

THE EDUCATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICANS IN
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS, 1916-1951

A THESIS IN
History

Presented to the faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

by
ROBERT MARTIN CLEARY

B.A., Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1981
M.L.S., Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey, 1993

Kansas City, Missouri
2002

THE EDUCATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICANS IN
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS, 1916-1951.

Robert Martin Cleary, Master of Arts

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2002

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines education for Mexican-Americans in Kansas City from 1916-1951. The racism of the Anglo community toward Mexican-Americans, as it developed nationally and in Kansas City, comprises the majority of the discussion. The Kansas City Kansas School District provided segregated education after the Anglo residents of Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale threatened to obstruct integration by resorting to violence. Newspaper accounts and oral histories reconstruct how this segregated system developed, and comparison to other Kansas communities, demonstrates the rigorous nature of racial separation in Kansas City.

The Mexican-American community organized to protest and resist this attempt to put them in the same class as African-Americans and achieved minor success. As resident aliens without access to the court system, they created change by lobbying the Mexican consulate to intervene with Federal and local officials on their behalf.

This abstract of 136 words is approved as to form and content.

Dennis Merrill, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of History

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis entitled, "The Education of Mexican-Americans in Kansas City, Kansas, 1916-1951," presented by Robert Martin Cleary, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Dennis Merrill, Ph.D. Date
Department of History

William Worley, Ph.D. Date
Department of History

Miriam Forman-Brunell, Ph.D. Date
Department of History

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1	13
RACIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD MEXICANS	
CHAPTER 2	33
RACIAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES IN KANSAS CITY, 1916-1922	
CHAPTER 3	51
EDUCATION PROVIDED TO MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS, 1918-1951	
CHAPTER 4	106
RESISTANCE TO PREJUDICE AND SEGREGATED EDUCATION IN KANSAS CITY	
CONCLUSION	135
BIBLIOGRAPHY	139
VITA	144

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to thank Esperanza Amayo and Carol Muro Turner for their help in locating important local documents. The writer would also like to thank his wife Abigail, and daughters Emma and Rosa for allowing me the time to complete this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of racial prejudice in the United States, statistics have been important to the dominant white culture. As long as small numbers of any one group could be confined to a certain area, and took the jobs native-born Americans and assimilated groups no longer wanted, they did not attract much attention. The history of Mexican immigration into the Kansas Cities followed this pattern. As the numbers of Mexicans grew during the early 1920s, and they either brought their families into the area or started them, the issue of education became important to the residents and school officials of Kansas City.¹ What distinguished the communities of Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale from other communities in Kansas, which would explain the severity and duration of prejudice toward Mexicans? That Mexican school children received segregated and inferior education in Kansas City is uncontested. Education provided to Mexican-Americans throughout Kansas will be compared to education in Kansas City, which will point out major differences in attitudes of Kansans to Mexican-Americans throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

A comparative review of the available sources on education for Mexican-Americans in Kansas and the Southwest reveals that the education provided in three particular neighborhoods of Kansas City during 1916-1951 was unique in these areas: duration, in that the period of segregation was longer than in other communities; lack of applied educational theory, in that the linguistic abilities of Mexican-American students were of minor consideration in justifying segregation; and race-based, in that the overriding concern of Anglo parents and residents was that Mexican-Americans constituted an undesirable racial group and therefore should remain separated.

Since the Immigration Act of 1882 and Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 specifically excluded Chinese and Japanese workers respectively, railroad companies looked to Mexico for

¹Since the focus of this study is on Kansas City, Kansas, "Kansas City" will refer to the Kansas side unless otherwise indicated.

cheap labor after 1900. These companies perceived single Mexican males as hard workers who would eventually return to Mexico. They were also perceived as docile and submissive.² But the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the years of unrest that followed discouraged repatriation and these single men looked for other work in the winter.³ In the Argentine district of Kansas City in 1915, two hundred of the three hundred Mexicans living there worked for the railroad, 12 percent were women and another 12 percent were children. By 1920 families increased in the Argentine section. They lived in boxcars provided by the Santa Fe Railroad, or in boarding houses that catered to Mexicans, and a few families lived in actual homes.⁴ The establishment of a permanent Mexican community attracted much more attention from Anglo residents than other immigrant groups, particularly recently settled Croatians and Poles. The main difference between Mexican and Eastern European groups was racial.

The Anglo community in Kansas City in the early twentieth century welcomed immigrants to take jobs that earlier immigrant groups such as the Irish and Germans no longer wanted. Americanization programs popular in the United States in this time were also active in the city. The school district supported night schools for the adults, encouraged the pursuit of American citizenship, and educated their non-English speaking children. When faced with the same obligations for the children of Mexicans, race became a great concern. Anglos could not envision accepting dark-skinned Mexicans as their future equals in society, and took the same steps to exclude them as they had with African-Americans.

The main historical debate among scholars of the subject of segregated education for Mexican-Americans revolved around determining why educators agreed that it was appropriate and needed. Historians Meyer Weinberg and Gilbert Gonzalez maintained that segregated

²George J. Sánchez, "Go After the Women!: Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 284-297; Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 248.

³Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 6.

⁴Valerie M. Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 142-143.

education of Mexican children was part of a national educational policy, and not due to local pressure.⁵ The evidence gathered for this study, however, demonstrates that pressure for segregated education arose primarily at the local level, and was not guided by national educational practice. The scholarly literature on Mexican-Americans in Kansas is growing but not extensive. Neither books nor articles consider exclusively the issue of education for Mexican-Americans, as has been done for states in the Southwest.⁶ Monographic studies of Mexicans in the Midwest have appeared in the last few years, but only two dissertations and one self-published book have been written exclusively about Mexicans in Kansas. Judith Laird's dissertation on the Argentine community provided the bare facts of education for Mexican children in the community. Valerie Mendoza's dissertation provided information on the attitudes of Mexican parents on education in the Kansas Cities, but did not attempt to trace the history of education for Mexican-Americans in the area. Cynthia Mine's work covered Mexican-Americans generally in Kansas, but did not deal extensively with education.⁷ There are journal articles that cover specific and general topics on the Mexican-American experience in Kansas, but none cover education to any detailed extent.⁸

⁵Gilbert G. Gonzalez, Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990), 21; Meyer Weinberg, A Chance to Learn: The History of Race and Education in the United States (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1.

⁶For a study of segregated education for Mexican-Americans in Texas, see Guadalupe San Miguel, "Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); for California, see Charles Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and Gilbert G. Gonzalez, "Segregation of Mexican Children in a Southern California City: The Legacy of Expansionism and the American Southwest," Western Historical Quarterly 16 (January 1985): 55-76; for a study of the entire Southwest see Gilbert G. Gonzalez, Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990); for a significant review of the education of Mexican-Americans see Meyer Weinberg, A Chance to Learn: The History of Race and Education in the United States (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); and for a chapter on segregated schools for Mexican-Americans in a single community in California, see Martha Menchaca, The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

⁷Judith A.F. Laird, "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975); Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community.,"; Cynthia Mines, Riding the Rails to Kansas: The Mexican Immigrants (S.I.: Mines, 1980).

⁸Robert Oppenheimer, "Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II," Western Historical Quarterly 16 (October 1985): 429-448; Michael M. Smith, "Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920," Perspectives in Mexican American Studies, 2 (1989): 29-

Scholar Larry G. Rutter analyzed educational opportunities afforded to Mexican parents and children in Kansas City and the state of Kansas. Rutter found in the 1930 census that Mexicans in Kansas recorded the lowest rates of school attendance. He concluded that Mexican parents could not perceive the value of education for their children, for a number of reasons. Extra family income was always needed and grade school boys could find work in the railroad yards. An education was not needed to do the kind of work available to Mexicans. When the factor of continued discrimination toward Mexicans was added to this equation, the parents' pessimism for their future overwhelmed any hope for their children's futures. Other factors inhibiting education were illiteracy in Spanish and the lack of English-speaking skills. Despite acknowledging all of these factors, Rutter concluded that "the Mexican failed drastically to take advantage of the educational opportunities open to him in the United States." As an afterthought, he mentioned that segregated education for Mexicans was yet another factor affecting the social progress of Mexicans, without making a connection between the effect of segregated education and social progress.⁹

This study challenges Rutter's on one essential point: it documents and analyzes the strong connection that existed between racism in education and racism in society in the Kansas City area. It builds on the work of historian Valerie Mendoza, which established that while the same factors inhibited school attendance by Mexican-Americans, many parents in the Kansas Cities believed their grade school children should attend school. The Mexican-American families who lived in small sections of the Argentine, however, faced staunch opposition to their educational ambitions from the white community.¹⁰ Extending the Mendoza thesis on education, this study will deconstruct cultural constructions of race and stereotypes of Mexican-Americans.

58.

⁹Larry G. Rutter, "Mexican Americans in Kansas: A Survey and Social Mobility Study, 1900-1970" (master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1972), 55-59. The same factors that affected the attitudes toward education of Mexican-American parents also influenced Italian-American parents. See Thomas Kessner, The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915 The Urban Life in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 84-85, 95-96.

¹⁰Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community," 196.

It will also probe the dynamics of resistance of the community to segregated education.

This study will review the historical works on prevailing attitudes toward Mexicans in the centuries prior to the twentieth in the United States in Chapter one. Chapter two will describe the racial atmosphere during World War I and the Twenties in Kansas City. Chapter three will discuss schools and education for Mexican students in Kansas City and compare how the “Mexican problem” was handled in other communities in Kansas with significant Mexican populations. Chapter four will review resistance on the part of the Mexican-American community to segregated education. The conclusion will assess the evidence that Kansas City was unsurpassed in the state of Kansas for their racist views toward Mexican-Americans and their education.

This study focuses on three crucial neighborhoods located within Kansas City, where Mexican immigrants and their descendants settled. Argentine was the neighborhood which spearheaded drive for segregated education. After the removal of the Shawnee and Wyandotte Indian tribes to Oklahoma, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company established a major terminal to the south of the flattest part of Kansas River plain in 1875. Attracted by the rail facilities, the town was named for and developed around a silver smelting plant established in 1881. In 1884, the town of Argentine elected their first mayor and developed their own municipal services, including schools, police, and fire departments. After the silver smelter closed in 1901, and the major floods of 1903, 1904 and 1908, financial concerns caused city leaders to seek incorporation into Kansas City, which occurred in 1909. The Santa Fe railroad remained to become the major employer in Argentine, and employed the majority of Mexican workers there.¹¹

Armourdale was situated across the Kansas River to the north from Argentine and was connected to it by numerous bridges. The Union Pacific railroad built shops there in 1860 and the Armour, Swift, and Cudahy meat packing plants became major industries in Armourdale. By

¹¹Donald H. Simmons, ed., Centennial History of Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas, 1880-1980: Includes the History of Argentine, Turner and Shawnee Township (Kansas City, Kans.: Simmons Funeral Home, 1980), 4-5, 12-13, 16.

1918, twenty-nine different factories provided employment in Armourdale, including oil refineries, and milling, soap, and ice factories. Investigators who studied Armourdale in 1918, concluded that its citizens were almost exclusively “an industrial class of people” and “of the best American stock,” because 90 per cent were native born. Established as a town in 1882, Armourdale was incorporated into Kansas City in 1886.¹² Of the three neighborhoods, Armourdale had the shortest experience of autonomy.

Rosedale was situated directly to the east of Argentine, on the southern side of the Kansas River. After the establishment of the first railroad in 1865, industries such as the Rosedale Coal & Mining Company, Thor Iron Works, and the Kansas Rolling Mills developed to supply needed materials. Established as a city of the third class in 1877 and of the second class in 1897, Rosedale was invited to incorporate with Kansas City in 1909. Despite a vote of the citizens of Rosedale to approve incorporation in 1911, the city council did not allow the vote to be certified. After political battles over the issue, and before a suit over the election was processed in the Supreme Court of Kansas, Rosedale was incorporated into Kansas City in 1922. Of the three neighborhoods, Rosedale had the longest experience of autonomy.¹³ These three neighborhoods shared a similar history of development. They all had some experience of administering their own affairs before eventual incorporation. All had established industries that required unskilled labor, and the initial work force was provided by various European ethnic groups. In the 1870s and 1880s, the principal groups were Irish, German, Scandinavian, English, Scots, and Welsh. In the 1890s, eastern European groups such as the Polish, Croatian, Serbian, and Slovene filled the need for industrial labor.¹⁴ All of these neighborhoods shared the same views on the growing Mexican population that developed after 1910.

¹²Loren L. Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Kansas Ethnic Council, 2000), 60; University of Kansas. Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Armourdale, a City within a City: The Report of a Social Survey of Armourdale, a Community of 12,000 People Living in the Industrial District of Kansas City, Kansas (Topeka, Kans.: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1919), 8, 12, 90.

¹³Margaret Landis, “Winding Valley and the Craggy Hillside”: A History of the City of Rosedale, Kansas (Kansas City, Kans.: Landis, 1976), 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 65-68.

¹⁴Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History, 64, 72-73.

Some critical documentation that would have provided more complete evidence of the prevailing views of the Anglo community either never was committed to writing or has been destroyed. The records of the Kansas City Kansas School Board barely acknowledged the tri-racial system of education that school officials maintained for more than three decades. The official voice of the school board, the Kansas City Kansan newspaper, dutifully recorded the allegedly limited role of the school board, who never publicly admitted that they shared the racial views of their patrons. The lack of records made it difficult to pinpoint the exact reasoning behind the strong racial views of Anglos in Kansas City. The Anglo-generated sources do reveal patterns of behavior that reflected racism. Oral history accounts from the Mexican-American community reveal and confirm this racism, and provide speculation on the source of Anglo attitudes.

Primary sources from the Mexican-American community for this topic can be found in two oral history collections.¹⁵ Two local newspapers, the Kansas City Kansan and the Argentine Republic and its many versions, are rich sources of information and provide insight into the popular cultural constructions and political attitudes of the twenties. The collections of the Kansas City Kansas School Board contain Nellie McGuinn's unpublished manuscript, "The Kansas City Kansas School System, 1819-1954." McGuinn scarcely mentioned the topic of educating Mexican children and completely missed or chose not to report on various controversies concerning Mexican-American students.¹⁶ The chapter on Mexican-Americans in Loren Taylor's The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County provided oral history accounts of education experiences, along with the myth that Saturnino Alvarado sued the Kansas City Kansas Board of Education in 1926. The myth recounted there was that the case went to the Supreme Court. Parents in the Argentine district prevented Alvarado's two children

¹⁵Irene Ruiz Interviews. Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library; Robert Oppenheimer Interviews. Trabajo y Cultura Project. Lawrence, Kans.: Kenneth Spencer Library, University of Kansas.

¹⁶Nellie McGuinn, "The Kansas City Kansas School System, 1819-1954." (Kansas City, Kans.: Board of Education, s.d.) McGuinn was a teacher in the Kansas City Kansas school system and did not cite her sources.

as well as two others from attending the ninth grade at Argentine High School in the fall of 1926. Through diplomatic pressure, a one-year boycott of the school, and by refusing to accept segregated alternatives, Alvarado's children and one other student attended Argentine High School in the fall of 1927. No records of court action exist, at either the local, state or federal levels, as was reported in Taylor's work. A more accurate but incomplete report of this conflict can be found in the summary by Francisco H. Ruiz.¹⁷ This study will provide the most definitive account to date of this significant example of resistance to segregated education in Kansas City.

One final note, the term Mexican will be used when the context requires it and Mexican-American for later time periods in this study. Invariably, Mexican was the only term used by the Anglo community for all Mexicans without regard to citizenship. Even Mexican children may not have been citizens by virtue of birth in this country in the 1920s. In most cases, children in this study should be considered to be Mexican-Americans. Chicano will not be used as it is the alternative form of Mexican-American and carries with it the connotation of a conquered people of the part of the United States that once was Mexico. Mexicans were one of many immigrant groups that moved to Kansas City, while the history of Chicanos in the Southwest was of a much longer duration. Anglo will be used for lack of a better term to describe the dominant culture in Kansas City. Diversity within European groups, who had the power to discriminate against non-European groups such as Mexicans and African-Americans, ceased to have much meaning for Mexican-Americans.

¹⁷Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History, 467-468; Francisco H. Ruiz, Report on the Greater Kansas City Hispanic Needs Assessment: With Master Resident, Leader, and Agency Questionnaire Tabulations, and a Spanish Version of the Resident Questionnaire, 1988 (Kansas City, Mo.: The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Affiliated Trusts, 1988), 3.

CHAPTER 1

RACIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD MEXICANS

People of Mexican descent have a long history in the United States and in the race consciousness of Anglos. Until the twentieth century, it was more likely for Mexicans to have preceded Anglos in areas of the Southwest. The situation was reversed in Kansas, where Mexicans would arrive as a new immigrant group. They were regarded in a similar fashion as the African-Americans of the Exoduster period, who came to Kansas in the 1870s looking to escape the difficult racial restrictions of the South. Just as African-Americans experienced prejudice in Kansas, so did Mexicans.¹ To understand the origins of these prejudices, a review of the previous century of Anglo-Mexican relations is necessary.

By the time Stephen Austin gained permission from the Mexican government in 1821 to found an American colony in Texas, Anglo-American racial attitudes toward those people perceived as Mexican were well formed.² The view of Mexicans as a race descended from the intermarriage of indigenous Mexican peoples and Spanish conquistadores and settlers provided potential for speculation on Mexican characteristics that fell into two broad areas: ethnicity and race. The composite Mexican was known as Catholic, Spanish, and Indian. "Hispanophobia," or the Black Legend, became a major factor in Anglo-American perception of Spaniards as the United States expanded its territory into areas held by the Spanish. The Black Legend evolved in Europe over the centuries prior to the age of exploration, and maintained that Spaniards were

¹James C. Carper, "The Popular Ideology of Segregated Schooling: Attitudes Toward the Education of Blacks in Kansas, 1854-1900," *Kansas History* 1 (Winter 1978): 254-265.

²Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 2; Raymund A. Paredes, "The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States," *New Scholar* 6 (1977): 139-165.

“uniquely cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, obscurantist, lazy, fanatical, greedy, and treacherous.”³ The fact that Spaniards were Catholic and that Anglo-Americans were overwhelmingly Protestant provided for more characterizations of Mexicans as different, and therefore, inherently inferior. Based on the knowledge that slaves were imported into Mexico in previous centuries and absorbed into the population, Africans became a third distinct people perceived to contribute to the racial mix of the Mexican in the minds of Texans.⁴ Anglo-Americans had waged wars and relocated Indians in their quest for land, so their prejudices against indigenous peoples were fully developed as the American frontier expanded. The typical Mexican represented two kinds of people who were perceived to be the exact opposite of the Anglo-American, and were thus worthy objects of prejudice and its by-product, economic and societal subjugation.

This chapter will explore the motivating factors behind Anglo-American prejudice and discrimination, and attempt to assess why discrimination against Mexicans continued to exist, well beyond the periods of expansion into the Southwest. Total domination was gained by Anglos over these regions when the Mexican War ended in 1848. The historical debate among scholars of the subject has revolved around the main cause of racism toward Mexicans as a group. Of particular interest in the debate has been the question of origination: did Anglo-Americans carry with them the seeds of a racist response to Mexicans, passed down over the generations or did they develop their attitudes based on observations which “justified” a racist response? Historians of anti-Mexican racism handled the same problem that arose when examining the issue of slavery in the United States; did economic need cause racism or did racism provide an opportunity for economic oppression? Another question faced by historians was to determine whether or not Anglo racism was the product of experience in war in Texas or

³Philip Wayne Powell, Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 10-11, 117-121.

⁴De León, They Called Them Greasers, 4. De León’s selection of primary sources provided observations of distinctly Negroid characteristics seen in Mexicans of the 1820s.

well established before initial contacts in Texas.

In his article, "The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States," the historian Raymund Paredes maintained that settlers who moved into Mexican territory carried with them attitudes developed over the centuries through "anti-Catholic sentiment and Hispanophobia." He did not believe that racist attitudes developed in the process of "empire building" or because of culture conflicts that accompanied imperialism.⁵ In contrast, historian Reginald Horsman has argued that the United States expansionism in the 1830s and 40s, and the Mexican-American War (1846-48) served as the "catalyst in the overt adoption of racial Anglo-Saxonism."⁶ While Horsman recognized the same roots of thought that led Anglo-Saxons to view themselves as a superior race as Paredes, he attributed the motivation for expansion into Mexican territory as a result of racist attitudes toward all non-Anglo-Saxon groups.⁷ While both agreed that racist attitudes toward Spanish-speaking groups were shared by settlers in Mexican territory, Horsman placed a great emphasis on economics as the main motivation for expansion -- thus linking racism with both territorial expansion and empire building.

The sociologist Mario Barrera has advanced what he calls a "colonial theory" of structural discrimination in Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality.⁸ He stresses the systemic rather than political causes for racial inequality, rather than asserting that either Anglos or Mexicans invented constructions of race. He examined the economic motivations for nineteenth and twentieth century racism and believed that the nature of American capitalism and class struggle created a racist labor economy. Borrowing from Marx,

⁵Paredes, "The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment," 139.

⁶Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 208.

⁷Ibid., 4-6.

⁸Mario Barrera, Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 2-3.

he emphasized that as the need for land and economic expansion became more important, race prejudice became a means to justify the policy of reducing the property holdings of Mexican-Americans throughout the Southwest in the nineteenth century.⁹

Historian Arnolde De León studied the attitudes of Texans toward Mexicans in the nineteenth century in They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900. He agreed with other historians that Anglo settlers arrived in Texas with preconceived notions of the characteristics of the Mexican race. He saw the historical debate as a question of whether the Anglo settlers were “more racists than cultural chauvinists.” Ethnocentrism and the belief that Anglos had a superior culture was the source of Anglo chauvinism. De León concluded that racism was more of a factor than any cultural bias.¹⁰

In his book, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986, historian David Montejano provides a sweeping account of “ethnic conflict and accommodation” over one and one-half centuries. He argued that racism in Texas was a continuous and changing phenomenon controlled by economic forces, but always prone to increase in intensity through political and cultural conflict.¹¹ Montejano examined the same racial conflicts during the nineteenth century as De León, but went beyond to analyze their significance and influence in the twentieth century. He paid particular attention to the issues of class and economics, and focused on the Texas-Mexico border area between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers.

Thus, the general Anglo-American view of Mexicans as a race during the nineteenth century was a complex and constantly changing cultural, economic, and political phenomenon. Popular constructions of race, moreover, consistently interacted with constructions of gender. According to historian Michael Hunt, Mexico was viewed by proponents of an expansionist

⁹Ibid., 208-209.

¹⁰De León, They Called Them Greasers, xi.

¹¹David Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986 (Austin: University

foreign policy as a “white maiden passively awaiting salvation.”¹² Feminizing inferior countries was a common tactic and was applied to other Latin American and non-western societies. The emphasis on the Caucasian feminine element in Mexico’s multi-racial society was designed to counteract the critics of President James K. Polk’s drive to expand the United States to include what was considered a “colored mongrel race” which could also be “the imbecile and indolent Mexican race.”¹³ Negative and positive images could both be employed to justify a stance on expansion into Mexico, but any positive image had to emphasize the Caucasian or Spanish element to appeal to Anglo-Americans.

Thoughts on gender were expressed in the political views conveyed toward Mexico in political cartoons of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. If the message was that Mexico was desirable, the country was represented by a Caucasian woman. When expressing concern and potential conflicts with Mexico, the country was represented by a short, dark-skinned, swarthy male.¹⁴ This image stood in sharp contrast to the construction of American manhood developed by President Theodore Roosevelt in the 1890s. He advanced a view of the American race as superior to all European races that formed it. He believed that non-European races were a corrupting influence that would lead to race suicide. As President, he viewed the foreign political mission of the United States as “asserting imperialistic control over races of inferior manhood.” As a result, he advocated strict controls on Japanese immigration. He influenced racial thinking of his contemporaries.¹⁵ The same views of increased Mexican immigration,

of Texas Press, 1987), xi, 5.

¹²Michael H. Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 60-61.

¹³*Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁴John J. Johnson, Latin America in Caricature. Texas Pan American Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 33, 57, 98-99, 104-105, 212-213.

¹⁵Gail Bederman, Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917, Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 171,

when it increased after 1910, evoked the same fears of race suicide.

Relations between Anglo men and Mexican women in Texas in the nineteenth century were complicated by race as well. The lighter-skinned females of prominent families were considered suitable for marriage by single Anglo males, in areas where there were few Anglo women. Overall, Anglo settlers had more critical comments about Mexican men than women. Yet Anglo men had ambivalent views toward Mexican women and an impression that Tejanas, especially those with darker skin, had a “defective morality.”¹⁶

Mexico itself had a complex racial makeup. Three distinct groups occupied Mexico after Cortés conquered the Aztecs in 1519: Indians, mestizos, and descendants of Spanish settlers who did not intermarry. The largest group, the mestizos, being part Indian and part Caucasian, were more inclined to emigrate to the United States. As a multiracial society, Mexico suffered from internal racism that isolated the Indian population and left the mestizo population “caught between two cultures.”¹⁷

While the thoughts of journalists and travelers on race may not have had an impact or were filtered down to settlers of the Southwest, racial theories certainly had an impact on policy makers in Washington, when they pursued their imperialistic campaign against Mexico. The subsequent purchase of the northern territories of Mexico covered in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, allowed for United States’ citizenship of all Mexicans residing in those territories. The property rights of Mexicans were supposed to be protected, but the rush of Anglo settlers into the new territories quickly imperiled those rights. When Congress passed the Land Act of 1851, all land owners were required to furnish documentation validating their title or else have the

195-199.

¹⁶De León, They Called Them Greasers, 39-40.

¹⁷Jaime Suchliki, Mexico: From Montezuma to NAFTA , Chiapas, and Beyond (Washington: Brassey's, 1996), 7.

lands pass into the public domain.¹⁸ This would prove to be a considerable burden to the Mexican landholders.

American knowledge of Mexico was also influenced by the perception of Mexico as a country dominated by the Catholic Church, which in turn provided a basis of support for the country's dictatorial leaders. After independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico was first ruled by a self-proclaimed emperor Agustín de Iturbide, much to the chagrin of President James Monroe and his administration. Internal dissent with monarchy led to the establishment of the Constitution of 1824, which ostensibly declared Mexico to be a republic. The leader of the dissidents, however, was General Antonio López de Santa Anna, a strong-armed *caudillo* who dominated Mexican politics for the next twenty-five years, either behind the scenes or during his six presidential terms. Santa Anna's support of the Catholic Church also disturbed American politicians.¹⁹

Early impressions of Mexicans in California in the nineteenth-century conveyed the same prejudices found along the Rio Grande, but Anglo travelers and settlers found a more established society there. The work of Protestant New Englander, Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast, published in 1840, provided a typical view of Mexicans in California. Dana had the usual preconceived impressions of Spanish-speakers and before he arrived in California, stopped in South America and observed that the men "were the laziest of mortals" and "have the habitual occupation of doing nothing."²⁰ The Mexican elite had dominated the Indians of California, held vast estates, and enjoyed good land for agriculture or cattle grazing, a mild climate, and excellent harbors. Dana noted that the Indians were slaves and provided all

¹⁸Richard Griswold del Castillo, The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 73.

¹⁹Suchliki, Mexico: From Montezuma to NAFTA, 59-60, 65-66.

²⁰Quoted in Ronald Takaki, Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Knopf, 1979), 157.

the labor on ranches. As for trade, which was in the hands of Americans, who had married into established families and converted to Catholicism, as required by California law. Dana contrasted the work ethic of the transplanted elite with that of the established Mexican leaders.²¹ The new California elite had behaved much like Mexicans in Texas and had failed to utilize natural resources in the production of wealth. The root cause of this dysfunction was distinctly racial: the inherent laziness of the degraded nonwhite race.

Perceptions of the particular indolence of a people may have served only to further a supremacist agenda, and of course were not grounded in fact. It is perhaps ironic that the back country ancestors of the early Texas settlers were once perceived as lazy. Farming in Appalachia required more work in some seasons than in others, and observers perceived the lack of work as a product of indolence.²²

Manifest destiny ideology, the belief in America's racial and cultural superiority and its right to territorial expansions, found its expression in the art of landscape painting, poetry, and literature. Landscape painting of the early nineteenth century invariably put the perspective westward, as viewed from a high point. The poet Walt Whitman saw the Mexican War as an opportunity for the United States to become a great empire and become "the first nation on the earth." A design to expand the United States was apparent in the Anglo consciousness and at its core was to redeem the wilderness from savage and inferior people. Henry David Thoreau maintained that "simple races,' like 'savages' do not climb mountains," because of irrational fears, and viewed mountain climbing by Americans as symbolic of their superiority.²³

²¹Cecil Robinson, Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest in American Literature: Revised from With the Ears of Strangers (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), 35-36; Takaki, Iron Cages, 157-158.

²²David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America, America, a Cultural History, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989,) 740-741.

²³Albert Boime, The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting c. 1830-1865, New Directions in American Art (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 10, 14-16, 19.

