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A HISTORY OF THE EDUCATION OF SPANISH-SPEAKING  
PEOPLE IN TEXAS

THESIS

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the history of the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas.

The study covers a long period of time, from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present time. The term, "Spanish-speaking," has a variable meaning over this period of time. In the Spanish period of Texas, from 1687 to 1821, the term refers to people directly from Spain and those born of Spanish parents in Mexico or the West Indies. Also it is used to refer to Indians who learned to speak the Spanish language. During the Mexican period of Texas, from 1821 to 1836, the term applies to citizens of Mexico and to those of Spanish descent who spoke the Spanish language. It is somewhat misleading to use the term, "Spanish-speaking," to refer to people in Texas of Spanish, Mexican, or Indian descent. Many people of pure Spanish descent and many descendants of early Mexican settlers in Texas are on equal cultural, social, and economic levels with the majority of Texans, and many of them are bilingual, speaking both Spanish and English. There are a number of Texans who are not of Spanish or Mexican descent, but who speak the Spanish language as well as the English as a result of location or

association. The majority of the people to whom reference is made as "Spanish-speaking" people from 1900 to 1940 are early immigrants from Mexico or descendants of rather recent immigrants from Mexico. Generally, the term, "Mexican," is used, especially in Texas and other southern states, to refer to these people. As a whole, Spanish-speaking people in Texas are of a lower cultural, social, and economic status than the average Texan. They speak in their homes the Spanish language -- not the Castilian, but what might be called a "Spanish-Mexican" language. This is the group which forms the educational problem in Texas known as the "Mexican problem." For the period from 1900 to 1940 the term, "Mexican," is more often used than "Spanish-speaking." To designate between the Mexicans and other Texans, outside the negro population, the term, "other whites," is used generally. The term, "American," is used at times to refer to the other whites of Texas. This may be misleading, but as the term is often used to refer to United States citizens, it is so used in this instance. As the naturalized element among the Mexican population in Texas is small, the term, "American," may be rather appropriate as meaning "other whites."

The history of the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas covers many phases as well as many years. In this paper there is more discussion of provisions for education

than of methods of education during the Spanish period, the Mexican period, and the period of the Texas Republic and early statehood. There is given a history of the beginning of the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas during the Spanish period, of the beginning of the segregation of Spanish-speaking people and Anglo-Americans in the schools during the Mexican period, of the lack of interest in the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas from 1836 to 1860, of the renewed interest in education from 1860 to 1900, and of the period of greatest development in the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas, from 1900 to 1940. More is said of methods of teaching and special curricula during the last period than in earlier periods. This has been a study of education in public schools more than in private schools. For this reason, more is said of methods for teaching children than for teaching adults.

As Texas has such a large Spanish-speaking population, the history of the education of this group is an important study for the people of Texas, teachers and educators in particular. Educators have been working for a number of years on the problem of the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas. One who studies the problem will readily see that it is closely allied with social and economic problems which make the educational problem even more difficult to solve.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNING OF THE EDUCATION OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN TEXAS IN THE SPANISH PERIOD, 1687-1821

Early in the sixteenth century Spanish priests began to see the need for establishing schools in Texas in order to instruct the natives. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Spanish priests, with the sanction of the Spanish government, which hoped for the extension of Spanish rule, established a large number of missions in Texas. In order later to maintain her control, the Spanish government established schools in the chief settlements of Texas. The independence of Mexico in 1821 put an end to Spanish rule in Texas.

#### Education in the Missions

Whoever undertakes to interpret the force by which Spain extended her rule, her language, her law, and her tradition over the frontiers of her vast American possessions, must give close attention to the missions, for in that work they constituted a primary agency.<sup>1</sup>

The Spanish missions in Texas formed the background of

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<sup>1</sup>H. E. Bolton, Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century, p. 9.



the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas. Spanish was the first European language taught on Texas soil and it was taught in the missions. The purpose of the Spanish government in establishing the first missions in East Texas was to guard against the encroachments of the French. These missions were in the neighborhood of Nacogdoches, but were abandoned in 1693. The second effort in East Texas came in 1716 and 1717. New missions, designed to be permanent, were established and a colony of Spaniards was attempted. Several of the missions were removed to San Antonio in 1731.<sup>2</sup> Other missions were also founded in different parts of Texas.

Following is a list of the names of the Spanish missions in Texas:

Missions established in Texas in the Spanish period;  
the earliest effort in Texas:

1690 - San Francisco de los Tejas.

1690 - Santísima Nombre de Maria.

Second effort in East Texas:

1716 - San Francisco de los Neches.

1716 - La Purísima Concepción.

1716 - Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches.

1716 - San Josef de los Nazares.

1717 - San Miguel de los Adaes.

1717 - Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de los Ais.

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<sup>2</sup>F. Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 3.

Missions at San Antonio and in South Texas:

- 1718 - San Antonio de Valero (Alamo).
- 1720 - San José de Aguayo.
- 1722 - San Xavier de Nóxera.
- 1731 - Concepción (removed from East Texas).
- 1731 - San Fernando.
- 1731 - San Francisco de la Espada (removed from East Texas).
- 1722 - Espiritu Santo de Zuñiga.

Missions in Central Texas:

- 1745 - San Francisco Xavier.
- 1749 - Candaleria.
- 1749 - San Idefonso.
- 1758 - Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Missions in South Texas:

- 1754 - Nuestra Señora del Rosario de los Cujanes.
- 1791 - Refugio (removed the same year some distance west).

Missions on the Lower Trinity River:

- 1756 - Nuestra Señora de la Luz.

Missions in West Texas:

- 1757-1757 - San Saba.
- 1762-1766 - Canadaleria.
- 1762-1769 - San Lorenzo.<sup>3</sup>

The religious orders desired to found missions in order to convert the natives to the Christian religion, and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

particularly to Catholicism.<sup>4</sup> It was hoped that through the missions the Indians would be made obedient subjects of the King of Spain. This was to be accomplished by teaching them the Christian religion and the elements of civilized life. The educational aim of the missions was rather elementary. The priests were to instill doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church in the Indians and to implant settled habits of civilized conduct and industrial life. The Indians were gathered into the missions and kept by force. A community system of ownership was employed under the control of the padres.<sup>5</sup>

The central feature of every successful mission was the Indian pueblo, or village. If the Indian was to be disciplined, he must be kept in a definite spot where discipline could be imposed upon him. To make the Indians self-supporting as soon as possible and to afford them the means of discipline, the missions were provided with communal lands for gardens, farms, and ranches, and a workshop in which to practice the crafts. The mission villages were organized into communities with limited self-government, modelled in form as the Spanish towns and closely supervised by the Spaniards. As a symbol of force for the protection of the missionaries and mission Indians, presidios, or garrisons, were established near by. Each mission was usually provided with two or three soldiers. Designed as frontier

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<sup>4</sup>F. W. Blackmar, Spanish Institutions of the Southwest, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup>F. Eby, Development of Education in Texas, pp. 56-57.

institutions, the missions were intended to be temporary. As soon as his work was done on one frontier, the missionary was expected to pass on to another. In the theory of the law, within ten years each mission was to be turned over to the secular clergy and the common lands distributed among the Indians, but a longer period of tutelage was found necessary. The missions of Texas were conducted by two Franciscan missionary colleges of Querétaro and Zacatecas, excepting the Apache missions, where part of the work was done by friars from the sister college of San Fernando at Mexico City.<sup>6</sup> Besides the church, each mission had its monastery, including cells for the friars, porter's lodge, refectory, kitchen, offices, workshops, and granary, usually all under a common roof and arranged around a patio.<sup>7</sup>

A usual daily program of procedure was followed in the missions. At sunrise the Angelus bell summoned the Indians to mass, an hour before breakfast. The Indians were taught to recite prayers, creed, and catechism. In the evening there were similar services. On Saturdays and Sundays, prolonged devotional services were imposed. There were fast days as punishment for minor misconduct. Corporal punishment was administered for neglect of the daily religious routine.<sup>8</sup>

Every mission was an industrial school. Habits of daily toil had to be implanted and skill in the various arts and

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<sup>6</sup>Bolton, pp. 10-12.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>8</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 57.

crafts acquired. The mission communities were organized and conducted as vast agricultural and industrial establishments. The Indians cultivated their own plot of land and worked two hours a day on the farm belonging to the village, the products of which were used to support the church. Irrigation plants were constructed. Indian corn, wheat, melons, beans, sweet potatoes, sugar, cotton, and fruits were grown. Cattle, horses, hogs, sheep, and goats were raised. The Indians learned ditching, carpentry, smithing, brickmaking, masonry, tanning, and wine making. The women were taught cooking, spinning, carding, weaving, and sewing. Children were also given instruction in these arts.<sup>9</sup>

The Spanish language was insisted upon in all the missions.<sup>10</sup> Some Christianized Indians from Mexico were sent to Texas as missionaries. They were enjoined to instruct the Texas Indians in their native tongue, but it was found that just as the natives lacked the concepts, the Texas Indian languages lacked the terms in which to convey properly the meaning of the Christian doctrine. There were so many dialects that it was impossible for the friars to learn them. For these reasons, instruction was usually given in Spanish, through interpreters at first, and directly as soon as the Indians learned the language of the padres. In the case of the children, this was quickly done.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-59.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>11</sup>H. E. Bolton, Wider Horizons of American History, pp. 135-136.

The first textbook used in Texas was in the Spanish language and was used in the missions. It was printed in Mexico in 1760. The title of the book was Manuel Para Administrar Los Santos Sacramentos De Penitencia Eucharistia, Extrema Uncion y Matrimonio, and Bartolme Garcia was the compiler. It was intended to serve as a guide and handbook for the missionaries who worked among the Texas Indians.<sup>12</sup> Whether or not the Spanish mission work in Texas was a success has been a matter of speculation. Bancroft said that "nowhere in America had missionary work been such a failure" as it was in Texas.<sup>13</sup> Burns said that "the educational work of the Franciscans in Texas was wonderfully successful considering the difficulties in the way."<sup>14</sup> So far as the Texas Indians were concerned, perhaps no permanent results were achieved by the efforts of the missions. The Texas missions failed to produce in Texas a lasting Indian civilization such as was produced in New Mexico and Southern California. Only a few buildings, now in ruins, remain to mark the attempts of the Spanish to wean the Indians from savagery and to implant in them ideals of civilized life.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Lota M. Spell, "The First Text Book Used in Texas," Quarterly of the Texas Historical Association, XXIX, 289.

<sup>13</sup>H. H. Bancroft, History of the North American States and Texas, I, 634.

<sup>14</sup>Rev. J. A. Burns, The Catholic School System in the United States, p. 47.

<sup>15</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 59.

Linn said that the Toncahuas developed a rather high degree of civilization and partially embraced the Christian religion. They spoke the Spanish language readily and manufactured blankets of very good quality, and cloth used in their apparel. They were making rapid progress in civilization when the war for Mexican independence came and destroyed the fruits of many years of arduous toil. The Indians reverted to barbarism when they became associated with the licentious soldiery and when the missionaries were forced to abandon their work in Texas.<sup>16</sup> After 1790 the Spanish missionaries began to give up their idea of Christianizing the Indians of Texas.<sup>17</sup>

#### Education in the Spanish Settlements

Among the early settlements formed in Texas by Europeans was the Spanish town of San Antonio de Bexar, which was founded in 1718. A Spanish military outpost was established there in the same year.<sup>18</sup> In 1731 ten families from the Canary Islands were brought by the Spanish government and settled at Fernando de Bexar.<sup>19</sup> The Spanish began the settlement of La Bahía del Espiritu Santo in 1722 and the settlement of

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<sup>16</sup>J. J. Linn, Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas, pp. 333-334.

<sup>17</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>Mrs. Mary A. Holley, Texas, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup>I. J. Cox, "Education in San Antonio under the Spanish Regime," Raines Year Book for Texas, I, 143, cited by F. Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 60.

Nacogdoches about 1779.<sup>20</sup> For several years these early settlements were struggling frontier communities.

Probably the first school in Texas, besides the missions, was conducted in San Fernando. The records show that as early as 1746 Cristobal de los Santos Coy, a native of Texas and probably the son of Cristobal, became sacristan and taught the parish school in the same villa. This was evidently a regular parish school such as was conducted in all Catholic countries for the training of the young in religious doctrines. It is possible that this school was established along with the church at the beginning of the settlement in 1731. The training received was not of a very high order. The Canary Islanders were proud, but lazy and quarrelsome. They had little education, for records indicate that few of them could read or write.<sup>21</sup>

Another school was conducted by Don Francisco de la Mata at San Antonio de Bexar. In May, 1789, Don Francisco sent to the cabildo, or village council, a petition in which he described the training among the children:

I have also been much grieved at heart to see the children . . . running about as vagabonds engaged only in pernicious pursuits, such as playing with arrows and ropes, and spending their time in childish games and their idle entertainments which lead only to perdition. They have no respect for the officials, and no reverence for the aged or

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<sup>20</sup>G. P. Garrison, Texas, A Conflict of Civilizations, pp. 78 and 92.

<sup>21</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 61.



distinguished. This I know from personal experience since most of them did not even know how to make the sign of the cross.<sup>22</sup>

The cabildo granted his request and Don Francisco contracted to teach for six years, to the summer of 1795.<sup>23</sup> This school was probably the first established in Texas by the Spanish government.<sup>24</sup>

In 1792 Don Ignacio de los Santos Coy, the rather meek instructor of the parish school, was dismissed from office and De la Mata was installed in his place, but not for long. He soon fled and was cast in prison on the charge of slandering the governor. For several years after this nothing much was heard of schools.<sup>25</sup>

Soon after the beginning of the next century the ruling officials took an interest in the establishment of schools in Texas. In January, 1802, Lieutenant Colonel Elguezabal issued a proclamation ordering the judges to compel parents to send their children to school. Heavy penalties were to be imposed upon those who failed to comply.<sup>26</sup> There is no record of the enforcement of this recommendation.

In 1803 Commandant Nemesio Salcedo ordered that schools be established in the presidios and other military posts where the number of troops and settlers was large enough to

<sup>22</sup>Quoted, ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>24</sup>Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup>Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 11.

justify a small salary. Detailed arrangements were set forth for the organization of the schools. A school opened in San Antonio, but efforts to keep the school open were not very successful, and in 1809 the new governor, Manuel de Salcedo, established a new school. A proclamation was posted informing the people of the opening of a school in a house rented for the purpose, located on the main plaza in front of the garrison. José Enrique Flóres was the teacher.<sup>27</sup> Also, a school was established at San Fernando de Bexar in 1809 and José Francisco Ruiz was selected as the teacher.<sup>28</sup>

In 1811 an earnest effort was made by the junta of the province of Texas to establish a public primary school at San Antonio de Bexar. Private subscriptions were taken for the building of the school and for its support for the first year. A building was erected and places were provided for seventy pupils, five of whom were to get free tuition. The teacher would choose these five scholars from the poor children of the community. Whether or not all these plans were realized is doubtful. A fresh effort was made in 1817 when José Nicolas Paez y Colomo was appointed schoolmaster.<sup>29</sup>

An article telling something of education at Bahía during the Spanish period in Texas follows:

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<sup>27</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, pp. 62-63.

<sup>28</sup>Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 63.

History of Education at Bahia (1775-1803)  
Uranga to Elguezabel  
Oct. 8, 1803

Being informed of the commandant-general's order concerning the establishment of a primary school and the regulations, he considers (it) wise at this time . . . said order being dated August 31, last, sent by him to you and forwarded to me on the third of the present month. . . . I must report that, as is well known to you, Domingo de Oulor with great care and faithfulness taught the children of the soldiers and settlers of the presidio to read, write, count, and recite the Christian doctrine for the space of twenty-two years gratuitously and without charge. His heir and executor, Don Manuel de la Concha, has continued the work in the same way up to the present time. I will ascertain whether it will suit him to continue under the terms fixed by the commandant-general. If not, I will try to secure some other citizen to take charge of the school. In any case, I will inform you of the results.

God guard you for many years.

Bahia, Oct. 8, 1803  
Francisco Xavier de Uranga  
Gov. Don Juan Batista de El-  
guezabel<sup>30</sup>

This is significant because it shows that the government authorities were making efforts to establish schools for the presidios. The document led to the first school at La Bahía. Eighty children enrolled in this school in 1818 and they were taught by José Galan, a private soldier.<sup>31</sup>

There had been a settlement at Nacogdoches since the establishment of the first mission in East Texas. Conditions there were unfavorable for the establishment of a school, for the population was scattered and only a meager salary could

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<sup>30</sup>Bexar Archives, translated by Mrs. Mary Austin Hatcher, cited by Eby, Development of Education in Texas, pp. 25-26.

<sup>31</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 64.

be paid a teacher. The following letter explains the situation:

Commandant of Nacogdoches to the Gov. of Tex.,  
November 1, 1803

Informed of the instructions given you by the commandant-general in his order of August 31 last, concerning the establishment of schools in all the military posts under his command . . . under the rules and regulations prescribed therein for the said purpose, I will do all I can to carry that purpose into effect; but as it happens that the greater part of the population of this jurisdiction consists of those living on ranches at a distance from this pueblo, it will be difficult to collect a sufficient number of children for the teacher to have a sum sufficient for his support, because the number will not reach twenty. Nevertheless it may be possible to carry the said order out, and I will give you information at the proper time as you ordered me to do in the letter transmitting the said order.

Nacogdoches, Nov. 1, 1803  
José Joaquín de Ugarte

[Addressed:]

Lieut. Cor. Juan Bautista de Elguezabel.<sup>32</sup>

The school discussed above was established as verified by the following court proceeding at Nacogdoches:

In the town of Nacogdoches (March 2, 1808) Manuel Bustamente, the teacher and only resident who could read and write, was appointed to serve as defense attorney for Antonio Ortez.

