The Shaping of Ethnic Mexican Identity in the Segregated Schools of Presidio, County, Texas, 1867-1947

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THE SHAPING OF ETHNIC MEXICAN IDENTITY IN THE SEGREGATED SCHOOLS OF
PRESIDIO COUNTY, TEXAS, 1867 TO 1947

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Doctoral Program in Borderlands History

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Dean of the Graduate School
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by

Aurelio Saldaña, Jr.

2022
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father, Aurelio Saldaña, Sr. and to all ethnic Mexicans who have worked their hands to the bone building the United States of America from the ground up.
THE SHAPING OF ETHNIC MEXICAN IDENTITY IN THE SEGREGATED SCHOOLS OF
PRESIDIO COUNTY, TEXAS, 1867 TO 1947

by

AURELIO SALDAÑA, JR., MA

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
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of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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It has been a tough, arduous road the one I have chosen to walk; always seeking knowledge. That red-headed, inquisitive, ethnic Mexican at times almost gave up but there it was, the proverbial village always picking me up when I was down and even carrying me when my feet did not want to go on. The least I can do is let all those persons know that I never forgot all the help they have given me along this road. Through your support, we have finally achieved the goal. Muchisimas gracias, este doctorado les pertenece tanto igual a ustedes como ami.

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Introduction

Since two or more ethnic groups constitute an ethnic system, one ethnic always implies the existence of another. In most portions of the Southwest, the term 'Anglo' is used as a catchall expression to designate all persons who are not Mexican nor Indian, while the term 'Hispano' is used to designate the Spanish-speaking. In essence, therefore the terms "Anglo" and 'Hispano' are the heads and the tails of a single coin, a single ethnic system; each term has meaning only as the other is implied. The terms do not define homogenous entities; they define a relationship.¹

During the early years of the nineteenth century, particularly throughout the American Southwest, Anglo Americans began to create policies to demean and marginalize Mexican people and their culture. This systematic disenfranchisement led to prolonged conflicts between Anglos and Mexicans, especially in the realm of education. Indeed, during the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century Anglo Americans sought to keep the education of their children separated from non-Anglos. As they expanded into the American Southwest, they imposed segregationist policies in an effort to give their own children a superior education. Throughout this violent century, Anglo-Americans eliminated, subjugated, or exiled people of color. This is how many Native American groups met their demise, while others, like Mexicans, were either removed through deportation or relegated to a secondary social status in the U.S. Still, others such as the Irish became integrated into the American project through Americanization. In other words, the Irish became “white” through population increase and by gaining political power via organizing votes. Generally speaking, Americanization required colored ethnic groups to adopt American customs and values such as speaking the English language and adopting the Protestant religion. This forced adoption was accomplished through informal means, such as social pressure and through formal methods used in schooling. As Anglo Americans spread geographically

¹ Carey McWilliams, North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949) 8, McWilliams goes as far as stating that the identity forming impact ethnic Mexicans had on Anglo-Americans and vice-versa, was far-reaching. The classification as one another’s foil, shaped the former’s perception of all groups not ethnic Mexican. McWilliams goes onto to say that “Thus, the Jew is an ‘Anglo’ in the Southwest and so is a Japanese or a Chinese.”
throughout the United States their social values (e.g.; individualism, English language, Protestantism) became dominant in schools. The socialization of the ethnic groups of the country sought to make everyone, regardless of background, into Americans. Unequal Americans, perhaps, but Americans nonetheless.

The historiography of segregation of ethnic Mexicans in the United States is well-researched, especially in urban settings. However, scholarship that analyzes this process in rural schools still needs more work. The rural area schools of far west Texas, for example, are some of these regions that have only been given minimal attention. Rural areas differ in that, for example, lower student numbers led school districts to maintain integration when other more populated areas practiced segregation; the inability to recruit and maintain teachers aggravated the teacher-to-student ratio in the classrooms; and the small community atmosphere concentrated power squarely in a small Anglo male sphere. These characteristics of the rural settings definitely played an integral part in shaping the Americanization processes in the smalltown school districts. This dissertation seeks to examine some of these schools, focusing primarily on the community of Marfa in Presidio County, Texas. In this dissertation I argue that Anglo American efforts at segregating ethnic Mexican from Anglo students were a systematic, and deliberate effort, to socialize or resocialize ethnic Mexicans’ identity into an Americanized form. This Americanization effort in turn led to higher rates of ethnic Mexican self-identification as Mexican American and to a lesser extent as Mexican. I argue that the Americanized socialization that took part in the segregated schools cannot be fully characterized as detrimental or “negative.” Although, there were instances where the ethnic Mexican students suffered maltreatment, received less-than-adequate education, and subjected to substandard housing at the

schools; the acquisition of Anglo-American sociocultural capital through Americanization produced a more socio-politically aware ethnic Mexican community in the U.S. School segregation in Marfa provides an excellent example of the systematic Americanization of ethnic Mexican children. Furthermore, the segregated school system found in late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century Marfa also demonstrates the intersectionality of the social factors of race, gender, class, and culture related to the education of ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. The present work will consider these historical and social lenses to elucidate the on-the-ground realities of the socialization of ethnic Mexicans in an Anglo-American educational system.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racially-segregated schools were found in many areas of the United States. Because of their diverse ethnic makeup, urban areas were of deep concern to nativist-oriented officials in the Americanization effort. Waves of immigrants from Europe, specifically those groups from Southern and Eastern Europe, such as Greeks, and from Asia, such as the Chinese and Japanese, brought considerable numbers of socio-culturally distinct peoples into the United States. The wave of new immigrants culturally shocked an American population used to more familiar groups from western Europe such as English, German, and Irish. For the newly arrived foreigners, ethnic ghettos may have provided a cultural haven but for Anglo-American nativists, this was not conducive to the formation of national identity. Still, others, such as progressive Senator and 1912 vice-presidential candidate, Hiram

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3 Jacquelin Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007) 161, Fear-Segal notes that Carlisle Indian Boarding School headmaster General Richard Henry Pratt was a firm believer in the concept of cultural immersion in which a minority or foreign group’s (in Carlisle’s case, native children) best way to acquire the majority group’s culture is through actually living or participating in that majority group’s society and live separated from it.
Johnson from California, actively sought to incorporate immigrants into the U.S. A concerted effort was made to indoctrinate or re-socialize ethnic groups with Anglo-American ideals, particularly a sincere loyalty and devotion to their new home, in an effort to assimilate them fully into the American system. Americanization was also a main concern along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Americanization of ethnic Mexicans was the touted goal of the school districts across the region. This concept of Americanization can be described in social scientific terms as the sociological concept of socialization. Socialization in social scientific terms is fathomed, "At a societal level, the idea of socialization summarizes how and to what extent diverse individuals mesh with the requirements of collective life. At the individual level, socialization is seen as society's principal mechanism for influencing the development of character and behavior." In

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5Unnamed author, “Resocialization,” May 31, 2018, https://alchetron.com/Resocialization (accessed July 7, 2021), Resocialization is the process by which an individual’s “sense of social values, beliefs, and norms are reshaped.” The process is deliberately carried out in total institutions such as prison, military boot camps, schools, and the home sphere through an intense social process of breaking down an already existing social identification and rebuilding it with a new, more “adequate” identity. A key tenet in “socialization is that what can be learned can be unlearned. That forms the basis of resocialization: to unlearn and to relearn.” “Resocialization can be defined also as a process by which individuals, defined as inadequate according to the norms of a dominant institution, are subjected to a dynamic redistribution of those values, attitudes and abilities to allow them to function according to the norms of the said dominant institutions.”; E. M. Kramer, “Cultural Fusion and the Defense of Difference” In M. K. Asante & J. E. Min (Eds.), *Socio-cultural Conflict between African and Korean Americans*, Archived 2012-04-26 at the Wayback Machine (New York: University Press of America, 2000) 182-223, https://web.archive.org/web/20120426062234/http://erickramer.net/download/papers/Kramer2000-cultural%20fusion-proof.pdf (accessed July 14, 2021), Kramer's Cultural Fusion theory contends that it is “impossible for a person to unlearn themselves and that by definition, ‘growth’ is not a zero-sum process that requires the disllusion of one form for another to come into being but rather a process of learning new languages and cultural repertoires.” In the author’s view a person does not need to unlearn a culture to learn a new one. Furthermore, a person does not have to unlearn one’s self-identity to learn new cultural expressions and thus reinvent one’s self-identity from scratch. A person will keep their culture and synthesize the new cultural repertoire. The blending of, for example, of language and culture creates a cognitive complexity which gives the ability to switch back and forth between cultural repertoires. The process is additive and not subtractive.

my view, then, in sociological terms, Americanization can be defined as learning from more "culturally competent others," especially those from the American ingroup, how to be "American." Thus, and by extension, outgroup members such as ethnic Mexicans, would learn how to engage the Anglo-American socio-cultural context they were born or brought into from ingroup members, that is: Anglo-Americans. For older, immigrant ethnic group member, more than likely already shaped by socialization by a deemed problematic culture (i.e., in the view of Anglo-American educators of the era under analysis in this work, this would be any culture not Anglo-American white), re-socialization, or a socio-cultural reprogramming, was essential. That is a re-formation of self-identity by Americanization was to take place in order for these outgroup members to be considered for inclusion by the Anglo-American establishment into Anglo conceptualization of the American “nation”.

Fathoming "the nation" takes a creative approach. The aim is to imagine what "the nation" should consist of ideologically and biologically. So, although the touted aim of Americanization was to instill Anglo-American socio-cultural ideals into its would-be citizens, the notion of who could become a full-fledged American was trivialized by a racial-biological component. Thus, in indoctrinating, for example, the ethnic Mexican population in the Southwest, creative approaches such as segregating ethnic Mexican from Anglo-American students were put into action.

In Marfa, Texas, ethnic Mexican students experienced segregation in the integrated campuses, but they were also required to attend separate campuses for the primary purpose of acquiring Anglo American culture including English language skills, American patriotic values, American cultural symbols, etc.

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7 Ibid; The conceptualization of the “nation,” in this case, is based on the ideal of a country constructed primarily by an Anglo white population that prescribes to and follows Anglo cultural expressions (i.e.; speaks English language, follows Protestant religion, individualism over collectivism).

8 See prior note for explanation on the imagined ideological and biological Anglicized “nation.”
and proper (i.e.; American idealized) hygiene habits. At least in theory, that is why school systems were often bifurcated and even trifurcated to maintain the racial groups separated and in "their proper place." School district officials in far west Texas argued that the segregation of Mexican-origin children was not due to racially-based views but because there were great educational concerns such as language differences. The most common of these oft-voiced justifications for school segregation was the low English proficiency of ethnic children. Educators were concerned that if Mexican students were integrated into the mainstream education system with Anglo-American children, ethnic children would create an atmosphere where both groups would be hindered in their educational achievement.

Segregated Mexican schools aimed, at least in theory, to prepare ethnic Mexican children to enter the regular school system, especially after having acquired a certain level of English language competence. But as Dr. Herschel Manuel found in mid-twentieth-century Texas, the actual move by ethnic Mexican students from the segregated setting to the main Anglo-American school rarely occurred. To add further layering to the creative Americanization approach, racial or ethnic segregation existed within the integrated school building and campus setting known as *de facto* segregation. There existed both segregated classrooms in the integrated school settings,

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9 “Anglo-American” is a commonly used label to denote white Americans of European background in the literature. Although the labels of “Anglo” and “Anglo-American” fall short in describing a “group” made up of an array of distinct cultures, the terms will be used with much apprehension in this work.: Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 62, In September 1943 Westminster, California the darker-skinned Mendez children were not allowed to attend the regular school while their lighter-skinned first cousins were allowed entrance.

and there were also segregated campuses where ethnic Mexican children attended school away from their Anglo-American peers.¹¹

Unlike African American segregation, which was primarily predicated on racial differentiation, the segregation of ethnic Mexican was justified in terms of their lack of academic aptitude.¹² Ethnic Mexicans, at least those born or naturalized in the United States, were considered legally "white." Thus, theoretically, the group was allowed full access to citizenship and all its spoils.¹³ Race, then, according to the Anglo-dominated school system, could not be a reasonable or legal reason for school segregation of ethnic Mexicans. And even when the legality of Mexican American citizenship was not in question, the notion of "white" citizenship for the "peculiar racial" identity ascribed to the ethnic Mexican "mestizo" could be circumvented on other grounds masked as academic deficiencies.¹⁴ Thus, to the local school board regulations,


¹⁴ Cynthia Orozco, No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 30, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.
the Mexican ward schools became a concurrent but separate education system where ethnic Mexican children were expected to attend facilities segregated from Anglo-American children.15

These school facilities in far west Texas could not be easily characterized as fully segregated school systems. Rather, they could be described as partially segregated or what historian Jesse J. Esparza calls pseudo integrated schools. For example, ethnic Mexican students, especially those with low English language skills, started their education in the segregated Mexican schools and were required to attend the Mexican School from 1st to 4th grade, and in some communities even up to the 9th grade, and later entered the regular "main" schools.16 At the main school, ethnic Mexicans attended integrated classrooms with Anglo American peers, but at times they were not allowed to engage in all school activities fully.17

Again, in theory, the move was made only after having acquired a certain level of Americanization. The "separate but equal" doctrine of \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson} was, in effect, the foundation for widespread segregation policies in the country.

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15 Unnamed author, “La Educación de los Latinoamericanos en el Estado de Texas Conferencia sustentada la noche del 30 de Noviembre en el Auditorio de San Fernando por el pasante de derecho Gustavo C. Garcia, bajo los auspicios del Club Mexicano de Bellas Artes,” \textit{La Prensa}, Dec. 4, 1934, 4, Section \textit{La Educacion}, \url{http://0-infoweb.newsbank.com.lib.utep.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbids=G55P5dWOMTM5OTM1NTk4Ni43MzQwNDk6MToxMzoxMjkuMTAxLjkuMTg0&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuename=0&d_viewref=search&queryname=3&p_docnum=1178879&toc=true&p_docref=v2.11F30FF2F63C9976@EANX-1223DD636EC95738@2427776-12227576B7898398@3-125058F08EDD8064} (accessed May 5, 2014). The Tejano newspaper argued that segregation based on race was “intolerable” although it did understand why language deficiencies merited the preparation of “Latino” children in the English language before starting primary school.

16 A key difference between urban and rural school experiences was that, for example, in urban places like El Paso, Texas, there was a “Mexican” high school. “Mexican” high schools were not present in the rural segregated districts. In the urban areas, ethnic Mexican students could have a totally segregated experience from K-12.

Although racial segregation was not legally observed for ethnic Mexican children, evidence suggests that differing treatment toward minority students occurred in integrated school systems. There were no written rules per se in the integrated schools that forbade non-Anglos students from, for example, joining certain extracurricular activities, from holding certain offices in their class, or from asking someone from outside their racial group to prom. But there existed a type of soft racism, an understood set of social rules that were to be abided by. Oral histories from the time period tell of how in Marfa High School ethnic Mexicans and Anglo-American students were expected to sit on opposite sides of the auditorium during school functions. Former Mexican school students in Marfa recalled the overt racism in theaters, restaurants, and other establishments, which openly stated that they did not serve non-whites. They also recalled the subtle racism that was observed at the school where racial expectations were unspoken but just as rigid as the “no Mexicans” signs they encountered on school trips to Alpine, Texas.18

Throughout the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, other examples of these unwritten racial segregation rules are remembered by former Mexican school students. For instance, in Fort Hancock, Texas, Margarita Piñon, a former Mexican school student, recalled how her mother had advised her “tienes que saber tu lugar” when she questioned why she could not go on a date with one of her Anglo classmates. Only after her mother explained the seriousness of what she intended to do did Margarita understand. She recalled, “Dijo, ‘tu papa pierde su trabajo.’ Dijo, ‘ala señora no le va gustar que el muchachito ande con una mexicana.’” 19 No legal segregation was in place but the understood racial codes were to be followed at the school and beyond.

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19 Margarita Piñon interview by author, El Paso, Texas, March 17, 2014, Margarita’s mother explained the social rules when advising her daughter to “know where her place was” in an Anglo-dominated country. The young
At the schools, ethnic Mexican students were known to be subjected to negative treatment from teachers and school administrators. As a result, the education of ethnic Mexican students was unequal as compared to that of Anglo-American students. Those ethnic Mexican students that caught on to the mainstream expectations, such as learning the English language in a culturally distinct classroom setting, became the success stories coming out of the Americanization efforts of this era. Unfortunately, some did not fit in and were in effect pushed out for whatever reason.

Account after account from the oral history record describes a problematic atmosphere found in these schools, which paints a picture in which all groups had access to education, which superficially made education equally available. In truth, the quality of education was subpar for ethnic groups as a whole. Segregated-ward schools for blacks and other ethnic children were often dilapidated and under-supplied relative to the Anglo-American schools. For instance, the Mexican ward schools were overcrowded with teacher/student ratios preventing adequate time for individual interaction. Teachers were consistently unqualified, providing the students with low-quality education.

Moreover, the vocational-based curriculum offered to ethnic Mexicans limited their opportunities in the labor market. Historians like Mario T. Garcia have contended that vocational education was oriented toward Mexicans so that Anglos would have access to a docile labor force for future exploitation.20 Ethnic Mexican children were often found outside the

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classroom and in the agricultural fields performing the much-needed work that fed America's population and generated profit for Anglo-American employers. Thus, the academic school in rural, agricultural areas was conveniently shortened according to the demand for farm work. Such demanding work patterns were not conducive for those students interested in higher education.  

Furthermore, the school facilities themselves were often poorly constructed and thinly insulated, if at all. Buildings were thus incredibly hot or unbearably cold, depending on the season. They often lacked basic amenities such as restrooms, heating, windows, or even adequate roofing. For example, in 1946 Mathis, Texas, education researcher George I. Sanchez wrote this about the Mexican School’s restroom:

Typical open pit privies with improper cover. No effort made to fly-proof or rat proof these privies. Inside, dirty and entrance littered with human feces. One is a girl's and the other is a boys' privy. No washing facilities whatsoever in any school toilet in the so-called 'Mexican Ward School'. Lids are not self-closing, and there is no toilet paper whatsoever.


These inferior conditions undoubtedly impacted the quality of education received by ethnic Mexican children. Furthermore, the education they received fell far short of what was provided to Anglo-American children. In the long term, the consequences of a limited education contributed to reproducing a social system where ethnic minorities were continually situated at the bottom rungs.

The historiography covering ethnic Mexican school segregation in the U.S. Southwest is vast. But, again, the majority of the work looks at urban areas leaving rural areas like Presidio County, Texas thinly researched. The historiography has produced a wealth of information on the strategic move to separate racialized-ethnic groups from the Anglo-American main schools. Within these works is found the historical experience of segregation often impregnated with interpretations on the ethnic groups’ identity formation or transformation. This historiographical shortfall is where my work fits into the discussion of ethnic Mexican school segregation in the U.S. In the rural settings of far west Texas, ethnic Mexicans were shaped by intersecting factors seen in more populated areas, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. As noted, in the case of less populated regions, including Presidio County, factors characterizing small communities

including low student numbers, the inability to recruit adequate numbers of qualified teachers, and limited resources, impacted the level of Americanization received by minority students.

The first waves of literature looking into ethnic group identity formation/socialization followed the contemporary thought of a linear shift away from the ethnic socio-cultural identity towards a more Americanized identity. For example, in a Master's thesis presented to the USC graduate school in 1938, Katherine H. Meguire describes that the "Mexican stock" needed a "culturally-specific" educational approach. According to her, "The Mexican does not come of purebred stock"; thus, "the Mexicans have ambition for a leisurely life that is an outgrowth of their ancestry."24 This stereotypical assumption seeped into the research and literature of the time, becoming a keystone in the educational processes, which was geared towards socializing ethnic communities directly into a more acceptable/Americanized identity. In theory, Americanization aimed to subtract the perceived negative ethnic socio-cultural identity and move them towards a more productive, more positive American identity. Meguire’s work, which was focused mainly on an urban setting, followed the prevalent ideology on the socialization of minorities as being linear; of being almost automatic, where a foreign and oft-seen negative cultural system was replaced with a more positive and superior one.

The historiography on minority integration at mid-twentieth century such as Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made American People* (1951), *The American People in the Twentieth Century* (1954), and his 1959 *The Newcomers: Negroes and Puerto Ricans in a Changing Metropolis* followed this conceptualization of ethnic group linear resocialization-identity formation once they came and attempted to integrate into the U.S. social milieu. Post-World War II scholarly works interpreted Americanization as a needed

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process to combat the socio-cultural forces that might create national disunity. At a time when “the nation” was in the midst of a culture-war fueled by a nascent Cold War mentality and the rising Civil Rights Movement, the literature felt the impact. Once again, the most important works focused primarily on urban settings.\(^{25}\) This gap in the historiography is where my contribution lies – in looking at rural schools because by looking at these rural areas a more nuanced picture of the segregation of ethnic Mexican children in the American school system will come into focus.

Questionings of the catchall conceptualization of immigrant identity formation came in subsequent works during the 1960s and 1970s. Monographs looking at Southern and Eastern European immigration problematized the immigrant experience as it pertained to the U.S. Joseph J. Barton's 1975 *Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians, and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950*; Virginia Yans-McLaughlin's 1977 *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930*; and John W. Briggs' 1977 *An Italian Passage: Immigrants to Three American Cities*, are works that suggested that immigration experiences to the U.S. could not be portrayed as monolithic. However, these works still seemed to conceptualize Americanization as neat and linear. The “Old World” immigrants, of course, did not have the cultural replenishment forces that immigrant groups from Latin America were afforded in the U.S. The flow of immigration from Europe was fairly minor compared to the steady stream arriving from Latin America. Thus, the literature's analysis on identity formation of European immigrant groups yielded a distinct interpretation—that of a more linear

resocialization/Americanization. The monographs, as their titles suggest, analyzed immigrant groups in American cities.26

The Chicano movement amplified the voice of Mexican American scholars, especially during the 1970s. Literature produced by Chicano scholars tapped into the funds of knowledge that shaped their identities, providing a lens which revealed their inner dynamics, including actual lived experiences in segregated spaces. For example, Rodolfo Acuña's 1972 *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* and Albert Camarillo's 1979 *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* provided a strong critique of Anglo-American dominance of Southwest society. Their monographs noted that a legacy of discrimination and oft-times violent racism created a complex Americanization process that at the same time attempted a forced assimilation into and a segregation from American society. Acuña made a wider analysis of the American Southwest including mention of rural areas. Camarillo concentrated on ethnic Mexican enclaves in California’s more populated areas. Overall, analysis of urban areas dominated the discussion in these works as well.27

Concerning ethnic Mexican immigration to the U.S., and the subsequent identity formation inherent in migrations, the 1980s brought research that further critiqued the so-called "melting pot" theory. Mario T. Garcia's 1981 *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920*; Arnoldo De Leon's 1982 *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900*, and 1983 *They Called*...
Them Greasers, and David Montejano's 1987 Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986, show that not all immigrants experiences were the same or even similar. Just like Acuña and Camarillo, this era of scholarship on ethnic Mexicans critiqued the Anglo-American aggressive approach in establishing a social order. Gender, directly or indirectly, was addressed in these works as a leading factor in the structuring of social, racial hierarchies in the U.S.²⁸

More specifically, and in discussing ethnic Mexican identity formation, the literature of the late twentieth century points out that the realities for ethnic minority groups, such as socioeconomic class, disqualify essentializing attempts to historicize the immigration experience. The historicizing illustrates a complex array of human behavior catered to the distinct contexts that migrants found themselves in. Moreover, the playing field, which was not level for all the migrating groups, made it challenging to present a one-size-fits-all approach in socializing them into a more Americanized identity. The literature of the 1980s and 1990s further revised earlier historiography to reflect this behavioral complexity.

In discussing Americanization of ethnic Mexicans in U.S. schools, Mario T. Garcia's Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920 told of the initial steps taken by the ethnic Mexican community of El Paso, with the help of an elderly Spaniard Olivas Aoy, to provide their children with basic education to make them competitive in a racially-constructed two-tiered job market of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century El Paso. The author contended that the education provided at the Mexican school put together by Aoy was geared

towards producing a readily available docile and well-trained employee pool.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, in his interpretation, a vocational-based curriculum and an English-only stance in the schools had clear motives in mind: the creation of an obedient and well-trained group, readily available for manual labor.\textsuperscript{30} The vocational training was designed to instill skills such as good housekeeping that channeled ethnic Mexican students once they left school to work in Anglo-American-owned and operated businesses and homes.\textsuperscript{31}

Continuing on the topic of ethnic Mexican education in the U.S., Guadalupe San Miguel's 1986 article "Status of the Historical Research on Chicano Education" presented a historiographical update on works focused on the education of ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. In this work, he argues that ethnic Mexican children were not passive but active learners and participated in ways prior works had not taken into account. Furthermore, San Miguel made a point to emphasize that these children's parents, along with other concerned citizens, were instrumental in bringing change to the less than adequate school settings.\textsuperscript{32} Anglo-American power structures could, in a sense, be persuaded to make relative improvements if approached in certain ways.\textsuperscript{33} García’s and San Miguel’s works center on the urban areas of America.

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\textsuperscript{30} See Garcia, Yosso and Barajas, "Few of the Brightest, Cleanest Mexican Children,” 2012.
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\textsuperscript{31} Garcia, \textit{Desert Immigrants}, 1981, 115, Garcia notes that in El Paso, ethnic Mexican students were channeled into vocational classes such as preparing boys for manual work and girls for domestic work.; Also see Garcia, Yosso, and Barajas_ "Few of the Brightest, Cleanest Mexican Children,” 2012.
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\textsuperscript{33} See Carey McWilliams, \textit{North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States} (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949); Lazaro Gonzalez interview by author Fort Hancock, Texas, Summer 2009, Don Lazaro was a Bracero from Mexico who took part in the program in the 1950s. The participant recalled the harsh treatment he received at hands of an Anglo-American employer known to the braceros as “El Aleman.”; See Howard Campbell, “A Tale of Two Families: The Mutual Construction of ‘Anglo’ and
In 1990, Gilberto González’s book, *Mexican and Mexican American Education in the Era of Segregation* argued that the segregated schooling approach taken in Americanizing the ethnic Mexican population had a specific goal in mind: to reproduce the racial status quo. Like García, González saw Anglo-American attempts to subjugate ethnic Mexicans completely and maintain a social order intact. In his view, the growing ethnic Mexican population could be kept under control in its subjugated space via education. Ethnic Mexican children were being Americanized, not to be integrated but to be socially and culturally competent enough to serve as manual workers in the Anglo-American world.\(^3^4\) González’s book provides a better view of the socio-cultural exchanges between Anglos and ethnic Mexicans in rural settings. The work provides one of the few glimpses into what was occurring in the lesser populated areas of the country in regards to ethnic Mexican education. But the trend of examining primarily urban settings continued into the 1990s.

George J. Sanchez's 1993 *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, looks at the shifting identity of the urban population of ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles. Sanchez's work focuses more extensively on the socialization and resocialization of ethnic Mexicans into the Anglo-American social milieu as they found their niche within an often-hostile environment. Sanchez’s primary contention is that ethnic Mexicans did not abandon their ethnic identity but rather synthesized the socio-cultural capital (i.e.,

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schemas) from both their Mexican background and the Anglo-American-dominated context where they now lived.\(^\text{35}\) The city of Los Angeles, one of the biggest urban centers in the U.S. and where a high concentration of Mexican Americans reside, is the focus of Sanchez’s book. The historiography on ethnic Mexican education outside the urban areas continued to be largely ignored although there were works that examined smaller communities.

One good example is Martha Menchaca's 1995 *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California* which looks at the history of racial relations in Santa Paula, California. Her work continues the discourse on how ethnic Mexicans were displaced in their community by Anglo power brokers. Menchaca tells the story of how ethnic Mexicans became segregated in the educational setting and the wider community. The separation of the groups was done according to social and legal mandates shaped by Anglo-Americans. Ethnic Mexicans', in the author's view, interactions with Anglo-Americans have been historically controlled by the Anglo-American power structure.\(^\text{36}\) Menchaca’s work looks at a smaller community in California but does not provide a deeper look at what happened in the segregated school setting in regards to Americanization. The research by Ruben Donato bridges the gaps between the urban setting and the rural areas especially in the conceptualization of identity formation.

In his 1997 *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans in the Civil Rights Era*, Donato tells of the prevalence of segregated schools for ethnic Mexicans in 1930. His research pointed out that 85 percent of ethnic Mexican children in the Southwest went to school in segregated classrooms or segregated schools away from their Anglo-American classmates.


Just like educator Hershel Manuel had found decades earlier, school administrators’ argument that segregation was but a mere temporary measure undertaken to Americanize ethnic Mexican students before a subsequent move to the "main" school was mere lip service. Ethnic Mexican children were rarely integrated with their Anglo-American peers. Donato’s research does provide both analysis of rural areas, such as in his work in Colorado, and the wider American Southwest. The research done by Donato provides a missing piece in the picture of the rural educational setting. The historiography on ethnic Mexican education, though, veers back to the urban settings.

In the first years of the twenty-first century, Guadalupe San Miguel continued his excellent work looking at the urban educational experience of ethnic Mexican children. In his 2001 monograph Brown, Not White that studies 1970s Houston, Texas, San Miguel examines the legal battles waged against the strategy of the Houston ISD to classify ethnic Mexican students as "white" and then integrate them with African American students to meet court-ordered desegregation mandates. This would have allowed Anglo-American students to attend all-white segregated schools away from non-white students. San Miguel’s exceptional work looks at an urban area.

In more recent work, Ruben Donato, along with co-researcher, Jarrod Hanson, 2017’s "Mexican-American Resistance to School Segregation" reminds us that the fight against ethnic Mexican student segregation is far from over. The authors state that systemic segregation processes at the state and local levels have historically denied the full integration of ethnic Mexican students based on what they deemed as academic needs. Still, in reality, that was not


According to state and local officials, ethnic Mexican students were denied integration by *de facto* segregation, not legal but cultural default. That is ethnic Mexican students because they needed to learn the English language were systematically segregated from their Anglo-American peers. Other Anglo-American cultural capital needed to be separated to acquire the needed skill sets to keep up with their Anglo-American, white peers. Donato and Hanson see it otherwise, stating that:

Though no state statutes explicitly authorized the segregation of Mexican-American students, these cases (*Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone et al.* (1914), *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930), *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931), *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946), *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi ISD* (1970)) illustrate how local school officials made intentional decisions that had the same effect. And when evaluating these actions, it is important to recognize that they should in fact be defined as *de jure* segregation. Legally, Mexican-American students may have been classified as White, but those students experienced segregation because local officials considered them not White. Schools didn't segregate them to better serve their educational needs or to pursue a societal demand to Americanize them. Rather, they chose to segregate Mexicans because of their social status, discriminating against them on the basis of color and race.39

All of these are excellent works that, at different degrees, look at the concept of the socialization/Americanization of the ethnic Mexican in the U.S. Of course, this is but a partial acknowledgment of the research into these schools for Mexicans. My research aims to add to the overall discussion on ethnic Mexican education, specifically looking at how this Americanized socialization, or resocialization, influenced identity formation of this group in a rural setting. Moreover, my work looks at this identity formation process from a sociological perspective where the crossroads of race, gender, class, sexuality, and plain humanity converge.

The historical evidence indicates that segregation had many negative outcomes. It must also be acknowledged that there were positive effects stemming from the socialization received

by ethnic Mexican students via the education received at the Mexican schools. It must be iterated, though, that this work is not an exoneration of the racialized discrimination, or a “white-washing” of history, that occurred in these segregated schools. Justifying ignorance-driven injustice, or injustice of any kind for that matter, commits as much harm and creates as much pain as the actual injustices themselves. That being said, it does not mean that scholars should avoid analyzing what took place in these social interactions whether these created more wrong than right.  

This is where scholars humbly step in and suggest alternate views.

The present work conducts a sociological analysis of the historical record documenting segregated school settings in a rural area using socialization theory. Anglo-American educators took it upon themselves to prepare ethnic Mexican children through an Americanized socialization to better negotiate an often unaccepting and even violent Anglo-American society.

The sociological theory of schemas will provide a lens from the Americanization process students in the U.S., specifically ethnic Mexican students, underwent to shape "American" identity.

The analysis, again, will venture into the intersectionality created by the social constructs of gender, sex, race, and class and how these factors combined as part of the Americanized socialization of ethnic Mexican students.  

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40 In my view, “wrong” and “right” are socially-constructed concepts loaded with layers in need of interpretation.

41 Cleofas Calleros Papers, 1860-1977, MS231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library, The concept of race in the mid-twentieth century can be characterized as a complex socio-politically constructed phenomenon and as always in a constant state of formation and reformation. A letter received by El Paso intellectual Cleofas Calleros from Frederick S. Haskin, Director of the El Paso Herald Information Bureau in Washington, D.C., in August 1921 is telling of the period’s conceptualization of race as it pertained to Mexicans. In the letter Mr. Haskin assures Calleros that “The majority of Mexicans are of mixed blood. Some are white, some red, and some black. The high class [sic] Mexicans of Spanish descent are white.” In this interpretation the Mexican “race” was composed of a hierarchical makeup where the “colored” Mexican was below the “high class” “white” Spanish descent Mexican. The social order of the American Southwest was not a “white” and “brown” dyad but a complex caste-like system.
particular interest in this work. Gender inequality, or patriarchy, was a leading factor in shaping the contested U.S.-Mexico borderlands and U.S. society. Anglo-American men wielded considerable power in shaping their physical and social surroundings to their liking. Whether the shaping or reshaping of the landscape was done legally, economically, sociably, or violently; white Anglo-American maleness was always at the forefront of Americanization. The gendered sociocultural force not only molded the spaces intruded by these men but also created the behaviors accepted, and expected, in said spaces. This concept I refer to as the *albus vater* or the "white patriarch" socialization schema.

Looking back throughout U.S. history, there are numerous examples of male Anglo Americans usurping power for their personal, familial, and racial group gain. For instance, during the colonial era in the Chesapeake, consolidating “the father’s power with that of the political patron and slaveholder” helped entrench Virginia’s male elite planters’ control over the social and economic sphere.\(^42\) Facilitating this reign in the wider Chesapeake region in terms of gender was the skewed population that is, that in the colony, the demographics were composed of a higher number of men. Therefore, there were a significant number of single or multiple male-inhabited residences. Thus, the prevailing familial structure was not that of a male head of household with female and child "underlings." This impeded the state-family symbiotic extension based on Filmerian ideology as seen in colonies with a relative abundance of women and a higher number of "nuclear" type families.\(^43\) There was, in a sense, a type of gender disequilibrium leading to a consolidation of the male-centered power structure.\(^44\)

\(^42\) Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 323.

\(^43\) Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, 13, 6, 8.

\(^44\) Ibid.
males took hold of a power they would not relinquish easily. This male-dominated ideology of how to run a household, a family, a community, or a nation became a key foundation of the Americanization process. Socialization of all groups, white and non-white, into the Anglo-American world followed this gendered model.

Cultural elements such as Protestant-based concepts of maleness (aka patriarchy) carried from the Old World to the Americas set the foundation for forming a Euro-dominated socio-political entity. As the march west across the North American continent proceeded for the descendants of the Euro-Anglo-American population, a white-patriarchal form of socialization (i.e., Americanization) engulfed those groups who had the fortune, or misfortune, of being absorbed by the expanding imperial colossus.45

To further elucidate the formation of identities on the border, the theoretical framework of Latina/o Critical Race Theory will be utilized to examine the experiences at the Mexican school and integrated school system in Presidio County, Texas, from the perspective of ethnic Mexicans.46 The historical actors, both Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican, interacted with one

45 Taylor, American Colonies, 152, 153, Chesapeake planters had completely instituted an elitist patriarchal society by the eighteenth century.; Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs, 324, 323, During this time, planter gentlemen reached their peak in the patriarchy as their power over others became unparalleled. This "omnipotence" produced a great anxiety in these men, especially when their dependents did not take their predicament passively. These acts prompted the challenged patriarchal system to become deeper entrenched at the family level and, more importantly, at the societal level. Slaves ran away, wives did not obey their husbands, and children did not heed patriarchal advice. In response to these setbacks, the now white patriarch master in the Chesapeake could have his "[s]laves … whipped, shackled, or medicated; wives and enslaved women [could be] compelled to engage in sexual intercourse; [and] children's diets and bodily functions [would be] required [to undergo] careful monitoring."

46 Jean Stefancic, “Latino and Latina Critical Theory: An Annotated Bibliography,” California Law Review 85, Issue 5 Article 9 (October 1997): 425-498; Also see Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Critical Race Theory: An Annotated Bibliography," Virginia Law Review 79, no. 2 (Mar. 1993): 461–516, Critical Race Theory posits that racist beliefs or racism has become embedded within American social structures to the point that individual racists do not have to exist so that white supremacy and white privilege to continue to be pervasive within it. The power of institutional racism has become so normalized that perhaps unconsciously the marginalization of non-whites has remained prevalent throughout U.S. society.
another, creating and shaping each other’s perception of identity. As McWilliams stated, both ingroup and outgroup status held simultaneously mentally concretized being "Anglo" and being "Mexican." Both dominant and minority group members, although not having equal voice, did have their own understanding of the shared life experiences in the contested regions of far west Texas. That being said, then, even when the Anglo-American educators perceived good in what they were doing at the school, the ethnic Mexican children had their perspectives of the education they were receiving at the ward schools. Latina/o Critical Race Theory allows for the perception of the ethnic Mexican students to take center stage in interpreting the social engagements taking place on the ground.47

To present a more balanced analysis, the concept of storytelling or counter-storytelling will be utilized to examine the educational experiences of ethnic Mexican students that attended the Mexican schools in Presidio County in the late nineteenth century through the late 1940s.48

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48 D.T. Armour, “Problems in the Education of the Mexican Child,” Texas Outlook 16, (Dec. 1932): 29-31, as quoted in San Miguel, Let All of Them Take Heed, 1987, 29. The author noted that social position was a factor taken into account in the admission to or rejection from the regular school.
The historical accounts of both Anglo-American educators and ethnic Mexican students will be presented and analyzed through a sociological lens to present a hypothetical interpretation of how ethnic Mexican children were shaped into Americans at the segregated schools of Presidio County, Texas.

The concept of identity formation is a fascinating one to say the least. The concept becomes much more intriguing when the group under analysis is the ethno-racial community that the scholar researching the topic belongs to: Americans of Mexican descent. The questions abound when attempting to decipher the enigma of what makes one who one is. How did ethnic Mexicans become Americanized, and to what extent? First of all, what constitutes being American? Can the concept of Americanization itself be defined? In the social sciences, there are as many conceptualizations of the process of identity formation/acculturation/assimilation as there are research studies. For example, social scientific models of identity/acculturation/assimilation have posited that the transition was clear cut from a less to more and ultimately complete assimilation into the mainstream Anglo-American socio-cultural sphere. Later models have contested this interpretation, opting to present the processes as multifaceted while manifesting in various forms and levels in different behavioral traits depending on the context being observed. In other words, there is no consensus or consistency in interpreting the concept.

The interpretations of the concept are very subjective, and even when a scientifically-based approach is taken, there is an arbitrary conceptualization taking place in measuring individuals' and group Americanization. I argue that the subjectivity inherently permeating any attempts at measuring ethereal concepts may problematize the data generated by the research. In

other words, subjective data is interpreted as concrete, irrefutable evidence without a solid scientific foundation. I further contend that socially-constructed processes at work, also known as human behavior, are so diverse that they cannot be measured. At least not satisfactorily.

As presented in the historiography and the social scientific literature, the concept of acculturation, which is central to Americanization, has not been fully defined. Just looking at the literature as to how the socialization processes work, for example, in healthcare, one can appreciate the inability of scholars to come to a consensus as to how to measure or define the concepts.\(^5\) That being the case, no attempt will be made to do so in this interpretation of Presidio County's segregated school system. The approach chosen is to present actions taken on the ground by the historical actors in everyday interactions as they negotiated the school and post-prep school settings of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century Presidio County. The details analyzed will give a better sense of the concept of Americanization in action. Educators' and students' interactions as well as choices made by either group in the classrooms, extra-curricular activities including athletics and academic undertakings, and even life choices made after graduation provide a more detailed view of how much ethnic Mexican youth internalized the Americanized socialization provided to them by the albus vater-driven school system.

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To reiterate, educational segregation policies in the United States, particularly in far west Texas, were shaped by notions of race, class, and gender. In this work, I do not contest this. Analyses of school segregation have supported that racial-cultural, gender, and class biases were present despite the claims that ethnic Mexican attended "ward" schools, for example, only to learn English and thus become better prepared to enter the integrated settings.\[51\] With this in mind, race-culture, class, and gender influenced the type of education ethnic Mexicans were afforded. Still, the intersection of these was not so clear-cut to blame any particular factor. On-the-ground actions taken by both Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican historical actors provide a much more complexity-laden environment than have analyses placing a monolithic omnipotent impact on, for example, race. A combination of distinct factors came together to limit and expand educational opportunities for ethnic Mexicans at different junctures in the past.

Although the balance of race relations was skewed, it does not mean that this imbalance permeated throughout every moment of interaction between the groups. First of all, minority group members were not powerless against racist-sexist-classist social, political, and legal fronts. Likewise, although perhaps guided by temporal racial expectations, dominant group members were not powerless against these same social, political, and legal fronts. At the schools, both Anglo-American educators and ethnic Mexican students created their stories and histories as they faced one another in actual interpersonal situations. This is where the concept of storytelling becomes vital in interpreting the past. That is, let the historical actors, both Anglo-American and

\[51\] Cleofas Calleros Papers, 1860-1977, MS231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library, The concept of race in the mid-twentieth century can be characterized as a complex socio-politically constructed phenomenon and as always in a constant state of formation and reformulation. A letter received by El Paso intellectual Cleofas Calleros from Frederick S. Haskin, Director of the El Paso Herald Information Bureau in Washington, D.C., in August 1921 is telling of the period’s conceptualization of race as it pertained to Mexicans. In the letter Mr. Haskin assures Calleros that “The majority of Mexicans are of mixed blood. Some are white, some red, and some black. The high class Mexicans of Spanish descent are white.” In this interpretation the Mexican “race” was composed of a hierarchical makeup where the “colored” Mexican was below the “high class” “white” Spanish descent Mexican. The social order of the American Southwest was not a “white” and “brown” dyad but a complex caste-like system.
ethnic Mexican, speak and explain for themselves what they experienced from their respective points of view.

The period discussed begins in the 1500s, when the first documented European and indigenous American encounters occurred. The central analysis on ethnic Mexican identity formation will begin in the mid to late nineteenth century, which is the period when Progressive Era ideologies began to instigate the movement that came to reform American society and the first public school was started in Presidio County. The examination will proceed to the late 1940s or roughly the period when the Civil Rights Movement began to take on a wider scope throughout the United States.

**Chapter Outlines**

Chapter 1 starts with the Spanish colonial period looking at the Europeans’ attempt to resocialize the natives’ sociocultural identity. The analysis moves on to examination of the Mexican era and the fledgling country’s inability to create a public school system. The Anglo conquest of Texas in 1836 and, so thus by extension, the later annexation of the territory by the United States in 1848 were partly justified by this lack of educational opportunities in the contested region. The influx of Anglo Americans to the conquered region slowly but surely modified the socialization schemas shaping the newer generations of area residents. The chapter examination continues with a look at the state of Texas’ attempt at providing education to its growing school-age population. The chapter closes with a look at schooling in the mid to later decades of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the Progressive Era and the first schools paying particular attention to the first schools opened in Presidio County at Fort Davis and Marfa.
Chapter 2 examines the Presidio County schools as Progressivism expanded throughout the United States. The school system in Marfa is given a more focused analysis especially after it became segregated in the late 1890s. The operation of the fully segregated Mexican school in Marfa begins in the first decade of the twentieth century. The chapter notes the impact of immigration and intra-state migration and how they reshaped regions across the U.S., Presidio County’s demography was not the exception. For instance, the Mexican Revolution brought an influx of immigrants from Mexico increasing the numbers of ethnic Mexican children which in turn helped justify segregation in the Presidio County schools.

Chapter 3 begins with the opening of the 1920s and the arrival of Jesse Blackwell to Marfa. The school district hoped to bring some measure of alleviation to the inequities in education observed at the school especially as these were exacerbated during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Although nativist sentiments had prompted a Mexican Repatriation thinning out the ethnic Mexican community in the U.S., the school numbers continued to grow at the Marfa Mexican school. The chapter looks at Blackwell’s tough-love approach and how it ameliorated the stressful Depression era situation at the segregated school. Furthermore, Americanization students at the Mexican school came of age during the period accelerated by Blackwell’s patriarchal tutelage.

Chapter 4 looks at the 1940s as the world entered military conflict. Blackwell students continued to make the move into the integrated Marfa High School. The chapter examines how ethnic Mexican student participation in athletic and academic activities at the high school furthered their Americanization. The integrated setting provided some measure of desegregation but the color line was unofficially observed and guarded via defacto segregation. The chapter closes as Uncle Sam beckoned young Americans, especially young men, into action against
fascism. Former segregated school students, in a demonstration of their American patriotism, responded to the call.

Chapter 5 examines the impact World War II had on the Marfa school and the community at large. More specifically, though, the analysis focuses on how the era impacted Presidio County’s ethnic Mexican identity formation. For example, Mexican school students became an integral part of those being summoned to defend our country’s ideals. In doing so, they proved their Americanization in every major battle of the global war. The chapter concludes by examining how ethnic Mexican students from Presidio County made contributions, some by making the ultimate sacrifice, to the war effort further proving their allegiance and more importantly, their American identity.
Chapter 1: Origins of the School System in the Presidio County, Texas Region

The Spanish Era

The name La Junta is Spanish for “the place where things meet”—in this particular case, a native trade and agricultural center situated at the meeting point of the Rio Bravo and Rio Conchos—was the name given to the area by Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century. Historical documentation on children’s schooling prior to the arrival of Anglo-Americans in Presidio County in west Texas’s Big Bend area is scant. The silence of the historical record has led to a belief that “there were no schools…during the Spanish and Mexican periods of its history.” It is true that formal schooling may not have been available during Spanish colonial era in the La Junta region. Nonetheless, there was a semblance of organized education beginning in the seventeenth century put together by Catholic clergy and missionaries.

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52 Texas Beyond History, Site Map, “La Junta de los Rios” https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/junta/index.html (accessed March 23, 2020) “La Junta de los Rios” is located in what is now Presidio County, Texas and the Northeastern part of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico—the present-day twin “city” region of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico and Presidio, Texas, USA.; Ralph England, “Presidio Has a History Far Back: Border Town was Site of Indian Communities,” The Big Bend Sentinel, September 1, 1950, 11, The author states that on June 2, 1715, Sergeant Major Juan Antonio Trasvina y Retes. of the Spanish founded the mission of Nuestro Serafico Padre San Frisco de la Junta de los Rios. England also states that the name given to the area by the Spanish missionaries later that century was Navidad en las Cruces, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf (accessed June 18, 2020); Cynthia Radding, Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 34, Radding notes that the combination of church and state, known as patronato real, in the conquest and subjugation of the indigenous peoples of America followed a process of resettlement called reducciones or reduction of the natives’ living space. In order to create a more manageable situation, the natives were expected to settle either within the mission grounds or at least close enough to have easier access to them.


Mission proto-schools, as I define them, were run by the Roman Catholic Church, in conjunction with the Spanish crown, as part of a unified effort to congregate the various nomadic indigenous groups in a single settlement (*congregacion*), so as to teach them the Spanish language, agricultural techniques, and craft industries, and most importantly the Catholic faith. The proto-curriculum, which was taught by these Franciscan missionaries, was embedded with European concepts of gender and conceptualizations of gendered social roles that began a subtle restructuring of what it meant to be masculine and feminine in the indigenous societies of *La Junta*. For instance, the curriculum fostered a sense of agricultural work, which was identified as masculine whereas domestic work was coded as feminine. The native social structure was more egalitarian, but once Europeans arrived the indigenous people were expected to follow the male-oriented power structure of their colonizers. In other words, men were to be seen as the heads of their households and communities at large.55

However, despite the mission schools’ best efforts to reeducate natives along European gender lines, they did not have their desired effect. Spaniards never fully domesticated or “civilized” the native peoples. Their goal of reshaping indigenous identity so as to better control indigenous societies were never fully actualized.56 Instead, native people were either subjugated


56 See William B. Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio, 1750-1858* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988). Griffen states that, for example, when the Spanish attempted to “civilize” the Apache, a notoriously mobile group, by requiring permanent settlement, it ended in failure. Beginning with the Spanish establishment of the presidios in northern New Spain, Apache were constantly expected to live and abide by regulations that went against their traditional lifestyle. Among the many restrictions that were set out by the newcomers was that the nomadic lifestyle of the Apache had to become a thing of the past and exchanged for a more “civilized” sedentary mode of living near or on the mission-presidio complex. The Apache took on a pragmatic
through violence, relegated to spaces reserved specifically for them, or absorbed gradually into ever-growing European and Euro-American populations; still, in some cases they maintained their traditional lifestyle well into the nineteenth century.  