The racial aspects of Manifest Destiny ideology developed as Americans compared themselves to other races and even other European groups. Americans had developed an idealized self-identity in the course of comparing America to European nations. They perceived themselves as democratic, hardworking, progressive, and Christian. They believed that they were more modern, humane, and benevolent in internal affairs than European nations. America was the “land saved for events of world significance.” Anglo travelers to the Mexican territory of California invariably concluded that Mexicans there were incapable of exploiting its riches.²⁴ This became a justification for Anglo dominance, yet other influential people opposed the Mexican War for various reasons: opposition to the expansion of slavery, discomfort with imperialism, and fear of a greater concentration of power in the executive office. President Polk and his supporters countered his critics with strong denunciations of Mexicans couched in racial terms, maintaining that their inferiority required that they be conquered. Pennsylvania Senator James Buchanan advocated “pushing aside ‘the imbecile and indolent Mexican race.’” His critics used race as well, and feared that the inferiority of Mexicans would make it difficult to assimilate them when the war was over.²⁵

The Mexican War of 1846-1848 lasted longer than expected. Yet, the victory for the United States and the expansion of territory to the Pacific via the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, only increased American perceptions of superiority over the Mexicans. In the years after the Mexican War, Mexicans were persecuted in even greater numbers and with more intensity. As more Anglo settlers arrived, a practice of displacement of native Mexicans throughout the Southwest followed. The presence of property-holding Mexican elite was an obstacle to the subjugation of Mexicans as a nonwhite race. While the threat of force and fraud by means of legal challenges to Mexican land titles were suitable to dispossess Mexican elite, outright force

²⁴Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny, 209-212.

²⁵Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy, 33-34, 60.

was seen as acceptable and necessary when the Mexicans involved were landless.²⁶

Incidents of violence and dispossession of land occurred in Texas after the Texas Revolution of 1836. This same pattern did not happen until the end of the Mexican War in the rest of the Southwest. In the territories of New Mexico, which included the area eventually known as Arizona, California, and New Mexico, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the subsequent Land Act of 1851 were used and misused to dispossess as many Mexicans as possible of their land. Capital-poor Mexican landowners were assaulted with claims on their titles to land. In the process of defending their title, they either lost their land via an adverse judgment or had to pay their attorneys in land to cover their expenses. Squatters who moved into California during the gold rush of 1849 provided additional pressure, as legal means to evict them required clear titles, which were difficult to provide. Despite the fact that Mexican land holders were the plaintiffs in these cases, the legal system turned them into victims. A critical article of the original Treaty, which acknowledged Mexican land grants as valid, had been removed by the United States Senate during the ratification process.²⁷

The history of race relations in Texas is important to this study for a number of reasons. The Mexican population had significant land holdings prior to Anglo immigration, which they would progressively lose. A significant immigration of Midwesterners to southwestern Texas occurred in the early twentieth century and caused another decline in the quality of life for Tejanos. Parallels can be drawn between their reaction to the established Mexican population and that of the earliest Anglo settlers in the 1820s. They could not take their land, since that had been accomplished already, but they were able to restrict any potential progress for Tejanos in society through segregation. The arrival of Midwesterners in Texas led to an increase in institutionalized discrimination. The first segregated school for Mexicans was established in

²⁶Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans, 28.

²⁷Ibid., 73-75, 95.

1892 in Texas, four years before the United States Supreme Court sanctioned segregation of African-Americans in the landmark case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.²⁸

No area of difference between Anglos and Mexicans was left unexamined in the accounts Texans gave of their observations of Mexicans in the nineteenth century. Mexicans were perceived as lazy, and not very inclined to work, yet capable of great energy in hedonistic pursuits such as dancing and gambling. This was referred to as making the best of their situation, and a product of the “stoicism” inherited from their Native American ancestors.²⁹ In contrast, Mexicans often perceived Anglos as “overbearing and aggressive.”³⁰ In a similar confrontational situation in the seventeenth century, Europeans perceived Algonquians in the Great Lakes region as only having concerns for their needs, without any other ambition than to survive, in stark contrast to the progress-minded Anglo.³¹ These differences of cultural attitudes toward work were a composite of selective perception and true differences in attitudes toward expectations from work. Frontier economic development was minimal in Texas, but highly developed in Central Mexico, and this had a great effect on early Texas settlers’ opinions of the Mexicans they observed.³² In more densely populated regions such as San Antonio, the Mexican economy was far more developed than that observed by Anglos in less populated regions, where American colonies were established.³³

²⁸Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans, 110-117, 159-161; Gilbert G. Gonzalez, Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990), 20.

²⁹De León, They Called Them Greasers, 24-29; quoted in De León, They Called Them Greasers, 29.

³⁰Carey McWilliams, North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 99.

³¹Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815, Cambridge Studies in North American History (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991,) 98.

³²David J. Weber, ed., Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 60.

³³De León, They Called Them Greasers, 6-7.

Already convinced of the superior work ethic of Anglo Americans, and having an agenda to confirm that belief, observers carefully noted examples of indolence where they found it and excluded examples that would disprove their observation. Perceived subsistence living and examples of poverty met the Anglo need to justify their superiority and would later be used to justify discriminatory wage practices against Mexicans, who “needed less.”³⁴ A major difference that widened the cultural gap between Anglos and Mexican was the advance of technology in the early nineteenth century, in particular, the steam engine and the telegraph. As the economy in the United States moved further from an agrarian to an industrial base, technology “served as a metaphor and materialist basis for the domination of mind over body, capital over labor, and whites over Indians, blacks, Mexicans and Asians.”³⁵ Mexican housing of adobe in Texas was often deemed inferior and inadequate for the environment and a prime example of the lack of Mexican technological expertise or interest. Mexican agricultural methods were also criticized as inferior, because they lacked the goal of market production.³⁶

In their need to assert their superiority over Mexicans in Texas, early settlers displayed the same myopic thinking that was once applied to their ancestors. This perception would change over time, as the benefits of Mexican farm labor would cause many Texas farmers to support a loosening of restrictions on Mexican immigration proposed in the early 1920s. One Texas farmer went so far as to say: “I prefer Mexican labor to other classes of labor. It is more humble and you get more for your money.”³⁷ Yet the general consensus of Anglo settlers in Matagorda County, Texas, in the 1850s, was that all Mexicans should be forcibly expelled. As one newspaper reported, only lower class Mexicans resided in the county, who had no land,

³⁴Ibid., 30.

³⁵Takaki, Iron Cages, 148.

³⁶Robinson, Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest, 33-34; De León, They Called Them Greasers, 25.

³⁷Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans, 182-183; quoted in Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans 183.

“hang around the plantations, “ tended to marry Negro women, and had a tendency to steal horses. The report referred to expulsion as “mild” when they had “anticipated an appeal to the Lynch law,” a typical response to horse-stealing in that era.³⁸ The justifications given reflected a distinct class consciousness, which had not been a significant factor in dealing with Tejano elites, but became useful when arguing for the removal of whatever class of Mexicans remained.

Having stripped the majority of Mexicans in the conquered territories of their land, Anglo settlers were ready to move on to the next phase of subjugation. In Texas during the late nineteenth-century, there were great struggles for dominance in trade between Anglos and Mexicans, as the remaining Mexicans tried to make a living. Mexicans dominated the freight trade between San Antonio and Goliad. In 1857, seventy-five of their number were attacked and killed, presumably by masked competitors. Texas authorities made no arrests and assigned the Texas Rangers to patrol the route. The Texas Rangers were formed in the 1820s, to provide order on the frontier and border with Mexico. Largely unencumbered by legal procedures, they provided summary judgments on Mexicans perceived to have committed crimes, and played the role of judge and hangman in numerous incidents in the last half of the nineteenth century in Texas. They could operate without recrimination, because they protected Anglos from “violent” Mexicans. This stopped the murders, but the goal of the eliminating the competition had been achieved.³⁹

In areas of Texas where Mexican economic efforts were in direct competition with Anglo efforts, violence was the means to discourage any Mexican advancement. The Anglo goal of complete economic subjugation, which began in 1821, was nearly completed in Texas by the end of the nineteenth century. Land-holding Tejanos comprised 16 percent of the population

³⁸Ibid., 28.

³⁹De León, They Called Them Greasers, 29, 75-76.

and the rest were either skilled or unskilled laborers, with manual laborers forming 67 percent of the total male population.⁴⁰ The systematic economic reduction of native Tejanos to a largely laboring class provides clear evidence that racism was a means of economic domination, not simply an outgrowth of the conflicts that arose from whatever natural antipathies Anglo settlers had toward Mexicans as a nonwhite group.⁴¹

Because of the advantages of wage discrimination, Mexican labor was primarily used for cultivation and ranch work. Mexican wages were typically one-half to two-thirds less than those paid to Anglo workers from the 1880s to the 1920s in Texas.⁴² This was the primary reason that Mexicans had a place in the Texas economy; the growth of the economic interests of the Texas land holders required a working class that would maximize profits. However, the Mexicans' place in the Texas economy would come at the expense of the Anglo working class, and created more opportunities for conflict in the twentieth century.

Railroads, built largely with Mexican labor, changed the economy of southern and western Texas, beginning in the late 1870s. This created easy access to large tracts of land, suitable for commercial farming by the end of the nineteenth century. The completion of railroads connecting the Midwest with Texas cities on the Mexican border created opportunities for further development in the 1900s. Ranchers' willingness to sell tracts of their land started a land boom, which attracted new settlers from the Midwest. These newcomers challenged the established social and economic order in southern and southwestern Texas.⁴³

Texas ranchers had managed to recreate a labor structure familiar to Mexican society,

⁴⁰Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans, 73.

⁴¹Tomás Almaguer, "Historical Notes on Chicano Oppression: The Dialectics of Racial and Class Domination in North America." Aztlan 5 (nos. 1 / 2 1974): 27-56; Barrera, Race and Class, 201.

⁴²Montejano, Anglos and Mexicans, 90-91.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 109-112.

since it closely mimicked *haciendas* of colonial Mexico: ranchers became *patrones* and Mexicans *peones*. This structure ruled Texas politics as well, with the Anglo farmers maintaining the loyalty of their Mexican employees at the ballot box. The settlers from the Midwest were interested in profitable commercial farming and in time, political control as well. They found it difficult to break into a structure they felt was riddled with corruption. Since the newcomers perceived the Mexican population as the base of established Anglo control, Mexicans became a focal point in the ensuing political struggle. As Midwesterners gained more political control and influence in the early twentieth century, Mexicans in Texas began to experience segregation and discrimination in a very open manner.⁴⁴ The selling of ranch lands for commercial farms displaced the Mexican cowboy, who had few opportunities for work other than seasonal labor on the very farms that eliminated that work. In their new occupation as migrant farm workers, Mexicans were given separate living quarters and refused service in local establishments. Separate public facilities for Mexicans throughout Texas were common beginning in 1920.⁴⁵

Montejano presented written evidence from Texans of the time to develop his theory of the two “themes” that dominated Texan racial thinking in the early twentieth century. The “oldtimers” operated on the theory that the defeated Mexicans who committed atrocities at the Alamo and then became “subjugated enemies” created a historical basis for discrimination. The “newcomers” were concerned with the hygiene of the Mexicans and particularly did not want their children to attend the same schools. Lacking the historical perspective of the old-timers, Montejano maintained that the newcomers carried these germ theories with them. The concept of dirtiness had two connotations: dark skin was also dirty and the living conditions and agricultural labor also made the Mexican dirty.⁴⁶ These same attitudes of the Midwesterners

⁴⁴Ibid., 114.

⁴⁵Ibid., 114, 160.

⁴⁶Ibid., 223-225, 227.

would be reflected in the Argentine section of Kansas City in 1918; whether Anglos were long-standing or new residents this perception was ingrained in Anglo consciousness.

Montejano argued that racism in Texas was a continuous and changing phenomenon controlled by economic forces. The “accommodation” that Montejano examined was evident in the paternalism that developed in Texas ranch society and the evolving role of Mexican labor in the general development of Texas. He did not go so far as to say that the Anglo *patrones* were not racists, only that years of contact softened the violent aspects of Texas racism. In a class structure in which Mexicans were lower class and had few possibilities for economic advancement, and the Anglos were clearly upper class, tolerance was possible. When newcomers from the Midwest changed Texas society, as part of the development of commercial agriculture, the immediate racist response to the Mexican community was again evident, just as it had been in 1821. Montejano’s emphasis on capitalism and its creation of a class hierarchy particularly confirms the contention of other scholars on Anglo racism: Anglo racism toward Mexicans was a very ingrained and spontaneously applied reaction. It could be especially vehement and degrading in situations in which newly arriving Anglos were anxious to establish their place in the economy.

The normal pattern of settlement in the Midwest saw Mexican communities developing in areas dominated for many years by Anglos. As Mexican immigration to the United States increased following the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, immigrants traveled further north to find work. As they became established in an area, incidents of discrimination intensified and institutional racism developed. Mexican school children were educated in separate facilities throughout Kansas, beginning in the 1920s.⁴⁷ In Kansas, the Mexicans were the immigrants; however, the Anglo response to them was the same as in Texas, where they had been an

⁴⁷Juan R. García, Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 122.

indigenous population. At various times, particularly during times of recession and the Great Depression, Mexicans were perceived as an economic threat to the white population in Kansas.⁴⁸ But in the post-World War I period, when prejudice was at its height in the Argentine, race, as determined by skin color, was the overriding reason behind Anglo parents' insistence that their children not be educated with Mexican students in Kansas City. While not minimizing the importance of economic and political factors, one scholar has asserted that "racism is also personal and social in origin." They are in fact a "learned behavior," "passed from generation to generation," and have been applied to all nonwhite groups.⁴⁹ This would point yet again to a strong, psychological response as the fundamental element responsible for responses to people perceived to be of a different race. The motivations of economics only served to reinforce and inculcate racism against Mexican-Americans.

A broader historical perspective is important to understanding the development of educational segregation in Kansas City. The history of United States foreign relations and particularly the Mexican-American War, and subsequent treatment of the Mexicans by United States settlers in Texas and California, shaped American attitudes toward Mexicans. Economic development and cultural constructions provides critical context for a local study of education and racial discrimination at the local level in Kansas City.

Emory Bogardus, a sociologist who wrote extensively about the Mexican community in the United States, asserted that in places such as Kansas, where Mexican labor was needed, "friendly attitudes toward them flourish."⁵⁰ Subsequent studies of Mexican communities displayed no friendliness on the part of Kansas Anglos. Various scholars of the Mexican

⁴⁸Judith A.F. Laird, "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975), 203.

⁴⁹Peter Loewenberg, "The Psychology of Racism," in *The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America*, ed. Gary B. Nash and Richard Weiss, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), 186.

⁵⁰Emory Stephen Bogardus, *Immigration and Race Attitudes* (New York: D.C. Heath, 1928), 163.

experience demonstrated that despite the low numbers of Mexicans in Kansas, compared to the Southwestern states, discrimination against Mexicans was common. Jim Crow-style segregation was prevalent throughout Kansas and extended into many areas of public life. Mexican-Americans were forced into segregated sections in housing, movie theaters, parks, churches, hospitals, work facilities, and trains. They were completely excluded from swimming pools, gymnasiums, and business establishments such as funeral homes, barbershops, restaurants, and many types of retail stores.⁵¹ Segregated education was also common, with some variations, and as the institutionalized form of racism toward Mexican-Americans, was the element needed to create “cradle to grave” discrimination.⁵²

The reaction of Anglo Kansans to the Mexican community was varied in smaller towns. The smaller the town, the less likely were Mexican-Americans to experience every one of the varieties of discrimination named above. It was impossible to predict in what areas of public life Mexican-Americans could encounter discrimination. Esperanza Amayo, who grew up in Turner, a town next to Argentine with a small Mexican community, recalled that Mexican-Americans were welcome in schools and business establishments, except for a certain restaurant. This recollection was of the early 1940s, a time when some of the stricter forms of discrimination against Mexicans were loosening up throughout the state. Her experiences in Argentine, where she moved in 1944, were markedly different, as she encountered discrimination in Catholic schools, public schools, and all types of retail establishments.⁵³ This racial climate for Mexican-

⁵¹Robert Oppenheimer, “Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 16 (October 1985): 429-448; Laird, “Argentine, Kansas,” 192; Irene Ruiz Interviews, Magdalena Rodriguez. Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library; Manuel Gamio, *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographic Documents Collected by Manuel Gamio* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 176-177; “Trabajo y Cultura,” transcript, slide/tape show. (Kansas City, Kans.: Vertical file, Argentine Public Library), 11.

⁵²Esperanza Amayo, personal interview, November 18, 2000.

⁵³Loren L. Taylor, *The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County* (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Kansas Ethnic Council, 2000), 477-479.

Americans in Argentine would remain poor for adult Mexican-Americans, even as all students were integrated into the schools prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

As an immigrant population to Kansas, Mexicans were instantly distinguished from other European immigrant groups as nonwhite, and while their treatment did not quite equal that given to African-Americans who emigrated to Kansas in the 1870s, it was similar enough to invite comparison. While having little prior knowledge of Mexican culture and no experience, the typical Kansan did recognize the color of their skin, and attributed to Mexicans all of the inherited associations Anglos had of different races.

CHAPTER 2

RACIAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES IN KANSAS CITY, 1916-1922

American constructions of race were fully developed through years of interactions with Mexicans. Those experiences were popularized in the press, and ideas about the Mexican race passed from generation to generation. Midwesterners who immigrated to Texas around the turn of the century responded to Mexicans with calls for institutional discrimination, and did not need first-hand observations to confirm their prejudices. When the first Mexicans reached Kansas, prior experience was also not essential to elicit a racially-based response. Kansas knew that Mexicans were neither African-American nor Anglo. As a new immigrant group, with language difficulties and lacking skills, Mexicans were no different from other European groups who emigrated to Kansas. Kansans were accustomed to new immigrant groups, but their responses to African-Americans in the 1870s and the Mexicans in the 1900s were similar: they were not welcome in general society.

The focus of this chapter is to show how constructions of race were applied in Kansas City. Through their newspapers, law enforcement officials, school boards, and parents, Anglo Kansas Citian's articulated their racism. Always faced with a need to justify their actions, they provided examples that confirmed perceptions of Mexicans as an unworthy race. When initial demands for segregated education for all Mexican students were not met, Anglos lobbied for and built a case for its justification.

It would be difficult to discuss education for Mexican-Americans without describing the atmosphere in which the "burden" of educating these students was perceived by the Anglo community. Local newspapers of the twenties and earlier, created impressions of particular races or ethnic groups by printing the news and especially the crimes committed by these non-Anglo groups. The criminal element was thus often allowed to represent the group to Anglo

society.¹ In the Argentine and Kansas City newspapers of the period from 1916-1922 this practice was very evident.

A common popular perception of Mexicans was that they were prone to violence and inciting revolution. When General John Pershing pursued Pancho Villa in 1916, after the raid on his men in the town of Columbus, New Mexico, events regarding conflicts in Mexico were dutifully reported in Kansas City Kansan and to a lesser extent in the Argentine newspaper.² A report that Mexican railroad workers were buying ammunition resulted in an appeal by Kansas Governor Arthur Capper to merchants that they not sell to Mexicans. Capper speculated that the purchase of arms by Mexicans could lead to trouble. He was also concerned that Mexicans might smuggle arms into their war-torn country.³ In an editorial on President Woodrow Wilson's choice to intervene militarily in Mexico, a local writer maintained that revolts in Mexico were responsible for the major character flaws of the Mexican: "Years of revolts have bred a race whose allegiance to leadership is as fickle as the ambitions of their leaders. The masses in Mexico will always be tinder until schooled to think solely for themselves."⁴ The piece conveyed the general impression that Mexicans were prone to violent acts, yet passive in their capacity to follow their leaders blindly. In a later editorial, possibly written by Grant S. Landrey, the editor of The Republic and prominent Argentine citizen, Villa was labeled a "greaser."⁵

In an article describing a Mexican vendor's dispute with an inspector over the amount of cream in his ice cream, the vendor was accused of professing a limited knowledge of English

¹Emory Stephen Bogardus, Immigration and Race Attitudes (New York: D.C. Heath, 1928), 70.

²F. Arturo Rosales, ¡Pobre Raza!: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 15-16.

³"Kansas Mexicans are Buying Arms," The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 29 June 1916, 2.

⁴Kansas City Kansan, 23 June 1916, 4.

⁵The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 14 December 1916, 3; Donald H. Simmons, ed., Centennial History of Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas, 1880-1980: Includes the History of Argentine, Turner and Shawnee Township (Kansas City, Kans.: Simmons Funeral Home, 1980), 138. Landrey would eventually

and sought the protection of his compatriots. These “chili con carnies” then initiated a “revolt” against the inspector “in true Mexican style.”⁶ These images confirmed the fear that Mexicans were hard to control and resolved their differences undemocratically, primarily using violence.

The July 26, 1917 edition of The Republic, reported that a Santa Fe worker had to be hospitalized from ax wounds suffered in a fight with another Mexican. Since the other Mexican could not be found, it was concluded, “that while in an insane condition he inflicted the wounds upon himself.”⁷ This seemed improbable, since there were far more effective weapons for suicide than an axe. Based on the biased kind of information that was printed in newspapers, articles like this created the impression that Mexicans were capable of anything.

These views were reinforced in a later article entitled “Say Little Mexico is Troublesome.” The community in North Argentine, near the Santa Fe yards, was described as “trouble for the police department,” “well behaved for Old Mexico,” but “too turbulent” for the United States. Fighting in the community was a source of injury and death and the police had trouble identifying the perpetrators, because “it is almost impossible to get information from a Mexican, which will incriminate one of his own nationality.” Since Mexican labor was “much needed,” no solution to the problem could be seen, except for the police “to hold the Mexicans down as much as possible in the hope that time will bring a betterment.”⁸ This description confirmed the impression for Argentine residents that Mexicans were prone to fighting, and that the community as a whole had no sense of justice, as evidenced by their unwillingness to cooperate with the police.

Mexicans could be perceived to be violent in situations in which language problems

become the president of the Kansas City Kansas School Board.

⁶“Not Cream at All,” Kansas City Kansan, 27 May 1920, 1.

⁷“Did He Injure Himself,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 26 July 1917, 1.

⁸“Say Little Mexico is Troublesome,”Argentine Republic, 27 March 1919, 1.

caused misunderstandings. A Mexican and his two small boys arranged to be driven in a taxi from Argentine to Turner and upon arriving, told the driver that he wanted to go to Holiday, a further distance, requiring an increased fare. When the Mexican was asked for twice the amount originally agreed upon, he “looked dangerous.” With the help of a Holiday merchant who knew some Spanish, they settled upon a fare.⁹ It was the writer’s impression that the taxi company lost money because of a lack of Spanish, but what was also implied was that the Mexican was prepared to become violent when things did not go his way. What the driver failed to do was make clear that going to Holiday involved an extra charge. This was acknowledged by the Mexican in question, who did pay more than the original agreed upon amount. Impressions of Mexicans were so ethnocentric and misleading that even when traveling with small children, they were believed to be capable of violence at any provocation. This man probably thought he was being swindled and may not have been prepared to pay more than the agreed amount.

One article detailing criminals who served their sentences in a local workhouse provided a racial profile of the offenders: six white, one colored, and “Mexico did not get in last week.”¹⁰ This expression of surprise evidenced the prevailing assumption of Mexican criminality. It was entirely expected that Mexico would indeed be represented every week in the workhouse. On the same page, an account of how a Mexican woman induced two twelve year old boys to steal chickens to sell to her, perhaps redeemed the common perception of Mexican criminality.¹¹

The Mexican community was very aware of the violent image the Anglo community had of Mexicans. During a trial of an African-American accused of killing a Mexican in Kansas City, the defense attorney described the victim as “a ferocious Mexican possessed of the inborn desire to murder characteristic of his race.” This editorial attributed motion picture portrayals of

⁹“It Pays to Know the Lingo,” Argentine Republic, 27 March 1919, 1.

¹⁰“Weekly Workhouse Record,” Argentine Republic, 19 April 1919, 2.

¹¹“Caught Stealing Chickens,” Argentine Republic, 19 April 1919, 2.

Mexicans “as assassins and criminals” as one source of this racial view. The writer pleaded for fair judgment of the Mexican people based on the majority, who were law-abiding and had made cultural contributions to the world.¹²

Novels in serialized form often appeared in the pages of Argentine’s The Republic. During 1917, the entire text of Heart of the Sunset by Rex Beach appeared at weekly intervals beginning April 5, 1917 and ending September 13, 1917. The novel was set during the Mexican Revolution in Texas near the Mexican border. The main characters were a married rancher woman, a Texas Ranger, and the Mexican General who pursued the woman. Before each chapter, the editor introduced the main events for his readers and hoped that the novel would provide a more insightful view of the conflicts at the border than newspaper accounts. The narrative presented the typical stereotypes of Mexican soldiers as “cruel, vindictive and treacherous,” and used the common slur of the time, “greaser,” on numerous occasions, but the editor’s glosses on the material accented the predatory nature of Mexican manhood and sexuality.¹³ The advances of Mexican General for the rancher woman are referred to as “distasteful and odious” several times, adjectives that were not used in the novel.¹⁴ Use of this obviously prejudiced novel, in which the Texas Ranger was virtuous and killed no Mexican without good cause, and Yankee women were pure and monogamous, was designed to confirm Anglo impressions of the Mexicans in their locale.¹⁵

¹²“México,” El Cosmopolita (Kansas City, Kans.), 19 March 1919, 2. El Cosmopolita published from 1914-1919 and was the only significant Spanish-language newspaper to publish in Kansas City during this time. For an analysis of its content, see Michael M. Smith, “The Mexican Immigrant Press Beyond the Borderlands: The Case of El Cosmopolita, 1914-19.” Great Plains Quarterly 10 (Spring 1990): 71-85.

¹³Rex Beach, Heart of the Sunset. (New York: A.L. Burt Publishers, 1915), 22.

¹⁴The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 5 April 1917, 2; 24 May 1917, 2; 7 June 1917, 1; 14 June 1917, 2. One pronounced difference between the Argentine newspapers and the Kansas City Kansan is that the racial slur “greaser” was not found in the Kansan, betraying perhaps not tolerance of Mexicans, but a certain restraint.

¹⁵Arnoldo De León, They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas,

The editors of Kansas City newspapers often reprinted articles from other sources to convey an image of the typical Mexican. From an article originally printed in National Geographic, the writer described life in the state of Guanajuato in Central Mexico, and characterized Mexican peons as “strangely superstitious, grossly ignorant... and pathetic in their simplicity. . . The Mexican peon knows that he is born to serve, as did the old southern darky, and caste or class distinction is emphasized on all occasions.”¹⁶ References linking Mexicans to African-Americans were scarce in the primary materials, but the use of “darky” in the above passage makes the link explicit. Anglos knew that the Mexican people emigrating to Kansas City did not come from the upper classes. Their local newspapers kept them informed of their crimes and interactions with Anglos as a public service.

In another reprint, a portrait of El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico was presented. Hygiene was of particular concern to the writer, who described Mexican families living in “dirty desuetude” as if they were in the sixteenth century, which was remarkable because the twentieth could be found across the bridge in Texas. The writer went on to employ standard stereotypes of Mexican women, who covered their mouths to keep out contagion, and labeled Mexican men and “greaser lads,” “grubby” and “sinister,” because they carried guns. Both genders could be seen “loafing,” and living in “the dirtiest, dustiest, poorest, weirdest, rowdiest and tawdriest” of slums.¹⁷ Any Argentine citizen reading this might wonder when such a place with such a people would recreate itself in their town.

In an editorial, possibly written by E.W. Wells, the editor of The Republic, the link between race, hygiene, and education was made explicit. The author began by asserting that the “race problem” was more serious in the United States than in any other country of the world

1821-1900 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 75-76.

¹⁶“Native Life in Guanajuato,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 19 October 1916, 2.

¹⁷“El Paso to Juarez,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 2 November 1917, 2.

and Argentine, like other towns, was not exempt:

To require little children coming out of the clean and well kept homes of the town to enter into close school room association with other children who are filthy and unclean, is not a fair thing to do. But it is also true that this condition is not only found among colored races but among the white race as well. And filth is filth whether the skin be brown, black or white. The big problem is a problem of sanitation.¹⁸

Since African-Americans, as the “black” race, were safely segregated from elementary to high school throughout the Kansas City Kansas school district, it was obvious that the “brown” race, Mexicans, were of great concern to the writer. But the problem was redefined from one of race to one of hygiene. The writer asked whether or not teachers had to authority to exclude “filthy” children, and exhorted teachers to exclude children with “vermin visibly in the open,” a condition which perhaps would apply more to one race than another.¹⁹ The editorial clearly depicted popular race thinking at the time: that Argentine Mexicans were a separate non-white race and hygiene was a serious problem for the greater community. While adult Mexicans could be effectively excluded from Anglos in public life, the means to accomplish this for Mexican children would remain a controversial subject for the next nine years.