José María Guadiara  
José Cayertana Zepeda  
José Pineda<sup>33</sup>

The schools in Texas during the Spanish period were more

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<sup>32</sup>Bexar Archives, cited by Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup>Bexar Archives, cited, ibid., p. 15.

in name than in action. There were a number of reasons why it was difficult to establish and maintain schools during this period. The settlers were scattered and were more interested in gaining a livelihood than in anything else. Poverty and lack of men with sufficient knowledge to teach were also barriers to education in Texas.<sup>34</sup>

#### Summary

The missions established the language and traditions of the Spanish in Texas, and the Spanish settlements carried them on. Thus, the beginning of the history of the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas was made in the missions and the Spanish settlements. The Spanish language was the first European language taught in Texas, and it was taught in the missions. Bold attempts were made to establish in the Spanish settlements of San Antonio, La Bahía, and Nacogdoches schools in which the language, customs, and laws of Spain could be taught. At the close of the Spanish period in 1821 there were probably three schools in existence in Texas, one at San Antonio, one at La Bahía, and one at Goliad, all of which were crudely administered and poorly attended.

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<sup>34</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 64.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNING OF THE SEGREGATION OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE AND ANGLO-AMERICANS IN SCHOOLS IN TEXAS DURING THE MEXICAN PERIOD, 1821-1836

The Revolution, which had begun in 1810, succeeded in throwing off the Spanish yoke and, in 1821, the Mexican people established a federal republic similar to the United States of America. There was little fighting in Texas, but Texas, having been a Spanish province, came under the government of Mexico. Under the Mexican government Texas was joined with the state of Coahuila, with the capital at Monclova for a short time and then at Saltillo. Texas was divided into three departments, Bexar, Brazos, and Nacogdoches, with their relative capitals at San Antonio, San Felipe de Austin, and Nacogdoches. The government of the state was placed under the charge of a congress at the state capital, but local affairs were managed by the departments.<sup>1</sup>

As an integral part of Mexico, Texas fell under the jurisdiction of the federal constitution and was directly affected by the general educational policies and traditions

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<sup>1</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 66.

of the republic. As education was a state function, various laws and orders were passed by the government for the establishment of a system of schools throughout the various departments of the state. Schools were formed and carried on for the Mexican population in several settlements. The birth year of the Mexican government marked the entrance of permanent Anglo-American colonists into Texas. It was expected that these settlers would immediately plan to train their children according to their own conceptions of education.<sup>2</sup>

Thus began the segregation of Spanish-speaking people and Anglo-Americans in schools in Texas.

#### Mexican Interest in Education

The federal constitution of Mexico provided for higher education, especially along the lines of national and political science, but the conduct of general education was reserved to the individual states.

The Mexican Constitution of January, 1824, provided for the following:

To promote instruction by securing for a limited time to authors the exclusive privilege to their works; by establishing colleges for the Marine, Artillery and Engineer Departments; by erecting one or more establishments for the teaching of the natural and exact sciences, the political and moral sciences, the useful arts and languages; without prejudice to the rights which the states possess, to regulate the public education in their respective states.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>H. P. N. Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 78.

The Mexican constitution entrusted the care of primary schools to the city councils, which for want of funds, were not able to do much toward their organization. In a report to the Mexican Congress on November 8, 1823, the Mexican Secretary of State said there were many places in Texas where there were no primary schools, and in other places the primary schools were almost useless because of the incapacity of teachers. The fathers were neglecting to give their children Christian education. The government had established a society in Mexico City for the purpose of mutual instruction. A school which had been established there was designed to accommodate one thousand six hundred children, who were to be taught the rudiments and other branches of literature. It was suggested that such schools be established in the Mexican states.<sup>4</sup>

The constitution of the state of Coahuila and Texas, adopted in 1827, made generous provisions for education. Following are some of the provisions:

Article 12. The state is also obligated to protect all its inhabitants in the exercise of the right which they possess of writing, printing and freely publishing their sentiments and political opinions, without the necessity of any examination, or critical review to their publication.

. . . . .

Article 215. In all the towns of the state a suitable number of primary schools shall be established, wherein shall be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the catechism of the Christian religion,

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<sup>4</sup>Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 28.



a brief and simple explanation of this constitution, and that of the republic, the rights and duties of man in society, and whatever else may conduce the better education of youth.

Article 216. The Seminaries most required for affording the public the means of instruction in the sciences, and arts useful to the state; and wherein the aforementioned constitutions shall be fully explained, shall be established in suitable places, and in proportion as circumstances go on permitting.

Article 217. The methods of teaching shall be uniform throughout the state, and with this view, also to facilitate the same, Congress shall form a general plan of public education, and regulate by means of statutes and laws all that pertains to this most important object.<sup>5</sup>

A few months after the adoption of the constitution of Texas and Coahuila in 1827, the governor of the state issued a decree calling upon the ayuntamientos to establish and maintain schools. Following are some of the regulations of the decree:

Article 120. The ayuntamiento shall take charge of the administration and regulation of hospitals, poor houses, institutions of learning, and other establishments of a literary, scientific, or benevolent nature that are supported by the public funds, and in those that are established by individuals, they shall see that nothing contrary to the law is permitted.

. . . . .

Article 122. It is their particular duty to establish primary schools in all the villages or settlements of the jurisdiction, and see that everything shall be taught in them prescribed by the 215th article of the constitution, and for this purpose they shall designate, of themselves and with the knowledge of the chief of the department, the means of raising the necessary funds to establish them in places that for want of funds cannot have them immediately, and propose the same to the government for its determination on the subject.

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<sup>5</sup>Gammel, I, 1.

Article 129. They shall appoint a committee from their own body to visit such schools weekly, and they will inform the government every six months as to the state of the said schools, stating the aid that is needed for them, and the mode of remedying the embarrassments to their advancement, when such embarrassments cannot be removed by the sole authority of the ayuntamiento. . . .

Article 130. They will excite, by every means in their power, the fathers of families to send their children to school, and they will see that the curates exhort their parishioners to this effect.

Article 131. The funds and capitals of schools must be secured and their rents attended to to the satisfaction of the ayuntamientos and on their responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

On May 13, 1829, the Congress of the state of Coahuila and Texas issued a decree for a school of monitorial or mutual instruction, on the Lancastrian plan, to be established in each department of the state. The schools were to be situated in the respective capitals of the departments. The teachers were to be engaged for three years if the executives were satisfied with their qualifications. Each establishment was to be composed of one hundred fifty pupils. The three teachers together should form a set of regulations to govern the schools, and these should be approved by the executives. The teachers were to instruct the pupils in reading, writing, arithmetic, the dogma of the Catholic religion, and Ackermann's Catechisms of arts and sciences. The ayuntamiento should see that all parents who had the means send their children to school. The ayuntamiento should

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<sup>6</sup>E. C. Barker, "Minutes of the Ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin, 1828-1832," Southern Historical Quarterly, XXI, 299-326.

say which children of the municipality were unable to pay and should choose five of these to be sent to school free.<sup>7</sup>

In view of obstacles that arose to prevent the decree concerning the Lancastrian schools from being carried out, the Congress of the state of Coahuila and Texas, on April 13, 1830, issued another decree. It provided that the executive should have the six primary schools established, but with some modifications of the plans designated by the former decree.<sup>8</sup>

On April 30, 1830, the State Congress decreed that three silver medals of first, second, and third classes be presented in each of the ayuntamientos to pupils as a reward of virtue and application. Also a number of copies of Fleuris' Castillian Grammar, Orthography, and Catechism were to be presented and distributed as prizes among the pupils who excelled in their work.<sup>9</sup>

With the coming of the Anglo-Americans into Texas, a decree was issued regarding colonization in the republic. Every empresario who should establish a colony was required to make provision for schools in which the Spanish language would be taught. In accordance with the old practice of founding new towns, one city block must be set aside for public buildings and another for school purposes. Such

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<sup>7</sup>Gammel, I, 237-240.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

blocks were set aside in Gonzales, Bastrop, Victoria, and other Texas towns.<sup>10</sup> In spite of the government provisions, nowhere in Texas did schools flourish.

A convention of Anglo-American citizens was held in October, 1832, at San Felipe de Austin to adopt resolutions to send to the governor and legislature of the state. They asked for grants of land for educational purposes. In December of the same year, some Mexican citizens at San Antonio sent a similar protest to the governor. They said the people were too poor to establish their own schools and demanded that the state endow a primary school in each town, leaving the people to find means to support the teacher. The ayuntamiento at Nacogdoches also asked Congress for land grants for schools.

Spurred by the general dissatisfaction, the state Congress in 1833 made new provisions for education in Texas. Four leagues, or 17,712 acres, of land were granted to Nacogdoches for the endowment of a primary school. San Antonio was also provided with the proceeds from the rental of certain public properties. Furthermore, geography and good manners were to be added to the curriculum of all the schools. Schools were to be established in all towns by the ayuntamientos. One-half of the income of all municipal funds, up to two thousand dollars, was to be set aside for education.

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<sup>10</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 67.

The revenues arising from the renting of public domain were also to be used for this purpose.<sup>11</sup>

Also, in 1833, the Congress of the state of Coahuila and Texas decreed that in all departments and district capitals juntas for the support of public education should be created. The juntas should be composed of the respective police chief, who should be president, the parish curate, and a resident citizen. All that concerned the education of youth within the precincts of the district should be under the charge of the juntas.<sup>12</sup>

In October, 1833, the Mexican government issued a decree concerning new educational plans. A copy of the decree was sent to Bexar, Austin, Libertad, Nacogdoches, and Goliad. It provided for the establishment of a teacher-training institution in each of the above-mentioned places. There was to be a primary school for children in connection with each of the teacher-training schools. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and political and religious catechisms were to be taught in these schools.<sup>13</sup>

#### Schools in Texas During the Mexican Period

After the establishment of the Mexican government there was evidently a lapse in educational interest in San Antonio.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>12</sup>Gammel, I, 324.

<sup>13</sup>Bexar Archives, cited by Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, pp. 85-87.

There was probably no school in operation from 1821 to 1826. A man by the name of Asbridge, who established a press at San Antonio in 1823, made a statement in his paper to the effect that Bexar was without a school in 1823.<sup>14</sup>

In 1825 the governor of Coahuila and Texas called upon the local political chief, José Antonio Saucedo to require the ayuntamiento to promote the establishment of public primary schools in his department. Saucedo responded, bemoaning the bad conditions, and recommended that there be established in San Antonio a primary school supported by state funds. A local movement to establish a school was begun. Subscriptions for the teacher's salary were taken and a tax was voted upon all cattle, sheep, and goats brought into the city for slaughter. The authorities petitioned Congress to supply funds for the erection of a school building, but Congress was unable to support the movement. In spite of this, the school opened in 1826 and continued to exist in a more or less fitful way for several years. In January of 1828 the state government bought one hundred charts, thirty-six catechisms, and other supplies out of public funds for this school. This is apparently the first instance in which free textbooks were supplied for children in Texas. However, the school did not flourish, and a new reform movement was begun.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>E. C. Barker, "Notes on Early Texas Newspapers, 1819-1836," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXI, 127-128.

<sup>15</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 68.

In March, 1828, a commission drew up and presented to the ayuntamiento of Bexar an ordinance concerning an elaborate plan for the establishment and organization of a public free primary school to be taught by Citizen José Antonio Gamay y Fonseca. The institution was dedicated to the Christ Child and was to be supported by private subscription supplemented by municipal appropriations. The ayuntamiento passed on the ordinance. Probably the most significant fact about this school was that it was free to all children. The entire conduct of the school was set forth in detail. A system of rivalry as in the Jesuit and Lancastrian schools, with badges, prizes, and other rewards, was to be used. The children were divided into two bands, Rome and Carthage, each with numerous officers. The teacher, Citizen José Antonio Gamay y Fonseca, was required to teach the children reading, writing, calculation, principles of grammar, religious doctrines, good morals and manners, and other social virtues.<sup>16</sup>

The reports of this school are surprisingly complete for a number of years. In 1828 there were one hundred fifty pupils enrolled, and the enrollment remained fairly stable for several years. There was great difficulty in securing satisfactory instructors. Some samples of the work of the pupils still exist. While this school did not reach its lofty ideals, it offered instruction to children of San Antonio at

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<sup>16</sup>I. J. Cox, "Educational Efforts in San Fernando de Bexar," Quarterly, Texas State Historical Association, VI, 52-63.

least to 1834 and perhaps later. As outside support was lacking, there was always a great struggle to keep the school going.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the most successful school of this period, other than that at San Antonio, was carried on at Nacogdoches, beginning in 1830. It was established by the Board of Piety, but was maintained, as were other schools in Texas, by private subscriptions. A building was erected for the school by the cooperative efforts of the citizens. One provided the lumber, another gave a hundred pounds of nails, and another gave hinges for the windows and doors. Other contributions were a month's service of a laborer, a barrel of beans, a two-year-old steer, a yoke of oxen for eight days, and a yearling calf. The school opened in 1831 with fifty-one pupils, but reports indicate a decline from year to year until in 1834 only eleven pupils were in attendance.<sup>18</sup>

The following letter tells of the installation of the first teacher of this school established by the Board of Piety:

Justice Court of Nacogdoches  
No. 56

The Primary Teacher, Don José Cariere, having been engaged, the amount of his salary and the remaining conditions and requirements necessary to the fulfillment of a contract having been regulated, it was necessary to open the school and install him in office, in order that he might at once begin to instruct the youth of this town.

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<sup>17</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup>Bexar Archives, cited, ibid.



Yesterday this act was solemnly ratified by myself as the sole constituted political authority, with the assistance of the Board of Piety, the guardian of this establishment, to whose labor and consecration is entirely due the installation of a school which will afford the public countless benefits.

The Teacher came to this town at the express invitation of the Board, and according to all appearances, he is a man of adequate intelligence and learning, of honesty, and of other commendable qualities.

I have the honor of communicating this to Your Excellency for your due notification and in compliance with my duty.

God and liberty. Nacogdoches, May 10, 1831.

Manuel do los Santo Coy (Rubric)

His Excellency the Political Chief of the Department of Bexar.<sup>19</sup>

A letter written in 1820 by José Ramirez at La Bahía stated that the teacher, a soldier, received no salary, but only got a few donations, such as meat, lard, and salt, on Friday, from a very few neighbors. The majority of the children were taught out of pure charity.<sup>20</sup>

Another letter from La Bahía, August 3, 1822, stated that there was no regular school at La Bahía since so many families had left the settlement. Only through the entreaties and persuasion of the cabildo had the parish priest, Don Tomas Buentello, taken charge of about twenty children to whom he gave primary instruction, more as a favor than for the money he received. Yet, the letter stated, if circumstances should change, the ayuntamiento should take steps to establish a school.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Nacogdoches Papers, cited by Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, pp. 46-47.

<sup>20</sup>Bexar Archives, cited, ibid., p. 51.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

In 1828 a school supported by private funds was conducted at La Bahía by Reverend Father José Miguel del Muro, the parish priest.<sup>22</sup> For a time a school was taught at Gonzales by the official translator employed by the city council.<sup>23</sup>

The coming of the Anglo-Americans into Texas, beginning in 1821, opened a new era in the civilization of Texas. In their colonies were reproduced the institutions and practices which they had known at home. As has been said, each empresario was to make provisions for schools in his colony. Among these pioneers there were those who valued culture and immediately sought teachers for their children. Some built rude log cabins on their farms and engaged wandering scholars to teach their own and their neighbors' children. Sometimes the parents and relatives taught the children to read and to write.<sup>24</sup>

Those Texan settlements that were able established private schools for the instruction of their children. In many cases where parents could afford it their children were sent to the United States to be educated.<sup>25</sup> Schools were established in the Anglo-American settlements at San Felipe de Austin, Brazoria, Johnsboro, and several other places.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>23</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 70.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>25</sup>H. Yoakum, History of Texas, II, 268.

<sup>26</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 70.

### Decline of Mexican Educational Work in Texas

Owing to the discontent of the people of Texas and the demand for the formation of a state separate from Coahuila, the federal government of Mexico, in the spring of 1834, sent Colonel Juan Almonte to Texas to make a survey of the territory along political, economic, and educational lines.

Following are some statements from Almonte's report which give an idea of educational conditions in Texas in 1834:

In 1834 there were four municipalities (in the department of Bexar) with the following population respectively -- San Antonio de Bexar, 2,400; Goliad, 700; Victoria, 300; San Patricio, 60, the latter an Irish settlement. Thus the Mexican population had declined from 6,400 to 4,000 between 1806 and 1834.

. . . . .

There is one school in the capital of the department, supported by the municipality, but apparently the funds are so reduced as to render the maintenance of even this useful establishment impossible. What is to be the fate of those unhappy Mexicans who dwell in the midst of savages without hope of civilization? Goliad, Victoria, and even San Patricio are similarly situated, and it is not difficult to foresee the consequences of such a state of things. In the whole department there is but one curate; the vicar died of cholera morbus in September last.<sup>27</sup>

The capital of the department of the Brazos is San Felipe de Austin, and its principal towns are San Felipe, Brazoria, Matagorda, Gonzales, Harrisburg, Mina, and Velasco. The district containing these towns is that generally called "Austin's Colony." The following are the municipalities and towns, with the population: San Felipe, 2,500; Columbia, 2,100; Matagorda, 1,400; Gonzales, 900; Mina, 1,100; total, 8,000. Towns: Brazoria, Harrisburg, Velasco, Bolivar. . . . .

