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by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
Dr. Nora Faires, Advisor

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 2008
PREFACE

When the History Department at Western Michigan University accepted my application to enroll as a doctoral candidate in July 2003, my primary research interests dealt with twentieth century American political culture, especially President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s Great Society agenda. Over the past five years, attentive guidance from the faculty and the stimulating companionship of fellow graduate students enabled me to see LBJ’s legacy in a broader social and cultural context. At no time did the assertion of the transformational power of education reach a greater level of hyperbole than during the brief Great Society era, when LBJ described it as the “passport from poverty.”

As I considered dissertation topics, a common thread ran through the options: Johnson was a teacher who became President of the United States. Like my father, also a Texan, Lyndon Johnson believed education held the key to a better life, both individually and collectively. I am a teacher, too. I approach this project with the goal of presenting the public school as America’s favorite laboratory for bringing about social change. My professional background includes twelve years teaching in a rural school district where I became a leader in the local Michigan Education Association (MEA) bargaining unit. A very satisfying K-12 teaching career led to seventeen years in school administration, culminating with nine years service as a superintendent in two districts in southwest Michigan. The warming energy of a supportive classroom environment; the tension of a crowded school board meeting; the anger of parents of victimized children—these are feelings familiar and unforgettable.
As a union activist, twice I helped lead my colleagues on strike. Later, as superintendent, I found strong, well-organized MEA locals to be very helpful when seeking ways to meet challenges facing the school district. I worked with some advocacy groups in these communities to help move their agendas forward, while resisting others. Too few historical treatments of education policy capture the inner workings of school politics during periods of intense internal and external pressure. It is my sincere hope that this project does so.

This study reinforced my belief in the awesome responsibilities given to teachers. In their hands lies the power to help children make dreams come true. Sadly, for some children the prejudice experienced in their classrooms dashes those dreams. One is left with the impression that like the medical profession or the priesthood, teachers and their professional associations lack workable mechanisms for whistleblowers to expose racism and gender bias in the classroom. The same is true for administrators and for boards of education. Consequently, a code of silence perpetuates tension in the school, inevitably creating barriers to learning in any language. In the twenty-first century, as educators across the United States ponder strategies to close the achievement gap between white students and their African American or Mexican American classmates, we must be mindful of this humiliating, painful, and enduring reality.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research benefited greatly from three research fellowships. The Albert Shanker Research Fellowship, awarded by the American Federation of Teachers AFT), led to many hours pouring over correspondence, speeches, and interviews involving long-time AFT President Shanker and other key AFT figures at Wayne State University’s Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in the Walter P. Reuther Library. Daniel Golodner, the AFT archivist, provided valuable support with this phase of my study.

The Baylor University Oral History Institute Research Fellowship exposed me to an extraordinary trove of oral histories in the Texas Collection involving public education and the Mexican American experience in Central Texas. Tom Charlton and a cadre of historians have collected and transcribed an abundance of rich sources. During my weeks on the Baylor campus, the invaluable assistance of Ellen Kuniyuki Brown, whose encyclopedic knowledge of the oral history collection still amazes me, enabled me to keep busy every minute. Her colleagues, Lois Myers and Elinor Maze, graciously granted me access to newly transcribed interviews. Thanks to fortuitous timing, my work at Baylor began immediately after the donation of the papers of the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans to the archives. Opening that file gave me the key to understanding how to consider the topic of bilingual education in a new way.
Research in Texas and Michigan benefited from funding provided by the Gwen Frostic Research Fellowship, awarded by Western Michigan University. With this support for travel and research expenses, it became possible to conduct further archival work at several locations in Texas, including the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). During my visit to UTA, Ben Huseman’s assistance with Ralph Yarborough’s papers illuminated the Senator’s role as chief sponsor of the landmark legislation. At the LBJ Library, the consummate professionalism of Claudia Johnson and Tina Houston enabled me to make the most of my time. Four research trips to Austin found Cynthia Beeman and Dan K. Utley of the Texas Historical Commission providing extraordinary logistical support and Southwestern hospitality of the highest order. For the discussion of the Ford Administration, frequent visits to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, allowed me to draw upon the Robert Teeter collection extensively with the able assistance of a fellow WMU graduate, Joshua Cochran. Material on the battle between Ford and Reagan for the Republican nomination in 1976 that signaled a period of dormancy for the moderate wing of the GOP comes largely from the Teeter files.

In addition to research funded by these generous fellowships, a considerable portion of the sources used for the discussion of Kalamazoo in this project came from the holdings of the Western Michigan University’s own Regional Archives and Local History Collection. Sharon Carlson and her staff provided indispensable assistance in helping me to uncover the experiences of Mexican-Americans in Kalamazoo. Elspeth Inglis of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum also played a key role in helping me with oral histories gathered in recent years.
I wish to express my gratitude to the faculty at Western Michigan University, where Buddy Gray, Chair of the History Department, sets a collaborative tone few administrators achieve, much less maintain. Lynne Heasley recruited me to assist with the National Endowment for the Humanities project she spearheaded with Fred Dobney. The weeks we spent in July 2007 working with K-12 teachers on how to weave America’s agricultural traditions into their curricula led directly to the incorporation of environmental factors into my study. Bill Warren’s labor history seminar played a key role in helping me to conceptualize this project. He opened doors for me and his own door was always open. Kristin Szylvian led me through the process of writing my first article for publication. The insights she gave me about how to connect local and federal affairs found their way onto almost every one of the pages that follow. Ed Martini’s willingness to individualize gave me the freedom to explore my project from a borderlands perspective. His suggestions enabled me to tighten the argumentation in draft chapters without losing my voice. Gunther Hega’s political science perspective helped me to acquire a working vocabulary in the dialect spoken by political scientists. Nora Faires expertly chaired the Dissertation Committee and advised me each step of the way these past five years. I sensed the first day we met in her office in 2003 that she would insist on my very best work. Nora Faires is a fearless leader and it was my great fortune to be one of her doctoral students at WMU. Never in my life have I been so well-coached. Finally, the unwavering support of Sandy Duke gave me the opportunity to step away from my K-12 career to pursue this lifelong dream.

Robert Harold Duke
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INTRODUCTION

My children don’t speak to me.
They have learned another language
And forgotten Spanish.
They think like Americans.
They deny that they are Mexican
Even though they have my skin color.

-- “Jaula de Oro,” Enrique Franco, 1985

How should a teacher respond to the needs of the family portrayed in the lyrics to this song? Each day the school bell rings in the United States, millions of children negotiate a language barrier as they enter the classroom. Greeting the girls and boys while standing beneath the flag, educators play a dual role by acting in loco parentis while doubling as government agents implementing federal, state and local policies. As gatekeepers at this cultural checkpoint, teachers guide non-English speaking students through steep learning curves and the peaks and valleys of adjustment. To the awed and malleable child crossing over from the intonations of family life, the teacher looms as the voice of America incarnate. All of the legislation, the court rulings, and the school
policies dealing with the language of instruction depend, ultimately, on what happens when the student steps across the threshold into the teacher's jurisdiction.

Five decades of English-only orthodoxy in American public schools ended when President Lyndon B. Johnson affixed his signature to the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (BEA), thereby adding Title VII to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). For the purposes of this discussion, the wording first used by the U.S. Office of Education in the Manual for Project Grant Applicants and Grantees for school officials shall serve as a common definition:

Bilingual education is the use of two languages, one of which is English, as mediums of instruction of the same pupil population in a well-organized program which encompasses part or all of the curriculum and includes the study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the child's self-esteem and a legitimate pride in both countries.

The voluntary nature of the Title VII amendment to ESEA invites reconsideration of the dynamics of Great Society federalism and its role in feeding a conservative backlash rooted in nativist bigotry. Similar to the gradual desegregation of schools after the Brown ruling in 1954, bilingual education would challenge social norms constructed over multiple generations. Unlike that landmark school desegregation case, however, schools faced no mandate regarding bilingual programming from the federal government until the Court's decision in Lau v. Nichols in 1974 determined that civil rights implications outweighed all other factors. Decisions made by school districts about whether to apply for federal funds to implement bilingual programming are reflections of
local attitudes about race, ethnicity, class, and collective identity. They offer a window into the bedrock of representative government in the United States, which is the locally elected Board of Education. School elections epitomize grassroots American representative government. As such, power struggles within these school districts hold the potential to illuminate larger societal conditions. Since the complex hierarchies of power within these institutions weave a political fabric resistant to change, a significant development in school policy such as the adoption of bilingual education programming opens a valuable window for the study of American political culture.

The original BEA legislation flew through the Senate and House, its ease of passage ensured by its elective design. Senator Ralph Yarborough (D-Texas) shepherded the bill through Congress, confident that its projected cost of $20 million could survive the ensuing appropriations process, since the total ESEA budget exceeded two billion dollars. Neither Democrats nor Republicans wished to alienate key constituencies, resulting in what political historian Gareth Davies characterized as a “very subdued” bill. During the six years between enactment of the BEA and the Lau ruling, then, the long American tradition of local control of schools meant that the distinctive political culture of each district resolved the pedagogical question of how to teach non-English speaking students.

Despite the original bill’s easy passage, the subsequent Supreme Court ruling touched one of the most sensitive nerves in the body politic. In countless hyphenated-American families, English literacy held symbolic value as proof of one’s love of country and of the hard-fought path to citizenship blazed by parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. In this regard, the schools’ mission for the nation seemed beyond reproach.
Evidenced by the vehement opposition to court-ordered busing of students to achieve racial balance, Uncle Sam’s impositions on Boards of Education do not always receive warm reception. As this research demonstrates, school officials, teachers’ associations, and interest groups often encouraged federal engagement in school affairs when they perceived doing so served their interests. Across this wandering divide that distinguishes between proper and improper use of federal authority over their children’s school occur policy debates that echo for generations.

The findings of this research indicate that for the first portion of the political journey of the BEA, which for the purposes of this discussion include developments prior to the 1974 Lau decision and subsequent federal rules for implementation, local conditions shaped community response. How and why did school districts decide whether or not to apply for the BEA funds appropriated by Congress? Did the growing political influence of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) give teachers a meaningful voice in the policymaking process? How did Mexican Americans influence the response by local school districts to federal policy as it evolved? During this watershed period from 1964 to 1980, complex issues of language, ethnicity, and national identity intersected with a determination by organized classroom teachers to have a meaningful voice in the operation of their schools. Thus, the formulation and implementation of federal bilingual education policy offers a valuable lens for examining each of these questions for a more nuanced understanding of how community activism, ethnic pride, and union clout shaped decision-making in a school setting during a pivotal period in American political history.
This project investigates how the convergence of ideas, interests and institutions shaped and reshaped bilingual education policies from Johnson’s triumph over Goldwater to the conservative counter-revolution of Citizen Reagan. During the 1960s and 1970s, in states as different from one another as Texas and Michigan, the Chicano movement gained legitimacy through significantly increased visibility in civic affairs. By forming local organizations to advocate on behalf of the Spanish-speaking population, they groomed leaders subsequently recognized by the dominant white or Anglo establishment as spokespersons for the “community.” These activists promoted bilingual education with moderate success by emphasizing dropout rates and employability issues, issues they linked to the failure of schools to recognize the alienation caused by language barriers between the teacher, the students, and the families.

The economic benefits of a more effective approach to educating Spanish-speaking children seemed obvious to Lyndon Johnson. Speaking in Cotulla, Texas, where his brief teaching career began nearly forty years earlier, the President signaled support of a new federal initiative in late 1966: “I intend to have all of our educational experts explore practical programs that will encourage these children (Mexican Americans) to stay in school and improve their chances of learning, to prepare themselves, and to equip themselves, to become lifelong taxpayers instead of tax eaters.”

In the worldview of the Great Society, developing a better educated populace years meant taking aim at the root causes of social ills: racism and other forms of discrimination, inadequate nourishment and limited access to health care. Education policy and economic policy intersect frequently in the wave of legislative initiatives bubbling up from dozens of domestic policy task forces from 1964 to 1968. Echoing Franklin
Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech from 1941, Johnson called for recognition of a fifth freedom, "freedom from ignorance," as a basic right of all Americans. Education for all means opportunity for all.\textsuperscript{11}

Emphasis on developing "pride in both countries," however, as stated in the U.S. Office of Education manual, alienated the same conservatives Johnson wished to persuade with his "taxpayers instead of taxeaters" statement. The call for not only bilingual but also bicultural education suggested Americanization no longer mattered. Chicano rhetoric calling for cultural retention rather than assimilation alienated not only segments of the Anglo community; but as historian Craig A. Kaplowitz argues in \textit{LULAC: Mexican Americans and National Policy}, such demands "became some of those most bitterly contested issues of the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s."\textsuperscript{12} Kaplowitz does not, in my judgment sufficiently address how these concerns factored into the Ford-Reagan contest for the Republican nomination in 1976.

The case studies presented here focus on school districts along two major political and cultural demarcations of the United States, places where distinctive transnational migration and settlement patterns resulted in powerful forces of assimilation and pluralism over multiple generations.\textsuperscript{13} Concentrating on the experiences of school districts in two borderland states, Texas and Michigan, with the newly enacted BEA highlights the forces of social change and tradition at the moment of collision. Aftershocks rumbled through the political landscape of educational policy-making as Great Society liberalism gave way to Reaganite conservatism. The epicenter was not in Washington and the tremors began before they carried Ronald Reagan from the Pacific Palisades to the Potomac.
This research not only serves to inform current educational policy debates by offering an example of the political journey of a landmark piece of legislation, it also reinforces the notion that citizenship involves membership in multiple, sometimes overlapping communities organized by factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, neighborhood of residence, and occupation. As historian Frank Bonilla observed, "the tensions between community processes and structures through which people participate in politics are particularly complicated."\textsuperscript{14} Along with the emergence of the Chicano movement in some sections of the country, many school districts churned with ongoing controversies over school desegregation. Many faced internal challenges of another kind as teachers' associations challenged paternalistic school governance while searching for a viable model of workplace democracy driven by professional excellence. Rather than understate these tensions, they must be dissected, probed, and held up for closer inspection, for the tradition of local control of community schools looms much larger in the actual implementation of bilingual programming in America's classrooms than existing studies acknowledge.\textsuperscript{15}

While there is a significant story to be told involving the accommodations made by private and parochial schools to the growing Mexican American population, this study concentrates on the experiences of public schools. A decade before Roe v. Wade mobilized the conservative movement, Historian William Berman points to Supreme Court rulings on school prayer and use of the Bible in 1962 and 1963, respectively, as seismic events that rocked the public's sense about the proper jurisdiction of the federal judiciary.\textsuperscript{16} The cannons of the right flank would not lack for fodder over the next decade, as right-wing doomsayers thrived in an environment where court-ordered busing
and Title IX provisions for equal opportunities for female students challenged the status quo. These seemed to traditionally-minded Americans to fit in the pattern of a relentless assault by secular humanists on mainstream values.

In addition to the challenge of homogenizing an increasingly diverse student population into loyal citizens, schools sorted and selected students into college-preparatory, vocational or domestic paths. Augmenting the ever-expanding mission, K-12 districts trained America’s automobile drivers, presented the rudiments of “sex ed,” and ostensibly taught children to live together as one. Whatever the merits of these policy initiatives, the expectation that social change needed to take root in the classroom amounted to standard operating procedure. After all, as Jane Addams, the founder of Chicago’s Hull House, wrote in 1920, this simply reflected the American approach to reform. “Men of all nations are determining upon the abolition of degrading poverty, disease, and intellectual weakness with their resulting industrial inefficiency. This manifests itself in labor legislation in England, in the Imperial Sick and Old-Age Insurance Acts of Germany, in the enormous system of public education in the United States.”

A century later, No Child Left Behind mandates enacted in 2002 and the needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) students stand among a host issues facing public education in the United States. A careful mapping of the past can contribute to informing policymakers and practitioners alike about the technologies of power at work in the political culture of the individual schools and how these forces shape outcomes. To accomplish this, the project draws from an array of methodologies, from social histories
drawn from Chicano studies to the works of political science theory. A survey of the literature surveys the scholarship informing this study.

Historiography

The wide-ranging scholarship on the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 first emerged in the mid-1970s, when the commitment of a generation of New Left Chicano intellectuals infused a strong sense of political purpose through their theses and dissertations as they sought to explain and measure the impact of the new federal policy. One of the most influential Chicano leaders, Jose Angel Gutierrez, documented his pilgrimage from adolescent torment about his identity in *The Making of a Chicano Militant*, reflecting that, "I had to learn to dislike myself enough to reject my bilingual being and become a clone of Anglos as a rite of cultural passage into *gringolandia*. Anglos did not want me to speak Spanish, only English, even if it meant I would fail in school trying to learn English first."

Combining dreams of a Chicano state of Aztlan with the sure-handedness of a Chicago ward boss, Gutierrez made Zavala County, Texas, a living laboratory for using the Anglos' electoral process to elect Chicanos to city council. Subsequently, he was elected to the Crystal City Board of Education and served as its President for two years. The story of Crystal City is well-documented, but the ripple effects of the movement there reached greater distances than those immersed in the struggle might have ever imagined, as the discussion of Michigan in Chapter Five demonstrates. In another community study, *From Peones to Politicos* examined the assertion of Chicano political
power in an “anonymous” community in the agriculturally rich “Winter Garden” area of South Texas, later identified as the town of Pearsall. In this sociological perspective, Douglas Foley and his collaborators present a sound model for deep research into the social and political context of such a transformation.21

The attention given by the architects of the Great Society to public education presents scholars with many options for policy analysis, from preschool to adult literacy. In comparison with the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or with programs like Head Start, the BEA receives little attention by LBJ biographers. Former Johnson cabinet officials and aides like Joseph Califano and Harry McPherson make no mention of the BEA in their memoirs. Hubert Humphrey’s autobiography, The Education of a Public Man, also stands mute on this topic. Although scholars of the Johnson administration address the issue of bilingual education, his role in amending ESEA with the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, remains an area of dispute worthy of further attention.

Julie Leininger Pycior attributes the Johnson administration’s interest in bilingual education to the burgeoning political activism of Mexican Americans in southwestern states. Educational efficacy and cultural sensitivity were concerns of Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough, Pycior concluded, but Johnson and his advisors merely sought to ameliorate the wounds of White House opposition to farm labor strikes and the damage done from the worsening situation in Vietnam. In this interpretation, LBJ, who taught Mexican American students in Cotulla, Texas, yielded to the demands of Mexican American lobbyists, such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and went against his own teaching practice of English-only instruction and endorsed
federal bilingual education legislation. Given the weakened status of the Johnson presidency as the opposition to the war in Vietnam grew, an explanation based on shifting alliances within the Democratic coalition seems plausible, but it minimizes the role of local school districts. Historian Carlos Kevin Blanton’s study of bilingual education practices in Texas addresses the BEA of 1968 and rejects not only Pycior’s conclusions, but also those of political historian Hugh Graham, who attributed eventual passage of the BEA to political expediency. Blanton references Johnson’s statement at Cotulla as indicative of motivations beyond locking in the Mexican American vote.

A collection of essays edited by Sidney Milkis and Jerome Mileur, The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism, probes the legacy of Johnson’s domestic agenda at a macro level, arguing that these programs “entailed the culmination of a century’s struggle to reconcile ‘big government’ and the dignity of the democratic individual.” Just as historians of the WWII American Home Front seek insights about the true impact of Uncle Sam’s presence on American communities in terms of housing, equal opportunity, and schooling in the 1940s, so should scholars of the Johnson administration consider how programs aimed at K-12 education looked from the schoolhouse up.

The undeniable expansiveness of LBJ’s vision suggests bloated bureaucracies which made Roosevelt’s alphabet agencies seem anemic, but this research suggests the young Texan’s experience as the State Director of the National Youth Administration (NYA) established patterns of engagement with local leaders that made federal involvement in the affairs of local school districts seem supportive rather than intrusive. Before WWII found schools organizing Victory Gardens and rounding up volunteer farm workers from amidst the student body, the National Youth Administration connected high
schools, colleges and the federal government in an unprecedented student retention strategy. Historian Carol Weisenberger addressed Johnson’s role in *Dollars and Dreams: The National Youth Administration in Texas*, the most comprehensive study to date of inner workings of the agency at the state level. More than just a stop on the way to the White House, the NYA assignment set firmly in Johnson’s mind the workings of the federal system at the local, state, and national levels. Johnson’s presence can be felt throughout the paper. Divisive as his presidency became, his association with Texas, teaching, and minority groups makes him a unifying figure for my research.

Straddling disciplinary boundaries, this examination of American political culture integrates comparative public policy and local history to illuminate varying community responses in the border states of Texas and Michigan to the first federal bilingual education initiative. The work of several political scientists and political historians provides the conceptual framework for comparing and contrasting the efforts of groups and individuals to advance their interests. Frank Baumgartner’s “punctuated equilibrium” theory offered an explanation of why public policy can change significantly after a lengthy period of stability. Major events, from the cataclysm of war to natural disasters, Baumgartner concluded, can reshape the political landscape seemingly overnight. This explanation seems plausible for federal policy-makers as well as state and local officials facing changing circumstances after five decades of practicing English-only methods. In order for Baumgartner’s model to be satisfactory, however, it seems the policy needs to remain static, or return to equilibrium after the punctuation occurs. The relatively frequent adjustments in bilingual education policy within just a
decade render Baumgarten’s vivid phrase of limited value for post-1968, but it may help to explain several uninterrupted decades of adherence to English-only strictures.

Given that the scope of this research includes the ideas, interests and institutions responding to the availability of federal aid for bilingual education programming, John Kingdon’s concept of policy streams and policy windows serves as a more useful model for examination of this period in American political culture. His “convergence theory” uses the metaphor of open or closed windows to describe the presence or absence of opportunities arising that aligned actors, events and ideas, leading generally slow-moving institutions to act with relative speed. From time to time, Kingdon argues, competing factions yield to coalitions conceiving, enacting and implementing new policy.27

The third of these influences comes from Arnold Heidenheimer’s treatment of education policies in federal systems. Heidenheimer’s identification of the phenomenon of “isomorphism” describes the tendency for bodies within a political culture to develop parallel organizational structures. Interest groups, for example, typically structure their own organizations to include national, state, and local levels of activity. For nations with a more centralized federal system, such as Japan, one would find teachers’ associations, for example, emulating that structure.28 The tension created in the United States over increased federal involvement in a historically decentralized system derives, then, not only from the adjustments made by the schools and related bureaucracies to the federal initiative, but also non-governmental organizations adjusting to the new political realities.

Over the past twenty-five years, labor historians have addressed the emergence of teacher’s unions as a force in American political life in the twentieth century, with most studies tending toward organizational history or biography. When Chicago Teacher
Federation cofounder Margaret Haley’s autobiography *Battleground* appeared in 1982, Robert Reid’s introduction placed Haley’s movement within the context of pre-WWI radicalism, wherein this public employee, an agent of the state, challenges the power structure by organizing her colleagues. In 1990, Marjorie Murphy’s pivotal *Blackboard Unions* emerged as the most comprehensive survey to date of twentieth century American teachers’ unions. Murphy effectively analyzed the significance of gender since the unionization movement began, often drawing upon Haley’s memoir. The AFT transformed itself “from a feminist and gadfly union to the bread-and-butter union that emerged in the early sixties,” with the influence of women declining during that transition. Women also “dominated lobbying efforts by the NEA” through the Depression era.29

Wayne J. Urban builds on Murphy’s work in *Gender, Race and the National Education Association*, affirming her finding that the higher up the organizational structure one might go, the stronger the white male hierarchy. The NEA’s response to the African American and Mexican American demand for civil rights and increased representation revealed some of the same state’s rights impulses associated with Alabama Governor George Wallace. The NEA chose to allow state affiliates to find their own paths to diversity at their own pace. Urban discusses the internal battles for institutional reforms, especially where he found the NEA’s traditional focus on “professionalism” intersecting with paternalism. The NEA moved toward an emphasis on collective bargaining rights at a slower pace than the rival AFT, due in large part to the longstanding practice of including administrators as NEA members. The success of AFT affiliates in negotiating contracts and the enactment of collective bargaining rights for
public employees in several states during the 1960s played significant roles in the gradual decline of the perception by many NEA members that emulating behavior of blue-collar unions would lower their status.\textsuperscript{30}

Urban concentrates almost exclusively on the NEA, briefly mentioning opposition by the AFT to Senator Yarborough's federal bilingual education initiative, a measure NEA strongly supported. AFT leaders insisted that taking the focus away from learning English would lead immigrants to pursue "their own interests in ways that alienated them from the larger American culture." Urban takes this significant difference between the rival unions and puts it in the larger context of the normative roles of public schools. The NEA advocated for bilingual education in part, he states, because it offered another means of protection for non-English proficient minorities "against prejudicial attitudes on the part of so-called mainstream Americans and against policies that catered to those prejudices."\textsuperscript{31}

Since the national leadership of teachers' unions reached such different conclusions about the fundamental issue of language of instruction, it would follow that differences existed about bilingual education policy within state affiliates and local associations, down to the union's building representative and rank-and-file members in each school. Given the discussion by Murphy and Urban of the prevalence of women among the teaching ranks at the primary level, one must ask how clearly their voices were heard by their employers or by their union leaders. Susan Moore Johnson provides a close-up view of the day to day interactions between teacher union leaders and members at the school level in \textit{Teacher Unions in Schools} and highlights the interplay of administrative directives and union guidance for faculty members.\textsuperscript{32} Kerchener and
Mitchell’s Changing Idea of the Teachers’ Union also raised the issue of how different senses of mission and priority within the membership counter the portrayal of a monolithic movement. This is the image one gets from the approach Veronica DiConti used in Interest Groups and Education Reform: The Latest Crusade to Restructure the Schools, which discusses policy stances of many kinds of advocacy groups as if full rank-and-file support is a given.

The mixed blessing of federal involvement in what were once exclusively local educational policy concerns antedates the Great Society, as Funigiello documents in The Challenge to Urban Liberalism. Addressing the issues of housing and public services on the American home front during World War II, Funigiello found well-intentioned policy initiatives such as the Lanham Act to be the source of enormous frustration and confusion. In effect, the New Deal and the war left states as little more than branch banks; intermediaries funneling federal funds to local school districts. Substantiating Funigiello’s work, education historian Adam Nelson’s recent study of post-WWII federalism in the context of public education policy, The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston’s Public Schools, 1950-1985, presents federal-local interactions over a more extended period. Both of these strongly suggest tendencies for the political culture of a community to be transformed by the “federal stain,” to paraphrase novelist Philip Roth, when it feels the impact of new federal policy.

The lines of authority in the American federalism blurred decades ago. Just as political scientists recognize the shifting nature of these structures, historians working in an era of globalization increasingly recognize the limitations of discourse based on
nation-states. The borderlands perspective can be traced back at least to Herbert Bolton’s insistence on the significance of the southwest borderland region in the 1920s to Marcus Hansen’s subsequent studies of Atlantic migration, when these historians found political boundaries problematic. Current scholarship uses borderlands discourse to inform migration studies, contributing to nuanced treatments of topics involving national identity or cultural imperatives. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron credit the reinterpretation of the frontier as a “zone of intercultural penetration.” Similarly, Jose David Saldivar describes a “Janus-faced borderline in which peoples geopolitically forced to separate themselves now negotiate with one another and manufacture new relations, hybrid cultures and multiple-voiced aesthetics.” As Saldivar suggests, there is more to determining identity than a literal national border, so not only is it time for “remapping American cultural studies,” I argue that it is time to remap studies of American political culture regarding bilingualism. In the two school districts included in this study, individuals and groups face frontiers, boundaries, and borders of all kinds.

School district boundaries can be every bit as arbitrary and counter-intuitive as lines dividing nations. Around the perimeter of its jurisdiction, neighbors on the opposite side of the street send their children to other schools, each with its own set of policies. In many communities, school district boundaries mimic racialized real estate practices, such as red-lining. Another level of boundaries defines attendance zones for buildings within the school district. Each of these buildings has its own constituency of parents, students and their extended families. These represent a “school culture,” with distinctive norms and folklore identifiable as a social and political system. Evidence of the importance of these boundaries in the public’s mind can be seen by the bitter reactions of some parents.
to court rulings requiring cross-district busing in the 1970s. The formal and informal
problem-solving processes used by the building principal, faculty, and support staff
create complex webs of relationships. As studies of Crystal City, Texas, demonstrate,
instituting bilingual education programming forced the entire school community to
answer the question, “Which side are you on?”

Although the scope of his work extends only into the 1940s and concentrates on
labor issues, Neil Foley’s study of the Texas cotton culture, *The White Scourge*, offers
eamples of how the transitory status of Mexicans coming from across the border
affected the ability of long-time Tejano residents of Texas communities to find political
voice through unions or electoral politics. Foley’s emphasis on the “whiteness” issue
presents an important generational contrast. The children of the tenant farmers and
braceros Foley describes, many of which would consider themselves part of the Chicano
generation, insisted that society recognize their brownness, not their whiteness.

Ironically, comparatively mainstream advocacy groups like the League of United
Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the G.I. Forum, Mexican American organizations
once at the vanguard of change, struck the Chicano activists of the 1960s and 1970s as
discredited relics that had sold out to the power structure. Groups like the Mexican
American Youth Organization, Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF) and
La Raza Unida tapped into the frustrations of young militants. Similar to the splintering
of the Democratic coalition over Vietnam and Civil Rights, a generation gap existed
among Mexican Americans over critical strategic and tactical questions of how best to
address the issues of poverty and alienation.
Although he did not include actions by elected school officials in his study, when historian Anthony Quiroz examined patterns of local politics in Victoria County, Texas in the mid-to-late twentieth century, he found Mexican American leaders settling on a non-confrontational approach to affirming the legitimate voice of the non-Anglo community. Political action efforts targeted the Victoria Independent School District, where high school students staged a walkout in 1970 in support of more emphasis on Chicano studies. Ben Heber Johnson confirmed the role of community activists in the reassertion of identity among Spanish-speaking peoples in the Texas-Mexico border country in the early twentieth century. The distance between the rural communities of South Texas elevated the significance of localized political movements.

Vicki Ruiz challenges Anglo perceptions of machismo in Mexican American culture and casts light on an unquestionably neglected segment of the American scene in From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America. She highlighted generational conflicts, especially as they relate to appearance, dating, sexuality and work, but Ruiz did not discuss child-rearing practices pertaining to schooling in her discussion. However, Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten’s discussion in Las Tejanas of escuelitas (“little schools”) operated by Mexican women in border towns strongly suggests a generational divide among Mexican women about expectations concerning the school’s teaching of English.

Many scholarly studies concentrate on political action by Mexican Americans in the Southwest, but comparisons across regions remain very limited. The work of two historians of the Chicano Movement, Marc Simon Rodriguez and Dionisio Nodin Valdes points to the potential value of a region-to-region comparison of the Mexican American
experience. Valdes concentrated primarily Mexican Americans in Minnesota in Barrios Nortenos, while Rodriguez examined the Chicano movement in Texas and Wisconsin spanned 1960 to 1975 and affirms the importance of circular migration in the establishment of civil rights and labor movements in the Midwest. Their use of the comparative case study methodology suggests the validity of a comparison of decision-making processes regarding bilingual education in school districts in Texas and Michigan. Zaragosa Vargas examined the urban lives of a settled population of Mexican Americans in Detroit in the post-World War I era, opening an important new vista that informs my own work about Kalamazoo in this project.\footnote{44}

With the exception of the Underground Railroad, Michigan’s extensive land and water border with Canada may lack the historical drama and tragedy of the Rio Grande region, but it provides a salient counterpoint to the cultural demographics of Texas. Chicano literature celebrates the Indio heritage of La Raza, yet tribal identity, other than references to the once hegemonic culture of the Aztecs, is not part of the identity discourse. In contrast, the historic interactions of Europeans with native linguistic traditions in Longfellow’s Land of Gitchee Goomee, described by migration historian John Bukowczyk as a “sort of linguistic and ethnic interweave,” positions the Great Lakes basin as an ideal place exemplifying the complexities of a non-bordered cultural interface.\footnote{45} The presence of several reservations across Michigan for members of the Chippewa, Ojibwa and Pottawatomi tribes demonstrates that the quality of cross-cultural communications along the shifting frontiers of the Great Lakes meant a world of difference to encroaching settlers whose children spoke French, English, or Dutch. Since the educational needs of the Native American children fell under the aegis of the Great
White Father in Washington, state and local school authorities played the role of largely disinterested bystanders.

Canada, like the United States, assigns responsibility for educating First Nations children to the federal government. French trappers, traders, and priests significantly influenced the adoption of French and Francophone versions of Algonquian terms into the vocabulary of English speakers. Michigan maps remain replete with French place names, as Texas maps are with Spanish. Unlike Texas, however, by the turn of the twentieth century, concentrations of French Canadians in Michigan diminished, with the 1900 Census recording the largest numbers residing along the Detroit River in Wayne County (4,426) and in the Upper Peninsula’s Keweenaw Peninsula, where French Canadians numbered 3,114 in Houghton County. Under these circumstances, a community member walking into a schoolhouse in Houghton County along Lake Superior in 1900 might have as good a chance of hearing French used in the classroom, as a Texan would have of hearing German along the Pedernales River in the Texas hill country.

For many schools in the South Texas border country (and throughout the state) a county-based school governance model survived into the first decade of the twentieth century. that left the needs of the indigenous Tejano population as well as incoming Mexicans were in the hands of the locally-elected county judge. As one might expect, the political cultures of the 254 Texas counties varied, leaving some Spanish-speaking children outside the schoolhouse door altogether, while in places like central Texas town of McGregor in McLennan County, children of local Mexican families attended classes with the Anglo Texans. In larger cities, such as Waco (also in McLennan County) and
Austin, separate elementary schools were maintained for the Mexican children at the elementary school level, with tiny numbers matriculating on to the “white” high school.48

Similar to the evolution of publicly funded K-12 education in Texas, the overwhelmingly rural school system in Michigan reflected local norms, as determined by elected school boards. Reform impulses characteristic of the Progressive era placed greater emphasis on accountability for local officials in the early decades of the twentieth century. Practical limitations involving transportation of students meant that prior to movement to consolidate tiny country schools into larger districts in the late 1940s and early 1950s, almost three thousand independent school districts offered some level of public instruction in Michigan. Local patterns of integration and socialization prevailed prior to the flaring of anti-German sentiments during WWI. State officials offered skeletal structure to matters of teacher certification and educational programming requirements. Decision-making about curriculum and personnel, including the working conditions of the faculty reflected hierarchies negotiated formally or informally over time by interested parties.

Since the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century, local school officials experienced multiple incursions upon their turf by federal policymakers. Border crossings of this kind may be welcomed, especially if it meant funding the costs of training teachers for vocational education programs. Even the annoyances that accompany federal programs, such as those the National Youth Administration (NYA) imposed on administrators during the latter part of the New Deal, could be tolerated if one could see the fruits of the labor, as in the case of that programs dropout prevention initiatives. Lessons learned by the Committee for Public Information in the Great War
found the schools second to none in promoting patriotism, so school-aged children served as a natural focal point for promoting “Victory Gardens” when the peace lilies fell victim to the blight of World War II. In each of these examples of federal influence over local school districts, Uncle Sam seems more like a welcome partner than would be the case with bilingual education.

Organization

The first chapter, “Make Worthy Citizens,” places the school as the central institutional player in the Progressive vision for a better America. The mission of the school called upon teachers to preserve the American way while improving its children. Examples used to illustrate this include the push for vocational education, the NYA’s strategies to prevent high school and college dropouts during the Great Depression, and the promotion of school-based Victory Gardens by the U.S. government during wartime. Drawing extensively upon the experiences of Texas and Michigan, this portion of the dissertation affirms the role of the public school as the government’s favorite change agent.

Chapter Two, “The Roots and Fruits of Federalism,” looks at common factors in the origins of American and Canadian federalism and the consequential impact on education policy. Canada’s experience with the transition to bilingualism provides valuable comparative context for this examination of policies adopted in the United States. This section also raises two examples of federal initiatives that encouraged conservatives to advocate for more local control. Passage of the Lanham Act in 1940
aimed at providing American school districts experiencing population spikes as the nation mobilized for war, but tensions between local boards of education and Washington, D.C. grew with each passing year as implementation proved burdensome and funding fell short of needs for many districts. Congress revisited the original legislation within a year, but the experience of the Augusta School in Kalamazoo County suggests local politics, not just federal fumbling, aggravated school officials. Such issues stoked Republican fires for the 1946 election season, when Navy veterans Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford won seats in the House of Representatives. Thirty years later, in the aftermath of Nixon’s fall in the Watergate scandal, the Ford Administration’s effort to woo Mexican-American voters in the 1976 election contributed to the alienation of the disgruntled right wing of the party, leading to Gerald Ford’s loss to Jimmy Carter and the subsequent rise of Ronald Reagan.

Next, attention turns to educators and their role in the policymaking process. Chapter Three, “Teachers’ Union and Education Policy” contextualizes the role of the AFT and NEA in the United States by considering the role of Canadian unions in formulation of education policy, including bilingual education. The status of teachers’ unions in Texas and Michigan being very different, the chapter considers the role of teachers’ associations in a right-to-work state and in a state with a vital labor movement. During their rise to prominence in the 1960s, leaders of American teachers’ unions sought to influence educational policy decisions and electoral politics in their own communities and beyond. Yet, by 1968 only a handful of states permitted collective bargaining between school boards and K-12 teachers.
The last two chapters address how issues involving language and landscape brought a diverse group of decision-makers together in confrontation and collaboration in Texas and Michigan. Chapter Four, “La Escuela, La Raza, y El Movimiento en Tejas,” applies the contextual material of the first three chapters to the particular circumstances facing Waco, Texas. The first of these two case studies begins with a discussion of the settlement patterns that brought increased numbers of Mexican Americans to the central Texas city. The impact of the physical landscape on their emergence as members of the policy community proves far more significant than indicated by previous studies of the Chicano Movement or bilingual education. This research demonstrates that urban renewal planning processes after the devastation of a tornado in 1953 engaged leaders of the growing Mexican American community, thereby legitimizing and grooming emergent leaders. Concurrently, the involvement of the federal government in enlarging the city’s main reservoir, Lake Waco, to increase the water supply and improve flood control reinforced negative attitudes about Uncle Sam as it altered the landscape.

For the discussion of Michigan and the City of Kalamazoo in the final chapter entitled “La Escuela, La Raza y El Movimiento en Kalamazoo, Michigan,” a similar approach examines the factors accounting for the establishment of a significant Mexican American community one thousand miles from Texas. Drawn to West Michigan primarily by agricultural opportunities after World War II, increasing numbers of once-migratory workers had settled in cities and towns found in the Fruit Belt. Located along the eastern edge of the “Fruit Belt” that seasonally drew thousands of migrant workers to the area, Kalamazoo proved slow to respond the changing cultural landscape. These new voices added complexity to the quest for harmony amidst tension between blacks and
whites. Hearings conducted by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in 1969 focused primarily on concerns raised by the African American community found the political establishment and school officials in Kalamazoo oblivious to the needs of the Spanish-speaking population. Drawing extensively from the minutes of Board of Education meetings and from the *Focus News*, a small publication serving the “minority” community, this investigation demonstrates how the leadership of the Mexican American community changed these perceptions.

