be performed along with the content analysis.

The codes used to describe each item were of a few varieties. There were strictly demographic codes such as *Anglo*, *Mexico/Mexican*, *Indigenous*, *Texan*, *Enslaved*, and *Woman.* These were chosen because our primary research question concerns the bias toward Anglos. Other codes described certain types of items, such as *Quote*, *Statue*, *Named*, and *Inscription.* Of particular interest is the *Named*" category as we felt it rhetorically important to study the specific people commemorated. Coding who was named allowed us to ask the question of who is not named and consider why these individuals are not included. Finally, codes were chosen as descriptors. *Enemy* and *Hero* were chosen because these terms demonstrate the rhetoric of sacredness The Alamo perpetuates– these are charged and biased terms. *Enemy* was coded for any time a person was named who was presented as an enemy combatant during the period from October 1835 through May 1836. For example, Santa Anna was most often coded as an enemy; however, there are several instances of Santa Anna that reference his life before the events of 1835-1836. In those cases, the *Enemy* code was not applied. *Hero* was only coded as such if the actual word hero was present. Likewise, *Defender* was only used to indicate someone actually present at the battle. For example, Juan Seguin was not coded as *Defender* because, while he was an important courier and scout, he was not present when The Alamo fell on March 6, 1836. We did not anticipate *Centralist* and *Rebel*, but both appeared with regularity once the analysis of the texts was performed. While not

as prominent, we sensed that these terms might have implications to our research. All of these codes were used in an effort to clarify our research questions, especially whether there exists a bias toward Anglo men and away from people of other demographics. After coding, we asked several questions of the data to identify trends. The goal was to see if there was enough data to arrive at conclusions regarding the initial research question. To identify our qualitative data, we recorded the guided tour and took notes when the historical interpreter addressed any of our research questions in his/her narrative.

Results

We cataloged 256 total items. Of these items, our first question examined how many were coded with various demographic information (refer to Figure 1). From this general piece of data, we observed a skew toward white/Anglo with a secondary skew towards Mexico/Mexican. Indigenous, Tejano, Women, and Slaves/slavery were coded far less often. Going further, we examined the occurrences of individual names being given and how often those named individuals were of a particular demographic (refer to Figure 2).

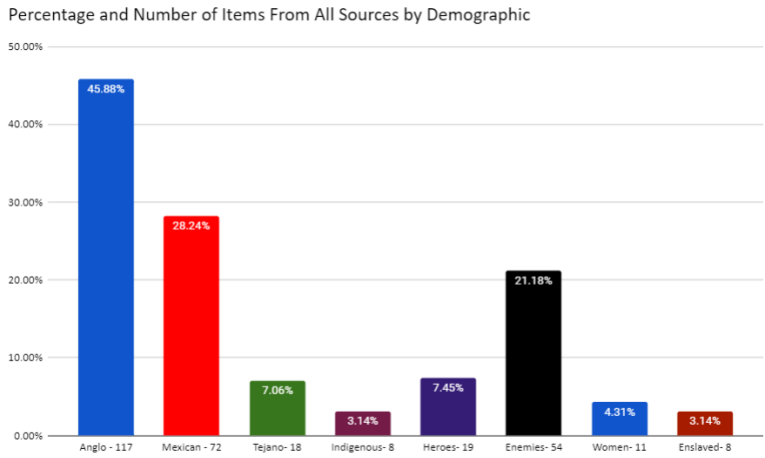

Figure 1. This image is of a bar graph that depicts demographic information at The Alamo. The graph shows that out of all the demographic groups mentioned, Anglo people are used the most at 45.88% and Indigenous and enslaved people are mentioned the least at 3.14% each.