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<sup>27</sup>John J. Linn, Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas, pp. 97-99.

Toward the northwest of San Felipe there is a new colony, under the direction of Robertson, the same that was formerly under the charge of Austin.

. . . . .

In this department there is but one school near Brazoria erected by subscription, and containing from thirty to forty pupils. The wealthier colonists prefer sending their children to the United States, and those who have not the advantages of fortune care little for the education of their sons, provided they can wield the axe and cut down a tree or kill a deer with dexterity.

The department of Nacogdoches contains four municipalities and four towns. Nacogdoches municipality has a population of 3,500; that of San Augustine, 2,500; Liberty, 1,000; Johnsburg, 2,000; the town of Anahuac, 50; Bevil, 140; Teran, 10; Tanaha, 100; total population, 9,900, in which is included about 1,000 negroes.

. . . . .

There are three common schools in this department: one in Nacogdoches, very badly supported, another at San Augustine, and the third at Johnsburg.

Texas wants a good establishment for public instruction where the Spanish language may be taught, otherwise the language will be lost. Even at present English is almost the only language spoken in this section of the Republic.<sup>28</sup>

Colonel Almonte estimated the population of Texas in 1834 at 36,300, of which 21,000 were civilized inhabitants and 15,300 were Indians. The number of hostile Indians was estimated at 10,800, and friendly tribes, 4,500. Of the former, 9,900 were in the department of Bexar and the remaining 900 in the department of Brazos.<sup>29</sup>

Almonte reported only five schools in Texas, but other sources mention Anglo-American schools he did not count.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-102.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>30</sup> Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 74.

According to one writer, the population of Texas in 1835 was 50,000. Of this number, 5,000 were Mexicans and the remainder were mostly Anglo-Americans, with a small number of Europeans. The principal Mexican settlements were the old Spanish towns of Bexar and Goliad. There was also a village of Mexicans at Victoria and in Nacogdoches there were about 500 Mexicans. Besides these, there were a number of Mexicans dispersed among the Anglo-American settlers. The Mexicans were held in great contempt by the Anglo-Americans.<sup>31</sup>

In the Texas Declaration of Independence, March 2, 1836, the Texans justified themselves in revolting against a government that would not provide education for them. Evidence has come to light to show that the Mexican government had made some efforts along the line in which the Texans charged it with failure. Nevertheless, it had failed and the Texans did not regard the subject with indifference. The Texas Constitution required Congress to provide as early as possible for a system of public education.<sup>32</sup>

Even though Mexico made ample provisions by law for education in Texas, it was difficult for her to carry out her plans.

The poverty of the people was extreme and the state treasury was in a condition of chronic bankruptcy. The towns suffered frequently from Indian raids and from pestilences which decimated the population. It

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<sup>31</sup>Holley, Texas, pp. 127-128.

<sup>32</sup>G. P. Garrison, Texas, a Contest of Civilizations, pp. 237-238.

was impossible to secure qualified teachers, and books and other apparatus were scarce. The officials, on the whole, were men of high intelligence and eager to promote the enlightenment of the children. But the people generally were not interested in education.<sup>33</sup>

Probably the chief reasons for Mexico's lack of success with education in Texas in the 1830's were the contempt of Anglo-Americans for the Mexicans and the fear of the Mexicans that the Anglo-Americans were gaining too much power in Texas. These ideas are expressed in the following reference:

The makers of the Texas and Coahuila Constitution, no doubt, did the best they could, and were actuated by genuine patriotism. Whatever puerilities may be found in the constitution and in the laws enacted under it, the people of Texas were indifferent and heeded them not, so long as they were left to themselves and did not feel the weight of strange systems and unmeaning ceremonies. And it is due to the truth of history to declare that the Texans did not feel themselves at home under the Mexican law. They kept aloof from Mexican politics. They did not blend or assimilate with the opposite race, but kept themselves apart -- justly reasoning that, if their own institutions were not superior, they were as good as they wished. The Mexicans were aware of this, and endeavored to change by force, when it was too late, what they could not otherwise direct.<sup>34</sup>

#### Summary

The origin of our present-day question of segregation of Spanish-speaking people and other Texans in our schools came during the years 1821 to 1836. It seems only natural that this segregation should have taken place, since the Anglo-Americans and the Mexicans were different in language and

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<sup>33</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 74.

<sup>34</sup>Yoakum, I, 254.

customs. Really, it was a Mexican provision which helped to bring about separate schools in Texas for the Anglo-Americans. The Mexicans had established schools for Mexican children at San Antonio, Gonzales, La Bahía, and Nacogdoches -- schools in which instruction was offered in the Spanish language. When people from the United States began to get grants of land for colonies, the Mexican government set aside one block of land in each town for schools. The schools established on this block of land became Anglo-American schools because such schools were in Anglo-American communities.

### CHAPTER III

#### LACK OF INTEREST IN THE EDUCATION OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN TEXAS DURING THE TEXAS REPUBLIC AND EARLY STATEHOOD PERIOD, 1836-1860

From 1836 to 1846 Texas was an independent republic. The constitution of the republic, adopted in 1836, made Congress responsible for education in the republic. In December, 1845, Texas became a state of the United States. The state constitution, adopted in 1845, made the legislature responsible for education in the state. In 1861 Texas seceded from the United States. It was not until 1876 that the present state constitution was adopted.

#### Mexican Population in Texas

Soon after the Texas revolution, the Anglo-American population of Texas was greatly increased. According to Morfit, the agent sent by President Jackson to Texas in 1836, there were 30,000 Anglo-Americans in Texas by the close of that year, and there had been about 20,000 at the outbreak of the revolution.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Garrison, p. 305.



The Spanish population of Texas was greatly diminished in 1835 and 1836. It was supposed that the country at large contained in 1836 only about half the Spanish population that it did in 1820. Many were killed and many fled before the settlements of the Americans.<sup>2</sup>

The population of Texas in 1840 was estimated to be from 150,000 to 200,000. There was a vast number of immigrants from the United States. The Mexican residents in the republic were chiefly those who had opposed Santa Anna's centralism in government. Except at Goliad and Nacogdoches they were scattered among the settlements of the Anglo-Americans. With the rapid increase in the American population of Texas, the Mexicans were soon to be in the minority.<sup>3</sup>

According to one writer, during the period of the Republic of Texas, the Mexicans were practically limited to San Antonio and the extreme west, with small settlements in the old towns of Nacogdoches and Goliad. The more progressive and industrious Mexicans refused to live under the Anglo-American government, and went back to their native land when Texas became a republic. Those who remained were a class unto themselves. They were not assimilated with the Anglo-Americans.<sup>4</sup>

Though many Mexicans left Texas during the days of the

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<sup>2</sup>A. A. Parker, Trip to the West and Texas, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>W. W. Allen, Texas in 1840, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>J. W. Schmitz, Thus They Lived, p. 1.

republic, in 1848 when that portion of Texas between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was conquered by the United States, some thousands of Mexicans preferred remaining in their old homes to going into Mexico.<sup>5</sup> The great majority of the people who lived along the Rio Grande from 1840 to 1848 were of Indian or Mexican origin. The Spanish race was in the minority.<sup>6</sup>

Let us turn our attention to the population of the various settlements of Texas during the period of the republic and early statehood. After the Texas revolution, San Antonio was half deserted by its Mexican population, who did not care to come under Anglo-American rule.<sup>7</sup> However, in 1840 San Antonio had more than 2,000 inhabitants, a large majority of whom were Mexican and Spanish.<sup>8</sup> By 1845 a great number of the Castilian families had left San Antonio, and the majority of the people of Spanish descent who were left there were Mexicans.<sup>9</sup> In 1848, Mexicans formed the greater part of the three or four thousand inhabitants,<sup>10</sup> and in 1850 quite a proportion of the 6,000 inhabitants of San Antonio

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<sup>5</sup>M. Rankin, Twenty Years Among the Mexicans, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup>E. H. D. Domenech, Missionary Adventures in Texas and Mexico, p. 250.

<sup>7</sup>F. L. Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas, p. 160.

<sup>8</sup>Allen, p. 211.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Sturmberg, History of San Antonio and of the Early Days in Texas, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup>Domenech, p. 9.

were Mexicans.<sup>11</sup> A Texas explorer states that in 1853 two-thirds of the population of San Antonio were Mexican, German, and French, but that the town was essentially American in character.<sup>12</sup> At this time there were also a number of wealthy Mexican ranch owners near San Antonio in Medina County. They had negro slaves and other Mexicans working for them.<sup>13</sup>

In 1850 El Paso contained a population of about 8,000 inhabitants, a large majority of whom were natives of Mexico.<sup>14</sup> There were a few respectable old Spanish families at El Paso. There was no great middle class as among the English and Anglo-Americans. A vast gulf intervened between the Castilians and the masses, who were a mixed breed of Spanish and Indian blood.<sup>15</sup>

The population of Goliad in 1850 was composed of Mexicans, for the most part.<sup>16</sup> About one-half of the population of East Texas was thought to be of Spanish origin.<sup>17</sup> The Mexicans of whom San Augustine was once composed had disappeared by 1850.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Rankin, Texas in 1850, p. 182.

<sup>12</sup>J. R. Bartlett, Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>Olmsted, p. 271.

<sup>14</sup>Rankin, Texas in 1850, p. 179.

<sup>15</sup>Bartlett, I, 191.

<sup>16</sup>Rankin, Texas in 1850, p. 191.

<sup>17</sup>Olmsted, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

According to Eby, the State Census of 1847 reported the population of Texas to be 142,009.<sup>19</sup> According to the United States Census, the population in 1850 was 212,592,<sup>20</sup> about 10,000 of whom were Mexicans.<sup>21</sup> By 1860 the total population of Texas was 601,039.<sup>22</sup>

It was estimated that the Mexican population of Texas in 1856 was 25,000, 6,000 of whom were in Bexar County; 1,000 in Uvalde County; 1,500 in Laredo County; 8,500 in El Paso County; 3,000 in the Lower Rio Grande Counties; 1,000 in Goliad and Nueces Counties; 1,000 in other parts of the state; 3,000 going from place to place.<sup>23</sup>

#### Attitude of Anglo-Americans and Spanish-Americans Toward Each Other

The attitude of the Anglo-Americans and Spanish-Americans in Texas had much to do with the educational progress of Spanish-speaking people during the Texas Republic and early statehood period.

Toward the Mexicans remaining within the limits of the republic the feeling of Texans was scarcely better than toward the Indians. The Mexicans were charged with various

<sup>19</sup>Development of Education in Texas, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup>United States Census Report, cited by D. W. C. Baker, Texas Scrap Book, p. 121.

<sup>21</sup>W. B. Dewees, Letters from an Early Settler of Texas, p. 306.

<sup>22</sup>Baker, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup>Olmsted, p. 165.

crimes and wrongdoing, such as stealing horses and exercising a mischievous influence among the slaves. In 1850 there was a conspiracy among the negroes of Colorado County to kill their masters and make their way to Mexico. Mexicans who were participants in this plan were severely punished and other Mexicans said to be generally implicated were driven out of the county. In another notable incident race animosity was reinforced by industrial competition in such a way as to bring about a series of outrages known as the "Cart War." In 1857 the Texas teamsters who were engaged in carrying freight from the coast to San Antonio were irritated because Mexican cartmen were drawing all the business with their low rates, and began to attack the trains of their rivals, killing the drivers, and sometimes carrying off the valuable freight. Governor Pease sent a message to the legislature recommending remedial measures, but the matter was not pushed to a conclusion by this body. However, when the Texas teamsters started punishing Texas citizens who did business with Mexican teamsters, other Texans began to hang the perpetrators. The mischief was soon stopped.<sup>24</sup>

The Mexicans were treated for a while after annexation like a conquered people. Ignorant of their rights and of the English language, the Mexicans allowed themselves to be imposed upon by the new-comers, who seized their lands and

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<sup>24</sup>Garrison, pp. 273-274.

property without claim, and drove many of them homeless across the Rio Grande. Some of them came back later as they got better informed and laid claims to their lands. Usually the cases were settled by a compromise. From several counties Mexicans were driven out altogether. In 1853 about twenty families who were charged with stealing horses, were driven out of Austin to western counties. In 1854 Mexican families were driven from Seguin. In 1855 some of the Mexican families who had returned to Austin were driven out again. Anglo-Americans in San Antonio wanted to drive out some Mexican families, but German settlers prevented it.<sup>25</sup>

Prejudices existing against the Mexicans, engendered during the Mexican War, often proved great barriers to missionary schools for Mexicans at Brownsville. The sentiment was expressed by many that "the Mexicans were a people just fit to be exterminated from the earth." Even ministers of the gospel said, "We had better send bullets and gunpowder to the Mexicans than Bibles."<sup>26</sup>

While journeying through Texas in the 1850's, Olmsted met a priest at the old mission at Goliad. The priest told that the Mexicans thought the Anglo-Americans had mistreated them. He said the Mexicans at Goliad were in an unhappy condition, but that he could only help their souls.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Olmsted, pp. 163-164.

<sup>26</sup>Rankin, Twenty Years Among the Mexicans, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup>Olmsted, pp. 264-265.

A review of some of the general characteristics of the Spanish-Americans in Texas from 1836 to 1860 will throw some light on the attitude of Anglo-Americans toward them. One writer said that the race of Spanish-Americans in Texas by 1850 had lost almost all the fire of their native land and formed a group that would never attain very high achievements in the world of history. The majority of these people were devoid of moral or literary culture. The Mexican priests ruled the ignorant peasantry with the strong sway of superstition and dread.<sup>28</sup> They were known to be an amiable, smiling, innocent race of people, utterly unconscious of the higher emotions of civilization except for the feeling of sympathy for the unfortunate.<sup>29</sup> The Mexicans had both good and bad qualities. They were hospitable and polite, but many were contemptible, untrustworthy, deceptive, and possessed of a great passion for gambling.<sup>30</sup> The Mexicans in Texas were mild, passive, and apathetic.<sup>31</sup> Always the Mexican took orders and knew no scheme of organization that did not involve a master and slaves. His mental habits made him unfit for cooperation in a common task.<sup>32</sup> In point

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<sup>28</sup>T. Viele, Following the Drum, pp. 111-112.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>30</sup>Viktor Bracht, Texas in 1848, p. 67.

<sup>31</sup>Domenech, p. 250.

<sup>32</sup>R. N. McLean, That Mexican, p. 34.

of intelligence, vigor, and enterprise, the Mexicans were far inferior to Anglo-Americans or any class of Europeans. They were generally uneducated in letters and without ambition to excel in any of the arts or accomplishments of civilized life. In their habits they were idle and averse to exertion.<sup>33</sup> Mexican indolence could not stand by the side of the Anglo-Americans and Europeans, so the new settlers rapidly elbowed the Mexicans to one side. Some of the Mexicans had the good sense to fall in with the spirit of progress, but the great majority drew back before it and lived upon the outskirts of towns in the primitive style of their forefathers.<sup>34</sup>

Mexicans have been considered treacherous, but many who have observed them say they were not, as a rule. A writer in 1850 said they were not treacherous unless by being so they could make a large sum of money.<sup>35</sup> All classes of Mexicans, aristocrats, middle class, and peons, seemed to look upon the Europeans and Anglo-Americans as being superior to themselves.<sup>36</sup>

From the above characteristics of the Spanish-American people in Texas it may be supposed that they were little interested in education. From the attitude of the Anglo-Americans

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<sup>33</sup>Allen, p. 227.

<sup>34</sup>Bartlett, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup>Deweese, p. 58.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 56.



toward the Spanish-Americans it is assumed that the Anglo-Americans had little interest in the educational progress of the Spanish-speaking people in Texas.

Provisions for Education in  
Texas from 1836 to 1860

For a few years after the Texas revolution, education was neglected because of the unsettled state of the country and the want of teachers. It seems that people of Texas were generally awake to the importance of schools and leading men in Congress were exerting some energy to get a general system of education established. There were already some places in Texas which offered flattering prospects to teachers, but parents who had the means continued to send their children to the United States to be educated.<sup>37</sup>

Van Nostrand, in his book on a visit to Texas during the time of the republic, said of the daughter of his host at Goliad that she "was a very intelligent and well educated young lady, and had recently returned from the Northern States where she had just completed her education."<sup>38</sup>

The Constitution of the Republic of Texas in 1836 made it the duty of Congress, as soon as circumstances would permit, to provide by law a general system of education. The Congress of 1837 was silent on the subject. In Congress in

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<sup>37</sup>C. Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas, p. 188.

<sup>38</sup>Van Nostrand, A Visit to Texas, p. 31.

1838 President Lamar made an impassioned plea for immediate and favorable action on education.<sup>39</sup>

A law of the Texas Congress in 1839 provided that each county of the republic should have three leagues of land surveyed and set apart for the purpose of establishing a primary school or academy in the county. If a county did not have enough good land, other vacant lands of the republic should be used for that county.<sup>40</sup>

By a law of Congress in 1840 another league of land was to be surveyed in each county for school purposes. The chief justice and two associate justices of each county should appoint a school commission in each county to look after school property in the respective counties. The commission was to organize the county into school districts for the purpose of establishing schools.<sup>41</sup> These land acts failed for a time to get schools established because land was so abundant and cheap.<sup>42</sup>

The first constitution of the state of Texas, adopted in 1845, gave the legislature positive mandate to establish free schools throughout the state and to furnish their support by taxation on property. It was also provided that not less than one-tenth of the annual revenue of the state from

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<sup>39</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, pp. 83-84.

<sup>40</sup>Gammel, II, 134.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 320-321.