Like many native groups, the *La Junta* native peoples of the Presidio-Big Bend region resisted the newcomers’ attempts to modify their sociocultural and linguistic identities.  

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approach and made the change only when sustenance through “traditional” means became nonviable and rationing at the presidio was available as a substitute food source. This radical transformation did not last for long. When funding went low and rations were not available, first because of Spain’s European wars and later during Mexican administration of the presidio, the Apache sought to supplement their resources, for sustenance and economic gain, through their traditional nomadic ways.; See Cynthia Radding, *Wandering People: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 7. In another region of present-day Texas, not only were the native groups maintaining a semblance of their traditional cultural expressions but as Barr contends, “[i]n this particular ‘colonial’ world, Indians not only retained control of the region but also asserted control over Spaniards themselves…No stories of Indian assimilation, accommodation, resistance, or perseverance here.” In the time period between the 1680s to the 1780s it was the Native American groups that dominated the interaction with the European imperialists and not the other way around. Barr utilizes the Caddo’s interactions with the French and the Spanish as these European powers encroached on native lands in late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries to highlight the cultural differences shaping these encounters. While the French sociocultural norms were, in the author’s view, more compatible with Caddo society, Spanish social conventions were quite distinct to those of the native group. This could not have been truer than in the way the Spaniards viewed women and women’s position within society. Deeming their culture as superior, the Spanish rejected any notion of accommodation to native ways opting to use military might and religious zeal to impose their will over the Caddo. The indigenous group then forced the Europeans out of their land.; Theodore E. Long and Jeffrey K. Hadden. “A Reconception of Socialization,” *Sociological Theory*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1985, pp. 39–49. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/202172](http://www.jstor.org/stable/202172) (Accessed 4 June 2021). The concept of “socialization” as used in this context refers to what Long and Hadden basically define (on page 42) as “the process of creating and incorporating new members of a group from a pool of newcomers, carried out by members and their allies.”  

57 The Native American or “indio” mixed to various degrees with the Spanish to become mestizos or ethnic Mexicans.  

58 Bradley Folsom, “Spanish La Junta de los Ríos: The Institutional Hispanicization of an Indian Community on New Spain’s Northern Frontier, 1535-1821,” MA thesis, University of North Texas, 2008, In ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304547662). [https://www-proquest-com.utep.idm.oclc.org/pqdtglobal/docview/304547662?770CDEC5B1E6474CPQ/2?accountid=7121](https://www-proquest-com.utep.idm.oclc.org/pqdtglobal/docview/304547662?770CDEC5B1E6474CPQ/2?accountid=7121) (accessed July 31, 2021); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Radding, *Wander People*, 3, 15, 8, 249, 263, 300, 310. The mission, along with the presidio, in Radding’s view, was but only “a site of cultural political confrontation” between the parties involved. Along these lines, as the distinct ethnic groups vied for control of geographical space the environment took on a mode of constant reconfiguration being altered by human occupation. By extent the value ascribed to the land constantly changed according to the system holding the upper hand in this back-and-forth battle. And thus, as the environment had always been a key factor in shaping native group cultural identity and vice versa, the Spanish *entradas* came to be understood as one more system influencing cultural expression and thus in need of subsequent cultural rebirth or re-adaptation. Radding calls this social ecology. An excellent example of this concept is the religious syncretism that occurred within La Junta and other colonial Spanish presidio-mission complexes. As Spanish colonial rule stiffened and Christianity was imposed on the indigenous groups, the latter adapted by either incorporating this new system of
 Nonetheless, due to their sedentary lifestyle in the river valley, they were more amenable to the Spanish-Catholic cultural reeducation curriculum than many of their peer groups throughout Texas. Unlike other indigenous communities who maintained a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifeway, the native groups at *La Junta* had already adopted a more agricultural-based life by the time of colonial encounter. Similar to the *reducción* or “reduction” expected of them by the Catholic Church and Spanish crown, the area’s traditional way of life afforded the Spaniards easier access to the native population and, at least in theory, a better chance to indoctrinate them into the Spanish social systems and cultural mores. Despite the native people’s ostensible amenability to Spanish colonial reeducation, those missionizing efforts largely failed.

The Spanish failure to take full control of the region throughout the colonial period can be attributed to several factors, among them: early Spanish *entradas* focused mostly on finding mineral wealth, take for example the fascination early adventurers had with finding the fabled cities of gold mentioned by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca; native resistance to making the cultural changes imposed on them; instability created by the Spanish War of Succession (1701-14) and the subsequent Bourbon efforts to exert greater control over its colonial peripheries by constructing more missions around Presidio; and outright native hostilities towards the Spanish.\(^{59}\) The Church’s failure to advance religious-centered education—even with their myopic, well-intended goals—was not the last time that an educational approach was enlisted to shape the younger generation of Presidio-Big Bend residents. Spanish colonial rule ended in the region in 1821, but the subsequent Mexican state, like its Spanish predecessor, had little success

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\(^{59}\) Ibid.
establishing a school system, especially in the northern provinces—including the La Junta region.

The Mexican Period in Texas

The 1824 Constitution of Mexico outlined a blueprint for state-controlled education systems. State-controlled education was instituted in the constitution for the state of Coahuila y Tejas, the region where Presidio County was to be situated later on. The education plan provided guidelines for the establishment of free public schools in all the major communities in the state but did not outline how these were to be funded. Later in 1829, further guidelines detailing how to provide free education were presented to local authorities in at least six prominent towns in Coahuila y Tejas, including the important community of Nacogdoches. However, the goal of free public education in that state never came to full fruition. The lack of free public education was a major source of discontent for many of the state’s residents—both Tejano residents and, especially, Anglo-American residents who were transplants to the northern Mexican province.

These Anglo-American immigrants were finding it difficult to modify their sociocultural identity into a form more in tune with the diverse communities of Mexican society. Among the changes Mexican authorities required of Americans moving into Coahuila y Tejas was that they convert to Catholicism, learn the Spanish language, and, after 1829, abolish their practice of slavery. In my view, formal schooling may have been the answer to making the Anglo-

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American community living in the northern Mexican state into full-fledged Mexicans. By providing immigrants from the United States, young and old alike, with a Mexicanized socialization through formal education, the Anglo-American colonists would have been more accepting of becoming Mexican nationals.

Post-independence Mexico, however, was swamped with various internal problems, including an ongoing public debate over whether to maintain a federalist government structure or centralize governing power in Mexico City. With a continuous onslaught of political instability, public education was not a top priority for the fledgling Mexican state. For Texians and especially Tejanos, free public education was of utmost importance.

In fact, along with the question of slavery in Coahuila y Tejas, one of the main grievances presented by the revolting Texians against the Mexican government was its inability to establish a system of education in the state. In their own declaration of independence, Anglo-Americans presented the need for formal education as a marker of civilization. That said, sparse school attendance exhibited by Anglo-American children and the failure of authorities to punish their truancy would suggest that the Anglo-American’s education grievance served merely as a pretext for resorting to revolution, at least in part. Still, the fact was that when the Texians and Tejanos declared their independence from Mexico in 1836, the question of education was at the forefront of their concerns. A document entitled Unanimous Declaration of Independence, by the Delegates of the People of Texas, in General Convention, at the town of Washington, on the second day of March, 1836 states that,

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It [the Mexican government] has failed to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources, (the public domain:) and although it is an axiom in political science, that unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self [-]government. 64

These words—citing the most advanced social scientific consensus available at the time—could easily have been uttered in later time periods. Along with seeking to preserve the benefits afforded to them by white supremacy, the Texians perhaps also feared being excluded from full participation in the Mexican political sphere and thus limited in their ability to access the economic gains they had sought when first migrating to Coahuila y Tejas. They claimed that their lack of Mexican cultural capital, including Spanish language skills, could not be improved without a formal education system in place. 65

It is my contention that when a significant portion of the population is denied access to established educational resources, it situates them in a position from which social advancement is challenging or even impossible. Arrested development from lack of education and diminished enlightenment caused by educational inaccessibility can be seen in the affected group’s inability to experience full civil liberty and self-determination. Low levels of education not only diminish academic knowledge, but also affect the acquisition of sociocultural, political, and legal capital. Thus, full participation in society is severely hindered without access to equitable forms of education. Thus, in the case I am considering, protest and then revolt, was in the view of Coahuila y Tejas’s Anglo-American immigrants (many of them illegal) their last and best resort.


65 Ibid.
The Anglo-American Conquest of Texas

The Mexican government lost control of its northern province in 1838. The loss of this important territory to the rebel Texians and Tejanos was but a glimpse of events soon to come—an all-out invasion by the ambitious United States in 1846. By early 1848 representatives from the U.S. and Mexico had signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, effectively ending the conflict. Mexico was forced to relinquish more than half of its territorial claims as part of the agreement. The persons living in the conquered territory who were now deemed “foreign” were faced with a choice: they could either leave the region or, if they chose to stay, they would be given a status of an American quasi-citizenship with limited rights. Property rights of former Mexican citizens would be recognized under U.S. law, at least in theory; the legal recognition by extension included the use of communal lands and holdings. Because of the questionable position ethnic Mexicans had within the conquered territory, the new “Mexican-Americans” now had to continually negotiate their American citizenship and the legitimacy of ownership and use of “their” lands. By the mid-nineteenth century, a new era of U.S. rule had come to the region once known as La Junta.

After the United States conquered the northern region of Coahuila y Tejas during the U.S. war with Mexico, a significant number of U.S. citizens of Anglo-American stock began to arrive

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66 See David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), Ethnic Mexicans who were U.S. citizens, for example, could make use of the judicial systems to settle legal disputes. When cases involved disputes with Anglo-Americans though, ethnic Mexicans rarely took their grievance before courts.; Margarita Piñon interview by author, El Paso, Texas, March 17, 2014, Apprehension towards seeking legal recourse by ethnic Mexicans against Anglo-Americans became characteristic throughout the former group’s experience in the U.S. The interviewee recalled when her sister was severely punished by an elementary teacher at the segregated school in Ft. Hancock, Texas in the 1940s-1950s. The beating left the child nearly bleeding but her parents did not seek legal recourse against the Anglo-American educator in fear of retaliation.

from the eastern and central United States, first as fortune-seeking single men and later as entire family units. Soon, the outpost of Marfa, Texas in Presidio County became a “thriving” social center, especially once the railroad fully arrived on the scene in the early 1880s.68

Many Anglo-American men who arrived early in this migration wave married ethnic Mexican women who then gave birth to the first generation of “white” Americans in the region. Historian Cecilia Thompson recounts several of these biracial unions in her work on the origins of the Anglo-American community of Marfa and the county of Presidio more broadly. For instance, she notes that soon after the U.S. war with Mexico, several Anglo-Americans came or returned to the region to start anew. Around a year after U.S. Army Colonel A. W. Doniphan’s front successfully captured Chihuahua City in March 1848, an officer under his command, Major Ben Leaton, came to Presidio. The American military man purchased farmland and a building then-known as Fortín de San José, which is near the site where the Misión del Apóstol Santiago once stood. Thus, Major Ben Leaton became one of the first Anglo-American farmers to settle in the Presidio valley. Like other Anglo-American migrants who came to the conquered Mexican territory, he married a Mexican woman by the name of Juana Pedroza, and the couple had three children—William, Isabella, and Joseph.69 Leaton, of course, would not be the only Anglo-American trying his luck out in the far west Texas frontier.

68 Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 1, 47-173; Thompson’s descriptive term is reminiscent of the romanticized historiography produced in earlier historical research. The area had actually been one filled with constant on-goings social, cultural, economic, and to some extent even educational before the arrival of the Americans to the Presidio region, See chapters 1 and 2 in Cecilia Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 1, for a description of the “thriving” pre-American social sphere in the area.

Milton Faver Goes West

The tale of “Don Melitón” serves as another example of the “go west young man, go west” ethos so prevalent in the retelling of the expansion of the United States. Milton Faver, a native of either Virginia or Missouri (per his census records), came to the Presidio region in the 1850s as he was trying to evade the law after getting into an altercation—a confrontation with fisticuffs quickly escalated, leading both men to resort to the more “manly” way to resolve the dispute. The future Don Melitón, perhaps a better and quicker shot, struck his opponent and dropped him on the spot. Faver quickly made his way out of town, believing he had killed the man in the duel. The far reaches of the border with Mexico seemed like a good place to avoid the law; so as many other outlaws before him had done, Milton Faver made his way down south. The eighteen-year-old American did not stop in Texas as he crossed the border into old Mexico. Once there, he earned a living working in a flour mill for one Don Francisco de León of Meoque, Mexico. In an interesting case of resocialization and “acculturation,” the American

June 21, 2020). Upon the death of her husband Ben in 1852, Juana Pedroza de Leaton y Hall, was deposed of her lands by one John D. Burgess. Ms. Pedroza de Leaton y Hall had remarried to an Anglo-American named Edward Hall, perhaps sensing her vulnerability in a fast-changing sociopolitical atmosphere in the county. Burgess acquired a deed of trust on the Leaton property for $1061 and quickly had the lands surveyed. The Leaton-Halls were kicked out of the property, Hall refused to leave and Burgess had him executed in the middle of the night in the summer of 1862. Juana and the three Leaton children escaped to Ojinaga in fear for their lives.


Southerner began to be transformed by his new surroundings. Faver went through a process of adaption or assimilation in order to not only survive but thrive in his new surroundings. As had happened to other foreigners living amongst native ethnic Mexicans, the young man became “Mexicanized” or at least well-versed in the local/ Mexican culture, especially after marrying into the community.

The Making of “Don Melitón”

Social scientific concepts of assimilation and acculturation have fallen out of favor in present-day analytical social historicizing as the agency of those undergoing identity formation or reformation, a concept known as resocialization in sociological research, is rightfully acknowledged. The processes of assimilation and acculturation in, for example, immigration historiography assumed a complete cultural transformation by minority groups coming into the country as they left behind their ethnic-traditional culture in favor of an American identity.


74 Charles Spielberger, Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology (New York: Academic Press, 2004) 615, Cultural assimilation is defined as the process “a minority group or culture majority group or assume the values, behaviors, and beliefs of another group whether fully or partially.” Similar to the theorized process of assimilation, acculturation refers to minority group or culture complete assimilation into the majority/dominant culture.
Historical actors, like people in the present, ought not be essentialized as powerless and voiceless pawns transformed by dominant sociocultural expressions, as people often make conscious decisions about what actions to take to better their lot in a new context. However, identity formation, or socialization, occurs both consciously and unconsciously. Even when endowed with agency, individuals undergoing socialization in a dominant culture may not be fully aware, if they are aware at all, of the forces shaping the sense of "self" that they will identify as or with throughout their lives. No one is immune to this shaping or transformation, and especially not minority persons, as all human beings acquire their social skills through interaction with other human beings in the course of the socialization process.

Self-identity, or a person’s perception of who they are socially and culturally, is constantly being shaped and reshaped by amorphous and almost imperceptible sociocultural schemas that are nonetheless very powerful. The American Psychological Association defines sociocultural or social schemas as:

[C]ognitive structure[s] of organized information, or representations, about social norms and collective patterns of behavior within society. Whereas a self-schema involves a person’s conception of herself or himself as an individual and in terms of a particular personal role (or roles) in life, social schemata often underlie behavior of the person acting within group contexts—particularly larger group or societal contexts.
For example, the putatively “correct” way to speak, act-behave, dress, worship, eat, etc. in an Anglo-dominated context will be considered those of the Anglo-American type. Anglo-Americans, having been raised as “Anglo-Americans” will have a high-degree of competence in following the socially privileged way to speak, act-behave, dress, worship, eat, etc. and have these competencies at their disposal when negotiating their social interactions. Ethnic minority groups, on the other hand, either have to undergo an Americanization process or be re-socialized so as to learn the socially dominant way to speak, act-behave, dress, worship, eat, etc. The dominant group’s sociocultural schemas, and the internalization of these schemas, are especially responsible for the molding and transformation of ethnic minority group identities. These social schemas inevitably shape the identities of individuals, and societies at large, whether the participants are aware of them or not, especially when the schemas are of the institutional type and control of the social world. It would be very difficult to function if we went about our everyday life without prior knowledge or expectations about the people and events around us. As such, schemas are theorized to be functional and essential for our well-being. As existing mental structures, they help us to understand the complexity of social life. Schemas help guide what we attend to, what we perceive, what we remember and what we infer. They are like mental short-cuts we use to simplify reality.);

According to the author, schemas are universal as all humans use them to make sense of and better negotiate their surroundings. As such, the schemas are shaped by a particular group’s social and cultural upbringing. In other words, social schemata are socio-culturally-specific.; See Paul Dimaggio, “Culture and Cognition,” Annual Review of Sociology, 23 (1997) 263-287 Annual Review of Sociology. JSTOR, https://0-www-jstor-org.lib.utep.edu/stable/2952552?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=dimaggio+AND+jid%3A%28j100663%29&searchUri=%2Faction%2FDooBasicSearch%3FQuery%3D%2BDimaggio%26filter%3Djid%3A253A10.2307%252F100663&ab_segments=0%2FSYC-5910%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3AAb81a9a26619bb119cc823e5b0a7c5&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (accessed July 16,2021).

79 Theodore E. Long and Jeffrey K. Hadden, “A Reconceptualization of Socialization,” Sociological Theory, vol. 3, no. 1, 1985, 39–49, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/202172 (accessed June 4, 2021); See Steven G. Brint, Schools and Societies (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1998), Brint identifies three dimensions of socialization related to schooling: behavioral conformity, moral conformity, and cultural conformity. Behavioral conformity refers to expectations to where a student must self-regulate or is expected to learn to self-regulate his/her body’s physical actions in order to fit into the school environment. Moral conformity where the student must internalize the preferred understanding of what is right and wrong, this type of socialization, according to Brint, is done through teachers’ emphasis on the desirability of certain virtues, such as hard work, equity, being respectful, etc. Cultural conformity where students learn accepted or deemed socioculturally “correct” perspectives, behaviors, language, manners, expressions, etc. In the case of Mexican schools, the preference for Anglo-American sociocultural schemas encompassing all three types of conformity were taught and expected.
(e.g., those imbedded in the Americanizing socialization that takes place in schools). This analysis in no way ignores or lessens the value of a person’s individual agency in rejecting, accepting, or taking part in the socialization process; rather, it is an acknowledgement of the power that society has over an individual’s need to be accepted into said society. In other words, persons may either be aware of which behaviors they should partake in to achieve social acceptance or they may be not aware—as in the case of young children whose identity is being created without their full awareness or conscious consent. Children, at least in theory, will more readily emulate and internalize the social dominant and approved behaviors that are being instilled in them by the dominant schema educators. In the case of the segregated schools, the dominant (Americanized) schema educators were Anglo-American school teachers. These teachers were entrusted to make obedient, proud “Americans” out of the uneducated children brought before them.

In effect, people are being continually shaped or transformed by social forces which expose them to the dominant society’s sociocultural schemas as embedded within the socialization process. Thus, conscious or unconscious learning, or combination of conscious and unconscious learning, shape and transform self-identity in all outgroup members—in this case

Institutional schemas or schemata, as used in this work, refers to the social norms and collective patterns of deemed appropriate behavior needed to negotiate life within a dominant society. The concept also refers to the systematic approach used in formal government institutions such as schools to inculcate social norms and collective patterns of the dominant society in the institution’s participants.

ethnic Mexicans, who are attempting to, or are expected to, integrate into the dominant society. Young children go through Americanized socialization at school, and older children and adults (as in the case of Faver) are re-socialized into an identity more similar to that of dominant group members. To whatever degree this occurs according to the in-group’s perceptions, the outsider may or may not be allowed to participate in the dominant society. Milton Faver was to become, and was accepted as, even more “Mexican” once he literally married into the ethnic Mexican culture. Through an acquaintance, Faver met and then married a young Mexican woman named Francisca Ramírez. A son, Juan, was born from their union. There is no mention in available records of other children born to the Faver-Ramírez couple. This was quite unusual at the time, as the families in that era frequently had numerous children. Whatever the reason, finances may have not been one of them, as Faver steadily moved up the socioeconomic ladder, eventually acquiring the local honorific title “Don Meliton.” Through hard work, much luck, and committed adaptation to his new surroundings, Faver made the extraordinary move from flour

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82 It is my contention that Americanized social schemas, as all other psychosocial constructs, cannot be easily defined. Precise definitions of social schemas or even a precise definition of what constitutes a “group,” again, are not so easily defined. An Americanized social schema and the American identity created by internalizing and then acting out (behaving) the norms associated with “Americanization” may be theoretically conceptualized as observed behavior and espoused ideologies based on white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant collective cultural ideologies. For example, speaking the English language, following (whether or not actual worship occurs) the Protestant Christian dogmas, individualist-minded, patriarchal-male-orientation, etc. maybe fathomed as being Anglo-American traits. But, of course, any list portending to describe an entire group will fall short and only end up putting together a list of stereotypical characteristics. Being “American” cannot be adequately and much less precisely defined. Only those belonging to the “American” group know “who” and when that “who” is and is not an “American.”; See Theodore E. Long and Jeffrey K. Hadden, “Reconception of Socialization,” Sociological Theory, Spring, 1985, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), 39-49; See Aurelio Saldana, “The Effects of Acculturation on Healthcare in the Mexican-Origin Community: El Paso County, Texas,” (Masters Thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2010), 10. The author suggests that the concept of “the ‘group’ [and by extension the social schemas followed by the ‘group’] may in fact be more apt to be called or categorized as a multi-subcultural ‘mass’ with complex, diverse inner behavioral dynamics.”

83 Killis Almond and Sue Moss, “Historic Resources Associated with Milton Faver-Agriculturalist,” National Register of Historic Places-Multiple Property Documentation Form, United States Department of the Interior, March 3, 1995, 7, https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/64500639/64500639.pdf (accessed July 16, 2021). The document notes that the 1860 U.S. Census, documented that the “Flavors” household was composed of Milton “Flavors,” a native of Missouri. In “the spot usually occupied by the spouse of the head” was the name of Josefita “Flavors.” Three children, Juan, Jose, and Pedro, of ages 10, 8, and 3 respectively, were part of the “Flavors” household.
miller to muleteer on the Santa Fe Trail to powerful cattle baron in the Presidio region over the course of the 1850s and 1860s.\textsuperscript{84}

Faver became a sort of noble in the region—king-like, as his relatives noted. The cattle baron would dress for the part, ordering tailor-made suits based on the latest European trends from Chihuahua. Such was Faver’s acquired power that decades later reports described his antics as follows:

Don Meliton could have such great influence with both Mexicans and Indians. They obeyed him as if he were a great ruler. Faver made his own laws and enforced them on his ranches. He had a big cottonwood whipping post and a thief was in hard luck when Don Meliton got hold of him. This does not signify he was a cruel man; it only shows that he knew how to maintain order and discipline among crude people. This old patriarch was something like the old cattlemen of the Bible stories. He was kind and helpful to all who came his way if, in his eyes, they merited such treatment.\textsuperscript{85}

The \textit{albus vater}, the white male patriarch mentality, is celebrated in this excerpt and seen apparently as a viable way to deal with those seen as “crude.” Those who knew him vividly recall that the old Southerner ruled his empire with the will of a feudal baron, asserting his power in a rough area of the country.\textsuperscript{86} Thus, it is almost expected that Milton Faver used this aggressiveness to acquire his extensive landholdings in Presidio County. The use of this comparison is indicative of the Anglo-American approach to acquiring and maintaining control of contested regions during this period of U.S. history. Again, this \textit{modus operandi} of the Anglo-American in acquiring what he wanted in a so-called “crude” region was an approach that


\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
he—and others—carried into other contestations over physical, social, cultural, and economic capital all across the country.

Faver’s success story, brought into being by sheer force, made its way back east and provided a compelling mythos for other Anglo-Americans to pursue a “better life” and try their luck in far west Texas. In a relatively short period of time, the region once dominated by ethnic Hispanics was inundated by what appeared to be an unstoppable wave of white settlers from the United States. U.S. military conquest of the American Southwest was stabilized by the rapid growth of the Anglo-American population through large-scale migration. With numbers came more power—Anglo-American control of the region’s political and economic landscape opened up the proverbial floodgates bringing in even more white settlers. The political-territorial security brought by the establishment of a large Anglo-American population in the region in turn enabled a reshaping of the Western frontier along the Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural lines of the East Coast of the United States. The once indomitable Western frontier was not only slowly being tamed, but became a place where out-of-luck Anglo-Americans could go and fulfill their aspiration to achieve economic independence and solvency—to such Anglos, America’s constitutional “pursuit of happiness” was within grasp in the liberty afforded them out West. Presidio County, and especially the community of Marfa, was a spot as good as any in which to make a fresh start. Marfa, Texas, because of this rich history, will be the community on which analysis of the segregated schools of Presidio County will be primarily focused.

A Town Named “Marfa”

As with most myths, the story of how the community of Marfa, Texas came to be named as such is not easily explained. The most common origin story states that a train engineer’s wife, traveling the long, winding railways of west Texas with her husband, took it upon herself to
baptize each town that had sprung up along the steel lifelines connecting these isolated regions with the interior of the United States. The name “Marfa,” according to one interpretation, was chosen from a Russian novel that the engineer’s wife was avidly reading at the moment when their iron transport passed by the desolate outpost in the Trans-Pecos back country. A more staid origin story may be found in a December 17, 1882, *The Galveston Daily News* article. A section reporting on railroads across the state claimed that the community and other towns in the Presidio County region were named after characters in the Jules Verne novel *Michael Strogoff: The Courier of the Czar*. The book by the infamous science fiction literary genre pioneer was written in 1876 and had by the 1880s been widely circulated and read in the United States.87

Officially Marfa, Texas was established in 1883 as the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway freight headquarters.88 These origin stories notwithstanding, the small community on the fringes of America’s expanding empire saw its beginnings even further back in time. It was around the early nineteenth century that many of the community’s prominent figures—most of them Spanish and then Mexican citizens—had arrived and settled in the region. The demographics of the settler population began to change in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

87 Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 1*, 176, 188; Louise S. O’Connor and Cecilia Thompson, *Images of America: Marfa*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009) 7. To further support this assertion, it is claimed that “Marfa” is Russian for “Martha.” Thompson disputes this origin story, stating that there is no definitive proof that this was how the community of Marfa, Texas was named. In fact, she states that the assertion that the Russian novel “The Brothers Karamazov” by Fyodor Dostoyesky as the piece of literature from where the name “Marfa” derived is far from correct, “[a]s ‘Marfa’ is a common name in Russian literature, [so thus] the title of the novel is impossible to determine.” Moreover, she asserts, that there is no known record who this engineer’s wife was or when she gave Marfa, if she actually did, its namesake.; Unnamed author, “Texas News Items: Presidio,” *The Galveston Daily News*, December 7, 1882, 4, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth464910/m1/4/zoom/?resolution=3&lat=4587.557654758191&lon=2729.130899305803 (accessed July 23, 2020).

The late 1870s and 1880s experienced a continuous influx of entrepreneurial, land-hungry Anglo-Americans who either followed or were preceded by government surveyors. The two categories of settlers became a formidable team in acquiring land holdings either for farming, ranching, and other privatized business ventures. An excellent example of an *albus vater* forcing his will onto the scene occurred in far west El Paso County, Texas in 1877. The contestation over use of communal lands in the American Southwest came to a boiling point when American entrepreneurs—among them a Virginian named Charles Howard—decided to challenge centuries-old regional understandings.\(^{89}\)

Back in 1866, the revamped Texas Constitution had effectively undercut the previous policy of recognizing a community’s rights over minerals found within its jurisdiction. Per the new Texas statute, individual claims could be filed in order to gain ownership. Such was a 1877 El Paso County case of salt lakes situated at the foot of the Guadalupe Mountains in present-day Hudspeth County, Texas.\(^{90}\) The region’s local population believed that their collective rights to the salt had been granted them via a colonial decree by the king of Spain, recognized by the Mexican government during that country’s control of the area, and, at least in theory, further solidified per the property rights agreements outlined in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the end of the U.S. War with Mexico. Thus, Charles Howard’s efforts to privatize the salt beds were quickly met with overt disdain that soon erupted in open violence. Battles for control of the salt lakes played out over the next eleven years, culminating in a binational coalition of ethnic

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90 Ibid, 36.
Mexicans staging an armed counter to what was deemed as outsider incursion onto communal claims.⁹¹

This chain of events sparked a wave of violence and bloodshed, including the capture and eventual execution of Howard and several Texas Rangers at San Elizario. The Rangers, protecting Anglo-American interests in the region, had escorted him back to the region stake and back his claim over the salt beds. A group of Anglo-American vigilantes from New Mexico and the intervention of the U.S. Cavalry under Colonel Edward Hatch intervened to impose their vision of social order—and later exert vengeance upon—the local ethnic Mexican community. In the end, American state and military power privileged individual over communal rights, forcefully ignoring guarantees in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and, perhaps worse, abrogating long-standing cultural understandings of land ownership in the region.⁹² Anglo-American *albus vater* control over the region was preserved and further concretized.

As more and more border lands came into Anglo-American hands, through legal or extra-judicial means, the Anglo-American population also gained further economic and political control.⁹³ Moreover, as Anglo-American patriarchy became more pronounced in the region, the

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⁹¹ Ibid, 81.


⁹³ Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County*, Vol. 1, 10-18; See Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), The Spanish had arrived centuries earlier with a similar “father figure” dogma to justify their claim over the lands inhabited by the “child-like” indigenous groups in the region.; Brent Campney, “Anti-Japanese Sentiment, International Diplomacy, and the Texas Alien Land Law of 1921,” *History Faculty Publications and Presentations*, 38, 2019, 850-851, [https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/hist_fac/38](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/hist_fac/38) (accessed July 17, 2020). In other regions of the Texas-Northern Mexico borderlands, Anglo-Americans also gained control of lands previously owned by ethnic Mexicans. The author notes that, “In the early twentieth century, white migrants to the [Rio Grande] Valley—many of whom were mid-westerners and southerners—wrested control of the region from its largely ethnic Mexican inhabitants through a ruthless and multifaceted campaign. When the railroad arrived in 1904, connecting the region to national and international markets, powerful white agricultural interests converged on the Valley and, using chicanery, fraud, and intimidation, seized lands held by Mexican Americans in what had long been a ranching area. Within a decade, white arrivals had gobbled up the land and resources from Mexican Americans and put the
ability of Anglo-American ranchers and land barons to shape society to their liking, and to their advantage, was further empowered. Ethnic Mexican resistance was often met with Anglo-American violence of both vigilante and state-sanctioned types. Legal recourse was futile, as Anglo-American-control of the courts helped ensure white dominance in the region. With the usurpation of power by the new arrivals, a shift occurred in Marfa’s social organization. Anglo-American sociocultural schemas became dominant, so the group asserting influence over socialization and identity formation in the region ceased to be the native, ethnic Mexican group. The albus vater mentality, although not new to the region, arrived with a refreshed fervor ready to reproduce the social structures Anglo-Americans favored and knew best.

As seen in other examples of the American expansionist West, the number of biracial families headed by an Anglo-American patriarch began to grow once the region was made secure latter, as well as increasing numbers of desperate and more easily exploitable Mexicans from across the border, to work as stoop labor on lands that Mexican Americans had recently owned.”


96 See Kathleen M. Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriots: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); see Mary Beth Norton, Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); See Nancy F. Cott, Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). The patriarchal model of society has been reproduced time and again throughout the history of the United States going back to the colonial era. For example, during the period 1620-1670 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and in particular New England, the dynamics of the gendered power structure affected women’s access to the upper-echelons of community authority. In colonial New England the social order was based on the top-down oriented Filmerian system following the ideologies of Robert Filmer. This doctrine saw “[t]he need to maintain patriarchal households and orderly communities …[as] both an obligation of and justification for state power.” This ideology of the omnipotent “white father figure,” the albus vater, was carried out to and reproduced in the western frontier in the late nineteenth century.
by the *albus vater*. Subsequently, the later decades of the nineteenth century saw the Presidio County region experience the arrival of numerous monoracial Anglo-American family units into its midst (i.e., those in which both parents were considered white). The need for organized schooling became a pressing issue to the settlers as more Anglo-American, or deemed Anglo-American, children populated the area.

By mid-nineteenth century, it was common practice for well-to-do families to send their children, and especially the boys, to socioeconomic urban centers—such as a colonial capital, a European capital, or a metropole of the eastern United States—to receive the best education possible to receive their formal schooling. During the pre-American period, both Spanish and Mexican elites sent their children, especially their sons, to the metropoles of their respective political centers. As the United States expanded into formerly Spanish and Mexican territories, many wealthy Anglo-Americans residing in what was then the Western frontier sent their offspring to the metropoles back east and Europe to receive formal academic education just as other elite families had done before them. As Deena Gonzalez states in her work on American encroachment in New Mexico following the U.S. victory over Mexico in 1848: “the institutions brought to Santa Fe [the New Mexican capital] after the war were hierarchical and prearranged; they required that their guardians be literate in English, be male, and have some formal education.”

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98 In my view, the “need” for formalizing education wherever they settled, is telling of the embeddedness of Protestant-Enlightenment ideologies carried by, especially, Anglo-Americans. Generations of Anglos and Anglo-Americans had been shaped by these religious and scientific dogmas.

Juan Faver—son of the legendary cattle baron Don Melitón—was sent to San Antonio for grade school once he was of age and was later sent on to New York to receive his college education. After his time in New York, the younger Faver went to Germany to further his academics before returning to far west Texas to take over his father’s business. Juan Faver was not the only Presidio County citizen to acquire his formal education back East—other well-to-do American families, including that of William Russell, Richard C. Daly, and John Spencer, also sent their children to either San Antonio or Austin for grade school.\(^{100}\) It is important to note here that the *albus vater* of these elite families had come to the county at the very same time as Ben Leaton back in the late 1840s. Just like Major Leaton, all these Anglo-American men in this group had also been part of General Doniphan’s troops when the United States invaded Mexico in 1846.\(^{101}\) This is important to reiterate, as these men returned to the region, married ethnic Mexican women, and started the first generation of Anglo-American families in the region.\(^{102}\)

**Early Forms of Schooling in Presidio County**

Not all families in Presidio County had the economic affluence of the aforementioned clans, and so not all families could afford a formal grade school and college education back East or in Europe. In the late decades of the nineteenth century, the academic education of working-

\(^{100}\) Unnamed author, “Milton Faver Establishes First Cattle Ranch in Presidio County-First of Cattlemen,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Vol. 25 number 26, September 1, 1950, 38, [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf) (accessed June 18, 2020). According to the author, Juan Faver’s education was quite extensive. Don Meliton had made it one of his priorities to give his son the best education money could buy sending the young Faver first to San Antonio to grade school, later to New York to college, and then abroad to England, France, and Germany to further his post-grade school education.


class children—both Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican—was seen as non-essential and was not sought on account of their economic situation. Those receiving some degree of education out in far west Texas were limited to the acquisition of basic civic knowledge and rudimentary reading and writing skills, and “… their [school’s] principal object was to keep the children out of mischief.”

From this quote it can be inferred that the instructors at these schools were regarded as an extension of the patriarchal household who were charged with socializing the children into the hegemonic sociocultural order and thereby solidifying the emerging structures of power. Though perhaps disorganized, this is the mode of education available in nineteenth century Presidio County that would become one of the most important vectors in securing and maintaining an Anglo-American patriarchal power structure in Texas.

This basic education was generally acquired from local teachers—some of them ethnic Mexican—who were frequently hired as private tutors for the children of wealthy families that could afford that luxury. Moreover, ranchers commonly collaborated up to recruit teachers to educate their children at a centrally-located schoolhouse. These ranch schools were similar to the so-called oilfield schools that were set up in centers of the oil industry across the state. Those families with higher incomes went as far as hiring governesses that gave instruction on location at the families’ homes. For those lacking such economic resources, their schooling was once again taken on by religious groups.


The parochial school model—once the only one in the region—was revisited once the American period took hold in the region. The first attempts at organized schooling by Anglo-American settlers in the region occurred after the U.S. Civil War. As the nation was once again united, Union soldiers reoccupied military bases and posts throughout the South. Fort Davis, situated northeast of Marfa, was regarrisoned on June 29, 1867, by Troops C, F, H, and I of the 9th U.S. Cavalry regiments led by Lt. Colonel Wesley Merritt. The primary school education of the post’s children was taken on by either the chaplains or non-commissioned officers at the post chapel. As an act of courtesy (and perhaps patriotism), the children of those people settling around the post were also allowed to attend the military-parochial school. This was a far cry from the established education system in the American East, but it was perhaps the best that could be expected in a disorganized and still highly contested territory in the far reaches of the American frontier.

In an attempt to meet the state’s educational needs, the Texas state Constitution of 1869 set a period of four months per year of compulsory schooling; along with assessment of a $1.00 poll tax, all funds from the sale of public lands and one-fourth of all general revenue were to go into the school fund. Again, at that time the rural areas had few choices for accessing formal education. So by 1875, the second school in Presidio County was founded at Fort Davis by a

105 See Barry Scobee, *Old Fort Davis* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1947); Barry Scobee, *The Story of Fort Davis: Jeff Davis County and the Davis Mountains* (Fort Davis, Texas: Marvin Hunter, 1936); The 9th and 10th U.S Cavalry regiments came to be known as the “Buffalo Soldiers.” The units were composed of African American troops directed by white officers. In the case of Merritt, he was Post Commander of Fort Davis from July 1, 1867 to November 29, 1867 and then from June 1, 1868 to September 3, 1869. Albus vater overseeing colored troops. Nancy C. Curtis, *Black Heritage Sites: The South* (New York: New Press, 1996), 276-277, According to Curtis, the African American population in Fort Davis increased to 489 when the Buffalo soldiers were stationed there.; J.M. Humphreys and Barbara Clark, “Old Military Post Center of Community Activities,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, September 1, 1950, 17-19. [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf) (accessed June 21, 2020), The editor notes that at the time of printing in 1950 the essay was part of the Shipman Collection.
Catholic priest, Father Joseph Hoban. As other parochial schools before and after, this school’s curriculum was religiously based and taught catechism at its core element. Even when Presidio County was officially organized that same year, there were no free public schools in the region.\textsuperscript{107}

At the end of the day, it was up to the local community, and more precisely the heads of families, to decide what educational options were viable or necessary for the children living within their households. The state of Texas was still uncertain how to proceed in educating its diverse younger generation across a vast expanse of territory, even with updated laws in the state Constitution on appropriating school funds; so, the state of Texas agreed, albeit reluctantly, to this premise that education should fall to community and household heads.\textsuperscript{108} The \textit{albus vater—el don or el patron} in the form of the American male head of household—would thus not be easily ousted as the main agent in determining educational access, policy, and administration.

By 1876 Texas had adopted into its state constitution the concept of the “community system” of schooling which “afforded maximum local control and offered parents a wide latitude of choice when making educational decisions for their children.”\textsuperscript{109} The schools were state

\textsuperscript{106} See John Jay Lane, \textit{History of Education in Texas} (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Education, 1903); The poll tax requirement was, of course, one of the buttresses of Jim Crow era disfranchisement of the African American community. This practice was finally eradicated, at least legally, until the passage of the 24\textsuperscript{th} Amendment in 1964.


\textsuperscript{108} See John Jay Lane, \textit{History of Education in Texas} (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Education, 1903), The provisions within the annexation of Texas to the United States outlined in the Constitution of 1845 included for the establishment of free, public schools. The law stated that no less than one-tenth of the annual revenue from taxation was to be utilized as funding for these schools. Another update during the period occurred in 1854 when the state set aside $2 million from funds received by Texas from the sale of lands to the United States.
funded but were run locally by parents. As such, parents decided which of their children could attend school and then submitted a list to the country judge who in turn elected three school trustees. These “school communities” were open to all children regardless of where they lived in the county. Furthermore, the process of putting together a community school was done on a yearly basis. Along with the creation of the “community system,” the poll tax for school funding was retained and the schools became officially segregated.

The laws aimed to segregate Black children from their Anglo-American peers, and in some areas the segregationist policies also included separate schooling for ethnic Mexican children. This latter group of students was legally classified as “white,” but were nonetheless subject to racial segregation. Although, there were no statutes or laws requiring the segregation of ethnic Mexican students, the separate grouping of these students was carried out through extralegal methods; de facto segregation provided a means of separating ethnic Mexican students from their Anglo-American peers. This approach was effective to the extent that it formally masked racial segregation, making it difficult to challenge segregationist practices in the courts and thereby dismantle them. In Presidio County, at least during this time period, the small numbers of school-aged children impeded full implementation of school segregation from a practical standpoint, and the county opted to follow a community system for the time being.

As mentioned earlier, the “community system” schools were reconfigured continuously, allowing local residents to shape the school community as they saw fit. The county judge served

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109 Alan W. Garrett, “Community Schools in 19th-Century Texas and School Choice Today,” *The Educational Forum, 65:1,* (2001) 22, The author states that “community schools” were established in Texas by the post-Reconstruction state legislature “as a response to a despised, centralized school system created by the Reconstruction state government following the Civil War.” Before the community school system was put in place, Texas had what was called a “radical school system.” The schools were named as such because of the phase of the Reconstruction (radical) period in which they were in place and because they were highly similar to a military structure.

110 Ibid.
as school superintendent to whom the interested parents submitted a list of potential students. Again, the school was open to all pupils from all over the county, as no boundaries or districts were set to limit patronage to the school. All these perks provided by the community school system were, in Texans’ view, a better option than the radical schools that had been in place. But ongoing school reconfiguration made it hard to maintain student numbers. One drawback of the community system’s open structure was that student participation was voluntary. The superintendent, even with the leverage of also being the county judge, had no power to enforce attendance or impose punishments for truancy. 

Because funding for the schools was based on student attendance, fluctuating attendance numbers caused fluctuation in available funds, which in turn created conditions of financial uncertainty for budgetary purposes. This community system of schooling was untenable and unsustainable; by the start of the 1880s, most Texans were ready for a change. 

In 1883, the Texas state Constitution established a district school system which increased funding to the schools by a state ad valorem school tax set at $0.20. School districts were given the right to levy property taxes on local real estate to fund its activities. But because of the immense size of Texas, the new school system did not take effect uniformly across the state right away; smaller rural communities struggled to ensure school numbers, so an open-door policy community-type system was kept in order to maintain the student body. Out in sparsely populated Presidio County, for instance, even after Texas law formally shifted to a district-based school system in 1883, the districts were not divided until 1893.

The rural communities may


112 Janice C. May, Handbook of Texas Online, "GOVERNMENT," http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mzgfq (accessed July 23, 2020); See John Jay Lane, History of
have been accused reticence to realign their school systems in accordance with the new model, but the refusal to shift may also have been motivated by such pragmatic factors as a low number of school-aged children living in the counties.

This apparent lack of interest in educational development on the part of Texas’s rural counties seemed to plague the state as far back as its independence from Mexico in the late 1830s. At that time Mirabeau B. Lamar, known as one of Texas’s “founding fathers,” succeeded in pushing two bills through the Republic of Texas’s Congress in 1838 and 1840, both allowing for the distribution of lands to counties across the state for their use in setting up endowments for a planned public school system. The plan failed in part because of the lack of funding and because of the counties’ apparent indifference towards public education. Moreover, by the mid-1850s, the lands allotted to many rural counties for public school system endowment had not yet been surveyed.113

In remote places like Presidio County, as previously mentioned, this mapping of the land had not been completed by the late 1880s. In February of 1889, the Commissioner of the General Land Office called upon Presidio County Judge B. F. Adams to contact the state office so that the county could receive the certificates of allotted school lands. Along with the three to four leagues of land to which it was entitled, Presidio County was to receive certificates to 2,627

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113 See Lane, History of Education in Texas, (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Education, 1903); Unnamed author, “Early Cattlemen had Battle to Build Up Profitable Ranches,” The Big Bend Sentinel, September 1, 1950, 18, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf (accessed June 22, 2020), The unnamed author notes, “From the beginning of the Republic of Texas there was a sentiment favoring the creation of a permanent school fund by the reservation of public land. January 26, 1839 was the first act to put this sentiment into effect was passed.”
acres of school land. The residents of the county did not have a sizeable potential student body within the county’s population, as did Texans living in larger communities. So, decades after state laws partitioning lands to be used for schools were put in place, the smaller counties, including Presidio, still resisted change and continued with the communal, locally-run model that—at least for the time being—was working for their purposes.

The funded community-based system, flawed as it was, did allow for the establishment of the first free public school to open in Presidio County, at Fort Davis, in 1883. While other, more populated areas moved to the district-based school system, the lived realities in far west Texas made the outdated community system the more plausible of the two models. As previously stated, local parents and guardians collaborated to organize themselves into a school community and make education available to all those families in their community who wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to give their children an education. In her memoirs, Mattie Belle Anderson, the first teacher in Presidio County, recalled that there were plenty of school funds and that a modest adobe schoolhouse had been erected, but that there was no teacher available to educate the growing number of children. The educational landscape of the rural communities in the region was slowly becoming more organized.

**Teacher Mattie Belle Anderson Arrives in Presidio, County**

Mrs. Mattie Belle Anderson, a native of Columbia in Adair County, Kentucky, came to Fort Davis, Texas in 1883 full of dreams, as many teachers do when they take on their first

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challenge of educating an underserved population. Excitedly, Mrs. Anderson contacted the men that had been in charge of educating the local children on the military post. Father Hoban, who taught catechism to the Mexican children, along with a non-commissioned officer, who taught soldiers’ children five days a week, helped Mrs. Anderson to assemble her classroom as best as they could. The two-room adobe structure was not very spacious and had, as she described it, “ugly bare walls and no furniture,” but this did not quell her enthusiasm. Mrs. Anderson was not only ready to make a change in these frontier children’s lives but was also “[i]n a hurry to begin earning [her] salary.” The structure may have been crude in the eyes of Mrs. Anderson, as she was used to working in better-equipped, well-styled school houses back in Kentucky.

In the late nineteenth century, adobe—the most popular building material in far west Texas—was not commonly, if ever, seen back in Appalachia. Out on the southwest perimeters of the United States, the earthen bricks were, and to this day still are, the building material of choice. Long-time residents of the American Southwest believed adobe was able to maintain a comfortable temperature year-round within a dwelling. The encroaching Anglo-American population initially frowned upon what they viewed as primitive construction methods, but the longer they stayed out West, the more accepting they became of this ancient building material. The post at Fort Davis, for example, was constructed of adobe as were other structures in the region including local government structures such as courthouses and jails, and of course, the

117 Researcher’s visit to Marfa, Texas Cemetery October 16, 2016, Anderson’s grave stone at the Marfa, Texas Cemetery has her birthdate as April 23, 1851 and death on November 3, 1938.

118 Anderson, Reminiscences, 2.

119 Ibid.
schoolhouses.\textsuperscript{120} Even if this structure was not up to the standards that the newly arrived educator was used to back home, this is what was provided and, by God, she was going to make this work.

On the first day of organized classes in the Presidio County desert, a group of about seventy-five children congregated at the new school.\textsuperscript{121} The mind cannot hope but imagine an overflowing mass of youngsters crowded all the way up to the proverbial brim as that small two-room \textit{adobe} structure was overwhelmed. Inside and outside those bare earthen brick walls one can envision young children tantrum-engaged crying for their mothers while others standing there quiet and scared out of their wits. The mind rushes across the years focusing on those little ones and their modest attire. This being an agricultural area, it was more than likely that many of the first day attendees were hygienically unkept and wearing unclean clothing while others were primped up with nicely combed hair and wearing their Sunday best. The more energetic ones were more than likely running around the schoolhouse playing tag, going wild, having the time of their lives. Then those naturally calm or heeding the advice from their others not to imply threats, stood looking intently with bright eyes at the lady, yes, a woman, at the head of the

\textsuperscript{120} Carlyle Graham Raht, \textit{The Romance of the Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country} (El Paso: Raht Books, 1919), 304, 305. On a personal note, my family both on the Mexican side and the U.S. side swore by the belief that adobe structures were in fact cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. Mind you, most, if not all, homes built with adobe were just that, complete adobe, no insulation added, constructions. Not having anything else to compare the temperatures during the seasonal extremes may have been why the idea of adobe’s performance in relation to comfort prevailed for so long.; Minutes Commissioners Court Hudspeth County 1917; Minutes Commissioners Court Hudspeth County 1928, 367, County elections took place there on August 13, 1928; Author’s personal onsite visit to Sierra Blanca, Texas, summer 2016-2021. A prime example of the use of adobe as a building material used during this period can be appreciated in the Hudspeth County courthouse and the Mexican ward school. The buildings in Sierra Blanca, Hudspeth County, still stand today. The school building was temporarily used as the county courthouse in 1917 as the adobe structure was being renovated.; Photograph “Ruidosa, Texas school,” Folder “School Classes From 1902, 1903, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913,” Sub Folder “1902,” Marfa Public Library Records, The schoolhouse in the photo is constructed of adobe as the unplastered outside of the building clearly demonstrates; Carey McWilliams, \textit{North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States}, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1949), 32.