This project demonstrates that school districts offer a distinctive vantage point for scholarly investigation of how important national issues germinate at the grassroots, where the local physical environment and cultural geography influence the make-up of the policy community. Despite the aspirations of teachers’ unions to influence education policy at the national level, the insensitivity of an individual classroom teacher could influence the political climate beyond the school itself. The experiences of communities in Texas and Michigan demonstrate how local dynamics significantly affected the formulation and implementation of local district practices related to bilingual education. These examples show how the hopes and aspirations of people with differing agendas translate into legislative, judicial or executive action.
Notes to Introduction

1 Partial lyrics to a corrido (ballad) by Enrique Franco entitled “Jaula de Oro,” recorded by Los Tigres del Norte in 1985. The song may be found in the collection 20 Norteñas Famosas, Univision Music Group compact disk 0883 51481 0.


4 Members of these elected bodies, which are sometimes called Boards of Trustees, These boards are usually comprised of five, seven or nine members, as prescribed by state statute. Terms of office also vary from state to state.

5 Boards of Education are equivalent to Boards of Trustees, charged with setting policy and accountable for public monies.

6 Robert Dallek, Flawed Giant (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 421. As discussed in Chapter 3, Yarborough would find it difficult to secure that level of funding, despite the $2 billion appropriation for ESEA resulting from contentious budgeting process in 1967.

The phrase “school district” refers to the institution responsible for the education of children from kindergarten (age 5) through high school (typically grades 9-12). A “K-12” district, may have anywhere from one to several campuses, depending on the number of school buildings needed to serve the various age groups.

Carlos Kevin Blanton, Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 134.


Craig A. Kaplowitz, LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 3.

Ronald Schmidt, Sr, “The Politics of Language in Canada and the United States: Explaining the Differences,” in Language and Politics in the United States and Canada (Mahwah: Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 39. Schmidt offers definitions of these terms in the context of language policy. Assimilationist policies find the “state seeks to eliminate language conflict by inducing members of subordinate language groups to acculturate linguistically by adopting the ‘national language’ as their own.” Pluralism in this context means “the state aims to create a climate of acceptance and toleration of multiple languages, through support for the maintenance of several languages existing in the society and encouragement of multilingualism on the part of the polity.”
“Bilingual education” is a phrase that evokes different images of classroom methodology used by teachers to help the non-English-speaking student acquire English language skills. Typically, instructional time during the day would be divided between “native” language and English. The age of the child plays a key role in the transition strategy, but actual programming decisions vary from school to school. Some schools viewed the issue more broadly, incorporating elements of cultural awareness into the curriculum.


Gilbert Sanchez, “An Analysis of the Bilingual Education Act, 1967-68” (Ph.D. diss., Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1973). Jesus Ernesto Zamora. “A Status Survey of Texas’ Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1977). As a general rule, the term “Chicano” will be used in discussion of the younger generation of activists who might otherwise be described as Mexican Americans or Tejanos. As generally understood by the late 1960s, Chicanos shared “Indian” and Spanish ancestry in the region along the U.S. border with Mexico, but failed to identify with either Anglo culture or traditional Mexican culture. Tejanos, again speaking
generally, are those Spanish-surnamed Texans whose families have roots in the state, but whose physical traits would likely find Anglos grouping them with Mexicans or Mexican-Americans. "Mexican American" is used when discussion centers on the children of migrants from Mexico and on individuals with family ties to Mexico.


20 A flurry of books and articles appeared about Crystal City ("Cristal" to Chicanos) in the mid-to-late 1970s, but more recent studies benefit from better use of sources and some historical distance. In addition to Gutierrez' own account, Armando Navarro's *The Cristal Experiment* stands out.


23 Blanton, *Strange Career, 134*.


The reference is to Roth’s *The Human Stain* (New York: Vintage, 2001), an examination of the complexities of identity that suggests humans leave indelible, though perhaps unrecognized marks on one another through their interactions. I argue that contact between the federal government and a school district affect the political culture of that community.


Anthony Quiroz, *Claiming Citizenship: Mexican Americans in Victoria, Texas.* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 107.


Current usage among Canadian scholars of the term First Nations to describe the population of not only “Indians” but “Eskimos” as well.


CHAPTER I

"MAKE WORTHY CITIZENS": FEDERALISM AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENTS

We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns out people as Americans, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house.

--Theodore Roosevelt, in letter read aloud 5 January 1919 at the All-American Festival in New York City.

The “crucible” the former President referred to is the public school classroom, the place where the children of the world’s migrating peoples came to be molded into productive, patriotic citizens of the United States of America. Every time federal officials determine the need to change the mold, they rely upon thousands of teachers and school officials across the nation to implement the new policy. This chapter presents examples of how the federal government assigned to new roles to local schools to achieve various national goals through promotion of decentralized, non-mandatory programs in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. I argue that federal initiatives in vocational education (1917), the National Youth Administration’s work-study programs during the Great Depression, and the victory garden campaign during WWII demonstrate remarkably fluid versions of federalism as applied to public education. The significance of this for my investigation of bilingual education policy lies in the context it

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establishes for changing expectations in American political culture concerning the role of
the federal government in education policy.

Each of policy initiatives represented a determined effort by national leaders to
influence educational programming in communities across America. The voluntary
model of federal intervention at work in the distinctive political cultures of school
districts led some to embrace federal initiative, while others did not. This is significant
for understanding the political journey of bilingual education in the United States from
1964-1980, which maps a dramatic shift from its origins as a voluntary program to a
federally mandated remedy, before moving back toward greater flexibility for school
districts in the face of powerful grassroots conservative movement.

The school, then, plays a dual role for society, serving simultaneously as an agent
of change and as the vessel for transmission of the American way. Throughout the
twentieth century, the person at the chalkboard served as both the stirrer of the melting
pot and as the gatekeeper to prosperity. As in all cultures, the elders oversee the training
of the young for adult roles through at least the time of their rites of passage. The ways
of the people, notably their language, pass from one generation to the next in perpetuity,
it would seem. This fundamental component of human societies becomes increasingly
complex in multicultural settings, so we must ask, the ways of which people? Whose
language? Who decides these questions?

For generations, American educators agonized over such issues. Frank V.
Thompson, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools during the post-WWI era (1918-
1921), urged policymakers to not see schools as the sole answer. “We are assuming too
much…” he cautioned, “when we conclude that the formal schooling of the immigrant
will automatically solve the problem of Americanization.” Thompson challenged assumptions of how efficiently schools played this role:

Of the 13,345,000 immigrants in our country in 1910, 3,000,000 were found to be non-English-speaking. Of the whole number of immigrants 9,981,000 were not acquainted with English at the time of arrival. Only a small proportion (729,000) were young enough to come under the compulsory school attendance laws. About 7,000,000 non-English-speaking immigrants had learned the language sufficiently well to be recorded as English speaking in the census of 1910 and must have acquired this knowledge largely outside the schools. Let us recognize the fact that the majority of our immigrants of non-English-speaking origin have learned to speak English, but have acquired this accomplishment outside the schools.²

Thompson’s data and the conclusion he drew did not alter the growing trend of relying on public schools for indoctrinating American youth. As the institution of public education developed in the latter nineteenth century, a time when division of labor would embrace time and motion studies for purposes of scientific management, public schools depended more than ever on direction from what education policy analyst David Spener described in 1988 as “the features of the wider society- economic, technological, and political.” Spener saw parallel processes operating in American schools, however. He argued that members of linguistic minorities, along with racial and ethnic minorities, occupy lower-status positions in society’s “opportunity structure.”³
Sociologist John Ogbu made a different distinction in his analysis of how public education carries out its mission of socialization, emphasizing in 1978 that immigrant minorities should be considered separately from “caste-like” minorities whose “pariah status... sharply circumscribes their economic, political and cultural participation in society.” Either group may be subject to an inferior educational experience from low expectations by teachers recruited from a pool of made-up largely of the majority population. Sometimes these teachers are culturally and socially removed from the community their students live in, resulting in bad attitudes toward the minority group.

Ogbu noted a distinction, however, in what he described as an “instrumentalist” perspective held by the immigrant. Nurtured by vivid memories of the less desirable circumstances they left behind, some see low status in America as the “price for personal advancement,” as he described it. Accordingly, children of immigrants transferred this parental attitude into a more utilitarian view of education than did the children of caste-minorities, where expectations of the power of education to break the shackles of poverty remained bleak.

Among the influential actors in this massive metamorphosis from “other” to American citizen, the editors of school textbooks found ways to match their narratives to the political realities faced by local officials concerning curriculum and instruction. Appealing to the predominantly Anglo-Saxon male power structure, the heavily gendered basic accounts of American history from colonial times through the industrial age carried an underlying message of divine intervention. Publishers like Macmillan, based in London and New York; as well as Houghton or Ginn and Company, both of Boston, came to dominate the market by catering to the growing sense of nationalism. For
example, the opening sentences of Edward Channing's classic _A Student's History of the United States_, originally published in 1897, invoked the blessings of the Anglicized creator along with fascinating characterizations of those he perceived as less fortunate:

The life of a nation depends mainly on its moral and mental make-up and the opportunities of improvement which are placed within its reach. On the one hand, the Spanish-Americans have made slight use of the great natural resources of South and Central America; on the other hand, the Danes have accomplished little in Greenland. In the territory now occupied by the American nation, a strong people found opportunities for development such as no other country of equal size possesses. In the present chapter will be found a brief description of the great natural resources which a kind Providence has placed at the disposal of the inhabitants of the United States.⁶

Summarizing his thesis that would guide him throughout six volumes of a projected eight-volume history of the U.S. through the Civil War, Channing argued that "the most important single fact in our development has been the victory of union over particularism."⁷ Taking stock of the American nation in closing the fourth edition of his narrative in 1908, Channing briefly noted the contributions of immigrants. One might wonder about the author's familiarity with the increasingly diverse population in urban schools in the United States.⁸ He cites the "conditions of living in the South" as the explanation for only five percent of immigrants settling there. Channing astutely notes "many of those who are enumerated among the foreign-born residents are only temporary...," highlighting the seasonal migration patterns of Canadianfishers and
laborers, as well as Italians. He concludes that although the “constant influx of immigrants has been one of the chief factors in our prosperity...many persons think, however, that the time has now come when some limitation should be placed on immigration.”

In 1914, as the debate over vocational education simmered in the pre-war environment, the United States Bureau of Education (BOE) began an inventory of school facilities in the nation, H.H. Wheaton, the BOE Specialist in Immigrant Education referred to the “chaos” of the national effort to meet the needs of immigrants. The only federal policy, he observed, was one of “non-interference.” Wheaton found private agencies rushing to fill the void by offering night classes “wholly unsuited to the immigrant type,” despite “well meaning” efforts. He reserved his most derisive comments for political organizations, accusing them of being “particularly harmful” because they wrestled for the loyalties of the new arrivals.

The needs of immigrants ranked high on the agenda for educators in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1914, when WSTC hosted the annual conference of the Michigan State Teachers’ Association (affiliated with the NEA). The program guide provided attendees with a highly detailed overview of the importance of education in the community.

For fifteen years the public schools during about five months of the year offer evening classes for two or three nights per week at the high school. There are now classes in the commercial branches for boys and girls who had to leave school on working permits without finishing the eight grades, special classes in English for foreigners who are learning the language...
One gets a sense of the eagerness of community organizations to play a role. In Kalamazoo, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) offered evening classes, as well, including English classes "for foreigners." As for which foreigners these classes were designed, the prominence of Dutch migrants to West Michigan led the editors of this MST A publication to add, "Besides these opportunities, the Holland schools have frequently offered special evening classes for newcomers of that nationality who wish to learn English." 11

Jane Addams, noted pioneer in the settlement house movement, shared a story to illustrate the clumsiness of some of the schools' efforts to Americanize. She wrote of the engagement of volunteer speakers to visit Chicago classrooms to discuss the observation of "Decoration Day" and "to foster patriotism among the foreign-born by descriptions of the Civil War." Addams makes no mention of the ages of the students, so one can only speculate on the appropriateness of accounts of battle as a means of instilling patriotism. She recounts the following exchange after a presentation at a school "filled with Italian children:"

Coming from the schoolhouse an eager young Italian broke out with characteristic vividness into a description of his father's campaigning under the leadership of Garibaldi. The lecturer...somewhat sharply told him that he was no longer an Italian, but an American. 12

Did the boy wonder at what moment the transformation took place? It seems that the streets of Chicago would remind him daily that while he could be a "dago" or a "wop," but could he ever be American? The schools faithfully taught that real Americans
would die for their flag, so perhaps by his own future sacrifice in war he could prove himself to be a red-blooded American boy.

Meanwhile, schools taught immigrant girls about Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle-class ideals of domesticity through home economics classes. But parents needed attention, too. Kate Waller Barrett, a medical doctor employed by the U.S. Immigration Commission as a “Special Agent,” believed “reaching the alien woman” would be the key to Americanizing newcomers. Barrett even recommended that “every state pass a law similar to the California law whereby teachers may be sent into the home to instruct the mothers.” Curiously, she follows that legislative strategy with a suggestion for “men’s clubs to form national centers to which the mothers can be gathered and where they will be addressed in their own language.”13 The California Immigration Commission (CIC) filed its report in 1917, five years after the state established the Commission of Immigration and Housing. The report addresses the challenge facing the schools,

Educators throughout America are realizing that teaching English to the foreign-born is a new profession for which new provision has to be made. And the cooperation of the leaders of these foreign-born is being enlisted in carrying America’s message to their compatriots in their own tongue, a measure which has long been a vital part of California’s plan for assimilation.14

The CIC and the California Department of Education agreed upon “one great need.” Citing the absence of any American influence on immigrants at home, they concluded that the school was the sole public institution capable of meeting the
challenge. After all, they reasoned, “it alone came with no prejudice, and it had the widest contact.” It appears that the discussions about the appointment of a “home teacher” to visit immigrants may have been difficult, as report states “for the sake of having a definite illustration of the advantages of this appendage to the school system, and to work out standards, the commission induced a highly trained woman to work as a volunteer in the Los Angeles City schools for a year and a half.”

The State of California tapped the enormous human resources of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), representing some two million members across the nation in 1920. In April 1917, the Chair of the GFWC, Dr. Mary E. Parker, addressed the annual meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas, urging them to consider becoming “Home Teachers” in one of the schools in the “foreign quarters.” In her estimation, the school remains, “in the last analysis the great instrumentality for Americanization...work that is not merely desirable but imperative...”

More than three thousand miles away, the Massachusetts Bureau of Immigration issued its own report, citing the “fundamental factor in assimilation and Americanization of the non-English-speaking foreign-born is education that will include a sound working knowledge of English language...” Identifying the most critical need being the male population twenty-one years of age or older, Massachusetts adopted a model calling for offering English classes in factories. Responding to the needs of employers increasingly affected by the presence of a non-English speaking labor force, the State Board of Education took responsibility for designing teaching materials and “trains the teachers in the direct, dramatic method of teaching the language.” However, the State looked to the
local school districts to coordinate arrangements with local industrial sites with regard to conducting classes on-site. 17

Without any apparent sense of irony about referencing the widely adopted German concept for early childhood education, sociologist Edward Ross of the University of Wisconsin expressed concern in an article for *The Century* in 1914 that the American political system risked losing political like-mindedness as a result of admitting “to citizenship myriads of strangers who have not yet passed the civic kindergarten…” Ross held that immigrants from non-democratic societies slowed the march of Anglo-Saxon progress, because their presence meant that the public discourse had to just rehash the long-resolved questions of church and state, forcing the citizens to “thresh over again old straw...meanwhile ripe sheaves ready to yield the wheat of wisdom under the flails of discussion lie untouched.” 18 The phrase “civic kindergarten” expresses more than the linkage between schooling and Americanization, it is also suggests that the process cannot be delayed.

In 1920, U.S. Commissioner of Education P.P. Claxton made the transformational power of schooling seem nearly irresistible, and probably painless:

Americanization is a process of education, of winning the mind and heart through instruction and enlightenment. From the very nature of the thing it can make little or no use of force. It must depend on the attractive power and reasonableness of the thing itself. Were it to resort to force, by that very act it would destroy its spirit and cease to be American. Our program of education does not compel, but invites and allures. It may,
therefore, probably must, in the beginning be slow; but in the end will be swift and sure.\textsuperscript{19}

Two themes run through these early twentieth century responses to dramatic changes in the cultural landscape in countless American communities. Along with a strong economic rationale for teaching English to the immigrant child, we see gendered constructions of patriotism linking assimilation to loyalty. The central role schools played in sorting and selecting immigrants for their adult roles in the social order increased further as the federal government endorsed the concept of vocational education in 1917.

A New Vocation for the Federal Government

The debates over vocational education in the decade before American entry into World War I reflect competing ideas about sorting and selecting school-age students as cogs for the wheels of industry at a time when significant numbers of Eastern and Southern European children filled grammar school classrooms in cities across the industrial belt of the northeast and the Midwest. Changes in child labor laws and gradual transition of a high school diploma from a middle-class ideal to a working class norm, at least for male students, coincided with initiatives by local, state and national organizations to groom the next generation of skilled labor for “their appropriate niches” in industry and agriculture via standardized curricula and methodology.\textsuperscript{20} Improved vocational training by high schools, however, could only be reached by grooming a new
breed of teachers capable of taking the latest developments in industry or agriculture and applying them to coursework.

According to education scholar Harvey Kantor, the Smith-Hughes Act (also known as the National Vocational Education Act) signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on 23 February 1917, represented a “major step in the use of education as a tool of federal social policy.” The struggle between conflicting interests and differing philosophies produced a pragmatic response to the noble and profane influence of the contending forces. The Progressive impulse to reform institutions included the public schools, a natural companion to child labor legislation. Spurring the first Congressional venture into education policy in the twentieth century, diverse interests responded to a turbulent economy by questioning the effectiveness of public schools. How could the next generation be successful if their teachers lacked training in scientific agriculture or in industrial trades?

Long before Lyndon Johnson described education as the “passport from poverty” in 1965, the newly-organized National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) identified schools as a passport to bigger profits. In 1895, NAM adopted the goal of “enhancing domestic competitiveness in expanding global markets,” thereby engaging members in a prolonged lobbying effort to persuade the federal government to play a leadership role in advancing vocational education. NAM concluded early on that public monies could train worker bees for its hives, but other factors besides the bottom line made federal involvement seem urgent, as evidenced by developments across the country.

In 1901, for example, the Nebraska legislature tightened certification standards for teachers, only to find they had turned the scarcity of teachers into a drought. Within a
few years, shared concerns led to collaboration among Nebraska education officials and members of the Nebraska Education Association, resulting in the drafting of a bill calling for federal aid for teacher training. Similar proposals originated in Missouri and Kentucky and in Utah. In 1901, Elmer Burkett, a Republican whom political scientist Elizabeth Saunders described as “eager to prove his progressive credentials,” introduced the bill in the U.S. Senate. Saunders describes the energy surrounding the vocational education funding debate of this period as “Congress-centered, with representatives responding to a diverse array of grass-roots farmer and labor demands and producing bills designed to yoke farmers, workers and educators.”

The National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE) formed in 1906. Leadership of this organization representing social workers, capital and labor, was in the hands of “New York educators at its helm.” Saunders characterizes NSPIE as dominated by “a particular segment of northeastern professional educators, and both the NAM and the AFL were initially reluctant to cooperate with the group. Led by Professor David Snedden of Columbia, who also served as Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts, these academics became associated with the concept of “social control...a science of educational sociology” looking for designs that would boost “social efficiency” and the “enhanced control of followers by leaders.” Adherents viewed the role of schools as using vocational education for the purpose of sorting and selecting individuals to assume their places in society. Added costs to local school districts meant federal funding would be necessary to support significant capital investment in the tools of the trades. In addition, specialized training for teachers inevitably required and there state-level bureaucracy, not to mention added costs for state universities.

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In David Snedden’s view, vocational educational could achieve the highest level of social efficiency if the needs of employers drove the programming in a manner that would channel laborers into suitable roles. He contended that as much as 80% of the students in secondary education in the early twentieth century gained nothing from “traditionally organized academic studies.”

The question of the role capitalist interests should have in steering the education of the masses and the chosen few recently led Emery J. Hyslop-Margison, a researcher for the Canadian Education Association, to explore the debate. Convinced that twenty-first century educational reform amounts to corporatist exploitation of an economically dislocated citizenry, Hyslop-Margison points today’s policymakers toward the “morally-appropriate model for vocational education...found within the comprehensive democratic approach of Dewey, rather than through narrowly conceived skills-based programs.”

John Dewey’s reputation as a philosopher of education may have peaked with the publication of Democracy and Education in 1916, contemporaneous with Congressional deliberations about the Smith-Hughes Act. At the national level, major players of the AFL, NAM, and the NEA courted members of the House and the Senate, the latter in transition from appointment by state legislature to popular election. The divide between Dewey and Snedden represented the parameters of the debate. Rather than locking drones into fixed places as flesh and blood components of industrial machinery, Dewey believed “vocational guidance must not be conceived as leading up to a fixed and irretrievable choice.” Behind this concern, Dewey remained convinced that any scheme of vocational education, which takes as its point of departure from the industrial regimes that now exists, is likely to assume and
perpetuate its divisions and weaknesses, and thus become an instrument in accomplishing the feudal dogma of social predestination.  

These arguments between Snedden, Dewey, and their followers played themselves out nationally, notably when President Theodore Roosevelt implored Congress in 1907 to adopt school reform legislation containing federal support for industrial and agricultural education in the nation’s schools. The trend toward centralization in the Progressive era carried into education policy debates, part of a national drive to become more competitive in global markets. But, as Kantor provocatively asserted, the thrust of vocational education in the early twentieth century “also aimed at socializing workers to stabilize American industrial society by creating ‘a school system that socialized youth for their new economic roles and sorting them into appropriate niches in the expanding capitalist division of labor.’”

Influenced by the pronounced recession in 1907, Theodore Roosevelt added the prestige of the “bully pulpit” to the movement, but it proved insufficient. Not until the formidable clout wielded by the combined forces the NAM and the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which joined in support of federal funding in 1910 did the call for federal funding for the “promotion of trade instruction in schools” gain momentum. The AFL viewed the bill as a means to an end, hopeful that labor would be part of the education policy community. Despite support from industry and labor, the initiative of Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia, chiefly concerned about agricultural interests, proved critical to moving from rhetoric to action.

Within a month of Woodrow Wilson inauguration in March 1913, Congressional approval of the Smith Resolution, launched formation of a presidential commission
chaired by Senator Smith. Charged with devising "a plan for federal assistance to agricultural and industrial schools," the subsequent report reflected the influence of David Snedden. 30 According to career education scholar Emery Hyslop-Margsion, Snedden believed vocational education served the dual purpose of "meeting labor force needs and preparing students with assumed limited intellectual capabilities for immediate employment in industry."31 One of Snedden's students, Charles Prosser served as principal author of the final report that informed the legislation introduced in December 1915 by Senator Smith and Representative Dudley Mays Hughes, who represented the Twelfth Congressional District in Georgia. The Smith-Hughes bill provided funding to assist schools with the cost of salaries for vocational education teachers (including agriculture) and program supervisors, as well as monies for teacher training. For the first time since the demise of the education initiatives of Freedmen's Bureau in 1870, the federal government committed itself to a role in the nation's schools.

As momentous as this development in federalism might appear, the war raging for a third summer in Europe focused Congressional attention on preparedness issues in 1916, so the Smith-Hughes proposal generated just one hour of debate. Reflecting the nation's changing sensibilities concerning federal authority as the stated neutrality policy faltered, Smith rallied support for the measure by stating:

We might well give some preparation for peace and to the better preparation of our girls and boys for the struggles of life...even in the case of war more men and women would be required at home to prepare the instruments of war and to prepare the food and clothing for the soldier...32
This lofty rhetoric masked what may have been the baser motives of Hoke Smith, whose remarks as a candidate for Governor of Georgia in 1906 reveal how racism colored his curricular insights. In what appears to be an endorsement for vocational emphasis in the education of African Americans, Smith observed, “These people are descended from ancestors who a little more than a century ago were savages in Africa...Mere instruction from books will accomplish nothing for him.”

The Senate and the House adopted the bill by voice vote. Representative Robert Doughton (D-North Carolina) noted the irrelevance of current public education to a significant percentage of people engaged in agriculture. Echoing this sentiment, Representative George Huddleston (D-Alabama) expressed confidence that by enacting support for vocational programs in both industry and agriculture, local school districts could teach students “good judgment as applied to the business of earning a living.”

Fifty years later, Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas would turn to a similar argument as he introduced his bilingual education legislation. Significantly, neither bill contained mandates.

Widespread support from labor, industry and agriculture then, broke through constitutional and philosophical concerns about federal assistance to high schools and converged into the omnibus Smith-Hughes bill in 1917, widely known as the National Vocational Education Act. The legislation served as the foundation of federal policy for career training in public high schools across the United States until the Aid for Vocational Education Act of December 1963 ushered in the Great Society era. Schools long promised to prepare the next generation for a better life. With the entry of the federal government into career training, the socialization function of schools entwined the
missions of Americanization with that of maximizing the potential productivity of the students. As Frances A. Kellor, a pillar of the Americanization movement spelled out, education policy operated within a larger political context:

Let us face the inevitable truth. There can be no Americanization from the top down or in the mass. It will not come from the court that grants a citizenship certificate; nor from the school that teaches English; nor from the speakers that talk patriotism; nor from the patriotic society that prints platitudes. It will come from basic conditions being right, and none is more vital than industrial relations. It will live as we shorten the distance between the Constitution and the shop.\textsuperscript{35}

The National Vocational Act of 1917 called for an expanded mission for the public schools in the United States, but the traditional of local control remained strong enough to stop short of federal coercion. The Progressive movement continued to shape political culture into the 1920s, especially in Midwestern states, but federalism under Harding and Coolidge reverted to a less expansive model than the nation had seen since the McKinley administration. After the fortunes of the Hoover administration ebbed, a second wave of progressivism emerged. Dubbed the “New Deal” by its chief architect, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, many of these initiatives touched local school districts. In terms of directly enhancing the lives of students, none exceeded the efforts of the National Youth Administration to help teenagers and young adults to complete their diplomas despite economic hardships at home.

51
The New Deal and Dropouts

The New Deal greatly increased the frequency of consequential interaction between the federal government and school districts. This section explores projects undertaken at the community level by the National Youth Administration (NYA) during this New Deal Agency’s eight-year existence, from 1935 to 1943. These new relationships between youthful citizens, community leaders and a federal agency suggest a mixture of pragmatic thinking about keeping sixteen year-olds off the job market as well as a belief in the power of education to open doors long closed to most vulnerable. It demonstrates that in its formulation and implementation of economic recovery policies, New Dealers envisioned public schools as agents of the federal government. NYA’s work study programs for college students like those attending Western State Teachers College in Kalamazoo, Michigan, enabled thousands of prospective teachers across the country to complete their college education despite difficult economic conditions.

In the months leading up to Executive Order #7086, issued 26 June 1935, multiple proposals for addressing youth unemployment circulated in Washington. John Studebaker, U.S. Commissioner of Education discussed a “Community Youth Program” in a radio broadcast just two months before that would distribute $288 million dollars in federal aid to local school districts for the purpose of establishing “guidance and adjustment centers” for unemployed teenagers. As envisioned, community councils would work collaboratively with local boards of education and serve a total of two million students. The Department of Labor drafted a less expansive plan calling for similar services for serving half as many students at one-third the cost. Roosevelt looked
to a pair of his trusted insiders, Harry Hopkins and Aubrey Williams, to sort out the varying proposals. This process that led by early June to a $60 million dollar plan under the Works Progress Administration that would have no connection to the Office of Education. Studebaker stewed, but the proposal moved forward without further opposition.

Working with the newly appointed Executive Director Aubrey Williams, the National Advisory Committee steered the implementation of the executive order. Selma Borchardt, vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, represented the interests of classroom teachers, but no one from the National Education Association received a similar appointment. In her study of the Texas NYA, Carol Whiteside Weisenberger describes Williams' preference for the Advisory Council to serve as a public relations vehicle. He viewed speaking engagements before conventions of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the NEA's Department of Secondary School Principals as opportunities to spread the word of the deeds and needs of the new agency. Williams shared the prevailing view that a decentralized model, operating through state and local NYA offices, would allow communities to tailor projects to their distinctive circumstances.

NYA targeted adolescents and young adults not reached by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Biographers of Lyndon B. Johnson point to his formative experiences as the State Director for the Texas NYA (1935-1937) in shaping future Great Society concepts of federalism. Consequently, scholarly focus on the Texas experience with this New Deal initiative typically deals more with Johnson than with the people the program aimed to help. Most recently,
historian, Randall Woods’ generally appreciative study presents the colorful State Director assessing options for helping the 125,000 sixteen-to-twenty-year old Texans on relief. Speaking to a group of Texas educators in September 1935, LBJ listed the choices. “We could starve them to death; we could send them to school; we could kill them through war. Obviously the answer lies in sending some of them to school; giving some of them vocational training; finding work projects for others.”

Johnson’s comments reflect the sense among supporters of more federal programming for youth that, in Weinenberger’s stark phrasing, to alleviate “fear that idleness of youth” could lead to a “demoralized, unproductive generation of Americans.”

Society faced a grave problem. At the time, 14% of the 16-to-24 year old in the nation were “on relief.” Schools must accomplish their mission, or society itself is at stake.

Bereft of any official role in this new federal effort to prevent dropouts and provide more vocational training opportunities for this key segment of the populace, Commissioner of Education Studebaker joined with the National Education Association as gadflies abuzz over turf violations. The NEA strongly supported Studebaker’s view that by skirting the Office of Education, the NYA would inevitably overstep appropriate boundaries for federal involvement in state and local affairs. The NEA showed a nuanced view of federalism by drawing lines evidenced by decisions on which policies to support or oppose. For example, NEA endorsed funding for vocational education under the Smith-Hughes Act, but considered NYA job training projects as encroaching on the power of local boards of education.

Roosevelt directly countered accusations by NEA leader Agnes Samuelson that schools were endangered by federal encroachment. The President dismissed the criticism.
in language likely seen as condescending by the union, asserting that the relief function of the program involved challenges “with which educational people are not generally well acquainted.”\(^4\) Considering that women outnumbered men in the teaching profession by a five-to-one margin in the 1930s, Roosevelt’s paternalistic tone suggests gender played a significant role in denying teacher organizations greater status in policymaking process.\(^43\)

Despite this opposition from the NEA, concerns about social unrest led the Brain Trust to conclude that federal programs aimed at nation’s public schools and system of higher education offered a means of alleviating tension. This heightened level of concern justified any perceived encroachment into the traditional domain of school officials and their employee groups. The nation faced a failure of capitalism so severe, in the estimation of Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, that the federal government must live up to its constitutional obligations (presumably under the “promote the general welfare” clause of the preamble) to ensure students in American public schools had “every possible opportunity...to unfold to his utmost intellectual and spiritual capacity, regardless of where along the road of education this means that any particular child should stop.”\(^44\)

Texas Democrats like Senator Tom Connally of McLennan County, an early supporter of FDR whose distaste for the New Deal grew commensurately with the rapid growth of federal agencies, supported Johnson’s candidacy for the NYA position, perhaps as a favor to Sam Rayburn.\(^45\) Upon assuming the post, LBJ operated out of offices on the sixth floor of the prestigious Littlefield Building on the corner of 6\(^{th}\) Street and Congress in the heart of Austin. There Johnson nurtured his relationship with attorney Arthur J. Wirtz. Chairman of the nine-member Advisory Council, Wirtz helped
the ambitious Johnson to establish key contacts across the vast state, reflected in the establishment of a lower-rung of “approximately 200 community and county advisory committees.”46 Tapping into these grassroots networks of mover and shakers mobilized public involvement, resulting in federally supported projects aimed at locally identified needs, often involving the schools. The impact of this direct experience with New Deal federalism on Lyndon Johnson’s vision for delivery for Great Society programs should not be underestimated.

Given LBJ’s reputation for self-promotion, these contacts might be seen as token acquaintances to be tapped later for support in campaigns for the U.S. Senate, but the evidence of Johnson’s hands-on approach to administering NYA points to more than glad-handing good ol’ boys. Sherman Birdwell, recruited to work in the Austin NYA office in August 1935 after a meeting in a San Marcos café with Johnson, recalled that the State Director traveled around Texas and made frequent trips to Washington, “but most of his time was spent in Austin.” Birdwell indicated two staff members, H.A. Ziegler and Jesse Kellam, college friends of LBJ, handled the details of the School Aid portion of the Texas NYA. Weinenberger’s research, however, found LBJ working with Ziegler in order to teach high school principals about working effectively with federal paperwork to avoid delays in payments. Johnson, according to Birdwell, “had to make many trips to Washington” during his twenty months as head of the Texas NYA, for “training seminars and program developments...because this was strictly a Federal program, this was not a Federal-State program...so instructions came from the source.”47

Serving eligible students in high schools and colleges, NYA established a two-tiered system of payments. Family eligibility for WPA benefits automatically qualified
students for assistance. Instead of direct payments to the students, however, high schools received six dollars per student, “depending on the size school and the number of students they had,” reported Birdwell. In practice,

The superintendent, at that time, would take the six dollars for one person—it was not designated for an individual, but it was designated for, we’ll say, ten students, so he’d get sixty dollars a month—and divide it maybe three ways and have thirty people working where each one of them got two dollars a month, because this would buy them a better pair of tennis shoes, in those days, and some pencils and paper that people badly needed to go to school.48

Changes emanating from William’s headquarters in Washington reflected ongoing debates about eligibility requirements. Effective October 1935, scarcely four months into the NYA eight year life cycle, students from families not on relief became eligible. This change required local school leaders to “exercise every precaution to make certain that its funds were not made available to any student who did not produce satisfactory evidence that NYA employment was essential to the proper continuance of his education.”49 Meetings with federal officials emphasized significant local control of the project design process. Out of this decentralized model came partnerships between local educational institutions and community organizations. Baylor University and Waco public school officials, for example, conceived a plan to use sociology students to reduce dropouts and improve school attendance for “underprivileged students of school age...who were maladjusted both in the home and in the school.”50
Using the clout attendant to holding the purse strings for NYA programming in Texas, Johnson assembled a group of college presidents in September 1935, to pool ideas and share concerns about their early experiences with the agency. Out of this came the establishment of twenty “freshman centers” (officially known as Emergency Education Freshman Colleges) across the state, aimed at assisting high school graduates with the transition to college. NYA hired teachers, but all programming decisions were local. Curiously, the waiver of eligibility requirements for other NYA projects announced a few weeks later did not apply to these centers. By tapping into the innovations conceived by local school districts, colleges and community-based organizations, Johnson’s NYA efforts resulted in high praise from the national office, “Texas is so prolific in projects that every new batch of project applications is greeted with “Oh’s and Ah’s.”51

Twelve-hundred miles from Austin, along a road already familiar to the Mexican American migrants drawn to the Michigan Fruit Belt, the strongly Republican political culture of Southwest Michigan looked upon the New Deal with opportunistic skepticism. The Annual Report for the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the year ending 1935 shows the increased presence of the federal government, lists six New Deal agencies with established offices in this Midwestern city of approximately 60,000. Frequent references to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the infrastructure projects it funded may be found in budgets and maintenance reports, but there is but one notation of the NYA, an arm of the WPA. “There are now located in the city the following offices in charge of the various phases of relief work…” The Todd Building at 343 N. Rose Street served as NYA headquarters. For decades, the highly successful A.M Todd Company marketed “essential oils,” notably mint, for products like chewing gum. The Twenties
were good years for the Todd’s, so they constructed a new manufacturing facility on the northwest side of the city at 1717 Douglas Avenue in 1929. The vacated building on the corner of Rose Street and Kalamazoo Avenue, then, remained available. Perhaps the company’s vice-president, Paul Todd (son of the founder), who also served as the Mayor of the city in the mid-thirties, had the right connections within the Democratic party to see to it that the family’s building could find suitable tenants. Securing federal resources during the Depression occupied a portion of the time of Paul Sangren, inaugurated as President of Western State Teachers College (WSTC) in November 1935.

The dual mission of the NYA highlights the Roosevelt administration’s view of the centrality of public education in binding the nation’s economic wounds while ensuring a better-educated workforce. NYA funds helped college students to stay in school during those lean years with work-study programs. Western State Teachers College (WSTC) endured a nearly fifty percent decline in enrollment between its peak of nearly 3,000 students in the late 1920s to 1,488 in 1935. Like any school administrator, President Sangren knew the trend could not be sustained. State officials seriously considered closing WSTC due to the state’s own budgetary woes. Maximizing federal resources, then, meant survival to Sangren’s beloved institution, its students and the city of Kalamazoo.

In late 1936, Sangren’s correspondence included a number of exchanges with various NYA officials, including these concerns expressed to Dr. William Haber, Director of NYA programs for the State of Michigan.

I doubt if the federal government sponsors any ore worthwhile project than the plan of making it possible for young people to attend college. We
have, as our figures show, literally hundreds of young people who need such assistance.53

But Sangren’s sense of the political culture in his community led him to express some concerns to Haber about issues of favoritism, for “if one organization is given students for assistance, there is always a tendency for other organizations to demand the same rights.” Additionally, Sangren noted, even if NYA provided enough funds to satisfy all of these demands, “we could undoubtedly allocate still larger numbers of our students to off-campus activities, but it would be very difficult to supervise the type of work which they do.”54

Republicans who survived the public’s ringing endorsement of the New Deal in November 1936, whatever their own philosophies, recognized that increased federal presence in their communities offered regular opportunities to cut the “red tape.” The timing of Congressman Paul W. Shafer’s (R-Battle Creek) letter to President Sangren dated 9 February 1937 locates it at a pivotal moment. Just four days earlier, Roosevelt sent Congress a plan for reforming the federal judiciary that provided friends and foes alike with new evidence of what some feared represented excessive executive power. Shafer’s letter to Sangren about the prospects federally funded project at the college showed that pragmatism in local affairs meant more than partisanship. Referring to an article in the Kalamazoo Gazette about the school’s desire to construct a football stadium along U.S. 12 (to note, known today as Stadium Drive, a Business Loop off Interstate Highway 94), Shafer assured Sangren, that

Since this will likely be a Works Progress Administration project, I would like to offer my assistance... I am informed no funds are available now for
new projects at this time. However, I confidently expect Congress will appropriate additional funds for the Works Progress Administration within a short time.\textsuperscript{55}

Gently poking at the layers of approval needed to advance the stadium project, Sangren’s reply indicates, “If I understand the matter correctly, this proposal has cleared local, state and Chicago offices, and rests in Washington at the present time.”\textsuperscript{56}

Both parties in these exchanges understood the precarious nature of the federal funding, especially as the economy turned downward in 1937.

Funding looked good for the construction project, but the situation for the popular work-study program looked grim for the 1937-1938 academic year. Operationally, funds would be available to support 8% of the school’s enrollment in the prior year, instead of 18%, as stipulated when the program began just two years earlier. In the short time since the establishment of the NYA, one sees evidence of growing dependence on federal aid by the college and its students. In July 1937, Sangren wrote to Aubrey Williams, a close ally of FDR who served as the NYA National Director. Sangren stated flatly that “...you will make it impossible for a large number of those students to return,” referring to the upcoming 1937-1938 academic year. Insisting that accusations of frivolous, politically motivated spending did not apply to his institution, Sangren assured Williams that “there has been a minimum of waste and a maximum of good results for both the student and the country.”\textsuperscript{57}

Scholars of the New Deal era almost universally find the budgetary decisions made by the Roosevelt administration in 1937 a significant factor in the drastic economic downturn that year. Citing unemployment rates and other indicators of a
severe recession, defenders and critics of Roosevelt find 1937 to be a low point in his popularity and effectiveness, but Sangren's correspondence sharpens the focus.