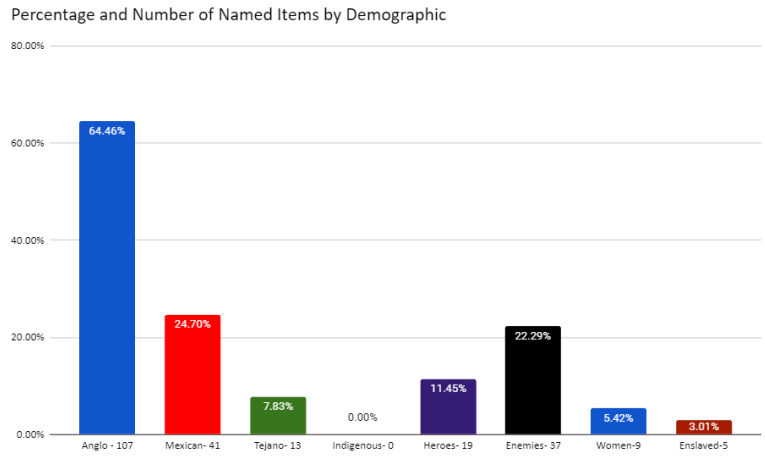

Figure 2. This image is of a bar graph that depicts the percentage and number of named items by demographic. The graph shows that out of all the demographic groups named, Anglo people are

named the most at 64.46% and Indigenous people are mentioned the least at 0%.

We found a high level of favoritism given to Anglos who were mentioned by name. Anglos represented 64% of all names, but that doesn't tell the whole story. Anglos also out-represented the next nearest demographic (Mexican) by a nearly three-to-one ratio. Anglo names also outnumbered all other names combined. Included in the data was whether a direct quotation of a person was included, and we listed eight quotes in total. Of those, six quoted Anglo men. We registered one Anglo woman's quote, but it was a quote of her recounting what her husband had said and not her words. Santa Anna, a Mexican, was quoted one time. The text originated from his written battle orders to his troops rather than something he actually said. While the total number of direct quotes is surprisingly low, the choice of whom to quote and what to quote is biased towards white men. Notable absences were Tejanos, enslaved or freedmen, and Indigenous people.

As noted above, only those who fought at the Battle of the Alamo were coded as a *Defender*. The following is the number of times this occurs by demographic (refer to Figure 3). This does *not* include the listing of names at the end of the tour. We chose to exclude this list for two reasons. First, in all of our visits, people at the exhibit tended to walk past this list without looking at it, or the tour guide mentioned it as almost an afterthought. Second, in what is just a long list of names, there is something lost rhetorically. This listing of names is less impactful than the individual people and events described throughout the rest of the exhibit.

We wanted to pay particular attention to anything coded as Mexican. There were 72 occurrences of Mexico/Mexican. Of those 72, forty-six (or 63%) were also coded as *Enemy*, and 42 instances

were named. Of those 42, thirty-one were for Santa Anna, the commander of enemy forces. Six were for General Cos, also an enemy. Virtually all instances of a Mexican named individual were for enemies or people who were or would become enemies of Texas. There was a single mention of a Mexican who fought for Texas independence–José Francisco Ruiz, who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence.

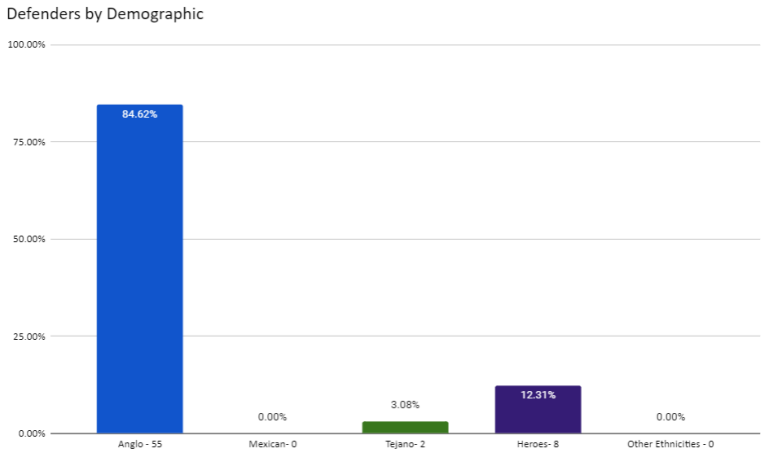

Figure 3. This image is of a bar graph that depicts The Alamo defenders by demographic. The graph shows that out of all the demographic groups named as defenders, Anglo people are named the most at 84.62% and Mexican people are mentioned the least at 0%.