\textsuperscript{121} Anderson, \textit{Reminiscences}, 2.
classroom preparing for this important first day. A historical first day, in Fort Davis, Texas, Presidio County.

Despite its legal separation of church and state, the United States, is far from being a secular polity. Christian beliefs suffuse the fundamental principles underpinning the country’s Constitution. The legal statutes derived from this constitutional type of government, then, cannot be divorced from American religious ideology. Central to this religious paradigm is a model of governance and authority in which a patriarch is the head of a household; by extension, in a Christian theocracy, a man and the authority that he represents is not only the head of state but the government itself must be constructed on Western ideals of masculinity.122

Again, looking back to the formative stages in American history, the family, or more precisely a patriarchy, was the foundation on which state government was based.123 In return, the state, forming a symbiotic relationship with patriarchal social structure, helped maintain the familial social order by codifying into law statutes that primarily benefitted white, male, heads of households.124 For instance, Markus Dirk Dubber argues that what defines the white, male Anglo-American power to police is reflected in the virtually limitless patriarchal power of the head of a house over his household.125 Given the embeddedness of this socialization schema in


124 Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs, 324, Early on in colonial English America, the author states that Anglo men had assured for themselves the power to have “[s]laves … whipped, shackled, or medicated; wives and enslaved women [could be] compelled to engage in sexual intercourse; [and] children’s diets and bodily functions [would be] required [to undergo] careful monitoring.” The ability to control wide array of individuals was not only informally achieved but legal-formal codification solidified this power.


64
Anglo-American identity, it is my contention that symbolic fathers were at the head of all Anglo-American social institutions, from the family to the upper levels of government.126

Furthermore, Anglo-American men in this society exercised such a high degree of sociopolitical control that their empowerment had the side-effect of affording Anglo-American women with residual power. The women—e.g., wives, daughters, employees “of” these men—were thus afforded some measure of power deriving from the structure.127 This residual power enabled Anglo-American women to gain positions of authority and utilize any means available—legal or otherwise, up to and including a measure of violence—to secure their positions and entrench their authority over their subjects. Thus, women such as Mattie Belle Anderson, unknowingly, benefitted from the Anglo-American patriarchal social structure. This was reflected in the way that Kentucky-born Mrs. Anderson ran the Texas school. For example, she could easily expel or suspend unwanted students, and she could even administer punishment without fear of reprisal. The challenge now right before her eyes, she was not confronting alone, whether she was aware of it or not, this was the reality.

Mrs. Anderson’s chaotic first day may have resembled a clash of two alien worlds the likes of which had not been seen in the region since the explorers Cabeza de Vaca and Estebanico appeared in La Junta centuries earlier on their return journey to New Spain.128 A

126 Masculinity infused schemas, codified or not, provide the blueprint for all social interactions and are especially influential when these are the foundation on which institutional power structures are based upon. In this case, those in positions of power in U.S. institutions—including the education system—whether man or woman, are shaped by these masculinized schemas. These power brokers, in turn, will rule, lead, and set expectations based on Anglo patriarchal socialization. Thus, the dominance of the patriarch is not limited to the home sphere but is extended into the wider society: symbolic fathers shape the world.


128 Robert Englund, “Presidio has a History Dating Far Back: Border Town was Site of Indian Communities,” The Big Bend Sentinel, September 1, 1950, 11. http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-
foreign language being uttered back and forth not only between the would-be pupils but also—and more telling of the differing social dynamics that were about to crash head first into one another inside that adobe structure—the uttering of foreign languages between educator and her students. It was a drastic shift for the new teacher in town. Change, as always, was the constant in all contexts—including the classroom.

In the 1890s, social reform movements on both sides of the Atlantic were shaping educational practice, policy, theory, and environments across the Anglo world. Appalachia, Mrs. Anderson’s native region in Kentucky, was no exception. The settlement school model was widely adopted in the first decades of the twentieth century, but ideas of progress and reform were already affecting pedagogical approaches by the time Mrs. Anderson made her move to far west Texas in 1883. These ideas were more than likely transplanted to Texas by the stern Kentuckian educator. The scene where the Anglo-American pedagogical beliefs met the unruly western frontier may have been chaotic perhaps, but then again, exciting and promising as well.

The sizeable group of students that first day may have been an inspiring sight. Many of these first students, as Mrs. Anderson recalled in her memoirs, were monolingual Spanish-speaking ethnic Mexican students with some of them having a discernible knowledge of the English language. She recalled that, “a few were neat and well behaved. Most of them were

84/1950-09-01.pdf (accessed July 16, 2021), The author notes that in 1535, “about 43 years after Columbus discovered America, Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and three companions, survivors of an unfortunate exploration of the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico under the leadership of Panfilo de Narvaez in 1528, wandered northwestward to sojourn for a time at the confluence of the Rio Conchos and the Rio Grande near the present site of Presidio. It was here they found the first permanent houses built by Indians.”

Mrs. Anderson expressed gratitude for the opportunity to bring formal education out to the outskirts of the country and noted that, although there were no books available to start her actual academic teaching, she had taken it upon herself to order them. In the meantime, the students, both boys and girls, were to be engaged in calisthenic exercises.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Reminiscences}, 2.}

Although not a central part of the pedagogical process, or not seen as such by the leading theories of the day, calisthenics were utilized in other educational settings, and especially in those focused on military-style training. One such example was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, where exercise was used as a technique to instill discipline and controllability into a student’s body.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Reminiscences}, 3.} With this in mind, then, it can be stated that no time was wasted in shaping the children’s identity in this new school. The adobe structure may have been missing the furniture and books needed for traditional teaching and grading, but in the mind of the Kentuckian teacher, the work of recalibrating the children’s classroom, if not their sociocultural abilities, was already underway with the practice of calisthenics.

The mostly ethnic Mexican student body at the Fort Davis, Texas “free school” had had limited exposure to what could be called formal classroom education. In her memoirs, Mrs. Anderson herself mused that whatever education the students brought to her classroom, especially in that first year, had been learned at home from their mothers, or from the catechism.

\footnote{ARCIA (1880), H. Exec. Doc. No. 1, part 5, 46\textsuperscript{th} Cong. 3\textsuperscript{rd} sess., serial 1959, 302 as cited in Michael C. Coleman, \textit{American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 109. At the Indian boarding schools, similar methods were utilized but the approach was perhaps more methodological following what would be seen as military tactics of discipline. Apart from following a strict daily schedule which often began at 4:30 in the morning, corporeal punishment was implemented in the schools. Although a military-like structure was not present in all Indian schools, nonetheless this was a central ideology in many of the institutions as Coleman explains, “BIA officials, and celebrated reformers such as Generals Pratt and Armstrong, powerfully espoused the idea that schools be run as much as possible like army posts; Anderson, \textit{Reminiscences}, 3.}
classes given by Father Hoban and the non-commissioned officer at the post. The “better class of pupils,” she documented, “knew a little bit more of the three ‘R’s’ and the rest of the children that were now here with her, the “Kentucky teacher,” were about to receive a dose of a structured and more rigid pedagogical approach.\textsuperscript{133} The word rigid may appear unwarranted, and perhaps even unfair, in describing events that occurred close to one and a half centuries ago. Furthermore, it can be argued that this is speculation since the researcher was not directly privy to the on goings that took place in this desert outpost back in the early 1880s. But then again, the description given by the teacher herself may indicate her teaching approach and learning expectations in the classroom.

That first day of school apparently overwhelmed the two-room schoolhouse and more than likely the teacher herself. Excited, and as determined as the Kentuckian may have been upon her arrival to Fort Davis in 1883, the weight of the challenge she faced in this far west Texas rural setting quickly became evident. The students spoke Spanish, the teacher spoke English, the students’ experience with academic schooling had been minimal at best, and the teacher had expectations based on her distinct sociocultural capital, so it was only a matter of time before the differences came fully to the surface.

The “better class” of students that Mrs. Anderson spoke of in those first days at the free public school appear to have stood out amongst those first seventy-five students enrolled. What characteristics these “better class” students may have had to merit such a distinctive recollection from their teacher has been lost to the annals of time. However, scholars of the history of ethnic

\textsuperscript{133} Anderson, Reminiscences, 3; Edwin Emory Slosson, The American Spirit in Education: A Chronicle of Great Teachers, Volume 33 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921) 305, Google Books, 
https://archive.org/details/cu31924028758625/page/n19/mode/2up (accessed June 26, 2020), The three R’s or “Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic” refers to the basic skills that were taught in the United States dating all the way back to pre-Revolutionary times. A fourth “R” for “religion” was sometimes added making the basic curriculum a four R’s model that is “Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and Religion.”
Mexican education can perhaps discern that these pupils may have exhibited sociocultural expressions (i.e., social schemas) of the Anglo-American kind or ones similar to those carried—and thus deemed appropriate or better suited for learning—by the teacher herself.\(^{134}\)

Mrs. Anderson did have an issue with what she perceived as a lack of hygiene among the ethnic Mexican students with respect to their hair. The teacher took issue and even complained to the school trustees about the students’ “tangled and thickly settled” “coarse black hair.”\(^{135}\) Mrs. Anderson noted that the “careless patrons” (i.e., the ethnic Mexican parents) were grateful for her having “taken notice of their offspring” as, in her view, the “patrons” wanted their children “to improve in every way.”\(^{136}\) Apparently, her insistence to the trustees regarding the hygiene of the “ill-clad, uncouth, dirty” ethnic Mexican students worked—parents heeded the “teacher’s commands” and cut their boys’ hair. The Kentuckian recalled thinking to herself that, “there must have been enough coarse black hair flying around the adobe huts for a few days to stuff several mattresses.”\(^{137}\) Her use of stereotypes with the children was rooted in her upbringing (i.e., socialization), hence the unquestioning tone in her description of students at the Fort Davis school. Moreover, Mrs. Anderson’s notions of what was unclean and was unworthy of a place at the new school had a racial component; this is not hidden in her memoirs.

The problem in maintaining consistent numbers in the student body continued to plague the schools and this was not the exception at the Fort Davis school. Although many of her students’ families either moved into town or boarded their children with families living closer to the school, the school’s initial enrollment began to decrease. Mrs. Anderson quickly found out

\(^{134}\) Anderson, *Reminiscences*, 3.


\(^{136}\) Ibid.

\(^{137}\) Ibid.
that it was especially hard to keep the boys coming back to her classroom. In Texas agricultural areas, it was not uncommon for parents to keep the boys home from school to “help on the ranch” and directly supplement the family income or perform household chores, which in turn freed the parents to engage in paid work.\textsuperscript{138} Noticing this dropout trend, Mrs. Anderson took the initiative to begin giving extra help to students who needed more one-on-one attention. In her view, guaranteeing children’s learning would surely demonstrate to their parents the value of education and would thus ensure student attendance to her school. The undertaking necessitated extra effort and personalized approaches with no promise of extra pay, but Mrs. Anderson did what, in her mind, had to be done.\textsuperscript{139}

For example, there was one unnamed boy who had a hard time with long division and often broke down in tears because of the difficulty he was having. Mrs. Anderson sat through every tear with this child hour after hour until he became adept in the subject. Likewise, another young student named Pearl kept falling behind in arithmetic. The girl became so frustrated with the subject that her similarly frustrated father asked that the teacher excuse her from the math requirement. Mrs. Anderson took the girl under her wing, and with after-school tutoring the girl apparently came to master the four fundamentals of math. Mrs. Anderson recalled that Pearl’s father, was “delighted [sic] afterward that I had acted on my own judgment instead of his.”\textsuperscript{140} She also reminisced on her experiences with a boy named “Joe.” The young Joe was one of her toughest cases. The boy’s antics at the school became so unruly that Anderson had to send him


\textsuperscript{139} In my own personal experience as an educator, I have found that most of the extra work put in to tutor your pupils up to speed with the rest of their peers is not paid. Tutoring you do basically on your own time.

\textsuperscript{140} Anderson, \textit{Reminiscences}, 8}
home; Joe then missed the next two days of school, which surprised and concerned Mrs. Anderson. On the third day, the teacher, apparently distraught, was found crying at the schoolhouse by the boy’s mother. The two women found a way to coax Joe back to the school, even after Mrs. Anderson asked for an apology and the boy refused to grant it.141 The mischievous Joe returned and went on to become one of her best students. The Kentuckian had gone out of her way to help these students. Notably, all were Anglo-American.

The number of ethnic Mexican students at her school, Mrs. Anderson remembered, decreased significantly as time went by. Since the early days of the Fort Davis school, Mrs. Anderson observed that “many Mexicons were taken home and did better work raising frijoles and hauling wood than in following my lead in teaching ideas how to shoot.”142 Another reason why her classroom saw less ethnic Mexican children, she remembered, was because many of them began to attend another school in Fort Davis where “Spanish was taught and Greaser was spoken.”143 Mrs. Anderson actually found that dropping out of “inferior” students with “no superior home backing” was a blessing which kept the class size manageable and filled with “better class” students.144 The teacher boasted in her recollection that, “as time progressed my school changed for the better.”145 With most of the “Mexicans” having left her tutelage and with

141 Anderson, Reminiscences, 11.
142 Anderson, Reminiscences, 4.
143 Anderson, Reminiscences, 9.
144 Anderson, Reminiscences, 5, 3.
“the influx of good children upheld and encouraged by fine parents,” Mrs. Anderson reminisced, “my school grew and prospered.”\textsuperscript{146}

More than likely the “good children” acquired these characteristics of the “better class” from their socialization at home or, as Mrs. Anderson put it, “learned at their mother’s knees.”\textsuperscript{147} Then again, these favored students also learned the expected behaviors, social, cultural, and educational, from the military post school teachers—Father Hoban or the non-commissioned officers. Whatever may have been the case, not all of the seventy-five students who came to school on the first day made it past that first month of education at the new formal public school in Fort Davis. “The law of the survival of the fittest asserted itself and within the first month my school had reduced itself to a more manageable size,” the proud teacher recollected years later.\textsuperscript{148}

As Mrs. Anderson settled in Fort Davis, a few miles down south in Marfa, the first public school was just about to be organized two years later in 1885.\textsuperscript{149}

**A School for Marfa, Texas**

The mid-1880s saw the town of Marfa develop significantly more than other communities in the area. The once-lowly water stop on the Southern Pacific rail line between El Paso and San Antonio benefited from a wealth of freshwater and stock pens sufficient to keep –

\textsuperscript{146} Anderson, *Reminiscences*, 9, 5.

\textsuperscript{147} Anderson, *Reminiscences*, 5, 3.

\textsuperscript{148} Anderson, *Reminiscences*, 3.

\textsuperscript{149} Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Marfa School History,” *The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement*, January 21, 1965, 1, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records, Ms. Anderson joined the Marfa school in 1896.; Anderson, *Reminiscences*, 10, 9, Mrs. Anderson had fallen out of favor with the school’s chairman of the board of trustees after taking on a second job as postmaster. She recalled suffering no ill from this until she crossed another line in which another board member was involved. Mrs. Anderson was quickly asked for her resignation after having “whipped rather severely the red headed, thin skinned son of trustee No. 2.” Later in life the teacher moved on to the Marfa school system where she became the principal.
locally-raised livestock available for shipment out across the continental United States. The outpost began to more closely resemble the Anglo-American communities back East as a schoolhouse, church, jail, and courthouse were constructed. Again, as control of the region came into the hands of Anglo newcomers, a significant number of Anglo-American people came to settle in the community. Moreover, as historian Cecilia Thompson puts it, “[Marfa] was quick to acquire cultural and social advantages. Conditions were right but more importantly, the little frontier town attracted people of exceptional vision and vitality, who initiated and supported institutions that brought in more of their kind.” Their “kind,” of course, were more Anglo-Americans. The small community—once an afterthought on the east-west trail across the state of Texas—now attracted enough of the so-called “exceptional” kind of people to stake its claims as the Presidio County seat. As had been the case in earlier stages of Anglo-American incursion to the region, one of the most pressing issues facing the growing number of new arrivals was the need to organize a school system to educate their children out in the far west Texas frontier town.

The residents of Marfa organized the community’s first public school in 1885 and in doing so followed the community system education model utilized across rural areas in the state—much like what was being used just up the road in Fort Davis, where Mrs. Anderson had worked. Just like the schoolhouse and other structures erected in the Southwest, the new Marfa school was constructed of adobe. The one-room building, erected “in the second block next to Highland Avenue on Galveston Street,” saw Miss Kate Barnhart become the first teacher in the history of that little shipping center named after a character in a Russian or Jules Verne novel. The small dwelling increased in size sometime later as two more rooms and two more teachers, Mrs. Joe Humphries and Miss Mamie Shields, were also employed by the Marfa public school.

150 Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I, 224.
school. In these early years, the school system in Marfa underwent several staff changes—perhaps an indication of the challenge these individuals were up against.

Over the next decade, a number of different educators would come and go from the Marfa schools. For instance, in 1886, a “Professor” Moulton taught in Marfa. Available historical documents reveal limited information, offering no clues to a first name for Professor Moulton. Around this time period, or “prior to 1892,” two other educators, Mr. B. F. Adams and Mr. John H. Taft came to and then left the Marfa schools. After openings were created, Mr. Addison Clark, Jr. and C. C. Thomas became teachers there. The last few years of the nineteenth century saw Mr. W. L. “Billy” Moore arrive from Waco in 1896 and leave around 1897. That same year, the teaching spot was again filled by a Miss Bertha Mae Monahan. Although the modest school system was limited to teaching elementary and some middle school curriculum, and despite the revolving door of faculty and staff, Marfa now had a formal school system in place. It was only a matter of time before the community would establish a prep school, and in a few more years, Marfa got its first high school up and running.

Fort Davis and Marfa were not the only communities to organize schools during this time, as other schools were also being established in Presidio County. Some of the towns that

151 Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I*, 224, Of course, and as stated by Thompson, the actual origin of the community’s name is up to historical debate.; Livingston, “Marfa School History,” *The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement*, January 21, 1965, 1, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records; J. E. Gregg, “Schools in the Marfa Independent School District,” *Patron’s Bulletin*, 2, Folder “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.,” Marfa Public Library Records. According to Gregg, the original Marfa public school building where Miss Barnhart started teaching was still standing in December 1947 “near the present Blackwell [Mexican ward] School building.” The building was then owned by a Mr. Sam Hensley. According to Livingston, the building was still standing in January 1965.

152 Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I*, 225; J. E. Gregg, “Schools in the Marfa Independent School District,” *Patron’s Bulletin*, 2, Folder “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.,” Marfa Public Library Records; Census Records—Presidio County, Texas, 1900 U.S. Census, [http://files.usgwaarchives.net/tx/presidio/census/1900/presid001.txt](http://files.usgwaarchives.net/tx/presidio/census/1900/presid001.txt), (accessed June 22, 2020); Livingston, “Marfa School History,” *The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement*, January 21, 1965, 1, 2, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records; The turnover rate of teachers at Marfa may have been significant but one constant was that all teachers hired in the early days of the school system were Anglo-American.
organized schools were: Presidio, the community, in 1887; Shafter, John Spencer’s mining town, in 1894; Ruidosa in 1902; and Candelaria also in 1901–1902. Moreover, the community of San Juan del Polvo started a school in 1886 and later saw one of its most prominent citizens, Francisco Javier Alvarado from Durango, Mexico establish a store, church, and school for the workers’ children on his hacienda Luz del Desierto in 1902.\textsuperscript{153} As the township of Polvo (later renamed Redford) grew in size, it recruited a young Mexican named Desiderio Alarcón from Presidio to serve as its first school teacher. Alarcón became a pillar of the community and a model citizen for the county at large, serving in several distinguished offices during his lifetime. According to the 1900 U.S. Census, he was later elected Presidio County Clerk.\textsuperscript{154}

In another section of the county, the community of Candelaria saw a former Marfa elementary school teacher originally from Alabama become one of its first public school educators. Eighteen-year-old Mary Kilpatrick moved from Marfa to Candelaria after teaching at the former’s school system for one year. Between 1901 and 1903, Miss Kilpatrick came to the tiny rural community and began teaching the fifteen-student class comprised of the few Mexican families living in Candelaria. Like the surrounding communities, the schoolhouse at Candelaria was also a one-room adobe building. Old but effective, adobe construction techniques were not easily discarded because of their low cost and reliability in mitigating against the harsh natural elements of the far west Texas desert. Mary Kilpatrick, like many of her teacher peers in the region, became a pillar of her community; she acquired and ran a small store with the help of

\textsuperscript{153} Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I, 7, Vol. 2, Alvarado’s hacienda went on to have two more teachers William R. Barnett in 1915-1916 and Cosme Jesus Alvarado from 1918 to 1919.

\textsuperscript{154} Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I, 254; J. E. Gregg, “Schools in the Marfa Independent School District,” Patron’s Bulletin, 2, Folder “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.,” Marfa Public Library Records; Another indication of the Anglo-American takeover of the region was the renaming of places with English titles.
family, and she later helped her father grow some of the first cotton in the county. The industrious young Alabama native eventually went on to teach for forty years in Candelaria, Texas.  

**Conclusion**

The appearance of Europeans in *La Junta de los Ríos* in the colonial era, introduced alien sociocultural expressions that set-in motion a shifting of self-identification schemas that shaped the peoples, native and newly arrived, living there. The masculinity-based socialization processes continued throughout the Spanish era, after the Latin American revolutions when Mexico gained its independence, through the American conquest of the northern Mexican territories, and into the mid to late nineteenth century when the United States asserted its dominance in the region. Education systems put in place by Anglo Americans became central to the socialization of especially the younger generations of Presidio County (as the *La Junta* region came to be known) residents. The Americanization of the U.S. citizenry, in fact, was occurring throughout the country. At the schools, Anglo patriarchal sociocultural expressions permeated the curriculum as the institutions sought to shape future Americans. The Americanization of minority groups, including ethnic Mexicans, was to be a key goal of the education system in achieving the total conquest of far west Texas and beyond.

In 1900, the first high school was established in Marfa, Texas. The founder of the prep school was Mr. H. B. Griffin, who also served as its superintendent from 1900 to 1912. As in many rural schools throughout west Texas, the superintendent position was but one of the many  

155 Mary Kilpatrick Howard, “Kilpatrick Cotton is Area First,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, September 1, 1950, 13, [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf) (accessed June 20, 2020); J.E. Gregg, “History of Presidio County” in “Wire Fencing Civilized County Cattle Business,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, September 1, 1950, 22, [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1950-09-01.pdf) (accessed June 20, 2020), This claim by the Kilpatricks may be contested as several centuries earlier Spanish friars, along with military escorts, upon arriving in the region in 1581, noticed that the indigenous peoples wore cotton garments. It may be that the natives of *La Junta* acquired the clothes from trade with other groups back east or maybe the textile was spun from their own harvests.
roles that Mr. Griffin, as other administrators, filled for the school. Griffin was one of the four faculty members at the school, the other three being Miss Thompson, Miss Laura Wilcox, and Miss Maggie Hyde. The building where Marfa’s prep school-aged students got their education was something to truly admire. Years later part of the architecture of the new schoolhouse was described as follows by a journalist:

The bell tower was a pointed structure with louvered [sic] windows on the four sides. Four tall pillars of concrete extended from the floor level to the secondary story and the flagpole was on the high gable over the porch….According to the RECORDS OF MARFA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, the building cost six thousand dollars.

The new school building was a far cry from the adobe structures that had been constructed in Marfa and Fort Davis when Miss Barnhart and Mrs. Anderson came to Presidio County. The two-story brick construction housed four classrooms on the first floor and two classrooms and an auditorium on the second floor. The small student body slowly grew from 1900 to 1910, necessitating an expansion of the school building well beyond these initial six classrooms. The new $15,000 north and south wing additions provided another six classrooms for the high school, providing plenty of space for the school’s future student body growth.

156 J. E. Gregg, “Schools in the Marfa Independent School District,” Patron’s Bulletin, 2, Folder “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.,” Marfa Public Library Records; Livingston, “Marfa School History,” The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement, January 21, 1965, 2, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records; Jacob Mendias, Jr. and Guy West, Jr., “The History of the Schools of Presidio County,” The Shorthorn, Volume 52 number 5, January 4, 1974, 1, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records. The authors state that the high school building was built in 1892.; Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I, , 315-316, The 1892 construction date is contested by Thompson in her research as she notes that the 1892 date was first proposed by Judge H.H. Kilpatrick and that this claim was questionable. In her research Thompson found that commissioners minutes from February 14, 1894 show that a petition had just been made to taxpayers in School District no. 1 of Presidio County, Marfa to tax themselves to acquire the funding to construct the high school.; Unnamed author, “Resigned,” The New Era, Vol. 24, No. 25, Ed. 1 Saturday, June 25, 1910, 4, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth994268/m1/4/ (accessed July 4, 2020), Miss Wilcox worked in Marfa schools until July 1910 when she tendered her resignation to the school board.

$7,500 domestic science building addition was built in 1910.\textsuperscript{159} The final product was a monumental structure reminiscent of the Gilded Age’s “captains of industry” mansions back east. Both Mr. Carnegie and Mr. Rockefeller, perfect manifestations of the American \textit{albus vater}, would have been proud to inhabit a home built to the standards followed by the builders of the new Marfa High School.\textsuperscript{160}

Documents from the era indicated that this first high school in Marfa was at least partly integrated, unlike other more populated areas of the state. Although not very numerous at the high school level, ethnic Mexican students who were able to attend prep school did achieve some measure of success. The story of the Machuca family, for instance, serves as a positive educational case in relation to the ethnic Mexican community coming out of the early part of twentieth century Presidio County.

The Machucas came to Marfa from Mexico in 1897 via the mining town of Schafter. Ysidro, the patriarch, found employment delivering beer, and the family settled down and raised six children in the community. Out of the two sons and four daughters, only Juan de la Cruz Machuca went on to graduate from Marfa High School in 1911. Records housed at the Marfa Public Library show that he was the first student of Mexican origin to receive a high school

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\textsuperscript{158} Thompson, \textit{The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 1}, 348; Undated, unnamed newspaper clipping, “Readin’- Ritin’ and Rithmetic in Marfa,” Folder “Class of 1926,” Marfa Public Library Records, The article states the high school building was actually built in 1892 and that the wings were added between 1910 and 1917; Undated, unnamed artist, black and white photograph of Marfa High School in 1925, Folder “Year 1925, Donnie Hampton” green, Sub folder, “Donnie Hampton 1925,” Marfa Public Library Records; Undated, unnamed artist, black and white photograph “Our Dear Old School,” donated by Willa Mae Bishop Dellabrite?, 4-81, Folder “Year 1921” Marfa Public Library Records.


\textsuperscript{160} Undated, unnamed author, undated, newspaper clipping, “Readin’- Ritin’ and Rithmetic in Marfa,” Folder “Class of 1926,” Marfa Public Library Records; The beautiful structure was demolished in 1925 after apparently being considerably damaged by a fire. The subsequent high school building opened that same year in November. This is telling of the availability of funds for educational purposes.
\end{small}
diploma in the small Presidio County community.\textsuperscript{161} Juan Machuca’s success, however, was an exception, not the rule, as a Mexican ward school had also been organized in Marfa in the late nineteenth century. The idealistic social reforms of the Progressive Era were uneven in their actual application and real-life expressions. The ethnic Mexican community, especially those living in rural far west Texas, was not one that came to enjoy much of the social betterment the progressives’ movement brought to American society.

Chapter 2: A School for Mexicans: The Marfa Mexican Ward School

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, nativist pedagogical thought was chiefly concerned with maintaining and preserving the English language. The Americanization movement, which began at the turn of the century, regarded language as a core cultural trait, in danger of being corrupted by the encroaching flows of immigrants entering the United States. This mentality was the driving force behind the many Americanization efforts across the country, particularly Presidio County. To incorporate the so-called "problem" peoples into preconceived ideals of what American society should encompass, nativists took to the nation's schools to re-socialize non-white children. Their goal was to establish a hegemonic Anglocentric national identity and assert it over the broader population of the United States at a historical juncture in which American society was diversifying. Anglo society feared that if such Americanization efforts were not taken seriously, in time it might recede into a numerical minority status.

Progressive Reforms Seek to Bring "Americanized" Betterment

The Progressive Era in the United States flourished between 1896 and 1920. The progressives were primarily middle-class urbanites, including lawyers, religious leaders, writers, and college professors. These reformists sought to combat various social stresses caused by industrialization, mass immigration, and urbanization. Education reform was seen as being of critical importance for the progressives, and the children of immigrants were seen as a key target. The era was marked by the diversity of opinion, approach, and prescription among progressive reformers.

On the one hand, there was W.E.B. DuBois, whose work advanced socialism, international worker solidarity, anti-imperialism, and domestic civil rights for American descendants of African slaves. But on the other, there was Rebecca Latimer Felton—a Georgian
women's suffrage activist and the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, a rabid segregationist and staunch advocate of the anti-lynching campaign of Black men. Throughout this period, African Americans, working-class/immigrants, Indigenous peoples, ethnic Latinos fought to advance civil rights, social equality, and human dignity. They needed to be recognized as all being part of the Progressive Era. Then again, white supremacists and their racial–capitalist ideology made their presence known as well.

This powerful brand of social reform in America was grounded in the prevailing pseudo-science of the time, which effectively situated White Protestant middle-class values at the apex of U.S. society. The concept of "100% Americanism" was central in this rhetoric and drove much of the ideology underpinning nativist ideology in the Progressive Era. In effect, the pro-American mentality behind the reformist concept sought to maintain the United States a nation insulated and purged of all foreign or alien entities, cultures, and persons.162

American nativists utilizing progressive models of social reform, including school segregation, helped ensure that ethnic minorities continued on a path towards perpetual poverty, thus becoming a social and economic nuisance. Many educational reformers believed that fostering identification among ethnic minorities with an Anglo-American cultural center would lead to social improvement, either through social integration into Anglo-American communities

162 Oscar Handlin, John Dewey’s Challenge to Education: Historical Perspectives on the Cultural Context (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959). Education researchers such as John Dewey commented on the nativist ideas regarding the children of immigrants to the U.S. regarding their English language deficiencies: “Although their [immigrants] children were but a small proportion of the school population, the newcomers were often described as a ‘distinct national menace.’ No one could live exposed to them without infection. They were making ‘a sorry mess’ of the nation’s language, for instance. ‘Their speech,’ to which they stubbornly clung, was ‘but a mangled product’ of ‘fragments from many tongues.’ To permit them thus to corrupt English was disloyal and unpatriotic.”; Aurelio Saldana, “The Invisible Nation Expands to the Borderland: The Ku Klux Klan in El Paso, 1921-1924,” The Journal of South Texas, Vol. 29. No. 1(2015), 2; Lynn Dumenil, Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 204-249.

163 Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, Progressivism (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1983), 6-8, 12.
or through cultural integration into an Anglo-American value system. Thus, nineteenth century culturally-sensitive pedagogical approaches used in Presidio County such as the integrated schools and the hiring of bilingual ethnic Mexican and Anglo-American teachers, fell by the wayside; instead, Anglo-centric models that followed an assimilationist approach came to dominate national education systems in the United States.164

Americanizing pedagogical approaches followed similar paths in most schools across the country, including large Anglo-American student populations. To non-Anglo students, however, educational approaches such as English-only, the teaching of Anglo-centric history, and the belittling of their culture, had as the end goal the reconstruction of identity. By subtracting their identity, forged in the home and their community, Anglo-American educators sought to replace it with a unified American one. Compounded with outright discrimination, these Americanization approaches, including corporeally punishing ethnic minority children for speaking in their native language, further complicated the educational advancement of non-Anglo children. Some non-Anglo children did manage to advance and secure a measure of social standing under these circumstances, and they were held up as evidence in support of assimilationist education reforms in the Progressive Era; however, significant numbers of students were "left behind."165


165 Of course, this concept is a subtle, if you will, reference to the George W. Bush administration era education policies. W.A. Stigler, The Lost Legion: El Paso Schools Standard, 11: 3-5, September 1931 as cited in Annie Reynolds, “The Education of Spanish-speaking Children in Five Southwestern States,” (US Department of the Interior Bulletin 1933, No. 11. Washington, DC, 1933: 45-46 in Education and the Mexican American, edited by Carlos E. Cortes, Rodolfo Acuña, Juan Gomez-Quinonez, and George F. Rivera, Jr. (New York: Arno Press, 1974), “In the fall of 1923, 1275 Mexican and 375 American children entered the low first grade in El Paso. In the fall of 1930, 7 years later, 174 Mexican and 506 American pupils entered an El Paso high school….Of the American pupils entering the high schools 36 percent, and of the Mexican pupils 16 percent, remain until they receive diplomas. As only 10 percent of the Mexican pupils entering the first grade reach the high school, and only 16 percent of these are graduated, it is evident that less than 2 percent of Mexican children entering the public schools remain to graduate from high school.”
The dynamic of racial/cultural condescension does not imply that non-Anglo student advancement within the assimilationist educational atmosphere did not exist. For some non-Anglo students, socialization into Anglo-American cultural modes via education enabled them to negotiate and even engage the American mainstream more effectively than others in their peer groups.\textsuperscript{166} The cases of Juan Menchaca, Chon Segura, and other ward school graduates of the Marfa school district can attest to this show of self-determination, family support, or a combination of both, which guided these students to achieve educational goals in the Americanization era.

In the nativist movement that engulfed the country during the Progressive Era, Anglo-American reformers propagated assimilation projects to counter the influx of non-Anglo immigrants from Europe and elsewhere, many of them drawn by the opportunities of the United States' burgeoning industrial economies. European peasants, including the Irish in Boston, the Poles in Chicago, and the Italians in Philadelphia, all cities where the industrial labor was in high demand, were targeted by these so-called Americanization efforts. Other ethnic groups, including Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans (recent migrants and long-time U.S. residents alike), were also scrutinized. Immigrant children were of special interest to assimilationist reform projects, as their youth permitted the molding of their still unformed identities. Attempts to achieve sociocultural restructuring were distinct according to the particular target group's sociocultural dynamics. For example, ethnic Mexican children who along with their parents were an important source of farm labor in the Southwest, received an education shaped by the seasonal labor needs of the agricultural industry. On the other hand, indigenous children of all Native American groups were selected to be sent to boarding schools across the United States.

\textsuperscript{166} Examples of these success stories will be provided in a later chapter.
The overall aim, at least in theory, was to make all these ethnic groups full participants in American society or develop a basic competency in mainstream Anglo-American society.

A good example of the resocialization-socialization approach at work is Americanization efforts targeted at Native Americans. Indigenous children were of primary concern to the U.S. government, as the guilt of having committed near extermination of various native groups led authorities in the country to follow the doctrine of "exterminate the Indian but develop the man." 167 To observe this dictum in practice, the U.S. government pursued a re-educating of the Native American ward population. 168

**The Americanizing Ward Schools**

The term "ward," or being under the protection of a caretaker, indicates how the U.S. government, which was then majority Anglo-American, conceptualized the position and identity of conquered Native Peoples. The U.S. Government-run "ward schools" were rooted in a patriarchal ideology about the education of Native peoples. The prevailing mentality underpinning pedagogical approaches at these schools was that Native children required protection in the form of systematic resocialization of their identities by a paternalistic government. The history of Native reeducation and identity formation in the United States is well-documented and is worth reviewing.


168 See Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); K. Tschina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 2, The Civilization Fund Act brought about on March 3, 1819 sought to create forces that would push for Euro American type of civilization by allotting funds to distinct institutions most of them religious who did educational work with Native Americans. Funding for the religious organizations maintaining Indian schools started at $10,000 in 1819 and by 1842 this had climbed to $214,000.
There were two types of Indian schools where children were instructed in the ways of the American middle-class: reservation schools and boarding schools. Some indigenous children from all over the United States were sent to Indian schools locally, on Native reservations. In contrast, others were sent far from their families to various urban centers of the United States.\textsuperscript{169} The first type is the Mescalero Apache reservation school in Mescalero, New Mexico, started in 1880. As an example of the second type, Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania was one of the first boarding schools in the country. It became a model for boarding institutions across the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s.\textsuperscript{170}

Reservation schools presented a challenge in that the indigenous sociocultural schemas that Native children learned and enacted among their communities conflicted with those presented in the Anglo-American educational environment fostered in the schoolhouse.\textsuperscript{171} Boarding schools, however, provided the conditions for sociocultural immersion. In theory, the cultural immersion (or, better yet, cultural isolation) approach at the heart of Native reeducation was an attempt to foster an assimilated American identity in Native children, and this included learning the English language, entering the American industrial-agricultural labor force, and adhering to the Christian religion.\textsuperscript{172} Away from their parents--the carriers of indigenous

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid, 26.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, 25-27.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, 42.
sociocultural knowledge--Native children could not learn the sociocultural schemas of their Native communities. As Michael C. Coleman notes in his work, this change in identity created a distancing between the Americanized native children and those back home who were not receiving the Anglo education.\textsuperscript{173} This separation policy was not applied exclusively to Native communities. Americanization was a force that the ethnic Mexicans of far west Texas also experienced in the widespread call for social reformation of the Progressive Era.

**Presidio County, Texas**

As discussed in Chapter One, the influx of Anglo-Americans to the Southwest grew significantly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as far west Texas came increasingly under U.S. control. Anglo-American settlement in the region began with the migration of single males in the mid-nineteenth century, when Colonel Alexander Doniphan's soldiers returned to claim land they had helped to conquer in the U.S.-Mexico War, and developed into a wave of full-family migration in the second half of the nineteenth century, once Anglos had secured political and economic domination of the region, including Presidio County. The American Southwest thus experienced a significant sociopolitical restructuring, which provoked a renegotiation of sociocultural identity in the region and, especially, among the conquered ethnic Mexican peoples.\textsuperscript{174}

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\textsuperscript{173} Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling*, 257-259.

Hispanic peoples resided in the American Southwest since the first Spanish *entradas* centuries earlier.\(^{175}\) Indeed, many of the most prominent families in this region had made their homes there centuries before the British American colonies even existed. By the early nineteenth century, the northernmost frontiers of the Spanish Empire in the Americas were inhabited by Spanish-speaking peoples.\(^{176}\) This included the region once known as *La Junta* or *Navidad en Las Cruces*, which, as discussed in Chapter 1, was called Presidio beginning in the nineteenth century. Many prominent Hispanic families in Marfa, Texas, had settled and grown roots there by the early 1800s.\(^{177}\)

The lived experiences of ethnic Mexican students enrolled in the Presidio education system, in both Marfa and other areas of the Southwest, offer glimpses of the day-to-day negotiations these children made with the forces of Anglo-American assimilation that they encountered in their local schools. One would be hard-pressed to deny that ethnic children's experience within the Americanized school system held many parallels with experiences lived by other "colored" children in other areas of the country. The experiences of ethnic Mexican persons who attended Anglo-ran schools during the Progressive Era support this schooling experience geared towards reshaping their sociocultural identity.\(^{178}\)

\(^{175}\) In this case, Hispanic refers to people who were Spanish-speaking or non-Anglo.


\(^{177}\) Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 1*, 173.

The Initial Steps Towards School Segregation in Presidio County

Late nineteenth-century Presidio County experienced the organization of its first public school system. As discussed in Chapter One, Marfa’s public school opened in 1885 under the community-system model when Kate Barnhart taught both Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican children in the two-room adobe school building on West Galveston Street.179 Again, the

179 J. E. Gregg, “The History of Presidio County,” (The University of Texas, Masters Thesis, 1933) 177, 186, 182, as referenced in Cecilia Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I, (Austin: Nortext, 1985); See Frederick Eby, The Development of Education in Texas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925); Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” Marfa Independent and Big Bend Sentinel, July 16, 1987, 10., http://library.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-07-16.pdf (accessed July 4, 2020); Presidio County, Texas, Deed Book No. 3, 403; 5 November 1885, Office of the County Clerk, Marfa, Texas; Presidio County, Texas, Deed Book No. 42, 41; 13 October 1910; Office of the County Clerk, Marfa, Texas; Research of deeds by the Blackwell School Alliance found that Lots 15 and 16 of Block 32 were purchased by County Judge W.H. Slaughter “for Public Free School purposes” in 1885. In 1910, the property was sold to a private citizen;
community system facilitated student body integration, given the sparse population relative to educational resources in regions like Presidio County.

The *adobe* structure was the only available public school in the community even as the "separate but equal" policy doctrine of USSC landmark case *Plessy v. Ferguson* of 1896 took hold across the state. Former teacher-coach at Marfa J.E. Gregg noted that "for some time, this was the only public school in Marfa, and was used by all children until the first section of the two stories [sic] red brick building was constructed in 1892 on the present location of the [Marfa] high school."¹⁸⁰ This integrated school did not last long. In 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* provided federal codification of and justification for a segregationist ideology that had already become entrenched in the country. Indeed, before the case, in the early 1890s, Marfa's residents had already made plans to segregate the school system.¹⁸¹

There is some question about the exact origin of the Mexican ward school in Marfa because the relevant records have been lost. A recollection by former Marfa school teacher Evelyn Davis in an article published in the late 1980s records this loss:

Since Judge-. Bobby Martinez could not locate the cache of old records when the county judges: W.W. Bogel, W.T. Davis, Claud Lee, Olie Johnson, and others acted as county superintendents of schools and since Supt. Carl Robinson was incapable of producing any information about Blackwell because his predecessor, Hamilton Steel, had cleaned house

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¹⁸¹ Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Marfa School History,” *The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement*, January 21, 1965, 1, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records; Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” *The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel*, May 21, 1987, 6, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-05-21.pdf (accessed July 18, 2020); Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume I*, 315-316, Again, this assertion is contested by Thompson, stating that in her research she found county documents from 1894 where the funding for the new schoolhouse is still being worked into county taxation. She contends that the red-brick schoolhouse was not constructed in 1892 and may have been until at least a couple years later that the building was completed.
and destroyed all the records; Blackwell had no history. So we appreciate your contributions of articles and pictures, Pat [Ryan], and your generous help in the July Blackwell Reunion.\textsuperscript{182}

According to the available sources, from 1892 to 1894, the Marfa community school system began segregating students in the early grades by race and ethnicity. Anglo-American students attended school in the partially-completed two-story red brick building while ethnic Mexican students attended the Mexican ward school on West Galveston Street on the south side of the railroad tracks.\textsuperscript{183}

Several teachers in the Marfa school system worked at the Mexican school. One former Blackwell School teacher, Ruth Livingston, stated in a 1987 interview that "Professor" Moulton and B. F. Adams had taught in the West Galveston Street school during its early years.\textsuperscript{184} A man named J. F. Taft taught at the Marfa school around the same time and then moved to the Shafter school, where he taught until 1902.\textsuperscript{185} According to Ruth Livingston's recollection, these teachers were there at the Mexican ward school "before the division of the school into the Anglo

\textsuperscript{182} Evelyn Davis, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” \textit{Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel}, July 16, 1987, 10, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-07-16.pdf} (accessed July 4, 2020), Pat Ryan was the editor of \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel} in 1987.; Evelyn Davis, “Blackwell Reunion Plans Continue,” \textit{The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel}, April 2, 1987, 1, 8, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-04-02.pdf}, (accessed July 4, 2020), The publication had previously stated that the Marfa Mexican school records had been lost, “Since Hamilton Steel cleaned house, and destroyed all the old records in 1955, the teachers are faced with a difficult task of writing a complete history. Carl Robinson and Veronica Campbell are searching the MISD records; Josie Luna and Aida Cano are combing the school board minutes. Bertha Sanchez has volunteered to study \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel} yearly files and Yvonne Saulter is searching the early records in the county judge's office when the Mexican school was administered by the county judges. Evelyn Davis has elected herself to be the coordinator of the written accounts, has mailed many letters to former teachers 'picking their brains' and has talked to many of her old pupils. She is asking the Marfa students to write their memories of their school days and mail them to her.”


\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
school and the Mexican school, and therefore become a part of the background history of the Mexican school. "186 The extant historical record suggests that all these men taught at the Mexican school before 1892.187

The newly segregated Mexican School in Marfa experienced virtual "musical chairs" of teaching staff at the turn of the century; for instance, between 1900 and 1901, Maggie Hyde, Mary Howard, and Joe Humphreys Sr. taught at Marfa's ward school. In 1902, Mr. Taft, once a teacher at the Marfa Mexican School, resigned from his teaching job at the Shafter company school. The school board elected Anne Elizabeth Shannon to replace him there. Shannon was just getting situated in Shafter when she resigned in December 1903 to marry Mr. Wyck Kendall Livingston. Maggie Hyde, a teacher at the Mexican School in Marfa, was elected to fill Shannon-Livingston's vacancy at Shafter. Around this time, a Mexican couple from Ojinaga, Mr. and Mrs. Tomas Castillo became teachers at the Marfa Mexican School.188 The short, piecemeal tenure of teaching staff suggests that building rapport with the ethnic Mexican students—a vital component in the education process—was deprioritized by the Marfa community school system. The ongoing teacher reassignment undoubtedly created or maintained a sense of disconnect between teacher and students. The only constant throughout those years was that Marfa's ethnic Mexican children were undergoing their schooling at a considerable

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186 Ibid.

187 Ibid.

physical distance from their Anglo peers—the Mexican ward school building had become a fully segregated educational facility.

**The Marfa Mexican School Building**

The origin story of the Marfa Mexican ward school building—as with many aspects of the education history in other rural areas of the state—is not without its share of uncertainties.\(^{189}\) The commonly agreed-upon origin story of the Mexican schoolhouse in Marfa purports that the local Methodist Church donated the original building to the Marfa School district in the late 1800s for use as a schoolhouse for the community's ethnic Mexican children. A 1940 account from the private papers of Chon Segura, a 1926 Marfa High School graduate and former Mexican ward school student, states that the building was initially constructed as a church and, beginning in 1889, was used on weekdays as a school.\(^{190}\) Former Mexican ward school student Carmen Mendias was quoted in *The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel*, saying:

> The oldest building which has been in use up to the present time, was built for a church but was used on week days for a school. The school was opened in December 1889 with Mr. Taft as the teacher of not more than twenty-five pupils. By 1908 there were two teachers, Joe Humphris and Calvin Robinson.\(^{191}\)

Giving credence to this account is a reminiscence by Hershal Hord, quoted in the same 1987 newspaper article; Hord recalled:

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I shall never forget the community church that was built in Marfa. As a youngster I remember my father and mother coming to town in a buggy from the ranch each Sunday to attend church. I also recall our church was used as a Mexican school.  

There is no other detail in the article about who this person is or what building exactly is being discussed. It appears the story by both Mendias and Hord was taken at face value in later years when local historians attempted to reconstruct the school's history—a state historical marker posted on the front of the old Blackwell School building, which now serves as a museum, reiterates this same account of the school's origin. State officials did not look deeper into the building’s history when completing the historical marker. Thus, Marfa residents adhered to the Mexican schoolhouse story as it being originally a church. The structure's architecture is similar to that of other church buildings from the era, but that alone does not prove the account's veracity. Indeed, research conducted by the Blackwell School Alliance and U.T. San Antonio declares that this story has "long been the source of misinformation."  

After the Marfa schools became segregated between 1892 and 1894, the Mexican ward school on West Galveston Street continued operating until the ethnic Mexican students were moved to a new location on the corner of Abbot and Waco. The district, reviewing the ward

192 Ibid.

193 United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 31, https://www.the.texas.gov/public/upload/Marfa%2C%20Blackwell%20School%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf (accessed July 12, 2020); Author’s multiple visits to the Blackwell School building now overseen by the Blackwell School Alliance.; Unnamed author, “The Daily Vacation Bible School,” The New Era, May 23, 1925, 1. http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanes/marfa21-28/1925-05-23.pdf (accessed July 21, 2020), To further complicate the origin story, the Methodist Church held summer school sessions on its grounds in the early 1920s. The author states that by May of 1925, the church was already starting its third summer session providing education for the children of Marfa. According to the article, the curriculum was not typical bible school limited to the teaching of Christian values. The column stated that, “The Vacation School is a real school. Educational standards are set and strictly adhered to…The program is based upon Religious and Educational fundamentals.”

school's dilapidated condition, elected to build a new Mexican ward school at the cost of $4,500; construction began in 1908 and was completed in 1909.\textsuperscript{195} Again, the architecture of the new Mexican school was similar to the ecclesiastical constructions of the day. Thus, the ward school came to be known as the "cathedral" among locals. The confusion concerning whether the Mexican ward school began as a church may have originated with the architecture and local nicknaming.

The standard account of the school's origin, as enshrined by the building's current historical marker, is contradicted by a 1909 article, published in \textit{The New Era}, which comments that the school district had recently acquired property at a new location to the south of the old Mexican school building. On a Tuesday night in May of 1909, the school board convened to discuss several topics relating to the upcoming school year. Judge John P. Shields, Robert Colquitt, Mr. O. L. Niccols, and Robert Ellison of the school board were present. The plan included elections, in which Mr. Niccols was installed as secretary and Mr. Colquitt as chairman. The Marfa School Principal, Professor H. B. Griffin, gave a "lengthy" report on the school system, demonstrating "a great improvement over past years" as well as the "great efficiency of the faculty."\textsuperscript{196} The administrator gave an eloquent presentation in a sense, "buttering up" the group of white male educators in charge of hiring and firing those employed by the school district.