By the time school began in the autumn of 1937, Aubrey Williams needed to engage in damage control. That September, he delivered a major address to K-12 and post-secondary administrators in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, about the problems facing NYA and its state and local partners. Barely thirty words into his remarks to an undoubtedly frustrated audience, Williams referred to the "immediate problems" for college and high school aid for the current school year. Acknowledging the extent of the problem created by budget cuts reducing NYA expenditures from $75 million to $50 million, Williams expressed "great concern" about the "many tragedies—tragedies to able and aspiring young people." Sangren's letter-writing campaign two months earlier included a missive to Michigan Senator Prentiss Brown, stating "only 6% instead of the usual 18% will be eligible," then adding that "in my estimation, this slash is too severe and drastic." A possible explanation for the difference between 6% and 8% may lie in a political response by a Director under fire. This seems more likely, given the two month interval between Sangren's letter and William's address. Judging from the tone of Sangren's letters, both composed on the same July day, not much time elapsed between his notification of the impending cuts and the sealing of the envelopes.

Following a trend evident in the other forty-one post-secondary institutions in Michigan, the 185 WSTC students who received the assistance in the 1936-1937 academic year earned a "higher scholastic average" than their classmates in Kalamazoo, according to "an exhaustive official publication" released in November 1937 by the University of Michigan. The WSTC student newspaper, the Teachers College Herald,
reported the recipients as a whole “believe their work is intelligently and efficiently supervised.” Nevertheless, the data used in the Herald cites 54% of the NYA beneficiaries would like to have their work assignments better coordinated with their major fields of study. For one-third of the students, the image of New Deal programs as make-work boondoggles extended beyond Republican critics, for they complained of a “humdrum routine” at their NYA assignments, with tasks “requiring no initiative and offering no intellectual stimulation.”

Perhaps some of these attitudes reflect the political opinions of the parents more than those of the students. By the start of the 1935-1936 school year, a total of eighty-one students attending three high schools in the city of Kalamazoo worked up to ten hours a week as the NYA quickly made its presence felt. C.C. Wilcox implemented the program for public school students at Central and State High Schools and for Catholic students at St. Augustine. Described in the Kalamazoo Gazette as the “first phase of the NYA program to assist needy youths in continuing their education, and which will eventually include college students,” the State Director projected 7,000 high school students and 4,000 college students in Michigan would receive aid through the new program. Interest in NYA opportunities showed no sign of flagging as the program entered its third year. As Coordinator of Projects for the Kalamazoo Public Schools, Virgil McClintic, expected the demand to continue rising. The Kalamazoo Gazette reported

if aid must be given to more students, it will be necessary to cut the maximum payment per student to $5 so that an average of 99 students may be assisted each month. Application blanks will be given to CHS students
only after interviewed by McClintic, who will be in the high school social
room to talk with prospective applicants from 1 to 4 Wednesday afternoon
and from 3 to 4 Thursday(sic). 62

By the close of the 1936-37 school year a maximum of 110 students at
Kalamazoo Central high school worked on NYA jobs. Worsening economic conditions
meant a likely increase in numbers, so McClintic estimated 150 to 200 students would
apply for NYA assistance for the upcoming 1937-38 school year. Without an increase in
the federal allocation, the amount of money available to each pupil could only drop.

Administering these programs proved very difficult for public institutions
shrunken from a string of lean budgets. With barely 2,000 students in the late 1930s,
WSTC’s own bureaucracy could be described as skeletal. In response to an inquiry from
Dean John Hoekje, President Sangren described in some detail the way federal funds
would be used to open a new “nursery school” program in the summer of 1938. The first
of these federally supported pre-kindergarten programs opened the first week of January
1936. Three elementary schools in the Kalamazoo Public Schools housed the new
programs. Under the supervision of Eleanor Troxell and Jessie Walton, NYA students
served as teacher aides for two hours a day. These centers served thirty-five children at
Woodward Elementary; the same number at McKinley Elementary; and forty-five at
Washington Elementary. 63

Sangren seemed pleased to offer a site on campus. “There will be in attendance
somewhere between 60 and 80 students” to be taught by WSTC students employed for
the four to six week session through NYA. Aspiring teachers coupled coursework with
this opportunity to work in a early childhood classroom setting. Easing Hoekje’s mind
(perhaps) about this latest federal partnership, Sangren’s letter assures the Dean of no need to instantly create new curricula. “People who enroll in this nursery school project will elect from a series of twelve or fifteen courses already being offered on campus.” College administrators, like public officials across the nation knew from their experiences with the federal budget cuts of 1937 that programs could be here today and gone later today.

These issues surfaced almost immediately in Texas, as well. In a report submitted by State Director Johnson in February 1936, evidence of a growing sense of the limits of both local control and centralization stand out in the analysis of the challenge of meeting rural needs with the current delivery system. Speaking of communities with less than ten eligible students, Johnson informed NYA officials in Washington that

Experience has demonstrated the inadvisability of operating a project without frequent inspection by persons paid from federal funds. It therefore appears that the excessive overhead of Federal cost will prevent operation of small projects for the employment of many youths scattered in small communities.

The establishment of local committees of stakeholders portends the model required in the Great Society era. In Texas, committees consisting of a school official, two employers, and two labor representatives worked with the State NYA office or its four regional staffs to develop, implement and oversee projects.

It appears that Mexican American’s access to sources of federal relief depended on the local political culture. For example, Texas reported “90% of the NYA program operating in San Antonio and south of San Antonio to the border of Texas was composed
of Mexican youth.\textsuperscript{66} A project in Austin found the school district converting a school formerly used for Mexican American students only to a community center for the city’s fluctuating numbers of Spanish-speaking residents.\textsuperscript{67} By the time the NYA programs came to Texas in the autumn of 1935, however, tens of thousands of adults and children of Mexican heritage left Texas voluntarily or by force in the repatriation movement spurred by hard times. For those who remained, “local discriminatory practices” limited access.\textsuperscript{68} Recent scholarship, such as the provocative \textit{When Affirmative Action Was White} published by political historian Ira Katznelson in 2005, manages to point out the discriminatory practices of many New Deal agencies, but mentions the NYA in just one sentence. Mexican Americans receive no mention; a startlingly binary view for a book subtitled \textit{An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America}.\textsuperscript{69} Katznelson recognized the subtleties of distinctive approaches used by states to use Jim Crow practices to limit access by African Americans, factors the Roosevelt administration weighed carefully in drafting federal policy. The significance of this sensitivity to local practices resides in the pattern it established for voluntary models of federal-state-local partnerships.

By the time Johnson launched the War on Poverty and Great Society programs, a generation of school officials shared the institutional memory of working with federal programs. The emphasis by the NYA on keeping students in school indicates that a new norm had emerged in the economic hardship, one that defined productive American citizens not only in terms of their English literacy, but in earning a high school diploma. Unlike vocational education, which served to sort and select students into categories of future laborers or future middle class, NYA envisioned everyone with at least a diploma.
At the local level, carrying out this new mission infuses new federal dollars into the system, thereby changing the expectations of teachers, parents, and students affected by the programs, and injecting new factors into the school’s political culture. The evidence suggests that school district’s embraced the opportunities extended to their communities by NYA.

This kind of mutually supportive interaction between federal and local educational agencies exemplifies the model the Johnson administration intended, derived in large part from their own experiences. The New Deal transformed the American political landscape in large part by bringing citizens into contact with agents of their government at the community level. During World War II, the United States government took further steps to create a sense of national community and it turned to America’s schools once again.

Planting the Seeds of Victory

The success of the federal government’s Victory Garden initiative during World War II demonstrates how an appeal to patriotism and engagement of community-based organizations contributed to enthusiastic participation in what amounted to voluntary collective farming. These projects engaged school personnel, students, and “green thumbs” across the country in elaborate planning (and planting) processes, offering a fascinating portrait of how the federal government transformed the growing of food into an affirmation of Americanism. Just as the vocational education movement and the NYA initiatives depended on local advisory committees for both direction and legitimacy, the
integration of community groups with teachers and students to achieve national goals for food production shows the effectiveness of this participatory model of federalism. This dual vision of vegetable gardening serving simultaneously as a practical means for individual sustenance and as an act of community-building fit the school environment, where so many lessons address the elusive balance between self and society.

During the normally festive holiday season of December 1941, many Americans found themselves summoned to patriotic service for God and country. From her home in Grosse Ile, Michigan, Erna Nagle, Chair of the Junior Garden Club Committee of the Federated Garden Clubs of Michigan (FGCM) composed an article for the organizations first bimonthly newsletter of 1942. “Every adult garden club,” she wrote, “through their Junior Department, will make a valuable contribution towards national defense, if they will provide gardening opportunities for the children in their communities…” She outlines three steps local garden club members could take to engage the children and their schools, reiterating strategies discussed in a report by the “garden committee” that “school and community gardens under the supervision of trained volunteer leaders will make a valuable defense contribution.”

In addition to gardens, schools in some regions could assist with easing anticipated food shortages by joining the local “Crop Corps” to when harvest demands peaked. Using the school principal as the communications link with the county extension office, students could sign up at school to earn hourly wages harvesting fruits and vegetables. The interplay between the federal government, states, local units of government and community organizations and public schools over the issue of insuring an adequate food supply during World War II provides a third example of how schools
contribute to the construction of citizenship. The promotion of Victory Gardens by the Department of Agriculture shows another dimension of the evolution of federal involvement in classrooms across the United States. By the late 1960s, when Great Society programs like Head Start and BEA signaled the start of a new era in federalism, the children and adults engaged in groundbreaking ventures during America's own great patriotic war would carry these experiences with them.

In addition to considering the role of community activists in generating support for the Victory Gardens strategy, this section analyzes efforts by the Department of Agriculture to assure successful harvests each summer and fall during the war years by encouraging high schools students to sign up for farm labor through their school. At the same time, the introduction of the Bracero Program reversed the practice of deporting Mexican laborers and their families from the United States. For the next two decades, the Bracero program would bring hundreds of thousands of Spanish-speaking students into school districts uncertain of how to respond to the new cultural landscape. The intersection of these policies, offers not one, but two windows to ascertain how and why BEA contributed to a backlash against Washington, D.C.

According to political scientist Char Miller, “because citizens so harkened to the voice of the state...victory gardens remain one of the most compelling memories of domestic participation in the Second World War.” Miller approaches his subject as illustrative of the relationship between the United States government and the individual citizen, asserting that “gardeners looked to their plots for conformation of a physical order in the world...” Miller concludes that scholars could look to the promotion of victory gardens as proof of the extent to which the federal government attempted to
organize American families to the “needs of industrial and domestic production.” His cultural emphasis underplays the essential contributions of community organizations like the Federated Garden Clubs of Michigan. His use of the term “state” to cover all governmental functions obscures the distinctive roles played by other actors at other levels, despite his observation that “even more productive for the nation-state was the role that individual states played…” In addition to public institutions, the private sector played a critical role in advancing the cause of victory gardening. Contemporary publications such as Better Homes and Gardens and House & Garden, as well as seed companies, marketed the campaign.

Miller emphasizes the importance of the “War Gardens” of World War I in establishing bureaucratic precedents for the next generation, especially in terms of the Department of Agriculture’s public relations campaign. Deeper analysis of the use of posters shows a greater focus on youth during the Forties than in the Great War, especially by state and local officials working through voluntary organizations like the Federated Garden Clubs. To build public support for the grassroots effort, the government established the National War Garden Commission, with Charles Lathrop Pack serving as its president. In his book, The War Garden Victorious, Pack takes credit for conceiving the idea in March 1917, certain that “only persistent publicity, only continual preachment, could convince the public…” Perhaps he deserves credit for being the first to recommend a national commission to spur a concerted effort, but gardening initiatives predated World War I by a quarter-century.

The New York Times reported a gradual increase in school and community gardening initiatives in urban areas since the origination of such programs in 1890, “but
each beginning has been independent of others. This suggests the confluence of the settlement house movement with the trend toward centralization associated with the progressive era. The notion that gardening not only produced food, but also encouraged the kind of thrift and domesticity that reformers deemed key to Americanizing women from eastern and southern Europe, meant the efficiency elements of scientific management could be applied to growing potatoes. Two years before the federal government linked gardening to the war effort in 1917, Congress considered the idea of community gardening to established (but inadequately fund) a division for “home and school gardening” within the Bureau of Education.74

Significant momentum gathered in the 1917 “planting season,” a somewhat problematic term due to significant regional variances in climate across the country. Whether students, teachers and community members planted in projects referred to as “school-directed home gardens” or in gardens on school grounds, the Bureau of Education reported student participation more than quadrupled from 1917 to 1918. Pack’s recounting of the brief tenure of the commission extolled the patriotism of children and school officials.

It was not expected, of course, that all school children would become immediate producers, but it was certain that the great volume of work undertaken in the schools would be of appreciable worth in swelling the total of war time food production and of even greater importance in creating a vast army of future citizens trained to intelligent application of the principles of thrift, industry, service, patriotism and responsibility.75
This represents extraordinary confidence that the local school district would successfully carry out its patriotic duty for the short term by supplementing food supplies and for the long term by building the American character. The limited involvement of the federal government in K-12 education, as discussed in the previous section, found the United States Bureau of Education within the Department of the Interior, with P.P. Claxton serving as its Commissioner. Pack credits Claxton with creating the United States School Garden Army. Claxton subsequently appointed J.H. Francis to oversee the enterprise. By early 1918, the School Garden Army managed to distribute the National War Garden Commission’s publication, *War Vegetable Gardening*, described by Pack as the “standard book of instructions,” to “every school in the land.” A vital component of the strategy involved the creation of a series of posters designed by graphic artist Maginel Wright Enright for use in schools. Perhaps the most famous of these portrays Uncle Sam as the “Pied Piper of the Gardens,” exemplifying the extent to which nationalism had transformed into a proto-fascist portrayal of the child’s relationship to the federal government. Pack referred to this image as the “pictorial trademark” of the School Garden Army.

The *New York Times* described a “typical plan” for school gardens, using plots developed in Maiden, Massachusetts for an example:

...a teacher in each grade school, who acts as the garden leader in that group, and ten paid supervisors for Summer work. There are four large demonstration gardens on vacant lots adjacent to school buildings, and the assistant supervisors, in addition to giving instruction there three times a week, are each responsible for 300 home gardens.
Education Commissioner Claxton expressed his vision of the deeper meaning of engaging students in 4,300 cities and school districts across the United States, echoing the philosophy of John Dewey, Jane Addams, and, of course, Woodrow Wilson. It simultaneously asserts the value of leadership from the federal government in promoting these initiatives, while foreshadowing the rhetoric of rugged individualism associated with Herbert Hoover:

After all, the value of this work in education, physical mental and moral, is greater than the value of the food produced. It is not good for children to be ground in the mills, sweated in the shops, or buried in the mines, but it is good for them to work joyously out of doors, with their feet in the soil, their heads in the sunshine, and their lungs filled with good, fresh air; to work until they are hungry and tired and will eat heartily and sleep soundly as a result. This kind of work gives strength of muscle, steadiness of nerve, a strong pulse-beat, a clear eye, and strength of endurance. It teaches children in a very practical way the fundamental principle of morality—that everyone should help to pay his own way and should contribute to his own support by some kind of honest, intelligent, productive labor.79

Three weeks before the armistice, the New York Times summarized the achievements of the School Garden Army in an article anticipating a longer war.80 Even if one allows for the statistical hyperbole associated with government agencies during wartime, data reported as the autumn harvest season drew to a close in 1918 shows the unprecedented influence of the federal government over teachers and students. No
precedent existed for the overt political pressure on Boards of education, which unnamed forces "influenced to give financial and moral support to the school and home garden movement and to pay extra salaries for supervision and teaching." According to these figures, 1.5 million children cultivated 60,000 acres of land previously untilled (at least in recent memory). By this time in the evolution of public education, school calendars across the nation seldom varied from the agriculturally-based academic year, which meant for all but the most temperate climate zones the prime growing season occurred when children were not in school. Fifty thousand teachers "received instruction in gardening through garden leaflets written by experts employed by the army." The report indicates $250,000 of federal monies appropriated for "national security and defense" supported Bureau of Education's own army to "promote the work," but there is no suggestion this money went directly to the schools.

Post-war famine issues facing Europe continued to inspire the crusading forces led by J.H. Francis. Responding to the alarm signaled by Food Administrator Herbert Hoover, Francis urged students to continue their own heroic efforts in their schools as a "mighty army." In order to reach Hoover's goal of shipping 20 million tons of food across the Atlantic, he noted, the schools must play a role.

It is a problem requiring careful, efficient organization. The organization is here, one of the most powerful in the country — the public school system of America. The school system should and must undertake the work with seriousness and determination and give the world results that are real and adequate. Superintendents of schools...must do this in
addition to talking and writing about this somewhat spectacular and highly interesting phase of the school’s part in the war.\textsuperscript{83}

As the famine receded and a sense of isolationism advanced, the emphasis on mobilizing child gardeners faded. Two decades later, however, the lessons learned during the Wilson administration proved indispensable.\textsuperscript{84} Without this experience, could the Department of Agriculture assemble over 200 stakeholders in Washington just twelve days after Pearl Harbor? Secretary Claud R. Wickard and Federal Security Administrator Paul V. McNutt clearly drew from the template provided by Charles Lathrop Peck and J.H. Francis by immediately engaging schools and community organizations.

For rural African American families during World War II, county extension agents and home demonstrators trained at federal land grant colleges provided valuable assistance.

Negro farm families engaged in the emergency production effort are being served by a variety of Negro college graduates…these are teachers in rural elementary schools, vocational teachers of agriculture and home economics in the county training schools found in every southern state…\textsuperscript{85}

Sharecroppers saw a change in the demands by landlords “who formerly discouraged gardens, and permitted the planting of a ‘cash crop,’ usually cotton up to the cabin door, are now in many instances encouraging, and occasionally requiring, the growing of gardens by their tenants.”\textsuperscript{86} In Tennessee, the “Food for Freedom” effort resulted in 21,000 victory gardens, a 90% participation rate by African American families in that state, a figure representing both farming and non-farming families. Assessing the
response to the clarion call by FDR in a wartime edition of the *Journal of Negro Education*, educator Frederick Patterson concluded the explanation for patriotic self-interest amounted to a "reflection of the concerted attack by the several agencies represented by the school, vocational education, agricultural extension, farm credit, Farm Security…"87

At the war’s conclusion, however, a more complex picture emerged from the analysis of agricultural data from southern states. The Negro State Agent for North Carolina reported the number of gardens planted by African Americans increased by 15% over the four years of the war, as well as a notable increase in the variety of vegetables. The federal government touched the lives of families through programs either aimed at public schools or at the institutions training the teachers themselves, using educators as its agents.

Conclusion

Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in a letter to Teachers College Dean William F. Russell in August 1939,

What goes on in the schools every hour of the day, on the playground and in the classrooms, whether reflecting methods of control by the teacher, or opportunities for self-expression by the pupils, must be checked against the fact that children are growing up to live in a democracy. That the schools make worthy citizens is the most important responsibility placed upon them.88
This chapter aimed to establish the role of the local school district as the chief agent of Americanization. As demonstrated in the examples of the Smith-Hughes Act, the National Youth Administration and victory gardens, in the first half of the twentieth century the federal government implemented several programs that used educators to groom productive citizens. In the context of the overall project on bilingual education policy, I sought to use these policy developments to illuminate the place of school in carrying out new directions from Washington, D.C.

Each example raises questions about the role of local school districts with the federal system and how they fit into the broader political culture. In the next chapter, I conduct a comparative analysis of the development of education policy in the United States and Canada to provide a contextual counterpoint for the development of bilingual education policies in both North American nations during the 1960s and 1970s. Chapter Two establishes that the key distinction between the Canadian and American experiences in developing and implementing bilingual education policies can be traced to the significant political influence of the separatist movement in Quebec. Despite significant population centers in the American Southwest, Mexican Americans did not wield the clout of the Quebecois, but they increasingly attracted the attention of Anglo politicians.
Notes to Chapter I

1 This statement is often attributed to TR from a speech in 1907, but there is general agreement that the wording originates in a letter read publicly the day before his death in January 1919. The audience for the reading was either the American Defense Society or the All American League.


4 Ibid., 135.

5 Ibid., 136.


8 Channing (1856-1931) spent virtually his entire adult life in and around Cambridge, Massachusetts.

9 Channing, Student’s History, 572.

10 Michigan State Teachers Association, Kalamazoo & Education, 1914. 42. Box A-192 Grace Gish Collection. Regional Archives and Local History Collection. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI.

11 Ibid, 42.
12 Jane Addams, "Immigration: A Field Neglected by the Scholar," in Introduction to
Immigration and Americanization Philip Davis (New York: Ginn and Company, 1920),
11. Davis's collection of essays by a combination of academics and public officials
amount to discussion of contemporary issues facing U.S. policymakers in the post WWI era.

13 Kate Waller Barrett, "The Immigrant Woman," in a chapter in Immigration and


16 Ibid., 466.

17 Philip Davis, ed., "The Immigrant and the State," in Immigration and Americanization

18 Edward Alsworth Ross, "The Political Consequences of Immigration," in Immigration

19 P.P. Claxton, "Americanization," in Immigration and Americanization (New York:

20 Emery J. Hyslop-Margison, "An Assessment of the Historical Arguments in
Vocational Education Reform," Journal of Career and Technical Education 17 (Spring
2001), <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v17n1/hyslop.html> (15 December
2007).

Elizabeth Sanders, Roots of Reform (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 318.

Ibid., 320.

Ibid., 326-327. The acronyms are for the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Federation of Labor.


Ibid., 1

Ibid., 4.

Ibid., 2.

Ibid. For a detailed analysis of the role of Democrats from the old south in shaping the legislation to advance rural interests, see Philip Grant’s “Senator Hoke Smith, Southern Congressmen, and Agricultural Education, 1914-1917,” Agricultural History 60 (Spring 1986) <http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agexed/ae501/grant.html> (19 May 2008).


Hyslop-Margison, “Historical Arguments in Vocational Education Reform.”

Grant, “Senator Hoke Smith.”

34 Grant, "Senator Hoke Smith."


37 Weisenberger, 31.

38 Weisenberger, iii.


40 Weisenberger, "National Youth Administration," 35

41 Weisenberger reports that according to the agreement reached in June, the U.S. Office of Education took over programs that provided “off the job” training, while NYA could continue to oversee “on the job” education. This territorial skirmishing eased but did not go away entirely, at least at the national level.

42 Ibid., 37


45 http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/fco36.html The Handbook of TexasOnline entry for Senator Connally as “seldom differing from the administration” during the first Roosevelt term, but growing disillusioned by the time of the “court-

46 Weisenberger, “National Youth Administration,” 61. For more on the significance of the Littlefield Building in the political culture of Austin, see http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/ll18.html


Pages 17-21 concentrate on Birdwell’s discussion of the NYA years, taken from an interview conducted thirty-three years after Johnson left the agency to run for the 10th Congressional District seat vacated by the sudden death of Representative James “Buck” Buchanan in late February. See Randall Woods’ discussion of Johnson’s decision to run in *Architect of Ambition*, p.116.


50 Ibid., 66

51 Ibid., 76.

52 In addition to the *Annual Report City of Kalamazoo Year Ending December 31, 1935*, and *Polk’s Kalamazoo City Directory*, Lynn Houghton and Pamela Hall O’Connor’s *Kalamazoo Lost and Found* (Kalamazoo: Kalamazoo Historic Society, 2001): 196, helped to clarify the company’s move. Governor Frank Murphy appointed Paul Todd to serve as head of the State of Michigan’s Public Utility Commission in 1936. Decades later, Paul Todd became the first Republican to represent Kalamazoo in Congress since Reconstruction when he swept into office in the Johnson landslide of 1964.

82
Shafer’s pragmatism served him well at this early stage of his long career. Sworn in for his first term in January after seven years as a municipal judge, the former newspaper publisher became increasingly strident in his politics. By the time he died in office in 1954, Shafer viewed the New Deal as dangerously, if not treacherously, leftist.


Paul Sangren. Letter to NYA Director Aubrey Williams dated 21 July 1937. Box 1 Paul Sangren’s Papers 1928-1939. Regional Archives and Local History Collection, Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI.

Aubrey Williams, “The College and High School Aid Program of the National Youth Administration,” Speech delivered 23 September 1937.


Ibid., 2.

61 Teachers College Herald. 10 November 1937 p.4 Regional Archives and Local History Collection. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI.

62 “NYA Will Aid 83 at Central” Kalamazoo Gazette 6 September 1938, p.10. KPS file #12 Kalamazoo Public Library.

63 “U.S. Supported Nursery Schools Open This Week,” Kalamazoo Gazette 5 January 1936. p.10. Kalamazoo Public School File #12

64 Paul Sangren. Letter to John C. Hoekje dated 1 May 1938. Box 1 Paul Sangren’s Papers 1928-1939. Regional Archives and Local History Collection, Western Michigan University. Kalamazoo, MI.


66 Ibid, 141-142. Some of these programs aimed exclusively at Mexican American adolescents and young adults, while others integrated with Anglos.

67 Ibid, 143.


Ibid., 406.

Published by the Meredith Company originally as *Successful Farming* in 1902 in a run of 500 copies, by 1914 circulation for the monthly periodical for farmers in and around his home of Des Moines, Iowa, grew to 1.5 million. Evidence of the growing ties between corporations and the federal government may be found in the appointment of Meredith to the post of Secretary of Agriculture by Woodrow Wilson in 1914.


Pack, *War Garden Victorious*.

Ibid., *New York Times*, 20 October 1918.

Ibid., *New York Times*, 20 October 1918.


Ibid., *New York Times*, 20 October 1918.

85


84 Miller, “In the Sweat of Our Brow,” 396.

85 Frederick D. Patterson, “Negro Higher Education’s Contribution to the War Effort from the Point of View of Agriculture.” Journal of Negro Education 11 (3 July 1942), 315.

86 Ibid., 316

87 Ibid., 316.

CHAPTER II

THE ROOTS AND FRUITS OF FEDERAL POLICY IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Federal energy is essential. But it is not enough. Only a total working partnership among federal, state and local governments can succeed. The test of that partnership will be the concern of each public organization, each private institution, and each responsible citizen.

-- President Lyndon B. Johnson, 10 January 1967

With this platitude, one of LBJ’s speechwriters captured the unreformed New Dealer’s faith that these partnerships among public and private institutions make a real difference in the lives of children. In its idealized rhetorical form, his agenda for the Great Society had no place for institutional barriers. Almost two years earlier, during the signing ceremony for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Johnson stated, “As a son of a tenant farmer, I know that education is the only valid passport from poverty,” characterizing educational opportunity as the sole means for passage through an otherwise impermeable border. Drawing upon his own experiences as the youthful Director of the National Youth Administration (NYA) for the State of Texas, the former teacher knew how well-intentioned federal programs could complicate the affairs of local officials. \(^2\)
Arguably, Johnson’s NYA experiences and subsequent decades of constituent service as a Congressman and Senator resulted in a predisposition as Chief Executive toward assuring more state and local discretion than his critics recognize. Noted Johnson biographer Robert Caro argues that the impact of another New Deal program, the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), on the 10th Congressional District illustrates Johnson’s sense of how federal authority could shape local conditions for the better.\(^3\) Conversely, the Texan learned valuable lessons in 1942 about the raw power of the federal government to disrupt the lives of citizens when the War Department seized thousands of acres for the creation of Camp Swift, a U.S. Army base established in his congressional district. By the time the war ended, public fatigue with seemingly endless decrees from the federal government spurred a veritable Republican sweep of the 1946 congressional elections with the slogan, “Had Enough?”\(^4\)

For a generation after LBJ went back to his Texas ranch in 1969, Republicans made political hay from the portrayal of Johnson’s Great Society initiatives as the epitome of bloated bureaucracy. Gerald R. (Jerry) Ford, House Minority Leader during the 89th Congress, found that working with only 139 other Republicans in the chamber offered little resistance to what he recalled as a “flood” of “irresponsible legislation that gave the federal bureaucracy unprecedented control over the lives of private citizens.”\(^5\) Recent scholarly reappraisals of the Johnson administration suggest that federal intrusiveness in the affairs of state and local government actually accelerated during the 1970s under Republican presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, despite the GOP’s rhetoric of retrenchment.\(^6\) This pattern proved especially evident in bilingual education policy, which illuminates the subtext of the underlying tension in the complex American
body politic about sovereignty and the meaning of federalism. Political historian Gareth Davies argues that bilingual education mandates emanating from Washington during the 1970s belies the representation of Nixon as the dismantler of LBJ’s Great Society programs. Supporting the “opportunistic liberalism” thesis, Davies concludes interest group politics and Richard Nixon’s ambivalence toward domestic policy actually took education policy toward greater, not lesser, centralization in the 1970s:

Historians have been slow to wrestle with the new institutional realities of American politics during that period, yet the evidence presented here suggests that they may hold the key to understanding the decade’s highly complex political dynamic. In particular, the disdain with which OCR (Office of Civil Rights) treated the nation’s school boards illustrates the extraordinary weakening of American federalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s.7

Encroachment by federal courts, acts of Congress and rule-making agencies into the affairs of public schools raises the question central to any analysis of education policy in a federal system: Where is the locus of decision making? The findings of this study of federal interventions in historically local affairs demonstrate that initiatives like the Lanham Act (1940) and the Bilingual Education Act originated from demands from community leaders and local interest groups and subsequently were amended as a result of hostile reception by the citizenry. This pattern of input and response actually constitutes the dynamic essence of federalism rather than its “extraordinary weakening.” The debate over the proper role of the federal government in education continues into the
twenty-first century in both the United States and Canada, which share organic roots of federalism that evolved in the vast colonial holdings of distant British masters.

Employing his talents as the “Great Communicator,” Ronald Reagan rekindled a revolutionary spirit among his devoted followers. Stirred by resentment to federal courts, to acts of Congress, and to reams of rules from tangled bureaucratic webs, these voters represented the vanguard of a rejection of liberalism. This interpretation of the conservative movement uses the formulation federal education policy to assert that local activists operating within distinctive political cultures leveraged federal involvement, subsequently reshaping demands when dissatisfied with Washington’s response. I introduce the concept of “policy echo,” drawn from the image of a voice calling out amidst the towering peaks of power, in an effort to synthesize elements of comparative public policy with the historical treatment of political culture.

Among these is the concept of “punctuated equilibrium,” the phrase political scientist Frank R. Baumgartner used to describe the tendency for periods of inaction in the formulation of public policy to be interrupted by bursts of change. Based on the findings of my research, I conclude that the usefulness of the punctuated equilibrium theory proves questionable when examining the impetus for changing education policies.

Since the formulation of federal bilingual education policy occurred in both Canada and the United States during the late 1960s, analysis of the development of federalism in these North American neighbors offers valuable context for the closer examination of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and related developments in education policies during the 1970s. I then concentrate on problematic aspects of American federalism, notably the resistance to centralization. Drawing upon the
experiences of school districts in Michigan and Texas in the 1930s and early 1940s, I discuss how the tremors of approaching war with Germany, Italy and Japan led to seismic shifts in communities all across the United States, revealing the fault lines of tension between federal and local authorities. Finally, I map the shifting political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s, challenging Davies' characterization of the “extraordinary weakening of American federalism” with the assertion that developments in bilingual education policy between 1964 and 1980 demonstrate the increased role of grassroots organization in American political culture.

Federalism and Education Policy in the U.S. and Canada

Inextricably linked by shared colonial origins under the British crown, the United States and Canada occupy lands and waters once held by aboriginal populations of varied linguistic families. The presence of French traders and priests in regions claimed for France by Cartier along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes meant longstanding friction between these expansive European kingdoms would spark into sporadic warfare along shifting borders. The geopolitical realities behind the diplomacy of the Iroquois, the Huron and other tribal groups in the region presented the emissaries of the two crowns with complex diplomatic challenges. At times, alliances with Native Americans (or First Nations) allowed peace to prevail, permitting cultural exchanges across the vast bountiful expanse the Europeans called wilderness.

These factors of natural and human ecology contributed to the evolution of federalism in Canada and her neighbor. From the earliest attempts at colonization,
European settlements featured fortifications able to temporarily shelter endangered families and individuals. Despite the diffusion of language, clothing, weapons, and agriculture, to name a few examples of cultural exchange with the native population, imperial designs led to racialized governance that either subsumed or ethnically cleansed indigenous peoples. Economic viability, if not survival itself, depended on secure trade routes. The establishment of local militias assured some protection for families, leading in turn to a growing network of communities, interwoven by shared religion, kinship or commercial relations. Isolation reinforced the utility of a political culture emphasizing local decision making, but larger cultural norms limited the extension of suffrage.

Early in the course of the occupation of North America, British imperial surges produced a self-perpetuating governing class of English-speaking Protestant landholders. For generations, Church-based elitist institutions trained these fortunate sons. As migration of Europeans continued and streams of settlers spread up rivers and across the vast landscape, diverse settlements of Swedes, Dutch, and Germans sought to teach their children how to read the Bible. The desire of many Jewish and Catholic families to sustain faithful observance led to the establishment of communities sizable enough to sustain a synagogue or parish, wherein schooling could be provided.

In the British North American colonies, French influence declined rapidly after the Treaty of Paris in 1763, with the exception of some concentrations of Acadiens south and east of the St. Lawrence River. Beneath the dense forest canopies of the eastern seaboard and the lands adjoining the Great Lakes, the foot traffic of generations of hunters and traders offered proven routes for passage, notably along the river valleys. The Ohio, Delaware, St. Lawrence, Hudson, St. Joseph, Ottawa and other navigable
arteries determined the most viable sites for settlement, thereby establishing concentrations of Eurocentric cultural traditions. These held long term implications for education policy, but considering culture on a continental scale, few events figure more significantly than the defeat of the French.

When the thirteen American colonies broke away from Britannia as free and independent States and acquired lands west of the Appalachians under the Treaty of Paris of 1783, Jeffersonian notions of nation-building produced models for the expansion of democratic principles within the prevailing boundaries of gender, race, and class. The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 literally mapped the structure of local and state governance for newly acquired territory. This matrix of rows and tiers effectively planned communities in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana, anticipating systems for local governance, including public schools, that would be emulated in one territorial acquisition after another as the United States doubled and tripled in size over the next six decades.

But locally, language usage reflected the insistence the peoples of more than a half-dozen European traditions on retention of the medium of communication that formed the lyrics of their songs, their folklore, and for many, their holy scripture. From the seventeenth century into the twentieth, when non-English speaking immigrant communities concentrated in numbers sufficient to need schools and churches in their new North American setting, the languages used would be Norwegian, German, French, Yiddish, Dutch, or other tongues. By the early 1830s, the idea of public education as a necessary ingredient in the formation of a community in DeToqueville’s America built
sufficient momentum to be part of the antebellum wave of reform characterized by Christian patriotism and messianic continental visions.\textsuperscript{10} Highly decentralized public education systems developed in Canada and in the United States by the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{11} On either side of the border, responsibility for public education remained with the states or provinces, but both nations exercised significant federal authority from time to time. Advocates for an expanded role in educational policies by the national government confronted deeply rooted norms and entrenched interests. In Canadian historian J. M. Bumsted’s view, it is “almost impossible to talk about (a) national movement... Education would become one of the most divisive issues.”\textsuperscript{12} Bumsted argued that the cleavage between French Canadian and Anglo Canadian traditions account for Canada functioning more like a confederation than a federation. The British North America Act of 1867 (BNAA) addressed the establishment of schools in Section 93, which assigns responsibility for schooling to the provinces. One by one, following provisions of the BNAA, provinces enacted their own bodies of law. For example, Manitoba’s provincial constitution, adopted in 1870, addressed education in Clause 22. Note the attention to governmental support of religious education: “Nothing in such law shall prejudicially affect any right of privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any class of person have by law or practice in the Province and the Union.”\textsuperscript{13}

The prospect of a successful separatist surge by French Catholics in Quebec hovers over Canadian politics, resulting in a limited appetite among federal officials to extend authority over provinces. In the case of mass secession in 1861, Americans experienced a cataclysmic grinding of citizens into the broken machinery of federalism
through four years of civil war. In the aftermath, the assertion of federal authority over
the education of former slaves by the Freedmen’s Bureau met with open hostility and
local prejudices prevailed. The levels of antipathy shown by many in the white
community to Freedmen’s Bureau schools seems as critical to understanding American
federalism as the Quebeccois factor in understanding Canadian federalism. 

In Quebec, where lives of community members and the local Catholic parish intertwined, politics,
religion, and the education of children remained inseparable. Pragmatic Canadians found
the proper language to bind the diverse provinces together, albeit loosely.

Through the latter decades of the nineteenth century and well into next, provisions
for public education in the United States and Canada followed patterns of local control,
with discernible national variations. American historian Michael Katz found “the
ideology of educational promotion in the nineteenth century was rather less egalitarian in
Canada than in the United States.” He also noted an early trend toward a greater degree
of centralization in Canadian provinces compared to American states during that period.
Katz attributed this to Canadians being “less hampered by an ideological defence of
localism, the bureaucratic model could emerge in purer form…than in most places in
America.” 

F. Henry Johnson, a Canadian scholar of education history, noted
similarities in taxation and governance, as he discussed “side by side trends,” including
common funding provisions. Essentially, communities would direct a portion of local
property tax revenues, a burden eventually lightened by provincial or state supplemental
funds.

Both nations enjoy a rich tradition of what might be termed country schools, often
literally one-room schoolhouses. American Jesse Stuart, a self-described “mountain
school teacher” reveals a great deal of the political culture of these rural systems in his memoir, *The Thread That Runs So True*. Typically, day-to-day operations of the school were the responsibility of one teacher, who either established authority or was run off by students or parents. Governing thousands of such schools were boards of education (boards of trustees in Canada) consisting of locally selected men, often community patriarchs or significant property owners. After 1945, a clear trend toward consolidation emerged, the smallest of these schools being merged to form larger districts on both sides of the U.S. and Canadian border. The political culture of local public education in Canada developed along similar lines well into the twentieth century, with the exception of schools operated by churches.

In this regard, the separatist movement in Quebec had an enormous impact. Crises in school governance policies peaked in the 1960s when the Parent Commission issued a series of recommendations which included a change in provincial bureaucracy. The resulting legislation, known as Bill 60, reassigned responsibility for education from the Ministry of Youth to the Ministry of Education. Concurrent with this bureaucratic shift, the Superior Council of Education reorganized into two committees, one Catholic and one Protestant, with each responsible for moral and religious education. Canadian education historian Norman Henchey concluded the accelerated pace of educational policy reforms contributed to the defeat of the Liberal Party in Quebec in the summer of 1966. The more conservative National Union Party took full advantage of this changing mood, but the release of another wave of recommendations by the Parent Commission stirred resentment anew.
This situation in Quebec raises a broader issue of the nature of change in a federal system. Policy-makers at each level of government face complex formal and informal hierarchies. Navigation of these power relationships is essential for successful formulation and implementation of educational reform. Henchey found “local initiative…is coming into collision with government (provincial) control of general policy and resources. A balance between centralization and decentralization has yet to be achieved.” As if feeling the need to commiserate with his Canadian counterparts, the executive director of the National School Boards Association, Harold Webb, addressed the issue of “patterns of public control” from the American point of view in his comments for the *Canadian Education and Research Digest* in 1968. He examined the issue in terms of sheer numbers, citing 60 million Americans involved in education on a full-time basis as teachers, administrators or as students. “Add to this number the 110,000 (local) school board members…and the several hundred members of our state boards of education…I believe there is no single control pattern that is emerging in U.S. education. Rather, it is a non-pattern that is most typical…”

From the U.S. Capitol to the Local Schoolhouse

Although the United States Constitution does not mention education, the Ninth and Tenth Amendments reserve and delegate powers to the people and the states. Madison crafted exquisitely elastic language and consequently “headed off proposals to limit federal power more explicitly.” Following WWII the states’ rights issue in the United States often centered on matters of school segregation. Over a six year period,
three federal court rulings uprooted the “seeds of race hate” sown more than a half-century earlier in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. Embodying the notion that citizens may petition their government for redress of grievances, *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD* (in 1948), *Sweatt v. University of Texas* (1950), and finally the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision (1954) reflected the strategies of the G.I. Forum, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to achieve change via the court system. These organizations mimicked the federal structure by establishing local, state and national chapters to secure the rights of citizens in their homes, workplaces, and communities. It took countless “subversive southerners” like Anna Braden to make these networks function.