Indigenous, Tejano, and Black people were barely mentioned at The Alamo. And when they were, it was usually as an enemy or as unimportant characters in The Alamo's story. There were eight items coded for Indigenous people. Of those eight, six were coded as enemies. Specifically, the Comanche Indians were characterized as marauders and raiders who would steal horses and kidnap women. Only once are they mentioned as doing something

positive, but even that is positive within the lens of doing things to aid white culture (artwork at the chapel). Tejanos, several of whom fought at the battle of The Alamo, are almost absent from The Alamo. They are only mentioned 18 times total. Of those 18, thirteen are named and usually to mention that they supported the revolution. However, there are no quotes associated with a Tejano person. Slaves and slavery are only mentioned six times in total. Of those six, only one was to name William Travis's slave Joe. The other four quotes were to mention that slavery existed and that as many as 2000 slaves were in Texas at the time of the revolution. There is one family photo with an unnamed slave in the picture. There was one mention of freedmen, which indicates that the person had, at some point in their lives, been a slave.

We studied the statuary present as well (see Figure 4). There were 28 statues of people/angels on site, with six named statues. Five of those six were Anglos. One was an Anglo woman, and one was a Tejano. The rest of the statues were Anglo/European (including the notably white European angels found in two of the relief statues). Most of the remaining statues were considered *Defenders* (defined earlier as people who were there on March 6, 1836), along the sides of the Cenotaph. On site, there were also two European angels, a statue of Lady Liberty, and an unnamed rider who looked very similar to paintings of William Travis. We want to stress that there were more statues of angels than of women or Tejanos. A study of the portraits present in the exhibit shows there were fourteen portraits. Eleven of them were Anglos, and of those, six were labeled as heroes. One portrait was of a Tejano, and two were Mexicans (Santa Anna and Iturbe, an Army general).

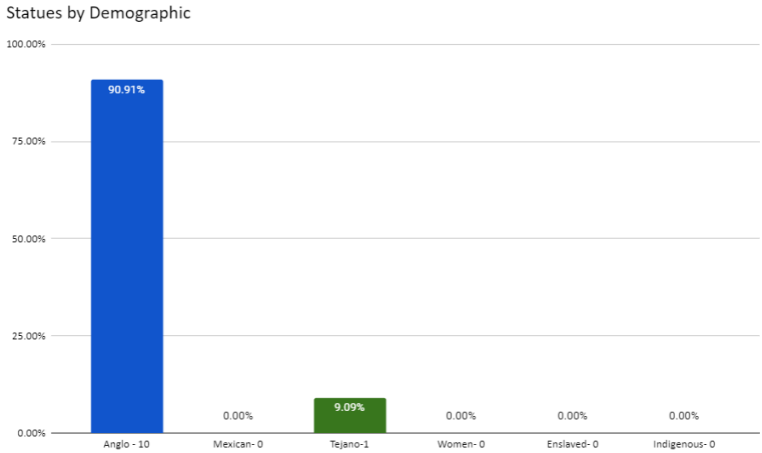

Figure 4. This image is of a bar graph that depicts the statues by demographic. The graph shows that out of all the demographic groups used in statuary, Anglo people are used the most at 90.91% and Mexican people, white women, enslaved people, and Indigenous people represent 0% of the statuary.

Finally, not a demographic study, but a content study for the word "hero" or "heroic" was performed. The word "hero" or "heroic" occurred 19 times on the site of The Alamo. Of those 19 times, six referred to a named person, and of those six, all are Anglo. The rest of the occurrences discussed the general heroism or gallantry of those who stayed to defend The Alamo. The word/concept occurred on plaques, inscriptions, marker text, memorials, and portraits throughout the shrine. One in particular that stands out was the inscription as one walks in the door of the chapel (refer to Figure 5).

Figure 5. The image is a plaque that is on the wall when visitors enter the chapel on The Alamo's grounds. The plaque states, "Be silent, friend. Here heroes died to blaze a trail for other men."