<sup>42</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 92.

taxation be set aside as a perpetual free school fund which was never to be diverted to other uses.<sup>43</sup> An act of the legislature in 1854 set aside as a permanent school fund \$2,000,000 of the five per cent bonds received from the United States for the Santa Fe County territory. The interest was to be distributed among the counties in proportion to the number of free white children between the ages of six and sixteen years.<sup>44</sup> In 1860 there were in existence, under the provisions of this law, about 1,200 semi-public schools.<sup>45</sup>

A number of private schools were organized in Texas during the period of the republic. Such schools were established at Huntsville, Nacogdoches, San Augustine, Marshall, Liberty, Rutersville, and Independence.<sup>46</sup>

At this time Matagorda was enjoying the advantage of a teacher of music, an advantage not usually enjoyed in Texas in the 1850's.<sup>47</sup> The state was not sufficiently supplied with teachers prepared to teach. Because of this, many who were not competent assumed the responsibility of teaching.<sup>48</sup>

The first genuine free school system in Texas was organized in San Antonio in 1853. Four schools were opened, one for boys and one for girls on each side of the river. These schools were supported by the income from funds derived from land that had been donated to the town by the Mexican state

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<sup>43</sup>Garrison, p. 275.

<sup>44</sup>Gammel, II, 1297.

<sup>45</sup>Garrison, p. 277.

<sup>46</sup>Schmitz, pp. 58-59.

<sup>47</sup>Deweese, p. 307.

<sup>48</sup>Rankin, Texas in 1850, p. 42.

Congress. Not only was instruction in the ordinary elementary subjects provided, but also free instruction in violin was given. These schools evidently lasted down to the beginning of the Civil War.<sup>49</sup> Owing to the unfriendly relations between the Mexicans and the Texans, it is easy to believe that only a few Mexicans attended the schools in Texas from 1836 to 1860. Of those who attended, the largest number was from the prominent families. There were more children from the prominent Mexican families than from the poorer families in attendance at the old Flores Street public school in San Antonio.<sup>50</sup>

It seems that the chief work of educating Spanish-speaking people in Texas during this period was done by missionaries. Domenech, a Catholic missionary at Brownsville, told of a man who kept a Protestant school for boys and girls there. He received from the Bible Society of New York an annual sum of five hundred dollars, to distribute Bibles and pamphlets among the Mexicans at Brownsville. In the pamphlets, Catholicism was harshly criticized. The man was advised to confine his instructions to letters or all the Catholic children would be moved from his school. He went on with his pamphlets, and the children were sent to another school taught

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<sup>49</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup>W. J. Knox, "Economic Status of the Mexican Immigrant in San Antonio, Texas" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1927), p. 17.

by a Mexican.<sup>51</sup> In 1852 Miss Rankin went to Brownsville after she was told by a Presbyterian minister that many Mexicans in Texas manifested a desire for instruction in the Bible. In a short time she was giving daily instruction on the Bible to thirty or forty Mexicans. Their parents showed no objections. Some could read in the Spanish language and some had acquired a knowledge of English. The parents were very desirous for their children to learn the English language, so Miss Rankin's school prospered. Several priests and nuns from France established headquarters at Brownsville, built a convent, and succeeded in taking many of Miss Rankin's pupils. Miss Rankin went to Philadelphia and obtained money for a seminary building, and when she returned to Brownsville, she got back all her former pupils, and new ones also. At the French convent, English was taught imperfectly, so Miss Rankin got more pupils. The Catholics turned many Mexicans against Miss Rankin and she lost a number of pupils for a time, but they eventually came back.<sup>52</sup>

#### Summary

The Spanish-speaking population of Texas between 1836 and 1860 was estimated to be about one-seventh of the total population of the state. This number included some wealthy and well-educated people who had all the advantages of education enjoyed by the Anglo-Americans in Texas. The larger

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<sup>51</sup>Domenech, p. 246.

<sup>52</sup>Rankin, Twenty Years Among the Mexicans, pp. 35-48, 57-58, 72.

per cent of Spanish-speaking people in the state were of the lower, poorer class, and were not interested, generally, in education. The state laws made no distinction in education for Spanish-speaking people and other Texans. Because of the unfriendly attitude of many Texans toward these people, we may suppose that the people of Texas, as a whole, objected to spending money and time trying to educate the Mexicans.

## CHAPTER IV

### EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR SPANISH- SPEAKING PEOPLE IN TEXAS, 1860-1900

All great wars have profoundly affected human progress. The Civil War was no exception, especially in the South. Some of its effects were immediate and superficial while others were more remote and far-reaching. In the end it made necessary a new era in the culture of the Confederate States, revolutionized Southern society and ideals of life, and gave a new direction to education. However, the immediate effects on the schools were destructive and caused Texas to flounder in chaos for twenty years before the new era dawned.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it may be assumed that no outstanding progress could be made in education in Texas from 1860 to 1900. By 1880 conditions were near normal again, and with the interest in general education in Texas came an interest in the education of Spanish-speaking people in the state. The state laws during this period made no distinction between Spanish-Americans and Americans in the schools in Texas.

#### State Legislation on Education

Because of the economic conditions in Texas after the Civil War, the state organization of education ceased to function. A very small amount of the public funds, sixty-two

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<sup>1</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 149.

cents per capita, was distributed for the last time during the first year of the war. However, the public school system was not seriously missed, for it had not become deeply rooted in Texas. The school fund was seriously affected by conditions brought about by the war. Railroad companies had borrowed school funds and could not pay the interest on the loans during the war. Some of the school funds were used for military purposes.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of the war on private schools varied. Some were slightly impaired, while some new ones were established; but most of them were completely destroyed. Only the wealthier classes were able to send their children to school. At the end of the war people turned again to private schools for the training of their children. By 1869 we find that practically every county had a number of common schools and one or more high schools, which were maintained by private funds.<sup>3</sup>

The Constitution of Texas in 1866 made some changes in the educational system, but the federal government nullified the constitution before any action resulted. After the war the government of Texas was in the hands of "carpetbaggers," northern Republicans, and "scalawags," southern sympathizers with the North. Under their control a new system of education was projected and imposed upon the people. The constitution of 1869 provided for the most highly centralized system of education Texas has ever had. A school law was passed in

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-151.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-155.



1870 complying with the demands of the constitution, but it was treated with indifference and few schools were organized.<sup>4</sup>

The National Bureau of Education reported in 1870 that Texas was the "darkest field educationally in the United States." For a full generation children had been born and had grown to maturity without public school instruction. According to the report of the United States Bureau of Education, 70,895 whites, or over seventeen per cent of the population above ten years of age, and ninety per cent of the negroes in Texas were illiterate in 1870.<sup>5</sup>

The radical government officials in Texas were angered because the school law of 1870 was treated with indifference, so they passed a law in 1871 which set up the most imperial system of education known to any American state. This law gave the Superintendent of Public Instruction strict supervisory control of scholastic records, apportionment of state funds for schools, records of distribution of funds, and the purchase of school materials for all the public schools of the state. There was to be in each judicial district a supervisor of schools, appointed by the State Superintendent. These supervisors were to enforce rules and regulations of the Board of Education, composed of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor, and the Attorney

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 155-159.

<sup>5</sup>Report of the United States Bureau of Education, 1870, cited by Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 542.

General. The local board of directors should require every child from six to eighteen years of age to attend school at least four months of every year, and should any of the scholastic population refuse to attend school, the parents would be fined a sum not to exceed twenty-five dollars. One part of this law provided that the Board of Education for Texas should not prescribe any rule or regulation that would prevent the directors of the school districts from making any separation of the students that the peace and success of the school and the good of the whole might require.<sup>6</sup> This law might have referred to separate schools for negroes, or it might have referred to Mexicans. At any rate, we see that the segregation of Mexicans in public schools was legal.

The old southern Democrats were returned to power in Texas in 1873, and a new school law was enacted to destroy the act of 1871. The management was taken from the hands of the State Superintendent and the State Board and lodged with the people. Little attention was paid to the law and people reverted to private schools.<sup>7</sup>

The constitution of 1876, which is the one Texas has now, made new provisions for education. It made it the duty of the legislature to establish and make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of public free schools. This

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<sup>6</sup>Gammel, VI, 959-961.

<sup>7</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 168.

constitution provided that separate schools be provided for the white and colored children, but no distinction was made between Mexicans and Americans. The school law of 1876 provided a method of school organization that was simple and loose. Parents and guardians might organize themselves into school communities and get the county judge to appoint trustees for the school. The new system seemed to give satisfaction for several years and the number of children enrolled in the schools increased remarkably.<sup>8</sup>

The question of whether or not towns might establish separate schools for Mexicans and Americans seems to be answered by Section 55 of the School Law of 1876:

Any incorporated city or town in this State may have exclusive control of the public schools within its limits; provided, they determine so to do by a majority vote of the property tax payers of said city or town; and the Council or Board of Aldermen thereof are vested with exclusive power to maintain, regulate, control, and govern all the public free schools now established or hereafter to be established within the limits of said city or town; and they are further authorized to pass such ordinances, rules and regulations not inconsistent with the Constitution and laws of this State, as may be necessary to establish and maintain free schools, purchase building sites, construct school-houses, and generally to promote free public education, within the limits of their respective cities or towns.<sup>9</sup>

In 1883 a constitutional amendment changed the method of providing revenue for the support of schools and permission was given to counties to form school districts outside the cities and towns.<sup>10</sup> In 1884 there was a complete rewriting

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-172.      <sup>9</sup>Gammel, VIII, 1045.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., IX, 440.

of the Texas school law. This new law became the basis for all future progress in education in Texas. Provisions were made concerning funds to be used for school purposes. These funds were to be used to provide public education for all children of Texas over eight years and under sixteen years, regardless of race or color. Separate schools were to be provided for children of the white and colored races. The scholastic year was to begin the first day of September and to end on the thirty-first day of the next August. A school day should be not less than seven hours, a school week five days, and a school month twenty days. The Governor, the Secretary of State, and the Comptroller should constitute a State Board of Education. Duties and powers of the Superintendent of Public Instruction were listed. The County Commissioners' Court of each county should divide their counties into convenient school districts and provide for county school taxes. Rules were set down for the election of school trustees.<sup>11</sup>

The question arose as to how far the obligation of the state for the education of the young went. Many said the state was obliged to see to only the bare needs of citizenship. Many said the obligation of the state was to see that children learned to read and to write the English language. In 1884 the office of a state board of education was authorized by state law. Expansion of state education upward

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 570-589.

to include high schools took place at this time. The greatest progress in education took place in cities and towns.<sup>12</sup>

#### Mexican Population in Texas

Between 1860 and 1870 the population of Texas increased from 604,215 to 818,579, an increase of 35.2 per cent.<sup>13</sup> According to the United States Census, the population of Texas in 1870 was 821,175. By 1885 the population was over a million.<sup>14</sup> In 1850 there had been 20,000 Mexicans, native and foreign-born, in Texas. In 1870 the foreign-born Mexicans in Texas numbered 22,510; in 1880, 43,161; in 1890, 51,559. In 1900 the Mexican population of Texas was 71,062.<sup>15</sup>

#### Schools for Mexicans

A school for Mexicans was established at El Paso in 1862.<sup>16</sup> The total number of graduates from the El Paso High School during the years from 1887 to 1917 was 584, and among these were sixteen Mexicans.<sup>17</sup>

Catholic schools, opened in Corpus Christi soon after the Civil War, admitted Mexican boys with American boys. As

<sup>12</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, pp. 194-200.

<sup>13</sup>Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>H. S. Thrall, A History of Texas, p. 169.

<sup>15</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900; Population, I, 734.

<sup>16</sup>A. H. Hughey, "El Paso Schools Will Hold Interest of Convention Visitors," Texas Outlook, September, 1926, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup>El Paso Standard, February, 1928, cited by H. T. Manuel, The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas, p. 34.

early as the 1870's public schools were established at Corpus Christi, and Mexicans entered them in 1891. Soon a separate school was established for the Mexicans. The attendance of Mexicans from farms was very irregular, as the parents thought cotton-picking more important than school attendance.<sup>18</sup>

In 1893 two-thirds of the population of Brownsville was Mexican and two-thirds of the pupils in school were Mexicans. On entering school they could not speak English. The curriculum covered a period of nine years. They were not required to speak English for the first three years, though they read it. In the fourth grade they started speaking it.<sup>19</sup>

In 1875 William J. Knox started to school at the only public school in San Antonio. There were a few Mexicans of the upper class in attendance at the school, but most of the wealthy Mexicans sent their children to private schools. In 1885 children of prominent Mexican families were still going with Americans to the old Flores Street public school, and Americans and Mexicans in the school were on intimate terms. A new high school was established in San Antonio in 1879. Mexicans went to it, but there were no Mexican graduates until the 1890's. In 1887 Mr. Knox taught in a new four-room building on South Pecos Street. There were no Americans going to this school, for only Mexicans lived in

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<sup>18</sup>P. S. Taylor, An American-Mexican Frontier, pp. 192-193.

<sup>19</sup>W. H. Chatfield, The Twin Cities, Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico, pp. 16-17.

this district. Mr. Knox had to learn the Spanish language in order to interpret what the children and parents said. The pupils learned to speak English and taught their parents. The teacher was expected to punish his pupils for offenses inside and outside of school. He was held on a par with the priest and the doctor.<sup>20</sup>

#### Summary

During the period from 1860 to 1900, especially from 1870 to 1900, there was a great increase in the Mexican population of Texas. Probably one reason for this increase was the fact that Mexican labor could be used in the cotton industry in South Texas. Since the government of Texas was in a state of confusion from 1860 to 1876, there was a lack of educational progress in the state. From 1880 to 1900 there was a brighter economic outlook for the people and there was more interest in education. During this period the upper-class Mexicans went to the same schools as the Americans. Special schools were established for the lower class, for economic as well as social reasons. The Mexican school at Brownsville developed a special curriculum for the Spanish-speaking children. So we see that there was in Texas an interest in Americanizing the Mexicans and providing curricula to suit the special needs of the Spanish-speaking children.

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<sup>20</sup>Knox, pp. 18-20.

## CHAPTER V

### INCREASE OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE SCHOOLS OF TEXAS, 1900-1940

The forty years between 1900 and 1940 have been marked by a great increase in the Spanish-speaking population of Texas. During these years there has also been a very noticeable increase in the number of Spanish-speaking scholastics in the state. As yet a large per cent of these scholastics are not enrolled in the public schools and many who are enrolled are not regular in attendance. In this chapter and the following ones the word "Mexican" is used more often than "Spanish-speaking" people. At times the word "American" is used to refer to Texans who are not Mexicans. More often the term "other whites" is used.

#### Mexican Population and Mexican Scholastics

The Mexican population of Texas has grown rather steadily throughout the years from the nucleus established in San Antonio and vicinity in the early part of the eighteenth century. There was a particularly large increase in the Mexican population during the twenty years, 1910-1930, due to the



opening of agricultural lands in West Texas and the demand for cotton pickers and other farm labor. The Mexican population of Texas lies throughout the Trans-Pecos and Southwest Texas regions, extending as far east as Houston along the coastal belt, with a scattered population that in recent years has extended all the way to the Red River and into the Great Plains country.<sup>1</sup> Many people think that most of the Mexicans in Texas reside along the Rio Grande frontier. This is a great mistake. In 1920 the greatest density of rural Mexican population in Texas was in Caldwell County, eighty miles to the east of San Antonio. The main current of Mexican migration to Texas from 1900 to 1920 extended to the northwest of San Antonio, passing Austin and Waco, and on to Dallas and Fort Worth and vicinity.<sup>2</sup> Since 1920 many Mexicans have penetrated the ranching and mining country of Southwest Texas, the new cotton lands of West Texas, and even North and Northeast Texas.<sup>3</sup>

In 1900 there were 71,062 foreign-born Mexicans in Texas; in 1910 there were 124,238; in 1920 there were 249,659. In 1920 the total Mexican population of Texas was estimated at 388,675, and in 1930, at 683,681.<sup>4</sup> The percentage of Mexicans for the entire state in 1930 amounted to 11.7 of the

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<sup>1</sup>Texas Almanac and Industrial Guide, 1939, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>E. E. Davis, A Report on Illiteracy in Texas, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>T. J. Cauley, "Mexican Immigration," Texas Monthly, IV (August, 1929), 51.