A report of a meeting of the Seventh Ward Improvement Association of Argentine appeared in the same edition of the newspaper and raised the same concerns:

One of the interesting questions brought up for discussion was the question of the admission of Mexican children from the families of the illiterate Mexicans to the schools with the children from the white families. The children, who were not objected to on the account of their color [*sic*] but because of uncleanliness in person and in dress. This subject led to a warm discussion and the question was finally dropped without any action.²⁰

It was possible, but cannot be confirmed, that the author of the article attended the meeting and also wrote the editorial discussed above. That Mexican parents were illiterate in English and also Spanish was likely, but in this context appeared as merely a slur, as if to confirm Mexican

¹⁸“The Race Problem,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 30 November 1917, 4.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰“Big Feed is Planned,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 30 November 1917, 1.

inferiority.²¹ Indeed, studies on language learning have shown that Mexican children, just like foreign children from non-English speaking European countries, learned English quickly in the United States.²² Any implication that the Mexican children were likewise illiterate, and that this was an educational problem, was not pursued in subsequent discussions. It is clear that the overriding concern was one of “uncleanliness” and hygiene.

The worldwide Influenza epidemic of 1918 focused further attention on Mexicans in Argentine. In a report in the Argentine Republic entitled, “The Influenza Situation,” two columns appeared: one for the “Mexican Situation” and one for the rest of Argentine and Armourdale. The writer reported that the Mexican population had increased, and occupied the box cars provided by them by the Santa Fe railroad, yet “were making big money and are able to provide themselves with good houses could they be found.”²³ This was an odd statement on two counts. Mexican laborers were employed in Argentine precisely because they would take the low-paying jobs that Anglos would not. Their salaries could not be considered “big” by any means.²⁴ Mexicans experienced residential segregation as well, a fact that the author acknowledged when he observed that there was “strenuous objection” to Mexican purchases of houses in the city. One ad that appeared in the Argentine paper in 1921, listed a property as “suitable for Colored/Mexican.”²⁵ Mexicans found themselves in a difficult situation, encountering discrimination if they tried to move out of the boxcar settlement, but blamed for the spread of

²¹Larry G. Rutter, “Mexican Americans in Kansas: A Survey and Social Mobility Study, 1900-1970” (master’s thesis, Kansas State University, 1972), 57. This assumption was also expressed in the title of a congressional hearing. See U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Hearings on the Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers, 66th Cong., 2nd. sess., 1920.

²²México. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Vol. 2. (Mexico: La Secretaría, 1931), 1790. This source described one study in Arizona that found that Mexican students learned English in one year.

²³“The Influenza Situation,” Argentine Republic, 18 October 1918, 1.

²⁴Valerie M. Mendoza, “The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890-1930” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 68.

²⁵Kansas City Kansas Republic, 29 April 1921, 7.

influenza because of their unsanitary living conditions in the Santa Fe yards.

The Argentine Republic's report on influenza spoke directly to the issue of education and racial segregation in schools. The perspective and concerns presented were those of the Anglo community:

It is not fair to demand the children of white parents, coming from clean and well kept homes go to school to enter a room partially filled with Mexican children that are not clean, and who have come from the disease ridden shacks that are provided as housing facilities for these people. This is the condition, however, that exists at present and one that grows worse with the constantly increasing Mexican population. This condition has been rebelled against but each objection has been met with the assertion that it cannot be helped. There is nothing else to do.²⁶

The author suggested that one solution would be to provide better housing and health inspections to insure sanitary living conditions. But a more drastic solution was to insist on segregated facilities:

It is possible to provide separate school facilities for these children. If there is not a separate building that they can have they can be given a separate room or rooms and this protection given to the bulk of the student body. Such a relief of this kind is possible and should be demanded by the parents of the children concerned. This is not a color question but it is a moral and a sanitary one and should be dealt with firmly. The writer speaks from experience having had the same problems to deal with for a period of four years.²⁷

The editors of El Cosmopolita also covered the Influenza epidemic and for the benefit of their readers, listed fifteen methods to avoid infection and ten methods for treatment in case of infection. They were aware that theaters, cinemas, and schools were closed as a hygienic measure, but were unaware that the Anglo community considered segregating Mexican school children as a direct result of the epidemic.²⁸

²⁶"The Influenza Situation," Argentine Republic, 18 October 1918, 1, 4.

²⁷Ibid., 4. These substantial quotes were provided because they clearly make the connection between race and hygiene, and would not appear in such detail in later discussions. During the critical periods of 1922-24, when the creation of the "Mexican" school was discussed, the Argentine Republic either did not publish or did not submit copies of their papers to the Kansas Historical Society for filming. The Kansan did cover this period, but in much less detail that would have revealed Anglo thinking of the time.

²⁸"La 'Spanish Influenza'," El Cosmopolita (Kansas City, Kans.), 19 October 1918, 2; "La Influenza Amenaza Neuvamente a Kansas City," El Cosmopolita (Kansas City, Kans.), 30 November 1918, 1.

The connection between race, hygiene and education would not be made in the extant newspaper accounts in later years. The Croatian community of Kansas City experienced many deaths in 1918. Considering that the Influenza epidemic ceased in the Kansas City area at the beginning of 1919, the mortal connection between sanitation and race could not have remained an issue.²⁹ Despite the disclaimer that it was “not a color question,” continued segregation on racial grounds clearly was not a question of a factually-based fear of contagion. Anglos would continue to find other reasons to justify segregation, and race was clearly prominent among them.

The Santa Fe Railroad responded to the epidemic by setting up boxcars as a makeshift hospital and provided nurses for Mexican workers. Heat was provided to the boxcars, an amenity never provided to standard Mexican housing of this type.³⁰ A local doctor, David E. Clopper, in his position as physician for the Santa Fe railroad, gave talks to workers on hygiene during the epidemic.³¹ Based on his treatment of members of the Mexican community, young and old, he doubtless formed impressions of his own concerning the hygienic habits of the Mexican community.³² He would later become, in his role as a prominent community advocate, a central figure in the creation of an exclusive school for Mexicans in Argentine.

All Mexican children were put in basement rooms in Emerson school in Argentine and John J. Ingalls School in Armourdale when classes resumed in the fall of 1918.³³ Additional evidence of separate facilities appeared in 1920, when a report for the Emerson school on

²⁹Loren L. Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Kansas Ethnic Council, 2000), 193.

³⁰“Carlins & Couplin’s,” Argentine Republic, 25 October 1918, 5.

³¹Ibid; City Directory of Kansas City, Kansas Kansas City, Mo.: Hoyer Directory Co., 1920, 1925, 1929, 1932.

³²“Loses all of the Toes on One Foot,” Argentine Republic, 14 June 1918, 1. This article described an accident to a “small Mexican boy” and named Clopper as the attending doctor.

³³“State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5.

writing proficiency specified that the “2d and 3d grades, Mexican, received a mark of ‘Excellent.’”³⁴ Although the progress report demonstrated that young Mexican students could learn English quickly, language proficiency did not allow them to be admitted into Anglo schools until the ninth grade. For the next school year, two teachers were assigned to the first through third Mexican grades at Emerson, but no class sizes were given.³⁵ A later report which listed teachers and class size, showed that one teacher for all eight grades was assigned to forty Mexican students. A teacher for the Mexican children was also assigned at the John J. Ingalls school in Armourdale for the school year of 1921.³⁶ The initial segregation of Mexican students in basement rooms was sufficient to placate the fears of parents of Argentine school children. The student-teacher ratio of one-to-forty and the lumping of all eight grades together regardless of proficiency in English, established a pattern of inferior, race-based segregation for all Mexican students.

Thoughts on race did not exist in a vacuum in Argentine. Eugenics or Social Darwinism, was a popular movement in the early twentieth century. Heredity was the key component for those thinkers concerned with American social progress. The increasing racial diversity of the United States population created concerns that racial mixing would diminish American stock. Its influence was found in Kansas. Under the auspices of the American Eugenics Society, and other organizations with a eugenics agenda, traveling exhibits appeared at the Kansas Free Fair first in 1920 and again in 1929.³⁷ The event was publicized in advance in the Argentine

³⁴“Emerson School,” Argentine Republic, 13 February 1920, 6.

³⁵“Show Increased Enrollment,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 24 September 1920, 1.

³⁶“The Schools Open,” Republic (Kansas City, Kans.), 16 September 1921, 1.

³⁷Steven Selden, Inheriting the Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America, Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series, no. 23 (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 1-2, 23-31.

newspaper, and readers were encouraged to participate.³⁸ Eugenics fit in under the general category of Biology, Physiology, and Hygiene for programs given at the Kansas State Teachers Association. The listed subjects included a heavy emphasis on eugenics applied to social problems and immigration.³⁹

In Kansas City, Dr. Clopper, in a talk on education with the local Hawthorne Club, presented his views on eugenics, stressing that “we need not more babies but better [*sic*] babies.” The reporter went on to mention that Clopper believed that laws would eventually “prevent reproduction by unfit individuals and thereby eliminate much crime and insanity.”⁴⁰ Eugenics in the twenties was often used to rationalize a “racist order.”⁴¹ The same Dr. Clopper, who lectured Santa Fe workers on hygiene and local mothers on supervising their children’s play, also appeared to hold the views of Social Darwinists of the times. While he left no testimony verifying his exact role, the written record indicates that he attended meetings and discussions on the issue of educating Mexican students, as a member of the Seventh Ward Improvement Association and its successor the Argentine Activities Association.

Dr. Clopper was also the only prominent Argentine figure named as a member of the notoriously racist Ku Klux Klan.⁴² Based on the oral history of Mexican-Americans who remembered the circumstances under which segregation was effected, the Ku Klux Klan was perceived to have had considerable influence.⁴³ It would be difficult to confirm the Klan

³⁸“Fitter Families for Future Firesides,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 27 August 1920, 2.

³⁹“Preliminary Program,” Kansas Teacher & Western School Journal, 17 (August-September 1923): 42.

⁴⁰“Dr. Clopper Addresses Hawthorne Club,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 31 March 1922, 1.

⁴¹Selden, Inheriting the Shame, 15.

⁴²Robert Oppenheimer Interviews, Joe Amayo et al. Trabajo y Cultura Project. Lawrence, Kans.: Kenneth Spencer Library, University of Kansas, 21.

⁴³Loren L. Taylor, A Short Ethnic History of Wyandotte County (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas Ethnic Council, 1995), 2: 260-261.

membership for Clopper or others who were also members of the P.T.A. groups or the Argentine Activities Association; given that Klan members wore hoods and concealed their identities from the public. When an anti-Klan campaign was initiated by the Kansas City police department in 1921, police surveillance noted the presence of “prominent citizens” at Klan meetings.⁴⁴ The Klan, moreover, was very active and growing throughout the Midwest from 1922 to 1925, initiating 40,000 people in Kansas from 1915 to 1944.⁴⁵ As it grew in membership, the organization also broadened its racist appeal by denouncing immigrant groups, as well as newly freed African-Americans. The Klan moved into eastern Kansas in 1922, and initially concealed its activities by meeting as the “Sunflower Club” of Wyandotte County. In 1923, five Kansas City men sought to incorporate the Klan in Kansas, in order to combat the state’s attempt to oust the Klan as a foreign corporation.⁴⁶

That the Klan was very active in Wyandotte County Kansas during the early 1920s was clear. One thousand people representing local chapters in Wyandotte and Johnson counties met at the Woodford Manor Estate, east of Overland Park, to initiate two hundred new members. One hundred in the audience “wore the Klan uniform but were not masked,” which was an example of either their brazenness or the level of public acceptance of their ideas and activities.⁴⁷ The pages of the Kansas City Kansan during 1921-24 were filled with stories of violent Klan skirmishes in other states in the Midwest and the South and reports of William Allen White's anti-Klan campaign for Governor in 1924. Yet in Kansas City the Klan appeared to

⁴⁴Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History, 96.

⁴⁵Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930, The Urban Life in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) 162, 237. These numbers are far below the 300,000 figure cited in Taylor’s The Short Ethnic History, vol. 1 on page 261. The figure was revised in Taylor’s Consolidated Ethnic History to 200,000. (p. 95)

⁴⁶Lila Lee Jones, The Ku Klux Klan in Eastern Kansas during the 1920s, Emporia State Research Studies, vol. 23 no.3 (Emporia, Kans.: Emporia State College,1975), 10-11,13.

⁴⁷“Klan Holds Big Initiation,” Kansas City Kansan, 31 August 1924, 1.

have reached some level of respect. In 1922, hooded Klansmen interrupted a church service in Rosedale to donate \$25 to the pastor along with a letter of appreciation “for his services to the community.” The letter was read aloud to the cheers of the congregation.⁴⁸

Wyandotte Klan No. 5 donated \$200 to Wilson High School in 1923, which needed money for teachers’ salaries. In the enclosed letter, the Klan stated their wish to “further the good work of the school.” The donation was “accepted by the school authorities and parents.”⁴⁹ While the contribution did not prove a direct link between the Klan and their influence on school affairs, it did indicate that school officials were not afraid of any backlash from a link to the Klan. Whether the Klan was instrumental in initiating the “miniature race riot,” in which four Mexican students were threatened with violence by Anglo parents at the Old Major Hudson School in 1924, or behind the movement to segregate Mexican children, is difficult to ascertain.⁵⁰ Of far greater significance was the atmosphere in Kansas in the 1920s, in which the Klan increased its numbers and discrimination against Mexicans expanded.

As the eugenics movement and the KKK flourished, efforts to discriminate against Mexicans were not likely to raise widespread objections. Mexicans in Kansas City were loosely organized at this time, and had not begun to form the mutual aid societies that would later develop. Early *mutualistas* appeared in Kansas City, Missouri, prior to World War II, which eventually aided Argentine Mexicans, and Kansas side societies followed.⁵¹ Meanwhile, Anglo educators in Kansas increasingly adopted the rhetoric of the nationwide “Americanization” movement which tended to disguise the segregationist intent of local school boards.

⁴⁸“Klansmen Give Pastor \$25,” Kansas City Kansan, 11 September 1922, 1.

⁴⁹“Parents Contribute to Save Wilson H.S.,” Kansas City Kansan, 30 January 1923, 3.

⁵⁰“Solves Racial Problem,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 September 1924, 10. A search of the Kansas City Kansan of the week prior to the report revealed no separate account of the riot.

⁵¹Laird, “Argentine, Kansas,” 52-54, 196. The *Unión Mexicana Benito Juárez* was formed in 1914 and was followed by the *Unión Cultural Mexicana* in 1924. Both originated in the Westside neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri. The *Sociedad Morelos* was active by 1930 in Argentine.

Americanization was a social-work based movement that gained popularity in the United States beginning in the early part of the twentieth century.⁵² In stark contrast to the race-based views of Eugenicists or the Ku Klux Klan, advocating Americanization simply viewed Mexicans as another foreign-born, non-native English speaking group, similar to Croatians or Poles. The goal of these programs was to turn these new groups into loyal Americans.

In a pamphlet prepared by the Kansas City Kansas Schools, the Chamber of Commerce and the University of Kansas, the design of such a program for the city was described. "The problem" was defined in terms of Mexican employees in packing plants, whose numbers grew as European groups stopped immigrating during and after World War I. In the next paragraph, the separate room at the Ingalls School in Armourdale was mentioned in terms that would lead a reader to believe that Americanization and not segregation was the goal: "one whole room is given over to the Mexican children, and there is a considerable sprinkling of Mexican children in the grades at Cooper and Bancroft."⁵³ The reality was that the Armourdale parents demanded their separate instruction, and had no concerns for the Americanization program.⁵⁴ One scholar maintained that the only substantive Americanization program for Mexicans began in 1921, and was administered by the Mexican Methodist Mission in Argentine, not by any of the organizations who were in charge of the program described in the pamphlet.⁵⁵

In the same spirit of Americanization, one of the few references to the language issue

⁵²George J. Sánchez, "'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929," in Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 284-297.

⁵³Kansas State Historical Society, "Program of Americanization, Kansas City Kansas, 1920-1921: A Program of Americanization for Kansas City, Kansas, Under the Direction of the Kansas City Public Schools, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and the University of Kansas." It was unusual for the authors of the pamphlet to omit any mention of Mexican students in the Argentine district, who in 1921 were educated in the basement of the Emerson school.

⁵⁴"State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row," Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5.

⁵⁵Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 191.

in all of the primary materials appeared in a report from the Ingalls school: “The Mexican room has seventy-two little people who are struggling with the task of learning the American language.”⁵⁶ Struggling perhaps because their teacher spoke no Spanish, was certainly not trained in teaching English as a second language because no such program existed, and probably enforced a no Spanish-rule on the playground in order to promote language learning.⁵⁷ The student teacher ratio of one-to-seventy-two would change, but absent from this report was that the Mexican classroom at Ingalls was located in the basement, an over-crowded space reserved for students, bathrooms, and a coal room.⁵⁸

Mexican children in one Kansas City school, Cooper, situated in the West Bottoms neighborhood adjacent to the Kansas River, were educated along with other foreign groups. The evidence confirms that there was indeed a true Americanization program for all foreign students in this school. Mexican students were not segregated, presumably because the parents of the Anglo children did not demand it. The Cooper School was a notable exception to the general practice of segregated education. Interestingly, when it closed in 1939, Mexican students attended the integrated Riverview School.⁵⁹ Thus, segregated education for Mexican students in Kansas City was not “rigidly enforced” by the school board.⁶⁰ Local pressure on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis coerced the school board to make these arrangements. The contiguous neighborhoods of Armourdale, Argentine, and Rosedale were nonetheless unified in their approach to educating Mexican students and would use any type of pressure

⁵⁶“John J. Ingalls School Notes,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 18 March 1921, 4.

⁵⁷Later oral history from students in segregated schools in the forties confirmed this practice.

⁵⁸Kansas City Kansas Schools. “John J. Ingalls School History, Architectural Floor Plans.”

⁵⁹Kansas City Schools, “Cooper School History.”

⁶⁰Michael M. Smith, “Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920,” Perspectives in Mexican American Studies, 2 (1989): 29-58. This was Smith’s opinion based on his reading of Laird.

available to force the school board to meet their demands.⁶¹

In the description of Americanization classes for foreign men and women, ethnicity was often confused with race: "The predominating racial elements are Mexican, Jew, Croatian and Pole."⁶² As was typical in other Americanization programs, the plan covered adults and children, but children were particularly important because they were assumed to have the greatest "influence over their parents."⁶³ This pamphlet did not discuss in depth any theory behind whether or not foreign-born children had anything to gain from integrated education with Anglo students. Each targeted group of foreigners were going to receive Americanization training in their own group. Americanization programs throughout the United States carried the underlying assumption that newcomers were not fit to assimilate into general society without remedial training.

An editorial in El Cosmopolita conveyed the ambivalence of the Mexican community toward Americanization programs. While addressing a rumor that Mexicans who did not pursue American citizenship would be deported, the writer questioned the need to abandon plans to return to Mexico. He criticized the United States for scorning Mexicans, and portraying them as "bandits" and "degenerates" in movies. He concluded that when the government treated Mexicans the same as other foreigners, it would be an individual decision to pursue American citizenship.⁶⁴

Despite the good intentions of city officials and educators, the simple fact remained that adult Anglos in Kansas City did not want to welcome other racial groups into general society and did not care to Americanize Mexicans. An incident that occurred in an Argentine restaurant

⁶¹ Armourdale and Argentine are joined by viaducts over the Kansas River and Rosedale is directly east of Argentine. The West Bottoms is east of the Riverview section, which is north of Armourdale.

⁶² Kansas State Historical Society, "Program of Americanization," 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁴ Ariel Nafarrete, "La Americanizacion," El Cosmopolita, 11 October 1919, 2.

provided a good example that Americanized or not, Mexicans were excluded based on their race. In 1922, two Mexican-American men tried to be served, and were told they had to eat in the kitchen. In protest, one of the men claimed that he was an American. That argument carried no weight with the woman in charge, who called the police when the men refused to leave. They were arrested and ultimately fined \$50 each, presumably for their protest, although the article's subtitle claimed they started a "rough house."⁶⁵ This type of discrimination was not sanctioned by any law, yet was supported by police and the court in Kansas City.⁶⁶ This indicated a conscious effort and agreement among Anglos in Argentine to exclude Mexicans from Anglo society. The pressure to do more than put Mexican students into basement rooms would increase as more Mexican children attended schools. During the period 1922-1926 Anglo hostility toward Mexican students only increased.

⁶⁵"Mexicans Fined in Row," Kansas City Kansan, 26 August 1922, 1.

⁶⁶According to the Kansas Laws of 1874, and still in force in 1949, any "trustees" of a "school of public instruction" or "managers in charge of "an establishment that requires a license, who makes "a distinction on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude," would "be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor." It can be presumed that any attempt to prosecute white Kansans under this law would have caused its repeal. See Bernard D. Reams, Jr. and Paul E. Wilson, eds., Segregation and the Fourteenth Amendment in the States: A Survey of State Segregation Laws 1865-1953; Prepared for United States Supreme Court in re: Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (Buffalo: William S. Hein, 1975), 187-188.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION PROVIDED TO MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS, 1918-1951

Residents of Kansas City displayed a variety of concerns about the Mexican community as it developed. Popular constructions of Mexican masculinity and femininity deeply influenced attitudes toward school-age children. Anglos perceived Mexican males to be violent and unpredictable and Mexican females as larcenous. Mexican women were viewed as chiefly responsible for perpetuating all superstitious beliefs and other negative attributes of the Mexican race. The Anglo community's concerns conveyed the strong belief that the behavior of adult Mexicans would be transferred to their children. The popularity of the Eugenics movement would put this concern into quasi-scientific theory. When forced to deal with Mexican students, educators in Kansas City were faced with reconciling Americanization goals with the influence of the Ku Klux Klan on their patrons.

Much of this chapter will not only describe segregation and its effects but also argue that segregation was a consequence of racism, in the form of pressure from Anglo parents, and did not stem from any real pedagogical, language or other social concern. Evidence drawn from newspaper reports, testimonial inconsistencies of the Kansas City school officials, and materials from the Department of State in Washington, D.C., where Mexican consuls lodged complaints, will clarify that the source of segregation was solely racism.

This chapter will demonstrate the blatant inequality of segregation of Mexican students, in spite of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Expenditures for Anglo schools compared to the Mexican facilities show that the school system intentionally aimed to provide an inferior education. An examination of the physical quality of the schools shows that the Mexican students had substandard facilities. The school system did not provide kindergarten, playgrounds, and summer schools, all of which were standard features of Anglo schools. This chapter will also

review the segregation of Mexican students that occurred elsewhere in Kansas, in large cities such as Topeka and Wichita, and smaller cities such as Hutchinson and Newton. In comparison, the segregation practiced in Kansas City was particularly harsh.

Given the deeply entrenched racism among the Anglo residents of the Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale neighborhoods, the school board's actions reflected the struggle to reconcile the request for segregated education for Mexican students with the expense involved in a tri-racial school system. Kansas City's meager school records do not provide a mono-causal explanation for why Anglo parents demanded that Mexican students be separated from Anglo students. Perhaps an example from Dodge City, Kansas, from the late 1940s reflects the thinking and actions of the Anglo community and the school board. John A. Rodriguez recalled that when he was in the second grade, his teacher hung him on a coat hook and said, "You Mexicans are just wasting the taxpayers' money."¹ The irritation of a tax burden was compounded by the extra expense of segregation, making it difficult to determine what was more important to Anglo taxpayers in Kansas City.

Kansans believed that African-Americans should be educated, but there were scant references to how Anglos in Kansas City felt about Mexican-Americans.² One local newspaper article described the financial state of the school system, and made an oblique reference to Mexican workers: "there is not a single employer of labor who does not desire a certain degree of intelligence among his workers; it is far preferable to the class which can be advanced but little on account of a lack of education."³ Another newspaper report, written during the Influenza epidemic in 1918, referred to required school attendance for Anglo children, and implied that the

¹Irene Ruiz Interviews, John A. Rodriguez (19 May 1977), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.

²James C. Carper, "The Popular Ideology of Segregated Schooling: Attitudes Toward the Education of Blacks in Kansas, 1854-1900," *Kansas History* 1 (Winter 1978): 254-265.

³"Delay for Library," *The Republic (Kansas City, Kans.)*, 21 December 1916, 1.

education of Mexican children was compulsory as well.⁴

Mexican students attended either the Fiske or Ingalls Schools in Armourdale; Emerson, and Stanley schools in Argentine or Catholic schools such as St. John the Evangelist, in the period after 1915 and before the fall of 1923.⁵ The first mention of any Mexican child attending an Argentine school appeared in November 1916. In a newspaper report on various accidents that befell students, Juan Diaz was referred to as “a Mexican boy attending the Emerson school.” Juan needed medical attention because he was injured while playing with another student, who may or may not have caused his injury. Given that the race of the other boy was omitted, it seems likely that he was an Anglo. This kind of interaction on the playground of Emerson school would prove to be a sore point for Anglo parents and was named as one of the reasons for the increased push for a segregated school. It was perhaps notable that in the other two incidents reported that day, Anglo boys were seen by doctors, while Juan Diaz was given “local treatment.”⁶

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the subject of separate education for Mexicans students had been discussed at a meeting of the Seventh Ward Improvement Association. Reports that appeared in the Argentine newspaper about their meetings revolved mostly around the paving of streets and other structural improvements.⁷ This organization frequently came into conflict with City Hall on Minnesota Avenue, and had a reputation for getting its way. Perhaps this stems from the fact that until 1909, when it was annexed by Kansas City, Argentine was an

⁴“The Influenza Situation,” Argentine Republic, 18 October 1918, 1.

⁵Judith A.F. Laird, “Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905-1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975), 193; Loren L. Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Kansas Ethnic Council, 2000), 457, 467-468.

⁶“Two School Accidents,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 23 November 1916, 1.

⁷“Big Feed is Planned,” The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.), 30 November 1917, 1.

autonomous town and in control of its own resources.⁸ The Seventh Ward group was eventually replaced by the Argentine Activities Association (A.A.A.) and a membership drive was initiated in October 1919. The first president was the Klansman Dr. David E. Clopper. Clopper was noted for galvanizing city hall to keep Argentine improvements on track.⁹ Other members included Grant S. Landrey, the former editor of the local newspaper, Ernest W. Wells, the current editor, Dr. Karl C. Haas, and Frank L. Schlagle.¹⁰ All of these Argentine citizens would have a part to play in the segregated education of Mexican children.

As editors, Landrey was responsible for printing that Pancho Villa was a “greaser” in 1916, and Wells reported on the alleged hygienic status of Mexican schoolchildren in 1918. Doctors Clopper and Haas would represent the A.A.A. in negotiations with the school board. Schlagle was the principal of Argentine High School in 1919, and would become the assistant to Superintendent Matthew E. Pearson in 1924. He became Superintendent in 1932, a position he would retain until 1962.¹¹ Evidence shows that he was instrumental in maintaining segregated education for Mexican-Americans, until he was pressured to institute gradual integration after World War II.¹² Schlagle was the link from the early era of segregated education for Mexican students and post-war efforts by the Mexican community to desegregate the school system. It

⁸“Argentine Fetes its Heroes of Gridiron,” Kansas City Kansan, 24 December 1925, 4. The Mayor stated that “the Argentine district usually got what it went after. He expressed surprise that the city hall was not in the Argentine District.”; Donald H. Simmons, ed., Centennial History of Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas, 1880-1980: Includes the History of Argentine, Turner and Shawnee Township (Kansas City, Kans.: Simmons Funeral Home, 1980), 40.

⁹“City Board Moves to Keep Promises,” Kansas City Kansan, 11 August, 1922, 1. Clopper lead an A.A.A. delegation to this meeting and the writer claimed that the city was “stung to action by a vitriolic attack” from Clopper.

¹⁰“Argentine Activities Association is Organized,” Argentine Republic, 23 October 1919, 1; “103 Paid Members,” Argentine Republic, 6 November 1919, 1.

¹¹Nellie McGuinn, “The Kansas City Kansas School System, 1819-1954.” (Kansas City, Kans.: Board of Education, s.d.), 404, 470.

¹²Irene Ruiz Interviews, Ladislao Lopez (27 June 1978), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.

took more than thirty years for him to soften his views, and then only in response to Mexican-American activism. The official records and statements from the school board to the press, and to United States and Mexican diplomats always attempted to disavow institutionalized discrimination and were careful not to contain any educator's views that betrayed racism. But in confrontations with Mexican-Americans in 1938, 1947, and 1950, Schlagle's personal racism nonetheless emerged. Thus, the school board clearly shared the racist views of the school district patrons from the beginning.

The A.A.A. not only concerned itself with improvements in Argentine, but with any activity in the Mexican community. Complaints were heard regarding a new rooming house for Mexicans and a committee formed to investigate the "character" of said rooming house.¹³ The meeting's report did not state the nature of the "character" flaw in question. These rooming houses provided decent housing for single men and represented a great improvement over boxcar housing. Taking in boarders also provided an income for the families that ran them in Kansas City. In the Mexican community in Chicago, similarly styled rooming houses also provided prostitution services, which perhaps raised concerns in Kansas City.¹⁴ The Anglo community's suspicion of any attempt by Mexicans to improve their housing situation in Argentine was evident in their unsubstantiated concern. No subsequent report on the rooming house appeared in the newspaper.