After Professor Griffin's report, the board appointed teachers to the county's various schools. Professor H. B. Griffin was to continue as Principal of the Marfa High School, while E. C. Nichols would serve as his assistant; Evelyn Greenwood was to teach the intermediate grades and Laura Wilcox was to tend to the primary students in the school; Mary Lee Greenwood was charged with teaching the music classes.¹⁹⁷ The smaller communities in Presidio County and the Marfa Mexican ward school were staffed: Alice Lovelace was the teacher at Penitas; Joe Humphris [sic] at Casa Piedra; Mary Rowan at Alamito; Verbye Kern at Alamo; and Mr. J. M. Macon and at Polvo. At Marfa's growing Mexican ward school, Rubie Jordan was the Principal with Sallie Barclay as her assistant.¹⁹⁸ These, then, were the teaching assignments for the 1909–10 school year.

The newspaper's unnamed editor celebrated the election of "the right people in the schools," touting the decisions as "a proper move on the part of the trustees," and he applauded that the citizens were "glad to note the great interest that is being manifested [sic] in educational matters."¹⁹⁹ The editor's views are representative of the reformist educational mentality permeating the country at that moment in time—for the United States was entering the initial stages of a process by which progress and reform ideologies would shake the country's structuring social institutions to their core.

The last item on the 1909 school board meeting agenda was a vote on whether to sell the old Mexican school building on West Galveston Street. The school board voted in the affirmative and chose a location to construct the new, fully segregated Mexican school, which

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid.
they arranged to commence in the coming weeks. It appears that the "separate but equal" doctrine was fully implemented in this move by the district. In the eyes of district officials, the old Mexican school at West Galveston Street was too worn to continue housing the growing number of students.\footnote{Unnamed Author, “School Board Meeting,” *The New Era*, Vol. 23, No. 22, Ed. 1 Saturday, May 29, 1909, 2, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth994447/m1/2/ (accessed July 15, 2020); Unnamed Author, “Laitas, Texas,” *The New Era*, Vol. 23, No. 22, Ed. 1 Saturday, May 29, 1909, 2, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth994447/m1/2/ (accessed July 15, 2020).} But the dilapidated state of the school was not regarded as sufficient reason to move those students into the new school north across the railroad tracks. Instead, the Mexican ward school campus was moved further to the south to a parcel of land on Block 87 consisting of Lots 1 through 5, which the district bought from John M. Dean on June 25, 1909, for $150.\footnote{Lonn Taylor, “Report on the Land History of Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Block 87, Original Town of Marfa,” (working paper in support of Historic Structures Report, 2017) as cited in United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, “Blackwell School,” 14, https://www.thetexas.gov/public/upload/Marfa%2C%20Blackwell%20School%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf (accessed July 12, 2020); Presidio County Deed Record 27:182, According to the document, the School Trustees of District #1, Presidio Co, purchased Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5 of Block 87 from J.M. Dean on 25 June 1909; Map, Presidio County Record of Deed Book 21, 640.} All these lots were situated south of the railroad tracks. The Mexican ward schools were constructed beyond a physical barrier, a phenomenon seen in other communities across the Southwest.

The seller, Mr. John M. Dean, had acquired much of the land that became Marfa when he arrived in Presidio County around 1878.\footnote{Abbie Perrault, “Marfa’s Blackwell School joins the National Register of Historic Places,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, December 18, 2019, https://bigbendsentinel.com/2019/12/18/marfas-blackwell-school-joins-the-national-register-of-historic-places/ (accessed July 7, 2020); H. Bailey Carrol, “Texas Collection,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Volume 48, July 1944 - April, 1945: 295, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth146055/ (accessed July 23, 2020).} Like other Anglo men before him, Dean had come to Presidio County hoping to better his economic lot. The region was by this time in the hands of
Anglo settlers, and Anglo-American men held most county offices. Dean came to the region intending to practice law but had to work as a stage driver while establishing himself socially and financially in the community. Now that Anglo-Americans were in firm control of the region, Dean soon moved into a more promising position within the county’s sociopolitical structure. In May 1879, Dean applied for and acquired an appointment as County Attorney of Presidio County. The industrious Dean simultaneously held several positions. In 1880, following a short stint as a driver for the Overland stage company, he left his employment and became an assistant to County Clerk John B. Shields.203

The Dean property on the corner of Abbot and Waco that the Marfa school district acquired in 1909 was quickly converted into a school campus for ethnic Mexican students: it was purchased in May and repurposed for its new function by the time school opened in September of that same year. Once again, the building material of choice was adobe, or as colloquially known by Anglo-Americans as "dobe," which had been used in the region for generations.204 For the school's construction, the district hired a contractor named Cal Robinson to build the school utilizing the era's prevailing schoolhouse model. The structure, as previously mentioned, was architecturally similar to churches in the region (a fact which may contribute to the confusion

203 Presidio County Commissioners Minutes, May 13, 1879; Evelyn Bishop Bentley, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel, April 30, 1879, 6, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-04-30.pdf (accessed July 23, 2020), Adding further confusion to the origin story of the Mexican school in Marfa, in an article written for the Blackwell school reunion in 1987, the author, a former teacher at Blackwell in the 1950s, states that her father, Charles Bishop, was born on October 22, 1887 in a private residence which was located on the Blackwell School site. She claimed that the building her father was born in was later used as the first building for the Mexican school which later became Blackwell School.

regarding the Mexican ward school’s origin). Community newspapers announced the completion of the one-room plastered adobe building in 1909. That fall, the ethnic Mexican children enjoyed the comforts of a new schoolhouse further south of the railroad tracks and further away from Marfa's regular school—however, the new and improved campus did not include a playground or indoor restrooms. Instead, the facility had two outhouses constructed away from the schoolhouse across an empty lot that served as a playground.

The account muddies the history of the education of ethnic Mexicans in the community. From available documents, it is evident that the district knowingly and actively sought to segregate the ethnic Mexican children from the Anglo-American children. The district's willingness to fund a separate schoolhouse for ethnic Mexicans suggests a change in or an emboldening of racial ideology. The construction of the new red-brick school and the subsequent establishment of a school for ethnic Mexican children that was separated from the town community by a railroad track is in line with the argument used by school districts to counter charges of racial segregation of the schools: to provide a school facility within walking distance with no need to cross the dangerous railroad tracks. The best way to achieve this was to construct a schoolhouse within Marfa's ethnic Mexican enclave section. In the segregationist

205 Unnamed author, “The New Mexican School House,” The New Era, July 24, 1909, 1 https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth994353/m1/1/ (accessed July 12, 2020); Unnamed author, “New Building,” The New Era, August, 28, 1909, 3, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth994244/m1/3/ (accessed July 13, 2020); Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2, 6, 61. The contractor Cal or G. C. Robinson was a well-connected businessman in Marfa. Robinson along with another prominent businessman, W.B. Mitchell were in the “lumber business” with access to the upper echelons of Marfa sociopolitical spheres. Robinson not only got the contract for the construction of the adobe Mexican school in 1909 but also built a two-storied brick house for then county Judge William Earney. The author states that the actual cost of building the Mexican school was $1678. Advertisements for “G.C. Robinson Lumber Company in The New Era advised Marfans, “Don’t Take Chances, Let Us Show You.” That is in terms of building, let Robinson show you how construction is done.

minds of the school board, the two-school system provided the best possible solution to the issue of the ethnic Mexican children’s safety.\textsuperscript{207}

\textbf{The Ethnic-Mexican Enclave of Presidio County Grows}

As in other regions of the United States, immigrants tended to settle in housing near or among other immigrants. The ethnic enclaves developed within broader urban communities comprised of persons and families who shared cultural or national backgrounds.\textsuperscript{208} In other words, immigrants felt more comfortable in environments that felt closer to how things were back in their home country. Ethnic ghettos developed in large and small communities across the United States, in some cases as a matter of choice for immigrants or as an effect of zoning and regulation that relegated them to certain spaces. The community of Marfa was not immune to this phenomenon. Marfa's south side developed as a majority ethnic Mexican neighborhood, and the north side, across the railroad tracks, took shape as a majority Anglo enclave.

The need for labor in industrial urban areas and agricultural regions motivated many immigrants to seek a better life in the United States. During the Progressive Era, immigration ideology sought to slow down or even prohibit the increasing multiculturalism caused by mass immigration in the late 1880s. Still, at the same time, the rapid influx of immigrants placed real

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{207} Ruben Donato, Gonzalo Guzman, and Jarrod Hanson, “Francisco Maestas, et al. v. George H. Shone et al.: Mexican American Resistance to School Segregation in the Hispano Homeland, 1912-1914,” \textit{Journal of Latinos and Education}, 16 (1):3-17, \url{https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2016.1179190} (accessed March 20, 2021). In the 1913 Colorado school desegregation court case Francisco Maestas v. George H. Shone, ethnic Mexican children were made to cross the railroad tracks to attend the “Mexican Preparatory School.” The district claimed the ethnic Mexican students had to attend the segregated school to enhance their English language skills before moving them to the Northside School with Anglo students. The district did not take into account that many of the “Mexican” children were descendants of the first Spanish settlements in the region, were U.S. citizens, and actually spoke English.

material pressures on local communities that were not equipped to administer a large, diverse population. Of course, within the list of effects was the creation of ethnic ghettos where immigrant groups settled next to those of the same cultural background making life in a new country more manageable. The tendency to settle in ethnic enclaves limited immigrants' ability to assimilate into mainstream American society, thereby furthering the social tension between native-born and immigrant communities. Nativist groups across the U.S. began to merge to combat these social transformations.

Within the history of American demographic change there is the important phenomenon of intra-state migration. As industrial urban areas drew large numbers of laborers from Europe and rural areas of the United States, a void was left in the American south and southwest agricultural sectors in this Great Migration. Between 1880 and 1930, the percentage of laborers in agriculture fell from 80.2% to below 50%; meanwhile, the number of workers in manufacturing increased from 66,100 to more than 541,500.\textsuperscript{209} Documentation from the period demonstrates an increasing net out-migration from the agricultural regions in the U.S. for both African Americans and Anglo-Americans after 1890. The pace of out-migration for these two groups even accelerated after 1900.\textsuperscript{210}


\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.
During this period, the proverbial stars aligned, producing conditions that would lead to the introduction of Mexican nationals to the agricultural fields of the United States. In the 1880s, expansion of the rail system connecting Mexico and the United States made northward migration more accessible. At the same time, the political instability and social tensions caused by the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship in Mexico provided an impetus for undertaking the journey.211

As a result, Presidio County received a significant influx of Mexican immigrants into its communities during the 1880s.212 As an important railroad hub, Marfa drew migrants who sought work, particularly "greasers" whose work experience gave them an advantage in the competition for the railway jobs.213 Work opportunities in Marfa and Presidio attracted not only single male migrants traveling alone but also male migrants who came with their families in tow, children included.214 Although Mexican families did not arrive in high numbers until the migration waves attending the Mexican Revolution, this early migration of entire households in


213 See Jerome R. Adams, Greasers and Gringos: The Historical Roots of Anglo-Hispanic Prejudice, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2006), 1. The word “greaser” can be traced back to the U.S. War with Mexico where the racial epithet was used to denigrate the Mexican people by the invading U.S. troops. There are etymologies that state that the word perhaps has non-racial origins. A “greaser,” was the job title held by those holding the lowest level of employment on railroad maintenance crews. The late nineteenth century Southwest with its multi-tiered employment and salary scales, usually reserved the “greaser” jobs for Mexican immigrant men.

214 See Cecilia Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 1, Austin: Nortex, 1985), The author notes many examples of families coming in from the Mexico and settling in Presidio County during this time.; Garcia, Desert Immigrants, 17, 37-38, 40, 43-44, 47, 49-50-54, 57-58, 63, 66-68. Garcia notes that railroad companies noticed that married Mexican men with families tended to be a more reliable labor force than single men. This belief drove companies to seek these men as a source of labor even allowing for up to a three-week furlough so that the workers could return home either in the U.S. or Mexico to visit families.
the late 1880s had a tremendous influence on the demographic developments of Presidio County.215

Census records for Presidio County document that the ethnic Mexican population outnumbered the Anglo-Americans considerably during the era.216 Ethnic Mexicans outnumbered Anglos, which became apparent when the groups met at the schoolhouse. Although the schools aimed to Americanize all children, regardless of their racial or cultural background, what played out was marked resocialization of the numerical minority group involved. As in the case of Milton Faver generations before, Anglo-American children were becoming assimilated into Mexican sociocultural schemas, rather than the Mexican children being subjected to Anglo assimilation processes.

But, then again, power does not necessarily correlate to population numbers. That is, not because one sociocultural group has more persons in a specific context does it mean that this particular group shapes the dominant cultural identity.217 When it comes to young children who have not yet formed a mature social identity, though, the numerical difference in actual on-the-ground cultural identity shapers creates a significant factor in socialization that should not be discounted. In other words, since there were more ethnic Mexican children (numerically

215 Friedrich Katz, “Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies,” Hispanic American Historical Review (1974): 1-47, https://read.dukeupress.edu/hahr/article/54/1/1/151287/Labor-Conditions-on-Haciendas-in-Porfirian-Mexico (accessed July 23, 2020), Katz notes that for a significant section of the Northern Mexico workforce, emigrating to the U.S. for seasonal work was just an extension of this group’s labor market. Availability of distinct employment opportunities on haciendas or mines, the workers were not necessarily tied to any particular job type so they had the ability to migrate when economic necessity heightened especially during periods of low employment and drought in Northern Mexico. Katz called these migrants semi-agricultural/semi-industrial laborers.


217 See K. Allan, The Social Lens: An Invitation to Social and Sociological Theory (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2007), Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is correct in that it is those that have the power, and not necessarily in numbers, that create our habitus, that create life for us.
dominant shapers of cultural identity) than Anglo-American children (sociopolitical, dominant economic group but numerically subordinate shapers of cultural identity), the latter group was becoming, in a sense, socio-culturally Mexicanized. Because of this phenomenon, I contend that segregation of the Marfa school system was expected and then secured, given the era's racial attitudes and the encouraging nativist ideology of the nascent Progressive Era.

From 1892–94, Anglo-American children and some of the "better class of pupils," to echo Mattie Belle Anderson's descriptive words, moved to the new, two-story, red-brick building across the railroad tracks on the north end of town. The ethnic Mexican children stayed at the Mexican ward school building on West Galveston Street—perhaps to keep them "safe" from the dangers of crossing the railroad tracks and to maintain better control of how their identities were shaped in the school environment. The available evidence is not clear as to where ethnic Mexican children attended school between 1889 and 1909, but what is known is that it was in a building closer to, or within, Marfa's Mexican barrio.

Photographs of the Mexican school taken at the turn of the century show that segregated school classes did continue at the West Galveston Street school. It is possible that the school made temporary use of the Methodist church building while the old Mexican school underwent maintenance and upgrades, minimal if any from what can be appreciated in the available photos. As hypothesized above, nicknaming the new Mexican school at the corner of Abbot and Waco "the cathedral" may have precipitated the erroneous belief that the building had originally been a church and was donated to the district—especially as it had been used as a temporary school in


\[219\] Unnamed artist, black and white photograph “Mexican School 1902,” Folder “School Bulletin,” Marfa Public Library Records. A photograph of the Mexican School from 1902 shows a group of over 70 ethnic Mexican students posing for a class photo in front of their abobe schoolhouse.
the past. The fact of the matter was, regardless of the Mexican school building's actual origin, ethnic Mexican children underwent segregated learning in the Marfa community school system.

The Segregation of Marfa's Ethnic Mexican Children

The reasons students attended ward schools across the state are unclear. Although Mexican children were sequestered in a separate campus, district administrators denied that this segregation was implemented based on race or ethnicity. In one recollection of racial or linguistic discrimination, Ramona Gonzalez a former segregated Mexican ward school student in the Southwest had this to say about the dynamic: “si era discriminación, nosotros no la conocíamos como discriminación, porque eso fue ya ahora moderna la palabra. Bueno, probablemente; pero yo nunca deje que a mí me molestara eso.”

Gonzalez recalled the segregated school practices in subtly critical ways. The differentiated treatment did not constitute outright discrimination to this student—at least, she did not perceive it as such. On the other hand, she also used the common expression te hacen menos, meaning "you are made [to feel] less-than," to articulate her ward school experiences further.

As previously discussed, there had been a high concentration of Spanish-Mexican peoples residing in far west Texas for centuries. Thus, it was no surprise to find a high concentration of ethnic Mexican students in its schools during the period in question. When the school board outlined the factors used to justify segregation, English-language deficiency was touted as one of the main reasons for instituting a separate campus. For instance, ethnic Mexican students in some regions of the Southwest recalled having to wait until age eight or nine to attend

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220 Ramona Gonzalez, 1976, Interview by Oscar J. Martinez, Interview no. 334, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas: 13, “If this [the way we were treated] was discrimination, we did not see it as such because that is a modern word [concept]. Well, it probably was [discrimination], but I never let that bother me.”
school. Some districts required all native Spanish-speaking children to abide by these guidelines.  

According to school district administrators, age restrictions on school attendance were implemented to facilitate children's English language acquisition. Developmental theories of the time indicated that the loss of baby teeth and subsequent growth of adult teeth impeded the correct pronunciation of certain English words in this age group between five and seven years. The contemporary linguistic theory posited that inherent differences between Spanish and English pronunciation requirements were a major factor in non-English-speaking children's difficulty pronouncing certain English words and acquiring a solid English-language foundation. This supposed inherent difference was aggravated, for lack of a better word, by the teething that began at five to six years of age. The district administrators argued that ethnic Mexican students, already at a disadvantage in pronouncing English words that required the use of the tongue and the teeth, would be better off waiting until their teeth had grown in before undertaking English-language learning.

Accounts from other segregated schools in the Southwest counter this narrative by presenting a racialized explanation of segregation policies. From the recollections of Isabel, a native English-speaking former segregated school student interviewed by historian Martha Menchaca, the language had little to do with the segregation of ethnic Mexicans in school districts across the region. The student recalled,

I don't think we were segregated because we didn't speak English. I spoke English, and so did my sisters, but we were kept with the Mejicanitos. They segregated us because we didn't learn as fast. The Anglo kids were smarter….When I was a kid, I was the smartest

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221 Ibid.

222 Katherine H. Meguire, “Educating the Mexican Child in the Elementary School,” (Masters Thesis, University of Southern California, 1938),
kid in the classroom, so they put me in a room with the Anglo kids…I used to play a lot, so they put me back with the Mejicanitos…They also separated us because the Mejicanitos came to school dirty and smelly.223

The student's recollection suggests that poor knowledge of English was not a major factor determining whether a student could attend the regular school.224 Of course, internalized perceptions of why she had been segregated were shaped by subsequent years of emotional, psychological, and social maturation. Still, her testimony also indicates segregation's impact on one's sense of self and personhood. Internalization of inferiority based on race or culture is presented to Menchaca by Isabel to explain, and perhaps even justify, segregation in the schools. Language and measures of linguistic proficiency enabled the segregation of ethnic Mexican children's education as proxies for race. Also, they functioned to justify the push for the Americanization of the ethnic Mexican students in the Marfa community school system.

As a result, ethnic Mexican children—who constituted the majority of non-English speaking school-aged persons in the Southwest—entered a biased school system at least one or two years after their Anglo-American counterparts, thereby creating another obstacle to educational attainment. Cultural minority status, economic hindrance, social exclusion, and chronic delays in education compounded an already precarious learning environment for ethnic Mexicans. How these dynamics played out on the ground is not well-recorded. Did teachers at the Mexican schools actively or consciously seek to provide subpar education to ethnic Mexican children because of their race? Or were teacher's simply doing their best under less-than-ideal circumstances? Did the educator spirit come to the fore, especially after daily face-to-face interactions with the "other"?


It is well-documented that teaching at the segregated Mexican ward schools was generally of poor quality. Historians such as Diana Marie Pino and Mario T. Garcia have suggested that ethnic Mexican children "were taught by poorly trained, often, unqualified teachers who were unacquainted with the culture and traditions of this population."\(^{225}\) The observation may have some merit, but it should be deconstructed to understand why teaching quality was perceived as poor. It is then important to note that perceptions of the quality of teaching differ because of its subjective nature. In other words, what one person sees as low-quality, ineffective education, another will see it as providing the proper skills needed to succeed in life.

Accounts of ethnic Mexican children's early schooling in Marfa may offer a glimpse of what was happening in the classroom. According to Presidio County historian Cecilia Thompson,

Even though the schools were segregated in Marfa, the Hispanic school did not suffer inferior instruction. Some of the best teachers in the Marfa system taught in the Mexican school. When the schools closed for the summer of 1909, its teachers, Mamie Robinson, and Loula Bunton commended the following students for superior work: Abelino Luzero, Manuel Gutierrez, Antonia Gonzales, Enrique Molina, George Osorio, Epifania Gonzalez, Dominga Molina, Antonia Gonzales, and Adela Jiner.\(^{226}\)

Of course, just a few months prior, the school board had convened and decided to sell the old Mexican schoolhouse, purchase property to the south of Marfa, and build a new schoolhouse for ethnic Mexican children there. The quality of education may or may not have been adequate depending on who was gauging the said quality of education. The fact was that in the fall of 1909, the segregated school for Mexicans in Marfa was ready for operation.


\(^{226}\) Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2*, 61.
A "New" Mexican School for Marfa

Beginning in the fall semester of 1909, Rubie Jordan assumed the role of principal at the ward school. Sarah Barclay was selected to be Jordan's assistant, but 15-year-old Mary Shannon ultimately replaced her. Barclay, elected to teach at the Mexican school on May 29, 1909, resigned even before the school year began. This abrupt departure created somewhat of a crisis for the school board as they scrambled to find a replacement. The reasons why are still to be found in the research.227

Shannon, who had just graduated from Marfa High School in 1908, was hired at $75 per month.228 The teacher's young age may come as a surprise, but then again, children entered the first grade often younger than six years of age. Considering that Texas state law only required eleven full years of schooling, including high school, it was possible to have rather young individuals teaching children not much younger than they were in some of the state's schools. It was not until 1937 that one more year was added to the intermediate levels, extending Texas's required schooling.229


228 Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2, 6, 61, According to Thompson, Mary Shannon came to Marfa by way of Shafter, the mining town established by John Spencer. Her father J.A. Shannon had worked for the mine and the family lived in a company house.; Unnamed author, “School Board Meeting,” The New Era, Vol. 23, No. 22, Ed. 1 Saturday, May 29, 1909, 2, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth994447/m1/2/ (accessed July 15, 2020); Thompson spells the Mexican school principal’s first name “Ruby” while the New Era reporters spell it “Rubie.”; Unnamed artist, Class of 1908 Commencement announcement, Folder “School Classes from 1902, 1903, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913,” Sub folder “1908,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed artist, black and white photograph Class of 1908, Folder “School Classes from 1902, 1903, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913,” Sub folder “1908,” Marfa Public Library Records.
To remediate the emergency of having lost one of their Mexican school teachers when Miss Barclay resigned, the school board trustees, Judge W.W. Bogel and Mr. Nichols recruited Shannon to take the teaching certification exam and assume the position vacated by Barclay. It was common knowledge that in isolated communities such as those on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands that acquiring a teaching certificate in the early years of rural schooling was much more easily done than is required today. Marfa's fledgling school system was in such desperate need of teachers that the young woman was hastily recruited and subsequently hired as the Mexican school teacher. Marfa residents kept up a running joke when they spoke about the need for teachers during that period:

In the early nine-teen hundreds, there were many fine schools along the Rio Grande which were instructed by poorly trained but dedicated teachers. A story is told of a stranger who drifted into Marfa and asked for a school on the river. Questioned by the board of trustees, he was evasive. At last, a lawyer with a keen sense of humor said, 'If you quote a passage from the Bible, I'll give you a certificate.' The man quoted, 'and the devil was there, also.' He got the certificate. In 1914, a member of the board of examiners asked the county superintendent how rigidly the papers [examinations] should be graded. The answer was, "Anyone with guts enough to teach on that river ought to pass." Once Shannon had stepped in to fill the void left by Barclay's sudden departure, the one-room adobe structure was prepared to serve as a place of instruction for Marfa's ethnic Mexican children. The building may have been relatively better equipped than the previous schoolhouses.

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229 Unnamed author, “Mann Inspects Marfa Schools During Week of May Tenth: Suggestions Given For New Curriculum for Fall Term,” The Shorthorn, May 15, 1937, 5, Folder “Class of 1937,” Subfolder “1937,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed author, “Schools Inspected,” The Big Bend Sentinel and New Era, May 21, 1937, 3, Folder “Class of 1937,” Subfolder “1937,” Marfa Public Library Records, Sue B. Mann, Deputy State Superintendent of Schools inspected schools in Presidio County in May 1937. She recommended that Marfa school district add one more year of schooling and go from a 7-4 format to an overall 12-year model. She also recommended to make Blackwell “Mexican” School into an accredited junior high school.


231 Ibid.
in the region installation-wise. For example, the new Mexican schoolhouse had at least plastered walls. Resource-wise, the segregated school was still lacking.\textsuperscript{232}

In an interview conducted many years later, Mary Shannon recalled developing tremendous resourcefulness over the three years she taught at the Mexican school, given its lack of supplies and equipment. For instance, the school had no books, and so Shannon created her teaching materials out of magazines; she cut out sections of the publications and then pasted them into what looked like collages. Shannon then utilized these introductory texts to teach English—the linguistic currency of political power at the time—to her twelve Spanish-speaking pupils.\textsuperscript{233} This was the initial step on their way to becoming more "American" through the teaching of a teacher not much older than they were. The ethnic Mexican children of Marfa were thus absorbing their first formal education lessons—and thereby undergoing Anglo socialization—at a segregated school. As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, a new wave of immigration was about to change the equilibrium of race relations in the region. This surge profoundly impacted communities situated between the United States and Mexico.

\textbf{Revolution Swells Presidio County’s Ethnic-Mexican Community}

The year 1910 was pivotal not only for Mexico but also for the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz proclaimed in 1910 that democracy could finally be exercised in Mexico and that elections would be held so the people could elect their country’s


\textsuperscript{233} Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” \textit{The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel}, May 21,1987, 6, \texttt{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-05-21.pdf} (accessed July 18, 2020); In 1911, Mary Shannon was offered the Principal’s position at the Mexican School when Jordan took on the teaching duties of the upper grades at the school.
next president. In the northern Mexican state of Coahuila, directly adjacent to Texas across the Rio Grande, Francisco I. Madero, a powerful Mexican landowner, took Diaz's words to heart and challenged the incumbent leader for the presidency. His challenge for leadership set in motion a chain of events that sent the Mexican state spiraling into an open revolution. The same fall in which Shannon began her second year at the Marfa ward school, masses of frustrated Mexicans mobilized for insurrection. The instability and violence that ensued, in turn, precipitated a massive wave of refugee migrants fleeing war-torn Mexico for the relative safety of Texas across the U.S. boundary with Mexico. The leaders of the Mexican Revolution—Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and Francisco I. Madero—toppled the once-invincible Porfiriato regime after a year of arduous fighting. But the social turmoil created by the Mexican Revolution was far from over, especially in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

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234 Roque Estrada, La Revolucion y Francisco I. Madero (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto de Estudios Historicos de las Revoluciones de Mexico, 2011, 1912), 37.

235 Friedrich Katz, “Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies,” Hispanic American Historical Review (1974): 1-47. [https://read.dukeupress.edu/hahr/article/54/1/1/151287/Labor-Conditions-on-Haciendas-in-Porfirian-Mexico](https://read.dukeupress.edu/hahr/article/54/1/1/151287/Labor-Conditions-on-Haciendas-in-Porfirian-Mexico) (accessed July 23, 2020), Katz notes that Madero, a wealthy northern Mexico hacendado, was a prime example of a patriarch businessman. This archetypical father-figure can be compared to the albus vaters encountered in the U.S. Southwest labor markets by the immigrant labor force. The immigrant Mexican worker had experienced this type of authoritarian employer on the haciendas, a major source of labor, back in their home country.


Communities situated on the Mexican-U.S. border would take the brunt of this mass immigration. The community of Presidio, Texas—situated just to the south of Marfa, close to the border—became a refugee camp housing thousands of displaced Mexicans, both military and civilian. The initial group of refugees was eventually moved to Ft. Bliss near El Paso in 1914. Still, continued migration to the region during the Mexican Revolution brought large Mexican families to Presidio County. Most of these families settled in far west Texas communities, believing their residence to be temporary. Many of these families came in with the hope of returning home after the hostilities ceased.

However, the Mexican Revolution continued until 1920, and its aftershocks, particularly due to the shifts in political and economic power within Mexico, rippled well into the 1930s. The ongoing violence in Mexico made it an unsafe place to live, so returning home was not possible for many war refugees. Thus, thousands of ethnic Mexicans became long-term residents of the American Southwest borderlands and, eventually, even U.S. citizens. Around the same time, refugees began arriving in Presidio. Further motivations to remain in the new country began to merge. In 1910, the U.S. federal government, in consort with the region's Anglo-American entrepreneurs, took on a set of ambitious initiatives that promised to create tremendous job growth in the region.

239 Garcia, Desert Immigrants, 40-41; Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2, 100-102, 110.

When the Kilpatricks grew cotton in Candelaria, a major impediment in their efforts to make the crop more profitable was the difficulty of harnessing water for a reliable irrigation system.241 The Rio Grande—or Rio Bravo as Mexicans call it—was historically subject to seasonal flooding, especially along the Texas–Chihuahua border. In 1902, the United States Department of the Interior recommended the Lowlands Reclamation Act, also called the National Reclamation Act, to remedy the seasonal flooding and make the region agriculturally productive. The legislation allowed the construction of dams along the Rio Grande to develop power and irrigation systems for southern New Mexico and far west Texas. Then, in 1905, as part of the Rio Grande Project, Congress approved the construction of the Elephant Butte Dam in southern New Mexico; work started six years later, in 1911, and the dam was completed in 1916. These infrastructure projects quickly changed the region's physical, economic, and social landscapes.242

The influx of migrant refugees from the Mexican Revolution—traveling the recently completed railways connecting central Mexico with the Southwest U.S. border—arrived in Presidio County and, as they did, so did a viable system of irrigation. The readily available source of cheap labor, substantial and lucrative agricultural work to be completed, technological


advances in hydro-engineering, and eager capitalist Anglos converged in Presidio County. Coincidentally, the immigrant refugee Mexicans found a place "para hacer vida." The student population of the Mexican ward schools increased rapidly as the children of migrant refugee families enrolled, particularly in the community schools of Presidio County. The growing number of Mexican students was used to justify the segregation of all non-Anglo-American children in their schools within the district. Furthermore, this population growth accordingly precipitated the expansion of the Mexican ward school in Marfa during the 1910s.

In a speech given at a Blackwell School graduation in 1948, school superintendent John Ernest Gregg shared his recollections of the Mexican ward school when he first came to Marfa. Gregg remembered that when the recently hired school superintendent W. J. B. Buttrill brought him on board as a young educator in 1914, the ward school was housed in a single building and maintained a staff of just three teachers. Gregg continued his recollection, stating that "through the years, many school board members, many teachers, and many parents have labored to improve the school." The continued increase of ethnic Mexican students, especially in the 1910s, necessitated the expansion of classroom space. Across the Marfa school district, the

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243 Garcia, Desert Immigrants, 38, 51-57, In his work on late nineteenth century El Paso, Garcia states, that many Mexicans emigrated across the border to get away from the brewing political instability, still many others were recruited by renganchistas or labor contractors to work in various industries across the Southwest including the railroads and the farms. Furthermore, the author notes that in times of labor shortage, the renganchistas were known to cross into Mexico to illegally recruit Mexican workers.

244 The expression *para hacer vida* is Spanish for “to make or earn a living,” is often heard from the working-class ethnic Mexican population as they seek to provide for their families in any given place, especially in a new place of residence.


246 Ibid., The three Mexican school teachers’ salaries, according to Gregg, ranged between $673 to $675 per year. If teachers’ salaries can be used as an indicator of the overall progress of the school, then, in the eyes of the administrator, much improvement had occurred since the salaries had more than doubled by the time he gave the graduation speech in 1948.; Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2, 110.
student population grew significantly, both at the regular and Mexican ward schools but more so at the latter.

Years later, in 1914, John Fortner, a former teacher at the ward school, likewise recalled that the campus, which eventually became the Blackwell School, had modestly improved from the original single-room schoolhouse to accommodate the swelling number of segregated pupils. Fortner reminisced:

It [Mexican school] was a three-room adobe plastered house with a belfry, a coal house, and two outside toilets. The east side had a long room that ran north and south in front. An archway and a short wooden stairstep led to a double or very large door. On the west there were two side-by-side classrooms. Each of these rooms had an outside door and a heavy staircase. There was no playground equipment— just an open gravel and sand lot.²⁴⁷

However much the Marfa school system officials attempted to accommodate the influx of new students, there was a powerful sense of worry on their part; the refugee children arriving from a socio-politically unstable Mexico were of particular concern. Their lack of American cultural capital—and supposed lack of intellectual capital in particular—was seen as a hindrance to their educational achievement and as a potential obstacle to the district's academic achievement as a whole. Moreover, their sociocultural characteristics were regarded as the cause of cultural regression among other children in the community, both Anglo-American and Anglicized Mexican.

Conclusion

Progressive Era Americanization efforts focused on socialization and resocialization of both ethnic and Anglo Americans. The era’s industrialization and agricultural labor needs

brought an influx of foreigners to the country to major cities like New York and Chicago and to the agricultural regions of the west and southwestern U.S. According to nativists, the mass of immigrants was problematic to the ongoing nation-building efforts and the Marfa, Texas school system was not exempted from the reformist ideology sweeping the country. As progressivism spread further, the small student population in Marfa was segregated in an effort to bring betterment through Americanization. The districts’ questioned claim that the lack of cultural-linguistic capital and not race as the reason to justify segregation, fueled continued contestation of the “separate-but-equal” doctrine in place at the schools. As luck would have it, mass immigration during the Mexican Revolution created further impetus to maintain a segregated school district in Marfa. Progressivists, including those prescribing to nativist ideology, stepped up to meet the deemed challenge before them. Educational reforms were seen as key tools in drawing the color-lines shaping Anglified America.

Feelings of xenophobia and outright racism against ethnic Mexicans exacerbated perceptions of the recent arrivals as "outsiders."248 The nativist feelings were particularly focused against those ethnic Mexicans who bore cultural markers regarded as "Mexican." Add the racialized proclaims of the marked phenotypic differences, including skin, eye, and hair color; and clothing style and segregation was further justified. To the nativists in the U.S., the "otherness" of the ethnic Mexican went from an ethereal conceptualization to a myopic concretization. With the immigration of Mexican nationals to the borderlands, nativist Anglo-Americans had a foil through which to project their insecurities, inadequacies, self-loathing, frustrations, anger, and ultimately, their violence.249

From El Paso to Brownsville, racial tensions reached a boiling point during the period. The xenophobic attitudes were not new but had been amplified during the tumultuousness of the 1910s—especially after Pancho Villa's transnational retaliations against Americans and the call for "reconquista" propagated by the Plan de San Diego. An event that took place in the immediate region in January of 1918 demonstrated, in horrific fashion, the extent of the hate that nativists harbored against the ethnic Mexican community: in Porvenir, Texas, a lynch mob composed of Texas Rangers, military personnel, and local influential persons expelled the town's ethnic Mexican male residents from existence. The community's ethnic Mexican residents were either executed or expelled to Mexico, and then their homes were burnt to the ground by the self-appointed racial boundary keepers.


The options available to the ethnic Mexican population were limited—they could adapt to the dominant Anglo-American social structure and, if they did not, they risked death or deportation from the United States. Needless to say, learning Anglo-American social schemas was not only a requirement for successful sociocultural adaptation but a necessity for survival. The earlier in life a Mexican child understood these conditions, the better they could adapt to the Anglo-American society around them, reducing their risk of deportation or even death. Hence, the power of a segregated school system where ethnic Mexicans learned the Anglo-American way.

The Mexican ward school campus continued its expansion as the Progressive Era, and its assimilationist ideology marched forward. Presidio County had many ethnic Mexicans to indoctrinate, so school district officials sought the best strategy to achieve their resocialization goals. A highly regarded albus vater of education was about to make his appearance at the Marfa Mexican School in 1922.252 His multilayered approach to education was about to be implemented in Presidio County. For better or worse, the man would become synonymous with the education of ethnic Mexican children in Marfa, Texas.

Chapter 3: The Mexican School: The Arrival of Professor Jesse Blackwell

On September 2, 1922, *The New Era* proudly announced the arrival of a new principal at the Mexican Ward school—replacement for another leaving educator. The teacher turnaround at the segregated school appears to have continued into the “roaring twenties” as the story by the reporter stated:

Most of the faculty that was employed here last term will again be employed, however there will be a few new teachers to take the place of those that have resigned. The names of these we have not learned, but we do know that Prof. Jesse Blackwell will have charge of the Mexican school. Prof. Blackwell comes highly recommended as a very capable instructor and will no doubt make us a good principal for that school.  

Professor Jesse Blackwell was to be the next person in charge of the school for ethnic Mexicans in Marfa. The new principal came to Marfa to invigorate the ward school just as the country itself was embarking on an economic revitalization period.

The times were marked by a growth in economic gains across the country as the Progressive Era social reforms were slowly pushed to the background and in their place a more *laissez faire* economic approach favoring business, over social well-being, took prominence. As has been the case in other eras, economic advancement did not translate into a uniform growth as there existed pockets of impoverishment throughout the country. These pockets of poverty were especially concentrated in certain racial cultural groups including Americans of ethnic Mexican heritage. Several reasons account for the economic disparity including racism.

Anti-foreigner sentiments continued to abound during the 1920s as xenophobic, nativist feelings manifested in the continued rise of hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, in areas outside their traditional strongholds. The U.S.-Mexico borderlands were not the exception as the

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hooded “social reformers” made their appearance in the Southwest during the decade.\textsuperscript{254} In Presidio County nativism was not an alien sentiment either even as it was situated far from the centers of Anglo-American dominance. It had not been long since the massacre at Porvenir had been perpetrated, so the wounds were still fresh as were the tensions between ethnic Mexicans and Anglos. Ethnic Mexicans remained the numerically dominant group in the region, but they were still sidelined politically, socially, and economically.\textsuperscript{255} It is quite the social phenomenon to decipher when a numerically subordinate controls the dominant numerical masses as was occurring in many areas of late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States Southwest.

The Successful Occupation of the American Southwest

Historian Carey McWilliams suggests that part of the successful occupation of the Spanish-speaking regions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands by Anglo-Americans was due to the ability of Anglos, the politically and economically but not numerically dominant group, to instill

\textsuperscript{254} See Aurelio Saldana, “The Invisible Nation Expands to the Borderland: The Ku Klux Klan in El Paso, 1921-1924.” \textit{Journal of South Texas}, Vol. 29, No. 1(2015) 48-67; Shawn Lay, \textit{War, Revolution, and the Ku Klux Klan: A Study of Intolerance in a Border City} (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1985) 16-32. The author argues that even though El Paso, and by extension the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, historically maintained stable race relations in the years prior to the establishing of a KKK chapter in the community, there had been a significant number of destabilizing events. Lay further argues that destabilization in racial relations were being felt as the after effects of acts such as Pancho Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico still lingered in the El Paso air. For example, the Mexican Revolution contributed to the xenophobic atmosphere that ultimately helped shape a state of racial intolerance.; John Hope Franklin, “The Birth of a Nation: Propaganda as History,” \textit{Massachusetts Review}, (Autumn 1979) 20 (3): 417–434. The author contends that the release of the film \textit{The Birth of a Nation} was a direct factor leading to the reorganization of the KKK in 1915.; Henry W. Schutze, “The New Era,” editor’s notes, \textit{The New Era}, Volume 30, number 50, September 2, 1922, 2, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/newera21-28/1922-09-02.pdf} (accessed August 5, 2020). The increase in terror group presence in the Southwest had become so significant that even the editor of Marfa’s newspaper \textit{The New Era} went on record addressing the possibility of the KKK existing, undercover, in the community: “If you live right you won’t have to worry about what the newspapers say about you nor whether there is a Ku Klux clan [sic] organization in your own town. It’s a person who has a guilty conscience that worries about the trifle matters.”

a sense of heterogeneity within the ethnic Mexican group. In this strategy, Anglos—the dominant ethnic minority—tended to apply a multi-prong approach in bringing into submission or subjugation targeted majority groups. First, Anglos tended to demean and set to the side traditional customary cultural expressions. Secondly, Anglo sociocultural ways were imposed onto subordinate groups. In particular, the younger generations of these subordinate groups were targeted for cultural resocialization. Thirdly, ethnic Mexican sociocultural expressions (i.e.; sociocultural schemas) shared by and which united their community were targeted, neutralized, and demonized. Anglo-American socialization forces (e.g.; legal system, education system, religious system) thus divided the ethnic masses. A way to sow this division among ethnic Mexicans was to categorize their members into different levels of acquired Americanization (i.e.; the dominant group’s cultural expression or sociocultural schemas). The imposed categorization divided the numerically superior group into smaller subsections which were much easier to bring under control.

In effect, these imposed categorization levels based on Americanization dispersed ethnic Mexicans into many smaller sub-cultural groups. The more Americanized ethnic Mexicans, having been socialized closer to the dominant Anglo-American culture, were often left with only a semblance of their “native” culture. The less Americanized, having achieved a lower degree of Americanization, still demonstrated and acted out a more ethnic Mexican culture. The previously homogenous ethnic Mexican group was then internally segregated and not united by a common cultural expression (i.e.; ethnic Mexican schemas no longer the primary way to

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negotiate and interpret their common environment). That is, as McWilliams notes, similar to how Anglo-Americans brought the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest under control. In this particular targeted ethnic group, heterogenization may have not been brought to the region, per se, by the conquering Anglo-Americans, but rather was built upon an already existing social order in the region.

McWilliams rightfully points out that the concept of “race” or “racialization” was not something new to the ethnic Mexican society of the Southwest. The conceptualization of racial distinction was carried over from the colonial Spanish caste system which, of course, situated different racial groups according to their, socially-constructed and legally-sanctioned, bloodline. The Southwest temporal context held a hierarchical racial categorization similar to the sociocultural-racially infused Anglo-American social stratification system.

The racialized sociocultural schemas imposed by Anglo-Americans became so internalized by ethnic Mexicans that the longer they lived under the Anglo-American structure, at least in theory, the more Americanized they became. Those ethnic Mexicans who internalized the Americanization to a higher degree saw themselves as more “American,” and thus a more legitimate part of the United States’ body politic, than recently arrived Mexican immigrants. Therefore, in their sociocultural-racial perceptions, they felt more deserving of the spoils of being an “American” than did the more recent, less-Americanized Mexicans. This is reminiscent of what the Californios, Tejanos, and the nuevomexicanos attempted to do when they looked to

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257 Milan Hauner, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union: Collision and Transformation* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1989) 40, The author proposes that this three-faceted program was utilized by the Soviet Union in the attempted conquest of its neighboring country of Afghanistan during the Cold War era. The USSR, of course, resorted to all out invasion to bring the targeted state into submission in the 1970s and 1980s.

258 McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 43.
distance themselves from the later waves of immigrants from Latin America.\(^\text{259}\) Moreover, the self-imparted distinction emphasized a racial basis so as to not be closely associated with the more indigenous or *indio* factions of the Mexican diaspora.\(^\text{260}\) Consequently, in the nouveau Americanized Mexicans’ minds, they would be more readily accepted into the mainstream milieu of Anglo-America.

To the Anglo-American conqueror, although keen on the central principles of the time-proven divide and conquer tactics, the internalized heterogeneity (i.e.; in the minds of the conquered ethnic Mexican group) served little to create distinctions in the treatment of the ethnic Mexican population. In other words, in general a “Mexican” was a “Mexican” in the eyes of the Anglo-Americans no matter the degree of Americanization acquired.\(^\text{261}\) This conceptualization of Anglo-American racial views of the ethnic Mexican population as an amorphous group with petty, if any, distinctions may hold true to some extent but then again, the nuances are multiple. The racial inferiority of the ethnic Mexican in the eyes of the dominant Anglo-American group may not have been in question, according to interpretations by researchers including McWilliams and De Leon. Thus, the place in Anglo-American society accorded to ethnic Mexicans, because of their socially-constructed racial makeup, had already been decided even before Americanized socialization was imposed on them. But, again, on-the-ground interactions paint a more complex

\(^{259}\) Ibid.

\(^{260}\) Saldana, “The Invisible Nation Expands to the Borderland,” 3, The author contends that, “The concept of race in the 1920s can be characterized as a complex socio-politically constructed phenomenon and as always in a constant state of formation and reformation.”; Cleofas Calleros Papers, 1860-1977, MS231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library, Correspondence received by Cleofas Calleros from Frederick S. Haskin, Director of the *El Paso Herald* Information Bureau in Washington, D.C., in August 1921 is telling of the period’s understanding of race as it pertained to ethnic Mexicans. In the letter Mr. Haskin tells Calleros that “The majority of Mexicans are of mixed blood. Some are white, some red, and some black. The high class Mexicans of Spanish descent are white.”\(^{261}\) In Haskin’s interpretation the ethnic Mexican “race” was composed of a hierarchical makeup where the darker “colored” ethnic Mexicans, those with apparent native and African blood, were situated below the “high class” “white” Spanish descent Mexican.

\(^{261}\) McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 43.
picture. Theory may provide an overarching lens from where abstractions of group interaction may be fathomed while real-life personal interaction between actual people often contests and even dismantles theoretical imaginaries.

**The Good, the Bad, and the Strange Mexican**

In a May 30, 1922 article in Marfa’s *The New Era*, the following report was published which presents subcategorizing of the ethnic Mexican population in the region. The article states,

The Mexican that killed Robert Ackerman at Fort Davis several months ago and received twenty years in the penitentiary broke jail this week in Davis and made his escape. He is about thirty years old-bald headed and has a mustache. The Sheriff of Jeff Davis County passed through Marfa en route [sic] to the River in hopes of heading him off from going into old Mexico, where he originally hailed from. We find that many of the Mexico Mexicans that come over to this side are bad men, and this fellow was one of this type. It behooves everyone to be on their guard and try to help the Sheriff re-capture him, even if a little [sic] powder and lead has to be used, for he killed young Ackerman without any provocation whatsoever [sic] and would commit murder again, if cornered.\(^\text{262}\)

The “Mexico Mexican” archetypes, according to the article, are of the “bad type” and come to do no good in the United States. The expression “We find” promotes the othering of the ethnic “Mexico Mexican” to a deeper degree which distances not only the Anglo-American from the “Mexico Mexican” but that also promotes a distancing of this “bad type” of Mexican from the more Americanized ethnic Mexican, as well. This is a brilliant, albeit conniving, tactic in fomenting disunity within a numerically dominant but subjugated group. The strategy disallows, or at least diminishes, any attempt of unified ethnic Mexican counter to an unjust social system.

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In my view, the dividing strategy portends to promote a temporary strategic incorporation of the more Americanized Mexican (i.e.; the “good” Mexican) and the Anglo to achieve an immediate goal but not to actually incorporate the ethnic Mexican group in the long term.

Continuous exposure to the supposed differences existing within the ethnic Mexican community through distinct avenues, including the media, provided a constant indoctrination into the stratified, racialized-social structure. Of course, status within the said social structure was ascribed based on an Anglo-American value system. The idea of a good and bad type of ethnic Mexican became internalized, normalized, and solidified across the population, Anglo and non-Anglo alike.263 With these ideologies set in place, it can be understood how racial-cultural based hierarchical social structures infiltrated many institutions of Anglo-American society including the education system.

The complex nature of the Presidio County region’s ethno-racial categorization ideologies extended to all ethnic Mexican labeling done by the broader Anglo establishment. This hierarchical categorizing can be appreciated in the seemingly inoffensive *The New Era* article. The Anglo ascribed distinctions within the ethnic Mexican community were magnified and brought to the forefront. Unconsciously, or with a certain racialized social control aim in mind, Anglo-American ranking of ethnic Mexicans according to their differing levels of “Mexicaness,” or better yet based on differing levels of acquired Americanization, served to create disunity amongst the numerically dominant group. The Anglo divisory tactic built on

263 Jesse J. Esparza, “Schools of their own: The San Felipe Independent School District and Mexican American Educational Autonomy, Del Rio, Texas, 1928-1972,” (PhD. Dissertation, University of Houston, 2008). In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, https://0-www-proquest-com.lib.utep.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/304601573/7EA27B372C554F3FPQ/8?accountid=7121 (accessed September 28, 2012). This idea of cultural hierarchy within the same ethnic group has been seen in other contexts. For example, in the San Felipe Del Rio, where the “lesser” assimilated were known or called “mojados” or “wetbacks” by their more Americanized compatriots.
existing racial categorization schemes, carried over from the Spanish-Mexican caste systems of the past which facilitated the subjugation of the ethnic Mexican group.264

Keeping this concept of disunification approach in mind, it appears that breaking up the mass of ethnic Mexicans into different subgroups is rather contradictory to what the Americanization program was attempting to do at the schools: to create a unifying identity framework based on idealized Americanism. Then again, the attempt to control a unified mass is much more difficult especially if the unifying cultural identity is foreign or ethnic. By extension, at least in theory, it is much more plausible to control masses that do not ascribe to a common and unifying identity. Thus, the fracturing of the ethnic Mexican community allowed for social disunification from the mass level all the way down to the individual-interpersonal level. Ironically, by following this “divide to conquer” tactic at the ward schools, a resocialization into a more favored “Americanized” cultural identity was made more probable and easier to achieve.