Discussion

Based on the written, visual, and audio texts at The Alamo, most visitors are likely to encounter two ideas: First, the people who fought at The Alamo were heroic Anglo Texans and not a diverse group of people. Second, Mexicans were the enemy. There is very little nuance between those two ideas presented. For instance, if we consider the occurrences of named individuals, Anglo names outnumbered all other demographics combined. This numerical advantage certainly gives the impression that the only people who mattered at the battle were Anglo. Furthermore, the site maintains that Mexicans, even when present in the narrative, were likely enemies. This sort of coding is pervasive throughout the extensive

informational signage and spoken language as well and reflects the two-tiered caste-like system that existed in Texas throughout much of the 19th century and beyond. We would like to note that there was only one explicit mention of the word "Anglo" on site, on an infographic entitled "Anglo-Tejano Interdependence." Elsewhere, Anglo people were just people, which demonstrates how the concept of whiteness is normalized throughout the site. Other people, of other nationalities, were labeled. However, the lack of labeling for Anglos certainly gives the impression that the default status is Anglo/white and that to be anything else is to be "Other." As a result of the focus on Anglo perspectives and utter absence of people of color from the narrative structure, The Alamo communicates that white stories matter and that all other stories are either unimportant or do not exist.

The frequent use of the word "hero" throughout all aspects of the tour is significant as well. Even when Alamo defenders are not explicitly named, the word hero is used with a deep reverence in conjunction with these men. For example, the inscription on the chapel door (refer to Figure 5) sets a tone of sacred reverence for tourists. Flores (1998b) notes the hushed tones in the chapel when he was a child, and during Author 2's tour, the interpreter lamented the loud and unruly visitors in a space he believed sacred and solemn (p. 428). Both Author 1 and 2 observed many visitors remove their hats and hush their voices. We noted a contemplative mood that seemed to descend upon the visitors. The message was clear: as visitors entered the chapel, they were expected to display reverence because of the many heroes who stood in that place. This rhetoric of reverence, as Dickinson et al. (2006) have noted, compels visitors to respect and admire the narratives expressed. However, unlike the Plains Indian Museum (PIM), The Alamo does not promote a distancing gaze (p. 28). Instead, The Alamo invites Texans to be a part of the (white) story. Similar to Dickinson et al.'s

analysis of the PIM, though, The Alamo does not include any narratives that would compel white visitors to contemplate the relevance and impact of the colonization of Texas, the removal of various nations–like the Comanche—or the significance of slavery to the economic development of Texas or as a compelling reason to fight at The Alamo. Again, though, this rhetoric of reverence is hypocritical; the site instead represents a rhetoric of dishonor towards the Tāp Pīlam, Black, and Tejano stories that remain erased.

We want to highlight the heroes who have been silenced, though, which is partially part of the exigence for this project. As the members of the Equal Justice Initiative (2020) write, "Remembering and acknowledging the past is a way to practice justice. Narrative truth-telling recognizes that creating a more just society is possible, but it requires us learning from our past and being willing to confront the silence and false narratives that have maintained injustice in our present" (p. 14). Of the 166 named individuals in the data, only thirteen were Tejanos and were never used in conjunction with the term "hero." This neglect must be noted in light of Texas's significant and growing ethnic Mexican community, many of whom have been rightly calling for a greater presence within the story of the Texas Revolution and elsewhere as well. Tejanos were crucial to the success of the Texas Revolution and to the Battle of the Alamo, and we contend that Tejanos have not been represented nearly in proportion to their contributions. Recent research shows dozens more Tejano defenders than the ones included in the list of 187 defenders on the Cenotaph (and the official line from the DRT). Some recent research shows there were as many as 212 defenders, and that a significant portion of those left off the roll are, indeed, Tejano (Lindley, 2003). We propose the statue of Juan Sequin as one notable example of neglect. On the site, as previously mentioned, there were 28 statues of