School attendance was increasing in the twenties and was reported often without respect to race.¹⁵ Relief from increasing numbers of Mexican students was gained in 1921, when an economic downturn resulted in the deportation of at least 108 Mexican children with

¹³"Ruby will be Paved," Argentine Republic, 20 February 1919, 1.

¹⁴Valerie M. Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 95-96, 102.

¹⁵"Show Increased Enrollment," Kansas City Kansas Republic, 24 September 1920, 1.; "The Schools Open," Republic (Kansas City, Kans.), 16 September 1921, 1.

their parents in June.¹⁶ These events may have been sufficient to delay further plans for a separate school, because Emerson school lost sixty-five children when enrollment was counted the following September. Superintendent Pearson reported that most of them were “Mexican children who returned with their parents to Mexico.”¹⁷ Pearson could not have been ignorant of the circumstances under which these students returned to Mexico, yet he reported these facts as if they were a normal event for immigrant Mexicans. His main concern, as usual, revolved around the overall numbers of Mexican students and how they created pressure for a separate school. The growing numbers of Mexican students in the basement of the Emerson School would eventually become unmanageable, but in 1921, deportations of Mexican families delayed the process.

In one editorial, the writer, probably editor E.W. Wells, cast his discussion of contemporary social problems within a global racial context: “The great world problem is indeed one that is a question of races and their existence and locally we cannot live to ourselves and escape the influence and the direct effect of vicious conditions existing elsewhere.” The writer then went on to encourage educational meetings, such as a recent one at the Argentine library, which was where the A.A.A. held their regular meetings.¹⁸ It was probable that discussions on the presence of Mexican students took place at meetings like this in 1922, since the new immigration constituted the leading racial issue of the day. The phrase “vicious conditions existing elsewhere” likely referred to the belief that Mexicans recreated their living conditions wherever they lived.

Civic groups from Argentine and Armourdale formally initiated an effort for a separate

¹⁶“Santa Fe to Deport All Mexicans Named by Mayor,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 3 June 1921, 4; “To Return Mexicans,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 24 June 1921, 4; “To Deport Mexicans,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 1 July 1921, 3.

¹⁷“K.C. Schools Show 633 Gain in a Year,” Kansas City Kansan, 21 September 1921, 9.

¹⁸“What is the Thing We Lack,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 29 September, 1922, 2.

school on October 11, 1922. The fact that Argentine was acting together with Armourdale was not surprising, since the two communities shared viaducts over the Kansas River, and often lobbied City Hall for improvements jointly.¹⁹ Representatives from the Emerson School Parent-Teachers Association, the A.A.A., and the school board planned to meet with the Mexican consul “to solicit his help in putting the proposition before the Mexican residents of the district. Members of the Parent-Teacher associations object to their children mixing with the Mexicans on the playground.”²⁰ The use of the word “mixing” was critical to Anglo thinking, but what fears were associated with mixing?

Anglo parents were well aware of the level of segregation that was required to keep African-Americans away from their children, a process of racial separation that started early, at the elementary level. Opinions on the hygienic habits of Mexican children had not substantially changed since 1917, but it is doubtful that hygienic concerns, that may or may not have been based in fact, account for the escalation in racial fear that led to segregated schools. The evidence strongly suggests instead that segregation arose from a popular perception that contact between Anglos and Mexican children would lead to further relationships. The fear of “race suicide” through intermarriage was a common component of eugenicist thought of the time. Mexicans were omitted from the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 and those who supported and opposed their exclusion expressed themselves in congressional hearings. Prominent among them were representatives of employers of Mexicans.²¹ As part of an investigation of the issue, theories were propounded that continued immigration of “less valuable stock” such as Mexicans, would eventually “lower the average of the race value of the

¹⁹“Boost Interest in South Side,” Argentine Republic, 17 December 1920, 3.

²⁰“Seek Mexican School,” Kansas City Kansan, 11 October 1922, 7.

²¹Lynne M. Getz, “Biological Determinism in the Making of Immigration Policy in the 1920s,” International Social Science Review 70 no. 1-2 (1995): 26-33.

white population of the United States.”²² Local opinion on the matter favored restrictions on “peon” Mexican immigration, citing the fact that the movement of Mexican men into industrial work created difficulties for “native” workmen.²³

The fear of intermarriage would be confirmed in later years by the experiences of Mexican students in integrated schools beyond the eighth grade, and by the violent attempts of Anglo parents to prevent integration at the junior and high school levels in 1924. Ladislao Lopez grew up in the Armourdale area, and attended high school with Anglos in the early 1930s, as one of the few Mexican students at that level. He recalled that he was mostly “avoided and ignored” by Anglo boys and Anglo girls’ reactions were either extremely “negative or positive.” He developed an interest in an Anglo girl, and was invited to her home by her brother. His interest was quickly suppressed by the Anglo parents, when they saw that he was Mexican. Other Mexican students who became friends with Anglo students were banned from further visits to Anglo homes by Argentine parents in the 1940s.²⁴ The fear of interracial dating was not a phenomenon confined to Kansas City. In Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1926, a relationship between a 19-year-old Mexican boy and 14-year-old Anglo girl heightened fears of race mixing. The Mexican boy was fined \$5 for disturbing the peace for not breaking off the relationship when asked to do so by the mother of the Anglo girl. He was told by the judge to pursue girls of his own race.²⁵

²²Robert F. Foerster, The Racial Problems Involved in Immigration from Latin America and the West Indies to the United States: A Report Submitted to the Secretary of Labor (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 48, 57. Foerster was an economics professor at Princeton, who examined the economic benefits of short-term Mexican labor versus the racial consequences if they were to intermarry with the white population.

²³“Moving in from Mexico,” Kansas City Kansan, 1 September 1926, 10. The writer allowed that Mexican workers were suitable for agricultural work and complained that they did not return to Mexico when that work was done.

²⁴Irene Ruiz Interviews, Ladislao Lopez; Irene Ruiz Interviews, Elvira Ramirez, Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.

²⁵Kathie Hinnen, “Mexican Immigrants to Hutchinson, Kansas, 1905-1940: How a Temporary

The next step in planning the separate Mexican school came less than a week later. Dr. Karl C. Haas, representing the A.A.A. and Nancy Bishop, of the Emerson P.T.A., met with the Mexican consul and obtained his “sanction” for a separate school in Argentine. Mrs. Bishop mentioned that the school board “promised a school ... near the Mexican mission in the Argentine district.” According to the Kansas City Kansan: “crowded conditions due to the 100 Mexican children in attendance at the Emerson school led the Parent-Teacher association to take steps to bring about relief.” The language used in this report implied that this was being done for the benefit of the Mexican children, who would get a “school of their own” with the blessing of the Mexican consul.²⁶ The article did not state why the Mexican consul approved the separate school.

It had been disclosed in the press less than a week earlier that Anglo parents objected to their children sharing the same playground with Mexican children. The tone of the complaints implied that crowded conditions for the students would be alleviated by a separate school. One hundred students attended class in a basement where they shared two bathrooms, coal, and boiler rooms, with the only true classroom a 19" x 29' room designated as a kindergarten.²⁷ The “relief” sought by Anglo parents, and mentioned in the previous article, could have two meanings, since the impact of one hundred Mexican students in the basement meant that the kindergarten students had to move to an outside building. This was a more manageable arrangement when Mexican students were forty in number, as they were in 1921. Increasing this number by two-and-a-half times meant that controlling incidents of “mixing” on the playground was much more difficult. Apparently the relief in this case was motivated by the desire of Anglo parents to keep their children separated from Mexican students throughout the

Haven Became Home” (master’s thesis, Southwest Missouri State University, 1998), 59.

²⁶“Mexican School Planned,” Kansas City Kansan, October 16, 1922, 1.

²⁷Kansas City Kansas Schools. “Emerson School History, Architectural Floor Plans.”

school day.

The theme of relief and who it was to benefit was clarified in a newspaper report two months later. The Argentine civic groups gained the confirmed consent of the school board on December 2, 1922, for a separate school for the Mexican children. This report claimed that this was the culmination of a “four-year fight” first started in the fall of 1918 by the Emerson P.T.A. and subsequently taken up as a project by the A.A.A. The A.A.A. was given credit for having lobbied to get the school board’s consent to build the school. Representing the A.A.A. at this meeting was Dr. David Clopper, former president of that organization and former Mayor of Argentine during 1903-1905.²⁸

The Emerson parents had wanted a separate school in 1918 and the basement solution was a compromise. As Mexican students increased their numbers, the parents had a stronger case to justify the expense. How much of a “fight” there was between the civic groups and the school board and how constant it was over the four years, cannot be discerned from surviving records. The plan at this time was to build the school near the Santa Fe railroad yards, which would be one story, have four rooms and house approximately 150 students, mostly from Emerson.²⁹ These plans suggested that Armourdale parents were lobbying for a separate school, and that Mexican students from other neighborhoods schools would also attend the Mexican only school.

Three days later, at a meeting of the school board, important numbers had changed. What had been 150 Mexican students was now 125 and the size of the building would be three rooms, not four. The original room to student ratio of thirty-seven was now increased to forty-one. The board also decided to schedule a conference with the Mexican consul and officials

²⁸“School for Mexican Children is Assured,” Kansas City Kansan, 12 December, 1922, 6; Simmons, Centennial History of Argentine, 90.

²⁹“School for Mexican Children is Assured,” Kansas City Kansan, 12 December, 1922, 6.

from Santa Fe to obtain assurances regarding the employment of the fathers of Mexican children.³⁰ That they did not want to erect a school that would not be cost effective was evident in the planning of the school, the staffing, and subsequent lack of improvements throughout the years. The school was simply referred to as the Mexican School, until it was named the Clara Barton School in 1924.

By February 1923, the building was not completed as originally planned and the A.A.A. designated the school's completion as a project in the year ahead.³¹ Laird stated that the Spanish Club of the Argentine district raised the construction funds, yet an announcement that appeared in the Kansas City Kansan gave the source as surplus funds from the Kansas City Kansas Board of Education.³²

The tone and the content of this announcement revealed the economic concerns associated with educating Mexican children. The article stated that the building was built for \$7000 from surplus funds. The surplus was created through savings in various departments rather than the creation of a special budget line. So in a sense the school was built through taxpayers' money, since taxes supported the school districts. To state that the "taxpayers are not burdened" would seem accurate, given that no additional levy was needed. But to say that

³⁰"2 School Building Contracts are Let," Kansas City Kansan, 5 December 1922, 3; "To Talk Mexican School," Kansas City Kansan, 11 December 1922, 2.

³¹"Argentine Activities Association Moving Spirit in Era of Prosperity Now on in District," Kansas City Kansan, 4 February 1923, 3C.

³²Laird, "Argentine, Kansas,"193; "Fund Surplus Pays for Mexican School," Kansas City Kansan, 23 September 1923, 1-B. Laird also stated that the Clara Barton School began operations in 1924, an error which was repeated by Oppenheimer and Mendoza who both cited Laird. Edwin Shutt correctly put the school's start date as 1923 in the Centennial History of Argentine, 20, after failing to mention the school at all in a seventeen page-section on schools in his master's thesis. See Edwin Dale Shutt, "Silver City, a History of the Argentine Community of Kansas City Kansas" (master's thesis, Emporia Kansas State College, 1976.) The school was called the Mexican School for its first year of existence. In the annual lists of grade school assignments that appeared in the September 5, 1923, Kansas City Kansan, Miriam Cheney, Irene Beazell and Rachel Wylie were listed next to "Mexican." Laird also misconstrued the role of the Spanish Club. Her source was a November 30, 1924, Kansas City Kansan article that reported that the Club had started a "school fund," probably for supplies and activities. The school building was completed in the summer of 1923, so the club could not have "raised funds for the new building," as Laird stated.

the school was built “with no expense to the taxpayers” was not entirely correct. The message to the white population was the same: the “Mexican problem” had been taken care of by school authorities, who were responding to the wishes of the Anglo population. The article went on to state the architecture of the school was “white stucco, in mission style, very appropriate for the Mexican students,” which implied that the students would feel very much at home and not be disturbed that they were not wanted in white schools.³³

The source of information for this article was a superintendent of the Board of Education, Lawrence Browne, and the tone conveyed must have been reassuring to white readers. The neighborhood in which the school was built was tagged by officials as a “settlement,” later referred to as the “box car district.” The article mentioned that “many students give ... Box car No. So-and-so” as their addresses.³⁴ Perhaps the only purpose of mentioning the living conditions would be to add another justification to the need for the Mexican students to receive segregated education as poor, lower-class people. Cultural constructions of class in this case reinforced popular constructions of race and gender. No white students lived in supposedly unsanitary boxcars without utilities.

At the beginning of the 1923/24 school year, Superintendent of the Kansas City School district, M.E. Pearson, stated that “Mexican children of all grades in the Argentine District will attend the new Mexican School at 24th and Cheyenne.” An examination of the teachers' assignments that appeared in the Kansas City Kansan that same day listed the teachers for the school. No separate assignments to teach Mexican children in the Kansas City district appear, almost implying that there were no other Mexican children in the entire district.³⁵ Mexican students were educated in the basements of other schools in the district.

³³“Fund Surplus Pays for Mexican School,” Kansas City Kansan, 23 September 1923, 1-B.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵“School Districts of City are Announced,” Kansas City Kansan, 5 September 1923, 6. “Grade

What was not reported at this time was the fact that Armourdale parents and their “Mexican problem” had somehow been left out of the plans, even though they were initially involved in talks in October 1922. Mexican workers in Armourdale primarily worked in the packing plants and experienced the same kind of discrimination in Armourdale. Their children were segregated in the basements of Fiske and Ingalls schools. This started sometime in 1918, after Mexican children were put in the basement of the Emerson school in Argentine. Ingalls was the primary location for Mexican students, and if there were too many there, they were transferred and also transported to Fiske in Armourdale.³⁶ As the Mexican population in Armourdale grew, parents in that district lobbied the school board for a separate building, starting in 1922. What the school board did at that time was to create a separate three-room building on the grounds of the Ingalls school, exclusively for the use of the Mexican students. They also reserved the basement of the original building for them.³⁷ The choice of words by Superintendent Pearson also suggested that the basement was the standard place to put Mexican students: “where there is extra basement room.” The school board had been lobbied by Anglo parents of Armourdale in the past, to take their children out of basement rooms of the Ingalls school, which were described as “dark ... cold and damp,” and a “detriment to public health.”³⁸ It was previously reported that there were seventy-two Mexican students at Ingalls in the Mexican Room in March 1921, so it can be inferred that Anglo parents objected to their students in basement rooms, while Mexican students were in above-ground rooms. Building a

Teachers are Assigned to Schools, Kansas City Kansan, 5 September 1923, 6.

³⁶National Archives. Records of the Department of State. Record Group 59. Decimal file 1910-1929, Box 3573, File 311.1215/Kansas City. “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation at Kansas City, Kansas.” Affidavit from M.E. Pearson by W.C. Ralston, October 21, 1925, 1-9; “Teachers’ Salaries to Match Positions,” Kansas City Kansan, 23 September 1924, 1.

³⁷National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 2; “State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5.

³⁸“Mothers Protest Schools,” Kansas City Kansan, 3 September 1921, 1.

separate annex on the grounds was a sufficient solution in Armourdale, and a line was drawn to separate Anglo from Mexican students on the playground. These annex rooms were not sufficient for the numbers of Mexican students who would attend Armourdale schools in the 1920s, so the basement was used as well as the annex.³⁹ By 1923, there were two locations where Mexican students received segregated education in Kansas City: Argentine and Armourdale.

Since the school board had originally intended for all Mexican students to attend the school in Argentine, they must have had plans to transport Armourdale students to Argentine. By limiting the Clara Barton school to one-story and three rooms, they were left with no alternative but to create an annex at the Ingalls school. Since deportation was an option when Mexican labor was no longer needed, the school board met with Santa Fe officials to determine if there would be a permanent Mexican labor force in Argentine, which was confirmed.⁴⁰ These preliminary discussions conveyed the school system's overriding concern for the economic implications of a separate school for Mexican students.

The provisions for the Mexican students did not begin to meet the constitutional criteria of "separate but equal," set forth in the landmark Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), and in terms of student-teacher ratio and improvements, the school board consistently provide inferior education to Mexican-American students in segregated facilities. Thus, the school district expressed local racism through creating and maintaining an inferior educational system. New schools were being built for Anglo students, as well as African-American, throughout this time period. Plans for the Whittier and Chelsea schools included figures at almost ten times or more the cost of the Clara Barton, and were typical schools of the time, with

³⁹Irene Ruiz Interviews, Frank Hernandez (19 May 1977), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library. 142 Mexican students attended Ingalls school in 1925 according to "State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row," *Kansas City Kansan*, 17 October 1925, 5.

⁴⁰"To Talk Mexican School," *Kansas City Kansan*, 11 December 1922, 2.

a basement, two floors, ten classrooms, auditorium and stage.⁴¹

The creation of the Clara Barton School and the annex at Ingalls did not “solve” the Mexican “problem.” Plans had been made to combine the Melville and Greystone schools in the Rosedale district to make the Major Hudson School, for grades 1-8. Rosedale had been incorporated into Kansas City in 1922 and was situated directly east of Argentine. The school opened in May 1924, and despite the demand from Anglo parents in Rosedale, that four Mexican boys who were in fifth grade not attend the new school, they did. At the same time, the old Melville school was used exclusively for Mexican children for grades 1-4 and eventually for grades 1-6 by the beginning of the 1924 school year.⁴²

The same four Mexican boys enrolled in the new Major Hudson School with the Anglo children on September 6, 1924 and by the afternoon, 200 Anglo parents encircled the building in protest. By threatening “bodily injury” to the Mexican children, they forced officials to remove the four boys from the school. Police escorted the Mexican children to their homes as a result.⁴³ After this incident, the Mexican parents removed their children from school entirely, rather than allow them attend the Mexican Annex. The Major Hudson incident inspired the beginning of resistance to segregated education, and the Mexican parents enlisted the Mexican consul in Kansas City, Missouri, and the *Unión Cultural Mexicana* to lobby the mayor and the school board for admission to the integrated school.⁴⁴

The school board had planned in advance what they were going to do with the majority

⁴¹“2 School Building Contracts are Let,” Kansas City Kansan, 5 December 1922, 3; “Whittier School, on Which Work has Begun,” Kansas City Star, 19 February 1921, 2.

⁴²National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 2-3.

⁴³McGuinn, “The Kansas City Kansas School System,” 357; National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 2-3.

⁴⁴National Archives, Manuel Téllez to Charles Hughes, November 6, 1924, File 311.1215/Kansas City; Paul Ming-Chang Lin, “Voluntary Kinship and Voluntary Association in a Mexican-American Community” (master’s thesis, University of Kansas, 1963), 103.

of the Mexican children in the Rosedale district when the new Major Hudson school was built. What was different was that the school board provided an educational reason for the separation: English proficiency. They resolved on April 18, 1924, that the Mexican children in the lower grades would be separated on the basis of “their defective knowledge of English,” and that they could progress better if separated from native children, who would be “at a like disadvantage if many pupils unfamiliar with English are placed in their classes.”⁴⁵ At no time was the question of English proficiency a stated issue in either Argentine or Armourdale; race was the issue. This resolution revealed the main concern and the bias of the school board: that Anglo students would suffer educationally from the presence of students who were not proficient in English. They assumed that teachers would take the extra time with the Mexican students and slow down the entire class. That these Mexican students were all deficient in English was also an assumption. No attempt to test these children in English was mentioned. Even in 1921, Mexican students in the 2nd and 3rd grades in Emerson school were receiving excellent marks in reading and writing.⁴⁶

The inspiration for segregation was racism; linguistic deficiency was a common, but unfounded, justification for doing what the community wanted. Pressure from the national and state levels motivated Superintendent Pearson to manufacture a more complex explanation. The Mexican consul in Washington appealed to the State Department on behalf of the Major Hudson students, which referred the matter to the Governor of Kansas, Ben Paulen. Paulen asked that the Superintendent be deposed by State Assistant Attorney General W.C. Ralston. Pearson’s descriptions of why Mexican students received segregated education in Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale reflected a reluctant school board eventually yielding to the wishes of their patrons. He took pains to stress that the school board resisted initial demands for

⁴⁵National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 6-7.

⁴⁶“Emerson School,” Argentine Republic, 13 February 1920, 6.

separate Mexican schools. The actions taken in Rosedale in 1924 were no different, but experience had taught school officials to offer some type of educational reason for segregation. Citing linguistic deficiency, Pearson gave the impression that the school administration did not share the racism of their patrons.

In this deposition, Pearson displayed an inexact knowledge of what constituted English proficiency. He revealed an inconsistent relationship of English skills to the education of Mexican children in the district. Pearson stated that Mexican children were allowed to attend with the native children above the fourth grade and believed that language problems were not resolved until the “fourth or fifth grades.” Yet all of the Mexican children in Argentine attended Clara Barton up to the eighth grade, and up to the sixth grade in Old Major Hudson and Ingalls.⁴⁷ His interlocutors either did not catch or did not want to pursue the discrepancy. The school system representatives who used the same arguments in Lemon Grove, California, segregation case, were criticized by the judge for failing to distinguish between those who were proficient and those who were not. The school system in Lemon Grove was not allowed to segregate Mexican children as a result.⁴⁸

Pearson’s testimony implied that the Kansas City Kansas school system had an official policy that allowed Mexican children who were proficient in English to be educated with Anglo students. In practice, this did not happen. Requests for transfers to Anglo schools by Mexican parents were not recorded & retained by the school board at the time, but given the violent reactions of Anglo parents, Mexican parents were probably reluctant to make them. As late as 1950, Maria Torrez noted that the Clara Barton School had no P.T.A., piano lessons, or long recesses, as was customary at Emerson School. When she asked to enroll her children at

⁴⁷National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 5.

⁴⁸México. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Vol. 2. (Mexico: La Secretaría, 1931), 1784-1787.

Emerson, Superintendent Schlagle denied her request.⁴⁹

The school system did not initially segregate Mexican students on linguistic grounds. This was clear from the fact that small numbers of students attended school with Anglo students in other areas of the district. Fifty-three Mexican-Americans attended the Cooper school in the West Bottoms neighborhood, which was largely foreign, and eight and seven students attended Morse and Riverview schools with Anglo students.⁵⁰ No specific linguistic program was set up for these students. They simply learned English as most children can easily do at a young age. Their teachers knew no Spanish and enforced “no Spanish” rules on the playground as the sole means of teaching English by discouraging Spanish.⁵¹

Newspaper accounts did not mention English proficiency as an issue. In the local context, there was no compelling need to provide a theoretical justification for racism in education. In a Kansas City Kansan account entitled, “Solves Racial Problem,” the incident at the new Major Hudson School was referred to as “a miniature race riot” that “broke out among the white patrons of the school, who objected to” Mexicans “attending at that place.” School board officials “assured the objectors that separate educational facilities would be provided.”⁵²

In a follow-up report dated September 23, 1924, Superintendent Pearson stated that ten new Mexican students had enrolled at the old Major Hudson School. He then mentioned that more Mexican students were expected and that there were “ten too many Mexican children” at the Ingalls school in Armourdale, who would have to be transferred to the basement of John Fiske School.⁵³ The school system may have provided transportation for these students, but

⁴⁹Taylor, Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 470.

⁵⁰National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 5.

⁵¹Irene Ruiz Interviews, Magdalena Rodriguez; Irene Ruiz Interviews, Mrs. Maria Mora, 3 August 1978. Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.

⁵²“Solves Racial Problem,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 September 1924, 10.

⁵³“Teachers’ Salaries to Match Positions,” Kansas City Kansan, 23 September 1924, 1.

they were clearly also controlling attendance on racial lines, not English proficiency. This practice illustrated yet again the extent of the school system's role in maintaining a segregated system for Mexican-American students.

No newspaper account provided details of the "miniature race riot" in subsequent editions. When the subject was revisited in 1925, the only clarification that Pearson offered was that "a near race riot was averted by calling out the police and giving special protection."⁵⁴ That police protection was needed for Mexican grade school students, who were being threatened by the Anglo P.T.A., demonstrated the very poor state of race relations in Rosedale. If the incident at the Major Hudson School was any indication, racial conditions for Mexican-Americans in Rosedale were as oppressive as they were in Argentine.

Mexican families who lived in Rosedale were clustered in an area called "La Colonia," and their fathers worked for the Saint Louis and San Francisco Railroad.⁵⁵ It was a small community and the children of these families presumably attended the Melville School with Anglo children before 1924. The pattern established in Argentine and Armourdale was repeated in Rosedale. The school district allowed a few Mexican children to attend integrated classes until the Anglo parents forced them to make other arrangements. Parents in Rosedale perhaps knew that Argentine and Armourdale parents had been successful in gaining segregated facilities and did not want to wait until the numbers of students grew larger than four in the upper grades to take action.

Superintendent Pearson believed he had no choice but to educate the Mexican children in the annex, regardless of their proficiency in English. Rather than accept enrollment at the Mexican only school, the Mexican parents kept their children out of school, with the result that

⁵⁴"State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row," Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5.

⁵⁵Taylor, Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 452-453; Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 44.

they were brought into local court under the Compulsory Attendance Law. The judge in this case ruled that these students could go to any school except the new Major Hudson School, unless the United States Department of State ruled on the matter.⁵⁶ One scholar who reviewed the State Department file concluded that the State Department refused to rule on the matter and left it up to the local authorities.⁵⁷ The school board claimed that they did not prevent these children from attending the new Major Hudson School, yet they used the attendance law to force them to attend a segregated facility. The local court ruled that they could not attend an integrated school by deferring to the State Department, which declined to express any clear opinion. There was no direct connection made between the English proficiency of these four students -- the only issue was race.

An incident that occurred across the Kansas River in Armourdale in August 1925 continued the sporadic but violent trend that had developed in race relations. On either the night of August 21st or 24th, a group of fourteen Mexican men were assaulted by a mob of 100 Anglos, while they attended a fair in Shawnee Park. They were able to escape with the help of the police, who told them “that they should stay at home if they did not want trouble with Americans,” and declined to arrest the offenders.⁵⁸ The Mexican men appealed to their local Consul who requested an investigation from the United States Department of State. After proceeding through the channels at various levels, an investigation of the incident was made by the Wyandotte County Attorney’s office. The investigator interviewed only the police officers, only looked at records for the police station in the area and only inquired about August 21st, not August 24th. He concluded that the incident did not take place or that the assaulted Mexicans

⁵⁶National Archives, Manuel C. Téllez to Frank B. Kellog, October 20, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 2.

⁵⁷Juan R. García, Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 122-123.

⁵⁸Kansas State Historical Society, Manuel Téllez to Frank B. Kellog, September 11, 1925, File 201-Aliens, Attorney General of Kansas.

did not inform the authorities in a timely manner.⁵⁹ The methodology of this investigation expressed the disdain in which Mexican citizens were held. The police never took the complaint seriously and obviously sympathized with the racial prejudices of the Anglo assailants by their lack of action.

The numbers of Mexican children in the district attending any school after the sixth grade showed a sharp drop-off following these incidences. Central Junior High was the designated school for children graduating from Ingalls or Major Hudson and only 15 attended in 1925 out of what could have been almost 200 hundred who graduated from the sixth grade. There could have been many reasons for the lack of continuing students. It arose, in part, due to the ambivalent attitudes toward education held by many Mexican parents. Gender attitudes dictated that Mexican boys were encouraged to attend school. Parents of Mexican girls thought that an education was not necessary to be a wife and mother or they needed help caring for younger siblings. Economic considerations often determined that families needed the income from older sons' labor to survive.⁶⁰ The great discouragement of the Anglo community was also a contributing factor. The fear of violence no doubt added to the Mexican parents' disillusionment with the value of education. Pearson stated that no objection to Mexican students at Central Junior High had been raised.⁶¹ This would not be the case when four graduates of the Clara Barton School began attending Argentine High School in 1925.

The school board's theories regarding substantial English proficiency could not be applied to the four Mexican-American graduates of the eighth grade from the Clara Barton School in Argentine in 1925. They were enrolled in Argentine High School for approximately one week when the objections of Argentine parents, and the threat of physical violence, forced the

⁵⁹Kansas State Historical Society. Frederick White to Harry Hayward, September 28, 1925, File 201-Aliens, Attorney General of Kansas. A search of the Kansan revealed no account of the incident.

⁶⁰Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community," 192-193.

parents to remove the children a few weeks later. In an attempt to reach a compromise based on segregation, the school board offered the parents a separate room and teacher, or carfare and tuition to a Kansas City, Missouri high school. The parents refused both of these options. A petition signed by over 200 Anglos from the Argentine district was produced as evidence that the children were not wanted.⁶² As was typical, no specific reason for their objections was offered. The Mexican parents again pursued diplomatic channels for their case, and after a year of struggle, Mexican students were free to attend the Argentine High School from 1926 onward.