<sup>4</sup>Abstract of the Fifteenth Census of the U. S., 1930, p. 84.

total population.<sup>5</sup> In terms of percentage, the Mexican population of the state is predominantly in South Texas, all along the border, and a considerable distance back from the border.<sup>6</sup> The Mexican population is rather well scattered over the state, but, so far, the Mexican has not settled in the extreme West, the Panhandle, in a tier of counties in Central Texas just west of Travis and Williamson Counties, in counties south and southeast of Travis where there is a heavy foreign-born population from central Europe, and in East Texas where the negro population is greatest.<sup>7</sup> According to the United States Census reports, twelve of the Texas counties contained, in 1930, 384,367, or fifty-six per cent, of all the Texas Mexicans. Following are the names of these counties and the Mexican population of each.<sup>8</sup>

TABLE 1

TEXAS COUNTIES THAT CONTAINED FIFTY-SIX PER CENT OF  
THE MEXICAN POPULATION OF THE STATE IN 1930

County	Mexican Population
Bexar . . . . .	99,901
El Paso . . . . .	77,389
Hidalgo . . . . .	41,522
Cameron . . . . .	38,343
Webb . . . . .	29,601
Nueces . . . . .	23,276
Harris . . . . .	19,190
San Patricio . . . . .	12,413
Karnes . . . . .	11,808
Caldwell . . . . .	11,367
Guadalupe . . . . .	10,332
Travis . . . . .	10,225

<sup>5</sup>Texas Almanac, 1936, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup>Manuel, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup>Texas Almanac, 1939, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

One can tell only approximately how many Mexican scholastics there are in Texas, for the Texas scholastic census rolls do not list Mexican children separately from the other whites. One must go by names in choosing from the scholastic census the number of Mexicans. Even this cannot be accurate, because many Mexican women have married American men. In many cases, however, the given names will signify Mexican origin. The total scholastic population of Texas in 1928 was 1,405,424. Of this number, 1,169,436 were whites, including 183,468 Mexicans. These figures show that about 15.6 per cent of the scholastic population was Mexican.<sup>9</sup>

After a survey, the tabulations made of scholastics in independent and common school districts showed the tendency of Mexican scholastics to live in larger centers of population in greater proportion than other white children and colored children. In 1929 in common school districts the number of Mexican scholastics was 61,181; other white, 414,004; colored, 105,600. In independent districts there were 121,308 Mexican scholastics, 566,848 other whites, and 130,850 colored. This average state tendency does not hold true for every county. The large Mexican population in a few centers helps to keep down the proportion to be found in the common school districts. In the five largest cities of the state -- Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Fort Worth,

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<sup>9</sup>Manuel, pp. 42-43.

and El Paso -- there were twenty-three per cent of the Mexican scholastics of the state in 1928, while in the same cities the Mexicans were only twelve or thirteen per cent of the other white and colored scholastics.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1922 and 1928 the per cent of increase of Mexican scholastics in Texas was more than five times that of other white scholastics and more than nine times that of colored scholastics.<sup>11</sup> According to the count of Spanish names in the 1930 census, there were seventy-five counties of Texas (29.5 per cent of the 254 counties) in which the number of Spanish-American or Mexican children was equal to at least ten per cent of the entire scholastic population. Mexicans in Texas in 1930 constituted 13.3 per cent of the total scholastic population.<sup>12</sup>

The statistics compiled in 1929 by the municipal school authorities of San Antonio showed that fifty-six per cent of the children enrolled in the primary schools had Mexican names; twenty-two per cent in the junior high schools; and nine per cent in the senior high schools. These percentages give a clearer picture of the place of the Mexican population in San Antonio than might be gathered in any other way. That population, probably 90,000 out of a total of 265,000, was in the main made up of what is called the peon class, a

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>12</sup>H. T. Manuel, "The Mexican Population of Texas," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, XV (June, 1934), 40.

name which is often used to describe the manner of living of the Mexicans, as well as to excuse the failure of the community to supply them with better living conditions.<sup>13</sup>

In 1930, 5,901 of the 790,000 Mexicans in Texas were in Dallas. This constituted 2.3 per cent of the Dallas population. There were 2,300 Mexican students in this city in 1935, and 933 Mexican families were represented in the scholastic census of that year. The number of Mexicans in Dallas in 1930 seems small when compared with the 65,000 in San Antonio and the 50,000 in El Paso in that year.<sup>14</sup>

In Nueces County, of which Corpus Christi is the county seat, the Mexican scholastics constituted 52.1 per cent of the total scholastic population in 1922, 51.9 per cent in 1925, 51.9 per cent in 1928, 47.3 per cent in 1929, and 50.1 per cent in 1930.<sup>15</sup>

#### Illiteracy in Texas

The Mexican and Spanish-speaking people of Texas form an exceedingly varied group. The problem of educating many of these children is no different from the problem of education in general. A large number, however, because of language, economic condition, cultural level, prevailing social attitudes toward them, and other factors, present difficulties

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<sup>13</sup>M. S. Handman, "San Antonio," Survey, LXVI (May, 1931), 164.

<sup>14</sup>W. T. Watson, "Mexicans in Dallas," Southwest Review, XXII (July, 1937), 407.

<sup>15</sup>Taylor, An American-Mexican Frontier, p. 94.

which together have been called "the Mexican problem." It has been said that "the illiterate Mexican child presents by far the most difficult human problem confronting elementary education in Texas today."<sup>16</sup>

The following table, compiled from the United States Census reports,<sup>17</sup> gives the figures for the illiteracy of the white population in Texas for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930, respectively.

TABLE 2  
ILLITERACY IN TEXAS, 1900-1930

Year	Classification of Illiterates					
	Native White		Foreign-born White		Native White of Foreign or Mixed Parentage	
	Num-ber	Per Cent	Num-ber	Per Cent	Num-ber	Per Cent
1900.	95,006	4.8	58,481	30.2	...	...
1910.	90,591	4.3	67,295	30.0	...	...
1920.	50,424	2.2	112,417	33.8	30,219	9.4
1930.	40,777	1.4	7,136	7.3	6,101	2.1

The Bureau of the Census does not tell us how many Mexican illiterates there are in Texas, but it is reasonable to

<sup>16</sup>Davis, A Report on Illiteracy in Texas, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup>Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920; State Compendium, Texas, p. 40; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930; Texas Series, p. 10.

infer that a large majority of the white illiterates in Texas are Mexicans. This inference can be quite satisfactorily verified by this table (Table 2), because in 1930, when the native whites of foreign or mixed parentage were not included in the number of foreign-born white illiterates, there was a drop in the percentage of illiteracy from 33.8 to 7.3. This is also verified by Table 3.<sup>18</sup>

TABLE 3

ILLITERACY AND THE MEXICAN POPULATION IN THE TEXAS COUNTIES  
HAVING OVER TWENTY-THREE PER CENT ILLITERACY IN 1930

County	Total Population 10 years old and over	No. of Illiterates 10 yrs. old and over	Per Cent of Illiteracy	Total Mexicans
Atascosa...	11,505	2,654	23.1	7,601
Duval.....	8,834	2,232	25.3	3,778
Frio.....	6,839	1,842	26.9	228
Goliad.....	7,602	1,835	24.1	4,514
Hudspeth...	2,641	1,272	48.2	2,589
Jeff Davis.	1,302	400	30.7	1,046
Karnes.....	16,939	4,776	28.2	11,808
Kenedy.....	528	309	28.5	603
La Salle...	6,006	2,051	24.1	5,492
Live Oak...	6,517	1,602	24.6	3,742
Starr.....	8,539	2,056	23.7	8,822
Willacy....	7,809	2,067	26.5	5,895
Zavala.....	7,675	1,875	24.5	7,660

In the interpretation of this table it is to be noted that the total population and number of illiterates are for

<sup>18</sup>Compiled from the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930; Texas Series, pp. 14-38, 39-54.

those ten years old and older, while the total Mexican population is for those of all ages. This table shows that, as a rule, the counties with the largest per cent of illiteracy are counties with a heavy Mexican population.

In 1937 the Dallas Youth Council interviewed 202 Mexicans from sixteen to twenty-four years of age. Fifty-five per cent of them lacked sufficient grasp of English to understand the questions prior to their translation and interpretation in Spanish. In a random sample of fifty intensive life histories of Mexican homes studied by Ethelyn Davis in 1936, English was employed as the second language. Mexican children in Dallas learn English after starting to school. We cannot call the Mexicans illiterate if they can read and write the Spanish language, but many cannot do that. In a study of fifty cases of Mexican adults, the median education was 4.6 years in school. Seven had no formal schooling and three had some work in college. In another sample of sixty-six cases, all over sixteen, the median school years completed were just over four for forty-one born in the United States and six for twenty-five born in Mexico. The average school year, if several college graduates were eliminated, was 4.3 years for the United-States-born and 3.6 years for the Mexican-born. The Dallas Youth Survey showed that six per cent were illiterate; forty per cent had not completed the sixth grade; sixty-seven per cent had not gone beyond the seventh grade; 10.9 per cent had completed high school; three



per cent had gone beyond high school. The second generation is somewhat better educated than their parents. Apparently, the Dallas Mexican has not as yet assimilated the American attitude toward secondary education. As soon as the boy is an economic asset he must go to work and the girls must marry before they are too old. Low socio-economic as well as low educational status prevents effective advancement beyond the humble levels.<sup>19</sup>

#### Mexican Enrollment and Attendance

It was estimated that the enrollment of Mexican children in the public schools of Texas in 1930 was about fifty per cent of the number of Mexican scholastics. In contrast with this, the enrollment of other white children probably ran between ninety-five and one hundred per cent of the number of scholastics. In certain communities the enrollment in public schools was supplemented by enrollment in parochial or other private schools. The extent of this enrollment is unknown, but it is probable that it was not more than ten per cent of the number of Mexican scholastics. It may be concluded that not more than sixty per cent of the number of Mexican scholastics were enrolled in schools.<sup>20</sup>

From forty-five to fifty per cent of the Mexican children who were in school at all in 1930 were in the first

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<sup>19</sup>Watson, "Mexicans in Dallas," Southwest Review, XXII (July, 1937), 407-409.

<sup>20</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 96-97.

grade; seventy to seventy-five per cent were in the first three grades; only about three or four per cent were in high school. The estimated figures for other white children of the same grades were sixteen per cent, 38.5 per cent, and 20.5 per cent, respectively. While the curve for other white children showed a marked retention of these children at least until the eighth grade, few Mexicans were left in school after the sixth grade. The curve for the colored children lay in general between the Mexican and other white children.<sup>21</sup> Data were received concerning enrollment of Mexican students in sixty academies, preparatory schools, and high-school departments of colleges. Of the total number of students enrolled, 5,369, only 295 were Mexicans and 126 of them claimed residence in Mexico. In a report on nine Protestant mission schools of Texas it was shown that 1,084 Mexican students of ages six to twenty-eight were enrolled. Of these, 472 claimed residence in Mexico. A study was made to see how many Mexican students there were in Texas colleges and universities. The information covered all the larger institutions of the state -- twenty-three senior colleges, eight teachers colleges, twenty-six junior colleges and colleges controlled by the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, and one theological seminary. Data were received from four additional junior colleges, two medical schools, and eight miscellaneous schools --seventy-three

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

institutions in all. Of the 38,538 students of college and university rank, approximately only 188 could be classed as Mexicans, and thirty-four of these claimed residence in Mexico. In relation to population, more than six times as many negroes as Mexicans were going to college in Texas.<sup>22</sup>

Fifty-one per cent of the Mexican children enrolled in the La Feria public schools in 1932 were in the first three grades. Only 3.1 per cent of the total Mexican enrollment was found in high school. Approximately seventy-five per cent of the Spanish-speaking pupils of the Brownsville schools were enrolled in the first three grades, while only 32.7 per cent of the English-speaking pupils were enrolled in these same grades. Mexican children are much slower to enroll than English-speaking children. While the enrollment of the American children is nearly as great the first day as at mid-year, the Mexican enrollment the first day is, on the average, only about sixty-five per cent of what it is at mid-year. The public school is gradually lessening illiteracy among the younger Mexicans. The percentage of Mexican children who enter the public schools in Texas is gradually rising. The average daily attendance and the number of years spent in school are also rising.<sup>23</sup>

A study of the average daily attendance in 1927 and 1928 shows a marked contrast between Mexicans and other white

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-106.

<sup>23</sup>Basil Armour, "Problems of the Education of the Mexican Child," Texas Outlook, XVI (December, 1932), 29.

children in different schools. In most of the systems reported, the attendance of other white children remained fairly constant; that is, the number attending any one month was not far different from the number attending any other month. In the case of the Mexicans, however, while some districts showed a great deal of constancy from month to month, a number showed extreme variations. About thirty to thirty-five per cent of the Mexican scholastics in Texas were in average daily attendance in 1927-1928, and seventy-six to eighty per cent of the other whites were in average daily attendance. That is, about two-thirds of the Mexican children enrolled and about four-fifths of the other whites enrolled were in average daily attendance. The per cent attendance of Mexicans in high school is usually better than in the lower grades.<sup>24</sup>

For Mexicans, other whites, and negroes all, the trend of yearly attendance is downward from the years seven to seventeen. The difference is greatest in the case of Mexicans and least in the case of other whites. Between the ages of seven and seventeen the number of Mexicans in attendance decreases about one-half.<sup>25</sup>

The rural Mexican rarely attends schools beyond the fifth grade, and even those in this grade are scarce. Mexicans are older, grade for grade, in all comparisons with other

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<sup>24</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 114-115.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

whites and negroes. It has been seen, too, that the rural Mexican is older for his grade than the urban Mexican. The ages of Mexicans in the first five grades are more variable than the ages of the other whites, and less variable than the ages of negroes in nearly all these grades. The greatest variation of the Mexican ages is in the first grade of rural schools. In all ages from seven through thirteen, except the first, Mexicans have attended school fewer months than either the other whites or the negroes.<sup>26</sup>

The average Mexican child enters the first grade about a year later than other white children and spends nearly three years in it. By the time he reaches twelve he is in the third grade if he is in school at all, while other children of the same age are in the sixth grade. If the average Mexican is to receive the benefits of the junior high school, either he must be promoted more rapidly or else the school program must be changed to introduce junior high school studies in lower grades. One should not lose sight of the fact that Mexican children vary greatly. Some make progress much more slowly and others more rapidly than the average.<sup>27</sup>

The greatest drop of Mexicans from school is at the age of thirteen or beyond. One writer gave as the reason for non-attendance of Mexicans at school: poverty, failure to

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<sup>26</sup>H. L. Koch and Rietta Simmons, "Educational Achievement," Texas Educational Survey Report, IV, 5.

<sup>27</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 110-111.

enforce compulsory attendance laws, antagonism shown by other whites, illness, frequent moving, lack of facilities, lack of clothing, and failure to realize the privilege of free education.<sup>28</sup> Another said that responsibility for pupil failure may be attributed to four causal agencies: the teacher and the school, the pupil, home conditions, and health factors which are the responsibility of both the home and the school.<sup>29</sup>

### Summary

The Mexican population of Texas has increased from 71,062 in 1900 to 683,681 in 1930. During these years the Mexican population has become rather well scattered over the state. In 1928 about 15.6 per cent of the scholastic population of the state was Mexican. Since the Texas counties with the largest per cent of illiteracy are counties with a heavy Mexican population, it is assumed that a large per cent of the Mexicans in Texas are illiterate. It is estimated that only fifty per cent of the Mexican scholastics were enrolled in public schools in the state in 1928. At least seventy or seventy-five per cent of the Mexicans enrolled in the public schools are in the first three grades. Few Mexicans are enrolled in the high schools and very few in colleges and universities in Texas. The average daily school

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<sup>28</sup>W. O. Sisk, "Mexicans in Texas," Texas Outlook, XIV (December, 1930), 64.

<sup>29</sup>H. M. Lafferty, "Problems of High School Failure and Elimination" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Texas, 1936), p. 160.

attendance of Mexicans is far below that of other whites. As a rule, Mexican children are older for their grade than are other children, resulting from the fact that they often spend more than a year in each grade, especially the first grade. Economic and social conditions have a great effect on the enrollment and attendance of Mexican children in the public schools of the state.

## CHAPTER VI

### GENERAL EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SPANISH-SPEAKING

#### PEOPLE IN TEXAS, 1900-1940

From surveys which have been made concerning buildings, equipment, and teachers for Spanish-speaking people in Texas, it has been found that provisions for these people rank far below those for the other whites. Tests have been given to compare the relative intelligence of the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children in the public schools of the state. Generally the Spanish-speaking children have shown lower scores than the other whites.

#### General Educational Provisions for the Mexicans

Previous to 1915 very little had been done toward the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas. Educators knew that there were many Mexicans in the public schools and that many were retarded in their work. In 1915 Dr. J. F. Bobbitt of the School of Education of the University of Chicago made a survey of the San Antonio school system. This survey woke up educators to the problems of the education of Spanish-speaking children. At that time San Antonio had an enrollment of 11,461 Americans and Europeans and 8,471



Mexicans. The enrollment of Mexicans was seventy-three per cent of that of other whites. The survey showed that, generally, Mexican children were retarded.<sup>1</sup>

Upon the recommendation of Dr. Bobbitt the educators of San Antonio began the study of a special course for Mexican children by which it was hoped they could make better progress. Acting upon Dr. Bobbitt's advice that the Mexican schools were teaching too much that was ill-adapted to the needs of the pupils, it was decided to put less stress on some subjects and more on others. The minimum essentials such as arithmetic, history, and geography were reduced, and additional stress put on English, especially in the first four grades.<sup>2</sup>

In 1923 the state legislature created a committee to survey educational conditions in Texas. The survey staff became convinced that much good work was being done in various communities of the state in handling the Mexican children when once they were in school. A conference of interested workers was held in San Antonio, and views on Mexican education were expressed. It was suggested that means should be provided for placing before teachers and local administrative authorities the best that had grown out of the experience of communities that had worked on the problem. It

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<sup>1</sup>J. F. Bobbitt, San Antonio Public School System, A Survey, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>J. K. Harris, "The Sociological Study of a Mexican School in San Antonio" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Texas, 1927), p. 82.

was suggested that teachers in the various counties be given special training at county institutes. This had been done to some extent. The Teachers Colleges at Kingsville and San Marcos might give special training for teachers of Mexican children, and supervisors in cities with a large Mexican population might provide for in-service training for teachers of the Mexicans. The State Department of Education might make available the best methods that have been used in teaching English to non-English-speaking children. Provision should be made for more latitude in the choice of reading texts for the schools. Segregation of non-English-speaking children in the first three grades was considered by the staff as best for all concerned.<sup>3</sup> Other surveys were made to ascertain the general educational status of Spanish-speaking people in Texas.