264 Albert Armendariz Sr., 1976, Interview by Oscar J. Martinez, Interview no. 284, transcript, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas. In this conceptualization, Americanization efforts was to alienate deemed “non-American” cultures so as to make it easier for the “assimilating” groups to distance themselves from their roots and incorporate American values. In 1920s El Paso, Texas the story of Albert Armendariz, one of the fortunate few who was afforded the chance to attend a well-funded Anglo-American school on El Paso’s north side, provides an inside look from the eyes of an insider-outsider on the asymmetrical educational experience of the ethnic Mexican students and their Anglo-American counterparts in far west Texas. Armendariz felt advantaged over his cousins and other “more Mexican” children that attended schools in El Segundo barrio’s Mexican schools. The interviewee felt that the education at the north El Paso school was superior, his English language skills were superior, and just plain overall a superior person to the “dirty kids” that lived south of the railroad tracks. The experiences of Mexican children at the school produced feelings of both inferiority (vis-a-vis Anglos) and superiority (vis-a-vis “more Mexican” peers) a juxtaposed mentality that Albert explained was instilled at an early age. Beginning with the interpretation given to him by his father that the kids in El Segundo barrio in south El Paso were all bad, this feeling of superiority extended to all children perceived as being less “assimilated.” Armendariz explained in an interview given in the 1970’s, “There is a feeling of superiority. It’s natural, I think, because you never felt superior to the Anglo and it’s always good to find someone to feel superior to. The funny thing about it is that we never had too much contact with the black. In our neighborhood and at school, of course, we didn’t have blacks; so we didn’t have anyone to feel superior to except other Mexicans….but certainly our knowledge of English was superior, our intelligence was superior….the school over here taught us heck of a lot better than they were taught over there; it was obvious.”; Jesse J. Esparza, “Schools of their own: The San Felipe Independent School District and Mexican American Educational Autonomy, Del Rio, Texas, 1928-1972.”(PhD. diss. University of Houston, 2008). In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, https://0-www-proquest-com.lib.utep.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/304601573?V7EA27B372C554F3FPQ/8?accountid=7121 (accessed September 28, 2012).
The breaking down of an, of course, already heterogeneous group into further factions served its temporary purpose of making it easier to control a numerically larger potential adversary. The essentialized mass of ethnic Mexicans underwent sociocultural degradation and a subsequent Americanized reshaping by the social-educational institutions in the Anglo-American controlled Southwest regions including far west Texas. What was not expected by the Anglo establishment was a resulting multi-cultural identity in the ethnic Mexican community living in the U.S. Decades later, the side-effect served to create a unifying force stemming from the Americanization taught at the Mexican schools.

In order to maintain the control over a growing political awareness and a continued cultural replenishment occurring in the Presidio County schools, action had to be undertaken to solidify the Americanization of the United States populace. Of particular concern was the country’s ethnic masses. This was a tight rope to walk because while the institutions pushed to create an idealized unifying American identity in all citizens, Anglo and non-Anglo, at the same time there was a concerted effort to maintain a stratified social structure which favored the Anglo-American way of life.

The Progressive Era’s double-edged sword approach had not only nurtured the movement towards Americanizing of all those recently arrived to the country but it had also helped shape a sense of belonging and by extension also a sense of expectation in all groups. That is, Americanized people, especially the young of the ethnic racial minorities now having been socialized into Anglo-America, expected to be fully allowed and incorporated into the social mainstream. In other words, by having learned their historical rights as citizens of the United States, the now socio-politically aware ethnic minority groups had developed certain expectations. The ethnic groups expected to have complete access to the needed resources (i.e.;
socioeconomic, cultural, educational) to achieve full participation in the Anglo-American mainstream milieu.

The minority groups, after being exposed to full-fledged Americanization, demanded participation in all social spheres of United States society including those that were supposed to be open only to a certain group of citizens: Anglo-Americans. The intensifying social tensions led to the emboldening, not the rise, of racialized gatekeeping laws, institutions, and even white nationalist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. This was the social turmoil that Principal Jesse Blackwell inherited at the Mexican ward school when he arrived in Marfa, Texas in 1922.

Marfa Meets Principal Jesse Blackwell

The school year 1922-1923, as any other new school year, brought a number of changes to the school system in Marfa. That year Marfa ISD, perhaps sensing a need to provide strict control of the ethnic Mexican population, hired a hardened educator in the person of Jesse Blackwell to be the next principal at the Mexican ward school. The experienced teacher did not only have what appeared to be the toughness to take the helm of the numerically-overwhelmed segregated school but he also had other intangible cultural capital. Having been born and raised

265 See Jan Voogd, Race Riots & Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2008). The author theorizes that in the late 1910s and early 1920s, minorities and especially African Americans, had crossed a sort of imaginary social line by demanding and expecting equality in the United States. Anglo-American men felt vulnerable and afraid of losing their grasp of social dominance in the country and thus, reacted in any way possible, even violently, to maintain the order intact.; See Saldana, “The Invisible Empire Expands to the Borderland,” 2014; Brent Campney, "Anti-Japanese Sentiment, International Diplomacy, and the Texas Alien Land Law of 1921," History Faculty Publications and Presentations, 38, 2019, 850-851, https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/hist_fac/38 (accessed August 12, 2020), The author states that Anglo Americans perceived a demographic shift and thus a potential destabilizing of the social order in the Texas borderlands in 1920-1921. The often-heard claim of an immigrant invasion was promulgated across the region prompting the passage of legislation barring the ability for minority groups in this case the Japanese from acquiring land in the state.; Unnamed author, “Locals and Personals,” The New Era, Volume 30 number 50, September 2, 1922, 3, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/newera21-28/1922-09-02.pdf (accessed August 12, 2020), Telling of how Americanized the former Marfa Mexican ward students had become, the newspaper reported that, “Tiburcio Segura was operated on this morning by Dr. J.A. Simpson for appendicitis. He is the oldest son of Remoldo Seguro [.,] the merchant, and is a veteran of the World War and saw service in France.” Tiburcio and his brothers, including Encarnacion “Chon” Segura, a pillar of the community of Marfa, Texas, all attended the Mexican ward school.
in the heart of agricultural country of Rusk County, Texas, Blackwell carried at least some
notion of what the ethnic Mexican farmworker families were up against in providing an
education for their children.\textsuperscript{266} The Blackwell family’s composition back in nineteenth century
Rusk County helped in adding to the empathy that the teacher carried for his future students at
the ward school. For instance, the size of the Blackwell family unit was similar to the makeup of
the ethnic Mexican families in 1920s far west Texas. Ethnic Mexican families of the era usually
were composed of numerous children and their parents and this is exactly the type of family that
had shaped Jesse Blackwell’s identity.

The future principal of the Marfa Mexican school was born into a family of ten children
where he was the fourth child of the bunch.\textsuperscript{267} Jesse Blackwell had been surrounded by and been
in charge of children what appears to be his entire life. This experience in turn gave Blackwell a
sort of parent-like skill set in handling the education and behavioral management of the younger
population. This can be gathered from the fact that at a very young age Blackwell assumed the
leadership of the entire Blackwell family unit. In 1885, the same year Presidio County was
organizing its first public school, the young Blackwell had to put his studies on the proverbial
back burner and prioritize his siblings’ and parents’ economic well-being before his education.
The family farm was situated in a remote area where little if any help could be accessed so the

\textsuperscript{266} Patty McKenzie, Copy of article “Former Teacher Marks 16\textsuperscript{th} Year as Paisano Secretary,” \textit{The El Paso Times}, July 26, 1952, 1, Folder A1969.02, Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed author, “Jesse Blackwell, Early Day School Man,” \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel}, Special School Supplement, January 21, 1965, 2, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940, A198601,” Marfa Public Library Records; J.L. Blackwell, interview by Velma Valenzuela, in “Jesse Blackwell,” Essay Junior Historians, Marfa High School, November 25, 1969, 1, Folder “Jesse Blackwell,” Marfa Public Library Records, Both \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel} article and the Junior Historian essay by Valenzuela appear to be very similar to the story written by McKenzie. \textit{The El Paso Times} correspondent’s article from 1952 close similarity might suggest that it was used as a source for both \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel} and the Valenzuela documents.

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.
14-year-old Jesse became the primary bread winner for the Blackwell family. In effect, he was alternating between being a student and a full-time farmworker as a child. This was not far from the reality that many of the ethnic Mexican students at the ward school were living on a daily basis in 1920’s Marfa.

When Blackwell arrived at the Marfa Mexican Ward school, there was much work to be done. Although teachers and administrators in the past had done a relatively admirable job teaching the ethnic Mexican students with the limited resources they had, the condition of the campus itself was in what can be characterized as dilapidated or in dire need of upgrades. The Mexican school house constructed in 1909 had undergone minimal change space-wise so Blackwell was welcomed with basically the same Mexican ward school that was in operation over a decade earlier. The campus was composed of the plastered adobe building which was by 1922 sectioned off into three rooms. As for creature comforts, the rooms were still heated by turn of the century coal stoves in the colder seasons. As for cooling in the hot months, no alleviation from the elements was afforded the ethnic students. Moreover, and further adding to inconvenience, there was no running water or indoor plumbing at the school. As such, students had to use the unhygienic outhouse restrooms which were commonly found in other Mexican schools across the country.

And just like in 1909, the Mexican ward school still reflected the community’s demographics in a microcosm. The disparity between the numerical minority Anglo-American population versus the numerically dominant ethnic Mexican population could be appreciated in

268 Ibid.

the teacher-student ratio at the school. The ward school registered 125 ethnic Mexican children who were taught by only three teachers including Professor Blackwell. The less-than-optimal situation might have felt insurmountable but then again, resourcefulness is one of the qualities bred in individuals shaped in less-than-optimal contexts themselves. The newly hired administrator’s economically-strapped and hardship-filled background in Rusk County provided Jesse Blackwell with the needed experience and gall (i.e.; socialization) to engage the situation at the ward school. Just as the district and community hoped that he would.

The situation in Marfa was compounded by the often-seen economic instability within working-class households which added to the educational barriers ethnic Mexican children faced. For example, the children were often expected to meet certain work responsibilities. This was especially true in ethnic Mexican families that depended significantly on agricultural work to make ends meet. The pooling of all household income was vital to the survival of the families’ economy so this meant that the children of the household were required to pull their own weight and join the adults in the fields. Agricultural work, of course, is seasonal in nature often times requiring family units to migrate in search of the next harvest. Needless to say, this meant that for many ethnic Mexican children in far west Texas, where farm work was a major avenue of employment for working-class families, educational needs took a backseat to the more pressing and immediate issue of the family economy. Moreover, shorter school days were not uncommon especially in agricultural regions when seasonal harvests necessitated the bulk of farm laborers to work. Because, of course, within the ranks of the needed labor were school-aged ethnic Mexican children.

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children. For ethnic Mexican children, this in turn translated into shortened school days and a shortened school year modified according to farm work needs across the Southwest. Jesse Blackwell, an educator shaped in a rural/agricultural background, was no stranger to the experiences of a farm labor-tied family.

During his educational endeavor, Blackwell had experienced several setbacks including the 1875 sudden illness experienced by his father. The event, not fully described in the documents, left the elder Blackwell “an invalid” effectively promoting his son Jesse, a young teenager at the time, from literal childhood right into hastened adulthood responsibility-wise. This rough start was to be just the beginning as throughout his remaining school years, Jesse Blackwell experienced obstacle after obstacle in achieving his education. The future Marfa Mexican ward school principal learned about the hardships some people must endure to achieve any and all worthwhile goals in life. The obstacles faced by Blackwell included walking over two miles to school on a daily basis and having to work full-time, thus not being able to attend an entire nine-month school year but twice in his life. After high school Blackwell only attended summer college courses so he could take care of his family the rest of the year. All the while, the young Jesse continued to tend to his family’s 500-acre farm.

Jesse Blackwell’s socialization back in late nineteenth century Rush County shaped a hard-nosed identity that he carried throughout his life. This life experience inevitably guided his administration of the Mexican ward school in Marfa. Blackwell’s administrative approach can

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271 Garcia, Desert Immigrants, 110-127; See Richardson, Batos, Bolillos, Pochos, and Pelados, 1999.

be characterized as that of a classical paternalistic model. This education model is characterized by leadership, in this case the Marfa Mexican school principal, that exhibits significant levels of both authoritarianism and benevolence. The juxtaposed approach taken by Blackwell was appreciated when dealing with his subordinates, in this case the ethnic Mexican students under his administration at the Mexican school.\textsuperscript{273} This authoritarian-benevolent model, or tough-love model, serves well in analyzing the approach taken by Blackwell. Furthermore, tough-love is an expression that is usually utilized to characterize child-rearing practices that entail instilling an appreciation for hard work and discipline through strictly disciplined socialization combined with an empathetic view of the child’s life circumstance.

The tough-love approach, as stated, may take on aspects of authoritarian child-rearing. But to say that the approach followed by Blackwell was authoritative or authoritarian-like does not imply that it was strictly the approach followed at the ward school. Furthermore, by tentatively labeling the Marfa Mexican school administration as such, in no way should it be understood as a justification for class management techniques that incorporated any type of physical or psychological harassment. Rather, it is intended to theorize a connection between Blackwell’s own working-class upbringing in a context requiring a high level of responsibility at a relatively young age and the way he ran educational institutions, including the Marfa Mexican ward school, put under his administration later in life. It was through a tough-love approach that the \textit{albus vater} Jesse Blackwell, and by extension the Mexican school faculty under his leadership, intended to prepare the ethnic Mexican children of Marfa to negotiate an increasingly

culturally-myopic Anglo-American society. Who better than the symbolic father-figure at the head of the socialization environment of the school to instill in all his students/children the needed life skills (i.e.; Anglo-American socio-cultural schemas) to better negotiate the milieu of Anglo-American society?

**The Strategic “Othering” of the Ethnic Mexican Community**

The racial aspect of the educational approach followed at the Marfa Mexican school cannot be divorced from the analysis. As has been pointed out, the time period was marked by continued racial divide in the country and this was especially true in regions where economic instability was encountered. The southwest was such a place experiencing economic strains during the 1920s even as the country experienced financial growth. Competition for the limited economic resources then became more pronounced between Anglo-Americans and the perceived “outsider” ethnic Mexicans. Violence, as could be expected in a volatile region, had for generations been seen as a viable and common weapon in maintaining the social order in the contested borderlands.

It can be theorized that in this volatile borderlands’ context, and in particular contexts under the racialized paternalistic leadership dynamic, there exists an embedded conceptualization of the non-Anglo-American “other” as being non-normative. That is, persons following a psychosocial identity considered non-normative (i.e.; deemed non-American identity) will be categorized as foreign/alien. By extension, the unwanted and unworthy “others” should not have access to the available—and at times limited--resources. For ethnic Mexicans, being perceived as racially and culturally different meant certain lines were not to be crossed.

If the “outsider” was not to be fully accepted because of racial background then in order to be deemed at least tolerable within the Anglo-American dominated milieu, a certain measure
of cultural modification or resocialization had to be achieved. Because a non-Anglo-American was assumed to lack competence in American culture (i.e.; did not follow American sociocultural schemas in daily interactions), many of those responsible for teaching them the “ins” and “outs” of American culture (e.g.; teachers), often times believed ethnic groups including ethnic Mexicans possessed low psychosociological development. These assumptions were often backed by the cutting-edge social science research of the day. The ethnic “other” was seen as child-like, regardless of their age, possessing of a low IQ, and, thus, in need of a guiding “parent” at the socialization institutions such as the schools.274

The “othering” of ethnic Mexicans and other racial minorities did not stop there as the deemed non-normative psychosocial identity was confounded with biological difference. Stereotypical perceptions of what Mexicans looked like usually included having brown eyes, a darker skin tone, and black hair. In other words, not only were ethnic Mexicans considered different because of their perceived defective culture but also because of their distinctive physical appearance. In a way, ethnic Mexicans were a constant reminder of the ethnic foil settler immigrant Anglo-Americans had been battling for control over coveted lands in North America: native people. The ethnic Mexican community, although a mestizo population biologically composed of significant European background, still looked very much like an “Indian.”

How much perceived racial differentiation guided Blackwell’s administration of the school and treatment of his students can only be left to interpretation either by those that

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experienced the ward school tutelage or by those scholars attempting to historicize human interaction at the segregated Mexican schools of the past. Needless to say, Jesse Blackwell’s job at the Marfa Mexican ward school was shaped and continued to be influenced by a myriad of forces both from within and from without, socially and psychologically speaking. And, at least in my humble opinion, those persons who actually lived and experienced the Mexican ward school education are better-suited to provide the grounding from where historical extrapolation should be drawn. Historians and scholars can speculate but those that were actually there, the teachers and the students, are the ones that know.

The semester before Professor Blackwell arrived in Marfa, the graduate invitations for that spring were decorated with the nicely printed title of “Class of 1922 White Carnation ‘Knowledge is Power’” indicating the graduation year, the class flower, and class motto. Within the class roster printed in the invitation for the Marfa High School 1922 graduation there is not one single Spanish surnamed individual.275 Of course, ethnic Mexican students had graduated from Marfa High School before Blackwell appeared on the scene but their numbers were not extensive. This is not to imply that non-Spanish-surnamed ethnic Mexicans did not or had not walked the halls of the far west Texas district’s school campuses. Although their numbers were not extensive, English-surnamed ethnic Mexicans did attend the Marfa school system pre-Blackwell. For example, the biracial children of Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican and African American and ethnic Mexican unions attended the Marfa school system since its inceptions.276 The reality, though, can be extrapolated from the all English-surnamed role of high

275 Unknown artist, Graduation invitation commencement program, Class of 1922, Folder “Year 1922,” Marfa Public Library Records.

school graduates printed on the 1922 invitation. The obvious was that few ethnic Mexican children were achieving successful completion of their high school education in the early decades, pre-Professor Blackwell, of the segregated school system in Marfa. Working in tandem were the economic realities of ethnic Mexican families and the not up-to-par education received at the ward school which kept the numbers of high school bound ethnic Mexicans low. That was about to change.

**Education at the Marfa Mexican School in the 1920s**

That fall of 1922, Professor Blackwell encountered a ward school utilizing the three R’s (Reading, wRiting, ‘Rithhmetic) approach as a foundation for the Mexican school curriculum. The model, although basic and to a point even rudimentary, was one that had been, as far as can be inferred from the records accessed, in use since the turn of the century at the school.\(^{277}\) Although the students at the ward school, as recalled by the former students and teachers themselves, were receiving an “adequate” education during that time period, once Blackwell arrived, it appears that pedagogical expectations were raised several notches. The voices of those that embodied the rural school community will serve as a proxy for educational expectations and achievement at the segregated institution. The misplacing, or destruction, of ward school curriculum records has left no actual contemporary documentation. Whether

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adequate or rudimentary education at the district was the case, the fact was that Marfa’s children were separated when they entered the school system.\textsuperscript{278}

It is a fact that small rural communities tend to lack many of the often times taken-for-granted, almost seen as common-sensical to-not-do without, amenities found in urban areas. In the urban areas, healthcare/medical, financial, law enforcement, and educational institutions are often better equipped than their rural counterparts. For instance, urban areas have enough numbers of people to fill vital positions within that social sphere to ensure its smooth functionality. On the other hand, the inability to fully staff all positions is a characteristic that plagues and has plagued rural schools, integrated and segregated alike, throughout their history. The Mexican ward school of 1920s Marfa was not the exception. Taking this social reality into consideration, then the questioning of teacher quality and the ability to staff a school campus with the adequate, a very subjective concept all its own, numbers at the Mexican ward schools must be scrutinized as well. For example, the lack of resources at the Mexican schools may have been underpinned by racialized apathy but, then again, other reasons cannot be easily discarded. One of them being the relative inability to recruit enough teachers out to the countryside. This will hold true especially during times of economic downturn. Moreover, under-staffing will be compounded when an upswing in violence in the region is observed.

As luck would have it, the economic explosion of the 1920s was accompanied by the growth of organized crime. The passage of the eighteenth amendment had only helped in aggravating an already existing racial disharmony in the borderlands. As mentioned, the transnational violence perpetrated by the likes of Pancho Villa and the Texas Rangers were still

\textsuperscript{278} Unnamed author, “ST. MARY’S PRIVATE SCHOOL Main Street, Marfa, Texas,” \textit{The New Era}, February 10, 1923, Volume 36 number 10, 6. \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/newera21-28/1923-02-10.pdf} (accessed August 14, 2020), Marfa’s parochial school put out a recruitment advertisement which stated that the school was, “Exclusively for American Boys and Girls. All subjects preparatory for High School.”
not too far off in the past when the effects of prohibition poured salt on the proverbial open wound of racial relations on the border. Historian Cecilia Thompson notes that during this time period, “Liquor was seized with regularity up and down the Rio Grande valley.”\textsuperscript{279} In an attempt to quell the onslaught of alcohol, and other deemed illegal incomers, into a thirsty but dry state, observation points were established throughout the borderlands where the recently established U.S. Border Patrol could arrest aliens and smugglers.\textsuperscript{280} Needless to say, \textit{la migra} became one of the institutions most dreaded by the ethnic Mexican community on both sides of the border. Furthermore, the Border Patrol has become one of the most divisive forces in terms of race relations between Anglo-America and its immigrant population. The agency’s history of at times questionable treatment of immigrants is to blame.\textsuperscript{281} Presidio County happened to be in a region found at the center of the border protection agency’s operations during the volatile period of prohibition. The ills created by this racialized atmosphere were not to prevent education to continue in the classrooms of the far west Texas regions.

In the fall of 1924, two years after Professor Blackwell arrived in Marfa and amid the ever tense social atmosphere, eighteen-year-old Margaret Harper walked into the white stucco building with a belfry so affectionately known as the “cathedral” to start off her teaching career. Naivete filled her young idealistic mind as it often does first year educators taking on monumental challenges such as teaching an underprivileged population. The young lady, still almost a girl, wanted to make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate children attending the

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segregated school. “Her enthusiasm [sic] knew no bounds!” reminisced a family member years later.282 Harper, riding the wave of first year teaching jubilance, not only fulfilled her teaching responsibilities in the two grades assigned to her but also took on the head coaching job of the baseball team as well as the teaching of dramas.283

The wearing of many hats by the limited staff members of the rural school is brought into full focus by the story of the young baseball-drama coach Miss Harper. The impact made by her enthusiastic approach in teaching at the ward school was not lost on her student-athletes decades later as many of them vividly remembered their trips to play opposing teams in Shafter’s mining town school while riding in the back of a parent’s truck. Still, many of her student thespians recalled the opera entitled “El Trovador” which Miss Harper put on in the late 1920s and how the performance had been lauded by the Sul Ross professors in attendance. The family member recalled Margaret’s joy stating that, “They [her students] must have been her main topic of conversation at home; her mom and dad and sisters knew each one by name and all the wonderful things about each one.”284

The accomplishments of her students helped maintain her passion for teaching even when the learning context was not optimal. The number of teachers were minimal and the number of students they taught may have seemed astronomical but at least some of the educators under the administration of the tough-love modeled curriculum were having relative success. The Marfa Mexican ward school was demonstrating some level of pedagogical, not to mention


283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.
Americanization, success. Making the feat that much more impressive, were the conditions that the faculty and staff at the ward school worked under.

**Jesse Blackwell’s Pragmatism to the Rescue**

According to Carmen Mendias’s memoirs, Professor Blackwell inherited a one-building, three-room school house, and, according to other accounts, with no indoor plumbing. The native of New London, Texas was to be responsible for the education of about one-hundred and twenty ethnic Mexican children in these rough circumstances. Back on the Blackwell farm in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Rusk County, Texas, the teenaged Jesse had experienced his share of overcrowding, when raising his nine siblings and providing for two parents, one of them disabled. Given his personal background experiences, the situation at the ward school was anything but atypical for the new principal. The mediating approaches taken by him were not unusual ones used to alleviate a tough setting especially one where children were involved. The seasoned educator did what he knew best: work with what he had been handed. For that matter, it could be said that the old proverb “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade” was the prevailing motto in the borderlands. The teachers under Blackwell followed his lead and did the same: worked with what resources they had been handed.

One of the most pressing obstacles to presenting a better-quality education was to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio that many times plagued the ward school. Former teachers at the ward school recalled how as many as over one hundred and twenty students were handled at one

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time by two or three educators often without the luxury of having an aide in the classroom.  

Stories of overcrowding at the ward school had become a sort of recurring theme when describing conditions faced by both the teachers and the students at the Marfa Mexican school. Even after the district had expanded the school in 1927 with the addition of a small annex constructed to the southwest of the original adobe schoolhouse, there were still incidents of highly skewed student-to-teacher ratios. A former Mexican school teacher, Evelyn Bishop Bentley, recalled stories told by her mother about her experiences as a teacher at the ward school back in the early decades of the twentieth century. According to Bishop Bentley, her mother, Mary Arelena Carver, came to Marfa after having taught for over forty years in New York schools to take up the teaching of the third grade at the ward school. The experience must have been a memorable one since the size of Mrs. Carver’s first class was recalled by Bishop Bentley some sixty years later. To encounter such a large number of ethnic Mexican third graders must have been quite a shock even for an experienced educator from New York. Bishop Bentley further stated that, “One hundred students was a bit too much for one teacher, so Mr. Blackwell

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287 J.E. Gregg, “Table Number III, Value of School Buildings Marfa Independent School District,” Patrons' Bulletin, Volume 1, December 1947, 13, Folder “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.”, Marfa Public Library Records, The addition to the Mexican school, which later became the Band Hall, cost the district $1,800.

divided the class with some fifty pupils going in the morning and the other half in the afternoon."289

Historians have consistently noted in their study of the education of ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. the problems associated with the inability for school districts across the Southwest to adequately staff the ward schools. Often these studies have critiqued the skewed numbers which disallowed, for example, more individualized instruction in the classroom. One-on-one approaches could have been, and have been known to be, highly beneficial for students learning in a new cultural environment. Moreover, attempts by school districts to ameliorate the on-the-ground overcrowding realities have also been cited by historical researchers as not being pedagogically sound.290

The historical record has noted that at the Anglo-American schools, children received a full day of education because of the availability of resources accessible to them. Meanwhile, a lack of resources at times disallowed the same at the ward schools.291 This inequality is not being

289 Ibid.


contested or justified but rather it must be acknowledged that historically, educators have been required to make do with whatever resources, or lack of them, are put at their disposal. For instance, the cutting of the school day into two sections, a morning and an afternoon session, in order to lessen the skewed student-to-teacher ratios was such an ameliorating strategy put into place by Principal Blackwell given the circumstances he was facing. The approach may in the bigger picture be seen as a byproduct of racial segregation at the school system, that view cannot be lost, of course. But at that precise moment, at that particular instance, Jesse Blackwell had to act right then and there to provide his students the best possible option, again, given the circumstances. The questionable splitting of the school day into two was done in hopes of not only making class management much more possible but also, and by extension, increasing teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom. The end goal being to enhance students’ learning in a less-than-adequate situation.292

In a perfect world, teaching a student body that is not well versed in the cultural capital of the Anglo education system all resources should be made available to the educators so as to alleviate the sociocultural obstacles encountered. In the case of the Marfa ward school, a setting

292 Unnamed artist, black and white photos, Folder “School Buildings,” Marfa Public Library Records, Marfa High School and the middle school were equipped with excellent classrooms with more modern amenities.
composed of primarily culturally ethnic Mexican students learning in an Anglo-American culturally-centered school, the feat was obviously not an easy thing to accomplish. Add to this fact an already complex situation marred by other barriers including lack of essential school supplies and extreme overcrowding and a situation necessitating prompt, albeit not perfect, action is brought forth. Soon there was to be added stress in terms of the availability of classroom space. In the 1930 fall semester, Marfa school system experienced the biggest enrollment it had seen up to that point.293

**Economic Depression Effects on the Marfa Ward School**

As the 1920s came to a close so did the boom of roaring laissez-faire enjoyed by the world economy. The 1930s inherited the negative side effects of unbridled capitalism and the ripples it created were felt all the way out in far west Texas. The ethnic Mexican community was one of the groups that was markedly affected by events prompted by the drastic economic downfall experienced across the country during the decade. One of the most impactful of these was the Mexican Repatriation.294 Although there are official records documenting the number of repatriated (deported is a better descriptor of what occurred) ethnic Mexicans, the actual number that left the country, both documented and undocumented, cannot and may never be fully accounted for. It must be taken into account the fact that many of those returning to the “homeland” did so on their own accord by self-deportation. The lack of employment compounded by unleashed nativist sentiments against the perceived labor competitors led ethnic

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293 Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2*, 345.

Mexicans, U.S. citizens included, to emigrate. The sentiments against the immigrant community were for sure at the forefront when in 1930 Del Rio I.S.D v. Salvatierra solidified the separate-but-equal doctrine in Texas.

In Marfa, the effects of the Great Depression’s economic collapse-forged anti-immigrant repatriation law may, no doubt, have impacted the ethnic Mexicans living there. Then again, if school enrollment is any indicator of the demographic makeup of a community at large, the growth of the Mexican school student body should also provide a glimpse of the size of the ethnic Mexican population in Marfa. Meaning that if the number of students at the Mexican school was swelling in the 1930s that suggests that there was a considerable number of ethnic Mexicans living in Marfa even in the era of forced repatriation. In fact, the number of ethnic Mexican students was still significant enough that the ward school was expanded in the early 1930s.

The research conducted by UT-San Antonio scholars into the structure of the original Marfa Mexican ward school found that in 1933, “the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Marfa showed two, ‘Mexican Schools:’ the nominated property and a second clay tile building a half-


block to the south and west.” This acquisition, under the administration of Professor Blackwell with the backing of district Superintendent J. E. Gregg, by the ward school had not only added rooms to its existing structure but had actually acquired further property considerably enlarging its classroom capacities.

The expansion could not have come at a better time as in the spring of the 1933-1934 school year Professor Blackwell announced that the Mexican ward school had enrolled five-hundred and forty-three students. Out of this initial number, four-hundred and twenty-five remained at the close of the term. The albus vater boasted that the school year had been “the most successful and outstanding in the history of the school.” Furthermore, out of the four-hundred and twenty-five, eighteen had completed the requirements to graduate from the Mexican school and were ready to enroll for the 1934-1935 school year at Marfa High School. The accomplishment seen in contextual terms is quite significant. By 1934-1935, Mexican Repatriation had been going on for at least five years. Moreover, nativist fervor was at a high level, ethnic Mexicans were either being forcefully deported or leaving on their own fearful accord. The 1930s were not an optimal period for the ethnic Mexican community in the U.S.

During that spring 1934 junior high commencement ceremony, Professor Blackwell acknowledged what he called exceptional work by the faculty for achieving a high percentage of

298 Ibid.


300 Unnamed author, “Term At Mexican Ward School Is Best In History,” The Big Bend Sentinel and The New Era, May 24, 1934, 1, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1934-05-24.pdf (accessed July 11, 2020); Thompson, History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2, 393, According to Thompson, the eighteen ward school students completed the seventh grade.

promotions for the term. All but one of the eight teachers working under him that past school year had been re-elected to return for the following fall 1934 term. This demonstrated that rapport between teachers and students was aiding the better quality of work performed with the ward school children. It is good to note here that Blackwell, like other school administrators working in the rural areas of the state, also performed teaching duties at the ward school. By then the Mexican ward school staff was composed of nine individuals including Principal Blackwell as teacher. It is also good to note that the significant skew in student-to-teacher ratio continued to be present at the school even with more teachers serving at the school. Blackwell stated that the Marfa School Board had been prompted to consider the hiring of two more teachers in order to alleviate the overcrowding problem at the Mexican school.302

To further contextualize the need for more teachers at the school, the principal further reported that Miss Mary Livingston now had the distinction of holding the state record for a one-room enrollment. In the school year 1933-1934, Miss Livingston’s first grade class had 138 ethnic Mexican students attending class in the Band Hall room.303 A Herculean effort by the teacher and an accomplishment that not many could have completed. The feat, of course, could not have been accomplished without the assistance of the entire Mexican ward school family. Professor Blackwell made acknowledgment of this school-home sphere partnership as he spoke highly of the “Mexican P.T.A.” The Mexican Parent-Teacher Association, he said, “had been a wonderful aid to this [1933-34] school year, and that their activity was sincerely appreciated by


303 Unnamed author, “Term At Mexican Ward School Is Best In History,” *The Big Bend Sentinel and The New Era*, May 24, 1934, 1, [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1934-05-24.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1934-05-24.pdf) (accessed July 11, 2020), Professor Blackwell further stated that the 138 students in Mary Livingston’s class was greater than the entire number of students (125) enrolled at the ward school when he arrived in 1922.
both faculty and students.”\textsuperscript{304} At this 1934 Mexican school graduation, the “Mexican P.T.A.” provided the “entertainment and social.”\textsuperscript{305} The parents served the staff and students the very traditional American treats of ice cream, cake, and punch.\textsuperscript{306} Any and all assistance by the families was not only welcomed but needed by the ward school. The effort at the ward school graduation at the end of the 1934 school year was yet another demonstration of the parent’s devotion to their children’s education. Team work and creativity served to better ameliorate an already tough situation at the Mexican ward school especially it being a time when the global depression was playing havoc on all aspects of everyday life.

The mid-1930s at the Marfa Mexican school brought out perhaps some of the most creative approaches at making the Depression era situation, if not better, at least tolerable. In a 1987 interview with \textit{The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel}, Ms. Livingston, the state-record holder, described her classroom during that time. Although spacious and relatively comfortable space-wise, her classroom had the unfortunate circumstance of having the bright, and more than likely extremely and intolerably hot, West Texas sun hit it mercilessly in the fall afternoons. The architects of the school building had failed to take into consideration the natural elements when putting together the design and had drafted, and later constructed, the entire west wall of large, high windows.\textsuperscript{307}

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.
Furthermore, funds for education were some of the hardest hit during the depression so many teachers were not even receiving a paycheck for their services. This lack of salaries further complicated life at the Marfa school system. Districts across the country resorted to paying their educators with scrips which were nothing more than “IOU’s” or promises of payment later on when the economic situation improved. The situation became so dire that some districts even considered petitioning the government to be allowed to issue bad checks in order to get some type of wage to teachers even if it meant somewhat bending the law.308

In Marfa, Ms. Livingston resorted to good old fashion small town teacher ingenuity when confronted with this bad economic situation. “It being the Depression years, there were no funds for shades, and surely, the teacher could not buy them as teachers received no money, just script [sic]. I found old shades, no rollers, climbed to the top of the windows and nailed pieces of shades to the window frames.”309 Ms. Livingston did not see her first payment until October of her second year of teaching at the Mexican school. Livingston took it upon herself to make the learning experience of her entirely ethnic Mexican class the best possible given the circumstances. Her aunt, Ms. Mary Shannon Kelly, had done the same decades earlier in her first year at the Mexican school.310

The 138-student class was no doubt a formidable challenge to handle so it was at this juncture that Principal Blackwell decided to go with the half-day-of-schooling approach in Ms.

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310 Ibid.
Livingston’s class. Half of the students were to attend in the morning and half of them in the afternoon to lessen the strain created by a mass of students attending the school at one time.311 It could be argued that overcrowding this situation could have been prevented had the main and Mexican schools been integrated. But then again, the economic limitations created by the depression and the racial attitudes of the era were formidable enough to necessitate a quick and tangible, on-the-spot decision to ameliorate the workload laid upon an unpaid and, more than likely, stressed-out educator. Although social and economic barriers abounded, Ms. Livingston held steadfast to her beliefs in education and how it could improve her students’ lives; even when the odds were mounted against her.

As Ms. Livingston recollected later, the school not only provided the tools the ethnic Mexican children would need to successfully negotiate an increasingly hostile and culturally intolerant environment in the country. On more pragmatic terms, attending the school also served to provide much needed food and creature comforts the children were not receiving at home. For example, the teacher noticed that her close to 140 students “flocked” to the school in order to get a meal from the “soup kitchen” there and to find relief from the dry but extremely cold far west Texas winters in the warm classrooms.312 The soup might have provided limited nutritional sustenance and the warmth may have come from an old, three-legged coal stove held up by a fourth leg composed of old bricks. Nevertheless, the school provided secure, guaranteed

311 Ibid.
312 Ibid.
comforts, luxuries even, the ethnic Mexican children of mid-1930s Marfa may otherwise have had no access to at home.  

Contested Sociocultural Borderlands of the Ward School Classroom

Blackwell’s work at the ward school helped create the needed rapport between educators and the students. However, there still was a continuous sociocultural distance confronted by the Anglo-American teachers and their students that created strain at the campus. Although ethnic Mexican teachers had been hired by the Marfa school system to serve at the ward school, practically all of the educators serving there during the Blackwell years were Anglo-American. The Anglo-American teachers, according to their recollections, did their best to lessen the strenuous situation but the cultural differences were not that easily resolved. This, of course, led to instances where the cultures clashed and the tough-love approach became poignantly amplified. One of the approaches utilized to correct or diminish these cultural differences was through corporeal punishment. Across far west Texas, the Mexican ward schools made extensive use of this method to ensure socialization-resocialization: corporeal punishment. The behavioral modifying process meant to punish through rituals of cultural degradation and then to reconstruct or reform behavior, and by extension self-identities, into a shape more in tune with American values. The strategy forcefully equipped ethnic Mexican students with the sociocultural schemas the Anglo-American teachers characterized as the correct ones needed to negotiate an American social context.

Furthermore, a persisting influence in the educational settings, and beyond, in the United States during this time was a eugenicist view that directly or indirectly attempted to maintain a

social order with Anglo-Americans at its apex. Contemporary scholarship examining the educational experiences of ethnic Mexicans contributed to the maintenance of this social order. Social scientific-based interpretations, for example in a work by USC graduate student Katherine Meguire, described the pedagogical needs of ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. as requiring a “culturally-specific” educational approach.\(^{314}\) The apparent culturally-sensitive argument by Meguire is then quickly dismantled as the work further describes what is meant by “culturally-specific” educational needs. The researcher asserts that the reason that there is a need for a “culturally-specific” approach in teaching ethnic Mexicans was because, “The Mexican does not come of purebred stock.”\(^{315}\)

In the researcher’s point of view, this impure stock, then, created a different type of culture. Moreover, in the scholar’s understanding, the ethnic Mexican peoples were guided by a sort of bioculture created by a synthesis between racial and cultural attributes or shortcomings. “[T]he Mexicans,” Meguire noted, “have ambition for a leisurely life that is an outgrowth of their ancestry.”\(^{316}\) As such, ethnic Mexicans, with their hybrid schemas through generations had shaped a different learning style based on leisure that needed a special approach.\(^{317}\) This matrix of a synthesis of both racial and cultural background situating the ethnic Mexican as inferior was embedded within the pedagogical conscience of the education system. Across the country,


\(^{315}\) Ibid.

\(^{316}\) Ibid.

\(^{317}\) Ibid.

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whether in a deliberate attempt at maintaining the social order or in a paternalistic-benevolent approach to aid in social mobility, a foundation for educating ethnic Mexicans had been set.

As mentioned, one key tenet of the Americanization process was the teaching and the learning of the English language. Therefore, a major reason given for school segregation, and especially for separating ethnic Mexican students from the main school, was the low level of English language proficiency found within that demographic.\(^{318}\) School districts argued that the segregation of ethnic Mexican children was not due to racially-based views, even when scholarship such as Meguire’s pointed at race as a main factor in differentiating education, but rather because there were abundant educational concerns. This was the central argument that had led to the *Del Rio I.S.D. v. Salvatierra* decision overturning the unconstitutionality ruling of the lower courts in 1930. In pro-segregationists’ views, the integration of classrooms created an atmosphere where both English-speaking students and non-English proficient students would be hindered in their educational achievement.\(^{319}\)

The scholastic justification presented ethnic Mexican children’s low English language competency as an educational detriment that created a sort of imbalance in the classroom atmosphere. The oftentimes overwhelmed teacher, the proposers proclaimed, became caught up trying to serve linguistically distinct groups at different paces and in the end not provide either with the adequate amount of time to transmit the required curriculum effectively. In the long run, this ended up denying all the children the ability to acquire important skills in a satisfactory

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manner. In the eyes of school officials, segregation then served to provide ethnic Mexican children a certain level of English language proficiency before entering the regular school readying them to keep up with the rest of the class. The argument posited that the segregated system was a positive approach impeding the hindering of both ethnic Mexican and Anglo American student knowledge acquisition.\footnote{See San Miguel, Jr., \textit{Brown, Not White}, 2001; Menchaca, \textit{The Mexican Outsiders}, 1995; Garcia, \textit{Desert Immigrants}, 1981; Sanchez, \textit{Becoming Mexican American}, 1993.} Therefore, districts across the state claimed that the aim of a segregated system was the dismantling of language barriers in order to help ethnic Mexican students achieve educational competence in the mainstream school once they transitioned.\footnote{Sanchez, \textit{Becoming Mexican American}, 1993, 259; As the number of Mexican origin students grew and became a significant presence in the schools, districts began the systematic distancing of the “othered” children using military-inspired tactics. For instance, IQ testing fashioned in the military as recruitment tools came into use in the schools as cognitive capacity assessments. The resulting outcomes supported the then prevailing belief that Mexican children were inferior to Anglo children deeming the “ethnic” children as “retarded” and in need of “special” education approaches.; Garcia, \textit{Desert Immigrants}, 1981.} Moreover, the proponents of segregated schools claimed that this was done in an effort to equip ethnic groups with the sociocultural schemas to adequately face an Anglo-American dominated United States.

Once segregated then the aim of the Mexican ward school was to enhance English language competence and, maybe unknowingly, to promote identity reformation of their students into an Americanized version. In theory, this resocialization of the older students and socialization of the younger ones facilitated integration into the American mainstream milieu. To reiterate, it is known that a key factor in identity formation is the language utilized to conceptualize, describe, internalize, and then use to negotiate your environment.\footnote{See Melissa Bowerman and Stephen Levinson (ed.), \textit{Language Acquisition and Conceptual Development} (Cambridge University Press, 2001); See Reiko Mazuka and Friedman, Ronald S. “Linguistic Relativity in Japanese and English: Is Language the Primary Determinant in Object Classification?” \textit{Journal of East Asian Linguistics}, 9 (4), (2000): 353–377.}
an environment dominated by Anglo-American ideals. Then, it can be understood that the most important goal was to promote the use of the English language over other idioms. In order to achieve this, a distancing from the “traditional” ethnic Mexican culture was to simultaneously take place. With this pedagogical understanding, the school settings were then constructed in a way that would better bring into fruition this English language competence and as a consequence an Americanized self-identity. In school districts across far west Texas, language skill acquisition thus became the factor, or proxy, that served to segregate the children attending their schools. Former Mexican ward school students’ recollection, provide first-hand knowledge of the Americanization experience in the classrooms.

When asked about the school’s policy on language usage a former Mexican school student in far west Texas recalled that, “Well we weren’t allowed [to speak in Spanish] but what we were told and what we did were two different things.” These acts of defiance allowed the young ethnic Mexican children not only to communicate amongst themselves but also to maintain a sense of pride in their cultural identity; not only in who they were as individuals but as members of a community with a common sociocultural background. This behavior, though, in the eyes of the Anglo-American educator was a hinderance towards guiding their ethnic wards down the path of eventual Americanization. These acts of defiance or cultural affirmation were thus met with swift tough-love actions by the albus vater administration of the 1930s Marfa


Mexican school. The use of corporeal punishment in the far west Texas school systems during the era under discussion can be appreciated in the physical remnants of the “tools” used to distribute this mode of behavioral modification/corrective measure.

The assessment given by this far west Texas former Mexican school student that “you don’t know any better,” referring to when he spoke Spanish on campus and then received what amounts to physical abuse, normalizes the education systems’ methods of dealing with the deemed language problem. The students’ upbringing in a distinct era took the punishment as part of the normal school and home experience. This acceptance of meriting physical castigation can be interpreted as an internalization of the mainstream’s ascribed stigma to those concepts or behaviors, (i.e.; sociocultural schemas) including language, characterized as foreign and unwanted. No doubt students of all groups were subjected to corporeal punishment in this era for behavior considered as incorrect, offensive, or disruptive. In the case of ethnic Mexican students this incorrect, offensive, or disruptive behavior included the use of their native or home language: Spanish. Physical punishment aided in the modification of the ethnic children’s identity including their language and other undesirable behaviors. But changing a person’s

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325 Pedro Piñon interview by author, El Paso, Texas March 17, 2014. The interviewee recalled, “But we got swatted for speaking Spanish. Most of the teachers in Sierra Blanca [Texas] were white from what I remember. And they were very strict in a sense but in the first grades you don’t know any better.” Later as a student in Ft. Hancock ISD, Pedro and a friend were “swatted” for “playing hookie.” Being freshmen they “got off easy” but the senior class boys that were with them that day not only received the corporeal punishment but were threatened with having their files being sent to the military draft board.

326 Digital photograph of student desk and wooden paddle from the Mexican school era in west Texas taken by author, summer 2012, Hudspeth County Historical Society Incorporated Museum. A wooden paddle with the inscription “Friendly Persuasion” sits in the Hudspeth County, Texas museum as a reminder of what former ward school student, Pedro Piñon describes in his narrative of the Mexican school experience. Photograph taken by author at the Blackwell School Alliance Museum the fall of 2016. A wooden paddle with the inscription “Sputnik,” perhaps in reference to the Soviet Union’s artificial satellite sent into orbit in 1957. The name perhaps indicative of how hard deviant students were going to receive their paddling. Apparently, they were to be hit hard enough to be sent into outer space? Of course, figuratively-speaking.

cultural identity is easier said than done as was the case in the earlier years of the Mexican ward school. The Anglo-American teachers were considerably outnumbered by their primarily Spanish-speaking students and thus were not able to keep an eye on every single interaction on campus much less at the home.

On a September morning in 1936, teacher Willie Harper “looked out over a sea of some forty or fifty expectant little faces” and felt just “as scared as the most timid of little first graders.” Principal Blackwell’s plan of scheduling morning and afternoon classes already in place did little to diminish the feeling of being overwhelmed. Harper recalled that, “And after lunch another wave of about the same number, of new faces!” showed up to the classroom creating in her a renewed feeling of inadequacy in dealing with a classroom full of non-English speakers. Luckily, the young Willie Harper, a native of far west Texas, was equipped with at least some level of ethnic-Mexican cultural capital. She could speak some Spanish.

The approach used by Harper may have been quite unorthodox for the era as instead of attempting an authoritative strategy, the teacher resorted to accommodating, or at least being flexible enough, in the area of language usage in the classroom. The empathetic approach allowed some semblance of intercultural communication to take place. Otherwise, the situation could have become a disaster for the new Mexican ward school teacher. As Harper put it, “Three years of Spanish in Marfa High School plus one year at Texas University at Austin had in no way prepared me for properly pronouncing such names Epifanio, Evangelina, or

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329 Ibid.
Anastasio.”330 But that rudimentary level of the foreign language gave her an advantage other Anglo-American teachers that did not have in their pedagogical arsenal. Harper made the most of that linguistic capital. The authoritarian side of the tough-love approach may have had its merits in educating an ethnic student population but that was not always the case. Willie Harper knew this.

The language barrier was countered with the more empathetic side of the tough-love teaching strategy and so after months of what seemed to be challenging back and forth exchange, the rapport between educator and students came to fruition. After those first few months, the connection to her students had grown to such an extent that in a 1987 interview Willie Harper joyfully stated, “I wouldn't have traded ‘my little muchachos’ for all the kids in the world.”331 While this intercultural connection was being forged in a far west Texas classroom, uncertainty loomed in the air in what seemed everywhere outside Ms. Harper’s adobe building-housed first grade.

**The Transnational Ripples of Global Social Instability**

The impact of the global depression had stirred up nationalist fervor in faraway lands. The instability felt across the world in turn served as a wake-up call for U.S. authorities. News out of Europe brought in rumors that a military threat was brewing in Germany. Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist party were becoming ever more powerful and aggressive. In 1936 Hitler defied the accords laid down in the Treaty of Versailles and began his imperial march across Europe. The Third Reich demonstrated its aggression by first remilitarizing the Rhineland, annexing Austria in 1938, and later that year, demanding and incorporating the

330 Ibid.

331 Ibid.
Czechoslovakian-held Sudetenland. The European allies lacking the support of the (self-imposed) isolationist U.S., had to all but accept the demands made by the Nazis and Hitler. Here at home in the U.S., there was still much to be worked on so geopolitical activities elsewhere were not given just attention.