Based on the evidence presented, the necessity to segregate Mexican students was based on the perception of Mexicans as a distinct race. Segregated education was the norm in Kansas for African-Americans, sanctioned by the laws of the state. The answers provided to a survey from the Supreme Court on state laws in Kansas offer some background. The Territorial legislature of 1855 provided for schools for “white” citizens. The state legislature of 1862 allowed separate schools for “black or mulatto persons.” The statute in force as late as 1949 permitted segregated schools, but did not require them. The survey answers go on to assert that “segregation has never been authorized in by law in any field other than in public education” and that “separate high schools were authorized” only for Kansas City.⁶³ The way in which Kansans worded their initial statute allowed for local decisions to be made, since segregation for African-Americans was not required, as it was in Missouri, but permitted.⁶⁴

Until 1905, graduates of African-American elementary schools attended the integrated Kansas City Kansas High School, in accordance with Kansas law. The racial intolerance of the

⁶¹National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 5, 7.

⁶²Ibid., 3-4; “State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5; “Mexican Row in K.C. Schools Up to State Dep’t,” Kansas City Kansan, 24 October 1925, 1.

⁶³Bernard D. Reams, Jr. and Paul E. Wilson, ed., Segregation and the Fourteenth Amendment in the States: A Survey of State Segregation Laws 1865-1953; Prepared for United States Supreme Court in re: Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (Buffalo: William S. Hein, 1975), 186-187.

⁶⁴Ibid., 349.

1890s, combined with a 1905 incident in which an African-American student killed an Anglo boy who had assaulted him, led directly to demands for a separate high school. After numerous fights between African-American and Anglo students, immediate segregation was achieved with half-day sessions. Superintendent Pearson met with members of the African-American community and together they resolved to ask for state legislation allowing a separate high school. Governor Edward W. Hoch signed the bill under protest and insisted that the new school be equal in every way, tacitly acknowledging the imperfections inherent to the doctrine of separate but equal. Separation between students was maintained through school board funded transportation, and students from Argentine and Rosedale were required to attend Sumner High School, which was situated in an African-American neighborhood in the center of Kansas City.⁶⁵ The fact that Kansas City had the only authorized African-American high school in the state of Kansas reflected the uniquely poor state of race relations in the city.

Violence and racial incidents had an established history in Kansas City, and while there were no recorded lynchings in the city proper in this time period, the African-American boy who killed the Anglo boy in self-defense had to be rescued from a lynch mob by a group of African-American veterans. The original incident that led to the creation of Sumner was considered a “pretext” by local historian Susan D. Greenbaum.⁶⁶ No similar incident involving Mexican students and Anglos occurred, but threats of violence had a history of getting the sought after response from the school board. There had not been and would not be any legislation to allow legal segregation of Mexican students, and the school board had not anticipated the reactions of Anglo parents to Mexican students in schools with their children.

The separation of the African-American and white races in Kansas City was

⁶⁵Susan D. Greenbaum, The Afro-American Community in Kansas City, Kansas: A History (Kansas City, Kans.: The City, 1982), 64-68.

⁶⁶Ibid., 65-66.

institutionalized and funded in a way that approached “separate but equal” facilities. The city planned a segregated park in 1922, which was to cost \$50,000, would have included a community center, pool, bath house, baseball diamond, six tennis courts, and a picnic ground. The plans for the park were the result of efforts by African-American civic groups. Opposition to the choice of location by African-Americans, and eventual opposition to any such park by white citizens appeared to put these efforts on hold.⁶⁷ This discussion revealed how the African-American community was divided on the issue of segregation between those that wanted improvements within that structure and those that wanted integration. White opposition also reflected that any concept of “equality” for other races was not at all desired in Kansas City.

The 1930s sociologist, Max Handman, described the Mexican “problem” in comparative terms of race, asserting that America “has no social technique for handling partly colored races. We have a place for the Negro and a place for the white man: the Mexican is not a Negro, and the white man refuses him an equal status.”⁶⁸ In Kansas City, Mexicans were treated just like African-Americans in terms of separate facilities, discriminatory treatment, and social inequality. The Anglo residents of Kansas City recognized that Mexicans were not African-Americans, but were considered to be “colored” nonetheless. In the movie theater in Argentine, Mexicans were instructed to sit in the “colored” section and experienced other forms of Jim Crow style discrimination.⁶⁹ Handman’s view described the problem of educational arrangements for Mexicans because integration was an experiment that failed in certain neighborhoods of Kansas City. The school board had a well-defined policy for the education of African-American students:

⁶⁷“Plan Colored Park,” Kansas City Kansan, 5 October 1922, 9; “Meet on Colored Park,” Kansas City Kansan, 11 October 1922, 7; “Colored Would Pick Own Park Location,” Kansas City Kansan, 14 October 1922, 3; “Not to Rush Colored Park,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1922, 2.

⁶⁸Max Sylvius Handman, “Economic Reasons for the Coming of the Mexican Immigrant,” American Journal of Sociology 35 (January 1930): 609-610.

⁶⁹Robert Oppenheimer Interviews, Josefa Parra. Trabajo y Cultura Project. Lawrence, Kans.: Kenneth Spencer Library, University of Kansas, 11-12.

they never received integrated education after 1905. The major difference was that integration was not attempted for African-Americans after that time and it was for Mexicans. It was not tolerated for any significant length of time in Armourdale, Argentine, and Rosedale, and Anglo demands for separate facilities were an attempt to attain the same segregation for Mexicans to which they were accustomed for African-Americans. The records do not reflect any attempt by the school board to put Mexicans in African-American schools or demands by Anglo parents for that "solution," which does not prove that they were not made, only that they were not considered by the school board. The school board consistently kept all three races apart. Since African-Americans were not considered foreign, any attempt to put Mexicans with African-Americans would have conflicted with the Americanization goals the school district professed to have in 1921. Their use of language deficiency as a justification for segregation would have appeared to be even more specious, if the shunned races were put together.

Schools for African-American students were inferior to those for Anglo students and a review of their construction revealed a constant struggle to gain adequate facilities. Schools for African-Americans developed in a similar fashion as those for the Mexican students. They were crammed into buildings no longer needed by Anglo students and received an unfavorable student-teacher ratio or one teacher for multiple grades. Lobbying efforts by African-American parents to the school board in the early part of the twentieth century rarely resulted in immediate action.⁷⁰ In 1917, on behalf of the Lincoln school in Argentine, the Mothers' Club of the school asked the school board for improvements and to prepare the playground so the equipment they had purchased could be installed. They asked for a kindergarten as well, which was not available to all Anglo students of the time, but to most of them. In 1925, they presented a report to the school board, which stated that the elementary schools in the Argentine were "inconvenient and unsanitary." "Their report was received and filed," was the only comment on

⁷⁰Greenbaum, The Afro-American Community in Kansas City, Kansas, 62.

what the board would do, if anything. The records of the school board budgets reflected that building plans for African-American school were regularly considered and carried out, based on expected school population.⁷¹

The African-American community appeared to have no interest or knowledge of the Mexican community's struggle for integrated education. A local African-American newspaper, the Kansas City Advocate, revealed a concern for the influx of Mexican labor and its effects on economic opportunities for African-Americans. The Mexicans' willingness to work for a low wage was cited as force that lowered wages for the African-American. One editorial approved of the mixing of African-American and Mexican children in California and their instruction by African-American teachers, but such expressions of solidarity were rare. The newspaper printed a joke that reflected poorly on the intelligence of a Mexican, who could not tell the difference between a rabbit and a cat, and the gullibility of an Anglo, who also could not tell the difference when eating it.⁷² The lack of sympathy was not surprising. Mexicans were a new threat to African-American labor opportunities and appeared to be favored for jobs that were not preferred by Anglo immigrant groups. The Mexican presence limited the already limited employment opportunities for African-Americans.

One major difference between education for the two groups was that African-American students were taught by African-American teachers, while Mexican students were largely taught by Anglo teachers.⁷³ Another was that the African-American community was organized to lobby

⁷¹"School Board Doin's," Republic (Kansas City, Kans.), 26 July 1917; "Will Build Addition to Quindaro School," Kansas City Kansan, 3 February 1925, 3; Kansas City Kansas Schools. Transfer Journal of Proceedings, 1921-1946.

⁷²"Mexican Labor Menaces Negro Cotton Pickers," Kansas City Advocate, 1 January 1926, 7; "Race Progress in California," Kansas City Advocate, 29 January 1926, 1; Kansas City Advocate, 23 October 1925, 4. Coverage of the incident with the four Mexican Argentine High School students did not appear in this newspaper.

⁷³One exception was Marie Hernandez, who taught at the Clara Barton School for one year only. The rest of the teachers of Mexican students had little or no training in Spanish.

for the best education for their children. Protests against segregation appear to have been rare and community activists concentrated on improving education for their children within the segregated structure. Based on the incident that led to the separate high school, the fear of violence from race mixing repressed any resistance movements for many years to come.⁷⁴ Governor Hoch, who reluctantly signed the bill that authorized the high school, called it a “step backward,” but believed that the “local conditions are peculiar and I have all along believed that it were better for both races in Kansas City, Kas., that the separation proposed in this bill be made.”⁷⁵ These peculiar local conditions had their effect on the Mexican-American community, in much the same way as they did on the African-American community.

As mentioned previously, the Clara Barton School was built with three rooms and no basement. Interior lights were not added until three years later, in the fall of 1926. Sanitary facilities were usually placed in the basement of schools, as revealed by the architectural plans for Emerson and Ingalls, and there were separate toilets in the basement for boys and girls. One teacher in the school recalled that the outdoor toilets at Clara Barton were too close to the building and required a variance for their placement there.⁷⁶ The Health Department evaluated these toilets in 1939 and called them the “poorest and worst type,” and noted that all facilities in schools except Clara Barton and the Mexican Annex of Major Hudson met health department standards.⁷⁷ Adequate facilities were not provided until 1949, displaying a lack of concern for hygiene on the part of school authorities, as well as discrimination toward the Mexican

⁷⁴“The High School Fight,” Kansas City Star, 15 February 1905, 6.

⁷⁵Kansas City Times, 23 February 1905.

⁷⁶“Lights for Barton School,” Kansas City Kansan, 18 August 1926, 12; Edwin Dale Shutt, “Wyandotte County History,” Silver City Record, 18 October 1979, 9. This information was provided by former teacher Mina Cheney.

⁷⁷Kansas City Kansas Department of Health, 1939 Annual Report, Survey and Appraisal (Kansas City, Kans.: Department of Health, 1939), 195.

students.⁷⁸

Single rooms were added to Clara Barton in 1928, when enrollment went from 98 to 134 and again when enrollment went from 176 to 190 in 1934. The 190 students who attended during the 1933-34 school year represented the peak enrollment for the Clara Barton school. Teachers were added as enrollment increased, but the numbers always included the principal. It was unclear from the records if the principal taught the same amount of students or less than the other teachers, because of administrative duties.⁷⁹ For the eight grades taught, there were never more than five teachers including the principal. The maximum teacher per student ratio was one-to-forty-four and the lowest was one-to-twenty-eight. Typically, one teacher taught two grades in the Mexican schools, while in Anglo schools; one teacher per grade was the norm.⁸⁰ The school system increased the number of teachers as enrollment increased and added rooms as a result. But this was the extent of their application of equality to the education of the Mexican students. Superintendent Pearson was able to claim that the Mexican students enjoyed an equitable student-teacher ratio and in 1925, it was one-to-thirty in the segregated schools.⁸¹ This was below what Pearson considered to be the ideal ratio for grade school students of “35 in a room.”⁸² This did not address the affect of grouping multiple grades together in the same room, a practice that was rarely applied to Anglo students.

Pearson stated that the cost per student in Kansas City was \$44.07 per year, while the state superintendent had reported in 1923 an average cost of \$71.25 statewide for city and

⁷⁸McGuinn, “The Kansas City Kansas School System,” 457.

⁷⁹Ibid., 393. Schools with three or more teachers were required to have one designated as the principal.

⁸⁰Kansas City Kansas Schools, “Clara Barton School History.”

⁸¹National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 5.

⁸²“Cost per Pupil in Grades Here Totals \$65.07,” Kansas City Kansan, 1 October 1929, 8.

village grade schools.⁸³ For a city of the first grade, which was the way in which cities were grouped by size in Kansas, this cost was comparatively low. This reflected the results of the school district's concern for using the taxpayer's money responsibly.

Teachers at the Mexican schools did not receive lower salaries than at Anglo schools, as was often the case in Texas.⁸⁴ Examples of the general thriftiness of the school board and the superintendent were reflected often in the records of their economic decisions. Mina Cheney, who taught at the Clara Barton School from 1928 until 1942, recalled that even though she had five years of teaching experience, she was hired by Pearson at a substitute's salary. She attributed this to Pearson's fiscal conservatism.⁸⁵ Another means of savings came from janitor's salaries that were based on the floor space in each school. Salaries for janitors at Clara Barton were consistently half of the salaries for other janitors in the school district, precisely because of its small size.⁸⁶

In 1909, the school system had twelve goals for each school, which were reviewed in 1930 to assess progress. Many of these goals were never considered for the Mexican schools in the system and included "night and vacation schools, supervised playgrounds, kindergartens, mother's clubs and branch libraries."⁸⁷

The school district never provided a kindergarten for Mexican students at any of the three locations. The necessity of kindergarten was a subject of some debate in 1922 and the city had only half of the number required to serve all Anglo students. Superintendent Pearson was convinced of its importance by this time, and adding kindergartens to schools became a

⁸³Ibid.; "Cost of Kansas Schools," Kansas City Kansan, 10 January 1923, 4.

⁸⁴Gonzalez, Chicano Education, 22.

⁸⁵Shutt, "Wyandotte County History," 9.

⁸⁶"New School Janitor System is Proposed," Kansas City Kansan, 25 August 1922, 8; Kansas City Kansan, 14 October 1922, 3; Transfer Journal of Proceedings, 1921-1946.

⁸⁷McGuinn, "The Kansas City Kansas School System," 393.

project that expanded over the years.⁸⁸ By 1926, the school system completed a study that showed that the lack of sufficient kindergartens forced many students to repeat the first grade at a thirty-percent higher rate than children who received kindergarten training.⁸⁹ Kindergarten and other needed social services were provided for the Mexican community in Argentine by the Mexican Methodist Mission. Established in 1921, the Mission also provided a nursery, preschool, and a kindergarten, which was added in 1923, when Clara Barton started operating.⁹⁰ As long as this was the case, the school board could effectively ignore the subject of public kindergarten for Mexican children in Argentine. It was probable that the Methodist Mission was told that kindergarten would never be provided for the Mexican students by the school district. No separate kindergarten was added to any Mexican school through the 1950s, despite Pearson's "hope and ambition to have one in every school."⁹¹ This was another example for the general lack of concern for the overall quality of education for Mexican students on the part of the school system.

The Mexican Methodist Mission also provided a vacation school for the Clara Barton students during the summer, beginning in 1924. The school board allowed the Mission to use the Clara Barton building under the condition that there would be no expense to the board.⁹² Vacation schools were another of the listed goals in 1909 for all schools, and because of the Mission, the school board did not have to take responsibility for providing this as well.

While Mother's Clubs were supposed to be set up for each school, one was never developed for Clara Barton, perhaps because the Methodist Mission provided one. When Trina

⁸⁸Ibid., 359.

⁸⁹"Kindergarten Shortage Adds to School Cost," Kansas City Kansan, 17 February 1926, 1.

⁹⁰Taylor, Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 469b, caption; "Kindergarten for Mexican Children," Kansas City Kansan, 10 October 1926, 6B.

⁹¹"To Open Kindergarten," Kansas City Kansan, 5 September 1922, 5.

⁹²Transfer Journal of Proceedings, 24 May 1924, 305.

Torrez approached Superintendent Schlagle in 1950 about the subject, she was told that “it was undesirable at that time, to allow us to have a P.T.A.” He eventually agreed to it, after Torrez collected signatures for a petition.⁹³

The Americanization and proselytization goals of the religious missions of the 1920s coordinated their work with the school districts, and Argentine was no exception. Because the Methodist Mission functioned as a settlement house, the Mexican community was kept isolated from a community that did not accept them. By providing English instruction in kindergarten, the Mission prepared students for English only instruction, thus making the work of Clara Barton teachers easier. Another benefit of the Mission was the fact that funding was provided by outside sources, which was a sensitive subject for the school board. Replacing Spanish with English was the first step to replace Mexican with American culture, but the goal was never integration. The Mission prepared the community to function effectively as workers, to live in isolation with minimal contact with the Anglo community.⁹⁴

A review of the budget plans of the school board revealed no mention of improvements to the Clara Barton School for playgrounds, a common budget item for Anglo schools. In fact, the school never had any playground equipment. Pictures of the school revealed that it was located in an unimproved area, close to the Santa Fe railroad in the back, and very close to the street in the front of the building.⁹⁵ The new Major Hudson School for Anglos had an asphalt playground, while the playground for the Mexican students at the annex consisted of “grass and

⁹³“Kindergarten for Mexican Children,” 6B; Taylor, Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 470.

⁹⁴“Kindergarten for Mexican Children,” 6B; Gilbert G. Gonzalez, “Culture, Language, and the Americanization of Mexican Children,” in Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader, ed. Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 170.

⁹⁵Transfer Journal of Proceedings, 1921-1946; Taylor, Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 469b.

weeds.”⁹⁶ The physical separation of Anglo from Mexican students on the playground was more difficult at the Ingalls school, and a line was drawn that the Mexican students could not cross at recess.⁹⁷

There was no evidence of any special type of curriculum used for Mexican students. Every Sunday during the school year, the Kansas City Kansan featured a “Boys and Girls Kansan” page, which featured reports from all of the district schools, and provided details of curriculum during this time period. Only one report on the Clara Barton School was found during 1923-26, while other schools contributed reports on a weekly basis. This single report observed that an Americanization program was employed in Clara Barton, as students were engaged in projects around the traditions of Thanksgiving and Christmas.⁹⁸

School system officials could argue that they were providing a separate but equal education for Mexican-American students in the neighborhoods in terms of student-teacher ratio, but little else. Even that ratio was diminished by putting three grades together in the same room, which occurred in Clara Barton, and the Mexican Annexes of the Major Hudson and John J. Ingalls schools. The school board’s main objective for their actions seemed was to prove to the taxpayers that they were spending their money wisely. Their accomplishments in the area of saving money were given favorable publicity, and through their efforts after a reorganization and reduction of accumulated debt, they announced that taxes for schools would decrease.⁹⁹ Spending a reasonable amount of the surplus of \$318,000 on the school for the Mexican-American students in Argentine would have been feasible, especially since the surplus was achieved at the same time that Clara Barton was under construction. The \$7,000 spent on the

⁹⁶Irene Ruiz Interviews, Magdalena Rodriguez. She attended the Mexican Annex of the Major Hudson School in the 1940s.

⁹⁷Irene Ruiz Interviews, Frank Hernandez (19 May 1977).

⁹⁸“Clara Barton School Notes,” Kansas City Kansan, 24 November 1924, 16A.

⁹⁹“School Board Saves \$318,000 in First Year,” Kansas City Kansan, 4 January 1923, 1.

construction of the Clara Barton School displayed an stinginess that was no doubt demanded by Anglo taxpayers. Equality in education between Anglos and Mexicans was never a civic goal.

Discrimination toward the Mexican-American students also could be cruel in ways that seemed more vicious than necessary. A visit from Santa Claus was planned for all Kansas City schools in 1925, and each one, except Clara Barton, was listed in the Kansan as a scheduled stop.¹⁰⁰ Magdalena Rodriguez recalled similar discrimination in programs and events in the 1940s between the students in the Mexican Annex at the Major Hudson school and the Anglo students in the newer, larger school. The Mexican-American students were rarely invited to attend events at the Anglo school and generally had their own, which had to be approved by the principal for occasions such as Christmas and Easter. The Anglo students had field trips while the Mexican students had none.¹⁰¹ While children may not have been fully aware of the extent to which they were discriminated against, recalling these events as adults gave them a fuller understanding of their school experiences of racism.

Records of interactions between the school board and the Mexican-American community in the years after the controversies of 1918-1926 were limited. The records of the school board meetings typically contained requests from the public for the use of school facilities outside of school hours. In 1930, a request by a “group of Mexicans from the Argentine district” to use the Argentine High School auditorium without charge was denied. In 1931, Dr. Clopper of Argentine joined the school board. Another request to use the Argentine Library by a “group of Mexicans” was referred to him, but the result never appeared in the Board’s proceedings.¹⁰² The group referred to could have been the *Sociedad Morelos*, the first *mutualista* established in Argentine in the late 1920s, and one in which Saturnino Alvarado was involved. Alvarado challenged

¹⁰⁰“Santa Claus Plans K.C. School Visits,” Kansas City Kansan, 18 December 1925, 5.

¹⁰¹Irene Ruiz Interviews, Magdalena Rodriguez.

¹⁰²Transfer Journal of Proceedings, 20 October 1930, 872; *Ibid.*, 7 December 1931, 990.

school officials in 1926 when Anglo parents demanded removal of his two children from Argentine High School.¹⁰³ The repeated use of the term “group of Mexicans,” implied that the Spanish name of this mutual aid society was too much trouble to record, and reflected the school board’s disdain.

Argentine residents made distinctions between Spanish speakers, based on the color of their skin. It was possible to be considered to be Spanish and not experience the discrimination that other Mexicans experienced. A report appeared in the local Argentine paper, about a “young Spaniard” who attended Emerson School in 1922, who was described as “studious” and when not working, could be found reading at the public library.¹⁰⁴ No other laudatory reports were found about Mexican students in Argentine of the time.

Various oral accounts revealed that skin color was a critical element in determining the placement of prospective students in Kansas City. A common Anglo perception expressed by a district teacher was that extended exposure to the sun would cause her and her companion to become as “brown as Mexicans.”¹⁰⁵ The children of Francisco Larios originally attended the Stanley School in the early 1920s, until they were told they were “not welcome because they were Mexican.”¹⁰⁶ They were later enrolled in the Catholic school of St. John the Evangelist.

Clearly, the perception of the white population in Kansas of the time was that Mexicans formed a different racial group, based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. Mrs. Esperanza Amayo had a very different experience with St. John the Evangelist while attempting to enroll her brother in Argentine schools in 1944. The child was refused admission at St. John the Evangelist and no reason was offered. When Mrs. Amayo went to the Emerson School, the

¹⁰³Taylor, Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 474.

¹⁰⁴“A Man in the Making,” Kansas City Kansas Republic, 6 October 1922, 7.

¹⁰⁵“Teacher on Motor Trip,” Kansas City Kansan, 19 August 1921, 13.

¹⁰⁶Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History, 459.

same one that Mexican students attended prior to 1918, the principal feared that the dark skin color of her younger brother would cause him to be treated badly by students, and that parents would object to his presence. However, she was told that three fair-skinned Mexican girls “had been enrolled as Spanish” in the school and inspired no prejudice. After appealing to the principal on the basis of the boy's heart condition, and the longer trip to Clara Barton, he was allowed to enroll at Emerson.¹⁰⁷

Apart from knowing that they should treat Mexicans as a different race, Kansas residents had difficulty using skin color to identify Mexicans and then discriminate against them. Inter-marriage among Indians, mestizos, and descendants of Spanish settlers accounted for a great variety in Mexican skin color. This created difficulty in determining who was Mexican and who was Spanish. During World War II, two brothers, one dark-skinned and one less dark, attempted to be served in a restaurant in Western Kansas. The darker one had his United States armed services uniform on, yet was refused service, while the other one was perceived as a non-Mexican and fit to serve. When one brother informed the waitress of this error, both were refused service, since the restaurant's policy was not to serve Mexicans.¹⁰⁸ School officials in Kansas City also had the same problem when determining the race of Mexican children by using skin color.

The remembrances of the students who attended the segregated schools provide ample evidence of racial discrimination. Maria Mora was born in Argentine, attended the Clara Barton school in the 1940s, and recalled having no problems with English while in school. She did remember that other students “were spanked with a ruler on the hands for using Spanish on the playground.” She acknowledged that when her name in school was changed to Mary, she did

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 478.

¹⁰⁸Robert Oppenheimer, “Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II,” Western Historical Quarterly 16 (October 1985): 429-448.

not understand as a child that this was symbolic of an attempt to destroy her Mexican heritage. Yet she felt that the same teachers that used corporal punishment to discourage Spanish, “really had the interests of the kids at heart.” She cited specifically the principal, Elizabeth Miller, as someone who had great influence on her in later life.¹⁰⁹ Mrs. Mora’s remembrance of her school days demonstrates that the pretext of English proficiency was less of an issue for many students who were born and raised in Kansas City. Her ability to remember the good and the bad experiences was typical of other students’ memories. Some of the Anglo teachers made genuine efforts to teach the Mexican students within the segregated structure.

Magdalena Rodriguez attended the Mexican Annex of the Major Hudson School in the 1940s for grades 1-6 and also recalled regular physical abuse. Her sister was thrown against a desk by a teacher and received a cut on her head. The principal, whose office was in the new Major Hudson School, regularly visited the Mexican Annex. She used to hit the Mexican students or otherwise “manhandled” them by digging her nails into their arms for trivial offences such as getting out of line or not standing up straight. Any student who cried would be whipped with a belt by the principal. Ms. Rodriguez concluded that the “principal hated Mexican children.” She did have one teacher whom she thought was fair and another who did not like her. As a result of these experiences, combined with the lack of encouragement on the part of Mexican-American parents, most of Ms. Rodriguez’ classmates did not attend school beyond the seventh grade.¹¹⁰ A typical attitude of parents in the Mexican community in Kansas City was to question the worth of education when their children reached working age. However, it would be difficult to assess what came first: discouraging school experiences or the belief that education was not important. The conviction that education was designed only to benefit Anglo children was

¹⁰⁹Irene Ruiz Interviews, Mrs. Maria Mora. This was the same Elizabeth Miller that taught Mexican-Americans at the Cooper School in an integrated environment.

¹¹⁰Irene Ruiz Interviews, Magdalena Rodriguez interview.

reinforced by the educational experiences of Mexican-American children and continued discrimination toward Mexican-Americans in Anglo society.

Attitudes toward education of Mexican parents often split on gender lines. In the early thirties, Mexican-American girls were often discouraged from attending school beyond the eighth grade, since further education was not seen as helpful in their future roles as wife and mother. Maria Mora countered this attitude with rebellion, while Magdalena Rodriguez' parents encouraged her education. Ms. Rodriguez had to interrupt her education when her mother died, but returned to finish high school.¹¹¹ Reasons for discontinuing education were often economic, and cannot be attributed to Mexican-Americans as an ethnic characteristic. Many European groups who immigrated to Kansas City shared the same constricted views of gender roles and suffered the same health events and economic situations that might take children out of school to help support the family.

The West Bottoms area of Kansas City employed various ethnic groups in industry and was situated across the Kansas River, to the northeast of Armourdale. Mexicans began working in the packing plants there in 1908, and found that their neighbors spoke languages other than English. Their elementary age children attended the Cooper School, where many of their non-Mexican classmates were also learning English. It was considered a transient area, with many temporary residents, and had no particular identity as a neighborhood.¹¹² In contrast, the neighborhoods of Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale were all once separate towns which were incorporated into Kansas City by 1921. Their identity as former autonomous towns and communities can perhaps explain their insistence on separate schools in contrast to the West Bottoms. The latter's lack of organization, transient population, and working-class make-up did

¹¹¹Irene Ruiz Interviews, Frank Hernandez; *Ibid.*, Maria Mora; *Ibid.*, Magdalena Rodriguez.

¹¹²Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 46-47; "Cooper School Notes," Kansas City Kansan, 17 January 1926, 7B; Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community," 51.

not necessarily extinguish racism. However, the sources used for this study did not reveal any incidents that reflected strong racist views toward Mexican students in the West Bottoms.

The lack of racial friction in the West Bottoms provided a sharp contrast to Mexican experiences in Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale neighborhoods. The P.T.A.s and other civic groups in these neighborhoods were prime actors in discrimination while West Bottoms mothers groups included all students. The Women's Commercial Club sponsored Christmas parties for the Cooper School students on an annual basis, starting in 1920. Mothers of students in the district formed a P.T.A. in 1926 and their members included "Mexicans, Americans, Croatians, Serbians, and Spaniards."¹¹³ Mexican mothers in Argentine and Rosedale, meanwhile, were not allowed to join P.T.A.s in those neighborhoods, well into the forties, and efforts to form a Clara Barton P.T.A. were discouraged by Superintendent Schlagle in 1950.¹¹⁴

The reports in the Kansan reflected that Mexican students were welcomed in the integrated Cooper School, and progressed in English just as quickly as other children of Croatian and Serbian origins. While Superintendent Pearson justified segregated education by stating that "experience has taught us that language difficulties are almost an insurmountable handicap for little children of the Mexican race," students were overcoming this handicap in an integrated classroom elsewhere in the school district. The fifty-three Mexican students attending Cooper School in 1926, constituted approximately a third of the student population, and approached a percentage that would have made Anglo parents in the Argentine uncomfortable.¹¹⁵ The Cooper School represented a true experiment in Americanization of the foreign born, where Mexican students were integrated rather than segregated. This was only

¹¹³"Women Fete Cooper Pupils," Kansas City Kansan, 25 December 1925, 1; "Form Cooper School P.T.A.," Kansas City Kansan, 17 January 1926, 7b.