The teacher of Mexican children from the poorest families is frequently a social worker and family advisor as well as instructor. In the face of hardship and discouragement, Mexican children make heroic efforts at progress. There are many exceptional cases of aspiration, but the extreme poverty of the Mexican does not usually foster ambition. The economic and cultural status of a large portion of the Mexican population of Texas is the result of a widespread prejudice against them. Many Americans assume the

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<sup>3</sup>G. A. Works, "Organization and Administration," Texas Educational Survey Report, I, 236-241.

attitude of superiority toward the Mexican, and while part of the Mexicans apparently accept the situation, others bitterly resent it. This hinders cultural assimilation. Taking all the public schools of the state together, Texas does not rank high among the states for its public schools. The facilities for Mexican children usually rank lower than for other whites. In many districts the facilities for Mexican children are much inferior to those provided for other children in the same district. Mexican children are segregated in schools, but this is not a universal practice. Even where segregation is practiced, there are some districts which treat the Mexican children as well as other groups of similar economic status are treated. On the other hand, the tendency in districts where compulsory segregation is practiced is definitely toward poorer schools for the segregated group. In some cases the discrimination is extreme. The school for the Mexican children is an unpainted shack in poor repair with no window shades, antiquated and insufficient furniture, no adequate water supply, primitive toilet arrangements, a poorly prepared and poorly paid teacher, and a short school term. Not far away in the same district, for the other children, there is usually a fine modern building with standard equipment and teaching arrangements. A few districts contrive to have no school at all for Mexican children by allowing the word to circulate that Mexicans

are not expected to attend school. In most districts the compulsory school attendance law is very weakly enforced, so far as Mexican children are concerned. While many school districts are earnestly working on the problem, the state of Texas as a whole has yet made no serious effort to educate its Mexican children. In some schools the conditions are much better than the averages indicated in this discussion, and many Mexican children make excellent progress.<sup>4</sup>

Whenever it is possible, separate schools, especially for the lower grades, are provided for the Mexicans and for other whites, as this has been found to be more satisfactory for all concerned. These schools for Mexicans are usually taught by Americans and always in English, as required by a state law. Some Mexican teachers are employed, but this is more the exception than the rule. Some teachers say they prefer teaching in the Mexican schools to teaching in schools for other whites because the Mexican children are more obedient and grateful. Some say they are as capable as other whites.<sup>5</sup> Following is a copy of the act passed by the legislature of Texas in 1933, providing for the use of the English language in the conduct of the public schools of Texas:

Except as herein provided, each teacher, principal, and superintendent employed in the public free

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<sup>4</sup>H. T. Manuel, "The Mexican Child in Texas," Southwest Review, XVII (April, 1932), 296-302.

<sup>5</sup>F. Calcott, "The Mexican Peon in Texas," Survey, XLIV (June 26, 1920), 438.

schools of this State shall use the English language exclusively in the conduct of the work of the schools and recitations and exercises of the school shall be conducted in the English language, and the trustees shall not prescribe any texts for elementary grades not printed in English; provided, however, that it shall be lawful to provide text books, as now provided by law, for and to teach any modern language in the elementary grades of the public free schools above the second grade, and in the high school grades as outlined in the State Course of Study; provided, however, that it shall be lawful to provide text books for and to teach the Spanish language in elementary grades in the public free schools in counties bordering on the boundary line between the United States and the Republic of Mexico and having a city or cities of five thousand (5,000) or more inhabitants according to the United States census for the year 1920. It is lawful to teach Latin and Greek as a branch of study in the high school grades as outlined in the State Course of Study. Any such teacher, principal, superintendent, trustee, or other school official having responsibility in the conduct of the work of such schools who fails to comply with the provisions of this article shall be fined not less than Twenty-Five Dollars (\$25.00) nor more than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00), cancellation of certificate or removal from office, or both fine and such cancellation or fine and removal from office.<sup>6</sup>

One of the serious deficiencies of public education in Texas is the frequent inferiority of educational opportunities in rural communities. Too often the child who lives in the country suffers serious educational handicaps. In buildings, equipment, length of term, extent of opportunities offered, quality of supervision and preparation of the teacher, he is at a disadvantage.<sup>7</sup>

In a small town in North Central Texas a rural district

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<sup>6</sup>S. B. McAlister, Public School Laws of the State of Texas, Bulletin No. 102, State Department of Education, 1938.

<sup>7</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 59.

maintains a four-teacher school for other white children and one block away a school for Mexican children. The latter school is a room about twenty feet by twenty feet. The enrollment of this school in 1928 was thirty-eight, and thirty were in regular attendance. This school had a term of five months, while the other whites had a term of eight months. There were desks for twelve out of the thirty pupils. Single boards set upon supports and extending to the center of the room served as desks. Water was carried in a bucket, and all used the same dipper. There was no playground equipment, no flash-cards, and the teacher was only a high-school graduate with no previous experience. Her salary was sixty dollars a month.

In a Central Texas county within a few miles of the county seat was found a Mexican school housed in an old dilapidated building, formerly a church. There was no school for the other whites, for they were transported to the city schools.

One district in South Texas reduced the term of schools for Mexicans from eight to six months to escape a rule of the county board requiring a certificate better than a second-class in the longer-term schools.<sup>8</sup>

In another community was seen a fine central building for the other white children, for a few Spanish children of high social-economic status, and theoretically for Mexican

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-60.

children beyond the sixth grade. It was said that no Mexicans ever went to the school. Out of the city behind the ball park was the Mexican school, an old one-room frame structure about twenty-four feet by forty feet, having windows in front and on two sides. The desks were of the old double type and all too large for the children. There was no special teaching equipment, no library, and no playground apparatus. The school was conducted for one month less and the teacher was paid thirty dollars per month less than in the central school. One hundred sixty-four of the 511 white scholastics of this town in 1928 were Mexicans.<sup>9</sup>

In a district of the Trans-Pecos country the school for the Mexicans was a small wooden structure with few windows, while the school for the other whites was a large modern building. In 1928 there were 122 Mexican scholastics and forty-three other whites. The Mexican children had a school term of five and a half or six months and the other whites had a term of nine months.<sup>10</sup>

Some districts make no provision for Mexican children and will not allow them to attend schools with the other whites. In a West Texas town with a population of six thousand where the 1928 scholastic census listed 179 Mexican children, there was no public school for the Mexicans and they were not expected to enroll in the schools with the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-73.

other whites. A parochial school, borrowing desks from the school district, was taking the place of the public school.<sup>11</sup>

Teachers of Mexican children usually get lower salaries than the teachers in other schools, but this is not always the case. A survey in South Central Texas showed that the average salary for teachers in Mexican schools was less than for other whites, but more than for teachers in schools for the colored. The number of months of school was less than for other whites and a little less than for the colored. There was little difference in years of training and experience of the teachers. In another study of a group of districts the findings were about the same. It was also found that the per capita expense in schools for Mexicans was less than for other whites. Not infrequently the Mexican school is regarded as a training school from which the most capable teachers may be drawn to other schools. This is the case many times, but there may be no difference in salary. Many prefer to teach in schools for the other whites for social reasons, but the teaching of Mexicans attracts many fine personalities and capable teachers.<sup>12</sup>

Inquiries concerning hygienic conditions of Mexicans in the lower grades revealed a variety of conditions. Some reported no difficulty at all. Others reported a constant fight against uncleanness and head lice. Some had trouble with cases of itch, eczema, and open sores. Sometimes the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-68.



children were bathed and deloused at school and sometimes they were sent home.<sup>13</sup> In a health survey in Nueces County it was found that ninety per cent of the tuberculosis cases in the county were Mexicans and that acute syphilitic conditions were more prevalent among Mexicans than among other whites.<sup>14</sup> A survey in San Antonio showed that there was a great deficiency of calcium in the diet of Mexican children. This was due to a shortage in consumption of milk.<sup>15</sup>

Health is probably stressed more than any other subject in the Mexican elementary schools of the Rio Grande Valley. Much stress is placed on general appearances of the child and proper food and diet, although often economic conditions prevent the children from following the teacher's advice. In some of the Valley towns the Parent-Teachers' Association or other clubs help to furnish food for the undernourished who cannot buy for themselves. Some schools have nurses to examine the children and suggest remedial measures. Some counties have county nurses and doctors to do this. In a group of Brownsville pupils it was found that English-speaking pupils had a greater percentage of defects of eyes and ears and Spanish-speaking pupils had greater percentages of other defects such as tonsils, nasal breathing, teeth, and skin. The English-speaking boys and girls were taller

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>14</sup>Taylor, An American-Mexican Frontier, p. 163.

<sup>15</sup>M. S. Handman, "Mexicans in San Antonio," Survey, LXVI (May, 1931), 165.

and heavier than the Spanish-speaking children in the schools.<sup>16</sup>

A study in 1938 of the educational program for Mexicans in Wichita Falls revealed that the educational opportunities afforded the Mexican children were inferior to those for other white children and for negroes. There has been an unsuccessful attempt to intersperse the Mexican children with other white children after they have completed the third grade in separate schools. Because of social differences, inherent characteristics, and economic conditions, the Mexican children are at a distinct disadvantage in attempting to compete in an educational system with the other white children. Much has been done toward curriculum revision to suit the needs of the other whites, but little has been done to find or to meet the needs of the Mexican children.<sup>17</sup>

A comparative study in 1935-1936 of American and Mexican children in five districts in Brewster, Jeff Davis, and Presidio Counties showed that facilities provided for the American children were much better than those provided for the Mexicans. Better buildings and equipment and better-qualified and more experienced teachers were provided for the American children. Also, the teachers of American children were paid higher salaries and taught fewer pupils per

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<sup>16</sup>B. Armour, "Problems in the Education of the Mexican Child," Texas Outlook, XVI (December, 1932), 30-31.

<sup>17</sup>C. G. Johns, "A Program of Education to Fit the Needs of the Mexican Children in Wichita Falls, Texas" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, North Texas State Teachers College, 1938), p. 1.

teacher. Progress was being made in furnishing better facilities for the Mexican, and where this was done the school enrollment and attendance had increased.<sup>18</sup>

In 1937 a study was made of educational provisions for Mexicans in Dallas and it was noted that the public schools, after a fashion, cared for the young, but that opportunities had been limited. Only three of the six schools serving Mexicans included seven grades. South Dallas children, if and when they completed the fifth grade, trudged across railroad tracks and the business section to finish their work in East Dallas. "Little Mexico" scholastics, after passing six grades at Cumberland School, moved north to Travis School, where American parents object to Mexican attendance and ask that their children be transferred to other schools. In West Dallas, Benito Juarez School, built to meet objections similar to those at Travis School, offers training in the first three grades and sends its alumni to Cement City, farther west. Here the Mexican children meet white prejudice once more and the majority finally turn east to enter Cumberland School. A two-mile journey along a fast-traffic highway precedes arrival there, and school busses are lacking. It is easy to understand how new interests on the road to school might reduce school attendance and promote delinquency. Very often the school training given to the

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<sup>18</sup>B. E. Coan, "A Comparative Study of the American and Mexican Children in the Big Bend Area for 1935-36" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, University of Texas, 1936), p. 130.

Mexican children causes them to lose respect for their parents, a fact which results in the loss of parental control. So the Mexican child is driven from home and into delinquency. There is no easy solution to the ills of the Mexican population in Dallas. Perhaps the Dallas schools have attempted too rapid assimilation of the Mexican children with the other children. Perhaps the answer educationally to Mexican problems in Dallas is not more English but more Spanish for Mexican children; not more American but more Mexican history, literature, and art. This might help to bridge the gap between the Mexican youth and adults and more nearly equalize the rate of assimilation of the two generations.<sup>19</sup>

After a survey was made of the conditions of Mexicans in Comal County in 1938, a number of recommendations were made. It was suggested that pupils would be more interested in education if they were placed in groups according to ability. Parent-Teacher Associations, local tuberculosis associations, and welfare councils might help to improve the general health of Mexican pupils. Many Mexicans fail because they are not physically able to perform the school work expected of them. Classes for the adult Mexicans might induce parents to take more interest in the education of the children. This interest might help solve the problem of

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<sup>19</sup>Watson, "Mexicans in Dallas," Southwest Review, XXII (July, 1937), 414-420.

late enrollment and irregular attendance. It was recommended that rural Mexican schools be consolidated and transportation be provided. Federal aid for the construction of consolidated school buildings would greatly help in solving the Mexican problem.<sup>20</sup>

#### Comparison of Mexicans and Other Whites in Texas Schools

Studies made by Garretson, Garth, Hughes, Young, Wright, and others show that Mexican children, on the average, have lower scores on intelligence tests than do other white children. Test scores seem to decrease with the increase of Indian blood.<sup>21</sup> The findings of studies made by Garth, Goodenough, Manuel, Koch, and others show the Mexican children to have lower scores on intelligence tests, but it is shown that there is a wide range of ability among Mexican children. Many of them have a superior, and some of them, a very superior, rating. Language handicaps are partly responsible for lower scores on intelligence tests. Also cultural background and inferior social status help to account for lower scores.<sup>22</sup> Intelligence tests devised by Americans do not measure the inherent mental capacity of the Mexican. The mental capacity of the Mexican child is probably normal,

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<sup>20</sup>M. F. Doerr, "Problem of the Elimination of Mexican Pupils from School" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, University of Texas, August, 1938), pp. 69-71.

<sup>21</sup>Sisk, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup>Armour, p. 29.

although some investigations conclude that he is mentally inferior to an American child of the same age. This conclusion is probably affected by racial attitudes and by a translation into terms of mental competence of differences in economic and cultural position.<sup>23</sup> Another investigator lists the factors responsible for the general unfavorable standing of the Mexican children in Texas schools as follows: a lack of knowledge of the English language, low social-economic status and cultural level of a large proportion of the Mexican population, inferior school opportunities, inferior heredity of a large number, and unsuitability of our measuring instruments to reveal clearly the extent and nature of differences in racial groups. The problem is an individual one. To determine the abilities and possibilities of a given child it is necessary to consider him individually. There are many Mexican children who differ radically from the group tendency in every trait which is alleged to differentiate the group.<sup>24</sup>

The results of the Pintner-Cunningham Primary Mental Test in forty-five sections of the kindergarten and first grades of El Paso in 1928 showed an advantage of twenty-three intelligence quotient points in favor of the other white pupils, but one should be cautious in interpreting

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<sup>23</sup>M. Gamio, Mexican Immigration to the United States, p. 71.

<sup>24</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 36-37.

this, for one does not know how well or how poorly adapted to Mexican children this test is, even when the directions are translated into Spanish. Results of achievement tests in the fourth and fifth grades in Brownsville showed that, grade for grade, the Brownsville Mexican children in the sections tested in the survey were uniformly older on the average and more variable in age than the other white children. There was a great deal of overlapping, however. The average scores of the Mexican children were lower in reading and geography, higher in arithmetic, and almost equal to those of the other white children in spelling. In general, the Mexican children showed greater variability than other white children in arithmetic and geography and less in reading.<sup>25</sup>

Data from eight districts -- Brownsville, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Edinburg, Harlingen, Kingsville, Mercedes, and Mission -- have been assembled to show the relative scholarship of Mexicans and other whites when they are enrolled in the same classes. The classes were divided into thirds on the basis of general scholastic averages. Mexicans fell in the second and third groups generally, but some Mexicans were in the first group.<sup>26</sup>

Results from the National Intelligence Test, the Stanford Achievement Test, and the Arithmetical Computation Test of the Stanford Achievement Series, given to children in

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

nineteen districts in 1926, showed that the Mexican pupils were, on the average, about a year older than the other whites. In spite of the greater age, the Mexicans tested seven points under the other whites on the National Intelligence Test; the average Stanford Achievement score of the Mexicans was four points lower than that of the other whites; and there was little or no difference in the average scores of the Arithmetical Computation Test. On the Monroe Standardized Reading Test in grades three, four, and five in the Harlingen schools, the Mexicans made lower scores on comprehension than the other whites, but there was not much difference in the reading rate. Standard achievement tests in reading, arithmetical computation, arithmetical reasoning, language usage, and spelling given in grades four and seven of the Laredo schools revealed a higher average score for the other whites in everything except seventh-grade spelling.<sup>27</sup> A comparison between Mexicans and other whites in the fifth grades in La Feria showed Mexicans to have a little higher score in arithmetic and the other white children to excel in reading.<sup>28</sup>

Of Mexicans in San Antonio it was said that they show a decided interest in the education of their children, but this interest gives way when the children are able to help make the living. In point of intellect the Mexican child presents a serious problem in the age-grade distribution.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>28</sup>Armour, p. 29.



The Mexican child usually ranks lower in grade and higher in age than the American child. The Mexican does better in non-verbal than in verbal tests. Inability to speak English adequately, irregular attendance due to labor conditions, and a general timidity in meeting the American school environment tend to slow up the advancement of the Mexican children.<sup>29</sup>

From a study made of Mexican pupils and American pupils of the Del Rio Public Schools in 1926 it was revealed that Mexican children ranked relatively lower in intelligence, socio-economic status, and school achievement than did American children.<sup>30</sup>

In 1928 a comparative study was made of the intelligence of Mexican and non-Mexican children of the first four grades in the San Antonio Public Schools. The study was based upon the Goodenough Intelligence Test, which requires the drawing of a man. A study of the drawings from the standpoint of intelligence and the ability to draw showed these two traits to be closely related. This relation decreased, however, with advance in school grade. It is suggested that probably the factors which differentiate talent in drawing were less obvious in the first grade than in later grades. In general, the average ability of the Mexican

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<sup>29</sup>Handman, "The Mexican Immigrant in Texas," Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly, VII (June, 1926), 38-39.