people/angels. Of that 28, only one was of a person of color–Juan Seguin. The marker text for Seguin's statue tells the story of his role as a courier for Travis and Sam Houston. It also, however, relays that Seguin later would fight in the Mexican Army against Texas. And while there is nothing untruthful about that, this narrative sorely lacks context. More important than the context, however, is that Seguin's marker text is the only one that refers to negative events in the life of the honored. This negative narrative is in stark contrast to the marker text for statues of white men, many of whom had colorful, if not checkered, pasts. Earlier we acknowledged that the focus of our study was limited to the grounds of The Alamo. It is notable, though, that the statue of Juan Toribio LoSoya stood for 35 years after being gifted to the city in 1986, three blocks distant from The Alamo. It is unlikely residents of San Antonio would have known of the monument and even less likely for non-residents to be aware of its existence. The city recently moved the statue to a corner of the plaza that, while technically within the footprint of the original mission, is certainly not a part of what one, as a visitor, thinks of as "The Alamo." The statue is a life size representation, heroic in pose in the same style as the other statues that have a place of honor within The Alamo grounds itself and, as indicated, is technically visible from the grounds of The Alamo. However, it is not prominent nor an obvious part of the site itself. For context, LoSoya was a Mexican soldier, former member of the famed Second Flying Company of Alamo de Parras. He is significant because he defected and joined Juan Seguin's unit. Unlike Seguin, whose statue resides in the grounds of The Alamo, LoSoya actually defended The Alamo and fell to Santa Anna's forces. The location of the placement of the statue elides the importance of his story, not only as a Texan but as a former soldier for Mexico and ultimately as a defender.

One result we didn't initially seek, but that the data revealed, was the treatment of women. Of the nine quotations, one was from a woman, and that woman was recounting what her husband said. Of the 166 named items, only nine reference women, and of the statues, only one was a woman–Susannah Dickenson. The marker text regarding her statue makes sure to note that after the battle, she went on to several "bad marriages." It includes nothing else about her character or life, nor does it tell of the importance of Dickenson in the days following the fall of The Alamo. Like Tejanos, the contributions of women to the Texas Revolution have been significantly silenced at the Alamo.

And silenced is certainly the word we can use for Black and Indigenous narratives at The Alamo, especially enslaved Black Americans. Slavery or slaves are only mentioned seven times in total. None of them discuss that Mexico had abolished slavery within their nation, and that this was a chief reason for Texas to rebel (Borough et al., 2021). The only name in conjunction with a Black American was Joe, William Travis's slave. And although there is one mention that "freedmen" fought at the battle, none are named. This is a part of the story the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (and those who followed in stewardship) have yet to tell. Along the same lines, Indigenous perspectives are nonexistent at The Alamo. During April's guided tour, the historical interpreter, perhaps expecting questions about Native American land, made this remark: "Everyone is always talking about 'whose land this was.' Let me make it clear that this was not about a land grab…. And as they say, it's not about who was here first; it's about who was here last."

When someone takes a guided tour at The Alamo, they are led by a "Historical Interpreter." The rhetorical implications of this title seem to be that this person is a mediator between history and those

taking the tour. They offer an interpretation rather than a factual telling. The differences between the tours taken by Brianna and April demonstrated that much of this interpretation is up to the particular interpreter. We found that several of the topics covered by the interpreter in Brianna's tour were not discussed or discussed in a slight fashion in April's tour and vice versa. The interpreter for April's tour even boasted that he didn't have a script because he'd been doing this for so long. There were several inaccuracies found in the recording Brianna made of their tour, including the interpreter stating that Davy Crockett died in the battle and that his body was found in the courtyard. As recent evidence has shown, this is not true. Davy Crocket surrendered and then was executed by Santa Anna's men (Burrough et al., 2021, p. 126). While ultimately this seems like a small discrepancy, it does indicate that the narrative told at The Alamo is slow to change even in the face of current research. Further, it highlights the continued deification of the Anglo defenders. The mythology of The Alamo relies on Crockett, Bowie, and Travis fighting till the bitter end in the face of tyranny. The entire narrative depends on it, even if it is problematic in the face of what most likely actually happened.