As discussed in Chapter One, public schools have long served as agents of socialization, perhaps most notably related to race relations. For decades, administrators and teachers throughout the United States maintained segregated or integrated classrooms, as instructed by state and local policies. When the federal government gradually rejected segregation in the 1950s and 1960s, teachers acted as local agents of government policy on one hand, and served *in loco parentis* on the other. In some respects, the schools have also done the initial screenings for the human resources departments of American employers. Along with grooming good citizens, public education has long served as a vehicle for the sorting and selecting of students along various career pathways.

With the ascendance of conservative voters, a disturbing idea gained currency in the early 1980s, captured in part by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. It describes “failing schools.” A scathing indictment of American public education, the
report resonated for two decades, culminating with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002, a major federal intervention touching every public school district in the nation. Anti-union sentiments found easy targets in the implied criticism of the AFT and NEA, as the success of these organizations in embedding themselves in the political culture meant they became associated with maintaining the status quo. Currently, educational policy debates in the United States center almost entirely on how to maximize the economic impact of investment in universal education.

*A Nation at Risk* reflected the growing influence of human capital theory, formulated by economist Gary S. Becker in 1964. Becker’s representation of the labor force as an underdeveloped (i.e., undereducated) resource became the dominant paradigm, not only for powerful economic interests, but for “liberal” economists like Robert Reich, who challenged public education to rethink its mission in terms of workforce development. In such an environment, standardized testing, literacy rates and teacher accountability (topics once seldom heard outside of local board of education meetings) became fodder for candidates for public office, from Main Street to Pennsylvania Avenue.

Whatever the shortcomings of the schools’ fulfillment of their role as chief agent for socialization, they became the public institution most accessible to citizen input. The public’s sense of democratic principles derived from their school experiences. Patterns of federal involvement in education since the 1920s shaped the vast majority of the voting public’s expectations in the late 1960s and 1970s. From time to time, the tide of events at the national or international level caused a policy response in Washington that washed away pretexts of local control. In the South particularly, long-simmering
bitterness about the Freedmen’s Bureau schools fueled generations of suspicion among across racial lines. Whites saw their world turned upside down and blacks stood shaken by the federal government’s silent tolerance of the enforcement terrorism employed by the Klan and its emulators.

The public response to federal pressure in several southern states proved to be strong enough to launch two prominent presidential campaigns. South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond bolted from the Democrats after the 1948 convention, forming the “Dixiecrat” party. Alabama Governor George C. Wallace found strong support when he ran for President as an independent candidate in 1968. Paralyzed by an assassination attempt in May 1972, Wallace galvanized the surging resentment of white male voters as federal courts over-ruled local school boards to force desegregation plans.26

Seizing the moment from the fallen Wallace, Ronald Reagan carried baggage less overtly racist, but the cowboy persona he affected epitomized Anglo machismo. Disaffected Democrats like those who carried Wallace to victory in the Michigan primary in 1972 heard the former spokesperson for General Electric as he crisscrossed the nation, holding forth at one county convention and Rotary meeting after another with tales of federal excesses. Rolling out anecdotes of Uncle Sam’s debacles side juxtaposed with the economic miracle of free enterprise, Reagan’s message resonated. After months of attacks on Gerald Ford’s conservative credentials in 1976, Reagan won nearly enough delegates at the Republican convention to wrest the nomination from the comparatively mainstream Michigander. Reagan tapped into a populist vein of anti-Washington resentment that transcended party lines after a decade of deceit by Johnson and Nixon
that resulted in the ticket-switching by "Reagan Democrats" in 1980. The legacy of the Reconstruction era continued to shape the party of Lincoln.

In addition to the crucible of race, some of the resentment toward Uncle Sam's intrusiveness derived from intermittent experiences during the New Deal, or WWII. These crises of unprecedented magnitude produced new patterns of federal, state, and local governance. By the 1960s, the increased exercise of federal power in the three branches of government led critics on the right, such as Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, to see the problem of federal interference to have grown from episodic to chronic. Efforts by moderate-to-liberal politicians in both parties to develop a sense of national community invited negative familial connotations, being either too paternalistic or too much like Big Brother, who came to personify the omniscient state after publication of George Orwell's *1984* in 1949, at the dawn of the cold war. 27

Prior to the Great Society, however, Uncle Sam already played unprecedented roles in realizing the Jeffersonian vision of an educated citizenry. During the New Deal, for example, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) constructed of hundreds of public schools, while the National Youth Administration funded student work-study opportunities aimed at keeping students in school. Even under the circumstances of the Great Depression, federal assistance came "wrapped in golden chains." 28 For example, strict guidelines in NYA Bulletin11 required all but 25% of federal funds to be expended on wages, yet Washington officials gave little or no direction to state directors like Lyndon Johnson on the type of programs to establish. As long as the projects created did not usurp work that might be undertaken by state, county or municipal auspices, he had free rein to meet his quota of 12,000 jobs.
as he pleased. When Johnson sought input from local officials, he often heard community leaders retort that they wanted neither handouts nor interference from the federal government. 29

Lessons on the Home Front

Similar interactions occurred in many communities as the nation mobilized for war. Historian Philip Funigiello examined how the war changed American federalism through the lens of urban policy making, concluding that extensive interaction between the three levels of government in the delivery of dozens of New Deal initiatives “eroded much of the earlier resistance to federal aid.” By 1940, a hybridized system Funigiello described as “cooperative federalism” found more Americans engaged in tense interactions with Washington, D.C. than ever before. 30 For some school districts, these tensions first flared as a consequence of dramatic population shifts accompanying mobilization for World War II. To fully understand the “suspicion and uncertainty” historian Alan Clive referred to in his study of Michigan’s experience as part of the “arsenal of democracy,” one must consider that mobilization decisions made by the War Department in October 1940 confronted many school districts with significant problems months before Pearl Harbor. Subsequent to enactment of the Selective Service and Training Act on 16 September 1940, the War Department determined the size and location of the encampments it would use to train millions of soldiers. 31 When employment boomed at defense industries, the crisis in public housing meant schools
faced huge challenges only partially addressed by the Lanham Act in 1940. At times the indirect effects of federal policies could be felt by schools.

Local control of schools anchored representative government at the grassroots. Beginning with World War II, federal, state and local policy intersected in America’s public education system. A post-war report commissioned by the U.S. Bureau of Community Facilities recognized “the capacity of many communities to finance expanded school programs under emergency conditions was extremely limited, particularly the small rural towns.” Across the country, circumstances faced by communities varied widely. Some entirely new school districts were created in response to the construction of military bases. In Midwest City, Oklahoma, the local school went from 99 students in the 1940-41 school year to 1,198 students in 1945-46, an increase of 1,100%. In a form of educational mission creep, districts facing an influx of what the federal government referred to as “defense-connected pupils” faced increased demands at the same time federal seizure of property reduced their local tax base.

Two bills sponsored by Congressman Frederick “Fritz” Lanham of Texas aimed to address the plight of community inundated by defense workers, soldiers, sailors and their families. The first of these addressed the defense-related housing crisis. Signed into law in October 1940, the National Housing for Defense Act neglected to address the school crisis. By the end of June 1941, the 77th Congress amended the legislation, now known as the Lanham Community Facilities Act, which took effect 1 September 1941.

For a public already showing signs of fatigue from contact with federal agencies of all shapes and sizes during the New Deal, these Lanham initiatives were seen as part of a pattern of utter cluelessness in Washington. Applying for assistance for these funds
proved cumbersome for school officials, with no guarantee of approval. Forms filed with the Federal Security Agency to determine eligibility required six copies along with the original documents. Thomas Cottingham’s examination of the Milwaukie, Oregon school district showed the Byzantine routing for such documents called for approval first in Portland, then in Seattle. If federal agents in those offices found everything in order, the next stop was Salt Lake City, Utah. Once approved there, the paperwork could finally be sent to Washington for final review. Once approved, school officials in Milwaukie were instructed to install separate utility usage meters for “defense-connected children.” This final requirement was later dropped.35

The post-war report prepared by the Bureau of Community Facilities cites two-thirds schools deemed eligible for the 1941-42 school year (328 out of 489 applicants). As the report states, “final settlements were extremely difficult, the detail involved was irritating and burdensome.”36 It noted that the interactions between the Federal Works Agency and the local officials defied normal patterns of federalism. As a courtesy, however, applications by local districts were distributed to state departments of education and to the U.S. Office of Education for “review and comment.”37 On her tour of wartime America, journalist Agnes Meyer’s inquiries about implementation of the Lanham Act found “their administration is criticized from one end of the country to another.”38

The tiny community of Augusta, Michigan felt the pressure. The headline “Fort Families With Children Presents A Serious Problem” grabbed the attention of parents and school personnel when they read their Beacon on 12 December 1940: “Families living in the Fort are not in any school district, but the children must be educated.” The Augusta Superintendent, Eber Carlson, attended a conference two days earlier called by
government officials to gather data regarding the capacity of schools in the area, including Battle Creek, Lakeview, Springfield Place, Level Park, Kalamazoo and Kellogg in addition to Augusta. Richardson referred to “a movement...to get relief from the federal government for the district that receives the pupils.”

No invitations to the conference were necessary for anyone at the Lawler School, officially known as Charleston School District #1. Situated at the intersection of Territorial Road and the Climax-Augusta road in the targeted acreage, the school’s fate was sealed. In a rare joint meeting of the Ross Township and Charleston Township Boards on 10 July 1941, the six officials present voted unanimously to dissolve the district. As if sorting through the belongings of a departed loved one to divide among the survivors, the two townships parceled out the district’s remaining property between the Augusta School and Charleston School District #4. Lawler’s cash assets reverted to Charleston Township. The minutes of the landmark meeting do not convey emotion; there is no indication of a meeting hall packed with concerned citizens. Similarly, when Augusta Board Secretary Ray Wood recorded the proceedings of the special meeting held on 17 July, he duly noted a motion to “accept the division of property of School District #1 of Charleston Township” by Trustee John Cortland, seconded Treasurer Karl Kent. The motion carried, but there is no record of how the five individual members voted. The minutes simply read “carried.”

By the conclusion of the 1944-45 school year, the audits of 876 school districts would reveal receipt of federal payments. Post-war studies showed eligible districts receiving no more than 17% of their operations and maintenance funds. The report submitted by the Federal Bureau of Community Facilities concludes
In spite of its restricted scope, this financial assistance was highly important to the communities that received it and to the war effort. Without it schools in some war areas could not have run full terms. Salary increases could not have been made and teachers would have left the schools for other higher paying jobs. War workers would not stay long in communities where their children did not have normal public school services.\(^4\)

Since the war, federal court rulings, acts of Congress and executive orders have shaped and reshaped local school policies on issues ranging from desegregation to prayer and special education. Two major pieces of legislation show the impact of the Cold War on public education. The implications of the Federal Highway Act of 1956, promoted by Eisenhower as a national defense initiative, not only bisected neighborhoods urban neighborhoods, it played a significant role in the development or demise of American communities. When interstate highway construction intersected in the 1960s with ambitious urban renewal plans and open housing legislation, the socio-economic impact of these changes in the urban landscape could be felt in distant, affluent suburbs as housing patterns adapted to longer range commuting options. These fast growing suburbs sprouted new schools touting the latest pedagogically-correct features aimed to please the white, middle-class, college-educated parents. Left behind in backwater neighborhoods divided along lines of race and ethnicity, African American and Latino children struggle for the mainstream.

Linkage to national defense rationale eased passage of the highway bill, and for many of America’s classrooms an infusion of federal monies to enhance math and
science instruction when the Soviet satellite nicknamed Sputnik heightened anxiety about America’s dysfunctional missiles. The National Defense Education Act targeted post-secondary education with the expectation of a trickle-down effect on K-12. By providing $1 billion in loans and fellowships to college students, the “Johnson plan” promoted by the Senate majority leader in 1958 would pay for itself through higher salaries earned by college graduates. As an incentive to attract people into the teaching profession, any debt accumulated by graduates going into K-12 teaching would be reduced by one-half. Under the legislation, states offering matching funds could receive a portion of $280 million set aside to upgrade science facilities in state universities.42

The relative ease of these bills reflected bipartisan support in the post-World War II era for an activist model of federalism that would accelerate as Democrats built large majority in the House and Senate in the 1964 elections. In spite of this trend toward greater federal involvement in public matters once the reserve of local authorities, the deeply wounded conservative wing of the Republican Party remained committed to strict constructionist views. Eisenhower’s iconic status as the hero of the Normandy invasion effectively shielded him from intra-party skirmishes. When Ike’s heir apparent, Richard Nixon lost the 1960 election, acolytes of the New right like William F. Buckley accused moderates (often referred to as “Rockefeller Republicans”) of failure to correct the leftward trajectory of increasingly intrusive federal agencies. These detractors threatened to split the GOP. Rejecting accommodationist strategies that bred moderate outcomes, a determined grassroots movement passed the mantle of conservative leadership from Barry Goldwater to Ronald Reagan following the Arizonan’s debacle at the hands of LBJ in November 1964.
Gerald Ford Courts the Mexican American Voter

The files of Robert M. Teeter, political strategist and survey research professional, offer fascinating glimpses of the inner workings of the emerging science of polling during the early 1970s, a period of political ascendance for Mexican Americans and other Latino/as. In the post-Johnson era, Republicans tacitly conceded the African American vote to the Democrats, but actively courted the Spanish-speaking vote from Florida to California and from Michigan to Texas. The commentary in a memo to Attorney General John Mitchell dated 27 February 1972 included with the survey results shows sensitivity to the volatility of issues tied to race and education. Court-ordered busing to achieve school desegregation rent community fabric in jaw-dropping displays of federal authority. In a section labeled “Special Areas for Emphasis,” Teeter advises, “An effort to cover Mid-Texas, principally Austin, is needed. Busing is the major concern to Austin area voters. Other important issues are unemployment, crime and drugs. Also, Mexican-Americans in San Antonio will be important.”

A few months later, eleven days before the White House Plumbers set American political history in a new direction as they were caught breaking into the Democratic National Committee Headquarters at the Watergate complex, one of Robert Teeter’s aides proposed a signal of Nixon’s commitment to improved relations south of the border. “The more I re-examine the first wave of campaign polls, the more importance I give to the Spanish-American vote… I want to recommend that we send a memorandum to Mr. Mitchell suggesting that consideration be given to having President Nixon make some type of dramatic visit to meet President Escheveste (sic) in order to strengthen
Mexican American relations. In the event of a McGovern candidacy and because of the likely inroads McGovern will make into the Mexican-American community, I believe this action is especially appropriate.\[44\]

Little more needs to be said of the zeal demonstrated by the Nixon campaign in 1972 as Mitchell and his lieutenants sought a great victory for the President, but these documents highlight the perceived political significance of federal policies or rulings on voter behavior, and thereby on candidate behavior. Attention focused on the “Spanish-American” bloc, as evidenced by the references in this memo from aide Ted Garrish to Teeter dated 6 June 1972:

With the upcoming state dinner for President Escheveria [of Mexico], it might be an appropriate time for the President to accept an invitation to visit Mexico in the near future. In the meantime, however, we should make every effort to publicize the state dinner to Spanish-Americans, particularly in California and Texas. Also, a presidential appearance in an area of large Spanish-American population would be helpful. While we did not attempt to measure anti-Mexican bias, I am confident we can make some positive overtures without alienating others who might otherwise vote for the President.\[45\] (emphasis added).

Underlying this concern about alienating conservative voters who might abandon Nixon for George Wallace is a sense of the growing importance of how Mexican Americans were seen by Anglos in Texas. Militancy did not fit the favored stereotype Anglos had of the hard-working, passive “wetback,” but the rhetoric of La Raza sounded like nothing white Texans were accustomed to hearing. These issues of identity and
nationalism stir passions. Using strategies of community activism adapted to the Chicano cause by Jose Angel Gutierrez, voter registration drives mobilized thousands of advocates of Brown Power into their first campaigns in local and state elections in 1968-1972. The leaders of La Raza were as controversial in the Mexican American community as the Black Panthers were among African Americans. With these circumstances in mind, playing the "Mexico card" involved calculation of risk.

Texas stayed on Teeter's radar deep into the fall campaign. The issue of race in Central Texas surfaced again, this time in a joint memo from both Teeter and campaign official Ted Garrish to Nixon campaign aide Clark MacGregor. Court-ordered busing in Waco and "race problems" in San Antonio and El Paso fanned resentment among conservatives toward Washington's seemingly relentless intrusion into state and local affairs. Tapping into this vein appealed to Republicans at all levels, as seen in a national survey of Republican County Chairs conducted in May, 1967. Asked to identify the most important problems facing the nation, 14.8% mentioned "federal government control of state." By comparison, 9.1% checked the category "Racial problems/integration." Only 1.1% noted "Education/Schools" as a national problem, but 40.9% rate education as the most important problem at the state level. This data illuminates the connection between federal education policy and voter sensibilities about local control.

Another example of an increased federal role in public education accompanied Gerald Ford into the White House in August 1974 as Richard Nixon pondered his fate in San Clemente. Congress amended ESEA in 1972 with Title IX, which promised to open doors for boys and girls to activities and programs with previously gender-based
eligibility factors. Rules disseminated for comment within days of Nixon’s departure would take effect 15 July 1975. The impact of these changes on opportunities for young women in extra-curricular and co-curricular programs cannot be overstated. To conservatives opposed to erosion of local, or even state control of such things as school sports, Uncle Sam left his footprint in the girls’ locker room. During his brief presidency and throughout the rest of his life, when Ford discussed his first month in the White House, he often referred to the array of foreign and domestic policy issues facing him. The explanation he gave for pardoning Nixon for Watergate transgressions revolved around his inability to deal with the nation’s business with constant wrangling about criminal consequences for the former President. As Gerald Ford sought some kind of political traction, the convergence of the volatile domestic issues might have made him feel like he had been appointed Superintendent of U.S. Schools.

Court-ordered busing for desegregation of schools inflamed simmering racial tensions and commanded significant media attention. But other issues converged to make the local public school a lightning rod charged with implementation of the new social order. Dissemination of Title IX regulations, new special education requirements and the aftermath of a January Supreme Court ruling on bilingual education placed conservative Gerald Ford in the unlikely position of presiding over rocking the status quo on several sensitive fronts during his first year. The *Lau v. Nichols* ruling on 21 January 1974 (414 U.S. 563) preceded Ford’s ascension to the Presidency by more than six months, but most school districts affected by the decision considered his administration responsible. This interpretation derives from the subsequent “Lau Remedies” mailed to
school districts on 11 August 1975 by the HEW’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR), represent federal activism at its most assertive.

With these impending directives in mind, William Seidman, a long-time member of the Ford inner circle from the President’s hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, had more than one reason to be interested in how his hometown schools would be affected by funding, but it does not appear that he had undue influence. Successful as the head of major accounting firm, in the 1960s Seidman served simultaneously as Governor George Romney’s Special Assistant for Financial Affairs and as President of a local television station, WZZM. He ran the American Broadcasting Company affiliate (known locally as Channel 13) as President from 1962-1973; served for many years on the Board of Control of Grand Valley State College; and was Chair of the Michigan Commission on Higher Education at the time his friend Jerry Ford asked him to be part of the Vice-President’s team in February 1974.

In response to Seidman’s inquiry about the amount of Title VII Grand Rapids Public Schools could expect, White House aide Fernando de Baca wrote on 2 July 1975 that he could confirm that Jerry Ford’s old district would be funded, but “due to the volume of proposals submitted throughout the country and the limited funds available for FY ’75, the Grand Rapids proposal was funded at a $337,000 level instead of the amount requested.” The memo from de Baca also gave Seidman some information useful in silencing disappointed friends back home who hoped new found connections with the White House would assure a successful application. Only three other districts in Michigan would be funded, and those at levels much lower than Grand Rapids: Pontiac received $100,000; Detroit $110,000; and Saginaw, $220,000.48
The *Lau* ruling effectively changed federal bilingual education policies from voluntary to mandatory by finding these pedagogical questions to have significant implications for the individual rights of a non-English speaking child. Targeting 333 school districts with a "substantial number of national origin group students," OCR gathered data in January 1975 that it would use to develop compliance parameters issued to schools eight months later. The text of these guidelines alone offers a curious blend of jargon spanning several social sciences, symbolizing the gap between local sensibilities and the institutional drone of the bureaucrat. Managing a robotically condescending tone, yet abandoning any notions of clarity or economy of phrase, the guidelines take four pages to determine reliably a student’s "primary or home language."

These assessments must be made by persons who can speak and understand the necessary language(s). An example of the latter would be to determine, by observation, the language used by the student to communicate with peers between classes or in informal situations. These assessments must cross-validate each other (Example: student speaks Spanish at home and Spanish with classmates at lunch.). Observers must estimate the frequency of use of each language spoken by the student in those situations.

The guidelines convey a sense of suspicion by federal authorities that either the school district, the parents or the student seek out these educational services improperly. Or, perhaps OCR needed to develop criteria for sorting and selecting students. The task force that developed the guidelines for use in implementing the *Lau* requirements set a trigger number for school districts to use to determine its obligations under the new
ruling. The language used once again chafed at local district sensibilities by using a constant number of twenty non-English speaking students, regardless of the size of the school district.

Due to staff limitations and priorities, we will require a plan under Lau during this initial stage of investigation when the district has 20 or more students of the same language group identified as having a primary or home language other than English. However, a district does have an obligation to serve any student whose primary or home language is other than English.51

By the time district officials read their marching orders for approved programming for students in elementary or secondary school, they would come upon Section IV Required and Elective Courses, which contains the first text clue to the influence of La Raza's call for cultural democracy. Specifically, the Lau guidelines state "Required courses (example: American History) must not be designed to exclude pertinent minority developments which have contributed to or influenced such subjects." Further, a "school must develop strong incentives and encouragement for minority students to enroll in electives where minorities have not traditionally enrolled. In this regard, counselors, principals and teachers have a most important role."52

As if sensing that educators would find curricular loopholes, the directives adopted a curious negativity in phrasing

All newly established elective courses cannot be designed to have a discriminatory effect. This means a District cannot, For example (sic) initiate a course in Spanish literature designed exclusively for Spanish-
speaking students so that enrollment in that subject is designed to result in the exclusion of students whose native language is English but who could equally benefit from such a course and/or be designed to result in the removal of the minority students in question from a general literature course which should be designed to be relevant for all the students served by the district.53

The federal government could give or take away, with a steady flow of funds for districts calculating enough to see the yield derived from designating personnel to maximize federal dollars. Over time, this creates a culture of expectation and dependency, but it also creates conditions for designating positions funded by grants which become the educational equivalent of patronage positions. Stereotypically, these offices become the operational hub for community activist groups with an affinity for the program. Contacts established by parents or their advocates lead to familiarity with insiders with influence in the hiring process. Depending on the prevailing school culture, employees specializing in bilingual education programs could be viewed by colleagues as by-products of affirmative action.

Just as Lyndon Johnson experienced as State Director of the NYA, local officials may fear federal funds come with manacles attached, not merely strings. Frustrated by relentless federal involvement in school operations, Superintendent James B. Nevins wrote a letter to Gerald Ford in November 1975. At that time, Nevins worked for San Angelo Public Schools, capping a career of more than thirty years in public schools in Texas. He refers to a
relatively new problem, since guidelines of some programs specify that program personnel only teach and not supervise students in halls, cafeterias, etc., but other teachers may. In contradiction, judges have ruled that lack of supervision is just cause for personal lawsuits. Teachers have reason to quarrel over special treatment of teachers in special programs. There is no local control, and to further complicate the situation, if a school refuses to accept federal funds, the school is suspect and subject to a suit for discrimination of deprived students.\textsuperscript{54}

In March 1976, Dick Cheney, Gerald Ford’s Chief of Staff, found himself sending a rather detailed letter in response to a woman describing herself as a “representative of concerned teachers, parents and community members of the ABC Unified School District in support of Bilingual/Bicultural Education.” Gayle Brumley of Cerritos, California had written to Cheney upon learning of a White House recommendation to cut Title VII (Bilingual Education) funds from the ESEA budget in the amount of $17.7 million, “an obvious injustice to the struggling Bilingual/Bicultural Educational movement.” Thanking her for “the opportunity to explain the Administration’s position…” Cheney walked Brumley through two paragraphs explaining the give and take with the Congressional process, concluding that an increase in funding would take place, but Cheney indicates funds would be at a level lower than what Congress appropriated. “These increases reflect the intention of the administration to continue to assist State and local educational agencies which have the responsibility for educating children with a primary language other than English.”\textsuperscript{55}
Written within a few days of its receipt from Gayle Brumley, Cheney’s letter deftly reminds the concerned citizen that Uncle Sam is just trying to help the state and local government to do the things they ought to be doing on their own. At the same time, political considerations developing in Ford’s campaign for the 1976 Republican nomination appear to have trumped the motive of fiscal discipline.

One finds ample evidence that Gerald Ford understood the growing importance of the “Hispanic” voter. In the Ford White House were two Special Assistants for Hispanic Affairs working out of the Office of Public Liaison. Thomas Aranda concentrated on Mexican Americans. If the issue involved Cubans or Puerto Ricans, the contact person would be Reynaldo Maduro. When faced with the risk of slighting the G.I. Forum by missing an opportunity for Ford to speak at their national convention in July, 1976, Aranda quickly arranged for a special videotaped message. Seeking to undercut any effort by insurgent Ronald Reagan to siphon away support in the final weeks before the Republican convention scheduled for August 16-19, Ford praised and promised his unseen audience. Ford read his lines, “Your effective efforts for the fulfillment of Hispanic economic development must continue. An important element of this undertaking is the expansion of bilingual educational opportunities for children and adults.”

Who could have anticipated that the calculus of Republican politics in the first post-Watergate presidential campaign would find the moderate candidate promising conservative Hispanics increased federal support for bilingual education?

The National Congress of Hispanic American Citizens (“El Congreso”) knew they had gotten someone’s ear. In a “Legislative Report” dated 23 June 1976, President, Manny Fiero, notes, “if you think we may sound a little proud it is because we think we
are doing a good job...” Two of the top four items on the list of accomplishments were “Bilingual education increased to $115 million,” and “New Bilingual Vocational Amendments.” Language education expert Theodore Andersson stated that the original BEA funding trajectory projected Congressional authorization of $135 million for FY 1973, so the claim to have raised funding levels to $115 million in FY 1976 reveals a great deal about the fate of yet another Great Society program. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this question of funding trajectory is the degree to which it represented the political will at the federal level to challenge the status quo while wooing a new-found political constituency.

Aranda had some dialogue with the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), evidenced by his letter dated 14 July 1976 to Raul Yzaguirre, National Director of NCLR:

Pursuant to your suggestion, I am in the process of establishing a meeting on Bilingual Education between representatives of the Hispanic Community and the Domestic Policy Council. I wanted to contact you via telephone when this matter was referred to me but I learned that you were in New York attending the Democratic National Convention, hence the present letter.

This communication signals the intent of the Ford campaign to not cede the any Hispanic organization to the Democrats and that his office utilized the powers associated with incumbency. In another triumph of pragmatism over ideology, La Raza worked both sides of the aisle. Ford’s assistants continued to demonstrate the importance of the Hispanic vote to the heretofore unelected President by holding a meeting of the “Hispanic
Ad Hoc Group” on 27 July 1976. Notes from this meeting taken by Special Assistant for Hispanic Affairs Reynaldo Maduro suggest La Raza’s outlook. Maduro’s notes record a comment about priorities from Yzaguirre stating, “I believe we should devote ourselves to the problem of how best to use Tom Aranda’s office and our own time. We must consider and divide substantive issues. I would propose the following issues be pursued with initiative and impact: 1) Bilingual education; 2) Voting Rights Act; 3) Immigration; and 4) Business Development.” 59 Two days later, on 29 July 1976, Gerald Ford addressed 650 members of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, emphasizing the “proper implementation of bilingual education.” 60

The struggle between moderate and conservative elements of the Republican Party over platform language reveals the continuing struggle to craft a statement about the federal role in education and specifically with regard to bilingual education that would be all things to all people. The draft wording for Education Policy shows Republicans determining where to draw the line:

Throughout our history, the education of children has been a community responsibility. But now federal categorical grant programs pressure local school districts into substituting Washington-dictated priorities for their own. Local school administrators and school boards are being turned into bookkeepers for the federal government. We propose consolidating federal categorical grant programs into block grants and turning the money over to the states to use in accordance with their own needs and priorities and with minimum bureaucratic controls. 61

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Yet, the draft language under the Hispanic Americans section sent a different message, stating, “When language is the cause of discrimination, there must be intensive educational effort to enable Spanish-speaking students to become fully proficient in English while maintaining their own language and culture.”62 When we look at the language for Education Policy settled upon by the Resolutions Committee, however, the strong influence of the more conservative Reagan delegates seems evident in this wording: “Red tape and restrictive regulations stifle imagination and creativity. We are deeply concerned about the decline in the performance of our schools and the decline in public confidence in them.”63

These statements appeal to the citizen who perceives that the heavy-handedness of federal government’s educational agencies represents intrusiveness and correlates this with the quality of the school. Speaking to the kind of flexibility available to school districts prior to the Lau Remedies, the Reagan delegates mapped a different path.

We propose consolidating federal categorical grant programs into block grants and turning the money over to the states to use in accordance with their own needs and priorities and with minimum bureaucratic controls. A single program must preserve the funding that is directed at the needs of such special groups as the handicapped and the disadvantaged.”64

The final platform did retain the wording referring to bilingualism, but rather than having a separate section with the heading “Hispanic Americans,” the delegates chose “Equal Rights and Ending Discrimination.” The Platform Committee amended the statement by adding, “Hispanic-Americans must not be treated as second-class citizens in schools, employment or any other aspect of life just because English is not their first
As historian Matthew Lassiter argues in *Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*, this represents the manipulation of language to suggest “color blindness.”

On 19 August 1976, the same date that Ford secured the Republican nomination after fending off Reagan’s conservative insurgency, the President received a letter from Edward R. Garza, Chair of Mexican American Republicans of Texas (MART), asking him to nominate Edward Aguirre as the new Commissioner of Education. With Terrell Bell departing (to return as Reagan’s Secretary of Education in 1981), Garza asserted, “The appointment of Ed Aguirre would profoundly underscore your administration’s concern for bilingual education and other critical areas of education.” Thomas Aranda recognized the importance of this communiqué, met with MART one week later in Dallas. In October, in a videotape message produced especially for MART’s convention, Republican nominee Gerald Ford announced Aguirre that had gotten the job.

The timing of a memo from the U.S. Office of Minority Business Enterprise suggests political considerations may have led presidential deputy assistant Reynaldo Maduro to request a list of contacts in Mexican American Chambers of Commerce in Texas. Linda Topping, Special Assistant to the Director of this Commerce Department office, provided Maduro with twelve such Texas organizations. Her comment that names of the participants “are being provided for clearance purposes” could account for the inclusion of Social Security numbers, birth dates and birthplace of each individual. This communication may reflect increased attention to protection of the President after two assassination attempts on Gerald Ford. It is the date of the memo, 24 September
1976 that raises the possibility that Ford’s presidential campaign staff used Maduro and the Commerce Department to leverage votes in a key state.

Conclusion

When the Carter Administration issued a new version of guidelines for schools, intended to replace the interim “Lau Remedies” issued by HEW during the Ford Administration with the Lau Regulations in 1979, it marked the end of the honeymoon for the newly established Department of Education (DOE). As the proposed rules moved through the promulgation process, a notable array of organizations spoke in opposition at one or more of the six regional hearings conducted by DOE. These included the National Governor’s Association, The National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers, which issued a rare joint statement. A policy question that involved civil rights elements alongside pedagogical issues threatened the increasingly problematic relationship between local school districts and the federal government. Referring to the usurpation of power by the DOE, the authors of the joint statement boldly challenged federal excess:

The Congress clearly intended to prevent unwarranted interference by the federal government in the operation of schools. The violation of the tenets of this law would set a dangerous precedent in the way that the Education Department honors state and local governance. A uniform, federally mandated curricula has been and remains an anathema to the
perpetuation of a non-totalitarian society. The regulations come
dangerously close to violating our basic democratic principles.68

This formidable consortium of interests asked the President to withhold any further action
toward implementation of the Lau Guidelines pending a “Congressionally-initiated
debate.”69

The issue of bilingual education served as a rallying point for Anglos as well as
Chicanos, fueling anti-federal sentiments among white conservatives to the point of
sparking a backlash at the ballot box. Yet, to date, its significance as a factor in the
ascent of conservatives receives insufficient scholarly attention. In the Northeast and
Midwest, court-ordered busing for the purpose of school integration engendered similar
resentment toward Washington in a potent mix of bigotry and legitimate concern about
the direction of America’s federal system. In the Southwest, and most notably in Texas,
the abandonment of English-only strictures raised similar concerns.

In the context of the culture wars that characterized the political landscape of the
United States in the latter decades of the twentieth century, conservative opponents
viewed advocacy of bilingual education as a path to disunity. These concerns that
bilingualism weakened cultural cohesiveness intersected with longstanding reservations
about federal intrusion into state and local affairs. Liberal supporters of bilingual
education viewed it as evidence of pluralism in an increasingly diverse society that would
yield educational (and thus, economic) benefits. Another factor affected many states
from 1964 to 1980, where the changing political culture of public school districts now
included collective bargaining rights for teachers. Chapter Three considers the role of
teachers’ unions as members of the education policy community.
Notes to Chapter II


2 Robert A. Caro. The Path to Power (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 344-350. Johnson's appointment as State Director was announced one month before his 27th birthday. The decentralized model aimed to give each of the forty-eight state directors "the widest latitude," in anticipation of charges that NYA resembled the Hitler Youth or Stalin's Comsosomol.

3 Caro advanced this argument at some length in public remarks made during an appearance I attended at the Gerald Ford Museum in Grand Rapids, MI, in February 2007.

4 The Republicans regained control of the Senate and House of Representatives for the first time since the election of 1928 by gaining 55 seats in the House while picking up 12 Senators. http://www.ashbrook.org/publicat/oped/busch/06/1946.html


6 Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, eds., The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005). Among the many fine essays in this reconsideration of the Johnson era, those by Hugh Heclo ("Sixties Civics") and R. Shep Melnick ("From Tax and Spend to Mandate and Sue") represent this trend.


9 In addition to extensive work by Walter Kamphoefer on the use of German in schools in Missouri and Texas, Jane Marie Pederson discussed the use of Norwegian and Polish in rural Wisconsin schoolhouses in the late nineteenth century in *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970*. Hasia R. Diner presented a more complex picture for Jewish children in *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*. Diner addressed the tendency to consider only Germanic Jews during this period, emphasizing a more diverse linguistic background that would include French and Belgian, among other languages. Although Yiddish was commonly spoken at home and Hebrew lessons were provided to youth at temple classes, locally elected school boards, especially in rural areas, did not implement language instruction policies sensitive to the needs of Jewish children from monolingual homes.

10 After retiring from the Senate in 1970, Eugene J. McCarthy published a book examining American life since the French aristocrat, Alexis De Toqueville, critiqued American life in *Democracy in America* after a tour of the republic in 1831. On page 161 in *America Revisited: 150 Years after Toqueville* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), McCarthy cites Toqueville’s admiration of the American tendency to form “voluntary associations.” McCarthy observed, “Whereas most of the groupings described by Toqueville had positive purposes...many organizations today are set up to prevent, to stop, or to reverse something which is already organized...”
The acquisition of Texas by the United States and the subsequent Mexican cession in the 1840s took place after states began to duplicate early models of public education established in Massachusetts. The Spanish and French influences on the Mexican political system resulted in a distinctive version of federalism, but the dominance of Catholicism, the reliance upon escuelitas for the education of children in the northern provinces, and a predominantly monolingual culture by the nineteenth century make comparison with the other North American systems problematic.


Johnson, *Brief History of Canadian Education*, 111.

18 Teachers in Newfoundland, directly employed by the provincial government, not local boards, are the exceptions, according to J. Douglas Muir’s chapter titled “Canada,” in Teacher Unions and Associations (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969).


20 Ibid., 167.


24 This quote comes from the title of Catherine Fosl’s study of Anne Braden’s courageous pursuit of racial justice, Subversive Southerner (New York: MacMillan, 2002).


26 Governor Thurmond carried four states in the Deep South in 1948, garnering 39 electoral votes and almost 1.2 million popular votes in the process. George Wallace carried five states and 46 electoral votes with votes of over 9.9 million citizens.

28 The phrase comes from a lyric in a song composed by John Fogerty titled “Who’ll Stop the Rain.” The best known version of the song was recorded by Fogerty’s band, Creedence Clearwater Revival in 1969 on Fantasy Records.

29 Weisenberger draws extensively from the work of Betty and Ernest K. Lindley’s study of the NYA, *A New Deal for Youth* (New York: Viking Press, 1938) for her discussion of the political culture of the NYA in Texas and across the nation.


32 Enacted in October, 1941, almost a year after base creation and expansion created major disruptions for affected districts, the Lanham Act established a formula for federal impact aid. Thomas Cottingham’s dissertation referenced in note 31 present evidence of the inadequacy of the legislation in addressing the schools’ needs.


34 Ibid., 17-18.


36 Lillywhite, *Federal Assistance*, 4-5.

37 Ibid., 7.

39 “Must Provide More Schools,” 12 December 1940.

40 Minutes of the Augusta Board of Education, 17 July 1941.

41 Lillywhite, Federal Assistance, 8


44 Garrish to Teeter, memorandum, 6 June 1972, Box 64. File: June 6, 1972- Spanish-American Vote.

45 Ibid.


Unfortunately, there is not a detailed breakdown of the states of the chairs responding to the survey.

48 de Baca to Seidman, memorandum, 2 July 1975, File 6/1/75-7/24/75 Box 7, White House Central Files FA 3 Education 2/1/75 (Exec.) to Education 11/30/75 (Exec).


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Nevins to Gerald R. Ford, letter, 7 November 1975, White House Central Files Box FA 3 Education 12/6/75 (Exec.) to FA 3 Education (EXEC.) to 1/31/76 (GENERAL)

Cheney to Brumley, memorandum, 16 March 1976, White House Central Files Box FA 3. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, MI.


62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid. For more analysis of the interplay among conservative and moderate elements before and during the 1976 convention in Kansas City, see “Writing the Republican Platform,” by Martha Wagner Weinberg in *Political Science Quarterly* 92 (4 Winter 1977-1978): 655-662. Weinberg indicates the 106 delegates serving on the Resolutions Committee charged with writing the platform did not see advance drafts, in fact, they were told drafts did not exist. They had one week to complete their work.