¹¹⁴Esperanza Amayo, personal interview; Irene Ruiz Interviews, Magdalena Rodriguez; Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 470.

¹¹⁵"Cooper School Notes," Kansas City Kansan, 17 January 1926, 7B; "National Archives, "In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation at Kansas City, Kansas," 5.

possible because the parents in the West Bottoms did not object to their presence. The school board would have succumbed to any pressure on their part for separate facilities, but could afford to be passive in the West Bottoms neighborhood. It was far more economical to have a uni-racial or bi-racial system rather than a tri-racial one. The inconsistent handling of Mexican students in the district, represented most notably by the Cooper School, provided further evidence for the local pressure theory.

In 1939, the Cooper School was abandoned by the school system for low attendance, as a result of increased industrial building, and all students in the West Bottoms were reassigned to the Riverview School, which had only seven Mexican students in 1925.¹¹⁶ Mexican students at Riverview also experienced a welcoming environment and this was in large part due to the views of the principal of the school, Mabel McConnell. She went out of her way to welcome Mexican students, and made efforts to combat the discrimination they experienced outside of her school. She was the principal from 1908 to 1953 and the national origins of her students included Greeks, Russians, Poles, Slovaks, Croats, and Mexicans. She was well aware of segregated schools in the district. When Natividad Blancarte transferred to Riverview from Ingalls, Principal McConnell explained to her that school would be different for her now and that she could come to her if she experienced any discrimination. She also lobbied the owners of a movie theater on Central Street to allow Mexican-Americans to sit in the white section. Elvira Ramirez held fond memories of her attendance at Riverview from 1943-1948 and recalled that Principal McConnell would provide food and clothing to her students.¹¹⁷

In the neighboring towns of Morris and Turner, Mexican-Americans were not segregated in grade schools, but experienced discrimination in an integrated environment. Being fewer in

¹¹⁶Kansas City Kansas Schools, "Cooper School History."

¹¹⁷"Regret When She Quits," Kansas City Star, 4 June 1953, 3; Esperanza Amayo, telephone interview, 30 March 2001; Irene Ruiz Interviews, Elvira Ramirez.

number than in Argentine, Armourdale or Rosedale, they were shielded from segregated education, but not discrimination. Mexican-Americans lived in a segregated area in Morris, which was five miles from Argentine, and were employed by Santa Fe railroad. Felisa Ruiz attended the Morris Grade School from 1932-1940, which was the only one available. She recalled bullying by an Anglo girl on the playground and that her sister came to her defense. The Anglo girl was not disciplined for these regular offences, and Mrs. Ruiz's mother's lack of English prevented her from helping her daughter. At first, Mrs. Ruiz' lack of English made her "terrified of school," but with the help of her first grade teacher, who worked with them on English at lunch and recess, she learned quickly. She attended high school in Turner and recalled no incidents of discrimination except for excursions to Armourdale, where she and her family attended services at the Mexican-only Our Lady of Mount St. Carmel Church, or sat with African-Americans in segregated sections in movie theaters.¹¹⁸

Esperanza Amayo's experience growing up in Turner was similar, where the Mexican population was also smaller. She recalled only one incident of discrimination in the third grade, when she was seated in the corner seats with "a poor white boy who lived in 'tin town' under the Turner Bridge." Local businesses welcomed Mexicans in the town, except one, and when she moved to Argentine in 1944, Mrs. Amayo was shocked at the strength of the prejudice against Mexicans there.¹¹⁹

Whether coming out of the segregated schools in Argentine, Armourdale, or Rosedale, or the integrated schools of the West Bottoms and other areas, Mexican-American students found the transition to junior and senior high schools difficult. In grades seven through twelve

¹¹⁸Irene Ruiz Interviews, Felisa Ruiz (7 November 1980), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo. : Kansas City Public Library; Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 464. This church was completed in 1926 by the Mexican community's initiative, as an alternative to services in the basement of St. Thomas Church in Armourdale.

¹¹⁹Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 477-478.

they were more likely to experience discrimination to which they had not been exposed, whether they had been in segregated grade schools or not. In the 1920s, Ladislao Lopez attended the Ingalls School until the seventh grade. Then he attended Central Jr. High School and also Wyandotte High School, from which he graduated in 1933. He was born in Mexico, and moved to the United States when he was four. He remembered having difficulties with English, which delayed his graduation from high school. He was the only Mexican of his first grade class to graduate from Ingalls. He attended high school as an isolated minority and was constantly teased by Anglos for being Mexican. Having lived in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood in Armourdale, he was sheltered from discrimination in public life and was shocked when he experienced it. When he was invited to a student's home, the Anglo parents would not allow further visits, when they saw that he was Mexican.¹²⁰

Elvira Ramirez grew up in the West Bottoms area, which she described as racially mixed, and attended the Riverview School. When she attended Central Jr. High, she felt that Mexican-American students were singled out for harassment by the teachers, who called their parents for every minor infraction. At Wyandotte High School in 1951, she was one of three or four Mexican students in what she described as an "elitist school." She would have preferred to attend Argentine High School, where there were more Mexican students. She thought that the teachers were not very competent, but did not experience any particular prejudice from them. She developed friendships with Anglo students, and their parents would inevitably force them to break the friendship because she was Mexican.¹²¹

The experiences of various Mexican-American students in Kansas City show that no amount of integration or segregation would serve to change the societal prejudice against them. Neither segregated nor integrated education prepared them to confront the ingrained hostility in

¹²⁰Irene Ruiz Interviews, Ladislao Lopez.

¹²¹Irene Ruiz Interviews, Elvira Ramirez.

the adult world. By forcing their children to abide by their prejudice, Anglo parents inhibited any prospects for change in racial relations for future generations.

The documentation presented here points to race or perception of racial differences as the primary reason for segregating Mexican pupils in Kansas City. While Mexicans were often treated in black wards of area hospitals and forced to sit in black sections of movie theaters in Kansas City, the geography of the school district required a “tri-racial” school system.¹²² School officials could have tried to justify segregating Mexican students on the basis of proficiency in English as was done in California and they eventually did this, but only after the third segregated school was demanded by Anglo parents.¹²³

In California the segregation of Mexican school children developed in much the same way as in Kansas City, and again the purported rationale for segregation sometimes emphasized the lack of English language skills and “personal hygiene” as the justification for segregation.¹²⁴ In the 1920s, IQ tests conducted by social scientists on Mexican children in the Southwest provided a further justification: Mexican children scored lower than Caucasians.¹²⁵ They were integrated into white schools when they had improved in English and hygiene. Race was not a factor, according to school officials, since “Mexican-Americans are considered to be Caucasians.”¹²⁶ While that may have been the case in one locality, other localities did use race and a law on the books that allow segregated education for children of Indian or Mongolian descent. The Indian heritage of Mexicans was used to provide a legal basis for segregation

¹²²Laird, “Argentine, Kansas,” 192, 195.

¹²³Gilbert G. Gonzalez, “Segregation of Mexican Children in a Southern California City: The Legacy of Expansionism and the American Southwest,” Western Historical Quarterly 16 (January 1985): 55-76.

¹²⁴W. Henry Cooke, “The Segregation of Mexican-American School Children in Southern California,” School and Society 67 (5 June 1948): 417-421.

¹²⁵Charles Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools 1855-1975 (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1976), 115.

based on race, making arguments about language and hygiene mute. The law was eventually rewritten to include non-United States Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolians, thereby including Mexicans.¹²⁷

California maintained a variety of discriminatory educational arrangements for Mexican-American students. However much school officials tried to disavow the race factor, they responded to pressure to separate Mexican students from the white community, based primarily on racial distinctions.¹²⁸ In this respect, the Kansas City Kansas School system was no different. Officials segregated Mexican pupils because of the racism of their Anglo patrons, and sought justification afterwards. Historian Gilbert G. Gonzalez maintained that local pressures in California to segregate Mexican students were less of a factor than the practice of a national educational theory for Mexican children. He based his assertion on the widespread practice of segregation as a means of subordinating inferior races. Educators used IQ tests and language proficiency to justify segregation in California. Mexican students invariably scored lower than Anglo students, as a result of the cultural bias inherent in these tests.¹²⁹ In Kansas City, segregation came about due to pressure from whites, rather than the influence of an educational theory. This became particularly apparent in the Alvarado case, in which four Mexican-American students were forced out of Argentine High School, because of their race. English proficiency was not an issue, nor was hygiene, and the school system officials were left with no alternative but to acknowledge that Anglo parents had forced their hand. Nevertheless, they accommodated Anglo parents to the extent of their power to do so. The 1920s through the 1950s were not a time noted for racial tolerance, and men with power in the school system were

¹²⁶Cooke, "The Segregation of Mexican-American School Children," 419.

¹²⁷Meyer Weinberg, A Chance to Learn: the History of Race and Education in the United States (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 166.

¹²⁸Gonzalez, Chicano Education, 21.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 55.

not motivated to alter the status quo in racial relations.

School boards in other cities in Kansas viewed the “Mexican Problem” in a variety of ways. Topeka, the capital of Kansas, had a significant Mexican population by the end of World War I. After denying admission to Mexican children beginning in 1907, the Topeka School Board responded to their growing numbers by building the Branner School Annex in 1918. The main reason given for segregation was that the numbers of Mexican students and their lack of English proficiency hampered education for Anglo students. The school covered kindergarten to the third grade, and its primary goal was to teach the children English and facilitate their entry into the higher grades. After years of protests by Mexican parents to end this policy, the school board closed the school in 1942.¹³⁰

Without extensive examination of the role of Anglo parents in Topeka, it would be difficult to determine whether or not they applied any pressure to the school system. The fact that Mexican students went into the integrated schools after the fourth grade implied that their presence, with English proficiency in hand, was not objectionable. In comparison to the Mexican schools in Kansas City, the Branner School had certain amenities that these schools did not have. The presence of a kindergarten in the Branner School lent some credence to the sincerity of the school system’s emphasis on English proficiency, rather than race. By starting at an earlier age with English proficiency, and designating the third grade as the time at which it would be gained, Topeka backed up their reasons for segregation on linguistic grounds. The segregated schools in Kansas City did not integrate Mexican children until seventh grade, at the earliest. Branner also compared favorably to Clara Barton, in that it had four rooms for four grades, while Clara Barton had three for eight. Rather than the outhouse at Clara Barton,

¹³⁰Laird, “Argentine, Kansas,” 195; Bill Wright, “Education is the Handhold,” in History of Mexicans in Topeka, 1906-1966, ed. José M. Garcia (S.I: s. n., 1973), 52-54; Marian Frances Braun, “A Survey of the American-Mexicans in Topeka, Kansas” (master’s thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1970), 13; Oppenheimer, “Acculturation or Assimilation,” 442.

Branner had two outside toilets, built of brick.¹³¹

Resistance on the part of Mexican-American parents in Topeka helped provide part of the impetus for the *Brown v. Board of Education* court case in the early 1950s. Mexican-American students had been fully integrated into the Topeka School System beginning after World War II. Linda Brown, litigant Oliver Brown's daughter, noted that she did not understand how she "could play with my white and Mexican friends all summer and then couldn't go to school with them."¹³² This simple observation of inequity showed Linda Brown's awareness of Mexican-Americans as a separate race, who were not segregated in Topeka's educational system.

Emporia, Kansas, had its first Mexican community in 1907 and the major employer was the Santa Fe Railroad, as was the case in Topeka and other Kansas cities. Mexican-American students entered the public schools in Emporia in 1913 and there was no evidence that they were subjected to segregated public education. However, the majority of students attended the Catholic schools there where they were segregated from the first to the seventh grades through 1941. Mexican-Americans did experience discrimination and prejudice in Emporia, particularly in cinemas and housing.¹³³

Wichita was another Santa Fe town that employed Mexican migrants. Although it was listed by the Mexican Government as practicing segregation of elementary Mexican-American students in 1931, as were the Kansas communities of Ottawa and Chanute, there have been no studies done on their education in those three cities.¹³⁴ Mexican-Americans in Wichita could

¹³¹Braun, "A Survey of the American-Mexicans in Topeka, Kansas," 13.

¹³²"Mother of Justice: *Brown v. Board of Education*," Kansas City Kansan, 20 June 1982, 10A.

¹³³Domingo Ricart, Just Across the Tracks: A Report on a Survey of Five Mexican Communities in the State of Kansas (Emporia, Florence, Newton, Wichita, Hutchinson) (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas, 1950), 56; Socorro Ramirez, "A Survey of the Mexicans in Emporia, Kansas" (master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1942), 25, 36-38.

¹³⁴Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, (1931), Vol. 1, 326.

experience discrimination typical of Kansas, and in 1945, signs saying “Mexicans Keep Out,” could be found at business establishments.¹³⁵

In Newton, Kansas, in the 1920s, Mexican children were not encouraged to attend the public schools, and stayed away in large numbers because of problems with English. A Spanish-speaking nurse persuaded the parents of forty-five students to attend, with the result that the small town’s Anglo teacher threatened to quit. The nurse then taught the children in Spanish for the next three years, until that practice was abolished. Eventually, Mexican-American students in Newton attended integrated schools. They were not allowed on the high school basketball team, until one student’s resistance changed that policy.¹³⁶

Hutchinson was a Santa Fe Railroad town in central Kansas, where Mexicans were discriminated against in restaurants, barbershops, movies, and parks. Tensions between Anglos and Mexicans heightened when the Methodist Mission brought children of both groups together. A relationship between a 19-year old Mexican boy and 14-year old Anglo girl resulted in action in a local court, when the Mexican boy refused to break off the relationship.¹³⁷

Mexican-American students attended integrated schools in Hutchinson until 1930, when Anglo parents petitioned the school board for a separate school. A separate count to keep track of Mexican-American attendance was started in 1923, when 132 students were counted. Because the community was clustered residentially, Mexican-American students attended two schools in the district. The actual count of Mexican-American students remained stable at 135 in 1930, but Anglo parents gathered 655 signatures requesting that the school board build a separate school. The spokesman for the parents cited linguistic deficiencies of the Mexican

¹³⁵Hector Franco, “The Mexican People in the State of Kansas” (master’s thesis, University of Wichita, 1950), 57.

¹³⁶Claudia Limbert, “The Invisible People: A Study of the Mexican American Community in Newton, Kansas” (research paper, Bethel College, 1978), 20, 32.

¹³⁷Hinnen, “Mexican Immigrants to Hutchinson, Kansas, 1905-1940: How a Temporary Haven Became Home,” 59.

students that affected the progress of native English speakers, a dislike of the “foreign element in the school life,” and the advanced ages of some of the students in classes with younger children as their reasons.¹³⁸

After consulting the State Attorney General W.A. Smith, Superintendent J.W. Gowans announced that the board had no authority to build a separate school, nor did state law permit the segregation of Anglo from Mexican students. Perhaps showing some awareness of the diplomatic complaints filed against the Kansas City Kansas School System in 1924-25, the Board did not want to invite “trouble from taxpayers and the Mexican Government.” To get around the law and any adverse publicity, the Hutchinson school board then did what had been done in other cities in Kansas: they remodeled an existing school to educate Mexican students in two rooms, covering kindergarten through the third or fourth grade, dependent on English proficiency.¹³⁹

The Hutchinson case illustrated some similarities and differences with Anglo attitudes in Kansas City. The use of petitions to pressure the school system and to gain support in the Anglo community was a common tactic in both cities. The sympathetic response from the school boards was also similar. The concerns about deficiencies in English and their affects on Anglo learning, which had also been expressed in the case of the Major Hudson School, were reasons used to justify racial exclusion in both communities. However, it cannot be determined if the Anglo residents had ever advanced the linguistic rationale. Their school board did, in their negotiations with the Mexican consul.

What was unusual in Hutchinson was the length of time it took the Anglo community to demand separation. The charge was not sparked by an increase in students, as occurred in Kansas City in 1922, since the same number attended Hutchinson schools in 1923 as in 1930.

¹³⁸Ibid., 56, 69, 83-84.

¹³⁹Ibid., 84-85.

Despite not having any legal backing for the separation of Mexican students on linguistic grounds, the school system in Hutchinson set up basically the same structure that Topeka had managed to erect with minimal public. The education arrangements were allegedly based on language deficiency, but used separate rooms, which had been done for many years in Armourdale at the Ingalls School. Given the events that had taken place in Kansas City prior to 1930, this was as much segregation as they could expect to have in Hutchinson. The fact that the Kansas Attorney General could prevent the construction of a segregated school for Mexican-American students merely reflected a desire not to bring more adverse publicity and pressure from Washington. Perhaps the Attorney General had no objection to any arrangement other than a separate school. The board's concern for the taxpayers acknowledged the expense of a separate school. The Hutchinson case illustrated that the rights of racists were still protected by the law, as they had been since the 1890s ruling *Plessy v. Ferguson*.¹⁴⁰

Interviews conducted in the Mexican-American community in the 1980s in Dodge City, Kansas, revealed long-standing and persistent racial prejudice against Mexican-Americans. They experienced discrimination in the usual public places, such as restaurants, movie theaters, and swimming pools, and restrictive covenants established in the 1950s ensured residential segregation.¹⁴¹ Dodge City barbers would not cut the hair of Mexican-American students, which the public school system required to be trimmed above the ears. To prevent fines and jail time, a Mexican-American opened a barber shop without obtaining a license. For this he was jailed, but the judge ruled that Dodge City barbers could not refuse the business of the Mexican community.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 83; Martha Menchaca, *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 23.

¹⁴¹Arthur D. Martinez, "Los de Dodge City, Kansas: A Mexican-American Community at the Heartland of the United States," *Journal of the West* 24 (April 1985): 88-95.

¹⁴²Irene Ruiz Interviews, John A. Rodriguez.

The educational structure in Dodge City was typical for the time period. From 1915 to 1947, all Mexican students received their education in the Coronado School, which had two rooms and one teacher and an assistant for grades one to three. The community had pressured the Dodge City school board for separate facilities on racial grounds, but a private individual built and started the school. When educators from the University of Kansas were invited to examine the school district of Dodge City in 1923, they observed that the “Mexican School” was a “temporary structure ... so inadequate,” that they excluded it from the usual comparisons of the rest of the town’s elementary schools.¹⁴³ They were unaware that this separate school had existed since 1915 and would be used without improvements for another twenty-four years.

The visiting educators had an outsider’s perspective that was rare for the time period. They were convinced that the Mexican school was temporary, and existed because of overcrowding in the Anglo school. They recommended that the Mexican students attend the a proposed larger elementary school with the Anglo students. They were aware that separation may have accompanied an Americanization effort, but concluded that “it is wholly impossible with such facilities to provide satisfactory elementary school instruction of the modern type which is regarded as best suited for making a desirable type of citizen and neighbor.”¹⁴⁴ The Dodge City school system did go on to improve many of its schools as recommended, but did nothing to change education for Mexican-Americans.

There were approximately fifty children enrolled in the Coronado School at any one time, because many children worked the fields with their families. The Santa Fe Railroad destroyed the company housing where the Mexican community resided since the early 1900s, as well as

¹⁴³Galen Floyd Davidson, “The Growth and Development of Public Education in Dodge City, Kansas” (master’s thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, 1953), 40, 81. Davidson did not examine, or show any awareness of race as an issue in the education of Mexicans in Dodge City; University of Kansas. School of Education. Bureau of School Service. School Survey and Building Program for Dodge City, Kansas (Dodge City, Kans.: Press of the Etrick Company, 1923), 5-7.

¹⁴⁴University of Kansas. School of Education. Bureau of School Service. School Survey and

the school, in 1947. Mexican-American students were then enrolled in the public schools. They experienced segregation there as well, when they were all put in large, special education classes, with Anglo children with developmental disabilities, on the assumption that they did not know English. No students were tested for their English proficiency. Their “curriculum” consisted of crayons, scissors, and a pad of paper. John Rodriguez happened to work after school for the Principal, and when it was discovered that John spoke English, he was put into regular classes.¹⁴⁵

John Rodriguez’ experiences in the public schools were not happy, yet provided him with an inspiration to succeed through education. With encouragement from his parents, he continued his education, while many of his fellow students dropped out after the sixth grade. He went to the Catholic High School in Dodge City, because the Catholic schools had the reputation of treating Mexican-American students better than in the public schools.¹⁴⁶

The experiences of Mexican-Americans in Catholic Schools in Kansas were mixed, because they often encountered the same prejudices that existed in Anglo society. Domingo Ricart’s study of five towns in Kansas revealed that the majority of Mexican-American students attended Catholic schools in the late 1940s. Only Mexican-American children attended the parochial schools in Emporia, Newton, Wichita and Hutchinson, and in Florence and Newton, Anglo and Mexican-American students were eventually integrated. José Perez recalled that he attended Catholic School in Newton in an all-Mexican room, and received corporal punishment for speaking Spanish.¹⁴⁷ The attitudes of the priest in charge were critical to the success of

Building program for Dodge City, Kansas, 49, 58.

¹⁴⁵Davidson, “The Growth and Development of Public Education in Dodge City, Kansas,” 40; Irene Ruiz Interviews, John A. Rodriguez.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Robert Oppenheimer Interviews, Group 1. Trabajo y Cultura Project. Lawrence, Kans.: Kenneth Spencer Library, University of Kansas, 5.

these students. One cleric in Florence believed that most Mexican-American children had to repeat first grade because they were not allowed to attend kindergarten, which was something he felt he was powerless to change. Another in Emporia believed that all Mexican-Americans were of below average intelligence compared to Anglo students. The priest in Hutchinson thought that too much education was “harmful” and unnecessary, and publicly denounced families who were active in *mutualistas*.¹⁴⁸

In Armourdale and Argentine, Mexican Catholics were not allowed to sit among Anglos at services. Both communities eventually built separate churches for Mexican parishioners, in 1926 and 1937 respectively. Mexican services were held in the basement of the St. Thomas Church in Armourdale and in Argentine, Mexicans sat in designated sections in St. John the Evangelist.¹⁴⁹ Pete Quiroga maintained that half of the Mexican-American children attended public schools and half St. John the Evangelist in Argentine in the 1940s. Mr. Quiroga recalled that his classes were integrated and could remember no particularly bad experiences from his Catholic education. In order to reach the Mexican-American children who attended Clara Barton in Argentine, a nearby building was remodeled for religious instruction in 1945 by the church. Children from Clara Barton were allowed to attend religious instruction there every Wednesday.¹⁵⁰

Ricart maintained that discrimination was worse in the smaller, more rural towns he studied.¹⁵¹ His conclusion was based on conditions in the late 1940s, after some progress had been made in race relations throughout the state. When discrimination in education is

¹⁴⁸Ricart, Just Across the Tracks, 38, 64.

¹⁴⁹Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 465-467.

¹⁵⁰Irene Ruiz Interviews, Pete Quiroga (3 May 1977), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library; Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 466.

¹⁵¹Ricart, Just Across the Tracks, 48.

considered for Kansas as a whole, the experiences of Mexican-Americans in either public or parochial institutions were affected by discrimination based on race to some degree. None came close to Kansas City in severity. The growth of the Mexican-American population, and the sheer number of Mexican students was sometimes a factor and sometimes not. There were only fifty or so in Dodge City, and the numbers in Argentine were not sufficient explanation for the implementation of segregation after the Influenza epidemic of 1918. The presence of only four Mexican-American fifth grade students sufficed to in the Major Hudson School in Rosedale, and the same number created fear of race mixing in the Alvarado case, which involved ninth grade students. This simply reflected an extreme prejudice, not a specific fear of being overwhelmed by masses of Mexican-Americans.

In Kansas City, Missouri, Mexican-Americans during the early twentieth century worked in packing plants and for the railroad, and communities developed along the same pattern as in Kansas City, Kansas. The community was smaller and controlled by strict residential segregation. Education for Mexicans in Kansas City, Missouri, was segregated on a *de facto* basis, whether it was provided in the Catholic schools or public schools.¹⁵² The Westside neighborhood was designated for Mexicans and any institution situated in that neighborhood became Mexican. In an announcement in the Catholic Register regarding a new school that was built in the neighborhood, there was no mention of the church's name. It was simply referred to as the "Mexican parish," and the school that was built was called the "New Mexican School."¹⁵³

Not all Mexican students attended parochial schools, but residential segregation in Kansas City, Missouri, ensured that the public school they attended would have a majority of Mexican-Americans. When Esther Rocha's family tried to take up residence in the East Bottoms

¹⁵²Mendoza, "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community," 196.

¹⁵³"New Mexican School to be Blessed by Bishop Sunday Afternoon," Catholic Register, 21 August 1927.

neighborhood at 19th and Holmes in 1921, they were forced to move to the Westside neighborhood. She recalled that the Westside neighborhood consisted of the blocks from 23rd street to 25th street and from State Line to Summit. Her brothers inevitably fought with Anglo boys, if they ventured north of 23rd Street. She attended the Adams School on Mercier Street, which was 90 percent Mexican-American by 1928, and was punished for speaking Spanish. To accomplish this, the teachers assigned an Anglo child to monitor the students on the playground and report them to the teacher. As an additional indignity, she was put into the “open air” program with all the other Mexican students, because they were assumed to be malnourished. The program involved extra meals and naps, and Mrs. Rocha recalled regularly missing important classes, such as geography and history.¹⁵⁴

Lydia Estevez also attended the Adams School during the late 1920s and remembered that a leaking roof and dripping water limited use of the second floor. She also recalled punishments for using Spanish and that Mexican-Americans were not allowed to buy homes outside of the Westside neighborhood.¹⁵⁵ After comparing Kansas City, Kansas, to Kansas City, Missouri, Laird concluded that Mexican-American students were not segregated in Missouri.¹⁵⁶ She did not factor in the affects of strictly controlled residential segregation and what that meant for education. Education for Mexican-Americans was not restricted beyond elementary school, but many were pushed into vocational training and experienced other forms of discriminatory treatment from their teachers in the 1930s.

Segregation for Mexican children occurred during the same time period in Ottawa and

¹⁵⁴Irene Ruiz Interviews, Esther Rocha (26 June 1978), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.

¹⁵⁵Irene Ruiz Interviews, Lydia Estevez (30 January 1978), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.

¹⁵⁶Laird, “Argentine, Kansas,” 193.

Chanute, for which no detailed studies have been done.¹⁵⁷ The spread of segregated education for Mexican children through Kansas supports Gonzalez' theory of a national program of education for Mexican-Americans. Extensive examination of the deliberations of various school boards in Kansas would be required to prove that Kansas school officials responded more to developing educational theories on a national basis, than to local pressure. Given other practices of discrimination against Mexicans in everyday life in Kansas, the theory of local pressure appears to be more applicable to Kansas. In the late forties, Mexican-American residents of Kansas, who had traveled to other states, declared Kansas to be the worst in discrimination toward Mexican-Americans.¹⁵⁸

While racial attitudes toward Mexican-Americans developed nationally, as shown Chapter 3, extensive comparative research demonstrates that segregated education for Mexican-Americans in Kansas developed based on local conditions. Only in Topeka did school officials apply an English proficiency policy that required four years before allowing Mexican-American students into schools with Anglos. That policy was racially biased, since a separate school was built after admission to all Mexican students was refused initially.

School officials in Kansas did not institute segregated education because of concerns about English proficiency, nor were their reasons based on hygienic matters. The issue was race and in most cases in Kansas, Anglo parental pressure played a major role, especially in Kansas City. Racist perception, fear of race mixing, fear of interracial sex, dating, and marriage influenced reactions to Mexicans by Anglos. Gendered stereotypes of Mexican boys as violent and girls as larcenous were the source of these fears. The race factor also explains why the

¹⁵⁷Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, (1932), 326.

¹⁵⁸Franco, "The Mexican People in the State of Kansas," 5.

separate schools were not of equal quality. While the Mexican community in the late teens and early twenties in Kansas City was not sufficiently organized to protest these arrangements, incidents in Rosedale and Argentine inspired resistance in 1924-25. The responses of the Mexican community will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESISTANCE TO PREJUDICE AND SEGREGATED EDUCATION IN KANSAS CITY

The educational experience for Mexican-Americans in Kansas in the twentieth century was a varied one, as no consistent policy on segregation was applied in any city. Evidence of widespread prejudice tended to mitigate any progress made through education. Educational progress for Mexican-Americans in Kansas remained a struggle well into the 1960s. Compared to other cities in Kansas, segregated education for Mexican-Americans in Kansas City was unparalleled in severity and duration. The Mexican community did not stand idly by while this system was instituted, and used what little power they had to attempt to change and influence educational policy.

This chapter will recount efforts by the Mexican community in Kansas City to resist and change segregated education. The struggle began in the mid-nineteen twenties when a growing number of residents used their status as aliens to appeal to their local Mexican consul, who pressured State Department officers in Washington to investigate educational practices in Kansas City. These efforts resulted in a full accounting of segregated education in Kansas City from the school system's perspective. Substantive change was not achieved, but the resistance effort reaffirmed basic educational and civil rights. After World War II, when large numbers of Mexican-Americans returned from the war effort, resistance efforts were renewed. The gradual demise of segregated education for Mexican-American elementary grade students was completed by the devastating flood of 1951. The flood ravaged Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale, and forced large numbers of the Mexican community to relocate. After the flood destroyed the Clara Barton School, it was not rebuilt, and the Mexican-American students that remained in the area achieved full integration. The Mexican community had started the process

of resistance almost thirty years earlier, which paved the way for change without legal recourse.