The depression still raged across the United States leaving much pain and uncertainty in every corner of the country. The FDR-led government’s hands-on approach to the economy was slowly showing signs of progress in lessening, if not fixing, the effects of the capitalist economic collapse. As President Roosevelt’s New Deal began to show some hope, in Presidio County the effects slowly trickled in and began to be felt. For instance, Marfa, Texas experienced first-hand both the impact of the global Great Depression and the subsequent Nazi aggression in Europe. The local military post, Fort D. A. Russell, was reactivated after the depression had forced its closure between 1933 and 1935.332 The New Deal sent many men into military service so as to get them some involved in some form of employment. Thus, Marfa received an influx of military personnel, most of them men. By 1936 there were several thousand soldiers stationed at the post near Marfa, Texas. The majority, as one Mexican school teacher observed, were there so as to keep them employed as part of President Roosevelt’s plan to get the economy up and running once more.333 At the same time, the military post served to begin peace time preparations in case the situation in Europe worsened.

332 Lee Bennett, “Fort D. A. Russell,” Handbook of Texas Online, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/fort-d-a-russell (accessed September 06, 2020). The post had been established to protect the border region right after Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico in 1911.

In 1936, the same year Hitler took the Rhineland there was a demonstration of scholastic improvement at the Marfa ward school. Principal Blackwell decided to put together a University Interscholastic League section reserved only for Spanish-speaking students in the region. The *albus vater* saw it as unfair to have the Spanish-speaking, ethnic Mexican children of Presidio County and surrounding communities to have to compete in literary events against the English-speaking students. A year later, more than 150 Spanish-speaking students from six surrounding communities, including Marfa and Fort Davis, competed in the Interscholastic League put together by Blackwell exclusively for them.334 This event was not a common educational strategy utilized during the era. Principal Blackwell’s initiative at including the primarily Spanish-speaking students in the officially-sanctioned literary competition is indicative of his paternalistic/tough-love approach. The *albus vater*, although a tough-nosed educator, was always, it seems, looking out for his children’s best interests even if it meant upsetting the social-

334 Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2*, 430; Katherine Stephens, “One Avenue to World Understanding,” *Patrons’ Bulletin, Volume 1*, December 1947, 11, Folder: “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.” Marfa Public Library Records, Stephens’ 1947 report details the efforts Marfa ISD was making in creating a bilingual student body. Given what Blackwell was doing at the junior high level, then it is quite the task to decipher as to why ethnic Mexican students were castigated for using their home language on campus.; Copy of a letter written by Evelyn Davis, “The Last Rites of Spanish Speaking 1954,” The Blackwell School Alliance Museum; Sterry Butcher, “Marfa’s Blackwell School Has a Painful Past. That’s Why the Town Wants to Save It,” *Texas Monthly*, January 3, 2019, https://www.teasmonthly.com/being-texan/marfas-blackwell-school-has-a-painful-past-thats-why-the-town-wants-to-save-it/ (accessed September 8, 2020), Years later in 1954, Ms. Evelyn Davis conducted what amounted to a funeral and burial service for “Mr. Spanish.” The ritual symbolized the killing or subtraction of ethnic Mexican culture within the Americanization process. The students were to write, “Spanish words” on pieces of paper and these were put in a cigar box and buried in a wooden “casket.” She was forming a new self-identity in her students. In this case, by symbolically eliminating the competing culture. After some altercation occurred while lowering the casket, loud cuss words in Spanish were hurled between the pallbearers. Then the children laughed at the whole “fiasco.”; Trinity Methodist Church Collection MS248, Box 1, 38, *History of Trinity Methodist Church*, June 15, 1966, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, University of Texas at El Paso Library, A similar ritual was undertaken by a Protestant preacher in prohibition era El Paso, Texas. Reverend Knickerbocker staged a symbolic burial of “John Barley Corn” with an actual casket filled with whisky and beer bottles.
educational norms of the time.\textsuperscript{335} All the while, Blackwell continued work on lessening the effects of other pressing matters at the ward school as the depression’s impact still lingered.

The Mexican school received much needed additions for the fall of 1937.\textsuperscript{336} The Marfa ISD had added one more year to its curriculum so now the students were recommended to attend a 12-year tenure in Texas school districts on the suggestion of Deputy State Superintendent of Public Schools, Sue Mann. The Mexican school added a grade after 1937 following the implementation of the state mandate.\textsuperscript{337} Thus, expansion of the campus was necessary once again. One of its own teachers, John Fortner, actually worked on the upgrades during the summer of 1937, readying the school for the next fall semester. The new extension, also made of adobe, added indoor restrooms, office space, new coal burning stoves, and “other conveniences” that the older buildings had lacked since the school’s inception. Mr. Fortner was looking forward to that fall as he was to make $125 per month and was to be assigned one of the new

\textsuperscript{335} Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas,” \textit{The Journal of American History}, vol. 92, no. 4, 2006, 1212–1237, JSTOR, \url{www.jstor.org/stable/4485889} (accessed June 18, 2021), Ethnic Mexicans were considered legally white. Even the U.S. Census Bureau, which had restrained form classifying the group as racially “white,” was required to classify ethnic Mexicans as “white” by 1936.


classrooms. One thing that he was dreading though, was the so-called curriculum upgrades the state board of education was to instill across Texas.\footnote{John Fortner, “The Blackwell School Memoirs,” \textit{The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel}, April 23, 1987, 7, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-04-23.pdf} (accessed September 11, 2020).}

The state of Texas Education Agency installed a new curriculum based on unit form which did not sit well with the teachers at the Mexican school. According to Fortner, “No body [sic] liked it,” as the plan that was to cure all the educational problems, in his view, did not work in practice.\footnote{Ibid.} Disillusioned, perhaps even disgruntled, the teacher resigned in December and took up the job of superintendent in Presidio, Texas. Moreover, the economic state of the Great Depression may have led Fortner to move onto greener pastures of administrative work. When the educator was called up for duty during World War II, he left and did not return to Presidio County until after the war.\footnote{John Fortner, “The Blackwell School Memoirs,” \textit{The Marfa Independent and The Big Bend Sentinel}, April 23, 1987, 7, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-04-23.pdf} (accessed September 10, 2020); Unnamed author, “Marfa High Sends 229 to Military Duty: Two Die in Service-Four Listed as Missing,” \textit{The Shorthorn}, October 20, 1944, 5, Folder “Class of 1944,” Marfa Public Library Records, Folder “Class of 1942-43,” Marfa Public Library Records, Many other Marfans, including many of the Mexican ward school boys, followed Mr. Fortner into military service. The \textit{albus vater} set the example to follow.}

The New Deal’s impact continued to gradually show some effects locally as the 1940s made their appearance. The Marfa school system, including the Mexican ward school, benefitted from the federal programs designed to ease the effects of the depression. For instance, the Marfa ISD school report issued in December 1947 noted that the Mexican school had added a structure in 1940 which was funded with the assistance of the Works Public Administration, or WPA, one of President Roosevelt’s “alphabet soup” programs.\footnote{J.E. Gregg, “Table Number III, Value of School Buildings Marfa Independent School District,” \textit{Patrons’ Bulletin, Volume 1}, December 1947, 13, Folder “History of the Schools of Presidio County,” Marfa Public} The immediate period right before World
War II were also marked by financial betterment in the region as the New Deal programs and peace time militarization were bringing some measure of stability to the economy. The increase in military personnel at Fort D.A. Russell and the Marfa Army Air Field was paying dividends as the soldiers and other post employees brought in dearly needed money flow into the local Marfa and overall state economy. And of course, when the United States entered the war after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, the economy came roaring back to life. The economic stabilization, though a relative success, was mired by inconsistencies. Teachers at the ward school had a front row view of these inconsistencies right in their classrooms.

**Conclusion**

Ethnic Mexican children’s identity formation had been shaped into what may be perceived, and rightfully so, as full-fledged “American,” even in segregation at the school. Jesse Blackwell’s guidance and the faculty’s teaching of things American went far beyond than just teaching and instilling a preference for the English language in ethnic Mexican children. The Americanized socialization did not only modify an existing sociocultural identity fortified with the accompanying sociocultural schemas to negotiate Anglo-America but it had forged a deep

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Library Records: Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2*, 488. Thompson states that the ward school had surpassed the enrollment requirements for it to be considered a junior high school and have it removed from the ward school category. Thompson also notes that the addition to the school for “Mexican Americans” was actually a new school building which was to be named “Blackwell Junior High School” in honor of Principal Jesse Blackwell. The new “Blackwell School” was dedicated on October 28, 1940.

342 Thompson, *The History of Marfa and Presidio County Volume 2*, 518-519. Telling of the proverbial change of fortunes in the area, Historian Cecilia Thompson notes that the state of Texas had more than one-hundred corporations issued charters in the years 1942-1943 and that no business failures had occurred in a stretch of six months within those two years.

343 Rena Peevey, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, June 6, 1987, 8, [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-06-18.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-06-18.pdf) (accessed June 18, 2020). The excruciating economic disaster afflicting the country was especially tough on the working-class. For example, Rena Peevey recalled conversations with former ward school teacher, J.W. Peevey, where the latter spoke of the extreme poverty he saw his students experience while he was teaching there. The ethnic Mexican students showed up to school with oversized, half-burned, old Army coats which had been rescued from the garbage piles left by the shutting down of Fort D.A. Russell during the decade of the 1930s. And even when the situation was getting better, students at the ward school were known to attend school mostly for the chance to eat a meal.
unconscious bond between their home, traditional-ethnic background and the Anglo-American created world. Socialization through Americanization with its foundation at the ward school was coming to fruition. These ethnic Mexican children had become Americans of Mexican descent. The Mexican school and its *albus vater* were but a starting point of this creation.

The roaring twenties had brought a renewed interest in economic betterment over social well-being. The decade of the 1920s also saw the continued surge of nativist-driven Americanization especially in the U.S. southwest. Divide and conquer tactics had helped achieve Anglo-American subjugation of the Hispanic population and the strategy continued to be used to maintain the social order in tact in the southwest region. An atmosphere of racial-sociocultural tension continued to be felt across the country and in particular in the contested areas such as the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The shortcomings faced by rural school systems including a lack of personnel did not deter educational efforts at the Marfa district. In 1922 Presidio County, Jesse Blackwell became the principal at Marfa’s Mexican school bringing with him a tough-love/patriarchal education model. The less than adequate situation at the Mexican school was met with resourcefulness by the new educator. Blackwell and his small staff made the best of what had been handed to them especially during the Depression Era. As the 1930s rolled along, glimpses of accommodation and empathy were seen in the Blackwell-led segregated school under the tough-love tutelage. The approach followed by Jesse Blackwell sometimes even went against the Americanization model.
Chapter 4: Partial Desegregation or Pseudo Integration: Ethnic Mexican Students Enroll at Marfa High School

"Farewell To Blackwell"
We're leaving you Dear Blackwell. We hate to say 'Good-Bye.' We'll remember you, In the years to Come. The days that have gone by. We'll remember our teachers, our friends, and schoolmates, too. We'll do our best in our land, And in our Community. ' CHORUS: Thanks to YOU, Dear Parents, for this opportunity of sending us to BLACKWELL SCHOOL Which has made life Complete! We'll remember our Teachers, Our Friends, and Schoolmates Too. We'll do our best in our land, And In our Community!!!!!
(REPEAT CHORUS)344

Educator Herschel T. Manuel noted in his research that ethnic Mexican children rarely made the transition from the Mexican schools to the regular school campus.345 The reasons were varied but his research also revealed the skewed numbers of Anglo-Americans as compared to other groups in relation to educational access. It even appeared that there was a coordinated effort by Anglo society to consciously deny the ethnic Mexican community a full education so as to maintain a constant supply of an exploitable workforce.346 Whatever might have been the


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leading factor, the reality was that the move from the segregated settings into the integrated classrooms of far west Texas during this time was not an easy one for ethnic Mexican children.

This move became even more daunting as ethnic Mexican children reached working age, which was often around the time they entered adolescence; there were times when even elementary-aged family members became full-time workers. Given the fact that the economic situation in the ethnic Mexican community tended to be in a constant state of flux between bad and worse, it was not uncommon to see parents rely on their teenage children’s ability to become contributors to the household economy. Just as the Blackwell family had relied on the adolescent Jesse Blackwell back in Rush County to provide for the family decades prior when confronted with a dire situation, likewise ethnic Mexican families needed to do what they saw as their best option to remedy their grim economic situation. Unfortunately, when Mexican families encountered difficult financial times, a common option was for them to withdraw their children from school.

“Mañana-Mañana” is Not An Option

Stereotypes of ethnic Mexicans portray a people with a “now” mentality who do not ascribe to long-term planning. The concept of delayed gratification, of course, is much easier to ascribe to when circumstances hold the possibility of a prosperous future. At times working-class people, including ethnic Mexicans, do not have the luxury of having to wait for their economic situation to eventually become better. For example, having to wait several years for potential income generators in the family to remain in school may not be a viable option. The working-poor class cannot rest upon the hope of attaining an education, including high school

347 See Chad Richardson, *Bataos, Bolillos, Pochos, and Pelados: Class and Culture on the South Texas Border* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1999). Richardson notes that ethnic Mexican children made a significant number of the peon labor force in South Texas and that the local Anglo-American farmer establishment made conceded efforts to maintain this labor pool intact. Recruiting of their young workers by the school system was kept to a minimum even prohibited on their lands so as not to allow the “ruining of good workers” by education.
graduation, to eventually better their economic lot. This especially rang true for ethnic Mexicans of the second, and subsequent, generation when opportunities did not seem to abound even after achieving a prep school diploma. Ethnic Mexican families, just like other working-class people, had to do what needed to be done such as entering the workforce at an earlier age and become wage earners in order to survive right then and there in their present.348

Taking a pragmatic approach by using the school system as a part of the family economic system has been a strategy applied by the working-class, including ethnic Mexicans. The schools provided, for example, free child care during working hours, it provided meals that may otherwise not be provided at home, and not just a place to be educated in the American culture. Thus, this strategy includes both short-term and long-term pragmatism in that the minority children received tangible needs such as a hot meal and a safe space when their parents were off at work. At the same time, the children were receiving vital American socialization. The latter being key cultural capital needed to ease their entrance into the Anglo-dominated work place. In general, ethnic Mexican families from Presidio, and the U.S. at large, did care about their children’s education. The fact that they were often forced to withdraw their children early from school either permanently, or as the seasonal harvests dictated, did not mean they did not care about their children’s education.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the American Southwest experienced significant numbers of ethnic Mexican students drop out of school.349 Impoverished

348 Financial stress also leads the working-class to ascribe to a “hustle” mentality. That is, working-class members must get up and work immediately to acquire basic needs. The stereotypical “mañana-mañana” mentality ascribed to ethnic Mexican culture is just another myopic absurdity projected at a historically marginalized but hard-working community.

families, both Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican, used all resources available to them to make ends meet. As in every family, most of the family income went towards housing, bills, food, and clothing. It was not uncommon to see both parents working as well as their older children. With no one left to care after younger children, schools became a vital source of childcare. At the Marfa schools, for example, ethnic Mexican families had access to child care, meals, and basic amenities such as heating and cooling especially when their financial struggles worsened.350

Thus, it was expected by ethnic Mexican families in the wider American Southwest that a significant number of their children were not going to finish high school; instead, they would become a part of the agricultural labor force. Ethnic Mexican students faced considerable obstacles from within the family in attaining any measure of education, especially after middle school. Ironically, it was through the power of Anglo-American society which created and solidified the racially-based dominant-subordinate system in far west Texas that access to the needed sociocultural capital to enter the American mainstream could be gained. In other words, Anglo-Americans created the barriers to full participation in American society and at the same time they held the keys to open those locked doors. Once again enter the albus vater.

The “White Father” at Marfa ISD

J. E. Gregg joined Marfa High School in 1914. As a coach, teacher, and later principal, Gregg eventually made his way up the administrative ladder to become superintendent in 1964. According to the authors, “In the fall of 1923, 1275 Mexican and 375 American children entered the low first grade in El Paso. In the fall of 1930, 7 years later, 174 Mexican and 506 American pupils entered an El Paso high school. Of the American pupils entering the high schools, 36 percent, and of the Mexican pupils, 16 percent, remain until they receive diplomas. As only 10 percent of the Mexican pupils entering the first grade reach the high school, and only 16 percent of these are graduated, it is evident that less than 2 percent of Mexican children entering the public schools remain to graduate from high school.”

350 Ellen Ruth Livingston, The Big Bend Sentinel, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” May 21, 1987, Livingston recalls how the children at the Mexican school received nourishment and a warm, safe place to learn during the Depression years. Soup kitchens set up at the school provided the much needed extra meals that the kids may not have had access to at home, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940,” Marfa Public Library Records.
1922. As a superintendent, Gregg labored to improve the environment at Marfa schools. As someone focused on inclusivity, he opened the doors to the creation of a home-school bridge, and created opportunities in extracurricular and health-oriented activities. These components were seen by educators and students alike as key in ensuring continued attendance by ethnic Mexicans.

At the ward school, not only was the inculcation of American cultural ideals accomplished through the enforcement of the English language but also through a holistic approach which included a rigorous academic curriculum, athletic competition, extracurricular activities such Anglo-oriented musical programs, and patriotic event participation. Gregg, a wearer of many hats, worked hand in hand with principal Blackwell at the Mexican school and Dr. L. T. Hinckley, principal of Marfa High School, to create a sense of inclusion for the district’s children. Moreover, they ensured that the connection between the Anglo-American based curriculum and the personal lives of the ethnic Mexican students eased the transition towards and the shaping of a more acceptable Americanized self-identity. The Americanization at the ward school provided the vital sociocultural schemas needed to negotiate the world of Anglo-America. It can be argued that the aim of Americanization at the Marfa school had a positive goal in mind in providing its ethnic Mexican students the cultural skills to negotiate the Anglo world. In order to achieve this Americanization, a holistic approach where paternalistic Anglo educators sought to socialize both Anglo and non-Anglo children through a synthesis of academics and athletics was implemented at the schools.

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More importantly, bridging the gap between the students themselves as individuals to the learning environment of the school, whether it was the regular school or the Americanization atmosphere at the segregated campus, provided that key component otherwise known as student-teacher rapport. That is, the paternalistic approach followed by Superintendent Gregg and the other school administrators aimed to create in the students (i.e.; their wards) a sense of connection, belonging to, or vested interest in the school and its teachers. The goal was to implant in the students the idea that the school and the home were not separate things but rather one extended life world. Gregg understood that the most efficient way of Americanizing ethnic Mexicans would be through not only providing quality education but by also providing an array of school activities. These included athletics, music, health and physical training, parent involvement through PTAs, and even the beautifying of the campus itself.

The administration at Marfa had had the privilege of having two other very influential individuals working in their school system starting in the 1920s to the mid-1940s. The aforementioned superintendent of schools at Marfa, J.E. Gregg was joined by Jesse Blackwell who was at the helm of the Mexican school since 1922. Blackwell remained a staple there for over twenty years. Over at the high school, L.T. Hinckley served as the principal for nearly twenty years as well. And just like Blackwell, Hinckley not only served as the principal, he also carried a full teaching load in science classes. When necessary, Hinckley covered as a substitute for other teachers from various subjects, emulating other rural school administrators across the country. Principal Hinckley, a man of science, had completed his doctorate degree at the University of Texas at Austin in the summer of 1935. According to historian Cecilia Thompson,
Dr. Hinckley’s research focused on the flora of Presidio County’s Davis Mountains. The comprehensive study specifically looked at the vegetation of Mt. Livermore and Madera Canyon. Undoubtedly, Principal Hinckley’s science background shaped his approach when serving the students of Marfa, Texas.

The three *albus vaters* coordinated in bringing to the Marfa school system “a very extensive health program.” The holistic approach sought to promote an overall mental and physical homeostasis, which theoretically enhanced the ability of students to learn. To build on the physical-biological aspect of learning, Dr. Hinckley promoted athletics-based activities not only for his student-athletes but for all the student body. In the Marfa schools, students took part in sports such as volleyball before and after school and during lunch. The sources present Marfa High school to have had a culture of maintaining all students engaged in an active lifestyle throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. At the lower levels of the Marfa school system the emphasis on health was also maintained and promoted by all three *albus vaters*, Superintendent Gregg and his two principals, Blackwell and Hinckley. The shaping of ethnic Mexican identity was undoubtably influenced by the paternalistic, Anglo male-dominated Americanization seen throughout Anglo-American history. Since the colonial period, the “white father” ethos held the reigns of socialization in this country.

The administrators continued their holistic approach in education and made sure that every class at Marfa Elementary and at the ward school were given eye, dental, and x-ray

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examinations as well as immunizations and follow-up physicals.\textsuperscript{356} Moreover, to further provide an atmosphere conducive to learning, the classrooms were painted following the current scientific theory of the Harmon Institute, which according to contemporary research, afforded the best lighting possible, and by extension, the best physical context for student achievement.\textsuperscript{357} The efforts made by the school campus and district leaders, albeit not uniform across campuses, were especially welcomed at Jesse Blackwell’s school.

\textbf{Unequal Improvements to the Marfa ISD School Buildings}

Several building upgrades had been made to the Mexican school since its inception and though it seems to not have been a priority for the Marfa district, attempts were made to liven up the campus especially after the arrival of Jesse Blackwell. For example, the once barren ward school playground had been upgraded during his administration. Likewise, the ward school campus had grown in size adding buildings as the school body expanded. The bare \textit{adobe} walls

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\item[356] Ellen Ruth Livingston, \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement}, “Marfa School History,” January 21, 1965, 4, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940,” Marfa Public Library Records; \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1965-01-21.PDF} (accessed September 17, 2020), Checkups later included ear examinations which would extend to include children not only from the Marfa schools but also children from neighboring Valentine, Fort Davis, and Casa Piedra. The clinic even provided examination for community adults with hearing difficulties. Apparently, the clinic model was so successful that a report sent to the national convention of ear specialists and the State Department of Health used the model to create similar clinics in other places.

\item[357] Ellen Ruth Livingston, \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement}, “Marfa School History,” January 21, 1965, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940,” Marfa Public Library Records; \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1965-01-21.PDF} (accessed September 17, 2020); The efforts made at the Marfa school system was a focus of pride for its leader, Superintendent J.E. Gregg. The publication quotes Gregg as stating in 1950 that, “We aren’t a big school and maybe we can’t always win all of our football games, or achieve everything else we want in competition with other schools, but thing I know we can do—we can have the best program of student health anywhere.; Amy F. Ogata, “Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools,” \textit{Journal of the Society of Architectural History}, Volume 67, no. 4, December 2008, 569-572, \url{https://dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Building_for_Learning_in_Postwar_Schools.pdf} (accessed September 18, 2020).
\end{footnotes}
of the older buildings were plastered and painted, heating added to combat the cold winters, and installation of inside plumbing were among the upgrades done at the school.358

Of course, these were relative improvements as the main school, that is the schoolhouse used by Anglo-American children at the high school and elementary levels, was constructed of reinforced concrete and faced with red brick. Moreover, while the Mexican school had been hastily constructed by a local construction company in Marfa, the main school had actually been designed by an architect firm. In a 1965 article from The Big Bend Sentinel the main schoolhouse was described as “The red brick building which now houses Marfa high and Marfa Elementary was completed in 1925. This building which is made of reinforced concrete faced with brick was constructed in such a way that the roof above the classrooms is strong enough to hold a second story.”359 Telling of the priorities held by the district, the article also states that the original intent of the J. E. Gregg-led administration called for a much larger complex worth seventy-five thousand dollars. Although the plans were eventually rejected, the schoolhouse that replaced the old building that burned down in the spring of 1925 was far better than the little


adobe school for ethnic Mexican children of Marfa. In an effort to elucidate the discrepancies between the segregated school versus the main campus, another look at the actual teaching facilities is merited.

A story in *The New Era* from 1928 provides further details about “the first brick building [that] was erected on the site of the present [high school] building in the late [eighteen] eighties, or early [eighteen] nineties.” Apparently the new school for Anglo-American children in Marfa was of the more advanced schoolhouse constructions seen across the country. As described by the publication,

[T]he [construction] was a two-story building having four rooms on the first floor and two rooms and the auditorium on the second floor. The building complete with all desks and equipment was $6,000.00. The school continued to grow, and in 1910 the north and south wings were added. These additions contained six class rooms, and were erected at a cost of $15,000.00 which was paid by voting bonds for the purpose. Another addition to the original building was made in 1917 at a cost of $9,000.00, and was built without voting any bonds as the school fund at the time was sufficient to take care of the cost. Mr. T. C. Mitchell, Mr. Roberts, and Mrs. J. P. Tigner were the trustees when the north and south wings were added to the building. Mr. T. C. Mitchell, Mr. J. P. Tigner, and Mr. J. C. Bean were trustees when the second addition was made[.] The newspaper story continued to detail the additions to the Marfa school attended primarily, and at various times exclusively, by Anglo-American children.

In 1924 the people of Marfa voted to erect a new school building, and a bond issue of $75,000.00 was voted for the purpose. The building was constructed during 1925, and is modern in every particular. The structure is of concrete reinforced with steel, and the walls are supported with reinforced beams, and are filled with hollow tile; and brick. The lighting, heating, ventilation, and arrangement of the rooms and corridors meet all standards set by the leading school architects of the country. At the time of the erection of

360 Ibid.


362 Ibid. This is interesting because as noted previously in this work, the old schoolhouse was said to have burned down in the spring of 1925.
the new building the school board was composed of Mr. J. W. Howell, Mr. C.T. Mitchell, and H. O. Metcalfe.\(^{363}\)

At the Mexican ward school not long before this, the children used outhouses and got their classrooms heated by a three-legged coal stove. Discrepancy in fund allocation can be readily seen, but the differences in schoolhouse conditions from the Anglo schools to the Mexican did not deter Mexican students from their desire to acquire an education.\(^{364}\)

The albus vaters’ sense of noblesse oblige, Christian-guilt-driven morality, compounded by a “White Man’s Burden-esque” racially-tinged idealism (or an empathy bore out of genuine educator’s concern for the future of their students or a complex combination of all these) reified itself in the actual on-the-ground human interaction at the school system of twentieth century Marfa, Texas.\(^{365}\) In other words, was it racially-influenced negligence, guilt, or actual concern that led the Anglo educators to invest school funds in such a skewed way? The explanation as to what was occurring will depend on who is doing the explaining. At that moment in 1930s Presidio County, educators and students alike were going about life as best as they could in the context they were afforded.


\(^{364}\) Unnamed author, “Ward School Graduation Held Tuesday Night At High School Auditorium,” The Big Bend Sentinel and New Era, May 21, 1937, 1, [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1937-05-21.pdf](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1937-05-21.pdf) (accessed October 14, 2020), Mexican school graduation numbers remained steady throughout the time period analyzed. For example, this article in The Big Bend and New Era from 1937 reported that several ethnic Mexican children had graduated from the ward school and most of the graduates went on to high school.

\(^{365}\) Ellen Ruth Livingston, The Big Bend Sentinel, Special School Supplement, “Marfa School History,” January 21, 1965, 4, Folder “Blackwell School 1889-1940,” Marfa Public Library Records; [http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1965-01-21.PDF](http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1965-01-21.PDF) (accessed September 17, 2020), The author notes that the school administrators actively sought to provide a school environment where, at least, all students received adequate care education-wise and healthcare-wise. The actions taken by administrators were not with equity in mind but did provide some measure of comfort to the ethnic Mexican students of Marfa.
Americanized Socialization at the Mexican School

At the Marfa Mexican School, the boys and girls had opportunities to enhance their exposure to Americana through extracurricular activities. These activities included volleyball, basketball, tennis, choral group, and band. Added to these extracurricular activities was parent participation in developing the school and in the beautification of the campus. Partially because of parent involvement, the connection between the two cultural worlds, Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican, became much closer. And although most of the equipment utilized by the segregated school sports teams was handed-down from the main campus, all the extracurricular activities not only provided a source of enjoyment, or the making of a “fun” school experience. By extension, the gestures also enhanced the goal of shaping the ethnic Mexican children’s identity into one more in tune with the Americanized identity-shaping being sought at the main campus. Furthermore, one of the most important, if not the main, objective of the school system could be accomplished: retaining the ethnic Mexican student attendance. One of the albus vaters in charge at the school system, Jay B. Bolin, stated in a district report, “It is the hope

366 Jay B. Bolin, “Blackwell’s Program of Development and the Growth: Blackwell Plays Football,” Patrons’ Bulletin, Volume 1, December 1947, 7, Folder: “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.” Marfa Public Library Records. A football team for the Blackwell School boys was added in 1947. In the author’s view, the new sport of American football could serve as one of the key components to spark or enhance the ethnic Mexican children’s interest in school, “It is expected that the advent of this sport for the Blackwell boys will be an incentive to continue their education through senior high school.”

367 Jay B. Bolin, “Blackwell’s Program of Development and the Growth,” Patrons’ Bulletin, Volume 1, December 1947, 7, Folder: “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.” Marfa Public Library Records. The report outlines the approach taken at Marfa ISD in the late 1940s. The ideals espoused in the publication are centered around those promoted by J.E. Gregg since his arrival in Marfa, Texas back in 1914. Both as a teacher-coach and campus-district administrator, the albus vater was keen on promoting a “tough love” paternalistic approach towards education. Furthermore, the document makes note of this “hand-me-down” practice at Marfa. Bolin states that, “Coach Bodie Hunter (Marfa High football coach) of the Shorthorns is doing a generous job of seeing that the six-man (football) squad, under the direction of W.A. Blankinship, has adequate equipment for this new sport at Blackwell.” Some good perhaps was done with this effort at expanding participation but it can be speculated that the ‘hand-me-down’/used equipment may have also produced a sense of “second-hand worth” in the students.; Raymond Wheat, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” The Big Bend Sentinel, May 28, 1987, 3, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/indandsent84-92/1987-05-28.pdf (accessed June 16, 2020), According to the Blackwell School music teacher Mr. Wheat, there was an instance where new music band uniforms for Blackwell were measured by UT-Austin personnel.
that of the administration that every Blackwell graduate will continue his education through senior high school.”

As noted, for the ethnic Mexican population of the 1930s and 1940s reaching the level of a high school education, much less achieving a high school diploma, was an exceptional accomplishment. This assertion is supported by records on student population-retention data from the era. At the height of ward school student attendance, the school taught hundreds of ethnic Mexican children. According to Principal Blackwell in a 1947 school publication article, the peak enrollment year for the Mexican ward school was in 1944-45 with an enrollment of 655 students. Unfortunately, these relative high numbers did not correlate with the number of ethnic Mexican students graduating from Marfa High School during this period. For example, the class of 1943-44 of Marfa High School graduated five Hispanic surnamed students.

A warm place away from home and extracurricular activities, among other things, which might have been otherwise inaccessible to the ethnic Mexican student population was not enough in terms of student retention. The district’s attempts at providing a measure of accommodation through providing a relatively secure learning environment did not fully accomplish the desired effect of retaining ward school students in the education system, at least not in extensive numbers. The low graduation numbers, as the example above demonstrates—five ethnic Mexican students.

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370 Various high school commencement announcements housed at the Marfa Public Library Records support this view. As there were hundreds of ethnic Mexican students attending the Blackwell School, only a handful appeared on the roles of Marfa High School graduates during this time.

371 Marfa High Class of 1944 Commencement Program, Folder: “Class of 1944,” Marfa Public Library Records.
Mexican high school graduates in a school system that housed hundreds of non-Anglo children in the lower grades-- are concrete evidence, and a condemnation, of the relative failure of a segregated school system to create substantial educational accessibility to ethnic Mexican students in Marfa. But even with the number of ethnic Mexican students dwindling at the prep school level, there were some exceptions, or perhaps better said-exceptional individuals, who did make the move into the halls of the Anglo-American school. Their story is one that inspires awe.

**Ethnic Mexicans Students Make the Move to Marfa High**

In a 1947 article interview, Jesse Blackwell stated that the first ward school students to make the move to Marfa High School occurred in the 1929-1930 school year.\(^\text{372}\) This may not be accurate as records housed at the Marfa Public Library show that before the 1929-1930 school year Mexican School students were already enrolling at the high school. One example is “Chon” Segura, who attended the segregated school for ethnic Mexicans and then later attended Marfa High School where he was part of several prep school programs including the first football team to suit up for the “Shorthorns” in 1926.\(^\text{373}\) Perhaps Principal Blackwell was referring to the first students graduating from the Mexican school under his administration to move to Marfa High School occurred in 1929-1930. Whatever may be the case, the reality was that at least some of the ethnic Mexican students from the segregated school were surmounting the odds and continuing their education at the prep school level. Their numbers may have been limited.


relative to the size of the Mexican school student body population, but the impact made by those ethnic Mexican students that got the opportunity to attend Marfa’s high school were leaving their mark. One of these students was Richard Gonzales.

A 1935 graduate of Marfa High School, Gonzales was remembered in a 1967 interview conducted by Junior Historian Lucy Lujan, as an active member of the Shorthorn family. He had been a multi-sport letterman representing Marfa High School on the field and on the court of play. First, Richard Gonzales was a star on the track team where he competed on the relay squad and as an individual hurdler. According to the Lujan interview, Gonzales was the “Fastest runner in the 220 and 440 relays and a great football player.” On the football team he played three years at end and had done such an excellent job that he earned letters his last two years of high school and even earned all-district honors his senior year. Athletics were not the only school activities he partook in; he was also the cartoonist of the school publication, “Shorthorn” for two years. Further telling of Gonzales’s tenacity, his senior year list of accomplishments noted that a full academic and athletic schedule did not impede the young Richard Gonzales from holding a job “all the time he has been in high school.” And, of course, like many other  

374 “Junior Historians” were Marfa High School students in the 1960s and 1970s who conducted research into Marfa’s history and produced, for example, essays based on their research as assignments for their high school English class. Many of these works are housed at the Marfa Public Library.

375 Richard Gonzales interview by Lucy Lujan, November 28, 1967, “Graduating Class of 1935: A Research Paper for American History,” Folder “Class of 1935,” Subfolder “Graduating Class of 1935,” Marfa Public Library Records, Lucy Lujan, Junior Historian, notes that, “The diploma for Marfa High School has almost been the same since 1935. They were distributed to each student by the principal, [but] in this case Mr. G. E. Gregg [sic] had presented them to 25 students. They were folded in the middle and had a white tassel.”; Richard Gonzales, 1935 High School Diploma photocopy, Folder “Class of 1935,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed artist, “Marfa Shorthorns: First Annual Banquet Honoring Marfa Shorthorns and Guests Squad of 1933,” Football-shaped Football Game Program, December 1, 1933, Folder “Class of 1933,” Marfa Public Library Records, Richard Gonzales is listed as #35, L.E. (left end), and 145 pounds.

376 Richard Gonzales, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1935,” Marfa Public Library Records, Senior class high school extracurricular activities notecard, Marfa Public Library Records, On the card Richard Gonzales is also noted as having had participated in “Basket” or basketball. His track and field
ethnic Mexican students before and after him, Gonzales had come “from Mr. Blackwell’s school” to Marfa High School where he had attended four years. The Marfa High School all-around athletic star left a deeper mark in the community’s collective memory as he went on to serve his country during World War II. The number of ethnic Mexican moving to the high school may not have been impressive given the large numbers of students attending the ward school during the period but the flow was slow and steady.

The May 21, 1937 issue of The Big Bend Sentinel and New Era covered the 1937 ward school graduation in an article entitled “Ward School Graduation Held Tuesday Night At High School Auditorium.” According to the article, the Marfa High School auditorium hosted the “Marfa Ward school” as it “presented a variety program as a prelude to the graduation exercises for the seventh grade.” The graduation was a bicultural affair as both traditional mainstream American and traditional Mexican folkloric themes adorned the ceremonies. The graduates entered the auditorium to the tune of piano sheet music, a popular American entertainment trend observed during the era. Sheet music, primarily produced at Tin Pan Alley, served up the popular tunes that many American households so readily consumed as a main form of entertainment.

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377 Richard Gonzales, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1935,” Marfa Public Library Records.


Pianist Olivia Quiroz received the ten junior high graduates with the lively tunes. As the young girls found their seats, attendee José De Anda announced the musical program. The traditional Mexican songs "Las Gaviotas" performed by Johnny Wilcox, Frances Hensley, and Jeff Graham; the dance number of “Las Chapanecas” performed by Lydia and Israel Garcia; and another traditional Mexican song a rendition of “Alla En El Rancho Grande” was presented by Lorina and Natalia Mata accompanied by musical virtuoso Olivia Quiroz on guitar. To further provide entertainment, a performance of "Manana del Sol" [sic] a Mexican comedic one-act play was presented by students Lorina Tarango as “Dona Laura,” [sic] Alberto Rede as “Don Gonzalo,” Irene Borunda as “Petra,” and Roman Valdez as “Juanito.” Finally, to close the program, the song "Cancion Mixteca" was performed by, once again, Olivia Quiroz accompanied by Orina Mata.380

The ward school graduating class of 1937, as the newspaper documented, was composed of ten young ethnic Mexican girls. Honor student of the class, Margarita Martínez took the stage and gave the welcome address. One cannot hope but envision the proud graduates and their families sitting in that main school auditorium beaming at the occasion. The publication detailed the attire worn stating that “[t]he girls were attractively dressed in white linen suits with red accessories.”381 Their smiling faces an image that cuts through time. Their proud madres y padres also smiling and even tearing up as they saw their young ones accomplish this milestone. The sacrifice was paying off.

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381 Ibid.
The commencement continued and the academic accomplishments of the ward school children were acknowledged. The *albus vater’s* work was showing dividends; an image of Jesse Blackwell beaming just as proudly as the children’s parents crosses my mind. In a demonstration of the ward student internalizing of Anglo-American sociocultural schemas, the ward school graduates received academic achievement acknowledgments. Part of the graduation ceremonies included the awarding of Junior handwriting certificates obtained by examination in the Minnie B. Graves system and these were presented to students Lydia Lerma, Amparo Mitchell, Margaret Rice, Minnie Cook, Esperanza Flores, Fay Dutchover and Dora Cabezuela. The main event still to come must have felt like it could not get there soon enough. As perhaps experienced in all graduation ceremonies, the feeling of anticipation was so intense inside the auditorium that, as the proverbial saying goes, it could be cut with a knife.

Then the moment of truth, one by one Blackwell School teacher John Fortner, Jr., presented the candidates for graduation. Dora Cabezuela, Minnie Cook, Fay Dutchover, Esperanza Flores, Lydia Lerma, Esperanza Martinez, Marguerita Martinez, Socorro Navarette, Ida Eliza Perez, and Lillie Watts walked across the stage and were presented with their graduation certificates. The now junior high school graduates found their way back to their seats and after cheers and adulations, Dora Cabezuela, the second ranking student of the class, then walked on stage and recited the farewell address. The ward school for ethnic Mexican students had just completed another successful academic school year. Again, the numbers may

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382 Ibid, The Minnie B. Graves system was a course program that served to enhance students’ handwriting skills. Books included “Progressive Course in Handwriting” and “Muscular Writing: Course of Study,” of course authored by Minnie B. Graves.

383 Ibid.
have been limited but Jesse Blackwell’s graduates continued onto the next level where they demonstrated how far the tough-love-driven segregated school for ethnic Mexicans had come.

This group of exceptional young students became highly involved in the activities taking place at the high school. The school’s newspaper, *Shorthorn*, provides a wealth of information on their social-scholastic experiences. These experiences, undoubtedly, further helped shape their Americanized ethnic Mexican identity by providing exposure to a wider Anglo-American lifeworld. The ethnic Mexican children now found themselves in the same classrooms with Anglo-American children where they could directly learn Anglo sociocultural schemas from ingroup members. And as the Blackwell graduating class of 1937 made their way into the halls of Marfa High School the following academic year, they had the opportunity of continuing under the guidance of Superintendent J. E. Gregg.

The *albus vater*, as any dynamic school administrator, continued as an integral part of the Marfa school system as he had been since being brought in back in the 1910s. In the late 1930s, Superintendent Gregg continued providing his invaluable leadership during this cohort’s prep school experience providing them, as well as the rest of the Marfa High School student body, with an array of activities that not only provided life-opportunity enhancement but that also inevitably, shaped their identity as Americans. Ethnic Mexican students were not only becoming more proficient in, for example, the English language but they were also internalizing a sense of belonging to the American body politic. This internalized sense of belonging was demonstrated through active participation in the various school activities both athletic and scholastic. The ethnic Mexican students were involved in representing their school colors in competition against other schools. The Americanization of their identity was soon to be further

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As noted elsewhere in this work, a vital part of the prep school experience revolves around students’ participation in activities away from the classroom. Taking part in extracurricular activities both scholastic and athletic, provide not only an invaluable extension to the social indoctrination in a sociocultural sense but also foments a feeling within the individual experiencing this lifeworld expansion a sense of belonging. In an interview conducted by Junior Historian Dora Sotelo in 1967, 1920s Marfa High graduate Orville Logan reminisced,

Of course [..] many people were just starting to get interested in the activities, but they all wanted to take part in this [sic] activities. They also wanted to keep up this school as best as they could. They all participated in everything that Marfa High School introduced when they were going to school. They all wanted the best for their school. They wanted to keep up all the activities that they had and they all wanted start new kinds of sports that had not been introduced as yet. They all thought along the same line and they wished the best for each other.\footnote{Dora Sotelo, “Biography: A Research Paper for American History,” November 28, 1967, 2, Folder “Football at Marfa High School,” Marfa Public Library Records.}

Feelings of inclusion, even when fathomed as illusory, shape in those experiencing this inclusivity a nascent sense of belonging to, and by extension, being equal to those already part of the American in-group. The classroom may provide the academic preparation to engage the scholastic facet of the Americanizing experience but as Junior Historian Martha Ann Minjarez documented in 1926, Marfa High graduate “Chon” Segura as stating in a 1970 interview, the social-cultural capital gained inside the classroom amounts but to only a portion of the overall Americanization process. The aged and wisdom-laden Segura put it this way in 1970,
Lessons, once learned in the classroom, may soon be forgotten, unless used constantly. Hence, one soon forgets English verbals [sic], or algebra. But from lessons learned on the field of sport, or in dressing rooms, one carries the stamina to meet some of life’s greatest problems, in a way that is honest and honorable. It takes a real man to accept the fact that there is no disgrace or dishonor in failure, but only in cheating to win, that there is little real importance in which game one plays, or whether one wins or loses, but only in how one plays.387

Add to these philosophical words, the fomenting of a sociocultural identity that is shaped by what the social studies and civics classes constantly inculcate in the classroom and you have the foundations for the creation of a Mexican American sociocultural identification. There was probably no other person better indicated than “Chon” Segura himself to attest to this socialization phenomenon. Telling Segura’s story helps elucidate the socialization of ethnic Mexicans into Americans.

**Marfa’s Hero: Encarnacion “Chon” Segura**

Encarnacion “Chon” Segura’s life experience in Marfa provides an excellent example of the Americanizing forces at play in the first decades of twentieth century Presidio County. Segura, 1926 Marfa High School graduate, was the son of a local business owner, Rumaldo Segura of Marfa. As a young child, Segura attended the Mexican ward school where he was remembered as a well-mannered student who “dressed like a prince.”388 He was also on the first football team to compete for Marfa High School in the mid-twenties. According to contemporary documents, including a photo from 1926, Segura was among the first, if not the


first, Marfa High School Shorthorn to wear an actual football uniform.\textsuperscript{389} Segura’s preparation at Marfa High School, as well as the economic solvency afforded by a merchant father, opened doors to the first Shorthorn gridiron star.

“Chon” Segura received a scholarship to Draughn’s Business College in San Antonio upon graduating from Marfa High School. After college, he came back home to Marfa and became highly involved in the community. For instance, “Chon,” perhaps looking back to his own childhood Anglo-American mentors, became a mentor of Americanization to young Marfa boys as he became part of the Marfa chapter of the Boys Scouts of America. Telling of his ethnocultural duality was his simultaneous involvement in the organizations of Marfa as Segura also went on to become a member of the Knights of Columbus. The Marfa, Texas chapter was primarily composed of ethnic Mexicans. Apparently, he was a highly revered member of the Knights and held to high esteem since he was accompanied by the organization on his December 1930 wedding in Marfa. It is also prudent to note here, and as further support of the socialization forces at play at the Marfa schools, that his older brother had gallantly served in World War I. The Segura family, through their civic and patriotic involvement in the community and beyond,

demonstrated a high level of the Americanization they had internalized at the Mexican school and in the wider Marfa social sphere.\textsuperscript{390}

The Presidio County borderland permeated by ethnic Mexican and Anglo-American sociocultural ideals shaped the psyche of those, including the Segura brothers, enveloped by the multicultural world. The Segura family as a whole serve as a prime example of the Americanization or identity formation that ethnic Mexicans were undergoing in the U.S. The younger Segura, Encarnacion, was involved in local organizations, including the Knights of Columbus, and in school he had participated in various activities academic and athletic. The elder sibling, Tiburcio, had done his patriotic part in serving his country in World War I. Needless to say, “Chon” Segura, a product of the Mexican ward school and Marfa High School, would not be the only ethnic Mexican socialized by Americanism in the far west Texas school system.

**Former Ward School Student Involvement in Marfa High School Activities**

The “Blackwell” ward school 1937 cohort moved onto Marfa High School and just as other former Mexican school alums before them had done, they proudly represented the Shorthorns in various scholastic activities.\textsuperscript{391} The former ward school students participated in a wide range of clubs, teams, choirs, etc. both athletic and scholastic. For example, 1940 Marfa High School graduate Juan R. Lujan noted on his senior class high school activity participation list a well-rounded educational experience.

\textsuperscript{390}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{391} See Jorge Iber and Samuel O. Regalado, eds., *Mexican Americans and Sports: A Reader on Athletics and Barrio Life*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007), The works in this anthology speak to the connection that exists between the ethnic Mexican community and sports and how it creates a platform from where ethnic Mexicans can contest preconceived notions about race and class.
Lujan had transferred to the ward school in Marfa from nearby Redford, Texas, where he had attended his first six years of elementary schooling. The Redford school was considerably smaller so it must have been quite the change for the young Juan when he arrived at Jesse Blackwell’s pride and joy. At the time Juan Lujan came to the Marfa school system, the enrollment there had swollen into the hundreds. Lujan attended the ward school for three years and moved on to the integrated high school on the north side of the tracks. In his two years at Marfa High, he took part in the one-act play where he made the cast one year. Acting was but one of Lujan’s talents as he also excelled on the playing field. He was part of the baseball team one year and played basketball both of his years at the school. Lujan was such a good basketball player that he lettered at forward his senior year at Marfa High School. Moreover, and demonstrating his dedication to hard work, the young man’s hectic schedule did not deter him from maintaining his “A” average in the classroom where his favorite subject was mathematics. Just like many other working-class American boys, and a further testament to the internalization of Anglo-American sociocultural schemas, after high school Lujan had dreams of continuing his education at the college level. Lujan’s senior class extracurricular activities list ends with the following notation, “[Juan] Plans to get a college education when he finds a way to finance himself.”

392 Juan Lujan, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records, Lists of all curricular activities, organizations, athletic and academic, students had participated in while at Marfa High School, as well as future aspirations, were completed for all graduating seniors.

393 J.E. Gregg, “Schools in the Marfa Independent School District: Table Number I,” Patrons’ Bulletin, Volume 1, December 1947, 2, Folder: “History of the Schools of Presidio Co.” Marfa Public Library Records, Enrollment at Marfa school district was over 900 students by the late 1930s.

394 Juan Lujan, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records.
The belief in a merit-based advancement through educational achievement was not lost to this former Mexican school graduate. Years of indoctrination through athletic, academic, and multi-cultural activities, both at “Blackwell” and the integrated setting of Marfa High School had become deeply engrained into Juan Lujan’s psyche shaping his American Dream-oriented identity. A multi-faceted Americanization that all school children are subjected to in the United States, including Anglos and ethnic minorities, had also shaped other former Mexican school students.

Amelia Tercero had practically attended all her schooling under the watchful eyes of the Marfa ward school faculty. Tercero had spent nine years in “Blackwell Junior High” before moving on to Marfa High School where she attended school for two years before graduating.\footnote{Amelia Tercero, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records.} This is interesting taking into account that elementary and junior high school in the Marfa school system consisted of only seven years. It appears that this was not uncommon at the rural segregated school system, where ethnic Mexican students actually continued their post middle school education at the Mexican school. The Blackwell graduates, again inferring from the records, seem to have received high school level tutelage at the segregated school for at least one to two years after graduating from the institution. It could be argued that Amelia Tercero’s list states she attended the ward school for nine years because she was held back a number of years before meeting the requirements for moving on to prep school, but another student’s list may say otherwise.

The senior class high school activity participation list of 1937 ward school graduate Dora Cabezuela notes that she spent “six years of grammar school in ‘Blackwell Junior Hi’ [sic] also my Freshman year, two summers in Alpine High School, and two years in Marfa High
Documentation shows that Cabezuela graduated from the ward school in 1937 and from Marfa High School in 1940 putting her total high school attendance at the main school at or around three years. Since she states in her high school activity participation list that she attended two years at Marfa High School, then it is fair to suggest that the 1937 ward school “salutatorian” did attend one of her high school years at the Mexican segregated school. Whatever might have been the case, the two Mexican school graduates made the most of their experience at the integrated main school.