65 Ibid., 655-662.


68 National Governor’s Association, et al. Statement on the Proposed Lau Regulations. 3 AFT President’s Office. Albert Shanker Collection Series X. Box 63. Folder 63.55. Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

69 Ibid., 6.
CHAPTER III

TEACHERS’ UNIONS AND THE MAKING OF EDUCATION POLICY

Any student of the history of education in this nation soon realizes that every advancement in educational quality has come via two means: legislative action and professional negotiations.

--“Politics and the Classroom,” MEA Voice, August 2002

Such hyperbole befits a “special issue” celebrating the sesquicentennial of the Michigan Education Association (MEA), an organization wielding extraordinary political clout in shaping educational policy at the state and local level. Indeed, the leadership of MEA figures Terry Herndon and Keith Geiger in achieving breakthroughs in collective bargaining rights for Michigan teachers during the union’s most militant phase elevated these teachers onto the national stage by the mid-1970s as NEA officials. Capable of converting the voices of hundreds of thousands of members into votes, teachers’ unions influenced education policy making throughout the federal system, giving teachers unprecedented prominence in American political culture. Their power grew even more formidable when the NEA and its smaller rival, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) could set aside differences long enough for the two unions to chalk up significant victories as lobbyists and at the polling place in local, state, and national elections. But what happened when rival teacher unions flexed their muscles at cross purposes? This
chapter examines the development of teachers' unions as members of the policy-making community in an effort to illuminate this instructive period in the development of public sector unions.

The struggle for collective bargaining rights reveals only one dimension of the impact public sector unions on school governance. As this study illustrates, educators organized not only to advance their economic interests, but also to move to the head of the class when government officials studied changes in education policy. As early as 1969, political scientists examined the decision by faculty unions to take civics from the classroom to legislative cloakrooms and polling places as a global trend among industrialized democracies. A quarter-century later, Arnold Heidenheimer demonstrated in *Disparate Ladders* that teachers’ unions in Switzerland, Japan, and Germany embedded themselves in the policy communities of these varied federal systems. Heidenheimer posited that these unions emulated governmental structures by utilizing a three-tiered hierarchy with local, state (or provincial), and national centers of power. These insights regarding the tendency toward parallel patterns of organization, which he labeled “isomorphism,” offer a valuable model for comparative studies. Unfortunately, Heidenheimer’s analysis represents teachers’ unions as essentially monolithic blocs, thereby discounting internal divisions that characterize these American unions.

Variations in state and local circumstances these teachers faced when the United States government embraced pilot bilingual education programs in 1968 presents a window to examine federalism in action. For students of American political culture, school districts offer distinctive vantage points to observe the clashing and meshing of interests at critical junctures in the life of a community. To establish a broader context
for this investigation of the quest of teachers’ unions for a place at the policy table, the discussion begins with somewhat parallel developments in bilingualism occurring in Canada. As Heidenheimer’s work suggests, historical treatments of these political processes benefit from comparative analysis. Given the similarities in the evolution of school governance in Canada and the United States, one might anticipate a high degree of parallelism in the efforts of teachers to organize themselves for collective action. Alongside similar developments in industry, public schools in the United States and Canada experienced a trend toward centralization which accelerated after WWII. Herein one finds the roots of many of the modern issues of contested terrain involving educational policy, especially school governance; issues that create tension within each school district as well as between the school district and higher levels of government.

In 1969, with passage of the Official Languages Act, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s Liberal government declared Canada officially bilingual, thereby paving the way for federal funding for bilingual education in the nation’s schools. Meanwhile, in the United States, educators introduced it one school district at a time from 1964 through 1974, when federal mandates replaced voluntarism. Did teachers’ unions play a significant role in shaping federal bilingual education policies in the United States and Canada during the 1960s? Sharing traditions of decentralized public education systems, teachers faced common challenges when federal interventions in local processes changed the longstanding practice of English-only instruction. Reconsidering the American and Canadian experiences with teachers unions through the lens of bilingual education policy in the 1960s and 1970s informs many current policy debates, from immigration to the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).
This chapter highlights the distinctive role played by American teachers' unions as stakeholders in education policy development and implementation. It does not endorse or criticize bilingualism as a strategy for socialization or cultural retention, nor does it address pedagogical considerations. Rather, it analyzes the political culture of K-12 education by considering the role of teachers as formal and informal members of the policy community. Beginning with a discussion of the evolution of the NEA and AFT with that of their Canadian counterparts offers a broader context for understanding their roles in their respective political cultures. Next, applying the concept of workplace democracy to the school setting illuminates the place teachers within the policy community. Then, by examining the status of NEA and AFT affiliates at the state level, this study finds significant differences between the political culture in Michigan, a strong labor state, and Texas, where collective bargaining by teachers' unions remains prohibited. For some insights about how teacher organizations can influence public policy, the next section assesses the role of Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas. Yarborough, a liberal Democrat and a strong supporter of unions, capitalized on the momentum created by an NEA conference on bilingual education in 1966 by guiding landmark legislation through Congress in 1967. The AFT's opposition to the federal support for bilingual education reflects a longstanding assimilationist philosophy. Drawing upon the correspondence and public remarks of AFT President Albert Shanker in the 1960s and 1970s, one can discern the intensity of the debate within the educational community. If the teachers' unions could not find common ground on bilingual education in the United States, how could the nation?
The Language of Power in Canada

The prominence of religious and language divisions in Canada, especially in Ontario and Quebec, led to what historian Bruce Cooper described as the “most complex labor relations system for teachers unions...perhaps in the world.” Prior to judicial rulings in 1998 in these two provinces, teachers would affiliate with unions under the umbrella of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), a highly fragmented body subdivided into French-Catholic, English-Protestant or English-Catholic organizations. Further, separate unions represent elementary teachers and secondary teachers. Unions were even divided by gender, although Ontario courts struck down this arrangement in 1998 as well. For Canada and the United States, the presence of millions of predominantly French and Spanish-speaking people harkens to the legacy of colonial history that raised the issue of bilingual education to a prominent place on the policy agendas in both countries in the 1960s. At that time, Francophones comprised a much greater percentage of the population in Quebec than did Spanish-speaking peoples in any of the United States. More importantly, the political establishment in Quebec, as well as in Canada as a whole, proved more responsive to the expectations of this “minority” constituency. Advocates of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada accessed levers of provincial and national power still out of the grasp of Mexican Americans, Cubans, or Puerto Ricans, then the most prevalent Hispanic populations south of the border. In the face of threats of secession by Quebeqois, the Canadian political system employed highly centralized authority to preserve the confederation.
The roots of the bilingual education debate run deep in Canada, as they do in the United States. Regulation 17, enacted in 1915, evidences the first provincial requirement for Ontario’s teachers to conduct classes in English, but it applied only to elementary schools. The implications for secondary education are obvious, nonetheless. Quebec took similar action through the adoption of Bill 101, which required all students to attend schools conducted in French. Both provincial policies harkened back to the early nineteenth century, when the Rebellion of 1837 led to constitutional reform. In the words of historian F. Henry Johnson, “the two cultures were each to be cultivated within their separate school systems.” One should not ignore the role of religion in defining this outcome. Within a few years, however, a new policy superseded the old. The Common School Act of 1841 called for a less rigid approach to determining the language of instruction, but it was “doomed to failure,” due, in large part, to the impracticalities of long-distance enforcement.  

Coinciding with the election in 1963 of an activist government under new Prime Minister Lester Pearson, the approaching observance of Canada’s national centennial in 1967 gave patriotism new resonance. Like maple leaves on a windy October day, a strong sense of nationalism swept across Canada, evoking a mood which served to heighten the “otherness” of independence-minded Quebecois. The distinctly French Catholic culture of Quebec presented profound political challenges of ethnic origins to the Pearson government. In recognition of the challenge of functioning as a divided nation, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism met from 1963-1965. Foremost among its recommendations was “the right of Canadian parents to have their children educated in the official language of their choice be recognized in the educational
According to F. Henry Johnson, teachers' unions actively sought to influence the deliberations of the Royal Commission, since their "views on education expressed in many a brief...have been consistently reflected in the recommendations of the Commission." Clearly, Canadian teachers would feel the impact of a federal commitment to bilingual and bicultural education as directly as any worker in the nation. Less clear is the methodology used by these unions to influence the Commission.

The focus on bilingual education policy in this study addresses only one aspect of educational reform. By March, 1968, for example, eight royal commissions deliberated over a host of educational policy questions raised since the seating of Pearson's government. Sociologist B.Y. Card contributed an article to the CEA's Research Digest in 1968 questioning the pace of reform, arguing "the most highly trained professional educators are hard-pressed to keep up with the changes, let alone understand their consequences for education or society." In his discussion of the "sociology of education," Card raised important issues about the driving force behind policy changes, pointing out that "in our enthusiasm about change...we forget that what is change or progress for us may appear as retrogression for somebody else, especially for some of Canada's ethnic and religious groups."

Transnational "seeding" of labor interests was a regular function of organizers from the late nineteenth through much of the twentieth century. The Canadian Education Association (CEA), founded in 1891, and the Canadian Federation of Teachers (CFT), established in 1905, took inspiration from fellow educators across the border. As David Selden wrote to the President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (CFT affiliate) in 1967, the AFT sought "on-going friendly relationships with
teacher leaders in Canada. We believe we can learn a lot from the Canadian experiences." Selden's deft political touch shows in correspondence of this kind. His reply to a cry for help from Robert Beardsley, president of 1,900 member local in Toronto, shows the issue of "professionalism" at play in Canada. Citing internal divisions, Beardsley reported

our executive has been accused of acting like trade unionists……the ultimate insult. However, we are not yet ready to attack the concept of “trade union” versus “professional association” head on. The mere fact of your presence will be enough to reinforce our position.14

Significantly, the Canadian organizations treated membership eligibility criteria much like the NEA did (until early 1970s), with the CEA and its affiliates in the provinces and local districts encouraging administrators, college faculty, and classroom teachers alike to enter the fold. Provincial governments went so far as to require membership by teachers. In his examination of teachers' unions, Muir found the same to be true in the Canadian Education Association and its provincial affiliates, the oldest of which (Ontario) predates the national organization by four decades. "Teachers themselves appeared to have a relatively minor influence...the presidents and executives were generally dependent on education officials, university personnel or distinguished lawyers." The literature points to the same conclusion: the CEA, despite its advocacy for the betterment of Canadian schools, "never did fulfill the role of teachers' associations as we now know them."15 Unlike the NEA, which underwent a major philosophical transformation in the early 1970s, the CEA retained its emphasis on "professionalism" over "unionism."
Gender issues, too, proved transnational. In *Blackboard Unions*, Marjorie Murphy shows how male NEA leaders virtually ignored their predominantly female teaching colleagues in the late 19th century. This included administrators included in NEA membership from its origins in 1857 until the early 1970s. Reflecting on the influence of American trends on Canadian society, historian J. M. Bumsted found women in a similar situation on both sides of the border, “actively recruited into the teaching ranks, they then remained at the lower end in terms of both salary and responsibility.”

One might draw from these observations of the status of women in the profession that gender alone limited the influence of classroom teachers over the direction of policy, but as discussed earlier, male employees struggled to be heard, as well. This could be due, in part, to the perception that the duties of teaching, an extension of child-rearing, constituted a “feminized profession.”

In both the United States and Canada, public and parochial education seldom extended beyond primary and upper elementary grades until the early twentieth century. Women teachers, usually unmarried, greatly outnumbered men in the profession. A compelling case exists for linkage between gender and the emergence of unionist sentiments within the profession. According to a recent study of the Ontario Education Association, “ambitious male educators” promoted a “new, science-based model of professionalism,” that excluded women. Consequently, women saw themselves more as exploited workers than as professionals and were therefore more accepting of unionism as a viable path to greater control over working conditions, pay and issues affecting their schools.
The roots of the AFT, in fact, can be traced to Chicago, when elementary school teachers led by Margaret Haley formed the Chicago Federation of Teachers (CFT) in 1903. From the beginning, CFT members sought protection from discriminatory employment practices by arbitrary school officials operating in a paternalistic culture. The pervasiveness of gender bias and other discriminatory characteristics of public school employment practices during the twentieth century and their impact on the nature of unionism among teachers generated significant scholarly attention, such as Marjorie Murphy and Wayne Urban’s studies.

Less obvious and more challenging to document are problems involving discriminatory behavior occurring within the membership. Violating professional norms by treating a colleague inappropriately can significantly impact relationships in ways that alter organizational dynamics. The complexity of these social and political factors may stifle whistle-blowing, but an example from Kalamazoo, Michigan, provides evidence that the AFT took discriminatory behavior within its locals seriously. In 1946, after five years of complaints by women banned from membership by male faculty members, the AFT decertified its Kalamazoo Public Schools affiliate. Along with a check in the amount of $31.20 refunding the local for dues, the AFT’s secretary-treasurer admonished the former affiliate’s male officers for conditions in which “women teachers in your system did not feel that your local represented the interests of all teachers.”
The Quest for Workplace Democracy in K-12 Education

More than gender, class consciousness may explain resistance to the union label by some members of the teaching profession. The quest for workplace democracy (wherein the employee to have a meaningful voice in the production process) transcends blue collar white collar dichotomies. Translated to a school environment, the concept of workplace democracy suggests teachers reasonably expect that their training, experience and professional commitment assures them a place at the policymaking table.

Teacher organizations from their earliest days sought to limit “external influences” on their profession while participating in “determining broad educational policies,” according to historian Albert Blum. Success in achieving this status varies not only from nation to nation, but also at the state and provincial levels. In Canada, teachers’ associations grew more active in governmental affairs after WWI. “Impatience on the part of many teachers with the number of restraints imposed by the various departments of education” led to activism, according to J. Douglas Muir, a contributor to Blum’s collection. Noting that the influence of teachers appeared tied to their union’s ability to deliver votes in election campaigns, Muir flatly concluded, “undoubtedly this fact has assisted them in securing the governmental and legislative support that they have.”

Despite similar efforts in the United States, political scientist Veronica Donahue DiConti considered the impact of teachers unions and other interest groups in the policymaking process and found teachers were “routinely excluded from the design and implementation of school reforms.” In what could be a case of conservative over-
statement, former Reagan administration official Diane Ravitch cited the dramatic increase in the influence of teachers' unions by the mid-1970s, stating “the real question was whether any school district had the political power or legal resources to deal with them (local AFT and NEA affiliates) as equals.” Ravitch’s political conservatism may have led her to exaggerate, but the real problem lies in the failure to recognize how the distinctiveness of the political cultures of individual school districts can shape outcomes. Personal and professional relationships formed over many years among individual teachers, administrators, and boards of education influence how the institution will adapt to input from community groups or to new policies imposed by state or federal authorities.

Arguably, “school communities” in the United States infuse democratic processes into decision-making to as great an extent as any other social entity. The student body elects class officers to organize social events and to be its voice. Teachers in local professional associations elect building representatives and officers to provide leadership for the membership. Parents choose booster-group leaders from their midst to oversee fundraising activities. Candidates vying for seats on the local board of education campaign for support at the ballot box. The spirit of workplace democracy thrives even in those American states where collective bargaining for K-12 educators remains prohibited. Many schools operate in highly collaborative modes, typified by powerful committees comprised of stakeholders representing faculty, administrative, and parental perspectives. At times, with all of the ingredients of a functioning democratic republic, participants change the lives of children for the better.

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As discussed in the Introduction to this paper, political scientist John Kingdon's notion of process "streams," influenced the direction of the project, but it is not enough to ask how teachers' unions influenced federal education policies. To apply Kingdon's theories, one also needs to examine the role of unions in building a chorus of demand for federal action. The leadership could certainly be expected to engage in the formulation and refining of policy proposals, perhaps as "insiders." Finally, the political gamesmanship, from lobbyists to getting the vote out, could find teachers' unions engaged in mobilizing support or opposition. Kingdon's concept of fragmentation also applies to the challenges of building and maintaining coalitions across the varied interests of educators. The "policy window," as Kingdon would say, for bilingual education projects opened in local communities at least four years before a similar alignment of ideas, interests and individuals existed in Washington, D.C.

Kingdon's model for policy analysis remains a framework that lends itself well to consideration of the social and cultural context of landmark legislation on a macro level. He provides a flexible model to demonstrate how seemingly dysfunctional policy communities may converge to achieve shared political goals. The civil rights movement in United States during the 1950s and 1960s offers a familiar example of how diverse groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Nation of Islam at times managed to find common ground in the face of opposition. Odd pairings of groups, or of individuals, though temporary, operate under the old dictum that teaches "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Even though it holds potential to inform historical analysis of public education policy, I submit aspects of Kingdon's model break down when applied to specific cases because of significant distinctions in the political cultures.
at work in different communities. When federal policies allow for local option regarding participation, the status of the local education association could be a major element in the decision-making process.

Despite the tendency to focus on national politics and machinations in Washington, ample evidence suggests the home front loomed large in the campaign for the hearts and minds of parents in the 1960s and 1970s. In her capacity as Vice President of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, Mrs. Irvin E. Hendryson addressed the assembly of NEA members with barbed criticism of some parent organizations, along with strategies to engage school boards directly, even confrontationally. Hendryson frankly stated, “Until the communities which support these schools become aroused, our concern may be interred in a report that this conference was held, and all our deathless words embalmed in a print of the proceedings.” The NEA’s official report on the symposium added this commentary: “Another reason suggested by Mrs. Hendryson was that the PTA policy of non-interference in school administration was sometimes used as an excuse for ignorance of school problems.”28 Acknowledging the shortcomings of some PTA chapters, Hendryson candidly spoke of “the most inactive or piddling PTA units that fit the uninspiring stereotype…” and urged the conference attendees to “enlist some of the other voluntary organizations which have an interest in education, such as the League of Women Voters, the AAUW, and the innumerable men’s service clubs; because you need public understanding and the climate must be favorable.”29

Consideration of how teachers and their various labor and professional associations vie for influence as members of the education policy community requires attention to the many policy arenas of their potential interest. Competition takes many
forms in the K-12 environment. Closer examination of teacher unions reveals ostensibly unified bodies frequently subdivided into factions. These groupings derive from gender, ethnicity, race, ideology, and experience; factors that shape the hierarchies that persist today. For example, tension between elementary faculty and their colleagues at the secondary level, based on perceived advantages one may have over the other often create fault lines within union locals. As one finds in many unions, the determination of who serves on a bargaining team, for example, may reflect resentment among staff members owing to results of the previous round of negotiations. When elementary teachers believe too much attention focused on the interests of coaches of high school athletic teams, ratification meetings become heated. Conversely, if secondary level teachers believe members of the bargaining team dominated by elementary teachers traded dollars for additional planning time during the school day, a move which requires increased staffing, some high school teachers will reject the settlement because they wanted those dollars to show up on the salary schedule. Just as teachers’ associations might seek to exploit divisions among the Board of Education trustees, the Board and administration might tailor proposals and counter-proposals with these factions in mind.

Unity proves elusive, even within much narrower segments of the educational community. Debates over curricular change within a subject area potentially create internal rifts with the power to turn an opportunity for reform into a bitter power struggle. Opponents of teachers’ unions may portray the NEA and AFT as monolithic interest groups, but this research suggests policy outcomes may seed more disunity than solidarity within these highly factionalized organizations. Differences over federal aid to education in the 1960s, for example, found the NEA initially opposed to the Elementary
and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) because it promised funding for parochial school students, while the AFT endorsed ESEA without reservation. Deep philosophical differences about professionalism and trade unionism divided the NEA and the AFT for generations, but both employed similar strategies in seeking a strong influence over the formulation of federal education policy.

Since its origin in the mid-nineteenth century, the NEA envisioned itself as a unified voice for educators which placed professionalism over baser matters of collective bargaining. Until the early 1970s, the NEA included administrators in the membership, unlike the AFT, which always excluded principals and superintendents. Ferment within the large classroom teachers segment of the 1.1 million-member NEA led the organization to emulate the aggressive collective bargaining strategies of the AFT. In 1971, the new tactics led to a strike in Reese, Michigan, quickly followed by others in the state. Both unions embraced the idea of using work stoppages to shut down school the same way the United Auto Workers could stop production at an assembly plant.

Despite the convergence of ideology on collective bargaining, differences remained between the AFT and the NEA over the issue of establishing a Cabinet-level Department of Education. The AFT opposed this symbol of centralization from its origins in Chicago. The NEA, conversely, consistently advocated for the highest level of bureaucratic status available in Washington. After lobbying for decades, the NEA scored something of a pyrrhic victory when President Jimmy Carter signed the legislation in 1979. Once seen as a vehicle to advance the interests of the membership, recurring calls for educational reform by every administration since Carter’s characterize teachers’ unions as complacent, obstructionist, or worse. It could be said that from the time
Lyndon Johnson became President through the Carter administration, the NEA and the AFT exchanged places on the political spectrum, with the NEA moving toward the left and the AFT moving toward the right during that fifteen year period.

During the 1960s, the struggle for the hearts, minds, and dues of public school teachers had intensified. In 1965, Pete Schnaufer, administrative assistant to then AFT President Charles Cogen, crisply corrected the editors of the *AFL-CIO News* by pointing out that an election among teachers in Menasha, Wisconsin "was the 15th win for the AFT over the NEA, and not the 5th. I am enclosing a copy of our 'Box Score' which will bring you up to date to July 1, 1964. Since that time, we have won elections in Minot, North Dakota, Taylor Township, Michigan, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Menasha, Wisconsin." 32

The AFT differed significantly from the NEA in that it experienced no identity crisis over the question of whether a professional teacher could also be a union member. An organizational history published in 1980 does not even use the word "union" in its preface, preferring the phrase "professional association." 33 When deep divisions in American society over unionism became virulent, as periodically occurs, this preference in terminology might be seen as strategic. Despite this important distinction of identity, both American organizations pursued expansion of membership aggressively, driven both by a sense of mission and by less noble interests such as collecting dues and earning the political clout associated with increased membership rolls. 34 Circumstances could vary widely between states, as the following discussions of Texas and Michigan demonstrate.
Addressing a National Education Association (NEA) symposium in October 1966, the Superintendent of the Laredo Independent School District asserted that "the educational program is the responsibility of the people of the community; part of our job is to create a community environment that is ripe for bilingualism." Superintendent Harold Brantley's audience of classroom teachers and school administrators heard how the staff of that Texas border town "took advantage of every Parent-Teacher Association meeting to thoroughly explain the program... how the program would work and how it would affect their children." 35 School personnel engaged the parents and business leaders of the community in a campaign to persuade them of the merits of bilingual education and succeeded.

Laredo Schools acted locally and thought internationally, if not globally, in introducing bilingual education strategies in the public schools to change the unacceptable status quo. The start-up of bilingual programs in at least nine Texas communities from 1964 to 1968 demonstrates that the abandonment of English-only instruction began at the local level. 36 Nationally, *Bilingual Schooling in the United States* identified fifty-six K-12 programs operating in the U.S. prior to FY1970. Lesser numbers served preschoolers, amounting to a total that "did not in all likelihood exceed the number of 100 in the entire country." 37

In November 1966, educators in Texas showed deep divisions, even within their own organizations regarding both the appropriateness and the legality of contracts between school boards and faculty. The Texas State Teachers' Association (TSTA)
Executive Committee supported legislative efforts to define the parameters of professional negotiations. A spokesperson for the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), Superintendent Archie Roberts of Beeville Independent School District, said the initiative represented nothing more than a proposal from “a small but powerfully organized minority.” The presence of TASA on the TSTA executive committee illustrates the dilemma NEA affiliates found themselves in during a time of increased militancy among teachers. Roberts argued that endorsement of the legislation represented an invitation to the AFT, despite his view that “Texas is not a labor-oriented state yet. You are opening the doors at least five years before they need have been opened.”

Waco Independent School District (ISD) Superintendent Avery Downing, then serving as chair of the TSTA professional negotiations committee disagreed with his colleague, finding “the promotion of unity among teachers, administrators and school board members is desirable within the profession.” In his view, the problematic absence of clear legal status for such contracts could not be ignored, for while “it is true we have no law against such cooperation now,” Downing indicated, “we also have no law permitting it, and there is some question of the legality of existing contracts.” The AFT remained highly suspicious of “sweetheart contracts,” like the “Professional Communications Agreement” between Ft. Worth ISD and its faculty, but for those sharing the views of Loyd Turner, President of the Ft. Worth Board of Education, “passage of the law will simply remove any legal excuse for the administrator who refuses to communicate with his teachers.”

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Despite these disagreements about critical issues related to the contractual status of teachers, coalitions could still form. For example, in the late fall of 1966, after the NEA Symposium about “New Voices of the Southwest” held in Tucson, Arizona, Texas teachers organized their own state-level conference on bilingual education, Marie Esman Barker, then a professor at the University of Texas El Paso, happily reported to the NEA. \(^4^2\) State Senator Joe Bernal of San Antonio joined Dr. Joseph Cardenas of the Southwestern Educational Development Laboratory, and a local high school principal, Nick Garza, as joint chairs. \(^4^3\) Since the late nineteenth century, a number of teachers’ associations formed in Texas to produce a chorus of voices striving to catch the ears of policy-makers. For officials at the Texas Education Agency, this meant engagement with the Texas State Teachers Association, Texas Classroom Teachers Association, Inter-American Education Center, Small Districts Association, and the Southwest Regional Laboratory. Conspicuously absent not only from the list shared by Barker, but also from the entire symposium, was the Teachers State Association of Texas, the segregated sister organization dissolved voluntarily at the end of 1966. \(^4^4\) The American Federation of Teachers did not successfully organize in Texas until Corpus Christi teachers certified their membership in 1975. \(^4^5\)

Although the formal political culture generally opposed effective exercise of power by labor organizations, lively struggles between Texas educators for influence over local and state education policy characterized the K-12 landscape during the twentieth century. Constitutional bans on collective bargaining by a “political subdivision of the State” and similar prohibitions on any “organized work stoppage” defined the profile that associations of educators could maintain in Texas. As early as 1919, a
cartoon published in the *Austin American Statesman* suggests editorial support for teachers’ unions in that island of progressivism. Decades later, William H. Darby, vice-president of the Texas AFL-CIO, urged the national organization to organize Texas teachers under the American Federation of Teachers banner in the spring of 1966. Due to the risks inherent for potential local organizers, Darby indicated “the persons who have requested that I inquire from you as to this problem, have definitely requested that their names not be used at present.” The recipient of the letter, AFT President Paul J. Megel, apparently discussed the issue with AFT Executive Director David Selden immediately, because Darby received a reply within a week. Using the customary union salutation “Brother” Darby, Selden delivered bad news to the Texas official, who suggested holding off on any organizing campaigns there for a year. Selden wrote Darby that

> at the present time we are placing our major effort below the Mason-Dixon line in the State of Louisiana. Elsewhere we are confronted with compulsory collective bargaining laws in six states. Whenever one of these laws is passed we are immediately thrust into dozens of representation elections which completely consumes the attention of our limited staff.

This exchange between leaders in the organization reveals something of the parallel nature of the federalized structures used by the AFL-CIO and by the United States government, as well as the challenges faced by organizers in the anti-labor South. Selden’s opening comment shows a need to demonstrate that he had not lost touch with the rank-and-file. He acknowledge Darby’s report of problems facing teachers in Corpus Christi, West Oso, and Flour Bluff, stating “we know there is quite a bit of interest
among teachers in the State of Texas.” His final sentence hints at the adoption of a parental mindset, rather than the fellow-sibling posture suggested by book-ending the terms “Brother” and “Fraternally” used in the opening and closing of the brief letter. “Putting all of the facts together, I think it best to try to hold Texas off for another year. I am sorry to have to put you off like this but facts are facts.”

Ironically, William Darby’s description of conditions in Texas centered on administrative dominance of organizations ostensibly advocating for teachers. Texas law did not bar individuals from employment because of membership in a union however, so at least five statewide organizations with local affiliates represented teachers in the state. One of these, the Association of Texas Professional Educators, expressly rejected unionism and left membership open to administrators and the general public. Their lobbying role concentrated on anti-union efforts. As Darby saw the political landscape, his concern appeared to be that the AFT decision to “put off” Texas did little more than abandon the field to competing organizations. Darby reported the formation of yet another such association, this one using the acronym “TEACH,” shortly before school board elections in the spring of 1966. TEACH joined a muted choir of voices in Austin working on behalf of teachers and non-administrative personnel across the state. As with the NEA, which permitted administrators to be members until 1972, none of these groups advocated exclusively for teachers. Darby flatly stated, “The Texas State Teachers As’sn is administration dominated completely. The Classroom Teachers As’sn, although it should not be, is in most cases administration dominated.”

Many of the teachers who worked to organize the Texas Federation of Teachers (TFT) in 1974 and 1975 came from the ranks of the TCTA. For decades, the Classroom
Teachers Association viewed the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA), established in 1880, as its chief rival for influence in the State Legislature. Respected but limited in power by the stifling Jim Crow culture of the state, the Teachers State Association of Texas operated as a “colored” counterpart to the all white TSTA until the civil rights movement exposed the realities of racism in the teaching profession, not just in the classroom. This anachronism survived both the *Brown* ruling in 1954 and the sweeping Civil Rights Act of 1964. A significant story about the merger of these associations, which began in 1967, remains largely untold. The segregated associations joined together with some difficulty, with some issues not resolved fully until 1974, when the integrated TSTA resumed normal standing within the National Education Association.  

Considering the timing of these momentous developments, closer examination of the race factor in the changing organizational structure of teacher associations in Texas needs further analysis.

Grassroots interest in AFT membership then, remained untapped by the national organization as well as by the local or state political culture. Darby gently jogged AFT President Paul Megel’s memory by describing the situation in Corpus Christi, where “as you will remember, an attempt was made some years ago, to establish a chapter of the A.F. of T...There is still the same nucleus of individuals who are interested and an additional group who have become disgusted and disgruntled.”

One of these individuals, John Cole, a teacher at Barnes Junior High in Corpus Christi, helped establish the first American Federation of Teachers affiliate in Texas in 1974. A combination of circumstances made Corpus Christi ripe for change. Court-ordered busing began in 1969, his first year at Corpus Christi, setting off a chain of
events few could have foreseen. Cole joined the faculty of forty-five teachers as one of seven newcomers. Of these seven, only Cole remained in his classroom after three years. “Nobody cared if I taught,” Cole recalled years later. He sensed the problem went beyond apathy. To many of the leaders of the Hispanic community, Anglo teachers, which constituted the overwhelming majority of the Corpus Christi faculty, were “hurtful.”

On the surface, pervasive racial tension triangulated relationships among the Anglo, African American and Mexican American communities. However, the absence of political consensus within these groups, not just between them, meant the status quo for student achievement would prevail, as evidenced by a 4% high school graduation rate at the school serving non-Anglo students. A court order aimed at desegregation resulted in busing African American students to a virtually all-Mexican American school. Starting his sixth year as a teacher, the twenty-seven year-old Cole watched as his district struggled to satisfy its diverse constituencies.

Resentment against the federal government shaped at least the next two school board elections. The controversy resulted in success at the polls by “George Wallace Democrats” in consecutive school board elections in the early 1970s, giving them six of seven seats responsible for setting policy for the Corpus Christi Independent School District. Emphasizing federal intrusion into local affairs rather, the candidates ran as “concerned neighbors.” In this environment, key developments within the local teacher organizations appear to be linked, as teachers responded to the public’s decision to endorse these conservative new trustees.
As the school year began, word circulated of a new organization to challenge the TSTA, calling itself the National Coalition for Teachers Unity. According the Cole, this AFT front group sought to peel away frustrated TSTA members. Poor working conditions and low pay for teachers Corpus Christi Schools, complicated by a fractious local political climate, led to the rise of leaders within the faculty like Cole and George Kirk. Yearning for unity, Kirk brought the issue to a head by arguing that the faculty should be dually affiliated with the TSTA and the new National Coalition. This middle road appealed to most of the rank-and-file, with an estimated 1,400 of the 2,100 Corpus Christi faculty joining the Coalition. When the 1974-75 school drew to a close, pressure from the NEA over this union of unions led to a momentous springtime confrontation between TSTA staff at Corpus Christi and NEA personnel over the handling of the insurgent AFT. Fallout from this led to the near-impeachment of the local TSTA President. By October of 1975, the American Federation of Teachers issued its first charter in Texas to Corpus Christi American Federation of Teachers (CCAFT). The emergence of the fledgling CCAFT meant the addition of 265 dues-paying teachers to Texas Federation nearly doubled the revenue side of the Texas Federation of Teacher’s ledger. Prior to the success of Cole and his allies, the state organization claimed just 300 members.

In the political culture of Corpus Christi during the 1970s, the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the letter carriers union were the largest AFL-CIO affiliates. Steelworkers and boilermakers along the Gulf Coast exercised some influence as well, but the pattern of mutual support among these racially diverse organizations broke apart in tensions over the busing issue. The CCAFT demonstrated skill in
assembling a slate of candidates for the school board election in 1979. They broke the
grip of the “George Wallace Democrats” by recruiting three established community
members. Appealing to Mexican Americans and African Americans, Dr. Henry Garcia
and Dr. Arturo Mantena formed a ticket with the Reverend Elliot Grant of St. Matthew’s
Missionary Baptist Church and successfully ousted three incumbents to form a working
majority of a comparatively progressive nature; certainly a better political climate for the
CCAFT than its members had ever known in their brief history. In recognition of this
coup, a fourth incumbent resigned. The fruits of victory spoiled as quickly as they
ripened, however, as the working majority for the diverse slate of candidates ceded
control of the Corpus Christi ISD Board of Trustees in the next round of elections back to
more conservative elements in the rising tide of the right.

Teachers’ Organizations in Michigan

Perhaps the twenty teachers gathered in 1852 for the dedication ceremony of
Michigan’s first “normal” school envisioned the day when educators would have a
meaningful voice in policy-making. Before they left Ypsilanti, and the campus that
would later became Eastern Michigan University, they established the Michigan State
Teachers Association (MSTA). Within two years, the MSTA grew to 150 members and
used the influence of its “college men,” the professors and school administrators who
dominated the organization’s membership, to convince the legislature to approve
expenditure of public monies for “teacher institutes.” It would be another fifty years
before teachers could participate in such workshops without forfeiting pay for time out of
the classroom. The rapid growth of Michigan in the latter half of the nineteenth century made teacher preparation a statewide priority, evidence by the establishment of three more normal schools across the state by 1903.54

The quest for professional growth and for the respect due to those entrusted with educating a community’s children dominated the agenda of the MSTA, but its internal political culture mirrored the gendered patterns of workplaces across the United States. The ranks of the classroom teachers joining the Association swelled to 8,288 by 1911, with women comprising more than 86% of these.55 Dominance by males did not prevent women from asserting their views on the broad spectrum of issues facing teachers and their schools. In the social order of the education profession, gender alone does not account for power. The elaborate caste system included ritualized costuming passed down from European tradition. Robes, collars and headgear for the ceremonial bequeathing of diplomas, leave little doubt about the pecking order. The use of honorific titles amplifies the distinction, from the patrician status of “Doctor” to the generically plebeian trio of Mister, Mrs. or Miss for the classroom teacher. With formal avenues to power blocked within the teaching profession by widely held social norms, women came together in “teacher clubs” to strategize ways to address their common concerns. Mary Cordier participated in one of these and later recalled

maybe once every other week to honestly discuss working conditions.

This in turn benefited children. It had to do with class size. It had to do with hygiene within the school. It was a time to talk about what they were doing in the classroom, how they were being paid.56

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In 1911, at the insistence of emerging leaders like Ann Barnard and Cornelia Hulst, the MSTA determined that the establishment of teachers clubs would give these instructors the means to address educational issues from their professional vantage point. Soon thereafter, the Michigan State Federation of Teachers Clubs (MSFTC) formed to provide a statewide forum for the classroom teachers “disenchanted with the… lethargy and conservatism” of the Michigan Education Association (MEA), as the MSTA had renamed itself in 1926.57

The text of *A Matter of Dignity*, the self-published official history of the MEA, includes references to dissension among teachers in the Association over the direction of the organization. In a rather conciliatory voice, as if to extend an olive branch to the rival Michigan Federation of Teachers, it states

> Throughout their evolution, the local teachers clubs were very likely to lend an ear to labor movements, such as those fostered by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Federation of Labor, as well as other more traditional unions. The threat posed by these organizations invariably motivated the MEA leadership to respond. .. But without the sting of the teachers clubs to prod it into motion, the MEA might well have remained a monolithic and immovable association with good intentions.58

During the 1930s, shared interest in legislation concerning retirement issues brought the MFT, the MEA, and the state’s teachers clubs into an alliance when the Social Security Act excluded teachers, who were not considered year-round employees.
The seasonal dictates of the once-agricultural economy set the traditional school calendar to maximize availability of sons and daughters to assist with the harvest. This vestige of a bygone era serves to isolate teachers from community members working on a twelve-month calendar. In addition to the lingering perception that teachers only work seventy-five percent of the time, the protection offered by tenure laws in some states can lead community members to see teachers as a privileged class.

In Michigan, the petition drive that culminated 12 March 1964 with tenure legislation marked the beginning of a new phase of influence within the policy community through immunity. Protected from arbitrary employers, “tenure gave them the right to think loud and to act when necessary.”59 Prior to this, local boards had the option of establishing teacher tenure rights through their own district’s employment policies. According to the MEA’s records, only 17 school districts out of over 500 in Michigan did so by 1950. Enactment of statewide teacher tenure protection remained a legislative priority from the 1940s into the early 1960s. For two decades, the MFT and MEA collaborated in frustration, unable to convince enough rock-ribbed Michigan conservatives in the State House and Senate. It took the persistence of a teacher from Ontonagon, located in the veritable wilderness of the Upper Peninsula, to provoke the staid MEA leadership to a remarkable grassroots political achievement. In 1963, a razor-thin margin of victory on a motion before the MEA Executive Board by Arnold Korpi could be interpreted as the tipping point in the power struggle within the MEA in the early 1960s

I made my motion that the full resources of the MEA be utilized to place tenure on the ballot in the next general election by initiative petition. It
came to a roll call vote. The fellow to my right was the last man to vote.

He was Forest Roberts from Northern Michigan University, representing Region 17. After a very long pause, he voted ‘yes.’ The board burst into applause.⁶⁰

Within two months, petitions circulated across the state that fall collected 327,794 signatures. Filed first with the Secretary of State, then with the legislature, these petitions represented the ability of Michigan’s teachers to mobilize, a signal not to be missed in a year when fissures between moderate and conservative Republicans portended a big year for Michigan Democrats. The Senate approved 21-20, followed by a more comfortable 61-41 in the House.⁶¹

For Michigan teachers, legitimacy long-derived from professional expertise took on the added dimension of enhanced legal status when a one-sentence opinion issued by liberal Democrat Attorney General Frank Kelley on March 18, 1964, transformed the politics of school governance in the Midwestern state:

Because the Board of Education of the school district of the City of Detroit has statutory power to determine terms and conditions of employment of teachers, it must follow that it is authorized in its discretion to recognize as the exclusive negotiating representative for the purpose of carrying out the procedures outlined by the board that association of teachers which receives a majority of teachers’ votes at a representative election.⁶²

Michigan workers played a pivotal role in the legitimization of industrial unions in the 1930s, but complex issues involving differing perceptions of professionalism and
apprehensions about using blue collar labor tactics left barriers to collective bargaining in place until the summer of 1965. Despite some lingering resentment from industrial unionists, the political muscle of the combined forces of the MEA and the AFL-CIO flexed when they leveraged support for the Public Employees Relations Act (PERA) from both sides of the aisle. The LBJ landslide in November 1964 reshaped the political landscape in Michigan. Republican Governor George Romney, in recognition of the political realities, signed it on 23 July 1965.