It is worth mentioning that The Alamo has become more inclusive in the narratives presented than what was communicated two decades ago when Brianna first visited. In 2014, after the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) was removed from stewardship in 2012, the city of San Antonio laid out its plan to curate a more inclusive exhibit. Gone were the indoctrination films the DRT presented starting in the 1980s. The exhibit area began to focus on a three-hundred-year span of Texas' history and not solely on the battle in 1836, and work has begun on an interactive, modern museum behind the actual grounds of The Alamo where curators will house the Collins collection of artifacts. They are opening new exhibits, such as the newer exhibit in the Long Barracks, that does

try for a more inclusive feel. There is, however, a long way to go, as our data supports.

Conclusion

By quantifying and analyzing the types of narratives used at The Alamo, this study demonstrates the continued domination of white-centric, American Exceptionalist narratives in U.S. historical sites. As community groups like the Tāp Pīlum work to educate the public via discussion videos, interviews, and governmental letters, Texas legislators, the Texas General Land Office, and the Alamo Trust continue to subvert truth-telling efforts and reverence for sacred burial land. Thus, public memory continues to be a rigorous site of study for rhetoricians, and more scholarship continues to unfold in light of national discussions about Confederate monuments, how history is taught in K-12 schools, and revisions in heritage tourism in the American South. We have witnessed former President Trump's "1776 Commission" as a direct rebuttal to the New York Times' *The 1619 Project* and how historical research about slavery and racism is labeled "Critical Race Theory," a modern educational boogeyman. Thus, it is more important than ever that we critically examine the myths and stories we tell about our nation and present an accurate discussion of the rhetorical choices, their intended purposes, and the real effects in our culture. As Loewen (1999) contends, "Most historic sites don't just tell stories about the past; they also tell visitors what to think about the stories they tell" (p. 8). Our current socio-political climate around the United States–but notably in Texas–is hostile to open dialogue about the country's history of racism. These efforts of truth-telling, whether about The Alamo or other historical sites/narratives, are called "revisionist history." However, we argue for a more complete Alamo story, one that would function as a corrective for the decades of revisionist

history that erases Indigenous, Tejano, and Black narratives. Who and what we commemorate matters.

Texas, in particular, has elevated the narrative of the Anglo defenders to a mythical status, which provides further evidence of the influence of Texas Exceptionalism in its public memory sites (Dean, 2016, p. 6). Moreover, the informational text, audio tour, and guided tour register as "fact" to visitors; there is an authority that the site communicates via its sacred status. As Texas' most significant and influential historical site, 2.5 million visitors tour the site each year ("The Alamo" n.d., p. 2). In our visits, we met people from all over the country and many international visitors as well, and it is a popular field trip location for schools, organizations, and clubs across Texas. With so many people learning about The Alamo via these tours, we are concerned that the majority of visitors never learn the complexities of The Alamo story. Through our examination of the curators' rhetorical choices, it is apparent that Anglo narratives are centered and that the problematic aspects of Texas' inception story and the battle itself are either erased or minimized. While the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) dominated The Alamo for more than 100 years, the slow revision of those choices by the Land Office has resulted in a historical monument that today tells a history dominated by Anglo men lifted up as heroic martyrs against the forces of tyranny. It largely ignores the contributions of anyone not Anglo and male.

Consequently, there is room for further study. We were not able to view the films that were shown until recently that Flores (1995a, 1998b, 2000c) studied. There is a new film that was not being shown on any of the days we attended. Comparisons between what Flores studied of the old indoctrination films and the new film might yield interesting results. The new museum featuring the Phil Collins collection of Alamo-related artifacts will be open in the near future

and will afford another opportunity for further analysis. The stated plans from the city of San Antonio are that it will be a state-of-the-art facility curated to be more inclusive. It is our hope that future research will be used to guide the city of San Antonio in these pursuits. Rather than bragging about Texas being an exceptional state, which Governor Abbott states on a regular basis, our research indicates Texas is just like the rest of the United States. Like many parts of the United States, Texas, too, exhibits racism in its public memory sites. Also similar to countless memorials, museums, monuments, historical marker texts, and tourism sites around the United States, Texas, too, exalts white male narratives and erases or minimizes Tejano, Indigenous, and Black narratives. In light of our research, we maintain that rhetoric scholars and communities like San Antonio should actively commit to a more equitable memorialization of history that challenges myths and acknowledges complexities in our national story.

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