<sup>30</sup>W. L. Brown, "Knowledge of Social Standards Among Mexican and Non-Mexican Children" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, University of Texas, 1934), p. 162.

children, both in intelligence and in drawing, compared favorably, grade for grade, with that of the other children, but the advancement of the Mexican children through the grades seemed to lag behind their growth in mental ability. A comparison by ages was less favorable. At each age from seven through ten years, the Mexican children had lower scores, both in intelligence and in drawing. The belief among many that Mexican children are gifted in drawing is not supported by a comparison of the scores at any age level. It may be that apparent talent of Mexican children in drawing is largely a matter of training and interest, or else that the test used in this study was not suitable to reveal their ability.<sup>31</sup>

There are outstanding examples of exceptional talent among the Mexicans in Texas. Manuel and Rather found from tests which they conducted in San Antonio that some Mexicans rated high in art.<sup>32</sup> That individual Mexican children are frequently honor students is illustrated by the fact that of the fifty-four honor students of graduating classes of the El Paso High School from 1918 through 1928, eight were Mexicans.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>H. T. Manuel and L. S. Hughes, "Intelligence and Drawing Ability of Young Mexican Children," Journal of Applied Psychology, XVI (August, 1932), 382-383.

<sup>32</sup>H. T. Manuel and A. Rather, "That One Talent," The Nation's Schools, II (November, 1928), 34.

<sup>33</sup>El Paso Standard, February, 1928, cited by Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 34.

Four out of five of the valedictorians of the Brownsville High School during the years from 1926 through 1930 were Mexicans. Two of the five salutatorians during the same period were Mexicans. There is much evidence of the special ability and talent among Mexican children. These children are usually good in handwriting and drawing, and are especially fond of handwork.<sup>34</sup> The teacher of a night school for Mexicans in Dallas discovered in a number of Mexicans a natural love for music and anything artistic and colorful.<sup>35</sup>

A study in 1938 of Mexican children in Comal County showed that these children were definitely slow in educational progress and therefore over-age for their grades. This condition embarrassed the boys and girls to some extent. The economic conditions of the Mexican families greatly influenced educational progress. The underlying and fundamental causes, as revealed in this study, that brought about the elimination of Mexican pupils from school, were a lack of interest in education on the part of both parents and children, distance from school and lack of means of transportation, and economic conditions.<sup>36</sup>

Twenty teachers in three Rio Grande Valley schools were asked to list reasons for favorable standing of Mexican

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<sup>34</sup> Armour, p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Flora Lowrey, "Night School in Little Mexico," South-west Review, XVI (October, 1930), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Doerr, p. 67.

pupils. The reasons below are a composite selection from the reasons given:

1. Specially trained teachers for Mexican children.
2. Keen interest in learning on the part of the children.
3. Desire for display of talent and abilities in the school.
4. Gradual growth of community interests.
5. School work less depressing than working at manual labor.
6. Teacher worship.
7. Fewer diversions for Mexican children than for other whites.
8. A desire to rival other whites.
9. Desire for play and association with a large group of children.
10. Intelligence, especially among pupils above primary grades.<sup>37</sup>

The teachers also listed reasons for the unfavorable standing of Mexican pupils. The reasons listed most often included the following:

1. Lack of knowledge of the English language.
2. Irregular attendance.
3. Lack of cultural background.
4. Financial conditions.
5. Lack of understanding between home and school.

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<sup>37</sup> Armour, p. 30.

6. Lack of incentive to go ahead with their education.
7. Lack of teachers' understanding of pupils.
8. Instability of the measuring instruments.
9. Lack of interest on the part of English-speaking members of the community.
10. Frequent moving.
11. Poorly trained teachers.<sup>38</sup>

#### Summary

Although much has been done since 1900 toward the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas, the picture of general educational conditions for these people is rather dark. In many cases conditions have been found to be distinctly unsatisfactory. Taking the state as a whole, educational provisions for the Spanish-speaking population rank far below those for English-speaking people. It has been found that generally Mexicans in the public schools rank lower on intelligence tests than other whites. On tests in language, reading, and spelling the Mexicans have also ranked lower, but about the same as other whites on arithmetic tests. Special abilities of Mexican children in art have been noted. These tests cannot be taken as a true measure, but they are valuable in showing the needs of these children.

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

CHAPTER VII  
SPECIAL CURRICULA FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE  
IN TEXAS AND THE QUESTION OF SEGREGATION,  
1900-1940

In line with the surveys to determine the educational status of Spanish-speaking people in Texas, a number of places have provided special training for these people. These opportunities range from training in the kindergarten to training for adult men and women. As the majority of Mexicans entering our schools for the first time are unable to speak the English language, the first major problem in the education of these people is to teach them to speak and read English. A number of methods have been developed for this training. It is difficult to say which method is the best. The method must be adapted to the needs of the individual children taught. The question of the segregation of Mexicans is a vital one. In some instances segregation seems to be advantageous and in other instances it is a distinct disadvantage. This question also must be settled by the local authorities with consideration for what is the best for the majority of the people.

### Special Educational Opportunities for Spanish-Speaking People

There are in Texas a number of cases of special opportunities for the education of Mexican children. Kindergarten instruction is given in a number of places, such as Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, and Houston. In some schools children below the scholastic age are admitted and the first grade is divided into sections according to advancement. At Taylor a health program was undertaken with the cooperation of the Nutrition and Health Education Bureau of the Division of Extension of the University of Texas. The superintendent of Karnes County schools conducts an annual interscholastic meet for Mexican children. The superintendent of the Hidalgo Schools reported exchange visits between schools in Hidalgo and schools in Mexico. Also, the Hidalgo Schools have an all-Mexican orchestra. In San Benito, opportunities for instruction in home economics are open to the older Mexican girls in grades as low as the fourth. In Laredo, special efforts have been made to carry over the school instruction in home economics into the homes of the students. El Paso has two teachers who spend part of their time in visiting in Mexican homes. In November, 1928, one teacher started an experiment in pre-parental and parental education for Mexican girls. The experiment in teaching personal hygiene and the care of children is an attempt to meet a need which

is greater because of the fact that many Mexicans marry at an early age.<sup>1</sup>

The Assistant Supervisor of Industrial Education for the State Board of Vocational Education gave the following information for the school year 1928-1929 concerning vocational classes of special significance to Mexican children:

Vocational Agriculture

Socorro School, El Paso County  
 San Ilezario School, El Paso County  
 Nellie Shunior High School, Sam Fordyce

Vocational Home Economics (for girls over 14)

Donna, Hidalgo County  
 Edinburg, Hidalgo County  
 McAllen, Hidalgo County  
 Weslaco, Hidalgo County  
 El Paso (City)

Smelter District, El Paso County

Trade and Industrial (for boys and girls over 14)

El Paso (City)  
 Smelter District, El Paso County  
 Houston (City)  
 Sidney Lanier Junior High, San Antonio<sup>2</sup>

An experiment in the education of Mexican women has been in progress in the lower Rio Grande Valley since September, 1927, under the supervision of the State Supervisor of Home Economics Education. In 1927-1928 this work was conducted in seven centers. The next year classes had begun in ten communities. Most of the classes are conducted in the afternoon twice a week. The aim of these classes is to produce home-makers rather than servants. However, the work does help to place members of the classes who desire to

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<sup>1</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 87-89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 88.



obtain employment. These classes have caused the organization of Parent-Teacher Associations in some schools.<sup>3</sup>

The Dallas Board of Education, in cooperation with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, has sponsored an educational experiment which has done much toward bettering the conditions of the Mexicans. The school is in a frame building on Corinth Street. It is taught at night. The first efforts of the school were toward teaching these people to write their names and to speak a few simple English phrases. One man sixty years old went to the school for three years trying to learn to read a newspaper. His eyesight failed before he realized his ambition. After five years the members of the class were able to read and discuss the daily newspaper. The Mexican women meet three times a week for cooking and sewing classes. Health conditions have been improved as a result of these classes. Instructions in cleanliness have been given. A pottery class has been conducted. This provided revenue for materials for further work. There is a weekly music class of which an orchestra is the nucleus. In 1933 the orchestra performed in the City Hall during the musical half-hour preceding a Dallas Open Forum lecture.<sup>4</sup>

Miss Lila Baugh, director of the elementary training school of the Texas College of Arts and Industries at

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>4</sup>Lowrey, pp. 2-7.

Kingsville, is conducting an interesting experiment in teaching Mexican children and in training teachers to teach these children. The course, Education 225, involves the study and organization of a suitable curriculum for Spanish-speaking children from the first through the third grades. Materials of study and equipment are evaluated to see which are best to use. The experimental school is a four-room building furnished to the college by the Kingsville Public Schools. It has the first three grades and has an average attendance of about forty in each room. The four teachers have had the course, Education 225, and nine months of training in the experimental school. The problem set is for each teacher in each grade to teach English so well that the prevailing custom of two years in a grade for Mexicans may be removed. When these children have finished the third grade, the objective is that they shall have an adequate speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary that will make it possible for them to take the course of study from the fourth on through the upper grades as easily as the other whites.<sup>5</sup>

The Mexican children of La Feria have done much to beautify the school grounds. They take pride in cultivating plants and trees on the school yard. A large percentage of Mexican boys are on the various athletic teams of the Valley.

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<sup>5</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 134-135.

The 1928 undefeated baseball team at Brownsville was composed entirely of Spanish-speaking boys. The McAllen Junior High School team that won the championship of the section for the years 1931 and 1932 had a large percentage of Mexican players. Most of the larger Valley towns also have a few Mexicans on their senior high school teams each year. The junior girls' indoor baseball championship of Cameron County for 1932 was won by a team of Mexican girls of the San Benito Schools. There has been much progress in Boy Scout work among the Valley Mexican boys during the last few years. The Valley district is composed of the counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr. In 1932, sixteen of the fifty-nine troops were composed entirely of Mexican boys. There were two mixed groups and a few others with a small percentage of Mexican boys. The first pure Mexican troop was organized in Edinburg in 1927. It has become one of the outstanding troops of the Valley. The Mexican troops are not organized on the idea of segregation at all, but represent certain sections.<sup>6</sup>

#### Methods of Teaching Spanish-Speaking People

Probably ninety per cent of the Mexican children who are enrolled for the first time in Texas schools cannot understand and speak the English language. Language instruction

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<sup>6</sup> Armour, pp. 29-30.

therefore is one of the major aspects of the "Mexican problem." In teaching English to beginners the prevailing method employs English almost exclusively. Some of the children know English when they enter school, so each case must be considered individually. Some children have been enrolled in schools where Spanish is the medium of instruction. Some schools have an opportunity room or class for pupils who do not know any English. Taking the state as a whole, a great deal of work has been done on the problem of teaching English to the non-English-speaking children and adults.<sup>7</sup>

The chief reason Mexicans have a difficult time in learning to speak English is not their lack of intelligence but because the teacher does not know how to train them. The teacher must understand the Mexican. It seems essential to use action pictures and objects for teaching any foreigner the English language. Vocabulary teaching should grow out of actual experiences. Informal instruction through songs, rhymes, stories, drawings, dramatizations, constructions, and games is valuable.<sup>8</sup>

A teacher in El Paso said that one of the most important things a first-grade teacher in Spanish-speaking schools should do is to find out the needs of the children and then to proceed from that level. A Spanish-speaking

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<sup>7</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 150, 121.

<sup>8</sup>Diego De Vargas, "Teaching Mexicans an English Vocabulary," Elementary English Review, XIV (January, 1937), 31.

child has no reading readiness until he has a working vocabulary in the English language. A good procedure of carrying on English successfully in the first grade is to make a game of everything possible in the schoolroom. The games should be simple and made to fill a need of the particular children. Action games are very good. The teacher should see that as much English as possible is used. When children have a reading readiness, it is time to start reading, not before. It is well to arouse curiosity before reading a new story and to talk about it after it has been read. The teacher must always keep in mind that learning the English language is a slow process for Mexican children who have not been accustomed to this language at home.<sup>9</sup>

One writer says of teaching English to foreign children that the words selected for the first lessons should be those which will be of the most practical value to the child. All words should be taught in association with their meaning; they should be heard repeatedly; they should be presented in connection with an interesting experience. Also, there should be some reason why the child would want to use these words.<sup>10</sup>

While the trend of opinion seems to be toward an all-English method of teaching beginners in Mexican schools,

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<sup>9</sup>Margaret Rodge, "Learning to Speak English in the First Grade," Texas Outlook, XXII (September, 1938), 40-41.

<sup>10</sup>S. T. Barrows, "Teaching English to Foreign Children," The Classroom Teacher, II, 438-439.

there are still those who believe in using Spanish to assist in this teaching. The principal of the East Del Rio Schools told of her method, which involves the use of the Spanish language. The method is based upon the proper use of verbs and pronouns used in set sentence forms. Only the verbs practical to the Mexican child are used in these sentences. Repetition is the keynote of instruction. These same sentence forms are used in every grade, and are given as language work and drill exercises. Since the first natural step in a child's mental growth is to want, the children make "want" sentences in Spanish. Then these sentences are changed to English, and various verb forms and pronouns are used in them.<sup>11</sup>

The school superintendent at Eagle Pass favored an all-English method of instruction. The child is taught to think and talk English through certain routine directional words and phrases for classroom use. The words and phrases are presented orally by the teacher first. Then they are used by the children in games, care being taken to see that the children pronounce the words correctly. Later the words are written.<sup>12</sup>

A big problem to be met with in teaching Mexican children is that of late enrollment and irregular attendance. In one

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<sup>11</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 124-125.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

place the problem has been partially solved by having the children in "A," "B," and "C" groups. "A" is the best group, "C" the beginning, and "B" the balancing one. If a child in "A" group is absent he must go to "B" group when he returns to school. If he has not been out long he may read with both "A" and "B" and finally get back in "A" alone. In the same way one may be in "B" and "C" groups. Each child must be given individual attention and be allowed to advance without any drawbacks. If the sounds of words are taught to Mexicans, they will recognize the words more quickly and enunciate more clearly. Our modern phonics books tell us not to teach the sound of letters. For normal English-speaking children this may be a waste of time, but not for the Mexican child who is used to speaking his language with the tip of his tongue. The sounds teach him to use his lips in speaking, and to open his mouth wide. The time element is not considered. Some days the Mexican child may learn as many as six words during a lesson, and on other days he may learn only one.<sup>13</sup>

Every year a few Mexican children, sixteen years old and younger, who have never been in school before, enter the Austin schools. In Metz School, one of the largest ward schools of Austin, there are many Mexican children. They are separated from the American children in the 1-A grade,

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<sup>13</sup>L. A. Wilder, "Problems in the Teaching of Mexican Children," Texas Outlook, XX (August, 1936), 9-10.

in which they are taught to speak and to read English. In 1-B grade these children are put in the same class with the American children and usually do as well as they. The Mexican children are never given the Spanish-language word first, for they are taught to think in English. The teacher of the 1-A Mexican children is provided with adequate materials for teaching the English language.<sup>14</sup>

Many Mexican boys in El Paso, realizing the importance of a knowledge of English in getting better positions, study English at the Lydia Patterson Institute. If the teacher is interested in his pupils and has a sympathetic understanding of them, he will find a great response. These boys are taught to think in English instead of in Spanish. The direct method with objects is used. This is followed by actions and perhaps pictures. The teacher usually has a knowledge of Spanish in order to understand the pupils and their problems in studying English. As little of Spanish as possible is used in the English class. Usually the pupils write their reading lessons. Such English as may be used by the child at once is taught in the class. Verb study is approached from the conjugative standpoint, using sentences based on conjugative forms. Declarative sentences are studied first, then questions. Definite practice in conversation forms a regular part of the daily program. Games,

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<sup>14</sup>E. P. Weir, "The Mexican Child," Texas Outlook, XX (June, 1936), 23.



poems, and songs are used to increase the English vocabulary. Also, the vocabulary is increased through art work.<sup>15</sup>

In November, 1927, at a meeting of the Superintendents' Association of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, held in Mercedes, the Superintendent of the Edinburg Public Schools, H. C. Baker, moved that a committee be appointed to standardize the various courses offered in the public schools. As an outgrowth of this resolution, a bulletin was published by the State Department of Education in 1932. The title of the bulletin is A Course in English for Non-English-Speaking Pupils, Grades I-III. This bulletin states that the first need of the non-English-speaking child is to learn to understand and speak the English language in the schoolroom. English must be taught to foreigners as a foreign language. What the reaction of the child will be will depend in large measure upon the attitude of the teacher toward his work and the physical, mental, and spiritual atmosphere of the schoolroom. The personality of the teacher counts for much with the Mexican pupil. Pictures, actions, objects, and pantomimes, accompanied by the oral use of the names of objects, will be largely needed throughout the first year. Instruction of the foreign child must be as interesting, entertaining, lively, and concrete as possible. The vocabulary taught should be connected with the everyday life, school life, and reading

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<sup>15</sup>G. Martindale, "Teaching English to Mexican Boys," Elementary English Review, VI (December, 1929), 276-278.

of the child. This bulletin, A Course in English for Non-English-Speaking Pupils, Grades I-III, gives general objectives and standards of attainment for each of the first three grades. Also, a number of general suggestions for teachers are given.<sup>16</sup>

### Segregation of Mexicans in Texas Schools

The extent of segregation of Mexican children varies in different parts of the state. In 1929 a survey was made of forty-eight counties with reference to segregation in the common school districts. In all of the four border counties included in the survey, Mexican children were taught in schools with other white children if there were other white children in the district. This was true of seven of the twenty-one South Texas and near-border counties surveyed. Back from the border there was a tendency toward at least partial segregation, except where the population was relatively small. Caldwell County, having a large Mexican and other white population, had complete segregation in the rural schools and in the independent districts also. Culberson County reported segregation, and Bowie County reported a summer school for Mexicans only. In Brooks County the other white children resident in the common school districts attended the schools of an independent district.<sup>17</sup> The other

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<sup>16</sup>Texas State Department of Education, A Course in English for Non-English-Speaking Pupils, Grades I-III, Bulletin No. 268, pp. 11-13, 33.