A mural completed in 1998 on a concrete wall on Metropolitan Boulevard in Argentine depicts the community's history from the days before Europeans arrived through the twentieth century. In one frame, the Ku Klux Klan appears in the background of a hierarchical pyramid which serves as a metaphor for local race relations. African-Americans and Mexican-Americans appear at the bottom of the pyramid and white Americans at the top. Another panel shows a Mexican boy and girl being turned away from a school by a school official. That striking artistic image recalls what locals today call "the Alvarado case," a 1925 incident involving four Mexican-American students, including the son and daughter of Saturnino and Guadalupe Alvarado.¹ When their children were forced out of high school, these parents refused to accept segregated alternatives. The resistance of the Alvarado, De Leon, and Pérez parents focused attention on the Kansas City Kansas school system at the federal and state levels of government. The end result was that the Mexican consulate intervened to pressure both Washington, D.C. and Kansas City officials to investigate and explain segregation. After the Alvarado case, educators were sensitized to the likelihood of diplomatic pressure and realized the need to be more covert in creating segregated education for Mexican-American students.

The effectiveness of the Mexican consuls in the Midwest were hampered by a government that had only recently gained stability after the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1919. But because of the revolution, the Mexican government had assumed a more nationalistic stance and Mexican leaders and popular culture celebrated Mexico's multi-racial society -- thus setting the stage for more active defense of Mexican rights in the United States. Before the revolution, during the Porfiriato of 1877-1911, the Mexican government had a record of acceding to United States interests in most political and economic matters. The Mexican

¹"Mural Stirs Vivid Images," Dos Mundos, 20 August 1998, 1. There were four students involved, not two. The Anglo community agitated for the removal of the students and none were officially removed by any school official.

government's intentions to protect the rights of Mexican citizens in the United States exceeded their funding. The consul in Kansas City, Missouri, was responsible for western Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota. While some funds were available for English-speaking attorneys, they were limited, and it was difficult to find an attorney that would take prosecuted Mexicans seriously.²

The Mexican Consulate nonetheless remained the first option for the Mexican community, for disputes that they could not resolve on their own. The first attempt by the Mexican community of Kansas City to challenge the policy of segregated education occurred in September 1924. Enraged over the school system's refusal to remove four Mexican boys from the new Major Hudson school, 200 Anglo parents forced the issue. They circled the school, called their own children out, and threatened bodily harm to the Mexican students. A police escort was required for their safety. In response, the parents of the four students enlisted the efforts of the recently formed *Union Cultural Mexicana* (UCM), based in the Westside neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri.³ Their method of resistance was to keep their children out of the Old Major Hudson School, specifically designated as Mexican only, while they pursued efforts to gain entry to the integrated school. They were not alone in this effort, since there were approximately forty other Mexican children who did not enroll in the Old Major Hudson School at the beginning of the school year.⁴

Through the UCM, the community went to the mayor of Kansas City, Kansas, who deferred the issue to the school, who deferred the issue to city hall, with no effective resolution.

²Juan R. García, Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 112-113.

³Paul Ming-Chang Lin, "Voluntary Kinship and Voluntary Association in a Mexican-American Community" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1963), 103. Lin's informant revealed that Mexican-American students were forced to attend schools for African-Americans in Kansas City, Missouri, which was not corroborated by any of the sources for this study.

⁴Ibid.

Eventually, the UCM was able to get the mayor to establish a committee consisting of three officials from the municipal government and five from the UCM. The UCM at the time was also pursuing the issues of segregated pools, schools, and hospitals. The mayor's committee affected no change in any of these areas after four years.⁵

The tendency to defer charges of racism to another authority characterized nearly every response from bureaucrats at federal, state, and local levels in the United States. The Mexican consul involved in the Major Hudson case sent complaints to Washington, starting in November, 1924. Authorities at the state level in Kansas offered to "make no distinction between the Mexican children and the American or any other children," but local school systems maintained the status quo. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Mexican Consul Manuel Téllez stated the children could not attend school, because of the lack "of the needed guarantees" -- referring to the fact that the school system claimed that the children were free to attend the integrated school, yet would not provide the security needed to prevent another race riot. Téllez charged that the school system's solution of a segregated school created a "disparaging difference" between Mexican students and those of other nationalities. He asked that the United States guarantee the "rights of equality and reciprocity that should belong to the Mexicans residing in the United States."⁶ The response came from the Acting Secretary, Joseph C. Grew, in which he reiterated that he understood what the Mexican government requested, but chose to wait for a report from Kansas authorities, which he asked for on the same day. However, his letter referred to the "alleged to be discriminatory treatment," perhaps reflecting a strict legal view of an unsubstantiated event or merely disdain for the claims of the Mexican Embassy.⁷ Téllez

⁵Ibid.

⁶National Archives, Manuel C. Téllez to Charles E. Hughes, November 6, 1924, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1-2. Department of State translation.

⁷National Archives, Joseph C. Grew to Manuel C. Téllez, November 19, 1924, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1; National Archives, Joseph C. Grew to the Governor of Kansas, November 19, 1924, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1. The Governor at the time was Jonathan Davis.

clearly implied that the “long negotiations” with the State of Kansas had resulted in no effective action at the local level, yet the State Department insisted on following standard procedure.

After receiving no response, the Mexican Chargé d'affaires José Benítez wrote again to the State Department in January, 1925. He stated that the parents of the children had kept their children out of school, with the result that the school system took steps to prosecute the parents under the compulsory attendance law. Grew then sent a telegram to the Governor of Kansas, restated the demand of the Mexican Embassy that “Mexican children be admitted to the public schools without discrimination,” and mentioned the court date, which was the next day. He asked that an investigation be made and that the outcome should be reported to the State Department. A few days later Benítez thanked Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes for his intervention that resulted in “so great a success.”⁸ He was probably referring to the fact that the case against the parents was dropped. Superintendent Matthew E. Pearson testified at a later date that Judge Donald C. McCombs advised against prosecuting the parents under the Compulsory Attendance Law until the Federal Government ruled on the matter, something which they never indicated they would do.⁹

Newspaper accounts did not initially acknowledge that the truant students were engaged in an act of resistance to segregation. At a school board meeting, the truant officer for the old Major Hudson School was asked to force the children back into school, where only three students out of forty now attended. The truant officer's effort resulted in ten more children attending the school three days later. Superintendent Pearson also noted no organized

⁸National Archives, José Benítez to Charles E. Hughes, January 12, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1-2. State Department translation; National Archives, Joseph C. Grew to José Benítez, January 13, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1; Kansas State Historical Society, Joseph C. Grew to the Governor of Kansas, January 12, 1925, File 201-Aliens, Attorney General of Kansas; National Archives, José Benítez to Charles E. Hughes, January 25, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City. State Department translation.

⁹National Archives. Records of the Department of State. Record Group 59. Decimal file 1910-1929, Box 3573, File 311.1215/Kansas City. “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation at Kansas City, Kansas.” Affidavit from M.E. Pearson by W.C. Ralston, October 21, 1925, 1-9.

resistance and assumed that many of the students had dropped out to attend parochial schools. The parents of thirty of the children appeared in court on January 13, 1925, and they promised before Judge McCombs that their children would attend. Yet two days later, twenty were still truant.¹⁰ Included in this group were the parents of the four Mexican boys who had pursued diplomatic channels for relief. While Pearson had testified that the school board was advised to drop the case, it was renewed in the courts two weeks later. Judge McCombs ruled that the four Mexican boys, who had been at the center of the controversy at the New Major Hudson School, had to attend school somewhere other than the New Major Hudson School until the State Department ruled on the matter. After this ruling, Benítez renewed his request for Mexican children to be given equal protection under the law and not be made subject to “special discriminatory orders.”¹¹

The State Department responded by asking for an investigation by the Governor’s Office. Governor Ben Paulen, who had just taken office in January, 1925, responded that the Governor’s office did not possess the previous correspondence from Governor Jonathan Davis, but they promised to have the Attorney General to “look into this alleged discrimination.”¹² Neither Federal nor State archives contain records indicating that an investigation ever took place. No further correspondence on the Major Hudson case was generated by either the Mexican consul, the State Department, or the State of Kansas, until a different set of four students were prevented from attending Argentine High School in September 1925. Mexican consul Manuel Téllez revisited the Major Hudson case in September 1925 and renewed the

¹⁰“Pupils Must Walk to Parker School,” Kansas City Kansan, 6 January 1925, 2; “Truant Officer’s Work has Hiked Numbers at Major Hudson School, Kansas City Kansan, 9 January 1925, 13; “Enrollment of Little Mexican Pupils Takes Sudden Jump, in School,” Kansas City Kansan, 15 January 1925, 4.

¹¹National Archives, José Benítez to Charles E. Hughes, February 4, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1-2. State Department translation.

¹²National Archives, Charles E. Hughes to José Benítez, February 9, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City; Kansas State Historical Society. Easton Hutchinson to Charles E. Hughes, February 13, 1925, Governor Jonathan Davis File.

plea for integrated education.¹³ From that time forward, the Mexican consul spoke repeatedly of the school district's widespread "offensive and disparaging discrimination."¹⁴ At no point in the correspondence did Mexican officials acknowledge any need for separate instruction based on the lack of English proficiency. They continually insisted on protection for the students under the law as foreign citizens.

As a result of diplomatic pressure, Superintendent Pearson was questioned by the Assistant Attorney General of Kansas, W. C. Ralston, on October 21, 1925. The sole purpose of the deposition was to gather information to satisfy a request that had been made over a year earlier. What eventually happened to the four New Major Hudson school students was not revealed in Pearson's testimony, since he reported that after Judge McCombs suggested that the school system stop trying to force the children into school, many more Mexican children had enrolled in the old Major Hudson School.¹⁵ The movement to lower truancy rates appeared to be applied to all students district-wide, without regard to race, since Kansas law required school attendance until age sixteen.¹⁶ In Texas, which required school attendance until the age of fourteen, this law was rarely enforced for Mexican-American students in agricultural areas. Local growers, who typically had considerable influence on school boards, saw education as a threat that would reduce the Mexican workforce.¹⁷ School authorities in Kansas City used the law to enforce segregation, giving the appearance of equal treatment. In Texas and California, the law was rarely applied to Mexican students, although they were carefully counted in

¹³National Archives, Manuel C. Téllez to Frank Kellog, September 21, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 1-2. State Department translation.

¹⁴National Archives, Manuel C. Téllez to Frank Kellog, October 20, 1925, File 311.1215/Kansas City, 3. State Department translation with a correction. The adjectival form of "offense" was not used, but clearly required both for clarity and accuracy.

¹⁵National Archives, "In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation," 3.

¹⁶"Truancy in County Nearly Eliminated," Kansas City Kansan, 20 January 1925, 1.

¹⁷Meyer Weinberg, A Chance to Learn: the History of Race and Education in the United States

enrollment figures to garner state money, which was then used to improve Anglo schools.¹⁸

The link between race and truancy was made clear in a newspaper article entitled “School Racial Row Over.” On February 3, 1925, Judge McCombs ordered six students to either attend the Old Major Hudson School or the Mexican rooms at Ingalls. They chose the Ingalls School, but did not report the next day.¹⁹ There was no mention of any State Department advice, which had been noted by Pearson as a cause for delay. When deposed eight months later, Pearson neglected to mention that Judge McCombs had indeed ruled on the matter. The number of students increased from four in the original incident to six, and their names were listed for the first time. The writer finally acknowledged that the truancy had constituted a form of resistance on the part of the students and their parents: “Six Mexican children who have been holding out and refusing to go to school ever since they were sent home from the new Major Hudson School in September because the white children refused to have them there.”²⁰

(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 147.

¹⁸Ibid., 162.

¹⁹“School Racial Row Over,” Kansas City Kansan, 4 February 1925, 4.

²⁰Ibid. All accounts clearly indicated that Anglo parents were responsible for their removal from the New Major Hudson School and not Anglo children.

Previous articles had attributed Mexican truancy to the “difficulties in roping their offspring.”²¹

Thus, by using the truancy law, school authorities emphasized that they would not tolerate any resistance to segregated education for Mexican-American students.

²¹“Enrollment of Little Mexican Pupils Takes Sudden Jump, in School,” Kansas City Kansan, 15 January 1925, 4.

Superintendent Pearson testified that the school board did not prevent these children from attending the new Major Hudson School, nor did they advise them not to attend. The school board, he reported, held public meetings to “quiet the feeling in the neighborhood,” although it was likely that only Anglo groups attended. He concluded that the children stayed away from the school because they were afraid.²² This was disingenuous on his part, because the decision of the school system to apply the truancy law led to Judge McCombs’s decision to force the students into a segregated school. His conclusion did not acknowledge that their non-attendance was an act of resistance. Nor did he address the Mexican Consul’s complaints that the “necessary protections” were not provided to allow the children to attend integrated schools. The school system’s use of the compulsory attendance law to enforce segregation rendered any good intentions moot: they did not at any time want to convey to officials at higher levels that they enforced segregation not supported by law, yet they were at no time going to force integration against the wishes of Anglo parents. Superintendent Pearson was not on trial at the time that he was questioned. Thus, any confusion and deception in his testimony was not pursued, since segregated education was not on trial in 1925, but tolerated as simply something that Anglo society required.

The fate of the four or six Major Hudson students was soon eclipsed by the Alvarado case. This incident inspired responses, albeit minimal, at the state level of government, and attracted a fair amount of publicity in the local newspapers. Four students who graduated from the all-Mexican Clara Barton school in 1925 enrolled in the all-Anglo Argentine High School that fall. The parents of these children believed in the importance of education for their sons and daughters, but did not enroll them as an act of resistance. While they experienced few problems in dealing with their classmates, Anglo parents in Argentine were extremely agitated over their presence. Newspaper accounts described the four as girls, but they were actually two boys and

²²National Archives, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation,” 3.

two girls: Jesus and Luz Alvarado, Marcos De Leon, and Victorina Pérez.²³ No specific reason was offered for the objection to their attendance. Skin color probably played a part in the parents' objection to the four children. Light-skinned Charles Sanchez and John Ferreira had graduated from Argentine High School in 1924, while Jesus and Luz Alvarado and Marcos De Leon had dark skin. Passing for Spanish would be an option for light-skinned Mexican-American students well into the 1940s in Argentine.²⁴

The tactics the Anglo parents employed were similar to those used in the Major Hudson incident. After the first week of the school year, Anglo parents asked the board directly to remove the students, and presented a petition with several hundred signatures. The school board refused to comply. Public and private meetings in Argentine created much tumult. This time Argentine residents conveyed the threat of violence to the Mexican community, without inciting an actual race riot.²⁵ The Mexican parents responded with tactics they employed previously without success, by withdrawing their children from school, registering their protests with the Mexican consul, and refusing all attempts at compromises that enforced segregation.

The school board revealed its strong commitment to segregated education in its response to the Alvarado case. Despite the initial public refusals to meet the demands of the Anglo parents, accommodating the white community quickly became very important. Assuming the role of mediator between the Anglo and Mexican communities, the board first authorized a separate room and teacher for the four students. After that offer was refused, it investigated the options for the Mexican students in nearby Missouri schools and authorized funding for tuition

²³Jesus F. Alvarado, "[Statement]." Photocopy. This undated document consists mainly of verbatim newspaper accounts of the incident that appeared in the Kansan.

²⁴The Argentinian, 1924, 29, 33; *Ibid.*, 1930, 24-25; Loren L. Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Kansas Ethnic Council, 2000), 458, 478. The Sanchez family came from Spain and owned a hotel in Argentine.

²⁵National Archives, "In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation," 4, 8. The newspaper account listed the number of signers as over 200. ("Mexican Row in K.C. Schools Up to State Dep't," Kansas City Kansan, 24 October 1925, 1; Alvarado, [Statement], 9.

and carfare. This offer was also refused by the parents and the students did not attend school anywhere for one year, while protests through diplomatic channels were pursued.²⁶ The possibility that the four students might attend high school at another district high school was not considered. This was the first group of dark-skinned Mexican-American students in Argentine that had pursued education beyond the eighth grade. Since African-Americans had their own high school, Sumner, the school system applied the policy of segregation to the Mexican students, but their numbers could not justify a separate school.

Since the Alvarado case involved high school age students, the school board could not use the arguments of linguistic deficiency to justify segregation. But they also made no overt arguments for segregation based on race. Instead, they insisted they merely sought to serve as honest brokers between the Mexican and Anglo communities in Argentine. Indeed, when they met with the parents of the children, the board maintained that they did not object to integrated schools, but emphasized their difficulties as mediators of the dispute. They even advised the Mexican parents to send their students to school, "if they thought it safe to do so."²⁷ In fact, their refusal to provide security in the schools, failed to address the needs of the Mexican population, and simultaneously, appeased the Anglo racists. Saturnino Alvarado and his wife Guadalupe, parents of students Jesus and Luz, took a stand against this form of discrimination, and eventually accomplished their goal of integrating Argentine High School. They did not accomplish this easily and sacrificed a year's worth of education. The Alvarado case became an example of successful early resistance to discrimination in the relatively young Mexican-American community in Argentine.

²⁶National Archives, "In the Matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School Situation," 4-5.

²⁷Ibid., 8.

Newspaper accounts followed the Alvarado case and the course of diplomatic negotiations more thoroughly than in the Major Hudson conflict. The Kansan, the school board's official publication, started reporting on the case when Superintendent Pearson was questioned in response to diplomatic pressure by the State Assistant Attorney General Ralston on October 21, 1925. In reviewing the pertinent facts about the education of Mexican students in the district over the past seven years, the Kansan emphasized the efforts of the school board to resolve the situation. The role of Anglo parents as a pressure group for segregated education was also prominent. The school board's confused arguments regarding English proficiency were presented as well, and in the context of a controversy involving high school students, the case seemed especially weak. In spite of the school board's inconsistencies, Ralston did not offer the position of the state on the matter, and instead indicated a need to delay judgment until he conferred with Governor Paulen.²⁸

State Attorney General C.B. Griffith started talks in October with Harry Hayward, the Wyandotte County attorney, to work out the means by which "the rights of friendly aliens are protected," and to "correct the condition... that exists in Wyandotte County."²⁹ When their first meeting was delayed, it was reported that the Mexican Embassy felt that the "school rumpus" violated treaties between the United States and Mexico.³⁰ The follow-up report on the meeting, which took place on October 29, 1925, named the "Mother's Club" of Argentine as the main Anglo group behind the movement to remove the Mexican-American children from Argentine High School.³¹ This was not surprising. Anglo racism did not break down along gender lines during this time, since Anglo women were involved in the creation of the Clara Barton School in

²⁸"State Officials into Mexican Pupil Row," Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5.

²⁹"Mexican Row in K.C. Schools Up to State Dep't," Kansas City Kansan, 24 October 1925, 1.

³⁰"Mexican Parley Delayed," Kansas City Kansan, 26 October 1925, 1.

³¹"Federal Injunction Mexican Possibility," Kansas City Kansan, 28 October 1925, 1.

Argentine.

By insisting on the right to attend Argentine High School and expressing an unwillingness to accept anything less, the Mexican parents concentrated attention on the racism of the Anglo parents. County Attorney Harry Hayward speculated that a federal injunction might force the Anglo parents to honor the terms of the existing treaty between Mexico and the United States.³² The focus on the Anglo parents would continue, as it was apparent that the resistance of the Mexican parents to submit to segregated alternatives would not waver. It also helped the Mexican cause that Governor Paulen actually questioned Superintendent Pearson about the justification for segregation, something which the previous Governor had declined to do.

County Attorney Hayward proved to be among the most persistent school board critics. The Kansan reported that in one meeting with Attorney General Griffith, Hayward named the P.T.A. of Argentine as one of the chief perpetrators of racial segregation. He also speculated that some federal action would be forthcoming. Hayward and Griffith concluded that because the Mexican children were considered “aliens,” the Attorney General of the Federal Government needed to take some action to ensure their rights.³³ Prior to meeting with the local Mexican consul, Hayward expressed that the current treaty between the nations regarding the status of resident Mexican aliens had been violated, but would need to examine other documents to be certain.³⁴ After Hayward met with the Mexican Consul in Kansas City, Missouri, the Mexican government renewed their efforts to pressure the State Department for action. Hayward himself concluded that the Anglo parents were “guilty of three grave federal offenses,” and charged them “with having violated the constitution, international treaty rights everywhere recognized, and the promises between Mexico and the United States.” The County Attorney predicted that a

³²Ibid.

³³“Mexican Case Up to U.S.,” Kansas City Kansan, 30 October 1925, 9.

³⁴“Mexican Crisis to Consul,” Kansas City Kansan, 2 November 1925, 1. The former “row”,

federal injunction against the Argentine parents would forbid “any further interference with the schools.”³⁵ Hayward appeared to think that this was indeed an international issue, but there was never any indication that the State Department considered it to be part of their domain.

Hayward was perhaps the first to state that the Anglo parents’ objections were considered “interference.” This was a view that was never expressed by the school board, whose interests often were one and the same with Anglo parents. Hayward, however, fell short of ascribing Anglo actions to racial prejudice.

Diplomatic pressure continued, and J. Garza Zertuche, the Mexican Consul General, posted in New Orleans, visited with Hayward and local Mexican consul Benigno Cantu to work out a solution. Zertuche claimed that he did not know of any “other place in the United States where trouble like this has come up.” Regarding attendance by Mexican-American students in high school, he was correct. High school attendance by Mexican-American students in the Southwest was rare, but when it occurred in Anglo schools, it did not create the controversy that it did in Argentine. In an appeal to economic concerns, he stated that segregated education created unnecessary expense to the taxpayer. As a solution to the Alvarado case, he believed that police protection should be provided by the school board to allow the children to attend, and believed it was the responsibility of the school board to affect this.³⁶ At no time did the school board offer police protection, which would have been required to integrate the new Major Hudson School in 1924, and no comment from the school board was made regarding this suggestion.

The last report on the segregation issue to appear in the Kansan during this time reflected that Hayward had not heard any further news and would not do anything substantive.

“rumpus,” and “parley” had now become more serious.

³⁵“K.C. School Row is Put Before Kellogg,” Kansas City Kansan, 3 November, 1925, 1.

³⁶“Special School is Unfair, Says Mexican Envoy,” Kansas City Kansan, 9 November 1925, 1.

He simply reiterated that the Anglo parents needed to take some action.³⁷ While it appeared that Hayward was somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the students, he merely continued the trend of bureaucratic “buck passing.” The standoff remained stalemated for one year, and the four students attended no school, despite the compulsory attendance law. The school board was not criticized for applying the law to the Major Hudson students by anyone except the Mexican Consulate, yet they did not pursue it against the Argentine High students. Perhaps the pressure from the federal and state levels on this case made them reluctant to force the students into a segregated educational arrangement. The fact that the Major Hudson holdouts were in the fifth grade perhaps made a difference, since the segregated old Major Hudson school was designed to accept students up to the sixth grade. There was no equivalent facility for the high school age students. On the same day that the Alvarado case first appeared in the Kansan, a Polish-American father of a fourteen-year old girl was jailed under the school attendance law, providing an example of a strict application applied to a non-Mexican parent.³⁸ The school board did not test the compulsory attendance law without a segregated alternative in place.

Although County and State officials may have questioned Argentine’s segregation policies, the real agents for change were parents of school age Mexican youths. The oral history passed from generation to generation in the Mexican community credits Saturnino Alvarado as the main instigator behind the successful campaign to integrate Argentine High School. He had achieved a higher level of education than was typical of recent immigrants, and eventually established a shoemaker’s shop in the Argentine neighborhood. His granddaughter, Rose Marie Moreno Mendez, insists that he traveled to Washington to plead his case and that he initiated a court case that went to the Supreme Court.³⁹ The existence of a court case at any level could

³⁷“Next Move Up to Parents,” Kansas City Kansan, 14 November 1925, 1.

³⁸“Girl Not in School; Father Put in Jail,” Kansas City Kansan, 17 October 1925, 5.

³⁹“Obituary: Saturnino Alvarado,” Kansas City Kansan, 8 August 1955. Esperanza Amayo,

not be verified and his name cannot be found in either newspaper accounts or consular correspondence. It is uncontested that Alvarado and the other parents did keep their children out of school, and pursued relief through diplomatic channels. Searches of county records revealed that this case did not proceed as a suit brought against the Kansas City Kansas Schools. It did not need to, since the Board of Education could not deny admission to those students under *Plessy v. Ferguson*. They were required to provide separate but equal facilities, and they were prepared to do so.

Records that would determine who was mainly responsible for the resolution of the Alvarado case are not available. Diplomatic correspondence and newspapers reports ceased to mention the case after November 1925. Local historians Loren Taylor and Judith Laird reported that the students involved were able to gain admission to the Argentine schools, and further evidence for this appeared in several sources. Joe Amayo, a contemporary of the Alvarado children who graduated after them, stated that through the efforts of “two doctors, a teacher and an attorney,” Alvarado’s children and Marcos De Leon were admitted to Argentine High School without objections in the fall of 1926. Marcos De Leon appeared in the starting lineup for the football team in October 1926. Jesus Alvarado, Luz Alvarado, and Marcos De Leon appeared in the yearbook for the first time in 1927, and were listed in the ninth grade.⁴⁰ Victorina Pérez did not attend, but the other students graduated from Argentine High School in 1930. De Leon graduated from Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas, in 1934 and became a minister. They were the first dark-skinned Mexican-American high school graduates in the Kansas City Kansas

personal interview, November 18, 2000; Taylor, *The Consolidated Ethnic History*, 468.

⁴⁰Taylor, *The Consolidated Ethnic History*, 468-470; Judith A.F. Laird, “Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905-1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975), 196; Robert Oppenheimer Interviews, Joe Amayo et al. Trabajo y Cultura Project. Lawrence, Kans.: Kenneth Spencer Library, University of Kansas, 4; “Argentine Romps on Leavenworth,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 23 October 1926, 3; *The Argentinian*, 1927, 34.

School District.⁴¹

The Alvarado case never reached any court of law, but the conflict typified the effects of diplomacy on local issues. The status of Mexicans as resident aliens and their tactics against segregated education invites comparisons to the Japanese in California. In the early part of the twentieth century, all Japanese students attended schools with Anglo children in San Francisco. Campaigns for segregated education increased in intensity after the Russo-Japanese War concluded in 1905, when the Anti-Japanese League was formed. California state law allowed for separate schools for children of Mongolian or Chinese descent, and that law was applied to force Japanese children to attend the Oriental schools with Chinese and Korean students. Japanese parents refused to allow their children to attend, and consulted their consul. The Japanese government escalated the conflict to the international level in 1907. To end the conflict, President Theodore Roosevelt negotiated the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907, which barred further Japanese immigration to the mainland United States in return for the integration of Japanese students. The Anglo campaign to segregate the Japanese did not end in 1907, and California State law was finally amended to include them in legalized segregation in 1921.⁴²

While the Japanese community in San Francisco did have one attorney who was qualified to prosecute their case in the courts, the Mexicans in Kansas City did not. The Japanese were able to challenge an existing law that was applied to them, while Mexicans were not specifically covered by any law that could be challenged. The experience of both the Japanese and Mexican communities contrasts with that of African-Americans, who struggled against laws that sanctioned segregated education that were specific to their racial group and not subject to interpretation. In California, the first court case to desegregate African-American

⁴¹ Alvarado, [Statement], 8; Kansas City Kansas Schools, "Clara Barton School History."

⁴² Charles Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 48, 50-52, 54, 66-67, 72.

schools was instigated in 1872, and was the first of many cases over the next hundred years.⁴³

In the South during Reconstruction, schools were segregated for African-Americans with few exceptions. After *Plessy v. Ferguson* sanctioned separate schools in 1896, African-Americans pursued change through the courts, until *Plessy* was overruled by *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. This case was the result of years of pressure from the various African-American organizations, most notably, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (N.A.A.C.P.) The N.A.A.C.P. trained attorneys who pursued a series of cases attacking segregation from 1939 on.⁴⁴ The Mexican community was too undeveloped in 1925 to take such measures and could only appeal to their local consuls.

The Alvarado case was significant in many respects. The use of the Mexican Consul and the pursuit of the violation of their rights as resident aliens attempted to remove the focus on race, which was a far more difficult attitude to challenge during the 1920s. The parents' refusal to accept segregated alternatives or to attend in Kansas City, Missouri, where no segregation at the high school level existed also was a strong form of resistance. This strategy relied on the fact that Mexican immigrants could not be legally segregated based on their racial status as Mexicans. It was clear that Mexican-Americans were not African-Americans and segregated education for them was not covered by existing law. The ultimate resolution came from local sources, from influential people within the Argentine community who perhaps felt that segregation beyond the eighth grade was hard to justify, except for racist reasons.