Prior to the implementation of PERA, teachers engaged locally elected officials in public confrontations revealing the essential ingredients of democracy and the exercise of power. In a suburb of Detroit, the Warren Education Association (WEA) turned to a twenty-four year old activist teacher named Terry Herndon. In little more than a decade, the NEA named Herndon its executive director. Addressing the Warren Board of Education, which heretofore refused to recognize the WEA as the bargaining agent for the district’s teachers, Herndon explained his next steps:

Over here I’ve got 700 signed resignations and over there I’ve got 800 power of attorney statements designating me as their attorney for purposes of any contract signing with the school system. And I want you to know that after the first day of September next year, none of these people are going to work in this school district unless I say so. Now, we can negotiate 800 contracts one at a time, or we can negotiate them all at once. It really doesn’t matter to me. You choose and let me know when you have decided.\(^63\)
Among the consequences of the legislation and the new militancy in the tactics of local associations, the exodus of administrators from the MEA accelerated throughout the latter half of the decade. Paradoxically, victory in the political arena during the struggle to enact PERA, the pinnacle of cooperation between the MEA and the MFT (and its parent AFL-CIO), gave way to years of bitter competition for representation rights among Michigan's teachers. Within a year of its passage, elections conducted by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) certified the MEA as exclusive bargaining agent in 450 of Michigan's districts (over 85%), representing 75,000 teachers. The AFT remained anchored primarily in urban districts on the east side of the state. Local districts represented one battleground, but state politics seemed central to Al Short, a teacher from the rural Michigan communities of Reading and Vandercook Lake who served as MEA Government Affairs Director in the 1990s.

Everything that takes place in the classroom, the bus garage, the secretary's desk, the administrator's office, is given permission or occurs by statute of the state Legislature and the executive branch of government. The only power that a local school board has granted to it is by the state Legislature. The state Legislature can take that power away at any time. So, therefore, every policy, every work condition, every action in the classroom, everything that takes place in transporting students, is determined by the state Legislature.\(^{64}\)

Another indication of the priority given to electoral politics, the MEA established a political action committee (MEA-PAC) in 1970. A growing conservative backlash spread across Michigan communities, a tide discernible by anti-tax crusades targeting
local property tax rates that were the lifeblood of public school funding. In the political culture of Michigan, the MEA would typically support Democrats, but moderate Republicans could also find meaningful support. Evidence of the success of these efforts to recruit and support “friends of education” came in the form of a near sweep in the first post-Watergate election. In the campaign for legislative seats in November 1974, MEA-supported candidates won twenty-six of twenty-nine races for the Senate and sixty-two of the seventy candidates they endorsed won their House races.65

Michigan’s problems with race relations seared their way into the nation’s consciousness when riots in Detroit in July 1967 laid bare any pretense of northern superiority in finding harmony. *A Matter of Dignity* points to the lackluster record of the MEA, finding no more than “lip service” to issues of human and civil rights during the 1940s and 1950s. By the 1960s, internal and external forces led to a crisis within the association. The identity crisis that divided members into factions advocating either professionalism or unionism proved to be just one of several fault lines in the slate monolith. The shock waves emanating from the violence of Detroit and other urban centers extended far into school communities across the nation. For the MEA, concern about racial tensions led to a joint conference with representatives of the U.S. Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice.

Members convened in February 1968 at the MEA Conference Center at St. Mary’s Lake near Battle Creek, a city where abolitionist Sojourner Truth lived for a time. By the time it published its organizational history, *A Matter of Dignity*, MEA officials recognized the symbolic importance of the meeting by referring to it as “the conference that never ended.” The weekend event lives on in the organizational folklore as “the
event that forever transformed the MEA." (One might envision scenes from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, where the “establishment” faces the wrath of an insurgent radicalized minority). By Saturday, school board members, local officials and many teachers invited to participate in the “sensitivity training” found themselves locked out of the meeting while a minority caucus wrote up a list of demands. Things broke down from there with tempers flaring and strong language exchanged. A few weeks later, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. sent tremors across the nation. An indication of the wrenching nature of these struggles over race relations, more than three more years passed with no African Americans, Hispanics or women in leadership positions until the MEA Board of Directors hired Herman Coleman, to run the newly created Minority Affairs Division in late 1971. Two years later, the Board named Coleman to serve as the first African American Executive Director of the organization. Indicative of the lack influence of Mexican American or other Hispanic voices within the MEA, none of the thirty-seven pages of A Matter of Dignity mentions them as stakeholders in the Association, or in the larger educational community. 66

Teacher in the White House

The development of federal bilingual education policy in the Johnson administration defies many representations of Great Society legislation, because it sprang from the Texas borderlands, not from one of the dozens of task forces LBJ relied upon to refine domestic policy initiatives. Like communities of all sizes in the lands formerly held by Mexico, matters related to the use of Spanish or English reflected local history as
well as official policy. Depending on the historic patterns of ethnic distribution in the school district, bilingualism might be interpreted in some circles as a pragmatic response by educators, or as part of a civil rights agenda in others. The figurative antenna of the extensive professional networks among educators transmitted word on the emerging use of bilingual education designs in districts large and small.

As an outgrowth of this trend in meeting the needs of Spanish-speaking children, Monroe Sweetland, then directing the NEA’s Western Regional Office, spearheaded the organization of a major symposium featuring nationally-known scholars. Through his efforts, the NEA convened representatives from affiliates in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Taken as a whole, the sessions amounted to what one NEA official called a “blueprint for action in six areas ranging from the individual classroom to the federal government.” Theodore Andersson applauded the NEA for leadership in organizing the conference and for “throwing the enormous influence of its huge membership behind bilingual education.”

An NEA publication titled “New Voices of the Southwest,” produced in early 1967, covered the event in twenty pages, with forty-six black and white photos, and a two page “Bibliografia” of scholarly works on Mexican Americans and the issue of bilingual education. The NEA’s Committee on Civil and Human Rights of Educators’ manifesto demanded changes in the way school personnel interact with the children and their families. It sought to rally the troops for engagement with the basic unit of representative government, the school board. As Texas State Senator Joseph Bernal told the audience for his remarks in Tucson, “A sound working partnership has to exist between local citizens, local boards of education, and State legislatures.” Mobilizing parents to demand
policy changes, to insist upon new line items for the program budget, and to call for new leadership, if appropriate; all would be necessary steps for communities to adopt bilingual education as a key component of an overall strategy of greater engagement with the Spanish-speaking family.

Educational research services were a common function of the NEA and the CEA. The Research Division of the NEA was established in 1922. For decades, American (and Canadian) government officials had turned to the research divisions of these groups for expert advice, particularly in the areas of school finance and teacher salaries. By the late 1950s, the NEA had substantially increased funding for this function. This expansion enabled the Research Division to act as a key resource for Congress and the White House. For example, when Douglass Cater, assistant to Lyndon Johnson, worked with an education policy task force led by John Gardner of the Carnegie Corporation, the NEA often provided the data. Cater’s papers also indicate the NEA assisted with projecting legislative support for the Johnson administration’s education bills.69

As established by Murphy and Urban, the importance of collective bargaining issues grew for the NEA by the mid-1960s. The union’s support of candidates for state legislatures began to enact collective bargaining laws for public employees. President Kennedy’s Executive Order #10988, issued in 1962, opened the door to this new dimension to the power relationships between teachers and local boards of education. It signaled state governments to consider allowing the two parties to negotiate over wages, benefits and working conditions. At the federal level, where Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society initiatives broke new ground in federal education policy, sprawling bureaucracies sowed the seeds of a conservative backlash. Johnson used the political influence of
teachers unions at the local and state levels to promote his agenda in Congress, directing
the energies of their lobbyists toward key legislators in the House and Senate.

Transcripts from White House tapes reveal how Lyndon Johnson courted
mutually beneficial relationships with labor leaders, notably George Meany of the AFL-
CIO. Another indicator of the kind of communication taking place, this telegram from
AFT President Charles Cogen to LBJ dated 17 February 1967 stated, “Be assured that the
American Federation of Teachers, AFL,CIO [sic], as part of the American Labor
Movement, will do all possible to see your ideas are transmitted into law.” A few weeks
later, LBJ replied by letter, telling Cogen, “You know I am always personally grateful for
your initiatives and support.” Despite its prominence within the AFL-CIO, however,
relationships between AFT lobbyists, especially its president, Charles Cogen, and LBJ
suffered irreparable harm when the union leader criticized the war in Vietnam. George
Meany, on the other hand, remained a staunch supporter of Johnson’s war policies.

NEA Executive Director William G. Carr shared at least one limo ride with the
President and had multiple photo opportunities when key education legislation came to
Johnson for signature. White House files indicate his most frequent contacts were with
Johnson aides, rather than the President himself. In 1967, Carr retired, marking the
transition in the NEA away from dominance by traditionalists who viewed the
Association as above the fray of labor disputes.

Recent appraisals of the presidency of Lyndon Baines Johnson, such as the essays
collected for The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism, describe the aggressive
approach taken to the domestic agenda in the United States in the mid-1960s. The
prevailing view of the federal role in developing a better-educated populace in those
years found liberals taking aim at the root causes of social ills: racism and other forms of
discrimination, inadequate nourishment and limited access to health care. Evidence of a
strong correlation between education policy and the nation’s economy can be found in
legislative initiatives percolating up from dozens of domestic policy task forces from
1964 to 1968.74 Echoing Franklin Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech from 1941,
Johnson called for recognition of a fifth freedom, “freedom from ignorance,” as a basic
right of all Americans. Education for all means opportunity for all.75 Corporate leaders
did not say to school officials, as they might today, “change, or else.” In fact, it was the
federal government that directed the business community to open its doors to all
American citizens, notably through numerous civil rights initiatives pushed through
Congress by Lyndon Johnson and Democrat allies.

As reported in New Voices of the Southwest, U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough of
Texas introduced two bills on 17 January 1967. With allies in the Northeast facing
educational challenges with the children of Puerto Rican immigrants, the Bilingual
American Education Act (S-428) found politically and regionally diverse co-sponsors,
including New York’s Jacob Javits, John Tower from Texas, Joseph Montoya of New
Mexico and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. During the hearings of the Select Senate
Subcommittee on Labor and Education, poor families emerged as the target population
for innovative programs to meet the needs of non-English speaking children. The
education policy components of the regional economic stimulus package Yarborough
introduced for the Southwest grew out of the NEA symposium on educating Mexican
American children held the previous October in Tucson, Arizona.76
In his remarks to the Senate that January day, Yarborough noted that “in addition to Mexican-American students, those of Puerto Rican descent would be eligible.” The companion bill took a distinctly more regional approach. The Southwestern Human Development Act (S-429), co-authored by Montoya, would provide “$100 million to be used for programs of education, training, health, leadership, citizenship, and other programs designed to assist the Mexican-Americans of the Southwestern United States to overcome the special barriers they encounter so that through self-help they may achieve equality of economic opportunity with the rest of the nation.” The federal investment projected out at $100 million, but the Hearst Foundation committed additional funding after Yarborough conducted a tour for representatives of the foundation to barrios and desolate rural sites from Texas to California. 77

Ever mindful of the strength of Texas conservatives, Yarborough’s Senate office produced press releases each week for release in newspapers on Thursdays. These punctual communications from another former teacher document the pro-labor Senator’s approach to describing his proposal. On 2 February 1967, a version of “Senator Ralph Yarborough’s Newsletter” run by the local press carried a concise announcement of his intent to lead a bipartisan legislative alliance to enact federal bilingual education policy and funding his foremost domestic priority from autumn of 1966 through the end of his Senate career in January 1971

Dear Fellow Texan:

In Texas today---and all over the Southwestern United States---there are many American children going to schools which deny them the use of their native language...To them, English is a foreign language, and most
of them find it hard to understand. As a result, our Mexican-American children find their English-speaking schooling so difficult that a large percentage of them drop out of school. And without adequate education, they find that making a decent living is almost impossible.\textsuperscript{78}

Describing an effort to "blaze new trails in double language education programs," the Texan said "outstanding teachers of Mexican-American descent would be sought out." Linking the issue of poverty to the language barrier, Yarborough went literally to the gut to make his case. He quoted Dr. Bill Crook, then serving as Director of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), who reacted viscerally to a tour of the Texas Big Bend country, certain that "Texans would gag on their food if they could witness the kind of poverty I saw." In addition to improving education, Yarborough's legislation created "self-help" programs aimed at breaking down the "Cactus Screen that has been built up between two cultures and two languages."\textsuperscript{79}

Perhaps participation in the Labor Day United Farm Workers march in Austin the previous September led Yarborough to bundle these pieces of legislation. In his letter to Texas AFL-CIO President Hank Brown a few weeks after the march, Yarborough describes that day as "one of the most stirring experiences of my life, and one I will never forget."\textsuperscript{80} Following a series of hearings across Texas by the Special Select Senate Labor and Education Committee he chaired, the skilled politician tied Cold War fears to the ethnic pride of politically active Teutonic Texans by asking, "Could Albert Einstein, who grew up speaking German, have learned physics as a boy if his teacher had made him study it in Greek?"\textsuperscript{81}
Yarborough described the bilingual education provisions of his two-pronged approach a "just a start," but expressed hope that "school districts in Texas and other states will take this money and decide the best way to use it. We need to quite wasting this potential. These boys and girls must be given every chance at the kind of education that will enable them to become productive, good citizens." Five weeks later, a July 1967 newsletter updates Texas constituents about hearings in California that confirmed that "Congressman form every political spectrum and from both partiess have given their support to this bill." He emphasized "how that money is to be spent is left largely up to local school officials." 

In recognition of the threatened sovereignty of the local school district, the celebratory newsletter of 14 December 1967, wherein Yarborough announces legislative victory, additional assurances virtually fill the page. "My bill will encourage local school districts to make these children literate in both languages—English and Spanish. Local educators will devise their own programs to suit their needs, buying special textbooks or workbooks, using films or flash cards or even using Spanish with English in the classroom. The ultimate aim is to make these children fully literate in English, because that is the national language."

Overwhelming Congressional support for bilingual education took on new life when a change in legislative strategy found major portions of the Yarborough bills reworked into Title VII, an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The centerpiece of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society vision of federal aid to K-12 education, ESEA directed compensatory education funds to disadvantaged children through state and regional bureaucracies established to oversee the local
districts' use of the funds. As Johnson saw the Title VII Amendment, "...what this law means is that we are now giving every child in America a better chance to reach his outermost limits—to reach to the farther edge of his talents and his dreams. We have begun a campaign to unlock the full potential of every boy and girl—regardless of his race or his region or his father’s income." 85

Yarborough, though clearly more pro-labor as a Senator than Lyndon Johnson, still faced issues of political survival in as a liberal Senator from Texas. In his case, the periodic votes on the Bracero Extension Bill risked support from organized labor in Texas, but alienated constituents in the Mexican American community as well. Evidence of the kind of pressures Yarborough faced, correspondence between Texas AFL-CIO officials in July 1963 reveals concerns about Yarborough’s record:

Senator has voted to extend this program every time in the past, usually on the basis that such an extension was temporary and was, therefore, a compromise. Our Latin friends are sure to ask why it is their interests which must be 'compromised' again. We have simply got to convince him to compromise the others this time by voting one time against this program’s extension. 86

More than a year before Laredo, Edinburg and other South Texas school districts implemented bilingual programs for their Spanish-speaking students, Yarborough voted again for the extension of the Bracero program. Growers benefited from the downward pressure on labor costs these ongoing annual importations of labor infused into the agricultural economy. Over the next few years, Yarborough sought to counter the negative effects of imported labor on the conditions facing working class Tejanos and

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Mexican Americans. As ideas, institutions and individuals converged in the formulation of bilingual education as a strategy to reduce poverty among the Spanish-speaking community, Yarborough found his relationship with organized labor tested in an even more complex manner. Political activism within the rank-and-file of teachers organizations revealed this constituency to be anything but monolithic.

In 1967, the AFT withheld support for Yarborough’s legislation on philosophical grounds. Few could have foreseen the metamorphosis federal policy would undergo, and the bill sailed through Congress almost unopposed, with minor amendments. The resulting addition of Title VII to the ESEA had no effect on the vast majority of U.S. school districts in its first incarnation. Unlike NEA executive council members, AFT personnel did not appear at the signing ceremony in January 1968. This contrasts with the presence of AFT Executives David Selden and Greg Humphries, as well as that AFL-CIO official Ken Young at the signing ceremony for the extension of ESEA in August 1974. This may be explained by the singular focus on bilingual education in the bill LBJ signed, whereas Ford affixed his name to a broader reauthorization. Five NEA leaders attended, as did Manuel Fierro, representing the national office of La Raza Unida.87

Determining the motivation for policy changes involves subjectivity on so many levels that it validates post-modernist concerns about the futility of finding “truth.” Julie Leininger Pycior attributed the Johnson administration’s interest in bilingual education to the burgeoning political activism of Mexican Americans in southwestern states. Educational efficacy and cultural sensitivity concerned Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough, Pycior concluded, but Johnson and his advisors were looking for ways to ameliorate the wounds of White House opposition to farm labor strikes and the damage done to his
coalition from the worsening situation in Vietnam. In this scenario, LBJ caved to the coalition of moderate Mexican American lobbyists and elements of the center-left Democratic constituency sympathetic with their interests.88

In his study of bilingual education in Texas, Carlos Kevin Blanton rejects not only Pycior’s conclusions, but those of political historian Hugh Graham, who also attributed eventual passage of BEA to political expediency. Blanton points to these remarks from LBJ at Cotulla, Texas, in late 1966: “I intend to have all of our educational experts explore practical programs that will encourage these children (Mexican Americans) to stay in school and improve their chances of learning, to prepare themselves, and to equip themselves….”89 The President went against his own previous practice of English-only instruction and endorsed federal bilingual education legislation, but doing simply acknowledged how the votes stacked up for what amounted to a non-intrusive federal initiative. The bill Lyndon Johnson signed, buried in forty years of amendments, reauthorizations, court rulings and rule promulgation, symbolizes now more than what it changed then. Even though it will forever be linked with his ambitious domestic agenda, the irony of BEA remains that the heavy-handedness by the federal government toward local school districts concerning bilingual education came during the Nixon and Ford Administrations. For the AFT, however, the establishment of the Department of Education buried any trace of local control.

AFT President Albert Shanker’s loathing of the newly created Department came across in his remarks at the AFT convention in 1980, when the latest Lau standards for districts came down from above, “Well, now along comes the new Department of Education. And it says, that what you have to do, and this is the first time in the history
of the United States of America, that the federal government is mandating a particular educational program and curriculum...the only way to do it is with bilingual education.” He found no real proof that such programming influenced student achievement, but agreed with those who felt “it ought to be given a try for those who want to try it.” Speculating that he could hypothetically support federal mandates if they found a cure for “educational cancer” and some local districts refused to use it on their own, Shanker’s remarks took on a serious turn as he warned of the intrusiveness of federal government in personnel matters:

So, what you’re getting is a huge increase in the number of students who must get this program and no teachers are available...you’ve got to go out and look for bilingual teachers or else you’re in violation of the law. As a sign of good faith, if you cannot find enough bilingual teachers, you have to go out and hire any bilingual people whether they are teachers or not to come in to do the bilingual instruction. That’s right. Well, what does this mean? This is a formula for warfare in our schools. In this speech to the rank and file of the American Federation of Teachers, Shanker effective use of sure-fire applause lines reveals the degree to which the perceived loss of local control of schools cut across the political spectrum. Ronald Reagan and other arch conservatives could have delivered portions of Shanker’s tub-thumper. “Well, what else does this federal program do?” the hero of the New York City teachers’ strike railed on

It will bring about another vast expansion of costs. Costs of testing children, costs of testing students, costs of training teachers, testing
teachers to see if they can be in the program, and all those costs will be borne by local school districts. Under these regulations, even if a child writes, speaks, and reads English, then the child must get bilingual education.

This all spelled trouble to Albert Shanker, who looked out toward the horizon to give the membership a glimpse of the troubled future he foresaw:

As soon as you get these budget cuts and as you get these programs you are forced to have, but are not given the money for, and as you dismiss teachers to hire non-teachers to provide these programs, and as you develop various ethnic conflicts because of the way these programs are promulgated, tuition tax credits and vouchers are going to look better and better to the average guy out there, who says, take me out of this things where all these problems are, and let me go to some little place down the corner in some storefront or somewhere else where those of us who want to run our own thing, can run our own thing.90

Surely there were many time when teachers across the nation dreamed of teaching children in an atmosphere devoid of political distractions or the administrative priority du jour. Shanker’s prescience hints at the emergence of charter schools as a rallying cry for parents eager to escape the power struggles endemic in the public school environment.
Conclusion

In the United States, federal involvement in bilingual education extended beyond the domain of K-12 interest groups, because legislative requirements dedicated certain categories of funds to support research at the university level. If funded, a wide range of professional and paraprofessional staff would be employed at universities and K-12 districts, as well as non-governmental organizations. By 1974, the Bilingual Education Act had come to mean employment for many individuals. Some of these were NEA or AFT members, but many others belonged to other labor organizations. This created a network of common interest in program funding extending from Washington to the state capitol, and on through to a closed loop of regional and local stakeholders.

Expansion of federal funding could also interest elected officials serving various constituencies benefiting from services provided by bilingual/bicultural programs. It would be simplistic to consider teacher unions as a monolithic force at any level. As Urban points out, the AFT opposed bilingual education, favoring the standardization of curriculum over diversification. Their two-pronged argument against it drew upon pedagogical reasons, but also because they thought it would splinter ethnic groups and slow down the pace of assimilation into the larger American culture. The NEA, on the other hand, argued that sound educational research supported bilingual education over English-only instruction. Urban reports the NEA leadership remained convinced that Mexican Americans (and other ethnic minorities) were “victims of prejudicial attitudes” and would be better able to advance their interests if the national government legitimized bilingualism. As it turned out, the issue of bilingual education signals a transition in the
roles of the two major teachers' unions. After decades as the more conservative organization, by the NEA by the mid1970s could be characterized as more liberal than the AFT, which drifted rightward. Did these trends at the national level reflect or influence attitudes locally?

Seldom has the winding path to workplace democracy been so difficult; seldom has local control seemed such a distant memory. External forces promoting reform can lead people to adopt defensive postures that find strength in resistance to external advocates of change, even in the face of inevitability. This is the greatest insight derived from my investigation of the influence of teachers' unions on educational policymaking. Nowhere in the literature used in this study is this stated more directly than this by F. Henry Johnson:

Those outside the school who would transform or regulate its practice remain somewhat suspect, whether they be district officials, legislators, or even union leaders...The problem, of course, is in distinguishing between cases where incomplete implementation serves schools and children and cases where it does not. Sometimes noncompliance only prolongs injustice or perpetuates obsolete practices.92

Recipes for reform on an array of challenges, not only bilingual education, flow freely, but implementation considerations are conspicuous by their absence. This examination of dramatically different policy outcomes in the United States and Canada finds the effectiveness of teachers' unions limited by their dual roles as insiders and outsiders, and by internal barriers to unity within the profession. At its conclusion, the more important question is: what role do local teachers' unions play in implementation
of educational policies, regardless of the support or opposition of state, provincial or national union leadership concerning those policies?

This suggests a need for case studies to examine the relationship between specific policies enacted at the federal, state or provincial level and the actual behaviors by local union leadership and the rank-and-file members in individual schools. The actions of non-members may prove just as telling. For example, leaders of the CEA and CTF appear to have influenced and supported the enactment of bilingual education legislation at the federal level in Canada during the 1960s. Does this mean teachers (and administrators) in individual schools dutifully implemented the new policies? In the United States, the AFT opposed the Bilingual Education Act signed by Johnson in January, 1968, while the NEA supported it. What actually happened in schools with teachers affiliated with these organizations? Were NEA districts more likely to apply for funding than AFT districts? These questions raise intriguing issues about the nature of workplace democracy and about the relationship between professional educators and their unions.

Generally, it appears that since the time teachers’ associations organized at the state (or provincial) and national level, their leadership has favored political parties and candidates espousing greater governmental “support” for schools. Dubofsky found union engagement in the policy arena “discloses much about the basic dynamics and dilemmas of democratic politics in the modern era.” Clearly, these dynamics are different in the Canadian parliamentary system than in the American model. The close alliance between the AFT, the NEA and the Democrats, especially since the 1960s seems undeniable, support for individual Republicans presents options for American unions that would...
prove far more problematic for Canadian unions. In either case, these essentially institutional analyses fail to recognize the potential influence of teachers supporting the Conservatives or the Republicans, regardless of their status as dues-paying members of their unions.

In the late nineteenth century, Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor embraced the concept of "voluntarism," meaning that unions independent of governmental processes better served the interests of members by staying free from any state regulation. Gompers anticipated the precarious position unions would find themselves in if they supported losing candidates or parties. Since the expansion of collective bargaining rights for teachers in both countries since the mid-1960s, this advice goes unheeded. In the case of Lyndon Johnson's skillful manipulation of union leaders, one might ask, who used whom?

In the final two chapters, it will become evident that in the complex political landscape of bilingual education programming, individual teachers played a greater role in school districts in Texas and Michigan than their professional associations, because cultural insensitivity by individual teachers strongly influenced the mobilization of community activists.
Notes to Chapter III


2 Albert J. Blum, ed., *Teacher Unions and Associations* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1969). The chapter dealing with Canada is found on pages 1-43. Teacher’s unions in the United States are discussed on pages 295-332.

3 Nancy J. Christie, “Psychology, Sociology and the Secular Movement: The Ontario Education Association’s Quest for Authority,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 25 (Summer 1990): 119-143. Christie cites strong American influence, especially in educational journals published in Ontario and Quebec “frequently reprinted selections from the education department of the American Social Science Association, and from various American educational publications which advanced the latest contributions of sociologists and psychologists to their field.”


5 The U.S. Office of Education’s *Manual for Project Grant Applicants and Grantees*’ definition: “Bilingual education is the use of two languages, one of which is English, as mediums of instruction of the same pupil population in a well-organized program which encompasses part or all of the curriculum and includes the study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the child’s self-esteem and a legitimate pride in both countries.” (quoted in Andersson, 432).


Both nations certainly contained populations speaking other languages than French, Spanish or English, but for the purposes of this paper, the discussion is limited to these.

Based on language spoken in the home, as indicated by census figures.


Ibid., 182.


This union strategy is examined in depth in Wehrle’s *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO, the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor and the Vietnam War*, recently published (October, 2005) by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.


Students of NEA organizational history will encounter different “anniversary” dates for the founding of the association. The modern association can be traced to 1917, when it established its headquarters in Washington, D.C., but its role as a true union did not develop until the early 1970s.


Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 275. Table #2 shows from 1900 to 1964 women comprised at least 68.6% of American classroom teachers.

Wayne J. Urban, *Gender, Race and the National Education Association* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2000). Murphy’s insights are found in *Blackboard Unions*, mentioned in the previous note.

Irvin R. Kuenzli, AFT Secretary-Treasurer, to Forrest C. Strome, 11 June 1946, Michigan Federation of Teachers Collection Part I, Kalamazoo File, 1940-1946.AFT Office of the President’s File. Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

internationalizes these issues by examining the relative status of teachers’ association in
other nations.

23 Ibid., Muir, “Canada,” 35.


26 The phrase school community refers to the residents within the attendance zone of a
public school. In rural settings, a school district may be comprised over several hamlets,
making that school community a potential unifying factor for otherwise isolated areas. In
urban settings, a school community may be equated with a neighborhood, based on the
attendance zone that schools establish to set boundaries.

27 John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984; New York: Harper Collins College Press, 1995). A landmark synthesis of the literature, Kingdon’s central arguments are concisely summarized by the Global Development Network: “The problem stream denotes which issues are recognised as significant social problems. Citizens, groups and journalists work actively within this stream to trigger interest in problems. The policy stream refers to which advice is regarded as 'good advice'. This changes in tandem with the problem stream and with external events. The political stream: both the problem stream and the policy stream operate within a political environment characterised by elections, changes in government, changes in political champion causes, and changes in public opinion. Policy windows occur when there is an opening for new views. This is usually triggered by a major event
such as a crisis, a new international agreement, budget negotiations, or a priority-setting exercise. Policy windows provide the opportunity to have alternative issues and solutions considered seriously.”


29 Ibid., 5.

30 Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 277. This figure is from 1970. The AFT had 205,000 members at that time.

31 Dark’s treatment of pivotal role of the NEA and its state affiliates in Carter’s campaign in 1975-1976 captures the quid pro quo understanding between the powerful union and the relatively unknown Georgian.


34 Wayne Urban and Margaret Haley detail the competition in all of its forms in their respective studies.


37 Ibid., 431.

38 Archie Roberts, quoted in *Ft Worth Star-Telegram* 4 November 1966. 9-A.

39 Ibid.

40 Avery Downing quoted in *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* 4 November 1966.


42 Marie Esman Barker wrote extensively about issues related to bilingual education, including articles for *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL Quarterly)*. An example is “One Method for Producing Automatic Control of English Phonology and Structure,” which appeared in Volume 2 (December 1968): 268-273. She founded the Southwest Council for Bilingual Education, serving as its chair. She worked closely with El Paso Independent School District in the late 1960s.

43 Bernal went on in 1969 to introduce legislation in Texas supporting bilingual education, as discussed by Blanton in *Strange Career of Bilingual Education*, p.146. Blanton also identifies Cardenas as having served as Director of Migrant Education at the University of Texas under language education expert Theodore Andersson. Nick Garza’s high
school, Sidney Lanier Technical High School in San Antonio, was one of the first schools experiencing a walkout by Chicano students in 1966, noted by Jose Angel Gutierrez in *The Making of a Chicano Militant*, p.111.

44 Wayne Urban’s study of the National Education Association’s record on race and gender offers a fascinating portrait of the union’s version of states rights. Adam Fairclough addressed the bittersweet nature of the transition from segregated schools and associations in his study of African American teachers in the South, *A Class of Their Own* (Cambridge: Harvard University Belknap Press, 2007).


48 Ibid.

49 Unfortunately, Darby’s letter does not give the name behind the acronym T.E.A.C.H.

50 Darby, letter to Paul J. Megel.

51 Wright and Gunderson, “Unions and Teachers,” 10-12.

Ibid., 5.

Ibid., 6.

Ibid., 7.

Ibid., 7.

Ibid., 17.

Ibid., 17.

Frank J. Kelley, “Opinion Concerning Collective Bargaining for Teachers,” March 18, 1964. Memo in AFT President’s Department Series I, Box 6 Collective Bargaining File, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Subsequent legislative action and court decisions codified the parameters of employer-employee relations in the public school environment, Kelley’s memo is the point of origin of collective bargaining rights for Michigan teachers. Under the Michigan Constitution, opinions of the Attorney General have the power of law unless and until overruled by the State Supreme Court.


Ibid., 32.

MEA Voice 79 (9 August 2002): 25. Under the Michigan Constitution of 1963, the Senate has 38 seats and the House of Representatives has 110. Senators serve four-year terms and House members serve two-year terms.

Despite this revealing omission, steps were taken by the Association to diversify its staff. The MEA established a system using UniServ Directors on a regional basis, with a goal of having one Director for every 800 teachers. This 1970 decision launched an outreach campaign that eventually included Mexican American and African American UniServ Directors that served in many districts across Michigan. For more discussion of UniServ Directors see page 22 of A Matter of Dignity.


69 Files of S. Douglass Cater Box 22 CATER, Douglass Education: “Current”


70 American Federation of Teachers. WHCF. Name File Bx126, LBJ Presidential Library. Austin, TX.


74 Richard L. Schott and Dagmar Hamilton’s People, Positions and Power: The Political Appointments of Lyndon Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) is an excellent source for those interested in Johnson’s use of task forces.


76 National Education Association, New Voices of the Southwest, 5.

77 Ibid., 15. The NEA notes, “These excerpts taken from Senator Yarborough’s speech were taken from the Congressional Record; Vol. 113, No. 5.”


79 Ibid.


82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.


87 Once the most radical voice in the Chicano Movement, ideological disputes among leaders in La Raza led some to be wooed by both major parties.


90 Albert Shanker, speech at American Federation of Teachers convention 1980.

91 Urban, *Gender, Race and the National Education Association*, 261.


94 Ibid., xii.
CHAPTER IV

BEYOND SANDTOWN: *LA ESCUELA, LA RAZA,*
*Y EL MOVIMIENTO EN WACO, TEXAS*

Since we had the power to implement school policy, including curriculum, we voted for a bilingual program that would maintain Spanish, build proficiency in that language, and also teach English proficiency by the twelfth grade, if not sooner. Because we added a strong cultural component to the language instruction, the critics—internal staff, community residents, outside influential, and some students—opposed our initiatives.”

--Jose Angel Gutierrez, President of Board of Education, Crystal City ISD, Texas, 1970-72).

Provocative reappraisals of Mexican Americans in the political culture of Texas published during the past decade offer a foundation for reassessing how community activists in the 1960s and 1970s shaped bilingual educational policy in Texas public schools. Changing perceptions of identity within the Mexican American population during this period raised complex questions for public institutions more accustomed to Americanizing than to accommodating diversity. Ground-breaking efforts by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the G.I. Forum brought the World War II generation of Mexican Americans closer to the political mainstream, but expectations

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and agendas between these groups and the post-war Chicano generation varied widely. These differences represent the emergence of a generation gap, characterized by young adults challenging authority figures to address social problems boldly. A trend toward pluralistic worldviews links this generational tension within the Mexican American community with similar conflicts in the African American and white communities in this pivotal era. Acting *in loco parentis*, schools occupied center stage for many of these dramas.

This chapter builds from the premise that the public school serves as a generational nexus; a social hub representing bedrock democratic principles, if not always practicing them. After some discussion of significant factors contributing to the diversity of Texas, a case study traces the evolution of bilingual education programming in the central Texas city of Waco, located in McLennan County. Building on the works of historians Ben Heber Johnson, Kevin Carlos Blanton, Gene Preuss, Anthony Quiroz, Neil Foley, Julie Leininger Pycior, Marc Simon Rodriguez, and Dionicio Nodin Valdes, the analysis of educational policymaking and programming in the area of bilingual education in the Waco Independent School District illuminates how divisions within both the Mexican American and Anglo communities shaped local, state and federal education policies.

Settlement Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Texas

Lyndon Johnson’s pluralistic vision of a Great Society, which issued figurative passports from poverty in the form of dozens of federal initiatives, has deep roots in the
soil and cultural geography of the South Central Texas. At no time during his controversial presidency did those roots show more prominently than in an address to Congress urging approval of the Voting Rights Act of 1965:

   My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Texas, in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English, and I couldn't speak much Spanish. My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast, hungry. They knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them. But they knew it was so, because I saw it in their eyes. Somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child. I never thought then, in 1928, that I would be standing here in 1965. It never even occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students and to help people like them all over this country. But now I do have that chance—and I'll let you in on a secret—I mean to use it.²

   In developing his policies as President, Johnson did not abandon his long-held belief in the merits of English-only instructional practices in the classroom, nor did the Bilingual Education Act he signed in January 1968 require schools to abandon it. Promoted by Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas, with whom Johnson did not enjoy close relations, the bill's progress in the House and Senate never required LBJ's attention. Johnson's mark on the legislation seems most distinguishable in its recognition of local circumstances. The distinctive culture of individual districts would lead school officials to either embrace or reject the opportunity for federal funding for bilingual
programming, just as National Youth Administration tailored projects to community needs. This element of local option offers a window to dynamics of the changing political equation in the United States, making case studies the most appropriate method of analysis. By the mid-1960s, Lyndon Johnson and Congress rewrote the American social contract, as well as the nation’s immigration laws. In the Great Society, education would be a “passport from poverty.”

Spanning the half-century from the rigidity of English-only policies to the widespread use of bilingual education strategies by the early 1970s is one of the most controversial of Texas sons, Lyndon Baines Johnson. In the first major study of LBJ’s relationship with Mexican Americans, Julie Leininger Pycior argues that the Johnson administration took this portion of the American population for granted. Using Patrick J. Carroll’s *Felix Longoria’s Wake* as a springboard, Pycior traces the growing disillusionment with LBJ across the generations among Mexican Americans. She attributes Johnson’s grudging signature of the Bilingual Education Act in early 1968 to his weakened position among congressional Democrats, having lost most of his political capital as a result of failed policies in Vietnam.

As historian Gene Preuss aptly noted in his reconsideration of Johnson’s teaching experience in Cotulla, the ability of distant policymakers to change what teachers do on a day to day basis is quite limited. Not surprising, then, that Johnson biographer Robert Caro’s portrait of LBJ’s boyhood includes an episode at the local school where Lyndon attended 9th grade circa 1922. Reportedly the lanky boy felt embarrassed both by the tiny burro he rode to school and by his poor German, a language used by many students and by teachers, as well. But diversity and isolation can reside side by side. A childhood
acquaintance of Lyndon Johnson recalled an example that might explain the relative homogeneity of Blanco County’s Johnson City:

There were no Mexican Americans in the town, except for a brief time.

While we still lived on the main street, there was a Mexican American who set up a restaurant next door to our house, and after a time, the boys or young men rocked him out of town one night. Well, they threw rocks into his restaurant and damaged the place enough that he left.\footnote{4}

As this account vividly illustrates, in South Texas counties, generations of coexistence, if not equality, among Anglos and Tejanos sometimes led to less openly hostile climates. Quiroz’ penetrating analysis local community leaders offered a case study of how the growth of the Mexican American population shaped the local political culture. In *Claiming Citizenship*, Quiroz seeks explanations for the accommodationist approach favored by Mexican American community leaders in Victoria County. Contrasting their moderation with the radicalism of Crystal City and other Winter Garden communities, where La Raza Unida and its supporters set shock waves through the Anglo community in the 1960s and 1970s, Quiroz points to the need for a more nuanced treatment of the political landscape.

The Chicano movement extended across the southwest, but perhaps achieved its greatest influence in California, Colorado and Texas. The scope of this chapter concentrates on Texas, where LULAC and the G.I. Forum originated, and the state where the La Raza Unida party put its first candidates on a ballot in 1970. By the time of the Johnson presidency, LULAC and the G.I. Forum were virtual arms of the Democratic Party and had organized themselves into the familiar federal model of national, state and...
local affiliates. Despite their successful assertion of the proud traditions of their culture, strategic and ideological barriers, prohibited the development of an effective regional or national movement for La Raza. ⁵

Arguably, the assertion of racial and ethnic pride among Blacks and Browns in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to a rediscovery of cultural heritage among other “hyphenated” Americans, including those of German, Italian, Czech and dozens of other ethnic origins. ⁶ Traditionally, scholarly treatments of the dynamics of ethnicity in American political culture portray the bare-knuckle power struggle among Democrats in the neighborhoods of Chicago, New York or Boston. Yet, in spite of extensive documentation of the migration of Europeans to Texas in the nineteenth century, few discussions of the politics of bilingual education show the influence of this body of work. A closer look at the settlement of Texas since Mexican authorities approved colonization by Moses Austin and others in the 1820s finds the infusion of diverse cultural influences over the next several decades a more significant factor in twentieth century politics than use of a term like “Anglo” conveys.