<sup>17</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 68.

forty-four counties were distributed as follows:

1. Counties in which no segregation in separate schools was reported for common school districts:

On or near the border:

Cameron

Hudspeth

Presidio

Starr

Jim Hogg

Kenedy

Kleberg

Matagorda

McMullen

Uvalde

Wilson

West Texas and Panhandle:

Brown

Callahan

Concho

Cattle

Howard

Jones

Mitchell

Potter

## East Texas:

Cass

Hardin

Henderson

Jasper

Liberty

Orange

## East Central Texas:

Robertson

## North Texas:

Fannin

Wichita

## 2. Counties in which practice varies:

## South Texas:

Atascosa

Bee

De Witt

Frio

Goliad

Gonzales

Guadalupe

Karnes

Live Oak

Medina

Refugio

Victoria

## Southwest Texas:

Schleicher

## Central Texas:

Falls

Hays

McCullough

In general, the counties which reported a varying practice had more districts in which Mexicans were taught in separate schools.<sup>18</sup>

In Nueces County Mexicans and other whites are segregated to some extent, but not so much as nearby counties. This separation is in the early grades only. Only the American children are transported to town schools. School authorities give as reasons for segregation of Mexicans from other whites, low standards of cleanliness among Mexicans, fear of intermarriage of Mexicans and other whites, race prejudice, irregular attendance of Mexicans, and hazing of Mexicans by Americans. Americans say that Mexicans are satisfied with separate schools. Some Mexicans say that segregation is a handicap, for teachers give little attention to the pupils in Mexican schools.<sup>19</sup>

In Corpus Christi, in Nueces County, residents are segregated according to race. The Mexican quarters are

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-70.

<sup>19</sup>Taylor, An American-Mexican Frontier, pp. 220-222.

fairly well defined and the laboring class does not usually object. Many people in Corpus Christi object to compulsory segregation of Mexicans in schools, and there is not so much segregation there now.<sup>20</sup>

In some districts Mexicans and other whites go to the same schools and are taught by the same teachers. The Marlin Schools, where the percentage of Mexicans is small, are a good example of an attempt to assimilate these children in the regular grades. In more populous cities Mexican children live in districts so situated that a large number of Mexicans attend the same school. In El Paso and San Antonio there are schools which are almost wholly Mexican because of accidents of residence. In other schools attended by English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children in considerable numbers, the Spanish-speaking children are often grouped in separate classes during the early part of their work.<sup>21</sup>

There is a tendency among towns and small cities having a large Mexican and other white population to maintain a separate school for Mexicans. Lockhart is an example of cities in which segregation extends through all the grades. The more common practice, however, is to maintain a separate Mexican school for the lower grades only and then place the Mexicans with the other whites in the upper grades. Some

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>21</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 73-74.

cities which maintain a separate school for Mexicans in designated grades allow Mexicans to attend schools for other whites in all grades. In certain schools of Austin Mexican children are found in all grades, although separate schools are maintained for Mexicans. The school systems of Edinburg and Mission have some Mexicans in the so-called American schools. The basis for admission of Mexicans to a school for other whites in a community where a separate school for Mexicans is maintained may be residence, language ability, social position, or some combination of the three.<sup>22</sup>

A survey in 1929 showed partial segregation in a number of schools to be as follows:

1. Grade one or grades one-two or one-three: Abilene, Charlotte, Del Rio, Port Lavaca, Temple.

2. Grades one-four or grades one-five: Crystal City, Edinburg, Harlingen, Kerrville, McAllen, Mercedes, Mission, Pharr, San Juan, Raymondville, Uvalde, Weslaco.

3. Grades one-six or grades one-seven: Alpine, Brady, Goose Creek, Kenedy, Kingsville, Rosebud, Runge, San Benito, Taylor.<sup>23</sup>

Opinions vary as to the number of years Mexican children should be separated for the best interest of the child. Dr. Bogardus of the University of Colorado suggested segregation for the first five years. Most Texas Valley towns do this. Mexicans are segregated in grades one-three at

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

La Feria and Rio Hondo; in grades one-four at Mercedes and Santa Rosa; in grades one-five at McAllen, San Benito, Harlingen, Weslaco, Donna, Mission, Pharr, San Juan, and Edinburg; in grades one-seven at Kingsville. Segregation in the first few grades seems best for the Mexican child in order to enable him to overcome his language handicaps. In small rural schools segregation would probably be unwise, since the expense would be out of proportion to results. It would also be impractical in large city systems where Mexican children are scattered throughout the city.<sup>24</sup>

Sometimes segregation is neither a consideration of the needs of the Mexican child nor a matter of access to some other school. Public sentiment rather than pedagogical wisdom seems often to be the factor back of segregation.<sup>25</sup> The cleaner Mexicans do not like to be in school with the dirty "greaser" type. So it seems that the only thing to do in the matter of educating this unfortunate class is to put the "dirty" ones in separate schools until they learn how to "clean up" and become eligible for better society.<sup>26</sup> Many times Mexicans resent compulsory segregation. If a Mexican is permitted to choose his school, he will usually choose the separate school, and this freedom of choice will cause him to be much more contented.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Armour, p. 30.

<sup>25</sup> Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, Illiteracy in Texas, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Sisk, p. 61.



In some instances segregation has been used for the purpose of giving the Mexican children a shorter school year, inferior buildings and equipment, and poorly trained and paid teachers.<sup>28</sup> Segregation opens the way to social cleavage and misunderstanding. However, some schools are meeting the situation with success. Some say that segregation should be minimized. It is pointed out that Mexicans may be in the same schools with other whites and segregated temporarily because of language difficulty, excessive retardation, or hygienic purposes. Some Mexican children, when measured by a reasonable standard, may be allowed to go on with the other whites at the beginning of school. Schools should be open to individual children who are ready for the opportunities offered by the school.<sup>29</sup>

The question is whether or not the policy of segregation is a wise one. The survey staff says it is wise on pedagogical grounds to segregate in the early grades, to provide the non-English-speaking pupils with specially trained teachers and the necessary special training resources, but this is not always practical, especially in small schools.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes Mexicans prefer their own schools. In the upper grades they are apt to be ill at ease if they are in a community where Mexicans are regarded

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<sup>28</sup>Texas Educational Survey Commission, General Report, VIII (1925), 213.

<sup>29</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 87.

<sup>30</sup>Texas Educational Survey Commission, General Report, VIII (1925), 213.

as inferior or if their economic status is such as to put them at a disadvantage. In El Paso all the schools are open to Mexicans, but one of the schools in the Mexican district has extended its course into the high-school field to care for those who prefer to continue their work in the environment to which they are accustomed. Perhaps Spanish-speaking children do not offer the best educative stimulus to other whites, so the question arises as to whether it is advantageous to the other whites to be in the same schools with Mexicans.<sup>31</sup>

The origin of prejudice against Mexicans is not to be found in known physical inferiority, since medical examinations show, as a whole, that their physical characteristics are normal. Color of skin has much to do with repulsion. The lighter a Mexican is, the more readily is he received by Americans. Racial prejudice dates back to the time immediately after Mexican states were admitted to the United States. Mexicans of even the third and fourth generations in the United States are still looked upon as purely Mexicans. Although Mexicans become American citizens, they usually remain on economic, political, and social levels inferior to those occupied by Americans of like condition and capacity. Racial prejudice toward Mexicans exists throughout the United States, but is not expressed with the

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<sup>31</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 85.

same degree of intensity and bitterness in all states. In Texas racial prejudice is very marked, in other southern states, less so; and in the northern states of the East and Midwest, even less.<sup>32</sup>

Some parents object to having Mexicans in school with their children because they believe Mexicans to be dirty and often infected with head lice. Mexicans are sometimes blamed for sickness among children in a mixed school. Some say Mexicans and other whites do not get along in play.<sup>33</sup> Many times Mexican children in mixed schools are not given honors due them. In one school a boy from a Spanish-speaking home made the highest grades in the high school graduating class. This fact was announced at the commencement exercises, but another child appeared as the valedictorian of the class.<sup>34</sup> In a lower Rio Grande Valley school district a Mexican boy was winner in a declamation contest in the Interscholastic League meet and was entitled to go to the state meet at Austin. So many people objected to his representing the community at the state meet that he did not go to Austin. There are quite a number of Mexican students in the University of Texas. One Mexican boy had a date one evening with a girl who lived in a fashionable dormitory on the University campus. When he arrived at the dormitory,

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<sup>32</sup>Gamio, pp. 52-54.

<sup>33</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 76.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

the matron refused to allow him to come in.<sup>35</sup>

Unfavorable attitudes toward Mexican children are not at all universal. It is reported that one superintendent said he had found Mexican children who attended his school to be as responsive and appreciative as the other whites. Another was reported to have said that conditions had improved during the last few years and that Mexicans were gaining more confidence in the public school and were beginning to enter their children in school at an earlier age and also earlier in the school year.<sup>36</sup>

Often the question as to the legality of the segregation of Mexican children in the public schools arises. The Constitution of Texas provides for public free schools for all children in the state. School funds are disbursed by the local board of trustees. This opens the way for great inequalities of educational opportunities and makes difficult the carrying out of the orders expressed in the Constitution.<sup>37</sup>

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education are the direct administrative agencies of the state for executing the desires of the state relative to public education below college and university level. In general, the duties of the State Department

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<sup>35</sup>Cauley, p. 57.

<sup>36</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, p. 80.

<sup>37</sup>Sisk, p. 61.

of Public Instruction lie in administering the state school fund, certifying teachers, providing free textbooks, seeing that the laws regarding schools are enforced, receiving and publishing reports, and supervising education in various ways. The actual control of schools is with the local boards of trustees. The school funds spent for the maintenance of schools are disbursed by local boards of trustees.<sup>38</sup>

The Texas Legislature passed compulsory school attendance laws in 1915, 1923, 1935, and 1939. The law approved in June, 1939, said that every child in the state who was seven years and not more than sixteen years of age should be required to attend the public school in the district of his residence, or in some other district to which he may be transferred as provided by law, for a period of not less than one hundred twenty days annually. The period of compulsory school attendance at each school is to begin at the opening of the school term unless otherwise authorized by the district trustees and notice given by the trustees prior to the beginning of the school term.<sup>39</sup>

Within the white population the law recognizes no segregation except that which is made to facilitate the educative process. Racial or national origin is not of itself a legal basis for segregation. The case of *Vela vs. the Board of*

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<sup>38</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 57-58.

<sup>39</sup>Gammel, Laws of Texas, XXXI, 227.

Trustees of Charlotte Independent School District of Atascosa County illustrates some of the issues in segregation. The case came up to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on appeal and later to the State Board of Education. The Charlotte Independent District maintained her public schools in two separate buildings, one for Mexicans and one for other whites. The school board gave as their reason for segregation that Mexican children were irregular in attendance and did not advance as rapidly as other whites. Also the town was divided into wards and Mexicans usually lived in wards together. Felipe Vela sent his child, Amada Vela, to school at Charlotte, and she was placed in the Mexican school. The child had been adopted in infancy and her race was of unknown origin. The parents objected to her going to the Mexican school on the basis that she was not a Mexican, she spoke English, and she lived in a ward with other whites. It was admitted that the school board could not segregate Mexican children on a racial basis, so the question of Amada's nationality was eliminated. The chief question was where the child should be placed so as to be at the best advantage. Superintendent Marrs decided that the child should be admitted to the school attended by the American children, and he recommended that she be given a chance to do her best work. The Charlotte School Board appealed the case to the State Board of Education and they upheld Marrs'

decision. The child was admitted to the school for other whites.<sup>40</sup>

About fifty per cent of the scholastic population of the Del Rio Independent School District is of Mexican extraction. Del Rio has four school buildings, one of which is set aside for Mexican children in the first, second, and third grades. The superintendent said this segregation was made because many Mexicans entered school late, because of cotton picking; the irregular attendance of Mexicans disrupted regular class work; Mexicans benefited by being segregated in the earlier grades; the natural abilities of Mexicans could be better developed when they were grouped together; all the advantages to be gained by racial association could be secured by these children after they were above the third grade. The superintendent said that racial animosity had nothing to do with the segregation. Jesus Salva-tierra and others secured an injunction in the district court restraining the superintendent from segregating the children. From this judgment the defendant appealed.

The local school boards of the state have the power to manage and regulate the schools of the respective districts. This direction extends to the power to locate and construct the district schools upon such sites, and in accordance with such plans and specifications, as in their judgment seem

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<sup>40</sup>Manuel, Education of Mexican Children in Texas, pp. 82-83.

best suited to the purpose of those policies. So it is the duty of school authorities to plan the methods of instruction and so classify and group the pupils as to bring to each individual the greatest benefits. The courts are not to interfere here so long as those acts are lawful, or discretion is not abused. If patrons are dissatisfied with administrative matters in a school, they may complain to the local school board, and, if overruled, to the county superintendent. If his decision is questioned, they may then take the case to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and from him it may go ultimately to the State Board of Education.

The court decision in the Del Rio case mentioned on the preceding page was that the reasons given by the superintendent for segregation were not unreasonable. It was stated that the school authorities have no power arbitrarily to segregate Mexican children, assign them to separate schools, and exclude them from schools maintained for children of other races, solely because they are Mexicans. Furthermore, no court can lay down a set of rules by which the school board and faculty shall grade, classify, and assign the pupils, for such are purely administrative functions inherent in local school authorities. These rules must be more or less flexible and adjustable to the peculiar needs of the school, grade, or class. The judgment in the case of the



Del Rio superintendent was reversed and the injunction was dissolved.<sup>41</sup>

### Summary

Marked progress has been made since 1900 in the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas, and advancement has been made from a curriculum which slavishly followed the English-speaking course of study to a special curriculum for Spanish-speaking people. Special schools for Spanish-speaking people have considered the particular abilities and needs of these people. The method most generally used for teaching these people the English language is the English method; that is, using the English language altogether in instruction so that the child learns to think as well as to speak in English. In some cases a Spanish-English method is used; that is, beginning with Spanish words, phrases, and sentences and making a gradual transition to the English language. In all the methods of teaching the English language to non-English-speaking people, much use is made of objects, pictures, dramatization, songs, and games. The teacher must remember that it takes time to learn a new language, and the pupils must not be rushed. In teaching an English vocabulary to a non-English-speaking child, care should be taken in choosing a vocabulary that will be useful for the child.

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<sup>41</sup>S. B. McAlister, Cases on the Government and Law of the Texas Public School System, pp. 251-256.

It still remains a question whether segregation of Mexicans in the public schools is a wise thing. It is a fact that in some places segregation is made in order to prevent the necessity of having to supply better buildings, equipment, and teachers for the Mexicans. In other places segregation is made because other whites object to their children's going to school with Mexicans, either because of hygienic conditions or because of racial antagonism. In some instances Mexicans seem to prefer segregation. From a legal point of view segregation is permissible, the local school board being the authority in the community. It seems that the best way of settling the question is to consider what is best for the majority of Mexicans and other whites in each particular community.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis there has been an attempt to point out and show the history of modern-day problems in the education of Spanish-speaking people in Texas. The chief of these problems are segregation of Mexicans from other whites in the public schools, antagonism between Mexicans and other whites, and special curricula for Spanish-speaking children. The segregation of Spanish-speaking children in the schools of Texas began about 1821. Antagonism between Mexicans and other whites in Texas dates back as early as 1836. The development of special curricula for Spanish-speaking children in Texas schools began as early as 1860, as a result of a desire on the part of educators to Americanize all the residents of the state. Although much progress has been made, these three problems still remain to be reckoned with.

Some may ask why the educational status of Spanish-speaking people in Texas is so low. It is partially because of the difficulty of teaching a new language, the more or less instability of residence of Spanish-speaking people, and the low economic status of a large number of these people

in Texas. A more distressing reason is that, taking the state as a whole, there has not been much serious effort to extend to Spanish-speaking people the education guaranteed to them by the state constitution and laws. Indifference and antagonism much more than inability are responsible for the failure to solve the problem of the education of our Spanish-speaking population. The compulsory school attendance law is not enforced and the Mexican child is discriminated against both in school and out.

Statewide organization for effective teaching of these children is needed. People insist on Americanizing the Mexican without realizing that this is impossible under the present set-up. If the Mexican is to be Americanized, he must be raised to the social and economic level of the average American. Until these people are made to realize that they are Americans, the problem will not be solved. The primary task is to stimulate right attitudes, first in educators and teachers, then in the general public. Mexican people in Texas need nothing more than to be understood. These people represent all extremes, from abject poverty to wealth, from low social position to positions of esteem, and from primitive modes of living to the highest culture. The possibilities in these people must be recognized and they must be given every possible chance to develop normally. Poverty and low culture should be regarded as challenges rather than as barriers to education. If these Spanish-

speaking people are to be permanent residents of Texas, the safety of our state demands their education. The Mexican child must be enabled to realize his possibilities and take the place which he should occupy as a citizen of the state. Already there are signs of progress, but so vast a social program must develop slowly. From the standpoint of the Mexican the greatest need is opportunity. From the standpoint of the general society of Texas the need is a clearer realization of the social purposes of educating the Mexican and the need of scientific research to make more effective the education of our Spanish-speaking population.

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