The Mexican parents presented a case that appealed to the sensibilities of the Mexican consulate, and they pursued it vigorously for a time. They forced Superintendent Pearson to explain the entire history of segregation in the district and create unfavorable publicity in the

⁴³Ibid., 8-9, 57.

⁴⁴C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 24, 71, 142-147.

local newspaper. The ultimate significance of the Alvarado case was that segregation would end at the eighth grade in the Argentine, Kansas. While this constituted only a partial victory for racial justice, it did represent an important step forward. If the parents had accepted one of the segregated alternatives, and given the racial atmosphere in Argentine, perhaps some form of segregated high school education could have been perpetuated. The strong resistance of these parents eliminated that possibility.

Attendance by Mexican-Americans did not increase greatly as a result of the breakthrough. Until 1939, no more than three Mexican-Americans graduated from Argentine High School in any year. One city agency reported that only three Mexican-American students attended beyond the ninth grade anywhere in the school district in 1940 and none of them were in the public schools.⁴⁵ While the Alvarado case opened the door for Mexican-Americans, oral history accounts provide evidence that integrated education did not prevent incidents of racism, particularly among the Anglo parents, who were still reluctant to allow their children to form relationships with Mexican-Americans.⁴⁶

Matthew E. Pearson became superintendent of the Kansas City School district in 1902 and the separate Argentine district came under his jurisdiction when Argentine became part of the city in 1910. Frank L. Schlagle became Pearson's assistant in 1924 and succeeded him in 1932 as Superintendent.⁴⁷ When interviewed by Hector Franco in 1938, Schlagle openly endorsed the board's policy toward the education of Mexicans: "Mexicans have no business moving or living away from the Mexican school. We would rather pay their transportation to the

⁴⁵Kansas City Kansas Department of Health, 170-171. According to the 1940 Argentine, six Hispanic surnamed students graduated from Argentine High School, so these figures are questionable.

⁴⁶In particular, the interviews with Ladislao Lopez, Elvira Ramirez and Magdalena Rodriguez provided evidence of continued racism on the part of Anglo parents in the 1940s.

⁴⁷Hattie Poppino, "Argentine and Argentine High School," (Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas Room, Kansas City Kansas Public Library, 1965), 3-4.

Mexican school than let them attend any other school in the city.”⁴⁸ Schlagle's statement supported the assertion that the board agreed with the school's Anglo patrons that Mexicans should be segregated. As previously mentioned, Schlagle had strong ties in the Argentine Community, and would later strongly resist any efforts to change segregated education in the district as Superintendent.

The Mexican consulates relied on mutual aid societies such as the *Union Cultural Mexicana* (UCM) to provide them with information on discrimination, including the Alvarado case. Cases of school discrimination throughout the Southwest was a subject of great interest, but the Mexican government was fairly cautious in addressing it. Attempts to use diplomatic means to force the State Department to pressure local figures were unsuccessful in most cases.⁴⁹ The Mexican Office of Foreign Relations covered the issue throughout the 1930s, and noted successful efforts of resistance proudly. In 1931, Mexican-American parents with the advice of the consul in San Diego boycotted a separate school built for their children in Lemon Grove, California, and also instituted a suit against the board. The judge in the local court cited the absence of authority to segregate the children, based on English proficiency. Critical to the case were the questions of the judge himself, who noted that the school board did not attempt to distinguish between students who were behind in their studies or lacked a command of English and those who did.⁵⁰ This was an isolated success and the local decision had no effect on other communities in California. Other towns in California used methods that were not as brazen, and effectively segregated Mexican-American students until 1945, when the California district court decision in *Mendez v. Westminster* caused voluntary desegregation throughout the

⁴⁸Hector Franco, “The Mexican People in the State of Kansas” (master’s thesis, University of Wichita, 1950), 54-55.

⁴⁹García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*, 112, 122.

⁵⁰México. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*. Vol. 2. (Mexico: La Secretaría, 1931), 1784-1787.

state. This decision ruled that separate but equal facilities for Mexican children did not allow equal protection under the law. In order to avoid litigation by Mexican parents who sued to apply *Mendez*, more California school districts voluntarily desegregated.⁵¹

The methods used by the Lemon Grove community, the boycott of the school by all Mexican students and appeals to their consul, were used on a smaller scale in Kansas City. The results were more successful in Lemon Grove, where all Mexican students attended the only integrated school in the town. The Mexican community in Lemon Grove was fortunate to have the means to sue the school board and a judge who did not believe that California law sanctioned segregation. Another important difference was that Lemon Grove was a small suburb of San Diego, where options for all students were limited. The Mexican community was united on this issue and their children had attended the school with Anglos for many years. Perhaps the most important difference between Lemon Grove and Kansas City was that the force of a court decision was enough for the school board to resist pressure from the community to appeal the decision.⁵² Since the incidents in Kansas City only involved four-to-six students at a time, and resistance efforts did not include instigating suits against the school district, the impact on the overall structure of segregated education was minimal.

Investigators in the field for the Mexican Government were well aware that the justification for segregation on linguistic grounds was racist in origin and they presented studies that proved that Mexican children were as capable as other foreign children in learning English. In one 1931 study, they noted accurately that no Mexican-American students were segregated at the high school level in Kansas. Because of the Alvarado case, that was a true statement, but

⁵¹Weinberg, *A Chance to Learn*, 166-167.

⁵²Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1982), 61.

oversimplified.⁵³ The Mexican government's review of the state of segregated education for Mexican students in the United States actually revealed a great variety of structures and restrictions. In areas of the Southwest, the majority of students were segregated until the fifth or sixth grade, with seven or more towns in rural Texas in which students remained segregated until the eighth grade. This occurred in towns in which Mexican-American students typically did not go on to high school.⁵⁴ The Clara Barton School was similar to the Texas model. The Mexican government was also involved with groups of citizens in California, who fought the institution or legalization of segregated education during the Depression.⁵⁵

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was formed in Texas in 1927 and began a campaign to end the segregated education of Mexican-American students in 1930. They struggled in the courts for many years to create changes in segregated education, but did not gain a federal decision until 1949. They had some successes at the state level, which usually contained some loophole for local authorities to continue segregation⁵⁶

Major efforts at further resistance after 1926 were not found in the historical record for the Kansas City areas and the status quo was maintained until World War II. The attendance records of the Clara Barton School reflected a sharp decline in the numbers of students attending the seventh and eighth grades. No students were listed as attending the eighth grade beginning in the 1939-1940 school year and after and no students were listed for the seventh grade beginning in the 1942-1943 school year. Increased numbers of Mexican students

⁵³Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, (1932), 324-330.

⁵⁴Ibid., 328-329.

⁵⁵Balderrama, In Defense of La Raza, 55-69.

⁵⁶Guadalupe San Miguel, "Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), xviii, 78, 65-125; Balderrama, In Defense of La Raza, 58-59.

attended Argentine Jr. High School at this time.⁵⁷ This merely brought the Clara Barton School to the same level as the Ingalls and Major Hudson Schools. Mexican-American children of this time attended Argentine Jr. High School after the sixth grade.⁵⁸ No concerted effort to further reduce the duration of segregation occurred until after World War II.

Ladislao Lopez had attended the Ingalls School as a child in the 1920s and served in the Army during the war, where he experienced no discrimination. He became active in the American G.I. Forum, which was a Mexican-American veterans organization that formed nationwide beginning in 1948 when American Legion chapters would not allow Mexican-Americans veterans to join.⁵⁹ He also took part in the formation of the Mexican-American City Council in Kansas City. This group visited Superintendent Schlagle, and asked that all Mexican-American children in the district be integrated into the white schools. Schlagle was dismissive to their requests and asked them rhetorically if they were telling him how to do his job. The council members bypassed Schlagle and sought the influence of current school board members. Lopez claimed that they gained an agreement to start gradual integration, beginning with the sixth grade and proceeding backwards through the grades.⁶⁰ For the 1950-1951 school year, eighty-five students attended grades 1-6 at the Clara Barton, so any efforts by this group did not appear to have had an impact. Attendance records for the Major Hudson and Ingalls schools were not available, and perhaps children were integrated sooner than the sixth grade at those schools through the efforts of the Mexican-American City Council.

⁵⁷Kansas City Kansas Schools, "Clara Barton School History, Average Daily Attendance."; The Argentinian, 1940, 28-29; *Ibid.*, 1943, 32-33.

⁵⁸The Argentinian, 1944, 32-33.

⁵⁹San Miguel, "Let All of Them Take Heed", 116-117; Esperanza Amayo, "Mexican-American Vets Deserve to be Honored," Kansas City Star, 5 May 1995, C7.

⁶⁰Irene Ruiz Interviews, Ladislao Lopez (27 June 1978), Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library. "He was disgusted with us for meddling in his business" was how Lopez characterized Schlagle's attitude.

Schlagle also obstructed the efforts of Mrs. Trina Oropeza Torrez. Mrs. Torrez attended the Clara Barton School along with her seven brothers and sisters, starting in 1927. She and two of her sisters, Aurora and Lois, eventually graduated from Argentine High School. She recalled that her school experiences and those of her sisters were generally good. When she had children of her own, they also attended Clara Barton in the late 1940s. She approached Superintendent Schlagle at the beginning of the school year and requested a transfer to the Emerson School, the same school from which Mexican-American students were first excluded in Argentine. He denied her request and in resistance, Mrs. Torrez home-schooled her children for four weeks. One of the teachers then informed her that if they did not attend by the fifth week, they would not be allowed to reenter the school.⁶¹ This was perhaps a pressure tactic on the part of the school system, since they commonly accepted students at all times of the school year.

Mrs. Torrez approached Schlagle again, and complained about the fact that Clara Barton lacked a "P.T.A., piano lessons and long recesses." Schlagle was as dismissive with Mrs. Torrez as he was with the Mexican-American City Council, and resented the interference. He did not acknowledge the discrimination that the school system supported and asked, "Mrs. Torrez, do you want to run my office?" He stated that "it was undesirable ... to allow us to have a P.T.A." Her response was to collect signatures via petition, and as a result, Schlagle finally allowed the Mexican-American mothers to have a P.T.A.⁶²

The petition had been used by Anglo parents to pressure the school board in the Alvarado case twenty-five years ago. The fact that Mexican-American parents could use the same method attested to a degree of progress in the area of discrimination, but not a significant one. Being able to gain permission for a P.T.A. did not fundamentally change the system of

⁶¹Taylor, The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County, 468, 470.

⁶²Ibid., 470.

segregation, but did lessen the degree of inferiority. Schlagle's attitude was evidence that the school board had to respond to organized pressure from parents, no matter what their racial group. Discouraging the organization of P.T.A.s of Mexican-American parents throughout the years ensured that segregated education would not be challenged. In comparison, the African-American community had a greater degree of organization for a longer time, and successfully lobbied the school board for improvements to their schools. They also did not alter segregated education. Significant progress in resistance and effecting change came to Mexican-Americans in Kansas City community came after World War II, as it did for Mexican-Americans throughout the Southwest. This was the result of increased activism by returning veterans, who experienced discrimination on their return.⁶³

Laird asserted that when the Flood of 1951 destroyed the Clara Barton School, segregation "effectively ended" in Argentine.⁶⁴ Since this occurred prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, school officials could have rebuilt the school or used basement space in other schools, under the separate but equal clause. The reality was that the Flood caused many Mexican-American residents of Armourdale, Argentine, and Rosedale to relocate, because they lived close to the Kansas River. Many moved to Kansas City, Missouri.⁶⁵ While the times had changed for Mexican-Americans in Kansas City, the numbers of their school children diminished as did their overall educational needs.

Yet attitudes did not change quickly in the years following *Brown v. Board of Education*. When Lou and Esperanza Amayo bought property in a predominantly Anglo neighborhood in Argentine in 1959, sixteen neighbors signed a petition to prevent the construction of their house.

⁶³San Miguel, "Let All of Them Take Heed," 113.

⁶⁴Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 193-194.

This effort failed, because the Amayos had a contract that could not be legally contested. They still live there today, in relative harmony in the neighborhood.⁶⁶ The type of accommodation that the Mexican-American community reached with their Anglo neighbors in border towns in Texas by the early 1900s, took much longer to develop in Argentine.

⁶⁵Lin, "Voluntary Kinship and Voluntary Association," 26.

⁶⁶Esperanza Amayo, personal interview, November 18, 2000.

Movements on the part of the Mexican community to resist segregation had limited success. The chief tactic was to work with the Mexican consulate to pressure for local change. The approach was used because of the resident alien status of Mexican-American parents, contrasting to African-American efforts to desegregate through the court system. This method was effective due to the small numbers of students involved at the high school level. The most significant breakthrough was the Alvarado case, which ensured that Mexican students could extend their education beyond the eighth grade. Grammar and middle schools, on the other hand, remained segregated until after World War II.

CONCLUSION

This study of the segregation of Mexican-American students in Kansas City has established that local pressure provided the main motivation for segregated education. While school officials conveyed some concern over language proficiency, their actions were not primarily driven by popular theories regarding language and immigrant education. Although school officials often cited language acquisition as a rationale for educational segregation, the record demonstrates that first and foremost they administered racially separate schools in response to the Anglo community, wherever and whenever they demanded segregated education.

The existence of integrated and segregated schools within the district is ample evidence to support the theory of local pressure. Mexican students attended the Cooper School in the West Bottoms section of Kansas City, Kansas, with other Anglo children. The West Bottoms parents were not organized, did not have their own identity as a separate town, as Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale did. The school system responded to local pressure with mild resistance at first, but when faced with the extra expense as Mexican-American students increased their numbers, sought economical alternatives before creating completely separate facilities. School district authorities could effectively hide their own thoughts on race, by placing the responsibility on their patrons. Their willingness to succumb to the pressure of racist parents indicated their sympathy with their racism. The statements of Assistant Superintendent and later Superintendent Frank L. Schlagle revealed that the personal racism of school authorities was an obvious factor in the severity and duration of segregated education in Kansas City. Schlagle's links with Argentine in 1918 and his membership in the civic organization that was responsible for the construction of the Clara Barton School in 1923, provided continuity to discriminatory education for Mexican-Americans.

The exact perceptions of Mexicans as a group that formed the basis of discrimination in Kansas City are not fully decipherable. Some were drawn from the history of nineteenth-century United States expansionism and the Mexican-American War (1846-48), when Mexicans were frequently depicted as indolent and prone to violence in order to justify United States hegemony. In Kansas City, concerns about hygiene were expressed during the Influenza Epidemic of 1918. White patrons of the schools believed that Mexican children would bring disease to their children as was commonly thought in the Southwest. Newspaper accounts of attitudes toward Mexicans conveyed that the Anglo community had class-based prejudices against Mexicans. They took the lowest-paying jobs and were forced to live in inferior conditions. Anglos in Kansas City protected their own interests by blocking Mexican progress in American society, just as they did for African-Americans. Racial practices in Kansas City reflected the influence of Jim Crow laws, which were passed in Southern states in the early part of the twentieth century. Their purpose was to completely separate the races and to push "the Negro further down."¹ Jim Crow laws were applied to Mexicans throughout Kansas. This study has shown that skin color, and its linkages to popular constructions of race, was a means to determine who should receive segregated education.

Extensive racial discrimination was established for all non-white groups and violent incidents occurred when the races mixed too closely together. Constructions of gender and fear of interracial dating, and racial mixing intensified racial antagonism. The continual threat of violence distinguished Anglo residents of Argentine, Armourdale, and Rosedale when compared to Anglo communities in California and Texas. Since the threatened subjects were school children and these threats were employed more than once, these communities stand out for the depth and vehemence of their racism. The tactics of Anglo parents created an atmosphere

¹C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 108.

conducive to violence. When their petitions and requests for segregation were not implemented, they intimidated Mexican parents and motivated the school board to impose racial segregation.

The status of Mexican parents as resident aliens required that they use different tactics to challenge segregation. Because of language difficulties of the parents, and lack of access to legal resources, they appealed to their local consulate for action. Their African-American counterparts had no language difficulty, and could support the training of African-American lawyers to address segregation in the courts. The Mexican-American community had limited access to the courts because of the lack of funding and sympathetic Anglo lawyers. The Mexican community used the only means available to them: boycotts and the Mexican consulate, with limited success.

The significance of racism in education in Kansas City extends beyond local history and adds to our understanding of race relations in the United States. Mexican-Americans immigrated in large numbers during the Jim Crow era and suffered the same type of oppression in the Midwest as African-Americans. The Mexican-American community resisted oppression and affected change against great odds and with few resources. As this study has shown, race relations in Kansas City were the worst in the state of Kansas, and the history of racism in education for Mexican-Americans provided ample evidence of the severity of race relations that the community endured.

A current effort to honor Saturnino Alvarado for his resistance on behalf of Mexican-American students has not been well received by the Argentine Activities Association. This was the same community organization that had a very active role in the institutionalization of segregated education in Argentine almost eighty years ago.² Dr. David Clopper was memorialized in 1935 when a statue of his likeness was erected in Emerson Park and an

²Esperanza Amayo, telephone interview, 13 March 2001. Alvarado Drive was named for Saturnino Alvarado in the 1970s.

athletic field named for him. Haas Drive was named for Dr. Karl C. Haas.³ Frank Schlagle was honored with the naming of Schlagle High, and he and his wife were honored with the naming of the Mr. & Mrs. F. L. Schlagle Library in Wyandotte County Park as recently as 1999. In the dedication speech for this environmental learning library, Kansas City Kansas School Board President Gloria Willis praised Schlagle's fifty years of service in public education. Obviously, this was not the forum to mention Schlagle's major contribution to the development and maintenance of segregated education for non-white groups.⁴ Willis' praise of Schlagle and ignorance of history was an example of the Anglo community's unwillingness to acknowledge their past. Those, such as Mrs. Esperanza Amayo, who remember past racist practices in Kansas City, will remind them.

³Simmons, Centennial History of Argentine, 90; Esperanza Amayo Interviews.

⁴Gloria Willis, "F.L. Schlagle Speech." 16 December 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/SCHLAGLE/Schlagl2.htm> [16 December 1999].

Bibliography

Primary sources

- Alvarado, Jesus F. "[Statement]." Photocopy.
- Amayo, Esperanza. Personal interview, November 18, 2000.
- _____. Telephone interviews: November-July, 2000-2001.
- Argentinian, 1926-51.
- Argentine Republic, 1918-1920.
- Catholic Register, 21 August 1927.
- City Directory of Kansas City, Kansas. Kansas City, Mo.: Hoye Directory Co., 1920, 1925, 1929, 1932.
- El Cosmopolita (Kansas City, Kans.), 1918-1919.
- Dos Mundos, 20 August 1998.
- Kansas City Advocate, 1925-1926.
- Kansas City Kansan, 1916-1926, 1955, 1982.
- Kansas City Kansas Department of Health, 1939 Annual Report, Survey and Appraisal. Kansas City, Kans.: Department of Health, 1939.
- Kansas City Kansas Republic, 1920-1922.
- Kansas City Kansas Schools. School Histories.
- Kansas City Kansas Schools. Transfer Journal of Proceedings, 1921-1946.
- Kansas City Star, 1905, 1921, 1953, 1995.
- Kansas City Times, 1905.
- Kansas State Historical Society. Attorney General. File 201-Aliens.
- _____. Governor's files.
- _____. "Program of Americanization, Kansas City Kansas, 1920-1921: A Program of Americanization for Kansas City, Kansas, Under the Direction of the Kansas City Public Schools, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and the University of Kansas."
- Kansas Teacher & Western School Journal, 1923.
- México. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Mexico: La Secretaría, 1931-1932.
- National Archives. Records of the Department of State. Record Group 59. Decimal file 1910-1929, Box 3573, File 311.1215/Kansas City.
- Oppenheimer, Robert Interviews. Trabajo y Cultura Project. Lawrence, Kans.: Kenneth Spencer Library, University of Kansas.
- The Republic, (Kansas City, Kans.) 1916-1918.
- Ruiz, Irene Interviews. Hispanic Oral History Collection, 1977-1982. Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Public Library.
- Silver City Record, 18 October 1979.
- "Trabajo y Cultura," transcript, slide/tape show. Kansas City, Kans.: Vertical file, Argentine Public Library.
- U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Hearings on the Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers, 66th Cong., 2nd sess., 1920.
- University of Kansas. Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Armourdale, a City within a City: The Report of a Social Survey of Armourdale, a

Community of 12,000 People Living in the Industrial District of
Kansas City, Kansas. Topeka, Kans.: Kansas State Printing
Plant, 1919..

University of Kansas. School of Education. Bureau of School Service. School Survey and Building Program for Dodge City, Kansas. Dodge City, Kans.: Press of the Etrick Company, 1923.

Willis, Gloria. "F.L. Schlagle Speech." 16 December 1999. Available [Online]:
<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/SCHLAGLE/Schlagl2.htm> [16 December 1999].

Secondary sources

Almaguer, Tomás. "Historical Notes on Chicano Oppression: The Dialectics of Racial and Class Domination in North America." Aztlan 5 (nos. 1 / 2 1974): 27-56.

Balderrama, Francisco E. In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1982.

Barrera, Mario. Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979.

Beach, Rex. Heart of the Sunset. New York: A.L. Burt Publishers, 1915.

Bederman, Gail. Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917. Women in Culture and Society. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Bogardus, Emory Stephen. Immigration and Race Attitudes. New York: D.C. Heath, 1928.

Boime, Albert. The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting c. 1830-1865. New Directions in American Art. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Braun, Marian Frances. "A Survey of the American-Mexicans in Topeka, Kansas." Master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1970.

Carper, James C. "The Popular Ideology of Segregated Schooling: Attitudes Toward the Education of Blacks in Kansas, 1854-1900." Kansas History 1 (Winter 1978): 254-265.

Cooke, W. Henry. "The Segregation of Mexican-American School Children in Southern California." School and Society 67 (5 June 1948): 417-421.

Davidson, Galen Floyd. "The Growth and Development of Public Education in Dodge City, Kansas." Master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, 1953.

De León, Arnolando. They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Fischer, David Hackett. Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America. America, a Cultural History, vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Foerster, Robert F. The Racial Problems Involved in Immigration from Latin America and the West Indies to the United States: A Report Submitted to the Secretary of Labor. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925.

Franco, Hector. "The Mexican People in the State of Kansas." Master's thesis, University of Wichita, 1950.

Gamio, Manuel. The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographic Documents Collected by Manuel Gamio. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931.

García, Juan R. Mexicans in the Midwest. 1900-1932. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996.

Getz, Lynne M. "Biological Determinism in the Making of Immigration Policy in the 1920s." International Social Science Review 70 no. 1-2 (1995): 26-33.

Gonzalez, Gilbert G. "Segregation of Mexican Children in a Southern California City: The

- Legacy of Expansionism and the American Southwest." Western Historical Quarterly 16 (January 1985): 55-76.
- _____. Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation. Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990.
- _____. "Culture, Language, and the Americanization of Mexican Children." In Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader, ed. Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez, 158-173. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Greenbaum, Susan D. The Afro-American Community in Kansas City, Kansas: A History. Kansas City, Kans.: The City, 1982.
- Griswold del Castillo, Richard. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.
- Handman, Max Sylvius. "Economic Reasons for the Coming of the Mexican Immigrant." American Journal of Sociology 35 (January 1930): 609-610.
- Hinnen, Kathie. "Mexican Immigrants to Hutchinson, Kansas, 1905-1940: How a Temporary Haven Became Home." Master's thesis, Southwest Missouri State University, 1998.
- Horsman, Reginald. Race and Manifest Destiny: the Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Hunt, Michael H. Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Jackson, Kenneth T. The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930. The Urban Life in America Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Johnson, John J. Latin America in Caricature. Texas Pan American Series. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980.
- Jones, Lila Lee. The Ku Klux Klan in Eastern Kansas during the 1920s. Emporia State Research Studies; vol. 23 no. 3. Emporia, Kans.: Emporia State College, 1975.
- Kessner, Thomas. The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915. The Urban Life in America Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Laird, Judith A.F. "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905-1940." Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975.
- Landis, Margaret. "Winding Valley and the Craggy Hillside": A History of the City of Rosedale, Kansas. Kansas City, Kans.: Landis, 1976.
- Limbirt, Claudia. "The Invisible People: A Study of the Mexican American Community in Newton, Kansas." Research paper, Bethel College, 1978.
- Lin, Paul Ming-Chang. "Voluntary Kinship and Voluntary Association in a Mexican-American Community." Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1963.
- Loewenberg, Peter. "The Psychology of Racism," in The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America, ed. Gary B. Nash and Richard Weiss, 186-201. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970.
- Martinez, Arthur D. "Los de Dodge City, Kansas: A Mexican-American Community at the Heartland of the United States." Journal of the West 24 (April 1985): 88-95.
- Menchaca, Martha. The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Mendoza, Valerie M. "The Creation of a Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City, 1890-1930." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997.
- Mines, Cynthia. Riding the Rails to Kansas: The Mexican Immigrants. S.I.: Mines, 1980.
- Montejano, David. Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.
- McGuinn, Nellie. "The Kansas City Kansas Public School System." Kansas City, Kans.: Board of Education, s.d.
- McWilliams, Carey. North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States.

- New York: Greenwood Press, 1968.
- Oppenheimer, Robert. "Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II." Western Historical Quarterly 16 (October 1985): 429-448.
- Paredes, Raymund A. "The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States." New Scholar 6 (1977): 139-165.
- Poppino, Hattie. "Argentine and Argentine High School," Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas Room, Kansas City Kansas Public Library, 1965.
- Powell, Philip Wayne. Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Ramirez, Socorro. "A Survey of the Mexicans in Emporia, Kansas." Master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1942.
- Reams, Jr., Bernard D. and Paul E. Wilson, ed. Segregation and the Fourteenth Amendment in the States: A Survey of State Segregation Laws 1865-1953; Prepared for United States Supreme Court in re: Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka. Buffalo: William S. Hein, 1975.
- Ricart, Domingo. Just Across the Tracks: A Report on a Survey of Five Mexican communities in the State of Kansas (Emporia, Florence, Newton, Wichita, Hutchinson). Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas, 1950.
- Robinson, Cecil. Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest in American Literature: Revised from With the Ears of Strangers. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977.
- Rosales, F. Arturo. ¡Pobre Raza!: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.
- Ruiz, Francisco H. Report on the Greater Kansas City Hispanic Needs Assessment: With Master Resident, Leader, and Agency Questionnaire Tabulations, and a Spanish Version of the Resident Questionnaire, 1988. Kansas City, Mo.: The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Affiliated Trusts, 1988.
- Rutter, Larry G. "Mexican Americans in Kansas: A Survey and Social Mobility Study, 1900-1970." Master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1972.
- San Miguel, Guadalupe. "Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.
- Sánchez, George J. "'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929." In Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, 284-297. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Selden, Steven. Inheriting the Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America. Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series, no. 23. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999.
- Shutt, Edwin Dale. "Silver City, a History of the Argentine Community of Kansas City Kansas." Master's thesis, Emporia Kansas State College, 1976.
- Simmons, Donald H., ed. Centennial History of Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas, 1880-1980: Includes the History of Argentine, Turner and Shawnee Township. Kansas City, Kans.: Simmons Funeral Home, 1980.
- Smith, Michael M. "The Mexican Immigrant Press Beyond the Borderlands: The Case of El Cosmopolita, 1914-19." Great Plains Quarterly 10 (Spring 1990): 71-85.
- _____. "Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920." Perspectives in Mexican American Studies 2 (1989): 29-58.
- Suchliki, Jaime. Mexico: From Montezuma to NAFTA, Chiapas, and Beyond. Washington: Brassey's, 1996.
- Takaki, Ronald. A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America. Boston: Little, Brown and

- Company, 1993.
- _____. Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America. New York: Knopf, 1979.
- Taylor, Loren L. The Consolidated Ethnic History of Wyandotte County. Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas City Kansas Ethnic Council, 2000.
- _____. A Short Ethnic History of Wyandotte County. Vol. 2. Kansas City, Kans.: Kansas Ethnic Council, 1995.
- Weber, David J., ed. Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973.
- Weinberg, Meyer. A Chance to Learn: The History of Race and Education in the United States. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- White, Richard. The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815. Cambridge Studies in North American History. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Wollenberg, Charles. All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Woodward, C. Vann. The Strange Career of Jim Crow. 3d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Wright, Bill. "Education is the Handhold." In History of Mexicans in Topeka, 1906-1966, ed. José M. García, 52-54. S.l: s.n., 1973.

VITA

Robert Martin Cleary was born on September 20, 1957 in Jamaica, New York. He graduated from Bridgewater-Raritan East High School in Bridgewater, New Jersey, in 1975. After attending Ramapo State College for one year, he graduated from Hunter College of the City University of New York in 1981 with a Bachelor of Arts in Classics. The program emphasized the study of Greek and Latin and he received two awards for excellence in Latin. While working in the family business, he studied German and eventually earned an Associate degree in Accounting from Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, New Jersey.

Cleary earned his Master's of Library Service degree from Rutgers University in 1993, while working in the library at Princeton University. He is currently the Serial Acquisitions Librarian at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and has written four articles published in library journals.

Upon completion of his degree requirements, Cleary plans to pursue his interests in the history of the Mexican-American community in Kansas City, with further research on the topic of education for Mexican-American students.