Also deducing from the Marfa High School newspaper, *The Shorthorn*, it seems that the ward school students were allowed to compete for the integrated high school in the various extracurricular activities while enrolled, or at least while still attending classes, at the segregated junior high school. Amelia Tercero’s extracurricular activity participation list documents that she took part in the choral club for two years. A photo taken her senior year shows Tercero as part of the pep squad composed of all young ladies. Indicative of both their cultural and academic background, a group of former ward school students all stand in the same row as the photo is taken. The faces of Minnie Cook, Fay Dutchover, Lorina Tarango, Marie Mendias, Dora Cabezuela, and Amelia Tarango smile joyfully back at the camera. Tercero’s favorite

396 Dora Cabezuela, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records.


398 Amelia Tercero, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records.

399 Unnamed artist, “Pep Squad,” black and white photo, *The Shorthorn*, undated newspaper clipping, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records, Although the exact date is not on the newspaper clipping, an
subject is noted as being “commerce” or commercial courses which at Marfa High School included subjects such as typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping. The self-proclaimed insect collector “hope[d] to go to school [the] next year” and “major in Span [ish?].” Similar to the goals Juan Lujan aspired to achieve, Amelia Tercero was looking forward to furthering her education at the next level.

The simple statement made by Tercero on her senior class activities participation list suggests a strong belief in the attainment of life betterment through the virtues of meritocracy earned through education. In other words, the soon-to-be Marfa High School graduate had also internalized the American Dream ethos as had other Mexican school alums before her. Of course, the shaping of her “self” cannot be wholly credited to the Americanization-driven atmosphere of the Marfa school system of the 1930s as there also existed the values and aspirations instilled in the culturally-ethnic Mexican home. This being said, the synthesizing of an American conceptualization of goal-achievement through hard work and education and a likewise hard-nosed determination to better oneself forged in a Mexican immigrant working

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401 Amelia Tercero, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records.

402 Unnamed author, *Sage Publications*, “Assimilation and Pluralism: From Immigrants to White Ethnics,” Chapter 2, 3. [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43865_2.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43865_2.pdf), Americanization efforts sought to inculcate the understanding that in order to achieve full access to U.S. society, all groups, including both minority and dominant, were to undergo an identity shaping or reshaping. “Under Anglo-conformity [otherwise known as “Americanization”], immigrant and minority groups are expected to adapt to Anglo-American culture as a precondition to acceptance and access to better jobs, education, and other opportunities. Assimilation has meant that minority groups have had to give up their traditions and adopt Anglo-American culture. To be sure, many groups and individuals were (and continue to be) eager to undergo Anglo-conformity, even if it meant losing much or all of their heritage. For other groups, Americanization created conflict, anxiety, demoralization, and resentment.”
class family was bringing into being a Mexican American identity. Speaking of determination, it can be clearly seen jumping out of fellow 1937 ward school graduate Dora Cabezuela’s senior class activities participation list. The 1937 ward school “salutatorian’s” march through prep school was, for lack of a better word, impressive.

After graduating from the ward school, Dora Cabezuela continued her education there, completing her freshmen year of high school under Principal Blackwell’s administration. The partial integration of ethnic Mexican students into the main school can be said, was stretched as far as possible without outright demonstrating a deliberate act of racial segregation of the legally “white” ward school students. Various photos in the school newspaper “The Shorthorn” show Marfa High School freshmen class after freshmen class composed of what appears to be entirely Anglo-American students. Inferring from Cabezuela’s senior year extracurricular activity participation list, this extended segregation or partial integration of the Marfa school system did not deter her ambition to gain a prep school education.

**Attending High School at the Mexican School Campus**

As noted, Dora Cabezuela continued her schooling at the ward school after graduating from the junior high in that 1937 commencement. The available records appear to confirm that this was the customary approach in the Marfa school system, that is students from the Mexican school completed their first year of high school right there in the segregated school setting. The middle school class “salutatorian” notes this in her senior class list of accomplishments.

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404 Unnamed artist, newspaper articles and photos of Marfa High School student life, *The Shorthorn*, 1930s-1940s editions, Marfa Public Library Records.

Cabezuela, again, also states that she attended six years of grammar school at “Blackwell Junior Hi,” two summers in Alpine High School, and two years at Marfa High. The feat of completing prep school in less than the usual four years demonstrates an uncommon drive in the general high school-aged population and, given the contemporary circumstances imposed on ethnic Mexicans, this accomplishment becomes even more impressive to say the least. Not only was she an academically-driven individual but an active all-around, all-American student.

It is important to discuss here Cabezuela’s military brat-like high school transcript. The question of whether Dora Cabezuela and Amelia Tercero attended part of their high school years at the Mexican ward school can be further answered by the class photos in the 1944 school yearbook “The Shorthorn Annual.” The freshmen class photos do not include a single student with a Spanish or Hispanic surname. From the lack of a single Spanish or Hispanic surnamed student in the photos, it is safe to imply that there were no ethnic Mexicans in that freshman class. The yearbook further confirms that ethnic Mexican students continued their schooling at the ward school into their first high school year in the sophomore class photo page.

Below the sophomore class member photos, the publication explains that, “The Lobo enrollment in September of this year was fifty-three. Sixteen of the sophomores were in Marfa High School last year and twenty-five pupils transferred from the Blackwell Junior High

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406 Dora Cabezuela, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed author, “Lobos: Sophomores Class History,” The Shorthorn 1944 Yearbook, Folder “Class of 1944,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed author, “Western Touch to School Paper's Annual For 1943-1944 Year; Chronicle of Activities,” The Big Bend Sentinel, May 26, 1944, 1, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1944-05-26.PDF (accessed October 21, 2020). Apparently, the high school classes took on mascot names to distinguish themselves from the other classes. For example, the Sophomores were the “Lobos,” the Freshmen were the “Wabbits,” the Junior class were the “Bronchos”, and the seniors were the “Owls”.

The 1944 annual further states that, the remaining eight students came to Marfa High from “other places.” More than half of the sophomore class had “skipped” their freshmen year at the regular school and joined their Anglo-American counterparts in the tenth grade. Once again it is important to note that even with this shortened Marfa High School experience, ward school “transfers” were not deterred from participating in the distinct activities made available at the prep school.

The list of activities participated in while at Marfa High, paints Dora Cabezuela as a true, deeply committed Shorthorn family member. Two years in choral club, four years as part of the volleyball team, and two years in pep-squad. The pages and articles in the school newspaper “The Shorthorn” lay testament to her, and fellow former ward school students, participation in these activities. The volleyball team photo from her senior year of 1939-1940 at Marfa High School shows the young Cabezuela in the front row of an entirely ethnic Mexican, or ethnic Hispanic volleyball squad. The only Anglo-American in the photo is the volleyball team coach and school principal, Dr. Hinckley. This is interesting because on that same publication, the team photo for the basketball team is composed of all Anglo-American girls. On the other hand, the boys’ teams, both football and basketball, are made up of both ethnic Mexicans and Anglo-Americans. The integration at the high school may not have been uniform across activities or perhaps there were distinctive differences in what athletic teams the two groups of

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408 Ibid.

409 Ibid.

410 Ibid.

411 Dora Cabezuela, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed artist, “Pep Squad,” black and white photo, The Shorthorn, undated newspaper clipping, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records. During the time period examined, positions of power at the high school, including in administration, in class and organization officer positions, and in coaching positions, were all held by Anglos.
girls preferred to join. Moreover, the choral group Cabezuela joined was integrated by both the former ward and Anglo-American students. Circumstances may have shaped a somewhat distorted type of school integration at the Marfa High School but it was integration and for better or worse, the ethnic Mexican students’ identities were being shaped by these socialization forces. Dora Cabezuela, educated in this partially integrated school system, was the first student from the ward school class of 1937 to graduate high school. But although a focused student as her record showed, she did not repeat the salutatorian ranking she had earned at the Mexican school.

Marfa High School’s Graduating Class of 1940

The Big Bend Sentinel reported in May 1940 that the “Readin’ and writin’ and ’rithmetic” taught at the secondary level was to come to a conclusion for twenty boys and girls from Marfa High that spring Thursday, May 16th to be precise. Leading the Marfa High graduates of 1940 as valedictorian and salutatorian of the class were “announced as Rossie Elaine Gregg, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Gregg” and Dorothy Bauer, daughter of Mrs. Jimmy Mills, respectively.412 Rossie Elaine Gregg, known to her classmates as “Elaine,” the daughter of Marfa school district superintendent, J. E. Gregg, according to the publication, had an average “better than A” in her academic work during high school.413

Giving further credence to the high level of involvement in extracurricular activities by the students at Marfa schools, “Elaine” was not only the number one student academically in her senior class but she was also involved in athletics, various clubs and organizations, and was the editor of the high school newspaper the “Shorthorn.” Her hard work had paid off as she had been


413 Ibid.
the recipient of “numerous scholastic and attendance awards” during her high school years at Marfa.\textsuperscript{414} The salutatorian, Dorothy Bauer, the newspaper noted, had been a student in Marfa schools since enrolling in the fourth grade. Among the achievements the publication mentioned was Bauer’s “better than A-minus” average in her high school work and her service as assistant editor of the “Shorthorn.”\textsuperscript{415} Moreover, Bauer was also recognized for achievement in arithmetic and spelling, and “for regularity of attendance” during her prep school years in Marfa.\textsuperscript{416}

Joining the two top students on the graduating class of 1940 was an integrated class of Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican girls and boys. \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel} announced that senior Joseph “Joe” Wayne Parks, Jr. son of Mrs. Bill Parks “as high-ranking boy student of the class.”\textsuperscript{417} The list of graduates included Roy Dempsey, James E. Dezendorf, Jr., Charles Leroy Edwards, Floyd F. Lee, Jr., William McVey, Jack Raymond Shirey, Hart Greenwood, Ada Mae Gottholt, Neva June Gottholt, Mildred Bernice Robinson, Doris Elisabeth White, and Mayola Elizabeth Wickizer. The ethnic Mexican and former ward school students included Juan Roberto Lujan, Henry B. Mendias, Jesus Flores Valdez, Dora Cabenzuela [sic], and Amelia L. Tercero.\textsuperscript{418}

\textsuperscript{414} Elaine Gregg, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1940,” Marfa Public Library Records; Unnamed author, “Twenty Seniors Candidates For Diplomas Thursday Night Two Girls Class Leaders This Year; Joe Parks High Ranking Boy; El Paso Educator Speaker,” \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel}, May 10, 1940, 1, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1940-05-10.PDF} (accessed October 22, 2020).

\textsuperscript{415} Unnamed author, “Twenty Seniors Candidates For Diplomas Thursday Night Two Girls Class Leaders This Year; Joe Parks High Ranking Boy; El Paso Educator Speaker,” \textit{The Big Bend Sentinel}, May 10, 1940, 1, \url{http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1940-05-10.PDF} (accessed October 22, 2020).

\textsuperscript{416} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{417} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid.

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Gender Norms ala Anglo-America

As a sign of the times, in the original article from The Big Bend Sentinel all the boys’ names were listed first followed by all the girls’ names. Also, as an interesting note, “top ranking boy student of the class” Joe Parks was presented as “the son of Mrs. Bill Parks,” all other students had both parents’ names included with theirs except one other student, Amelia L. Tercero. The only other ethnic Mexican girl graduate had her mother listed as Mrs. Servera Tercero. There is no gender coverture applied in the public notice for Amelia’s ethnic Mexican mother.

These sometimes unnoticed, perhaps ignored, gendered normalizations of what constitutes the inner dynamics of society can help observers conceptualize what factors shape life within that specific society. Better said, when attempting to understand the unspoken rules that set and enforce behavioral expectations within a society, it is these micro-actions such as naming the boys in a graduating class first and the girls second. Why not use an alphabetical order to present the graduates? Likewise, why not name Amelia L. Tercero’s parent as “Mrs. ‘father’s name’ Tercero” just as Joe Park’s mother was introduced? It can be deduced from the title of “Mrs.” used to list Tercero’s mother that she was or had been a married woman. The answer may be another but perhaps the contemporary understanding of what constituted proper gender relations within a society was not uniform. That is, male-coverture applied to Anglo-American women but not extended to ethnic Mexican women.

A virtual line is drawn so as to protect the virtue of, and to ensure control over, white Anglo-American women as well as to distance them from what Deena J. Gonzalez calls deemed “caustic attitudes about femaleness.” The “caustic attitudes,” of course, ascribed onto the

419 Ibid.
“othered” ethnic Mexican woman in an *albus vater* sociocultural schema. Anglo-American men’s shaping of, and by extension control over, far west Texas society was far-reaching. This control was not only expected but celebrated as well.

**The 1940 Graduation at the Mexican Ward School**

In May 1940, the Mexican ward school also held its annual junior high graduation. The graduates of the ward school received their diplomas directly from Principal Jesse Blackwell. As in years prior, the commencement program was filled with entertainment numbers in the form songs and dances provided by the various grades of the school. One of the main, if not the main performance of the program, was a quartet's singing of “South of the Border.”

The ward school graduation ceremonies appear to have always had a tinge of cultural Mexican-ness enmeshed into them. A facet of “otherness” presented always so as to either maintain a sense of sociocultural distancing or so as to ease the sociocultural transition/shaping while in the midst of the Americanization process.

The segregated school announced that Ernest Garcia was the class of 1940 valedictorian and the “runner-up” scholastic was Edwardo [sic] Tarango. Joining the two boys were their classmates Angelina Martinez, Juan Martinez, Eloiza Martinez, Lorina Martinez, Sifredo Rodriguez, Nasaria [sic] Hernandez, Larina Miller, Elizandra [sic] Perez, Benjamin Mendias, Larenzo [sic] Pineda, Ramon Gonzales, Adelita Orazca, and Ysabel Chavira.”

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420 Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 59-60, Gonzalez states that, “Sexual idiom of any society, composed to the values assigned to people, the morals attributed, and the behavior ascribed, to them---in this instance women, by the conquerors of the United States---has many historical counterparts.”


students was not in a gendered order. Moreover, as The Big Bend Sentinel 1940 story pointed out, composing the group of ethnic Mexican students were, “The first graduates of Blackwell junior high school— name recently adopted for what was formerly the Marfa ward school.”

The “tough-love” oriented albus vater’s almost two-decade long work at the Mexican ward school was receiving recognition.

The acknowledgement did not end at the renaming of the ward school. The extended accolades came in the form of a new school building for the ethnic Mexican children who had been under Blackwell’s educational watch since 1922. The WPA funds from President Roosevelt’s Great Depression era New Deal programs were used to upgrade the main school campus in Marfa where $15,189 were allotted for a new gymnasium as well as to construct the new segregated school building. As the ward school teachers left for summer break that May of 1940, Principal Blackwell stayed behind to oversee the construction of the new “Blackwell Junior High School.” The Blackwell Junior High School was dedicated the next fall on October 28, 1940. As the ethnic Mexican community of Marfa celebrated the soon-to-be

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424 Thompson, The History of Marfa and Presidio County, Volume 2, 466, Thompson states that the Marfa ISD added $24,995 for the gymnasium’s construction.


improvements to their school, events across the Atlantic were becoming increasingly worse. The following day came news out of Washington, the first Presidio County residents’ draft numbers had been drawn.427

**Ethnic Mexican Students Continue Graduating From Marfa High School**

In the spring of 1941 two more 1937 graduates from the Mexican ward completed the requirements to earn their high school diploma at Marfa. Senior class extracurricular activities participation cards stated that Socorro Navarrete attended “Blackwell Junior High” for eight years and done “three years of work” at the high school.428 The junior high, of course, was in 1941 known as Blackwell Junior High but during the years Navarrete attended the school it was named the “ward school.” The extracurricular activities on her list included three years as a member of choral club, one year on the science club, and had also participated in the commerce programs at the school. Navarrete excelled in the latter activities as she had come in second place at the district academic meet in typing and, of course, she listed office practices as her favorite subject.

In her future plans, just like Juan Lujan, Amelia Tercero, and Dora Cabezuela before her, there were dreams of an education after high school. Navarrete saw herself as either attending a business college or a music school.429 An internalization of and a gravitating towards Anglo-American sociocultural ideals, Navarrete had not only stayed in school but had pushed herself to

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428 Socorro Navarrete, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1941,” Marfa Public Library Records.

429 Ibid.
excel in her studies after making the move to the main school. Further adding to her socialization into the Anglo-American lifeworld was Navarrete’s athletic participation while at Marfa High School. According to the list, the young Socorro stated that “Her hobby is all kinds of sports.” So, it was no surprise then to see that athletics composed a major part of her school activities.

A key to retaining at risk children in school, again, is to instill in them a sense of belonging: a type of investment created in their minds that forges some deep responsibility to see things through. In a way that investment of time and limited, albeit precious, resources and the subsequent outcomes, the investing person, in this case the ethnic Mexican student-athlete, embraces much more fully than, for example, something that is achieved with relative ease. Dr. Hinckley and Mr. Blackwell seem to have had this in mind when they used all resources to sway their students, and especially the ethnic Mexican students, into remaining in school. The head educators at both campuses were firm believers in maintaining their students active, and by extension, or as a result, interested in everything that their respective schools had to offer. A key component of the experience included the opportunity to take part in a team sport. As noted, Dr. Hinckley’s love of volleyball led him to utilize the sport any time possible including before school, during lunch break, and after school to keep the students engaged. Socorro Navarrete was on the “volley ball” team for six years where she donned the captain’s hat for three of those years. The young woman’s vested interest in both academics and athletics forged a deep sense of belonging to a system that otherwise would have been foreign to her sociocultural background.

\[430\] Ibid.

\[431\] Ibid.
If Navarrete attended Marfa High School for three years, this means that her volleyball participation spanned all the way back to her ward school years right through prep school. The sport had provided a “bridge” of sorts which connected her educational path through the Marfa school system. To further round off and expand her extracurricular activities participation were two years of “basket ball” where she was captain one year, membership on the tennis doubles team where she won first place at district, and one year of band.432

Fellow ward school 1937 graduate Ida Perez, another student-athlete, also received her high school diploma that spring of 1941. According to her senior extracurricular activities participation list, Ida Perez had attended “Blackwell Junior High” for eight years prior to entering Marfa High School where she completed her last three years of prep school. Teachers were impressed with Perez’s work at the high school and many of the Anglo-American educators at the school noted that, in general, all the ward school graduates were usually well-prepared, well-rounded students. The educators noticed that the ward school students’ skills were especially keen in office related courses. The students may have gravitated to the classes that they were better at thus, making the classwork much more fun and easier to complete. Then again, the enhanced skill sets in office work could have also been a product of curriculum channeling which served to railroad some students into certain employment niches in the future. Perez used the acquired skills in office to make the most of her high school experience in Marfa.

Whatever may have been the case, the fact was that Ida Perez gravitated to the “commerce” classes. The soon-to-be graduate expressed a liking for bookkeeping, calling it one of her favorite subjects. Perhaps capitalizing on this love for the clerical field, she planned to work after graduating high school and then to “later enter Draughn’s Business College.”433 Like

432 Ibid.

433 Ibid.
her classmate, Socorro Navarrete, Perez had also been a member of choral club three years and participated in the science club two years. And just like, Socorro Navarrete, Ida Perez stated that her “hobby [was] all kinds of sports.” It would be redundant to say that athletics also made a good part of her high school extracurricular participation. Rounding off her high school athletics engagement, the list noted that Perez had been on the pep-squad three years, “played basket ball” one year, and “volley ball” for four years. Ida Perez’s, again as many of her fellow ward school classmates, school transcript highlighted the “bridging” of academics and athletics/sports participation that stretched back all through her “Blackwell Junior Hi” years. Involvement in multiple school activities, the *albus vaters* found, was key in retaining students at the school.

The well-rounded academic-athletic holistic socialization approach fortified the ethnic-Mexican students’ sociocultural schemas. These skills embedded within the Americanization processes unconsciously not only prepared them for negotiation of the Anglo-American social milieu but also shaped a preference for things “American.” Athletics were at the center of the socialization.

In a district bulletin examining curriculum effectivity in the schools, administrators reiterated the significance of athletics in the shaping of young minds in the Marfa school district. The publication stated that,

433 Ida Perez, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1941,” Marfa Public Library Records; Sheila Kelly, comment on “Draughn's Business College,” Draughn's Business College-Esther Draughn Johnson, comment posted on July 16, 2005, https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/draughon/222/ (accessed October 26, 2020), “Draughn’s,” actually spelled Draughon’s, is a business-oriented school started in 1879 by John F. Draughon. Founded as Draughon’s Practical Business College and run from the back of a horse-drawn wagon. According to the Genealogy.com website, Professor Draughon went on to expand his endeavor into “one of the largest chains of business colleges in the nation.” The business schools were “located in practically every Southern and Western state.” Presently, the school is known as Draughons Junior College and has campuses in Tennessee and Kentucky.

434 Ida Perez, Senior class extracurricular activities list notecard, Folder “Class of 1941,” Marfa Public Library Records.

435 Ibid.
Some of the things which are of great importance in athletics are: 1. To give the student a sound understanding of health habits. 2. To instill in the student the desire to be a spectator and participant in many sports. To teach the student the worth of a good opponent and to respect that person as a fellow human. 4. To build a feeling of sincere friendship through an atmosphere of friendly competition.\textsuperscript{436}

The bulletin further stated that, “There are many opportunities to teach the student the respect for authority on the part of judges, officials and others carrying responsibility. The fact that this quality can be carried into his later life is very evident.”\textsuperscript{437}

These words resonated in the minds of a good number of former ward school students. Students like Cabezuela, Tercero, Navarrete, Perez, and Segura had been given access to a variety of activities at Marfa High School that helped enhance their lifeworld way beyond what they had been exposed to in the south side of Marfa, Texas. These experiences at the partially or pseudo-integrated schools of Marfa in a way readied them for negotiating life in Anglo-America by consciously and unconsciously learning the expected social skills and accepted behaviors embedded within Anglo-American sociocultural schemas. The patriarchal foundation of this socialization cannot be lost in this discussion of Mexican American identity formation. The extent this socialization shaped a sense of national allegiance and duty was to be once again put on display all across the country. For some of Cabezuela’s, Tercero’s, Navarrete’s, and Perez’s ward school peers, the segregated school-Americanization system at Blackwell had prepared them for something far away from the confines of Marfa. Uncle Sam was about to call on many of his ethnic nephews for their patriotic assistance.\textsuperscript{438}


\textsuperscript{437} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{438} Uncle Sam is the ultimate symbol of the “albus vater.”
Conclusion

Common stereotypes of the ethnic Mexican community portray it as a group that is culturally-hindered by a “now” mentality. The reality, though, is that ethnic Mexican parents resorted to withdrawing their children from school as a pragmatic choice so as to maintain financial solvency in the household. Education was seen as important but circumstances disallowed long-term schooling. Ironically, Anglo-American patriarchs simultaneously created barriers and opened avenues in the educational endeavors of ethnic Mexicans in the southwest. In 1930s Marfa ISD, for example, the albus vaters continued at the helm of the school system. They maintained a segregated system where Americanization was observed in all campuses. Their paternalistic approach at socializing the children of the school system came to the forefront especially at the Mexican school. At the integrated high school, the Americanization process utilized various activities both athletic and academic to continue the shaping of the student body’s identity. This was especially true for the ethnic Mexican students. The Anglo-American educators continued their tough-love model intact as the 1940s arrived. And it can be said, that the paternalistic type of education became even further entrenched in the school and the wider social milieu of Marfa, Texas.
Chapter 5: The Ultimate Sacrifice: Presidio County Ethnic Mexican Students in World War II

School teacher Willie Harper recounted in 1987 that teaching at the ward school in the 1940s had been somewhat bittersweet as it provided both fond and painful memories that she carried with her for years. One of the most endearing reminiscences she spoke about was the year that the district administration decided to remove some of the overcrowding burden from her and moved the first grade back into the old “cathedral” building which had been recently renovated. The bigger space had been turned into two first grade classrooms with newly added restrooms and drinking fountains; a far cry from the outhouse equipped structure of prior years. To make the cold winters in far west Texas more bearable, a big kerosene burning heater replaced the unstable three-legged coal stove in the first-grade classrooms. Furthermore, and much to her delight, Superintendent J. E. Gregg had furnished her classroom with “the most beautiful blonde desks and chairs and a matching teaching desk.”

The words seem to project an image of the aging teacher smiling across the decades while she pictured in her mind all those underprivileged children looking back at her with inquisitive eyes and smiles of their own. Then a solemn look takes over.

Years went by; then came that day when a strange service man, accompanied by a local priest, knocked at the door of an adobe house to inform the occupants that their son had been killed in action. Then another — a boy who would rather die than kill some one. And yet another — three of them! My boys. Memories? Some sad? Yes.

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Some of the Mexican school “muchachos” had made the ultimate sacrifice for the country they so loved.

**On-the-Ground Group Interaction**

The World War II era engenders perhaps one of the most elucidating settings where the theoretical oversimplification of dominant-subordinate group interactions can be contested. Periods engulfed by strife as in wartime often elucidate populations’ humanity. Too often, monolithic explanations based on racial paradigms fog and, to certain extent, even negate on-the-ground group interaction analysis. In turn, the multi-layered complexity of what is known as intercultural or interracial strife may fall prey to broad-stroked historicizing, which obscures pragmatic individual/personal interactions. Of course, understandings of the historical record of the meeting between racial-cultural groups in far west Texas were, and are, fathomed by what can be defined as a colonizer sociological conceptualization.\(^{441}\) In other words, the relationships between whites and non-whites are defined by the sociocultural, political, economic dominant group. These obscured explanations of human interaction include the theories utilized by both Anglo-American and minority scholars to interpret history. Furthermore, racialized oversimplifications of the historical record from a macro-level can have the counter-effect of negating the “colonized” their rightful place as active participants in the contestation over power. Let us listen to the historical actors before we lay down a definite verdict of what occurred on-the-ground between the racial groups.

At the interpersonal one-on-one strata of everyday life, human beings will negotiate to the best of their capacities to gain access to needed resources. This negotiation is done daily to allow personal, familial, and communal well-being. It would be naïve to believe that every

interaction was aimed at securing group dominance rather than to achieve compromise with potential competitors. Conscious and unconscious social negotiations are made by both the dominant group and the socially disempowered to materialize a stable-livable space for themselves and one another, in their immediate lifeworld. The construction of this stable-livable space has occurred, and is still taking place, everywhere people interact. This phenomenon occurs every time people come into contact with one another, but it especially becomes more pronounced within the dominant-subordinate settings of the socio-politically contested regions. A good example of a contested region is the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. For Anglos and non-Anglos, finding common ground provided the ability to live in relative harmony in the disputed borderlands. Moreover, during World War II intergroup accommodation was key to mounting a successful front against the ever-growing menace in Europe and Asia.

Out in the far reaches of the American frontier, in 1940s Presidio County, Texas, examples of this human interaction/contestation were observed on-the-ground. The answer to “Who is a true American?” was about to be brought forth by the call to arms in World War II. Questioning of national loyalty was put to the test across the U.S. as different groups stepped up when the country called on their service. Ethnic Mexicans on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands did

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443 Yes, contested not conquered regions and this holds especially true at the one-on-one interpersonal level.
their part in dismantling this questioning with their patriotic volunteerism, and more, during World War II.444

**Patriotic Mettle Tested in Far West Texas**

By late 1940, Europe had been entangled in total war for over a year. The U.S. was not to remain neutral for very long and just like had happened earlier in the century, far west Texas braced for the eventual draft of its young men into the armed forces. In October 1940, the first 100 draft numbers affecting Presidio County were drawn in Washington. Although the local “order number” was given out by the newspaper and not by the county board and thus unofficial, the reality was that the goings-on in faraway places were getting serious enough that the peacetime conscription was being instituted.445 *The Big Bend Sentinel*, reiterated that the “order numbers” were unofficial but that nonetheless these would “be published in the future issues” so any numbers above 1,188, which was the number designated for Presidio County registrants, were “not [to] be published because they do not apply to this county.”446 Eventually, of course, many of those “order numbers” did apply to Presidio County. In early November 1940, *The Big Bend Sentinel* reported that the first men from Presidio County had been summoned to appear before the local draft board.447 The war was drawing closer to home.

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444 See Frank H. Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), In the author’s view, American nativists/racists are afflicted by the perpetual foreigner syndrome and will not accept full integration of Asian Americans and other ethnic groups. This is regardless of any sacrifices or contributions made by the “othered” groups.


446 Ibid.

On November 1, 1940, *The Big Bend Sentinel* reported that the number of four Presidio County men had been drawn. The selectees’ number, stated the newspaper, had come up “Subjecting the holders of the registration (serial) numbers to examination as to their being ‘fit and available’ for military training to aid them in the defense of their country.” On Tuesday, October 30th the first numbers affecting Presidio County registrants were drawn and included two Marfa citizens, one Shafter resident, and the fourth from the community of Presidio. The draftees were to be subjected to physical examinations and also to be given the opportunity to present exemptions or deferment pleas which the local board was to consider for each summoned registrant. After eliminating all registration numbers drawn greater than 1,188, the number of Presidio registrants, the paper noted that four Presidio County registrants were the ones “who may be called to tell of themselves and whether or not they should be given military training.”

The four men summoned before the local draft board were Julio Calderon Duran from the community of Presidio with the number 158, Ismael Quintana of Marfa with number 192, Jose Galindo from Shafter with the number 105, and Orville Rolland Logan of Marfa with the number 188.

The newspaper, in a show of civic duty or perhaps clever marketing, took it upon itself to keep all country registrants informed of the numbers drawn in Washington, “In the belief that a large number of registrants will want a paper containing their registration (serial) numbers.…”

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449 Ibid.

450 Ibid.

451 Ibid.
the newspaper sent cards with the name of stores where county registrants could buy a copy of the publication. 452 Business strategy or patriotic duty, the newspaper wanted to keep county residents with a copy of the lists on hand. The peacetime conscription was but only foreshadowing of things to come. As war drew closer still, more Presidio County, more Marfans, and, specifically, more former students of the Blackwell Junior High-school for ethnic Mexicans were asked to demonstrate their patriotic allegiance. The fateful day finally arrived late in 1941.

**Presidio County’s Call to Arms in World War II**

On December 8th, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt went before the Congress and presented the case for war on Japan. The events of the prior day left no doubt as to how the House and Senate would vote. The thousands of American lives lost at Pearl Harbor that 7th day of December of 1941 made the legislative branch’s tally a mere formality to finally enter World War II. Presidio County was, as many other military communities across the United States, already a step ahead in more ways than one in providing its share for the war effort.

Military service by Marfans was not limited to its former students. Faculty at the Marfa schools had done their part in serving the country since early in the school system’s existence. For example, J. E. Gregg then a coach and teacher for Marfa schools, had taken a leave of absence during World War I to serve in the conflict. Then “Principal Gregg,” served two years in the United States Army and after the victory over Germany, came back home to Marfa where he worked in the school system until 1953.453 So, it was not a surprise when Marfa school faculty began to do their part in representing the far west Texas school in the Second World War. Five

452 Ibid.

weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the first Marfa teacher was called up for military service.454

A banquet was celebrated at the Crews Motel where thirty-one teachers from across the district, including Marfa and Blackwell Junior High School, came to send Robert Miles off to war. An A-list of Marfa school administration including “Mr. Wheat,” who served as master of ceremonies for the event, Superintendent J. E. Gregg, Principal Jesse Blackwell, Coach Martin, and R. M. Beaver were among those giving honor to the draftee with speeches. The event, of course, was adorned in a patriotic theme. Since Mr. Miles had enlisted in the Navy, a naval theme, to be more exact, decorated the ballroom. The tables were covered in red, white, and blue; a centerpiece in a naval destroyer shape; and tiny battleships served as place cards. The evening was all about showing both comraderie but perhaps unknowingly, also for promulgating the Anglo-American male brand of patriotism. The heads of the district, the various school campuses, and the athletic department, all Anglo-American men, were there sending off one of their own to war in effect setting an example to the students they were in charge of indoctrinating into Americana.

The group of albus vaters made light of the potentially sad event by presenting teacher “Bob” Miles with gag gifts as part of the ceremony. “Coach Martin presented Mr. Miles with a


455 Unnamed author, “Bob Miles Honored By Staff In Banquet Wednesday Evening; Attended By Many: First Marfa Teacher To Leave For Service,” The Shorthorn, January 16, 1942, 1, Folder “Class of 1942-43,” Marfa Public Library Records; “Mr. Wheat,” the master of ceremonies for the event, is not identified fully in the article. The person in the article may be Raymond Wheat who was also a teacher at Marfa ISD. Raymond Wheat served as the music teacher at the Mexican School.
mop to use on the deck of his ship and Mr. Beaver gave him a potato peeler.”  An other attendee, Mrs. Ray McDonald sang “songs of the sea” to the would-be U.S. Navy sailor. J. E. Gregg presented the teacher and now, military man with a bill-fold courtesy of the school faculty. Mr. R.V. Gogate from the University of Texas Hogg Foundation was on hand and, to put the event into perspective, spoke of the conflict and its similarity to the past world war. According to The Shorthorn report, Mr. Gogate stated, that the aim was to win and set into place mechanisms so as to not let this occur once more. The end, was nowhere near though, and so many of Marfa’s “muchachos” from both the so-called main school and the segregated school got their chance to represent their community in the global conflict. Some, unfortunately as happens in every war, made the ultimate sacrifice.

Marfa’s Young Men Ready for Duty

On Wednesday, January 29th, 1942, just two weeks after teacher Bob Miles was sent off to the Navy, the Marfa football team received their letter jackets. Members of the 1941 football team were praised by local lawyer Mr. S. M. Swearingen stating that their play had provided “much pleasure” to Marfans who had attended the team’s games the previous fall. Coach Martin continued the praise as he, assisted by Mr. Swearingen, put the grey wool jackets on the boys. Returning players got their jackets and individual kudos first. Those student-athletes returning for the following fall season included Russell Guevara, Tommy Copeland, Jack

456 Ibid.

457 Ibid.

458 Several of the contemporary publications entitle Marfa High School as the “major” school or “major” team and the school for ethnic Mexicans as the “ward school” or “Mr. Blackwell’s school.”

Waldren, Hector Arce, Gilbert Flores, Sifredo Rodriguez, Elijandro Perez, Joe Chemali, Isabel Chavira, and Ramon Gonzales. Those graduating, or no longer eligible to play, included Ernest Gregg, Albert Sailler, Clark Ridout, Charlie Tarango, Chap [o] Devolin, Bill Black, Angus Nichols, Nasario Hernandez, Tony Dutchover, and Israel Galindo. As the listing shows, amongst these footballers composing the integrated football team were several former ward school boys. These boys’ athletic training was about to be put to the test as they entered the ranks of the U.S. military to serve in the war just like other Marfa High School football players had done before them in a prior generation.

*The Shorthorn* reported on January 30th, 1942 that many of the ex-students of Marfa High School had already “been called to serve their country in some branch of the service.” The school newspaper noted that most of the graduates had joined the Army Air Corp but that there were former Marfa students serving in the other military branches including the Army and the Navy. The Elmendorf family was represented by several of their boys on the list, as well as were many other Anglo-American families. Within the list were also former ward school students including Eliseo Viscaino, Edmundo Madrid, and Ruperto Medina. Blackwell’s former wards were now enlisted in the Army. A sense of pride resonates from the writing as the author notes that, “Almost all of these boys are ex-lettermen of the Marfa football team. Perhaps the training the boys received on the team helped prepare them for the work which they are doing now.”

In my view, innocence can often times be misinterpreted as the glow and fervor of patriotism. Naïve statements from an adolescent mind perhaps but the socialization done by

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460 Ibid.


462 Ibid.
Coach Martin on the playing and practice fields carried on to the next *albus vaters* in the field of battle. Martin had passed onto the young men, both Anglo and ethnic Mexican, on the field of play and beyond, his understanding of what he believed to be the best possible social skills so that they could better negotiate life after high school (i.e.; in an Anglo-American dominated society). The teenager-penned 1942 *The Short Horn* article may have been innocence-filled but the harshness of the war that was about to be fought was very real. The mettle of the teenage boys of the Marfa football team was about to be tested.

The Marfa High School publication dedicated an issue to the former Marfa students serving the country in World War II. The names of 229 former students had been procured and details of their contributions to the war effort, and whereabouts, were announced to the community. “These boys,” the *Shorthorn* proclaimed, “have given up homes, school, and many other things that were very important to them.”

Yes, some of the “boys” had even left school early to go fight for the American ideals instilled in them in the far west Texas borderland, and more specifically at the school system of Marfa, Texas.

Former ward school 1940 “salutatorian” Edward Tarango left his junior year to join the U.S. Navy. Joining Tarango in the ranks of the military was an extensive list of ethnic Mexican young men. The list consisted of surnames such as Aguilar, Aguirre, Alvarado, Chavira, De Anda, Flores, Galindo, Gonzales, Guevara, Gutierrez, Hernandez, Herrera, Jasso, Jaime, Jimenez, Madrid, Mata, Medina, Morales, Natera, Pineda, Quintana, Rodriguez, Salcido, Segura, Tarango, Uranga, Vasquez, Valdez, Valenzuela, and Viscaino. Of course, this was not an exhaustive list. Many of the surnames can be recognized as those of recent members of the

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464 Ibid.
Marfa High School football team. A closer look tells us that many of these young men had also been Mexican school graduates. At this point in their lives, self-identity as well as their personal sense of nationality, citizenship, and allegiance was not in doubt. These “boys’” formative experience in the American sociocultural system had been guided-supervised by Superintendent Gregg, Principals Blackwell and Hinckley, and Coach Martin. Now, the Marfa School system products were moving onto a different Americanizing stage.

Former Mexican school alums and *Shorthorn* footballers were now under the supervision of *albus vaters* with surnames such as MacArthur, Eisenhower, Patton, and Nimitz. Some of the last students from the “Ward” school before it became formally named “Blackwell” in 1940 were now soldiers. The familiar names of the Marfa segregated school “muchachos” appear recurrently in the school and community war time publications. For instance, graduate of the Mexican school Ysabel Chavira joined the Navy and was serving on the USS Crescent City destroyer. Classmate, and former captain of the Marfa football team, Russell Guevara, was serving in Iceland. His teammates and ward school classmates, Nasario Hernandez, Sifredo Rodriguez, Lorenzo Pineda, Benjamin Medias, and Charlie Tarango likewise all donned the colors of their respective military branches serving their patriotic duty to the country. Every major battle in the war had former students of the American ward schools engaged in the fighting. Without regard to life or limb, they fought for deeply ingrained American ideals. As could be expected, the possibility of loss of life was to be but a part of the experience.

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465 Ibid, Sifredo Rodriguez, according to the publication, had actually taken part in the invasion to liberate France from the Nazis.
Mexican Ward School Students Prove Their Allegiance

As the war drew on, it became common in World War II era Marfa to see former ward school students donning their military uniforms as they returned home to visit. Such was the case when former composing room employee at The Big Bend Sentinel, Private “Rupert” Vasquez, visited his parents in February 1944. Private Ruperto Vasquez of the United States Army came home from his Canada station where he served in the Signal Corps organization. The young Vasquez returned to Marfa to be with his family for a few weeks before reporting back on February 21. A short, and perhaps bittersweet, stay. As the last years of the war moved along other Blackwell students came back home to reenergize before heading back to the battlefields of the world. For those ethnic Mexicans staying home in Presidio County it meant a trip back to the abstract front of the segregated schools but to the “soldier boys” it meant going back to all the real dangers the war front presented.

Later that month of February 1944, Mrs. Catarina Alvarez received word from military authorities that her son Corporal Daniel Alvarez had suffered a serious wound. Daniel Alvarez, just like many of his fellow ethnic Mexican comrades from Marfa, had joined the military to serve his country during the war. And, just like many other young men his age, Alvarez had done so not only as his patriotic responsibility as a U.S. citizen when the call-to-arms came but also as a means to better his fortunes in the Texan far west. Alvarez had first been employed at the local base Fort D. A. Russell in Marfa and had then enlisted and risen to the rank of corporal. The young Marfan had been serving overseas since the spring of 1943 after having been stationed in several posts across the country. That winter of 1944, the Alvarez family learned

that Daniel had suffered a wound in the waning days of December 1943 and that he had since been subjected to another injury in January of the current year.467

Upon returning home, Alvarez, by then donning the rank of Sergeant, detailed his experiences in the liberation of Italy. According to Alvarez’s firsthand account, he received his first injury when his infantry regiment, the 36th Division, was engaging the enemy from Salerno to Cassino. Alvarez’s responsibility in the 36th was a crucial one as he was in charge of the heavy weapons in his unit. This was a significant duty placed upon him which is telling of the level of competence demonstrated and the likewise high level of trust superiors had in the young Marfan. At the city of Pietro, Alvarez explained, was where the Americans took on the fiercest resistance. “Everything we took here was with our bayonets,” as he described the hand-to-hand fighting that took place there.468 It was during the taking of San Pietro, that a shell exploded and the resulting flying debris hit him in the back. After spending 20 days recovering at an evacuation hospital, he was sent back on duty. A few weeks later on January 23, as the Allies were still pushing the Axis back towards Cassino, Alvarez was once again seriously wounded by a land mine where he lost the lower part of his right leg. According to the young sergeant, the


blast was powerful enough that it threw him so violently that he reinjured his back and received injuries to his left leg upon hitting the ground.\textsuperscript{469}

Sergeant Alvarez explained,

\begin{quote}
We had crossed the river and on the other side we ran into a lot of Germans. We were pinned down by machine gun fire and mortar. Many of the boys were being captured and I knew it was useless to try against the Germans. Another Sergeant and I escaped from the Germans by swimming back across the river. It was dark when we got to the other side. Not long after we got there I stepped on the mine. The Sergeant was right beside me and one of his hands was blown off. He tried to help me on, but he couldn't do anything with one hand gone and bleeding. I told him to leave me and go on back to our lines and send a medico. I don't know what happened to him for I never saw him again. I lay there 24 hours before the medicos got to me. By this time, I had lost a lot of blood and was in great pain. Shells were falling around me all the time and sometimes I wished that one would hit me directly I was in such pain. By the time the medicos did come I was out of my head and vaguely remember it. It was about three days later in the hospital that I completely regained consciousness.\textsuperscript{470}
\end{quote}

Across the U.S. many examples of the self-sacrifice in the name of country, just as Alvarez’s case exemplified, could be seen coming out of the so-called ethnic ghettos or in the case of ethnic Mexicans, the \textit{barrio}. Luckily, Alvarez went on to recover from his war injuries but nevertheless these, it can be inferred, served as lifelong badges of honor and, furthermore, as definite proof of where his loyalty stood in terms of country.\textsuperscript{471} For many families of the Mexican diaspora in the United States, it was a source of honor and pride to send their “boys” to serve their adopted country.\textsuperscript{472} Such was the case of the family of Marfan Jose Salgado.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[469] Ibid.
\item[470] Ibid.
\item[471] Ibid.
\item[472] Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas,” \textit{The Journal of American History}, vol. 92, no. 4, 2006, 1212–1237, JSTOR, \url{www.jstor.org/stable/4485889} (accessed June 18, 2021), The sacrifice made by these young men also served as a coalescing force within the ethnic Mexican community which was by then demanding equality in the U.S.
\end{footnotes}
Americanization Pays Dividends During the War

Jose Salgado, a native of Mexico, had immigrated to the United States circa 1909-1910. The time period suggests that Salgado was part of the first wave of refugees displaced by the Mexican Revolution. Salgado had sought his fortunes north of the Mexican borderlands just as many Mexican families had done when they were displaced by the violence down south. When he arrived in the U.S., the Salgado patriarch had found work at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid as a ranch hand at Mitchell ranch in Presidio County. Salgado was a proud laborer starting in the lower rungs of American society just as legions of other immigrant ethnic Mexicans had done before him. Salgado had been a resident, citizen if you will, of the community for over 30 years when World War II came around.473

Salgado detailed his experience as a military father in a war time interview for the local The Big Bend Sentinel. The journalist noted the patriarch’s immigrant background and further stated that, Salgado “is the kind of a fellow you’d never notice in a crowd.”474 Perhaps Salgado’s phenotype was, in the eyes of the American reporter, stereotypically “Mexican” and that was why “[h]undreds of officers and enlisted personnel of Marfa Army Air Field AAF school have seen Jose at the barbecue held on the post, tasted the tender beef with all the trimmings, but it is doubtful if a handful of soldiers remember the little tanned, gnarled man himself.”475 That is, tanned by the hot far west Texas sun and gnarled, twisted by the decades-long back-breaking work he had completed on an Anglo-American owned ranch. It is almost common sensical to


474 Ibid.

475 Ibid.
believe that Jose Salgado did not want his children to engage in such hard, exploitative work as he had done in this country. There had to be a better way in this his new home.

The United States military was to be the conduit that provided the way towards a better life. The American reporter stated that, “When the war broke out, he [Salgado] started sending his sons to battle for his adopted land.” Salgado was documented as stating that he had four sons actively serving in the armed forces and one more son that was working for the military as a civilian. The four sons included Jose Salgado, Jr., who was working in the Army Corps of Engineers. Jose, according to the elder Salgado, helped build the infamous Alaska-Canada (Alcan) Highway. A second son, Martino was enlisted in the Army and followed General MacArthur in the “island-hopping” campaign against the Japanese in the South Pacific. The third, Roberto was “sailing the [German] submarine infested Atlantic with the Navy,” and Luis, a fourth son, was in the Army, stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso County, Texas. And a fifth son, Juan, was fulfilling his patriotic duty working at the Marfa Army Air Field with the post Quartermaster. No doubt, his boys were Salgado’s pride and joy.

If this was not enough, Jose Salgado still took the time to contribute a bit more to the war effort. When special service officer at the Marfa Pilot School, Captain Clarence H. Godshall, was looking to reward the efforts of military personnel on base, he turned to his friend the

476 Ibid.


“hardworking little man” to help him organize barbecues. Salgado explained, "but I like to help with the barbecues. I like to see the soldier boys eat." Nevertheless, he jumped right in and did his part to make the tough military life more tolerable for those making this sacrifice. In his mind, Jose Salgado, Sr. hoped that somebody would go out of their way and donate some of their time to give his sons the same type of care as he did to these “soldier boys” stationed in Marfa.

In what could be understood as a demeaning analysis of Jose Salgado’s intellectual capacities, The Big Bend Sentinel article goes on to attempt to gauge the “tanned, gnarled, hard-working little man’s” psyche. Of course, not all human interactions are molded by racialized ideologies but a good number of them sure are. The author writes that Salgado’s use of the term "soldier boy" included “officers and enlisted men alike, for Jose pays, no heed to rank.” Furthermore, according to the article, “He [Salgado] doesn't even know whether his own sons are buck privates, sergeants, or officers.” The reporter may have been assuming that Salgado, the ranch hand, carried a certain level of ignorance (e.g.; especially lacking in American cultural capital) that disallowed him to pay a certain level of respect towards the U.S. military personnel he so graciously catered to.

Then again, the elder Salgado was attempting to tell this American journalist a thing or two about equality. The subtle racialized narrative undertones taken by the article are dismantled by the common sensical understanding Jose Salgado presented in his responses in the

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479 Ibid.
480 Ibid.
481 Ibid.
482 Ibid.
publication. In Salgado’s point of view, these military men regardless of rank, young and *albus vater* alike, ethnic Mexican or Anglo-American, were at Marfa Army Airfield doing exactly what his sons were doing wherever they were serving. "Don’t make no difference," Salgado is said to have stated. "They're all in there doing all they can." The “tanned,” working-class, ethnic Mexican “little” man was making a resounding declaration. All the military personnel were making a conscious choice to put themselves in harm’s way for American ideals. Ideals that all true citizens would be willing to die for.

Getting hurt or wounded was like a badge of honor which demonstrated to the fullest the validation of allegiance anyone can make for their country. It is my contention, that to many ethnic Mexican families becoming American did not just entail learning the culture, the English language, etc. but also making the ultimate sacrifice. That is, a sacrifice solidified with the spilling of blood either your own or that of the sworn enemies of our nation. And, yes, many families in the ethnic Mexican community experienced that sacrifice. To what extent this was seen as the ultimate proof of allegiance by Anglo-America, is not so easily deciphered.

The Ultimate Sacrifice as a Key Americanized Sociocultural Schema

The community of Marfa began to receive the sad news that some of its “muchachos” were not coming back home. A modest memorial was set up “on a fence to the right-hand side near the Catholic Church” where the names of the fallen were commemorated. The memorial listed Anastacio Gonzalez, George Roman, Claudio Valenzuela, Manuel Rodriguez, Adolfo

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483 Ibid.