With each passing generation, the experiences of those who made the journey became part of a heroic immigrant narrative that managed to reinforce ethnic identities while “Americanizing,” largely through oral traditions from a variety of storytellers. Most of these odysseys never found their way into print. Fortunately, events like the American bicentennial celebration in 1976, combined with the mainstream popularity of oral historians like Studs Terkel, inspired scholars and amateur historians to record and transcribe memoirs. These first hand accounts fall short of representing the last word on “what really happened,” but they add depth and texture to a panorama colored by the
historian's judgment of which memories to include and which to leave for another scholar.

Both fond and bittersweet recollections of decades-old humiliations or triumph in the classroom recorded by older subjects sometimes suggest the process of acquiring English language skills served as a rite of passage; a barrier to be crossed by all but the stubborn or prideful. For those individuals admitted to the fraternity or sorority of "real Americans," the gauntlet of public school comes across more as hazing than victimization. Interviews conducted more contemporaneously with the school experiences of the subjects often reveal wounded self-esteem and bitterness, indicating that the "generation gap" itself cut across divisions of race and culture. This investigation finds traditional interpretations of the melting pot effect and the merits of English-only instruction garner ample support in the memoirs of immigrants from across Europe and Latin America. Consequently, opponents of bilingual education included significant numbers of "ethnic-Americans," who interpreted English language skills as a signifier of belonging.

Which Side Are You On?

A favorite tactic of nativists is to mention when one's ancestors came to America. On one hand, today's Tejanos can stake a good claim of their own. Juan Gomez-Quinones study of the "migration and sojourning" of Mexicans found evidence they originally settled Central Texas during the period from 1718-1731. As the phrase suggests, the "sojourning" aspect of this settlement pattern indicates "people migrated
both south and north into neighboring provinces, and from one frontier province to another in the north.”

When aspiring historian Elizabeth Broadbent analyzed the Mexican population of the United States for her Master’s thesis in 1941, she directly encountered the dilemma created by the shifting construct of race and ethnicity concerning the “Mexican.” The 1930 Census was the first of the fifteen decennial tallies conducted by the U.S. Government to enumerate Mexicans as a separate group. Previously, they were included in the white or Indian column, as determined locally. The phrase “Mexican White Stock” refers to whites born in Mexico and white persons with one or more parents who were born in Mexico. County-by-county breakdowns of these numbers for the state of Texas became available with the 1930 census. Prior to that, statewide numbers for this category were available in 1910 and 1920, but not before. “Persons Born in Mexico,” with no reference to color, was a category in the census reports for some states, including Texas, from 1850-1930. Broadbent determined the “most serviceable” category for tracing growth and distribution of the Mexican population prior to 1930, then, is “Persons Born in Mexico.”

Almost half a century later, Arnoldo De Leon and Kenneth L. Stewart tackled this issue again in their book Tejanos and the Numbers Game: A Socio-Historical Interpretation From Federal Census, 1850-1900. Working with the information available they conclude the number of Tejanos (Mexican-Texans) statewide could be estimated as low as 13,900 or as high as 23,200 in 1850. By 1900, the number was 165,000. During that same period of time, the Anglo population (includes “non-native” white Texans) grew from 130,800 to 2,261,700.
Texas in general and Austin in particular would experience dramatic increases in the Mexican population between 1910 and 1930. Emilio Zamora identified several reasons for this upsurge in migration in *Mexican Labor Activity in South Texas 1900-1920*. Zamora relies on traditional “push-pull” explanations. Some movement was attributable to Mexican economic reform policies after the Revolution of 1910. The economic expansion of the United States during and after World War I created a demand for labor in the southwest. Zamora also emphasized the impact of improved transportation, increased information and rural violence and instability in Mexico.\(^\text{10}\)

In 1910, approximately 1 of every 16 residents of Texas was “Mexican,” but by 1930 the ratio had increased to 1 of every 8. The center of this “Mexican American cultural province,” as Daniel Arreola described it in *Tejano South Texas*, were twenty-six counties, many of these contiguous to the Rio Grande River. By 1930, 46% of the Mexican population of Texas resided in this region.\(^\text{11}\) Travis County is just north of this zone, but the census data and the maps showing ethnicity of households in the city clearly illustrate a significant demographic trend.

Zamora’s study shows some of the complexities faced by United States government and Texan officials with regard to the status of Mexican migrants. Major labor organizations, such as the American Federation of Labor, used settings like their annual convention in 1919 to call for immigration restrictions.\(^\text{12}\) When asked to take a position on legislation sponsored by Texas Congressman John C. Box to restrict immigration, the Austin Chamber of Commerce opposed it, as stated in Chamber’s *Annual Report for 1919*.\(^\text{13}\) Yet, in January, 1920, Travis County ordered 800 Mexicans living in Austin to return to the border. Another indicator of how Anglo perceptions
changed over time, the Coolidge administration established the Border Patrol in 1924. The Mexicans, and their children, were welcomed yet unwelcomed.

The xenophobic mindset of nativists questions the loyalty of immigrants, but as developments in borderlands scholarship suggest, the cultural geography of the southwestern United States presents significant questions about the meanings of terms like homeland and patriotism. To which governmental entity does one owe fealty when different nation-states claim sovereignty over ancestral land? When does separatism represent truer patriotism than membership in a federation? For Texas, given its history as an independent republic (1836-1845), followed by secession from the United States in 1861 after only sixteen years of statehood, these questions strike what Lincoln called “mystic chords of memory.”

Recently, Ben Heber Johnson’s reconsideration of separatist movements along the perpetually troubled Texas-Mexico boundary rejected stereotypical characterizations of banditos, interpreting the resistance instead as a foreshadowing of the Chicano movement. Johnson deems the previously obscure “Plan de San Diego,” a manifesto penned in 1913 decrying treatment of Tejanos at the hands the American and Mexican governments, as a call to arms, thereby bearing witness to the problematic issue of identity in a transnational setting. The isolation of the Tejanos occupying the disputed land from either of these political entities assured their ongoing status as “others” who happened to reside at the periphery of the spheres of influence of the two nations.

In another recent example of borderland revisionism, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*, Carlos Kevin Blanton examined the records of dozens of the state’s 254 counties to portray the pragmatic diversity in approaches to
educating non-English speaking students found in communities across Texas prior to the
dogma of mandated English-only instruction. Blanton takes important steps in breaking
down the simplistic "Anglo" descriptor, tapping migration literature and county school
reports submitted to the state education office to document the experience of German and
Czech students in Texas. During nine years as the Lone Star Republic and after
becoming a state, Texas boosters sought settlers from the United States and Europe.
Perhaps by the 1960s, after several generations in the state, Texans of Italian, Swedish or
Polish heritage all became Anglos in the eyes of some Mexicans, a result of opinion
leaders whose own agendas benefited from defining the hegemonic "other" as a
monolithic force.

By the turn of the twentieth century, more than a dozen European accents could
be heard in Texas. Prior to the devastation wrought by a hurricane in 1905, the piers of
the port city of Galveston experienced the ebb and flow of migrants. A burgeoning
trade in passenger and cargo boats churned families upstream. Paddlewheel steamers
like the *William Penn* plied the waters of the Guadalupe River from Matagorda Bay to
the city of Victoria in as little as fourteen hours, readying dreamers and schemers alike
for the next phase of their journey. The iconic pioneer wagon train associated with
westward migration in the 1840s still played a key role, as entrepreneurs in Victoria
awaited each wave of arrivals with as many as twenty-five wagons ready for board the
newcomers for the next part of the journey.

Later in the century, these wagons gave way to rail lines later in the century,
offering both faster passage and employment for still more immigrants needed to lay the
tracks. An ill-fated project labeled the "Macaroni Line" by locals because 1,200 laborers
recruited to Texas from Italy built it, drove only enough spikes to complete 64 miles of rails. This fell far short of the goal of connecting Mexico City to New York. Once the state established a system of public education in the 1880s, these migrants and others “gone to Texas” tailored their approaches to bilingual education to the prevailing wishes of community leaders. Along with Scots-Irish migrants from Appalachia, these different strands of European fabric comprised the “Anglo” population that blanketed Aztlan.

Of the Europeans who migrated to Texas in the nineteenth century, no group has received more scholarly attention than the Germans. Well-organized recruitment efforts by organizations like the Zollverein led to extensive settlement by a highly literate population. The diaries, journals and newspapers of these settlers and their descendants provide ample sources for historians. Like the Dutch who settled in southwest Michigan cities like Holland, Zeeland, Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, high levels of cultural retention remained evident in those Texas communities into the twenty-first century. The success of these ethnic groups in preserving language and folkways across several generations owes to several factors, including relative population density, the tradition of local control of public schools, and their status as “whites.”

Population density could determine whether newly arriving families intend to educate their children in a church school, where issues of cultural retention beyond the “faith of their fathers” could be addressed, or to enroll them or a public school for immersion in the local version of American culture. In communities on the frontier or in rural areas, a strategic settlement decision by several families could change the ethnic profile of the voting public dramatically. Given the highly decentralized model of school governance employed in the United States in the nineteenth century, the tradition of local
control could serve to quickly advance or to stifle the development of educational programs affirming ethnic identity.

For the child, however, the institutional response to a changing population interfaces with direction received from parents or guardians. Raymond Engelbrecht grew up near Crawford, Texas, a rural community outside of Waco where German influence remained strong well into the twentieth century. During his childhood, he recalled “our parents taught us English before we started school age,” Engelbrecht believed, “because so many children were hindered and handicapped when they started to school because they didn’t know English [that] our parents switched over to English before we started going to school.” Engelbrecht also remembered that after 1920, in the aftermath of anti-German sentiments inflamed by World War I, the school placed increased emphasis on English-only strictures.

When the state constitution’s provisions for school governance changed during the Progressive era from semi-autocratic control by county judges to a system of locally elected trustees to make policy for school districts, one ethnic group or another controlled virtually every district, even along the extensive border with Mexico. A combination of the progressive movement’s preference for the efficiencies of centralization and the effectiveness of anti-German propaganda moved several states to restrict local options in terms of language instruction. Prior to state legislation mandating English-only instruction in 1920, local boards determined the language of instruction without interference from the state. Although Blanton posits that the English-only phase in Texas public education represents a lengthy detour from deeply-rooted local practice of accommodating language diversity, this assertion seems most applicable to the small,
rural districts consisting of isolated schoolhouses serving families from area farms or ranches. Depending on the size of the Tejano population, the community might establish separate elementary schools for “whites” and “Mexicans.”

For many Texas communities, especially in rural areas, the teaching methods used in schoolhouses reflected the influence of parents and others concerned about what and how teachers taught students to read, write and cipher. Bilingual methodologies in country schoolhouses yielded to 100% Americanism slowly, but the virulent infection of xenophobic thinking in the first two decades of the twentieth century gradually became evident in the actions of local policymakers. Even more consequential, the virtual purge of all things German that accompanied the Committee for Public Information’s WWI propaganda campaigns, followed by the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in 1921, fed a strong homogenizing impulse that challenged “old” and “new” immigrants to fully assimilate into the larger nativist body.

Most Texas communities had limited experience educating Spanish-speaking children until at least the 1920s, since the Tejano population remained concentrated along the border. When the Mexican Revolution of 1910 led an estimated 10% of the struggling nation to cross the Rio Grande, the influx meant 1 Texas school district after another faced policy decisions. Local officials would decide whether or not to establish a separate school for Mexican children. As Blanton captured in great detail, public schools felt the increased numbers of Spanish-speaking children as if seismic forces in Mexican society caused an up-swell of humanity to overspill the boundary. Neil Foley tracks the consequences of such social tectonics in The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks and Poor Whites in the Texas Cotton Culture, documenting the triangulated cultural clash...
that accompanied the increased dependence of the Texas agricultural economy on Mexican labor. For many Mexicans, “el norte” represented opportunity for greater comfort and security, while farmers found the incoming stream of prospective laborers as vital as the rain that nourished their cotton. Concentrating on the blackland prairie region that distinguishes a swath of Central Texas from the piney woods of East Texas and from the cactus flowers to the west, Foley deftly blends an environmental perspective with the “whiteness” studies pioneered by David Roediger.25

Foley documents the friction that accompanied increased dependence of the Texas economy on cheap Mexican labor. Highlighting the role of the state’s nascent labor movement in educating farm-workers and tenant farmers alike to see the common origins of their shared plight, Foley demonstrates how issues of race, ethnicity and class intersect to influence political activism. Certainly this proved to be the case in Waco, where Ernest Calderon first served as chair of the Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations (PASSO; or PASO) in 1965. According to Calderon, PASSO “always worked with what’s commonly called the coalition. Not only here but on a statewide basis. You know, the black, the labor, organized labor, the independent liberal and the Mexican American who is the coalition.”26 When the depressed agricultural economy of the 1920s seeded the greater collapse of the 1930s, the northerly flow of human traffic across the border reversed with a vengeance. Not long before the deportation of thousands of Mexicans, a member of the Texas congressional delegation warned his colleagues on the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization that the Southwest had become a “vast dumping ground for the human hordes of poverty-stricken peon Indians of Mexico.”27
In 1930 the census recorded an estimated 4% of Waco’s population of 52,848 as native to Mexico, a figure that declined slightly during surges of repatriation, then rose in the 1940s, driven by labor shortages in the agricultural sector as well as in the smokestack industries energized by World War II, immigration from Mexico into Texas and the Midwest resumed in greater numbers than before. The “Bracero” program, as it became known, formalized the use of contracted Mexican labor via a bilateral understanding between the U.S. and Mexico extending over two decades, from 1943 until 1965. The Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, a sweeping reform of U.S. immigration policy, rendered the Bracero program obsolete. The combined effect of these developments in international diplomacy and national policy meant that communities all across the United States, not only in the Southwestern border states, would experience an influx of Spanish-speaking families.

According to census data, the Mexican American population in Waco rose by nearly 50% in the decade of the 1960s, from 6,600 to 9,610, representing just over 10% of the total in 1970.28 The changes experienced by Waco, however, signify that important political relationships stemmed not only from economic interdependence and the inevitable clash of cultures, but also from environmental factors. This examination of the growing influence of Mexican Americans as members of the policymaking community in Waco provides importance evidence of the significant role landscape, forces of nature, and human intervention can play in shaping the political landscape.
The Dam, the Twister, and the Arm-twisters

As stunned Waco residents wandered through the wreckage of their devastated homes and businesses in the aftermath of a horrendous tornado on May 11, 1953, few, if any, could fathom how the twister that killed 114 people would alter the landscape of race relations in their segregated city. Situated along the Brazos River on the western edge of the blackland prairie midway between Austin and Dallas, the city of 50,000 counted no more than 5% of its population as “Spanish-speaking” in the 1950 census. Prior to the tornado, housing options in Waco found most of these Tejanos and Mexican Americans concentrated in the riverfront barrio/ghetto known as Sandtown. The broad floodplain of the Brazos rendered properties along its south bank marginal, resulting in lower real estate values and substandard housing favored by slumlords.

In 1950, five year-old Robert Gamboa moved to South First Street in Sandtown with his family from Kansas City, Missouri. Years later, Gamboa described Sandtown boundaries as “…a long rectangular area of about maybe four or five, six blocks. And the community was made up of probably I’m going to say 98% Mexican families. There were a few African American families. No Anglo families I can recall.”

Located just two miles downstream from the confluence of the three branches of the Bosque River enter the historic Brazos, this part of the city knew hardships born of natural calamities and of human failings. The silt deposited by the receding waters through the ages, however, renewed the rich soil that made cotton production in the bottomlands east and south of town among the best in Texas. When the statewide boom in railroad construction created a small transportation hub in Waco in the 1880s, Waco
grew from a small settlement into an urban center serving the area’s predominantly agricultural economy. New wealth and old mingled in this infusion of economic activity. For four decades, a tourist attraction Cotton Palace celebrated the staple crop and drew hundreds of thousands of visitors. City boosters called Waco the “Athens of the West,” a reference to the presence of the distinguished Baylor University and Paul Quinn College, the college for “colored.”

The city’s growth engendered problems. Too much water posed all of the problems inherent with seasonal flooding, while too little challenged city officials to maintain a reliable supply as the population grew nearly eight-fold, from 7,295 in 1880 to over 53,000 in 1930. Despite opposition from critics who feared that creation of a reservoir would lead to “sickness and typhoid and would attract crap shooters, ukulele players and venereal bathers,” voters approved a city bonding referendum for $3.5 million in 1928, thereby launching construction of an earthen dam at the convergence of the forks of the Bosque River. The resulting Lake Waco immediately became the most reliable source of water in an area known to experience extended drought.

The impact of this eco-intervention cascades through the decades. The first version of the dam was completed in approximately one year and resulted in both improved flood control and in an apparent solution to the drinking water shortages looming before the growing city. As the lake filled, the construction firm responsible for the project crowed the dawning of a new day, describing it as the “crowning achievement of Waco’s 80 Years of Romantic History.” Owner W.E. Callahan made it sound so easy, saying “Waco had only to build a dam...in a crevice in the Bosque Hills, to form a basin
into which three rivers yearly pour 20 billion gallons of high grade water." It seemed like enough.

By 1950, recurring drought conditions and the desirability of hydroelectric power generation led city officials to consider a more ambitious project requiring the involvement of the Army Corps of Engineers. The damage wrought by the tornado of 1953 appears to have prompted Congressional action by influential Representative Bob Poage (D-11th District) and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (D-Texas). The expansion itself would take a decade, from the design and budgeting stage in 1956 to the dedication of the new dam in September 1965. The newly established Brazos River Authority not only envisioned a major expansion of Lake Waco from the construction of a new hydroelectric dam, it signaled the beginning of twenty years of escalating federal involvement in local affairs.

A fruitful relationship between Congressman Poage and LBJ facilitated a steady flow of federal money to Waco. On more than one occasion, Johnson saw to it that appropriations for Waco projects exceeded the requests of local officials. In July 1958, a day before the groundbreaking ceremony for the new dam, Johnson confirmed to Mayor Joe Ward and Chamber of Commerce President H.M. Fentress that he secured $1.8 million for construction, not just the $1 million approved by the House in accordance with the original request.

As nature and human intervention changed the landscape of this deeply segregated Central Texas city in the 1950s, Sandtown felt the blades and backhoes of heavy equipment. Within five months of the devastating tornado, in October 1953, community activists like Almarie Bulloch Blaine and Mardell Armstrong, white women
deeply involved with their Council of Church Women, established the Latin American Christian Center at 1618 Clay Street in South Waco. Armstrong, the first president of this organization, recalled “the greatest need at that time was a nursery and kindergarten for Latin American children.”\(^{34}\) Blaine pinned down the nature of the challenge bluntly, noting “there was no place for the Latin American child to go and get preschool education.”\(^{35}\) By 1956, the successful center received half of its annual funding through the United Fund.

The efforts of Blaine and Armstrong represent the impact of the religious community on children who would, in many cases, transition to a public school setting. One should not underestimate the significance of religious institutions in the fabric of the neighborhood. Whites established the Latin American Christian Center, but Mexican Americans also responded to the increased needs of the community. Margie Lopez Cintron emphasized the prominence of the church as an expression of solidarity for Waco’s Mexican American residents. Born in 1956, Margie spent her early childhood on the locally infamous “Calle Dos,” the red light district on Second Street. At one time, she observed, “Saint Francis Church was the prominent Catholic Church for Hispanics because the masses were done in Spanish. In 1956, when people started locating to south Waco, enough people located there where they started Sacred Heart Church.”\(^{36}\) This church construction project proved central to the identities of a significant segment of Waco’s Mexican American population.

In addition to churches, locally-owned businesses served as anchors to the community. In the case of Carol Duron’s family, the grocery store they operated called “El Progreso” at the corner of Second and Jefferson since arriving in Waco in 1920,
actively rallied support for the project. The construction of the church began with five families, who decided, she recalled, “to ask each family to donate one hundred bricks—each family for starters. And like my aunt said, ‘Papa Marcial,’ meaning our grandfather, was never going half way on anything. He said, ‘I’m going to give you one hundred bricks for each member of my family.’ And so, he donated one thousand bricks for the starters of the church.” After several years of community-based effort, the volunteers saw their church dedicated in October, 1931. Along with the schools (and some were both), these buildings served as community hubs in distinctive ways. In their own ways, as institutions they also represent the power and inertia of tradition. Significantly, the issues faced by the Mexican American community, either in isolation or in collaboration with Anglos or African Americans, resulted in the emergence of leaders who knew the political terrain.

Changes in the physical landscape affected the political landscape, and *vice versa.* In the wake of the tornado and the dam expansion, the combination of Congressman Poage’s leverage with Lyndon Johnson with the engagement of community leaders spurred Waco into what could be considered an early phase of federally-assisted urban renewal, anticipating some of the Model Cities and Community Action programs of the Great Society era. The documents created by urban planners contracted by the City of Waco from the late 1950s through the 1970s confirm the growing importance of Mexican American civic leaders in the planning process. For the first time, Anglos brought them into the circle of a strategic planning process that led to a successful bonding referendum for urban renewal in 1958. Wacoan Tomas Arroyo recalled serving on one of the first of these planning committees and conducting on-site inspections. “And we went all over
the community around here—First and Third to Fifth Street, I believe, house by house to see the conditions that people was in. It was awful." Arroyo and Calderon were among many Mexican Americans in Waco whose activism grew out of not only the political and cultural challenges of their environment, but by those of nature itself. The chain of events illustrates how local and federal initiatives intertwine with geography, altering housing patterns and thereby changing school attendance zones, as well.

Mutual aid organizations ("mutualistas"), such as Waco’s Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana del Jornaleros ("journeymen") at 2009 Flint Street served as the vehicle for channeling funds from the Campaign for Human Development (CHD) of the United States Catholic Conference. Mutualistas assisted newly arrived Mexicans, especially in urban settings, since the 1920s. Aid to these individuals and their families came in the form of referrals for jobs, housing, health care and a host of relocation needs faced by the immigrants. Faced with greater needs than ever, in 1971 Robert Aguilar, a figure central to the increased visibility of Waco’s Mexican American population in civic affairs, submitted a proposal to the Campaign for Human Development on behalf of the Sociedad Mutualista seeking $754,693, plus $85,450 a year for the next three years.39

The data collected for the application serves as a snapshot of the socio-economic conditions facing Waco’s Mexican American population in the early 1970s. One quarter lived below the federal poverty level, but 50% lived below the CHD standard of household income of $5,000 per year. Another generation victimized by poverty seemed assured by dismal figures concerning the education of Mexican American children in Waco. With a dropout rate of 48%, seven times than of the general population (including African American students), Mexican American children completed, on average, 8.1
grades in school, compared to the overall level of 11.7 grades. Mexican American families earned 72% of the city’s median income of $8,197, or just $5,878.  

A New Generation of Leadership

In 1967, frustration with the pace of change led to the establishment of a new organization, the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans. Incorporated in August 1969, the Alliance advocated for the social, economic and civil rights of Mexican Americans. One of their strategies, supported by years of experience around soft money due to their engagement in Waco’s urban renewal projects, involved aggressive pursuit of grants. The introductory material accompanying grant applications contains phrasing influenced by the ethnocentric rhetoric of La Raza Unida Party (RUP). It is information aimed at securing funding prepared largely by the same individual, Robert Aguilar. Showing sensitivity to his audience, Aguilar credited the cohesiveness of the Mexican American family unit as the factor enabling “La Raza to maintain its cultural identity which has served as a survival mechanism.” In his appeal for funding, he quickly disclaimed any real gains made from government programs in recent years, noting, “in the past five years over $50,000,000 has been spent in federal, state, and local programs. Despite the efforts of the Alliance, only a token amount went to help La Raza.” His solicitation for aid also contains an indicator of the changing political culture. A backlash against federal intrusiveness gathered steam in early 1970s, resulting in some changes in the Nixon and Ford administration in the handling of federal aid. Aguilar observed, “At a time of decentralization by the federal and even state agencies and the rise of revenue sharing, it
is important that the Mexican American speak up for his share of the programs if he is to survive as a person, a culture, and as a family.  

Robert Aguilar cited LBJ’s declaration of War on Poverty in 1964 as the impetus behind his decision to become politically active. At that time, the twenty year old Aguilar had spent his entire life in South Waco, residing for all but one of those years at the family’s home at 1608 Webster. He benefited from the work done by Almarie Blaine and Mardell Armstrong’s Latin American Christian Center at 13th and Webster, where he attended preschool. Blaine’s observation that the “biggest problem the Latin American child had was the language barrier” applied to young Robert. The transition to public school at Bell’s Hill Elementary on Cleveland Street proved daunting, as Aguilar recalled:

There were English speaking teachers and Spanish speaking teachers, but Spanish was still my first language and it hurt me when I got to elementary because they put me in third level reading, which was the lowest reading there was—one level above mental retardation. And they kept me in that third level for six years.

Overcoming odds which found 75% of his fellow Mexican Americans dropping out of school, Aguilar persevered, graduating in 1962 from Waco High School with painful memories of lice checks and insensitive educators. From earliest days in elementary school, where his teacher characterized Spanish as a “stupid language” and punished him for using it, through high school, where “everything was slandered against the Hispanics so we had no roots in this country,” he felt teachers resented his very
Aguilar considered his 6th grade teacher his favorite, "the only one...that really spent some time with me."

In terms of his political maturation, the War on Poverty inspired Aguilar and parental activism, such as his father’s involvement in the Viva Kennedy movement in 1960, also clearly influenced his commitment to social change. "In fact, I joined LULAC in my junior year in high school...I stayed a LULAC member for almost twenty years," but, later, he continued, "...they were too conservative for me...slow to move."

Evidently, Aguilar’s view of LULAC reflected a growing generational rift within the politically-minded Mexican American community in Waco. Like their restless white and African American counterparts, the spirit of liberal activism called for action.

Among those answering the call was Ernest Calderon, a prominent Waco activist who served as State Treasurer for La Raza Unida Party in the early 1970s, became interested in politics in the 1960 presidential campaign and credits the Viva Kennedy clubs as the “seed” of a more politicized generation. In late 1962, Calderon learned of efforts to establish a chapter of Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organization (PASSO). Kennedy’s election made a difference, he said. "...the Kennedy clubs were so successful that they felt there had to be something to take its place as an ongoing thing."

He rose to chair of the McLennan County chapter in 1965. Working within the Democratic Party structure, because, Calderon said, "historically that’s where we were,” Mexican Americans in Waco entered into precinct and county-level for the first time on an organized basis. Like so many of the Chicano generation, Calderon experienced the political process on a personal level for the first time. "I’ll never forget the first time we went to a precinct convention here,” he recalled. "I think it was five of us controlled the
precinct. It shows the apathy on these things. Here's a precinct of eighteen hundred voters and five can control the precinct convention."\(^{48}\)

Addressing the significance of the generational differences within the Mexican American community, Calderon speculated, “I think probably it was because the older people who were involved in PASSO...were merely giving lip service that the young people picked the interest up...and I think it was about this time that MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) started getting pretty active.” Calderon points to the Del Rio Manifesto of 30 March 1969 as a pivotal event in the minds of activists who decided the traditional two-party system did not address their issues. Calderon found it possible to be “a staunch Democrat but...relate to some of the people in the MAYO group and subsequently the Raza Unida group.”\(^{49}\)

Spurred by idealism, leaders within the emerging “Chicano generation” in Waco quickly gained experience, albeit not without friction with the establishment. Calderon refers to this period as a time of “growing pains,” due in part to procedural hurdles. A visit to the McLennan County courthouse by a long-haired or bearded member of the fledgling La Raza Unida party to file papers or simply to obtain information could result in a confrontation. “You know what kind of reception the guy’s going to get. He’s going to be thrown out of there. They couldn’t approach the officials of the city or county without being harassed because of their appearance.”\(^{50}\)

The recollections of Waco resident, Margie Lopez Cintron shed more light on the complexity of the changes occurring within the Mexican American community, many of which faced Anglo and African American baby boomers. Like white or black “radicals,” who faced communication issues with their Depression-era parents, differences involving
both style and substance emerged in many Mexican American families. Reflecting on her upbringing, Cintron recalled, "You know, there was a language barrier between the generations." Her parents were both "punished severely for speaking Spanish in school. Because my father and mother were punished severely, the generation that I'm in—we lost the Spanish language." By the time Margie entered University High School, "it was in the Seventies. The Hispanics...were embarrassed to have anybody think they knew Spanish..." Not unlike the role rock or soul music played in the politicization of whites and blacks, Cintron credits Tejano music, in part, for an awakening of ethnic pride in her generation. But you know, Tejano music made its way back into our culture and it was something that was, I think, interesting and made us proud..."

Building a cross-generational coalition proved difficult for other reasons, especially when religion and church teachings faced challenges on issues like abortion rights. Sherrill J. Smith, who served as a priest in Crystal City in the 1970s, recalled the efforts of his predecessor to bring wayward sheep back into the fold. From what Smith learned, the Italian clergyman, a very conservative man, spoke English and Spanish, and Italian, of course, but was...totally unsympathetic to La Raza Unida. He had some of the kids in and talked to them. The kids were Catholics who were leading it. The people around him, who were really running the parish with him—every parish had those layfolk, you know, were all on the other side. If they were Mexicanos, they were opposed to La Raza Unida, and there were a good number of Anglo Catholics opposed to it."
The political fault lines were many, so power resided in the hands of community leaders with the skills to assemble and maintain coalitions of interests despite their almost amoebic tendency to divide into rival factions. As Pycior discussed in *LBJ and the Mexican Americans*, by the late 1960s, many Mexican Americans believed that federal anti-poverty programs gave disproportionate attention to the problems of African Americans at the expense of Mexican Americans. From Aguilar’s perspective, “to the Anglo, poor means being Black…,” so Great Society programs “were designed of Blacks and staffed by either Blacks or Blacks and Anglos. “Consequently, Aguilar concluded, “we had to get into the business of operating programs ourselves if was to be done at all to help.”54 As events progressed in Waco ISD in the early 1970s, the leaders of the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans found themselves being courted by the Board of Trustees as potential allies in the increasingly complex political culture of the district.

**Waco ISD and the Alliance**

In the case of a letter sent by the Waco ISD Board of Trustees to the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans in December 1973, the language suggests the extension of an olive branch. In her letter to Julian Vasquez, a leader in the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans, M. M. McRae expressed gratitude for their “contributions to the partial restoration of confidence in public education” in the community. Collaboration that autumn with Charles Thorna, WISD’s Director of Federal Programs, had led to the
submission of an application for funding under the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) that would “complement the basic ESAA proposal” prepared by the district itself. Mrs. MacRae’s letter characterizes the school system as the victim of the heavy-handedness of an encroaching federal government:

So, in the wake of a traumatic experience following the school district’s efforts to implement a Federal Court Order, requiring massive reorganization of our entire educational plan and program, it seemed natural and proper to ask representative, straight-thinking, and direct-talking people to come to our aid.55

Perhaps nobody knew the troubles she had seen as President of the WISD Board, but Mrs. MacRae’s letter masks the avoidance behavior of the district dating back to U.S. Supreme Court’s desegregation ruling in 1954. The havoc wreaked by the tornado in 1953 that resulted in a small scale diaspora of Waco’s poorest families also triggered disruptions in school attendance patterns by African American and Mexican American children in schools serving downtown neighborhoods. Although these circumstances affected where hundreds of pupils would attend classes, the school district’s own official history, published in the bicentennial year of 1976, does not address the situation.

The language used in History of the Waco Public Schools insinuates that the federal government created, in effect, a disturbance of the peace. The longest journey, which in this case lasted almost two decades, began when the Waco Board “like so many other communities, started to work with its problem of implementing the 1954 decision, that the separate but equal idea was
unconstitutional."\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{Brown} decision came six years after the \textit{Delgado v. Bastrop} in 1948, when U.S. District Court Judge Ben H. Rice of the Western District of Texas sustained LULAC's argument that separate schools for Mexican American children were unconstitutional.\textsuperscript{57}

Wilbur Ball, President of McLennan Community College when it opened in Waco in 1972, laughed when he remembered how his tiny community of 800 people dealt with diversity prior to \textit{Delgado}. He experienced the Great Depression as an elementary school student in the town of Berclair, located about 200 miles south of Waco in Goliad County. “We had the Mexican school, we had the Negro school and we had the white school. Three! And, of course…when the integration of the Mexican American into the so-called white schools happened, it was a much more serious thing and harder to do than integration of the blacks later.”\textsuperscript{58} Perhaps Ball’s laughter acknowledged, from his perspective as a school administrator, the inefficiency of such an operation. Or, perhaps verbalizing how much conditions had changed simply amazed him and elicited a laugh. The Tejanos and Mexican Americans of Goliad historically outnumber the African American population by a significant margin, as much as 7:1, hence Ball’s recollection of the relative difficulty of the integration process in the school district.\textsuperscript{59} The very history of Goliad, site of a legendary massacre in the formative stages of the Texas Republic, could significantly color relations between local Anglos and residents of Mexican ancestry.

The culture and climate of a school building derive not only from policies and programs, but also from its location, because these factors cannot be divorced
from the history and geography of the school setting. In Waco in the 1950s, when Robert Gamboa attended the partially-integrated Sul Ross Elementary School (Mexican Americans and Anglos together, with no African American students), the teachers touched his life in a manner he fondly recalled fifty years later as “unbelievable.” From these teachers, Gamboa experienced “warmth, the encouragement, the ability to accelerate,” even though none of them shared his heritage. “There was not one African American teacher; there was not one Hispanic or Mexican American teacher. All my teachers were Anglo. And it didn’t matter.”

But after promotion to junior high level, trouble set in, shocking the young Gamboa. As he recalled, “…the racial prejudice that existed that I truly…didn’t realize it existed.” Speaking to a friend in Spanish one day while walking through the hallways of South Junior High, Gamboa found himself on the receiving end of “brutality.”

…I felt a hand literally wrap around my throat and another hand to get one of the belt loops in the back of my pants and literally lifted me. It was the assistant principal…he said, ‘Boy, didn’t we tell you not to speak that shit here?’ And I promptly got several licks with the paddle all because I spoke Spanish. You know, that’s the oddity of it. I never once was corrected at South Junior by any of the teachers about my language ability or capability.60

These examples illustrate the variance in patterns of discrimination not only within a school district, but within a school building. Policies issued from on high, even
when legitimized by the trappings of democratic institutions, stand or fall by the actions taken by individuals (teachers) at the operational level. More importantly, they highlight how a school can become subdivided into zones of relative safety or danger for students. Within a school, students communicate to one another about their teachers. Gamboa’s experience reminds us of the power of individual action within an institutional setting.

The importance of decisions involving the hiring and assignment of teachers, then, cannot be overestimated, whether school policies call for segregation or integration. Waco ISD Superintendent Avery Downing began the portion of the integration process that garners insufficient attention by scholars of the civil rights era; that is, the integration of school faculties. The first court order directing WISD to integrate schools came in 1963, but it did not address faculty issues. According to the district’s official history, by the 1965-66 school year only eleven WISD faculty members taught “on an integrated basis,” a phrase left unexplained. By January 1971, the district initiated a more extensive plan to integrate the faculty, but by that time two lawsuits, one filed by African American parents and the other by Mexican Americans, charged Waco Schools operated a “dual school system...with schools left racially identifiable.”

The mobilization of an increasingly politicized Mexican American community to put pressure on the Waco Schools began the previous spring. Charles Gonzales stood before the WISD Board of Education on 21 May 1970 as President of the Alliance of Mexican Americans, which he claimed “represents the largest segment of organized Mexican Americans.” Gonzales called for reform, maintaining that “most of the problems are also those that plague the Negro and the poor White in some manner or another.” Gonzales highlighted several areas of concern, including the school lunch

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program, counseling services and teacher qualifications, but then pointed specifically to
issues limiting the success of Mexican American students. He grounded his argument in
his role as a parent. “As you know,” he told the Board, “We are not educators, but we see
our children having problems.”62 By first calling attention to the common needs of all of
the district’s children, Gonzales displayed keen political skills and modeled an approach
of constructive confrontation that the Alliance would follow in years to come.

Perhaps Mr. Gonzales knew that a representative of the Waco Classroom
Teachers Association, Mrs. Ollie Posey, listened as several of his sharpest criticisms
struck at her membership. In addition to personnel issues such as hiring practices,
teacher training and supervision, Gonzales continued, “We are not saying there is
discrimination. We are saying there is complacency, apathy and indifference...”63
Gonzales asked, in effect, whether anyone cared who taught the children. He turned one
of the gravest concerns among teachers; that parents are disinterested in the progress their
children make in school; on its head. Speaking on behalf of the Alliance, he urged the
Board and the Administration of the Waco ISD to see high drop-out rates, low grades
among those still in school as indicators of a problem with teacher quality. Then
Gonzales recommended solutions:

There should be a method to periodically check on the qualifications of the
teachers and we do not mean their academic achievements. We want their
productiveness checked. Teachers with master degrees who cannot relate
or communicate their knowledge to youngsters is like having the blind
leading a person with 20-20 vision. The youngsters can learn, but teachers
must be able to teach. We want to suggest that teachers should be moved
and not stagnate in areas where the people do not have their displeasures heard or they are unable to articulate their problems.64

If parents could not rely on the professionalism and basic humanity of the faculty, could they not rely on the school's administrators to monitor, to discipline, or to remove bad teachers? This public rebuke, aimed at the faculty and administration of Waco High School, represents the palpable tension between the many factions of the school community. Closing on a note that many teachers and principals would have agreed with, Gonzales called upon the Board to spend more money. Chiding them for their priorities, he said, “You did not bat an eye in raising our taxes for new buildings, how about raising our taxes for new levels of human achievement?” Gonzales stressed the importance of hiring bilingual aides “wherever needed” for elementary and junior high classrooms to “supplement the teachers in communicating instructions to the students… and we suggest you begin studying and implementing bi-lingual education where needed in the immediate future.”65 In this context, it seems Gonzales envisions bilingual programming as more than a strategy for teaching for learning. He sees it as a means to break down barriers to mutual understanding among teachers and students.

A few passages in Gonzales statement to the Board on behalf of the Alliance for Mexican Americans hinted at future political action, but they made no time specific demands. From the official minutes of the meeting, it appears all participants remained professional and businesslike. In fact, the minutes specifically mentioned that “Superintendent Downing expressed appreciation...for the fine manner in which their reports were prepared and presented.” The Vice President of the Board, a local Chevrolet
dealer named Gordon Rountree, "assured the visitors that the study of the reports would be discussed at a subsequent meeting."

The end of May brings the close of the school year in Texas. Teachers earning low salaries hustle for ways to make ends meet. The school business office gets ready to conclude one fiscal year while principals approve purchase orders for supplies billed to the next. The pace changes for administrators. During the summer, no Waco ISD administrator publicly contacted Charles Gonzales. Instead, Superintendent Avery Downing waited until 22 September 1970 to respond to the issues raised by the spokesperson for the Alliance four months earlier. Even before that spring meeting, Downing had a troubled career during a turbulent period in the school district. The worst was yet to come, as his response to Gonzales was not only far too late but far too little. His letter extends the barest courtesies in defending the district's performance. He begins by indicating that the idea for writing the letter germinated elsewhere. "I have been asked to give a report on the status of the main topics mentioned in your letter," Downing states. Detailing efforts to boost reading achievement scores in elementary schools, he informs Gonzales that "an allotment of $7 per pupil is spent to purchase reading materials for slow readers in disadvantaged school, a sum which is over and above the regular budget allotment for this activity."