484 Gabriel A. Solis, “The Revolutionary History of Lowriders,” *VICE*, May 10, 2017, [https://www.vice.com/en/article/9aeamy/the-revolutionary-history-of-lowriders](https://www.vice.com/en/article/9aeamy/the-revolutionary-history-of-lowriders) (accessed June 19, 2021), Solis quotes Chicana historian Dr. Yolanda Leyva as stating that, "In WWII, we [Mexican Americans] fought in bigger numbers, and a lot of it had to do with proving patriotism. So, when the troops came back, there were heightened expectations for equality and the end of racial inferiority."
Baeza, and Jose Jimenez as the “Men who died.” Listed as “Missing in Action” was Jose Morales. The Morales family had, in fact, been informed by the War Department in late June of 1944 that their son Jose “Joe” Morales had been missing in action since earlier that month. The uncertainty of not knowing what had happened to their loved one must have been overwhelming no doubt. But, at least, there was still the slim hope that their beloved son could somehow miraculously make it back home safely. For other families of the ethnic Mexican community of Marfa, and Presidio County at large, this was not the case. Several of the families received grave news.

Military personnel often times accompanied by chaplains began to be seen visiting the ethnic Mexican communities in Presidio County. The list compiled on the small memorial near the church was but the tip of the proverbial iceberg. U.S. military records for World War II casualties from Presidio County, Texas confirm some of the deceased’ names on the Marfa Catholic Church memorial. The official records added other names to the list. According to the records, the following Presidio County soldiers were listed: Killed in Action (KIA) Private First Class (PFC) Andres Aguilar number 38579383, Private (PVT) Salome Alvarado number 38442584, PFC Diego Baeza number 38213308, PVT Alejandro De Leon number 38579386, PVT Alonzo Hernandez number 38213340 - “Death, Non-Battle” (DNB), PVT S.C. Hernandez 38442591, PFC Alberto P. Jimenez number 38215417, TEC5 Jose R. Jimenez number 38065507, PFC Dolores Levario number 38215420, PFC Delfin B. Lopez number 38439207 - “Died Of [Battle] Wounds” (DOW), PFC Jesus Lujan number 38213317, PFC Jose P. Madrid


number 38213318, PFC Roberto Munoz number 38442612, PFC Manuel Rodriguez number 38215427, Corporal George E. Roman number 6297071, and PFC Claudio D. Valenzuela number 38068841. These young men had made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. As the teen-aged Shorthorn reporter had stated in the 1942 Marfa High School newspaper article, these “boys” left everything they loved back home in far west Texas. Yes, they left everything they loved in Presidio County to fight for an equally important passion: love of country. The former Mexican ward school students never made it back home to Texas. Some of them literally never made it back home.

The Big Bend Sentinel reported in March 1944 that, “The laying down of his life in the defense of his country has been reported for Corporal (Cpl.) George Roman, Marfa youth, whose beginning of military service to his country dates from the time 77th Field Artillery units were stationed at Fort D. A. Russell [in Marfa].” Then Roman had said “goodbye” to his young wife Precilla M. Roman and his two-year-old son, George, Jr. and to his parents, Cosme Roman and Guadalupe Hernandez-Roman. Cpl. George E. Roman left behind his entire life to go fight fascism in Europe. During his time in Marfa, the industrious young man had sought out a living working, among other things, as a plasterer. Just like many other youths, the skill was learned from working along-side his father.

487 National Archives, Military Records, WWII Army Casualties: Texas, “Presidio County,” https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/media/images/29/20/29-1911a.gif, (accessed May 10, 2021); Fold3 by Ancestry, “Index Record for Aguilar, Andres, U.S. WWII Hospital Admission Card Files, 1942-1954,” https://www.fold3.com/record/700986505/aguilar-andres-us-wwii-hospital-admission-card-files-1942-1954 (accessed May 10, 2021). PFC Andres Aguilar was admitted to the hospital after he sustained battle wounds. Aguilar was fighting in the European theater, exact location listed as “unknown” when he received an “Injury Type: Battle casualty; InjuryType2: All battle casualties, and all battle injuries not intentionally inflicted by self or another person.” PFC Aguilar died in the field of battle as the report states that, the “Diagnosis: Killed in action; Location: Unknown, code not applicable; Causative Agent: None or Unknown” and was “Not in Medical Installation Prior to Death.”

In the case of Roman, this meant working in menial construction work. The so-called work of a chalan (or apprenticeship in borderland Spanish lingo) for minimal pay also offered the opportunity to gain the skills to one day become el maestro (or skilled laborer in borderland Spanish lingo). This gained capital could afford the once apprentice to become his own boss and hire his own chalanes. Unfortunately, this source of labor is characterized by sporadic bouts of unemployment and by what seems to be entire seasons of underemployment. Partakers in this type of work must then find ways to supplement their income. To make ends meet, George Roman had at one time done a stint working at the cleaning and pressing department at Fort D. A. Russell. Being around the military personnel may have drawn the young father to the army life, but more than likely other deep-seated reasons played an influence as well.

Personal drive or insecurity, whatever might be the case pushes persons to step beyond the comfort zones and seek betterment. Ideologies internalized from an education system founded on individualism and the idealism of Protestant work ethics--the proclaimed foundations on which Anglo-America is set upon-- also influenced American youth, including those in Presidio County, to enlist. What drove George Roman to join the military? Who knows? Perhaps the chance of a lifetime to travel beyond the far west Texas borderlands? Maybe to seek a better life for himself and his family? Only George Roman knew the answer. There is a factor that cannot be discarded, that one which had influenced many other red-blooded American boys: to bravely serve his country. George Roman decided to gamble it all, rolled the proverbial dice, and joined the ranks of the United States military. The young ethnic Mexican from Presidio County had unknowingly, but willingly, signed up to make the ultimate sacrifice.

489 Ibid.
Along with his brother Salvador, Roman joined the military since before the war just as many other young men had done across the U.S. As luck would have it, Roman was assigned to Fort D. A. Russell back home in Marfa. At the post, Roman created such a considerable buzz that he became sort of a celebrity and even a “hero” to local men and women “as a box club member and program, fighting in the middleweight class.” After George Roman enlisted in the Army, his boxing along with “his ability in the art of self-defense,” apparently gathered quite the following amongst the Marfans that attended the Fort D. A. Russell sponsored boxing tournaments. In these “highlights of the winter sports season,” the young Roman was one of the principal contenders and his work as a boxer elicited a great deal of comment.” With the coming of the war, Roman was shipped to Europe with the Third Army boxing gloves and all.

In the European theatre, Corporal Roman served in North Africa and in Sicily as part of the liberation efforts against the Germans and Italians. After clearing these regions, the Allies under General George Patton headed north to engage the fascists in battle in Italy. Unfortunately, and as expected, the freeing of the Italians from fascism cost numerous casualties to the American forces. Amongst the dead was Corporal George E. Roman.

The final week of February 1944, Cosme Roman received a message that stated that his son had been "Killed in action in Italy, February 3." The message further said that, “A letter of additional details will be sent as soon as possible.” The message was short, concise,

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490 Ibid.
491 Ibid.
492 Ibid.
493 Ibid.
mechanical, and cold. George Roman had been overseas about a year, his father Cosme told *The Big Bend Sentinel*.494 His boy was gone.

Official military records document that George E. Roman enlisted on January 26, 1940 and was part of Battery E, 77th Field Artillery Battalion. Of his demise, the records state that during his service in World War II, Army Corporal Roman, ID number 6297071, was killed in action in the European theatre in the liberation of Italy on February 3, 1944. The record succinctly states that Corporal George E. Roman “experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life.”495 Ultimately, Corporal Roman made it back home to far west Texas, to his family, and his beloved Marfa. His wife, Precilla signed the necessary forms and her husband was repatriated in 1949 and reinterred at the segregated Merced Cemetery in Marfa, Texas.496 Other Marfa World War II service men have still not returned.

In late April 1944, Librada Baeza Corrales and her husband Braulio Corrales received word from the U.S. Army that her son Delfin Baeza Lopez was “wounded in action some time ago.”497 The message further said that Private First-Class Lopez had succumbed to his wounds and died in a hospital in the Pacific theatre. Just as other Presidio County young men, Delfin had been employed in the local Marfa area prior to the war. In his case, Lopez had been working on

494 Ibid.


496 Unnamed author, “Cpl, George Roman Global War Victim: Youthful Marfan Known As Result of Ring Action,” *The Big Bend Sentinel*, 1, http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1944-03-03.PDF (May 10, 2021); Find a Grave.Com, “CPL George E. Roman,” https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/206914658/george-e-roman (accessed May 10, 2021); Author’s visit to the Marfa Cemetery, October 2016, The Marfa cemetery, like other cemeteries in far west Texas, is partitioned into what some residents call the “Catholic” and “non-Catholic” sections, what some call the “Spanish” and the “English” sections, and still others characterize as the “white” and “non-white/Mexican” sections.

a ranch for Mr. B. H. Davis for about five years when duty called and he went into the Army. Once in the military, PFC Lopez served his country with “an Infantry organization chiefly, in the Southwest Pacific area.” The five foot-two, one-hundred twenty-nine-pound, “dark complexioned,” “youthful Presidio [C]ounty resident,” of “Mexican descent” had been serving in the United States Army when he met his demise.

According to military records, “During his service in World War II, Army Private First-Class Lopez experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life on March 15, 1944.” The official record codes his sacrifice as DOW or “Died Of [Battle] Wounds.” Unlike fellow Marfan Corporal George Roman, Delfin B. Lopez did not make it back to far west Texas. The hard-working youth from Presidio County “is buried or memorialized at Plot A Row 7 Grave 147” in the Manila American Cemetery in the city of Manila, Philippines. At the time they received the military notice, Delfin’s parents were still living in Marfa and awaiting the departure of another son, eighteen-year-old Pablo, as he was about “to be inducted into the service soon.”

498 Ibid.


501 Ibid.

502 Ibid.

In mid-June 1944, the Lujan family received a message from the U.S. government. The short notification had been reported in the local newspaper where it stated that, “[c]onfirmation of the death in action of Pfc. Jesus Lujan of Presidio has been received by relatives who live in Presidio.” PFC Lujan had registered for the draft on October 16, 1940 where the then 23-year-old “cotton picker” had registrar Jesse Hernandez fill out and sign his card. The card notes that his mother Rosa Valenzuela Lujan would know where to find him in Marfa. A little over four years later, The Big Bend Sentinel reported that, "Lujan, a member of an Infantry unit, was serving in Italy at the time he was killed; March 5, 1944. A letter confirming the report of his death was received recently from Robert H. Dunlop, Brigadier General, The Adjutant General's Office, Washington.”

According to military records, “During his service in World War II, Army Private First-Class Lujan experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life.” The grieving Lujan family included his father Camilo Lujan and his mother Manuela Carrillo de Lujan, and “a brother, Manuel, a sister, Mrs. Amada L. Rubio, who lives in Presidio. A brother, Ramon, of Brownwood, a brother, Federico, of McNary, a sister, Carlota, of Mexico, and the following brothers who are California residents—Alberto, Melchor, Raymundo, Jose, [and]

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505 Fold3 by Ancestry, “WWII Draft Registration Cards, Valenzuela, Jesus Lujan (1917),” https://www.fold3.com/image/625393722?terms=lujan,jesus (accessed May 12, 2021). Apparently, Jesus Lujan was illiterate. The registration card has a written side note that states, “His mark was witnessed by Jesse Hernandez.” An “X” mark was made in the signature line and the signature next to it appears to be written in the registrar’s handwriting. The back of the card denotes that Jesse Hernandez was the county draft registrar who signed up Jesus Lujan.


Francisco.” PFC Jesus Lujan is buried at Fort Bliss National Cemetery, El Paso County, Texas in Plot E, 0, 9129. Below Lujan’s name and birth and death dates, the tomb’s inscription reads, “TEXAS PFC 349 INF 87 INF DIV WORLD WAR II.” The names on the list of the “Men who died” take on a whole different meaning when details of the young men’s lives elucidate their humanity.

Private First Class, U.S. Army, Diego Baeza was also present in the same liberation effort of Italy where Corporal George Roman lost his life. PFC Baeza, service number 38213308, was part of the 351st Infantry Regiment, 88th Infantry Division which was driving north towards France after having cleared North Africa and Sicily from Nazi-fascist occupation. On July 13, 1944, Diego Baeza, just like Roman, sustained battle wounds that ultimately caused his death. And just like Delfin B. Lopez, PFC Diego Baeza was not repatriated. Baeza is interred in a foreign country at the Florence American Cemetery in Florence, Italy to be exact. In Plot E Row 6 Grave 23 the burial site for one of Marfa’s sons can be found. The ultimate sacrifice for the country one feels a part of sometimes is exactly that, the last sacrifice of one’s life.

As noted before, ward school teacher Willie Harper discussed in later years her recollections of government officials visiting the homes of some of her “muchachos’” parents to deliver the devastating news. Whatever may have been their experience at the ward school or at the integrated high school, or whatever the extracurricular activities or in-classroom albus vater


formulated guidance; these young men had gallantly, or maybe even reluctantly, gone off to fight a war for their country. Still more “muchachos” were on their way to serve.

Duty Calls More Marfa’s Mexican Ward School “Broncos”

That spring of 1944, Presidio County’s ethnic Mexican community saw more of its young men join the ranks of the military forces. In April, fifteen new recruits were inducted into the United States Army and “the Presidio County Selective Service System board [was] given credit for their service in El Paso.” Inductees included Francisco Sandoval Vasquez, David Fuentes, Catarino Gonzales, Jr., and Antonio Chaves whose exact community residence was not noted but who were all confirmed residents of Presidio County. Residents of Schafter inducted were Salvador Zubia Zubiate, Merced Ortiz Cordova, and Alfredo Cordova. Alfredo Valverde Lopez, George Madrid, Gregorio Lara Mata, Felipe Dominguez Dutchover, Fermin J. Vasquez, Jose Garza Franco, Henry Jaime Rice, and Jose Francisco Hernandez all residents of Marfa were...
announced by the office of the Selective Service as also having been inducted. One of the Marfa inductees, Henry Jaime Rice, had the honor of being registered into the Selective Service by none other than ward school teacher Ms. Willie Harper.512 The young men were now set to be trained to serve their country in the different war fronts in Europe and the Pacific.

There may have been options other than serving in the U.S. military for these young men; and there were. The border is within walking distance and crossing the international boundary into Mexico could have been an easy choice. For those who understood the call to serve in World War II a patriot responsibility, though, that was not an option. At least a good number of ethnic Mexicans did not “go back to where they came from” to avoid getting in harm’s way.

Historical accounts and government reports on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands have noted that it has been somewhat of a common understanding that for many ethnic Mexicans, the borderlands region was not (and is not) composed of two countries divided by an international boundary.\footnote{U.S. Congress, House, \textit{Report from Colonel Hatch on the subject of El Paso troubles}, 45\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., May 8, 1878. H. Doc. 84: 3; Unknown author, “Law, Race, and the Border: The El Paso Salt War of 1877,” \textit{Harvard Law Review} 117, no. 3 (Jan., 2004): 941, 949, 962.}

But rather in these peoples’ minds, the American-Mexican \textit{frontera} is conceptualized as a transborder. In other words, the U.S.-Mexico borderland consists of one space which serves as an extended homeland with a semi-watered river running through it. In times of duress, the borderlands peoples could use this transborder conceptualization to their advantage. This international demarcation was just another resource that could be pragmatically exploited in times of need.\footnote{See Brian DeLay, \textit{War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).}

The conceptualized fluidity of the southern U.S. border was especially of extreme utility when ethnic Mexicans and indigenous peoples felt the wrath of Anglo-American brutality. As Oscar J. Martinez points out, “In the worst cases, sanctuary from European persecution could be found [across the border] in Mexico.”\footnote{Oscar J. Martinez, \textit{Troublesome Border, Revised Edition} (The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ, 2006) 87.}

As noted, Presidio County is situated right on the border with Mexico and literally within walking distance for many of these young men, Anglo-American and non-Anglo, to find safety just south of the international boundary.\footnote{A young Milton Faver had undertaken this exact option when he perceived himself to be in harm’s way back in the nineteenth century.} Although this apparent historical option was available to the former ward school alums of Marfa, many of them made the ultimate sacrifice for American ideals they had internalized even in segregation. These
ideals were not foreign or strange. They were ones that shaped their very identity. These were ideals that shaped their very American being.

The monolithic idea of segregation, as stated before, at times generalizes complexities not readily perceived at the surface. The tendency to conveniently broad stroke human interactions, especially when interpreting interracial dynamics, paint over on-the-ground exchanges where actual socialization takes place. Historical accounts demonstrate that the classrooms of America were, and still are, key places of intergroup sociocultural exchange. It must be kept in mind that much of this exchange often times does not occur at the macro-theoretical level but rather it happens one-on-one, person-to-person, and in small group settings. This closeness, I have experienced, will inevitably create rapport between those parties involved in the interaction. It then must be expected that the unifying force of empathy especially during times of mutual duress will bring into focus the complex layered array of human interaction. The details of this humanity, then, are often times blurred by the broad strokes of racial dynamic generalization. Not to negate that racialized, or better said racist, attitudes were left at the door of educational settings but not every waking interaction at the schools was driven by hate, prejudice, or notions of group supremacy-inferiority. In the classrooms of the world, the connection between teacher and students, regardless of their racial- cultural background, cannot be easily deciphered or defined from afar. Interpreting the socialization that took place in these places of sociocultural contestation is not clear cut and, again, inadequately defined by monoliths. This holds true for every setting including that of the mid-twentieth century Presidio County schools. Yes, tough to define especially not without taking a stroll through the Americanizing classrooms.

That stroll is where contestations, misunderstandings, discontents, and barriers are, more often than not, surmounted through interpersonal-cultural accommodation. Yes, on one side
there is the dominant structure of the school and its educators and on the other the youthful, malleable innocence of minority children. But in this pedagogical borderland, a contested accommodation, skewed as it was, also came into being. In other words, a genuine empathy between educator and pupil, Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican, was formed.\textsuperscript{517} Tumultuous as this symbiotic relationship may have been, as Carey McWilliams posited, both group’s identity was constructed (socialized and resocialized to put it in sociological terms) in this middle ground. Regardless of the power dynamics in place, both groups, dominant and subordinate, were in a way changed. By perceiving each other as being a simultaneous foil and ideal, the groups constructed a sense of “self” based on this projected duality. Anglo-American teachers further entrenched in their sociocultural niches and solidified their American identities while ethnic Mexican students either rejected or accommodated, synthesized, and internalized the perceived foreign sociocultural schemas. For many of them going back to Mexico was no longer a viable option. These Americans of Mexican-descent, for better or for worse, had made their choice: America the beautiful is home. A home worth dying for.

**Continued Americanization in the Home Front**

During World War II, the ethnic Mexican community in Marfa, especially the children attending the Blackwell school, were continuing the fulfillment of their part in the war effort. Of course, not everyone could join the military and defend the nation’s ideals by taking up arms. Fortunately, there were other avenues to help those that were engaging our country’s enemies on the battlefields of Europe, Africa, and the Pacific as this advertisement in *The Big Bend Sentinel* reminded Marfans:

> You know that this year may bring great victories—if every

American, civilian as well as soldier, stands loyally at his or her post. And, whatever else your duties may call for, there is one job that concerns every citizen—that concerns you: That is to help make 1944 one of the decisive years of human history. So [.,] make whatever sacrifice may be necessary to help make the 4th War Loan Drive the success it must be if we are to realize our great objectives this year. Ask yourself honestly—how much of a sacrifice is it to give up some-luxury just temporarily in order to buy the best investments in the world? When you’ve answered that question, buy at least one extra $100 Bond now—at your office or plant, if possible. And if you’ve already bought, buy again this month—and keep'em!518

Earlier in 1944, Blackwell students’ overall scholastic performance was rewarded by being placed on the school’s honor roll. Eighth graders Pedro Munoz, Hilario Magallanez, Anastacio Magallanez, Virginia Minjares and Jose Roman not only achieved high grades but demonstrated their commitment to their community by contributing to local charities like the infantile paralysis campaign and by buying War Savings Stamps. The Blackwell school children took their patriotic duty quite serious as 80% of the thirty-one children in the eighth grade donated a total of $2.42 to the paralysis campaign.519 A small contribution but a telling one nevertheless taking into consideration the socioeconomic level of the majority of the children at the segregated school. Their financial situation did not diminish their sense of patriotism though. The war volunteerism continued at the Mexican school as later in 1944 Blackwell students sold more than $1000 in war bonds at a USO-sponsored program. The sales actually totaled $1025.520

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Towards the end of the 1943-44 school year, the Blackwell school demonstrated their commitment to raising funds for the war. Miss Mary Louise Mitchell’s and Miss Willie Harper’s first grade students presented a program explaining the importance of buying War Savings Stamps. The program boosted the sale of stamps and also helped maintain morale at the school and the community at large. The ever-resourceful Jesse Blackwell did not let the school’s limited resources stop his students’ aspirations of serving their country. “The lack of an auditorium at Blackwell Junior High School was not an insurmountable handicap to Jesse Blackwell, principal, who recently completed the building of a stage at the south end of the building so programs in the open air may be staged,” boasted The Big Bend Sentinel.521 The albus vater demonstrated once again his commitment to his children’s education and in the process taught them that obstacles were meant to be toppled. Furthermore, the idea of civic responsibility as dutiful patriotic Americans was instilled deeper into the ethnic Mexican students.

The fund-raising effort to help American troops was turned into a friendly competition between the Blackwell school classes as a prize was awarded to the class buying the most War Savings Stamps. “Friendly competition” opportunities unconsciously further solidified the American ideals of individualism which in turn helps distance persons from the identification with collectivism-community. Were the tough-love educators under Blackwell knowingly using these identity forming techniques at the school? That cannot be asserted. Nonetheless, the ideals of Protestantism, including individualism, impregnated all interaction at the schools. The fund-raising competition that spring of 1944 was won by Miss Laura Nelson's ninth grade with a total

collection of $12.75 in stamps. Overall, $153.95 in stamps was collected by the ethnic Mexican students at Blackwell Junior High School.\textsuperscript{522}

The amounts, one small and the other substantial, may not fully convey the sociocultural impact that the schooling at Blackwell had had on the ethnic Mexican students. Just the sheer involvement in and of itself, for example, in the selling of war stamps to help the cause demonstrates the further shaping of an American identity. Moreover, a nascent sense of responsibility and by extension a sense of “belonging to” was being simultaneously forged in these fledgling patriotic Americans. Understandably then, it can be inferred that not only financial motivations drew ethnic Mexicans from Marfa’s working-poor class into military service but also a deep sense of responsibility as a patriot-citizen of the United States. Belonging to and sacrificing for the nation, “our” nation, was a strong reason why numerous ethnic Mexicans were volunteering for service in the distinct military branches.

Furthermore, the influence of the \textit{albus vater} can be felt in the swaying of the ethnic Mexican community towards a pro-war stance. As had been the case during the Great Depression years, President Franklin Roosevelt had sold the picturesque idea that all was going to be fine in just a short while. Since his inaugural speech, Roosevelt had reassured the American masses that “the only thing to fear was fear itself” and that not even an unprecedented world-wide economic depression should be cause for panic. It did not matter that the situation was so severe that it was crippling capitalist economies and, by its very syncretistic nature, the entire democratic ideals on which said capitalist economies were based. The country, and more importantly its citizens, FDR proclaimed, should dig deep and keep fighting through the tough times. In the meantime, he, the symbolic father, would eventually bring back prosperity.

\textsuperscript{522} Ibid.
Historian George J. Sanchez notes that especially during World War II, “Roosevelt had an astonishing effect on ordinary people.” The *albus vater* set out to rally his American family by instilling in it a deep sense of hope and determination. Faith could have not been demonstrated more deeply than in how the working-class in the United States gravitated towards President Roosevelt’s optimism. Many members of this working-class included the emerging Americanized ethnic Mexican community in the U.S.

Those ethnic Mexicans educated by the likes of Blackwell in the ward schools had bought into Roosevelt’s ideas. This socialization in turn helped further solidify the feeling of truly being part of the so-called American experiment. The *albus vater’s* keen sense of patriarchal-oriented family structure, coalesced the American peoples into what can be described as a fledgling nation. It appeared that the President’s optimism was shaping an otherwise regionalized polity into not just one country demarcated by the same borders, but into an actual unified nation-state. The United States multi-cosm, at least for an historical moment, was coalesced into an “American” national entity with similar ideas heading towards common goals. At least for a brief period in U.S. history it seemed possible. The World War II context was as good a situation as there has ever been to form a sense of not just self-identity but that of a national-identity. Several generations of ethnic Mexicans educated at the ward schools were paying attention to the *albus vaters’* message of unity and inclusion.

Americanization had by this point indoctrinated significant numbers of ethnic Mexicans, as well as members of all other ethnic groups in the U.S., into feeling part of the American body politic. A sense of American group membership was forged. A key tenet in sociological theory

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524 It cannot be lost, though, that during this period in U.S. history, along with the schools, the country’s armed forces were still segregated.
posits group membership as a means of self-preservation and survival. Furthermore, the instinctual-biological and inevitably sociological force serves as an identity forging agent. Humans by nature will seek group membership as a means of self-preservation and overall group-species survival. A safety-in-numbers evolutionary wiring leads members of the species to look for, ache even, to belong to a/the “group.” The drive to belong is so strong that individuals normally strive to be part of the group even when said “group” itself and the “belonging” to the “group” is imagined. These are reassuring concepts we fathom in our minds. In other words, the “group” is not real and so thus “belonging to” a conceptualized “group” is by extension not real either. But individuals will convince themselves and reify these social constructs by doing/acting out and abiding by sociocultural rules unconsciously. In other words, human beings will seek to enhance their individual and group survival by displaying, hopefully competently, the cultural characteristics (i.e.; sociocultural schemas) deemed as necessary to be accepted into the conceptualized/imagined group. Dominant group members, Anglo-Americans in the case of the United States, will decide who and to what degree individuals will be allowed to participate within its socially-demarcated confines.

There is a catch though for non-white racial-ethno-cultural peoples. Not looking phenotypically “American,” such as Jose Salgado had been deemed, will often prevent full entrance into the desired group. Racial gatekeepers will make sure this does not occur. For those not fully accepted then an adjustment must be made in their quest for acceptance. Some will respond by rejecting, others by contesting and demanding, and still others by accommodating. Those in the latter grouping will settle for the next best thing: unconsciously becoming, or more precisely pragmatically acting as, an ethnic Mexican-American. The World War II era provided ethnic Mexicans the possibility of making the ultimate sacrifice to prove
their patriotism to the gatekeepers. In the end, though, and more importantly, ethnic Mexicans were proving their American identity to themselves and by extension, that they belonged within the idealized/Americanized group.

**Jesse Blackwell Says “Goodbye”**

*The Big Bend Sentinel* reported that Blackwell Junior High School was to present their graduation program at the high school auditorium on May 22, 1945. That spring day, Principal Blackwell handed out diplomas to the two top-ranking students. The publication announced that Patrick Cordero was the highest-ranking student and that Anastacio Magallanez was the next ranking student of the Blackwell Junior High class of 1945. Accompanying the top two pupils were classmates Hilario Magallanez, Elva Franco, Sam Garcia, Viola Robinson, Virginia Minjares, Margarito Calderon, Adan Pena, Jose Roman, Fred Leos, Ema Valenzuela, Pedro Munoz, Naomi Aguilar, Belsora Mendias, Josephine Mendias, Daniel Sotelo, Frank Salgado, Ruben Rodriguez, Josephine Perez, Armando Vasquez, Alberto Vasquez, Betty Villarreal, Concho Ramirez, and Dora Nunez. Many of the surnames of the Mexican school graduates sound familiar as perhaps many of them were kin to those young men who had served and were serving their country in the still raging global war.525

The mid-1940s saw the end of World War II when Hitler’s Axis powers met their demise at the hands of a determined, multinational, multicultural, and at least, for the time being, unified, anti-fascist force. The great armies, having completed their mission, parted ways and went back home. Returning soldiers received a hero’s welcome where parades, national commendations, government-aided accommodations in education and access to home ownership

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were the order of the day. Many took the plunge and started families. The “baby boom” a social phenomenon that Theodore Roosevelt would have been ecstatic over occurred in the United States. The historical growth in the Anglo-American population elevated the hopes of nativists in maintaining the desired social-racial balance in the country. In order to ensure the Anglo-American numerical majority, other actions were taken in the country including further repatriation of ethnic Mexicans. The solidification of an Anglo majority population in the U.S. did not mean, though, that the colored minorities were no longer an issue in the country especially in terms of education. At least for that moment, the ward school system was still the way to go in educating the ethnic Mexican.

Principal Jesse Blackwell was to provide his services in this education effort for a few more years at the Marfa Blackwell School for ethnic Mexican children before he parted ways from the classroom “trenches” in 1947. The spring 1947 was to be the last time the *albus vater* from Rusk County, Texas handed out diplomas to his students. Guiding generations of Marfa’s ward school students under his watchful, tough-love approach, as imperfect as it may have been, had given many of these children a space where they could fortify their sociocultural capital for the battles ahead. For better or for worse, and as painful as it had been for many children, Marfa school system’s brand of Americanization had shaped them into the Mexican Americans they had become.

The 1940s began with an ever-encroaching menace. The world had been at war for close to two years and President Roosevelt had done his best to maintain U.S. neutrality. That all came to an end early December 7th, 1941. Young men from across the country were readied to repel the attack; this included numerous ethnic Mexicans. Many of these American soldiers came via the segregated schools. In Marfa, both teachers and students of the local school district
were called to service during the Second World War. The *albus vater* educators provided an example to follow for their students both Anglo-American and ethnic Mexican. Many former students of the Marfa school system, and in particular the former segregated school students, valiantly represented their community and country across the distinct fronts in the war. Many of them made the ultimate sacrifice. Some made it back home and some never did. Whatever may have been the case, the fact was that ethnic Mexican students from the segregated Mexican school in Marfa had more than proven their patriotism. Although, the *albus vaters* identity shaping and reshaping of ethnic students had been quite effective, the questioning of their Americanization did not end with the final surrender of the Axis in 1945. Now fortified with generations of socialization at the segregated schools, Americanized ethnic Mexicans were now better-equipped to take on the challenge.526

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526 Charges of an “illusion of inclusion” at play? Well let me put it this way, EVERYTHING is an illusion. The inclusion-exclusion continuum exists only in our minds.
Conclusion

Yet although few Mexicans and Mexican Americans encountered the full power and force of discrimination and prejudice—the legalized and more pervasive forms of disenfranchisement, segregation, exclusion, and violence that blacks experienced—still fewer enjoyed the full power and privileges of whiteness. Here, then, was a truly in-between people, neither black nor white, and truly disadvantaged.527

Milton Faver had been privy throughout his lifetime to the social, political, and cultural differences between the way things were done in the ethnic Mexican world of far west Texas and the way things were done in the Anglo-American world. That was a main reason the old rancher had been able to acquire such wealth in the first place. And even more so, he was knowledgeable of what the end goal of territorial acquisition as it actually played out on-the-ground. He, himself, had been part of the Anglo-American expansion into the acquired territories. Furthermore, the albus vater understood the ingrained belief of superiority many Anglo-Americans had in dealing with colored peoples. Milton Faver, a product of the Confederate South, was well-aware of Anglo-American racial arrogance that permeated life not just out in far west Texas but in the entire country. Through his experiences he even became aware of the aggressive Anglo-Americans’ treatment of non-colored but ethnicized people: the Mexicanized Anglo such as himself.

By making sure that his lands were legally in order before his death tells us that Faver had in the past seen how the rigid, American justice system could time and again be made a mockery of. His foresight in educating his only son, Juan, in the ways of the Anglo-European-American mentality is another example of Don Meliton attempting to fortify the younger Faver with the social, political, and cultural capital (i.e.; sociocultural schemas) so that he could better

fend for himself in a quickly Anglicizing atmosphere. Moreover, and more than likely unconsciously, Milton Faver was inculcating in his son the idea that shaping an American identity in later generations of Favers was not a just an option but a necessity to survive in an Anglo-dominated world. Faver was teaching his son the sociocultural schemas he needed to compete in this new context. In his own right, Faver was an Americanization teacher to his bicultural-biracial offspring. Likewise, it can be said that about the Anglo-American teachers that followed Faver, the pioneering albus vater, to the outskirts of the American sociocultural frontier.

Instead of literally marrying into an ethnic Mexican family, the ward school teachers “married” into the ethnic Mexican cultural milieu. Like Faver, the Anglo-American teachers passed on the Americanized socialization or American social schemas to the ethnic Mexican children in their classroom lessons and in their wider acculturation efforts. But instead of shaping their own offspring into a socio-culturally pragmatic and tough-as-nails business negotiators against an encroaching and aggressive Anglo-American dominated system as Faver had done to his son, the teachers at Blackwell helped forge a dual Mexican and American identity in their fictive kin-scholastic offspring so that they could better negotiate an Anglo-American dominated U.S. society.

The tough-love approach of Jesse Blackwell’s brand of Americanization had been perceived in distinct ways by his students. This, of course, was not limited to the segregated school in Marfa as students’ understanding of their educational experiences. Socialization efforts were just as diverse, and perceived as such, in other school settings. That being said, some students recalled, even years after Blackwell retired, both instances of good and not so good effects from the segregated school experience. Instances of cultural shaming through
verbal reprimands and even corporeal punishment make part of those negative, painful memories. Beatings at the school, often brought on by attempts at modifying cultural indicators, such as the use of English over Spanish, were at times severe enough to have warranted legal intervention.

One particular student, Quintin Guerrero Williams reminisced in a 1987 interview on how a teacher at the segregated school treatment of him and other students was a constant torment. Ms. Goldberg’s (i.e.; the tormenter) beatings and verbal assaults became so intolerable that the young Guerrero Williams ended up leaving school. Granted the child was a self-proclaimed troublemaker, and even if corporeal punishment was more accepted during the era, perhaps the overly tough approach at resocializing the ethnic Mexican student could have been lessened. Then again, this approach being used across the country in all schools was key in shaping the duality of the ethnic American identity. Tough love, paternalistic upbringing,

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529 Margarita Piñon interview by author, El Paso, Texas, March 17, 2014, Piñon, a far west Texas former segregated school student, recalled when her sister, Estela, received a paddling at the hands of an Anglo-American school teacher which left deep welts on her legs and buttocks. She also recalled that this and other beatings, just as severe, were not reported to authorities and seen as “just the way things were” or “normal.”; Sterry Butcher, “Marfa’s Blackwell School Has a Painful Past. That’s Why the Town Wants to Save It,” Texas Monthly, January 3, 2019, https://www.texasmonthly.com/being-texan/marfas-blackwell-school-has-a-painful-past-thats-why-the-town-wants-to-save-it/(accessed June 21, 2021). Former Blackwell student, Maggie Marquez recalled how she was “whupped” “black-and-blue” for stating, in Spanish, at a symbolic-mock burial that, “Nadie me va quitar que hable el Espanol.” (“No one will take Spanish from me.”)

inconsistent as it was, helped forge that demanding individualistic attitude that characterizes Anglo-American identity: never settle for less, seek change, shape history but do not allow history to shape you. Still many other former Blackwell School “Broncos” had what could be characterized as a love-hate recollection of the school.

Again, what better way is there to detail what occurred at the segregated schools than by listening to the actual historical actors themselves. Firsthand accounts better than any scholarly attempt, more precise than any theoretical speculation, will elucidate the cultural contestation that occurred in the segregated schools. For instance, in a 2020 interview former Blackwell student Maggie Marquez shared her recollections of her time at the school. She recalled how parents of the segregated school children had a dynamic PTA who held fundraisers to purchase school supplies and even instruments and uniforms. The interviewer records Marquez as stating that, “We [Blackwell students] had everything we needed because of them. Our band uniforms were just beautiful. Our parents made sure we were well educated. We had a lot of pride in Blackwell.” Another former student, Lionel Salgado, interviewed on that same publication, stated that, “Our teachers were really good and kind, and a lot of those kids were bright kids. They’d get up to Marfa High School and be valedictorian or salutatorian. We carried ourselves pretty good.” The words are reminiscent to what Marfa High School educators and administrators alike used to describe the students Blackwell was sending their way.

531 See Stephen Kinzer, The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and their Secret World War (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), The author argues that U.S. foreign policy is guided by the concept of preemptive action. The U.S., according to Kinzer, does not wait for history to play out but rather, the U.S. will shape history to its advantage.


Educators at the schools in general reflected on the positive aspects of the tough-love approach. For example, in Marfa, teachers at the ward school were known to go out of their way to provide supplies and textbooks in the under-funded classrooms. Mary Shannon in the early days of the segregated school created her own textbooks from magazines at home to provide the needed resources to teach her pupils. For the years other teachers at the segregated Blackwell school went out of their way and provided healthcare, food, transportation, and even uncompensated, extra time to ease the academic growth/sociocultural transition of their students.

For example, teacher Jackie Bird Pickering bought disinfectant, out-of-pocket, at the local pharmacy brought it to school and went around the schoolyard during recess and lunch and took care of cuts and scrapes. Even principal Jesse Blackwell was known to volunteer his own vehicle to provide transportation to school-sponsored activities when the district could not step up and provide buses itself. There was also the case of Margaret Harper and how she drove

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miles after school each day to track down one of her students who had been withdrawn from school by his parents so he could go to work. Once she found the student, Ms. Harper continued her daily miles-long drive to make sure her student got and completed his assignments. This student eventually graduated from college and became a teacher.\textsuperscript{537} After crying her eyes out when first-grade dropout Quintin Guerrero Williams returned to school, Ms. Goldberg provided him with needed supplies, perhaps out of guilt or realized empathy, to help him on his way to eventually graduating college and becoming a teacher himself.\textsuperscript{538}

More than likely, there are numerous other stories such as these, positive and not so positive, lost to the annals of time. This in no way is meant to diminish, to “white-wash,” or to deliberately misinterpret ward school student and teacher experiences as only they know the truth; that is, their truth of what happened at the segregated school. What is known is that the socialization that the ethnic Mexican children received in the segregated settings helped shape a self-identity based on American ideals which the teachers hoped would allow them to better negotiate life in an Anglo-American \textit{albus vater} shaped context. Fortified with the Americanized socialization, then their students could better compete for the available niches afforded to ethnic Mexicans in the United States: an \textit{albus vater} shaped society.\textsuperscript{539}

Superintendent Gregg reminisced about how Principal Jesse Blackwell used his own car to carry his students to extracurricular events when transportation was not made available by the district.


\textsuperscript{539} Author’s thoughts: Were ethnic students maltreated? Yes, they were. Did race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. impact their education? Yes, they did. Could they have received a better-quality education/socialization at the
The socialization was relatively successful from the Anglo-American establishment point of view but also from the ethnic-communities’ perspective. The byproduct came in the form of continuous questioning as significant numbers of ethnic Mexicans across the country, many of whom were educated in segregated ward schools, demanded accessibility to all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities they had learned about in those segregated schools. The fruits of the Americanization of the ethnic Mexican students began to manifest especially after World War II. The courts and the streets became virtual battlegrounds where the fight for full American identification was fought.

The Fruits of Americanization

What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable.540

schools? Yes, definitely. Were Anglo-American teachers, in general, biased against ethnic Mexican students? In my view, yes, they were and there may be many excuses as to why this was the pedagogical path taken. No explanation or excuse would suffice to satisfactorily answer that question why. But then again how do we reconcile what some of these teachers did for a good many of the ethnic Mexican children? Why did whole groups of them, educators for example, take the time to indoctrinate their ethnic students into the Americanized way? What drove the albus vater? Was it a “whiteman’s burden” complex? Airs of noblesse oblige? What did they have to gain? It was not all about, for example, creating an exploitable workforce. That, is too simplistic of a take on the complexity that is human (historical) interaction. Examples abound where Anglo-American teachers were actually at times going out of their way to socialize or resocialize ethnic Mexican children so that they could better negotiate, that is, to survive in a hostile environment. Racially-tinged education, yes, but also a sharing of [cultural] capital and a shaping of identities that helped these future adults, and could be/would be deemed “threats,” to learn how to stay alive [by seeming less threatening] in an often-times predatory Anglo-America. Staying alive at the risk, or cost, of losing their sociocultural identity. A “Kill the Indian, save the man…Teach out the ‘Mexican’ to avoid another Porvenir” type of mentality.; Frank H. Wu, Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White (NY: Basic Books, 2003), As Frank Wu postulates in his concept of perpetual foreigner syndrome, ethnics will be tolerated but not, and perhaps never, fully accepted.

540 Audre Lorde, The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House (London: Penguin Classics, 2018). According to Lorde, the reproduction of the existing social order might be the outcome of activism if the master’s tools, those used in protests against the Anglo-American-centric system, are the of the master’s creation. Thus, any change brought about will be in a way permeated with the master’s essence. In my view, this is not necessarily so. The master’s tools are dominant, yes, and internalized by the indoctrinated recipient and these “tools,” aka sociocultural schemas, are reshaped by the recipient. The original schemas are mixed with the ethnic “tools” and fitted to negotiate the social context lived in. The synthesized schemas are now not “pure” mainstream/majority group-oriented but ethnicized versions, if you will, themselves now permeated with the essence of the (decolonized) minority group.
Ethnic American students educated at the segregated campuses knew they could not sit idle and wish for change to come. They had to get involved and push for that change to occur. A former Blackwell School student, Lionel Salgado recalled this realization. “We must do something,” Salgado along with generations of former and current, ward, segregated, Mexican school students cried out in unison.\textsuperscript{541} Decades of socialization in albus vater-run Americanization institutions had created socio-politically conscious ethnic American masses.

The socialization gained at the ward school drove Americanized ideals into these youngsters’ minds that served to later question the way things were, especially their own situation, in the country. The students acted “American” as they followed the scripts or schemas taught or modeled to them in the schools. The proof is in the actions as the students and their families actively engaged in the school community, took part in athletic and academic extracurricular activities, graduated and went off to receive a post-high school education, or made the ultimate sacrifice for American ideals in the theater of war. Whether ethnic Mexican children really believed they had become “American” or not, the reality was that many of them behaved and actually expressed themselves as such. By the actions undertaken then, at least for some of the students, socialization or resocialization into an U.S.-Anglo-American society had been a relative success. The teachers at the segregated schools had significantly achieved the goal of shaping the ethnic children into ethnic Americans or better yet, Mexican-Americans. The students had internalized the ideologies, values, beliefs, thoughts, language, culture of their socialization agents: the Anglo-American teachers.

Principal Blackwell’s teachings carried his students to become leaders in their own right. Just as the ethnic masses had internalized the ideologies, values, beliefs, thoughts, language,

culture, etc. they also had been socialized into becoming more socially and politically aware of their responsibilities and rights as Americans. While some rejected the Americanization effort as best as they could, their upbringing in an, if not dominated at least impacted, Anglo-American context, ethnic Mexicans growing up in America were no longer “Mexican.”

Ethnic Mexican children had come of age at mid-twentieth century and coalesced into a movement that continued to grow in subsequent generations. The ideals that Americanization had instilled in them being socialized or resocialized in the ward schools had now paid dividends. For the Anglo-American establishment it may have been an unwanted side-effect but to the ethnic minority groups, including ethnic Mexicans, the time had come to pay the proverbial piper. The Americanized socialization and resocialization of the ethnic Mexican internalized the social cultural schemas not only needed to negotiate life in the main stream social milieu but had given this minority group the needed socio-cultural capital to challenge that same main stream society. The experiences at the segregated school, in the partially-integrated prep schools, in the theaters of war, and then in the protest arenas had forged a new dual identity into being. At least a good number of them took in the teachings of their beloved “teachers,” “advisors,” “friends,” etc. and went on to challenge a social system that was not in-line with the American ideals inculcated at the ward schools.

In the spring of 1947 news came from California that the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit had upheld a lower court decision which stated that segregated or so-called “Mexican schools” were unconstitutional. The April 14, 1947 court decision came with a proverbial grain of salt though, as ethnic Mexican children, the court made clear, were not “white”. Dismantling racial discrimination was not the reason why the court of appeals let the

Likewise, those that internalized the Americanization/Americanized socialization schemas, even as they gravitated towards Anglo-America, found themselves in sociocultural limbo. Not really “Mexican” anymore. So, it was either reject or fight for full access into the mainstream: Chicanismo.
lower court’s decision stand. U.S. District Court Judge Paul J. McCormick pointed out that there was an ultimate goal of schooling American children. The aim was not to establish some sense of racial equality in 1940s California but rather, the court decided that the distinction between racial groups was not to be contested in this case. The goal all along had been to sustain the goal of Americanization of all groups regardless of racial background. The perfect place to achieve this was at the schools; in integrated school settings that is. The ruling stated that,

The equal protection of the laws pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, textbooks and courses of instruction to children of Mexican ancestry that are available to the other public school children regardless of their ancestry. A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage.543

Judge McCormick reiterated the court’s views on Americanization,

The evidence clearly shows that Spanish-speaking children are retarded in learning English by lack of exposure to its use because of segregation, and that commingling of the entire student body instills and develops a common cultural attitude among the school children which is imperative for the perpetuation of American institutions and ideals.544

In the spring of 1947, Presidio County experienced the end of an of era at the Marfa ISD. Principal Jesse Blackwell decided to retire after decades of administrating and teaching at the segregated school. Faculty, staff, and students, both current and former, celebrated the educator’s contributions to their school and community at large. Alumni of the school had taken it upon themselves to organize the retirement celebration at the Marfa USO Club. The speaker’s table was adorned with “[a] white cake with pink icing forming a ‘25’ centered [at] the speaker’s table, and a miniature, rose-covered schoolhouse supplied an interesting note. The schoolmaster,


stick in hand, was in front of the replica of the one-room school of olden days.” 256 Twenty-five years of dedication to the educating of the ethnic Mexican community had passed since the albus vater had arrived in Marfa.

For better or for worse, Jesse Blackwell had left his indubitable mark on generations of students at the school. Mrs. E. R. Vazquez, one of Blackwell’s former students, graciously reminded those in attendance of this fact when she stated that the celebration was, “to honor our teacher and friend, Jesse Blackwell, the memory of whose unselfish work we will carry with us through the years.” 256 And not just his memory would be carried on by his students but also, and perhaps more importantly, the Anglo-American idealization of the United States of America. Across the country many former Mexican ward school students with a cultural duality identification had arrived. Thanks to the Anglo-American albus vaters and their assistants in the socialization efforts, Mexican-Americans were now here to stay.

545 Unnamed author, “Alumni of School Arrange Dinner in Blackwell’s Honor Marfa Educator Who Is Retiring Presented Gift In Tribute Program,” The Big Bend Sentinel, May 16, 1947, 1  http://libit.sulross.edu/archives/marfanews/sent26-84/1947-05-16.pdf (accessed May 21, 2021); Minerva Delgado, et. al v. Bastrop ISD, 1947-1948, Collection: “Chester Ollison, TEA 1952-1976,” Box 5, Texas State Archives, State Department of Education, In 1948, the Americanized Mexicans of LULAC and American G.I. Forum of Texas, many of who attended the ward schools, continued the attack on what they deemed the discriminatory practice of segregation. In Minerva Delgado et al vs. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County, et al., Judge Ben H. Rice of the No. 388 Civil District Court of the United States, Western District of Texas ordered the end of school segregation based on race by September 1949. Unfortunately, the Texas court left a loophole and allowed the separation of classes for “language-deficient or non-English-speaking students.” Of course, the deficiencies were to be gauged on the cutting-edge, and biased, social scientific testing. The ruling, although setting a precedence and providing a relative civil rights victory, left the door open to continued separate educational settings. The fight continued into the next decade.

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Vita

Aurelio Saldaña, Jr. was raised in both El Valle de Juarez and Fort Hancock, Texas. The first son of Mexican immigrants, Aurelio and Yolanda Saldaña, he graduated from Fort Hancock High School in Fort Hancock, Texas and attended The University of Texas at El Paso the subsequent fall semester. The first attempt at a higher education was not successful, so, Aurelio stepped away from his education for an extended period of time. During that period, he joined the workforce in the agricultural and manufacturing fields in El Paso and Hudspeth County, Texas. In 2003, Aurelio resumed his education at the El Paso Community College where he earned an Associate of Arts degree in Psychology in the fall of 2005. In the spring of 2006, he returned to The University of Texas at El Paso and completed Bachelor of Arts degrees in psychology in the fall of 2007 and anthropology in the summer of 2008. In the fall of 2010, he earned a Master of Arts degree in Sociology from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at The University of Texas at El Paso. In the spring of 2014, Aurelio earned a Master of Arts degree in History from the Department of History at The University of Texas at El Paso. Aurelio was the banner bearer for the UTEP Department of Liberal Arts at the 2014 centennial graduation ceremony. Finally, in the spring of 2022, he completed a Ph.D. in Borderlands History at the Department of History at The University of Texas at El Paso. Aurelio has presented his research at various conferences including the Texas State Historical Association Conference, Texas Oral History Association Conference, Oral History Association Conference, Southwestern Social Science Conference, and the UTEP Graduate School Expo competition where he earned the top honor presentation in 2014. Currently, Aurelio teaches both at the high school and college level back home in Fort Hancock, Texas.

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