Twice in his two page "report," Downing uses the term "Mexican-American." Both cases involve the issue of participation in school activities. The school principals tell him of "several instances of Mexican-American homeroom leaders, student council officers, cheer leaders, football heroes, and campus favorites." Nevertheless, just in case,
a committee of parents, teachers and students will review eligibility standards with "the whole idea...to remove real or imagined obstacles in the way of any worthy child..." The Superintendent closes by saying Gonzales’ criticisms last May led to doing a lot of soul searching and hope that the valid criticisms leveled at us can be eliminated or at least minimized and constructive suggestions for improvement adopted. Some of your questions, however, are judgment matters and whether we can satisfy all of our questioners remains in doubt.57

The contents of Downing’s letter strike a different tone than his remarks made five days earlier at a Board of Trustees meeting on 17 September, a Thursday afternoon. The Board’s agenda routinely included an item listed as “Superintendent’s Reports and Recommendations.” During this portion of the meeting, Downing introduced a student named Ernest Gamboa, indicating that earlier in the week, on Monday, Ernest and two classmates from Waco University High School requested that the school set aside two hours on Wednesday for “a workshop to educate Mexican-American students on their heritage and culture.”68 Perhaps sensing trouble, Downing stated for the record that he had assembled as many Board members as he could that Monday to confer with high school administrators about the request. After conferring, they convinced Ernest Gamboa to present his request to the Board of Trustees that Thursday, September 17, rather than to make the decision about the potentially controversial workshop request without the opportunity for the full Board to consider the matter.

The minutes of meeting on 17 September 1970 refer to a reaction by “a number of Mexican American adults,” who then presented their opposition to the kind of program
Gamboa and his classmates proposed. The minutes do not specify the nature of their concerns, but this very public exposure of the generational divisions within the Waco Mexican American community hints at turmoil among family members and at the friction between friends and neighbors over the student demands. One might suspect that the solutions Gonzales outlined months earlier had not gone far enough for the more militant Chicano students. For less politicized members of the Mexican American community, such as local businessman, Manuel Sustaita, a dollars and common sense outlook about getting involved in school affairs influenced their behavior in this difficult period. Sustaita’s political activism took the form of involvement with the newly formed Cen-Tex Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which promoted business opportunities for Tejanos and Mexican Americans. Trouble in the schools meant trouble for business, in his view. “We are certainly concerned, just like the Waco business community is concerned about bringing the issue to rest. We are supposed to be bringing new industry to Waco and any time a company looks at Waco and sees we can’t seem to find a solution to this problem, they have to wonder whether this is where their employees need to be living.”

Sustaita’s perspective, along with the reaction of the audience at the Board of Trustees’ meeting, suggest a significant level of concern among more conservative members of the Mexican American community that emergent leaders in the Chicano movement did not speak for all. The Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans faced the challenge of keeping a coalition of interests together to remain a viable force in community affairs. The decision by the Waco ISD Board of Trustees to table action on Ernest Gamboa’s proposal, “until the Mexican American group could come up with a
joint plan for the Board’s consideration,” shows the Board’s sense that time favored the institution over the insurgent.⁶⁹

The energies channeled into the Alliance continued to build as the school district struggled to confront the backlog of issues left by its segregationist history. The Alliance did not wait for Downing to set upon a course of action. In the months prior to Downing’s response the Alliance moved ahead with their own strategies to increase the graduation rate of Mexican American children. By October, their representatives met with the City of Waco’s Human Relations Commission, asking the officials to verify that the City’s “integration system” matched guidelines set by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. They urged the Commissioners to fund programs designed to “motivate youths to further their education.” Victor Rodriguez spoke on behalf on the Alliance, later joined by Robert Garibay, identified by the Waco Herald-Tribune the next day as “a local businessman and Mexican American activist.” Both men sought to advance bilingual and bicultural understanding. They also raised a new topic, questioning the failure of school or city officials to notify any families about the new attendance boundaries that would accompany the opening of the new Jefferson-Moore High School. The newspaper reported that “the ultimate goal in their argument was to ‘prevent a Negro-Mexican school.’”⁷⁰ Under pre-Chicano era constructs of race and ethnicity, LULAC and the G.I. Forum pressed the case that Mexican heritage entitled one to the privileges of whiteness, setting the stage for school officials to consider meeting court orders based on the black-white binary by grouping the two minorities.

Whether by coincidence or by design, two guests joined the Human Relations Commission for its next meeting on 5 November 1970. The Chair introduced
Superintendent Downing and John Faulkner, President of the WISD Board of Education, then declared the floor open for questions. After some give and take with Robert Garibay about the merits of conducting a valid study of the dropout problem, Rabbi N. Podet of the Commission suggested the formation of a group to look at the merits of such a study, including identification of potential sources of funding. The minutes of the meeting note a statement by Garibay to the effect that “if a child failed in school, it was the teacher’s fault.”\textsuperscript{71} As it turned out, the suggestion by Podet led to a resolution of the immediate question of how to pay for a proper study.

In March 1971, the Human Relations Commission announced receipt of a grant from the Cooper Foundation to conduct a dropout study focused on Waco public school students, a step all parties believed necessary. Professor Lawrence G. Felice of the Sociology Department at Baylor conducted the research and submitted his findings in 1973. The Alliance included the data with its application for ESAA funds in November 1973. From the perspective of the Alliance, the findings “brought to light the great disparity that exists between the achievement levels of minority groups as opposed to those of the more affluent. It also found that the highest drop-out rate and the lowest achievement level existed among Mexican American students.”\textsuperscript{72}

The threat of litigation materialized with a lawsuit filed 12 August 1971. Armed with data from the “Drop Out Rates in the City of Waco Public Schools” report, the plaintiffs took their case to the U.S. District Court of Judge Jack Roberts. The case known as Pete D. Arizu, Et Al v. Waco Independent School District (Civil Action # W-71-CA-72) found the Judge concentrating on staffing patterns and the administration’s use of its power to recruit or transfer teachers in the interest of diversity. His ruling
against the Waco ISD, handed down 27 July, 1973, the fourth intervention by the federal judiciary since 1963, reflects the power of the testimony of Mexican American students and parents.

Roberts directed WISD officials to file reports with the Court on or about January 15 and July 15 of each year including information about “progress regarding recruitment and assignment of black and Mexican American personnel in the faculty, staff and administration.” Implying the existence of some constraints on the administration’s ability to reassign personnel, Judge Roberts stated in Part II of his ruling that “the administration must be given some latitude in assignment of principals and teachers to those schools most drastically affected who are considered especially qualified to facilitate an orderly transition with a minimum of disruption of the school routine.”

Further research into the contractual status of the WISD faculty may shed some light on what obstacles district administrators faced, as this would not be the first time adjustments in teaching assignments constituted a partial remedy. The parties, i.e., the Alliance of Mexican Americans and the district administrators were directed to collaborate on the design and implementation of innovative strategies to build tolerance and mutual respect within each school and the community it serves.

Highlighting the central role of language in the relationship between Spanish-speaking families and the English-speaking homes of Anglos and African Americans, Roberts ordered the school district to “continue to improve and expand its program of bilingual and bi-cultural activities.” Specifically, Roberts ordered that efforts will be made to acquire supplemental funding from the emergency school aid program and other areas to develop curricula, continue to seek
consultative assistance and involve more participation. The district will also conduct faculty and staff workshops to minimize the effects of any discriminatory practices and/or attitudes.

This judicially-mandated collaboration generated complementary grant proposals by the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans and the Waco ISD to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) for Emergency Aid, a category they qualified for due to the court order.

The resulting application under the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) offers significant evidence of the agency of a distinctive coalition of left-center interests in the Waco Mexican American community. The cover sheet for the application lists Pedro D. Arvizu of 1705 S. Park Avenue as the contact person and Chairman of the Alliance of Mexican Americans, but the sixty-two page document itself probably involved the work of several other individuals. Undoubtedly, the effort to “make it feasible for minority individuals in University High School and concomitant feeder schools to re-enter the educational mainstream and become full and enlightened participants in the total educational system” spearheaded by the Alliance with the support of several other organizations, represented the kind of coalition-building the federal grant writing process engendered. Local activists who could find sufficient common ground to get into the flowing stream of federal money available to community-based groups since the Great Society years learned to work the system.
Learning the System from the Inside

Fulfillment of the HEW guidelines required the establishment of a citizen advisory group as part of the planning process for the preparation of grant applications. Two categories of participants were needed, six students and six adults, each comprised of two whites, two African Americans, and two Mexican Americans. Selection conferred a degree of recognition for one’s contributions or prominence, as well as the individual’s acceptability to the selectors. In theory, such a cross section of stakeholders assured that diverse voices and opinions would yield better proposals.

Taken as a whole, the brief profiles submitted by the individuals selected suggest that the selection process used to determine participants in the Advisory Committee, whether intentionally or not, screened out more militant members of the community who would self-identify as Chicanos. As originally envisioned, assurance of grassroots involvement in plans for use of federal money came in the form of advisory groups comprised of stakeholders. Each of these federally required demonstrations of inclusion holds great potential for building legitimacy for the project under consideration. The identification and selection of representatives of stakeholder groups seated at the table, being the basic step, involves the exercising of considerable power. By the time of his involvement with this project, Robert Aguilar was an experienced community organizer with demonstrated credentials as a grant writer.

If these participants were more than token representatives, the group assembled appeared to hold great potential. For example, Neomi Adams, a member of the Cabrera Neighborhood Council, brought over forty years of teaching experience in the rural La
Vega and Lorena school districts. Adams continued to dedicate her life to children by volunteering to help with the Campfire Girls in her neighborhood near 21st and Bagby Avenue. “All my work was in segregated schools,” she confided on the information sheet advisory committee members complete prior to service. Then, as if to say she understands the realities facing Mexican American children, she shares, “My work with the Campfire girls has brought me in contact with many families of our area.”75

Another member, Chuck Rose, a disabled veteran, represented LULAC on the advisory council. After moving to Waco in 1961, he and his family became active in youth sports programs and scouting. Residing at 1600 Holly Vista, the Rose children attended school at Kendrick Elementary, Sul Ross Elementary, University Junior High and University High. Rose served as a Board member of the Equal Opportunities Advancement Corporation, as he had done for the previous three years. He expressed hope that, “by involving the parents in the activities we will get the student’s interest. Now we can put some help where it is needed- with the student and the parent.”76

A seat on the council designated for a “parent at large” went to Ernest Fajardo of 3417 Wood Street. Fajardo’s involvement in community improvement efforts would make him an obvious choice for an advisory body of this kind. Like Chuck Rose, Fajardo’s children know these schools and their experiences, good and bad, contributed to parental activism. Fajardo stated, “My community involvement has brought me in contact with the school board, city officials and school personnel.” People like Ernest Fajardo, active with the local Parent-Teacher Association, a volunteer at places like the Cabrera Neighborhood Center, play vital roles within segments of the population most
likely to be politically active, especially in school elections. As a member of LULAC’s Scholarship Committee, he knew the qualities to look for in Waco’s youth. 77

Students like Tracye McDaniel represented the teenage perspective on dropout prevention, as seen from her vantage point as Student Council Secretary and circulation manager of the school newspaper. McDaniel’s experiences as a tutor for second grade students opened her eyes, as she put it, “the community really does need a tutoring system to help the children that are behind.” 78

To seasoned grant writers now familiar with the mindset of readers at HEW after almost ten years of Johnson-begotten federal aid to education programs, the advisory groups could also be perfunctory. This appears to be the case in Waco. Neomi Adams, Chuck Rose and Ernest Fajardo may have contributed a one-page information sheet, but none of the three attended either of the two meetings of the Committee. The evidence available to this researcher suggests the ESAA advisory group played no meaningful role in the conception, design or formulation of the plans to spend $178,922.

The group the Alliance assembled met for the first time on 12 November 1973. The minutes of the meeting show seven of the twelve individuals named to the committee in attendance. As President of the Alliance, Robert Aguilar reviewed for the small group how the Federal Register specified the composition of the Advisory Committee. Aguilar explained the Committee’s charge to “review the proposal developed from the defined needs and make comments which would become part of the proposal.” The group then brainstormed a list of “Problem Areas.” The minutes show a list of nineteen areas of concern, all of which centered on barriers to success faced by adolescents at school and in the community at large. As a follow-up activity, the group identified seven needs:
dropout prevention, tutorial, cultural awareness, more counselors, school staff sensitizing, parent involvement in school and children, and educational information.

The official minutes of the ESAA Advisory Committee indicate the task of submitting a proposal for review and comment by the committee on Monday, 19 November 1973, fell to staff members. When the group met as scheduled, the only adults present all had ties to federal programs or to the school district; or both, as in the case of Charles Thomal, WISD’s Director of Federal Programs. Five students dutifully attended, hearing Mr. Thomal explain how the Alliance effort could best complement the school district’s proposal. Then Mr. Thomal excused himself to attend another meeting.

The application materials give 21 November—two days later—as the date of preparation. Based on the minutes of the two meetings of the ESAA Advisory Committee and on the twelve pages of Needs, Objectives, Activities and Evaluation accompanying the application, it appears the Committee served as a classic “rubber stamp,” not as a vehicle for the people’s voice to be heard. The fires of idealism still burned and frustration with the system still bred radicalism, but the body of energy expended by Mexican American organizations in Waco appears to have been largely attributable to a relatively small group of savvy, pragmatic politicos who knew how to navigate the currents of the Anglo system. They operated in an environment, after all, where Mexican Americans represented but 10% of the population.

As Rodriguez found in his study of the ties between the Chicano movements in South Texas and in Wisconsin in the 1960s and 1970s, pragmatic community leaders did not let ethnicity or gender stand in the way of mutually advantageous alliances. The introduction to the grant cites several local organizations the Alliance “has had liaison
with over the years;” specifically mentioning the Juvenile Achievement Center, the Methodist Home Child Guidance Center, the Neighborhood Centers’ Program, the Mexican American Educational Foundation, the Association of Locally Involved Volunteers in Education, and the Friends for the Pablo Bernal Library. Using a “War on Poverty” style metaphor, the application describes the common problems faced by all, which “have been significantly handicapped by lack of facilities, materials, staff and outreach personnel to substantially mount a frontal attack on the problem at hand.” 80

In order to justify the application for $178,922, the Alliance needed to demonstrate the shortcomings of the school district, such as the assertion that

the WISD problems are compounded by the fact that many individuals in the community, both students and parents, who, because of prior experiences have gradually perceived, whether correctly or incorrectly, an aura of negativism emanating from the school system and thus are unwilling, at this point, to actively participate in programs conducted by the schools. 81

Despite the blunt critiques of the Waco Schools dating back to at least 22 May 1970, the Alliance and WISD officials recognized their mutual interest in collaborating to obtain federal funding for a number of projects, including the one cited in this research, “Emergency Minority Remediation & Graduation Encouragement.” In some respects, the dreams of the Great Society liberalism had come true, with more places and faces at the policy-making table determining how to solve local problems with the help of federal resources. 82
Conclusion

The story of the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans opens a window on an aspect of the political culture from the Great Society era through the 1970s which finds federal aid programs providing leadership opportunities for members of minority groups. Arguably, the advent of significant federal funding for urban renewal and dam improvements at Lake Waco opened doors for representatives of the Mexican American community prior to the emergence of the Chicano movement. Consequently, dynamic individuals who would later form the core of the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans gained access to the corridors of power of community politics via programs advanced by Congressman Bob Poage and Senator Lyndon Johnson.

The social problems did not go away, but Robert Aguilar, Ernest Calderon, and others of similar talent and ambition moved into leadership opportunities within the system. They knew how to write grants to keep the flow of soft money coming in. The fires of idealism still burned and frustration with the system still bred radicalism, but the success of Mexican American organizations in Waco appears to have been largely attributable to a relatively small group of savvy, pragmatic politicos who knew how to navigate the currents of the Anglo system.

The experiences of Waco ISD and the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans demonstrate that there could be other avenues to bilingual education programming during the interval between enactment of BEA in 1968 and the Lau mandates in 1974-1975 besides applying for Title VII funds, as in the case of Waco ISD utilizing ESAA monies. This is significant because it means one cannot assume by reviewing the line items for
federal funding in a school budget that a zero in the revenue column under the Title VII (Bilingual Education) heading means the district offers no programming.

In the next chapter, the circumstances faced by the Southwest Michigan city of Kalamazoo in the 1960s and 1970s illuminate how a political culture in the Midwest responded to the realization that it now stood on the frontiers of bilingual education programming.
Notes to Chapter IV


2 This quotation from Johnson’s ringing address to Congress about the Voting Rights Act appears in most studies of his presidency. This comes from the recent study of LBJ’s relationship with Martin Luther King, Jr. by Nick Kotz, *Judgment Days* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 313.


4 Emmette S. Redford, ranscript of interview conducted 2 October 1968. File AC74-238. Oral History Collection, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX.


9 Ibid, 2.


16 The Winter Garden area of Texas includes seventeen heavily agricultural borderland counties.

17 Galveston has been called the Ellis Island of the Gulf Coast. Nearby Indianola played a similar role as a hub prior to Mother Nature’s rearrangement of coastal waterways.


22 Sam Ealy Johnson, Lyndon’s father, served three terms in the Texas House of Representatives. In 1917, with anti-German sentiments reaching fever pitch, the elder
Johnson offered a fierce defense of his German-American constituents and denounced proposed anti-German legislation. A few years later, the Red Scare combined with suspicion of what we might call “invasive species” today for Texas to mandate public schools to use English as the language of instruction at all levels, excepting high school foreign language classes.

23 An explanation of decisions regarding the use of the terms Mexican, Mexican American, Tejano/a, and Chicano/a may be useful. Individuals who families resided for many generations in the area known commonly as Texas whose physical appearance suggests a “mestizo” background of mixed Spanish (or other Caucasian) and Native American parentage. A Mexican lives on the Mexican side of the border with the United States. A Mexican American has family roots in Mexico, but resides in the United States. Local custom would dictate how long a Mexican American family would have to live in Texas to be considered Tejano.

24 At the Social Science History Association conference in Chicago, Illinois in November 2007, Brian Gratton of Arizona State University previewed a provocative new study of the settlement of region. Gratton’s work will challenge most interpretations since the Chicano Movement advanced the notion of Aztlan in the late 1960s and early 1970s.


26 Ernest Calderon, interview by Tom South, transcript of recording made 27 March 1973. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

28 Waco census figures available at:


and from the Handbook of Texas Online


The figure used for the 1930 census is problematic for reasons discussed earlier in the chapter.

29 Robert Gamboa, interview by Ali Clark, Mark Ruth, Amber West and Stephen Aston. Transcript of recording made 4 March 2006. Gamboa’s description is found on page 2 of the interview transcript. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.


32 Bob Poage was elected to the House of Representatives in the Roosevelt landslide of 1936 and remained a fixture in Congress representing Waco and its rural surroundings in the 11th District until 1979. Lyndon Johnson would join him in the House in 1937, where Johnson represented the 10th District.


34 Mardell Armstrong, interview by Mrs. Clifton Robinson, transcript of recording made 1 November 1976: 2. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.
35 Almarie Bulloch Blaine, interview by Jerrie Callan, transcript of recording made 13 November 1975. 46. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

36 Margie Lopez Cintron, interview by Elinor Maze, transcript of recording made 11 November 2006. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

37 Carol Duron, interview by Elinor Maze, transcript of recording made 11 November 2006: 3-8. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

38 Tomas Arroyo, interview by Rebecca Jimenez, transcript of recording made 2 June 1983: 14 Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

39 Data cited in Application for funding submitted to the Campaign for Human Development in document prepared by Robert Aguilar, Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

40 Ibid.

41 The State of Texas’ Secretary of State Office issued Charter # 265478 to the Alliance of Mexican Americans on 22 August 1969.

42 Aguilar, introduction to application for assistance from the Campaign for Human Development. Waco Organizations Box 2L169, Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

43 Blaine, interview, 46.
Robert Aguilar, interview by Thomas Charlton, transcript of recording made 19 September 2005. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX. Auguilar discusses his preschool through high school experiences on pages 3-25 of the transcript. The dropout data also comes from the application to the Campaign for Human Development submitted by Aguilar.

Ibid., 8

Ibid., 46-48.

Ernest Calderon, interview by Tom South, transcript of recording made 27 March 1973, 45-52. Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco TX.


Ibid., 82

Margie Lopez Cintron, interview by Elinor Maze, transcript of recording made November 11, 2006, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas. 11-12.

Ibid., 15


Cintron interview, 15


57 As Carlos Kevin Blanton explained in *Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004):114-116, the Texas State Department of Education allowed schools to use the “Inter-American Test in Oral English” to segregate students through first grade until a successful court challenge by LULAC and the G.I. Forum in *Hernandez v. Driscoll* in 1957, but the federal district court ruling by former Texas Governor James V. Allred did allow Spanish-speaking children to be tracked into different groupings based on “scientific” testing of individual students. For a summary of the Delgado ruling, see the Handbook of Texas online, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/DD/jrd1.html (28 June 2008).

58 Wilbur Allen Ball, interview by Thomas Charlton. Transcript of tape recording made 5 June 1974, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX. The discussion takes place on page 9 of the transcript.


60 Robert Gamboa, interview by Thomas Charlton. Transcript of recording made 11 November 2006, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas. Gamboa discusses elementary school on pages 6-9 of the interview. See pages 46-50 the junior high incident.


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Charles Gonzales, letter to Waco Board of Education dated 23 May 1970. Waco
Organizations Box 2L169 [Waco] Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas
Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco TX.

Document obtained via FOIA request to Waco ISD, Waco, Texas, as are all subsequent
references to minutes of the Waco ISD Board, which are kept at the district’s
administrative offices in Waco.

Charles Gonzales, letter to Waco Board of Education dated 23 May 1970. Waco
Organizations Box 2L169 [Waco] Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas
Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco TX.

Ibid.

Waco Independent School District. Minutes of Board of Trustees meeting on 21 May
1970.

Avery R. Downing, letter to Charles Gonzales dated 22 September 1970. Waco
Organizations Box 2L169 [Waco] Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas
Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

Waco Independent School District. Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting 17
September 1970.

Waco ISD, Ibid.

Waco Tribune Herald 16 October 1970. “Mexican Americans Request Review of
Integration Plan.” Vertical File, Texas Collection. Baylor University, Waco, TX.
Minutes of Human Relations Commission 5 November 1970. Waco Organizations Box 2L169 [Waco] Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

Alliance of Mexican Americans, from “Introduction and Philosophy” (Section IV, 9.) of their application for ESAA funds. Application dated 21 November 1973. Waco Organizations Box 2L169 [Waco] Alliance of Mexican Americans File, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.


Alliance of Mexican Americans, “Introduction and Philosophy,” 17

Neomi Adams, information sheet for advisory committee members contained with ESAA grant application by Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans. Waco Organizations Box 2L169, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

Chuck Rose, information sheet for advisory committee members contained with ESAA grant application by Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans. Waco Organizations Box 2L169, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

Ernest Fajardo, information sheet for advisory committee members contained with ESAA grant application by Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans. Waco Organizations Box 2L169, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.
78 Tracye McDaniel, information sheet for advisory committee members contained with ESAA grant application by Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans. Waco Organizations Box 2L169, Texas Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.


81 Ibid., 16.

82 Ibid., 17.
CHAPTER V

"MEXICAN LABOR IS MUCH IN EVIDENCE": LA ESCUELA, LA RAZA, Y EL MOVIMIENTO EN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

Mr. Jamie Garcia labeled himself as a Mexican-American. He said he was not black or white—he was brown. He said there is no brown representation in Kalamazoo. He said he did not want trouble; he just wanted to be seen, to be heard, and to be respected.

-- Minutes of the Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education meeting 30 September, 1968.¹

For the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), a moment of awakening occurred at the Board of Education meeting on 30 September 1968. One citizen after another confronted the trustees with charges of racism in the district’s classrooms. Amid this chorus of complaints about the treatment of African American students, the lone voice of Jaime Garcia, a student at Kalamazoo Central High School, challenged the Board to serve all students.

School closings due to outbreaks of racially motivated violence wracked the community that fall.² In April 1969, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) held hearings about race relations in the city of Kalamazoo. Although a mere handful of the testimonies from eighty-three individuals addressed discrimination experienced by Mexican Americans, the findings of the investigation published that September describe a city emerging from the cocoon of denial about the status of this growing residential

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population. According to the report issued by MCRC District Executive John R. Castillo in September 1969, “major institutions of the community—social services, education, business, industry, government—have not directed adequate attention to the Spanish-speaking population.” The investigation led to seventy-nine recommendations involving employment practices, law enforcement, housing, and education. Of these, four spoke directly to the growing Mexican-American population, but others clearly addressed more than just the African-American community, including the call by the MCRC for Kalamazoo Board of Education to negotiate a provision with the teachers’ union “that the employment screening committee include minority group members.”

These hearings and the subsequent report marked a pivotal moment in the diversification of the political culture of Kalamazoo. For Mexican American residents and activists organizing what could be characterized as a local Chicano movement, the MCRC findings symbolized the moment of recognition. For the staid city fathers, so preoccupied with tense race relations aggravated by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in April 1968, the growing chorus of voices insisting upon a place at the table represented one of the most difficult periods of the civil rights era. The public school system found this especially true. Heretofore virtually ignored by the Board of Education, the undeniable demographic trend in Kalamazoo presented a complex calculus for local decision makers and for their traditional constituencies.

This chapter presents a case study of how Mexican Americans in Kalamazoo created and took advantage of opportunities to assume their place as members of the policy-making community, emphasizing their role in the establishment of bilingual programming during a period of diversification in the local political culture. Attention
turns first to aspects of Michigan’s physical environment that heavily influenced settlement patterns for Mexican Americans. The landscape and climate of Michigan played a significant role in attracting thousands of migrant farm laborers (especially from Texas the peninsular state’s population to cultivate and harvest the fruits and vegetables to the Great Lakes State. Advances in crop yields and federal immigration policies favoring the preservation of cheap labor made the roads from the Rio Grande Valley to the Lake Michigan shoreline familiar to thousands of Mexican American families.

Next, analysis of the growth of the Mexican American community in Kalamazoo illustrates how community activists challenged the status quo, thereby changing the black-white binary of race relations in the city’s public bodies. The Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education meetings from the late 1960s throughout the 1970s served as town hall meetings wherein locally elected trustees frequently jousted with the audience and among themselves about race relations, busing, and multiculturalism. These meetings demonstrate the centrality of the school in the expansion of the political culture. Since the nineteenth century, election to the school board has been the springboard to a quest for higher office. Consequently, examination of the extraordinarily detailed minutes of these meetings in Kalamazoo reveals the hopes and fears of those times with crystal clarity. Finally, interactions between educators, interest groups and public officials in response to the expectations of concerned Mexican American citizens confirm that the Chicano movement in Michigan, one thousand miles from Aztlan, retained many of the goals and tactics of their brothers and sisters in Texas.
Factories, the Fruit Belt, and the Road to Michigan

Two peninsulas jut into the depths of one of the world’s largest concentrations of fresh water, where ancient glaciers gouged the earth almost one-quarter mile deep before receding to the Arctic Circle. In many ways, these Great Lakes define the cultural geography of Michigan by influencing climate and shaping land usage throughout most of the state. The west side of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula, given the major influence of Lake Michigan on the coastal weather patterns, constituted what became known by the late nineteenth century as the “Fruit Belt.” Extending eastward from Lake Michigan toward Kalamazoo, bounded roughly by U.S. Highway 131, this thirty mile wide microclimate alongside the lake provides ideal conditions for orchards, vineyards and berry patches.\(^4\) The highly perishable nature of these products requires seasonal spikes in labor requirements; a demand met by a supply of migratory farm workers that changed over time from primarily southern whites and African Americans into the 1960s, transitioning in subsequent decades to an overwhelmingly Mexican American labor force.

Prior to WWI, the number of Mexican Americans who lived or worked in Michigan, could be stated in hundreds, rather than thousands, regardless of the season. This would change with the combination of political turbulence and armed conflict in Mexico, including President Wilson’s interventions. These developments led some Tejanos to promote what historian Ben Heber Johnson referred to as a “revolution in Texas” from 1913 to 1919, while thousands more heard the call of Henry Ford’s factory whistles.\(^5\) Changes in the labor market driven by the Great War and its xenophobic
aftermath made Detroit’s economic engines churn out jobs by the thousands manufacturing automobiles and trucks, only to grind to a near halt when boom turned to bust. Considerable scholarly attention to Ford’s comparatively progressive outlook on hiring African-Americans overshadows the Ford Motor Company’s role in attracting Mexican-American laborers to Detroit.

Given the problematic aspects of working with census data on this population previously noted in this study, conflicting numbers emerge. For example, in their study of the Mexican-American experience in Michigan, historians Rudolph and Sonya Alvarado challenge the U.S. Census figures compiled in 1920 that lists 1,268 individuals born in Mexico living in Michigan. Citing contemporary sources describing the Mexican-origin population of Detroit as high as four thousand, the Alvarados challenged the figure of seven hundred used in the official count. Post-war repatriation cut this number by more than one-third. Contractions in the auto industry may account for a significant development in the use of Mexican labor in Michigan in 1922, as some of the unemployed turned to farm labor and food processing factories to fend off hunger. Within a few harvests, the mutual dependency flourished, with growers and processors firmly in place as the dominant partners.6 Despite a hostile environment, union-building efforts transcended any supposed industrial-agricultural divide. This represents an interesting formulation of the transmission of the labor movement deserving of further scholarly attention, as demonstrated in studies by Dionisio Valdes and Zaragosa Vargas.7

Accurate measurement of the population of residents of Mexican lineage proved challenging to the U.S. Census Bureau for a host of reasons. These included language barriers, intake worker’s biases, the transience of portions of the target population, and
changing views on whiteness within society as reflected in the changing categories used by the Bureau. As determined by the 1930 count, of a population of more than 4.8 million, 11,578 persons of Mexican descent lived in Michigan, with nearly 8,000 of these born in Mexico. Problematic as census-taking may be, there seems to be no problem sorting people out when it came time to deport. Despite the rapid growth of Detroit’s “Mexican quarter,” which grew to nearly 10,000 persons by 1930, another wave of deportations fueled by nativist sentiments inflamed by the Great Depression reduced their numbers by two-thirds over the next decade.

In addition to the Mexican-American families who moved to Motown to stoke raw materials and finished parts into the maw of the auto industry, another trend coincided involving employment opportunities in agriculture. Over the course of several growing seasons, the infusion of Mexican American labor, and increasingly their culture, became part of Michigan’s cultural geography. In 1940, the U.S. Census counted 3,694 Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan. In his study of farm labor in the Depression years, Paul S. Taylor described a similar phenomenon in the northeastern part of the state, often referred to as the “thumb:”

Each spring for nearly twenty years, some ten or fifteen thousand Mexicans have journeyed from Texas to Michigan to work in the sugar beet fields. Yet so quietly, one is almost tempted to say so mysteriously, is this migration effected that few, if any, people along the line of march have ever noticed the presence of the Mexicans passing north or returning south. Nor are these Mexicans normally observed in Michigan, for they work in the fields, not in the towns; in small family groups, not in one
mass. Many communities throughout the country, at the height of the season, are often wholly unaware of the presence in their midst of several thousand migrants.⁹

Protectionist trade policies of the federal government had encouraged major expansion of acreage for sugar beets, thereby drawing more Mexican Americans to Michigan. Sugar beets and related processing plants benefited from tariffs on imported sugar in the early twentieth century, when the Sugar Trust sweetened the coffers of political allies in Washington. The turn to a foreign policy driven by interests seeking overseas expansion produced an overseas empire capable of processing mountains of sugar. As the markets reacted to changing conditions, the challenging climate of northeastern Michigan found a crop to match its rigorous demands as a result. According the Claus A. Spreckels, President of the Federal Sugar Refining Company, in 1908 “nearly all the sugar beet plants are located in the Western states.”¹⁰ Despite Spreckels’ complaints that the tariff simply enriched the Trust, it also resulted in cultivation of more acreage in favorable conditions such as those of the Michigan “thumb” region. A staple crop of northern Michigan agriculture by the 1920s, according to a study conducted by geographer F. A. Stilgenbauer, the sugar beet industry played a key role in the Michigan economy, revitalizing the state’s northeastern region, then suffering from “industrial decline brought about by the ruthless exploitation of vast timber resources on which a large population once depended.”¹¹ Describing what twenty-first century reformers might call a “green revolution,” he noted changes on the cultural landscape of the Saginaw River basin attributable to the successful production of sugar beets, which

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created conditions of "general prosperity for the beet farmers and contentment among the laborers."\textsuperscript{12}

The system operating at the time Mexican laborers first worked Michigan beet fields typically found the individual farm family contracting with firms like the Michigan Sugar Company. Such companies would act as missionaries for the beet growers in that the representatives go into the industrial centers where these common laborers reside, present to them contracts offered by the farmers, and supervise the moving of the laborers and their household effects to the beet districts with a minimum amount of trouble and expense to the farmer. The hand labor on beets is very great and much labor has to be imported during the summer to care for the industry. Mexican labor is much in evidence in recent years. Child labor is utilized to some extent without injurious effects.\textsuperscript{13}

In her examination of the transition to Mexican American workers in the beet fields of Ohio, historian Barbara June Macklin directed scholarly attention to the implications of this change from a predominantly Polish American workforce. The climate in Michigan includes harsher winter conditions than Ohio, but the production cycle for beets follow similar patterns. In their comparatively stable places in the farm labor market, beet workers remain in the fields for a longer season than for most other crops almost always tended by migrant laborers. In Michigan, this meant from the preparation of the soil in May to seeding, thinning, through summer hoeing and topping, the demand for labor runs beyond the traditional fall harvest. This worked well for the owner, since beets could be brought in anytime from late September on into November.
because the beets were able to stay in the ground beyond the onset of freezing temperatures.\textsuperscript{14} According to Stilgenbauer, growers accommodated these laborers and their families by having them occupy “temporary movable quarters” from May to December. Some farmers provided horse-drawn cabins or “portable one-room shanties” to facilitate moving from one field to another.\textsuperscript{15} Due to the excellent soil drainage of the Saginaw Basin and because of the organic properties of the soil itself, the sugar beet does well in the “thumb” area of Michigan, near Saginaw Bay. The distinctive labor demands for this crop helps explain why Saginaw’s population of Mexican Americans remained second only to Detroit in the early decades of the twentieth century. A significant number of these migrating men, women, and children came from Texas.

After the dramatic population swings of the 1920s and 1930s, the accelerating wartime economy of the 1940s enabled many families to establish themselves in West Michigan cities. Soon, these men and women would comprise the boards and commissions of Mexican American interest groups of all kinds. Mutualistas appeared in virtually every Michigan city of 25,000 or more, as did LULAC chapters in the 1930s and GI Forum chapters in the late 1940s.\textsuperscript{16} A less settled life, however, befell the migrant farm workers. Assessing the plight of farm laborers in 1936, Paul Taylor solemnly acknowledged its impact on the young, witnessing how

migration cripples the education of the young. And in Texas practically no attempt at all has been made to enroll the children of migrants. Indeed, I know of school districts where Mexicans predominate, where in fact their nonattendance at school was preferred, so that the State aid given

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because of their presence in the district might be spent on the local white
American children.  

With the post-WWII demand for automobiles, the Mexican American population
in Detroit reached 25,000 by 1950, attracted by the opportunity for competitive wages
and benefits negotiated by the United Auto Workers (UAW). The experience of Robert
P. Mejia offers an example circular migration between Michigan and Texas. Born three
years after his parents left Mexico for Benavidez, Texas, he made the long journey to
Michigan to pick fruits and vegetables each summer from 1939 to 1944. Mejia’s parents
settled in Detroit when his father took a job with the Great Lakes Steel Foundry in
1944. Despite such opportunities in the industrial sector, by 1960 Michigan employed
more migrant farm workers than any other state than Texas. Yet even in the moment
when the living and working conditions of migrant workers came under national scrutiny,
attention focused on white and black farmer workers, not Mexican Americans.

Within a few weeks of John F. Kennedy’s victory over Richard Nixon in
November 1960, CBS reporter Edward R. Murrow presented a documentary on the
conditions facing migrant workers in the United States. Harvest of Shame concentrated
almost exclusively on the plight of latter-day versions of the mythical Joads of Oklahoma
and African Americans, giving scant attention to Mexican Americans, the portion of the
labor market which would soon become synonymous with the phrase “migrant worker.”
Michigan farm workers would not be rallied to political action until the Concerned
Citizens for Migrant Workers adopted tactics similar to those of the Obreros Unidos
(United Workers) used in Wisconsin in August 1966, when Jesus Salas led a ninety mile
march to the Capitol in Madison. The “March for Migrants” represented a fledgling
movement aimed at drawing attention to the plight of the thousands of laborers who would arrive in the spring. Salas timed the seventy-mile trek from Saginaw, the heart of beet country, to the Capitol in Lansing, to conclude on Easter Sunday. Evoking the potent symbolism of biblical resurrection, the marchers gathered at the steps below the Capitol dome to present "A Declaration of Grievances." Cesar Chavez and the UFW expressed solidarity through telegrams, as did New York Senator Robert Kennedy and Michigan Senator Philip Hart. These senators were allies of their Texas colleague, Ralph Yarborough, who, as discussed in Chapter 3, appeared to be the white knight for the cause of his Tejano and Mexican American constituents. Across the United States, and especially in the Midwest, new political realities took shape in response to the increased visibility of this segment of the population.

The change had not occurred overnight. Predating the Bracero program, Survey Graphic, published as a "Magazine of Social Interpretation," highlighted the new approach taken by the Texas State Employment Service (TSES). Estimating the number of migrant farm workers at 600,000, the agency attempted to direct the desperately needed human resource to where it could do the most good. In terms of the impact on the children of these migrants, schooling proved problematic for all concerned. Not all of these children faced language barriers, because these numbers include whites and blacks as well who lost their farms along with 60,000 other Texas families in the Depression years, but state officials estimated Mexicans comprised 60%. This contemporary account employs language flavored by nativist sentiments putting the struggle in context, for these Anglos were "driven by cold necessity...sucked into the
stream of crop-following workers. The Depression schooled millions of Americans on how the economic system, like nature itself, could devastate the landscape.

Documenting the new realities of American agriculture, journalist Lewis Nordyke congratulated his beloved Texas for “removing from the harvest the old idea of the honey pond and the fritter tree—a promised land combination many a weary soul has sought in vain.” State officials sought to manage the work force by steering them, in effect, from field to field as the rancher moves the herd, thereby creating a nomadic class of citizen that “thanks to a modern sort of round-up,” now made up a “new order.” Away from border towns and larger cities of south and southwest Texas, the seasons dictated the patterns of life. As Nordyke described it,

A cotton picker can start work in South Texas in June and ‘pick his way’ to the plains, where he can work until nearly Christmas. Then he can drop back to the valley and start cutting spinach and gathering vegetables in the winter garden.25

These seemingly rootless individuals placed the slightest burden on community services, but their labor enriched the large landowners. The decision by the TSES to hire Spanish-speaking employees facilitated a more targeted distribution of labor. These bilingual officials employed a variation of the “padron system” seen in immigrant communities and studied by immigration historians at least since the Rudolf Vecoli’s discussion of Italians in Chicago in the early twentieth century.26 an understanding with the “jefe,” the individual responsible for recruiting and organizing work crews. For example, faced with 4,000 laborers gathered around Dallas for the onion harvest, the
TSES arranged to redirect incoming workers, with the understanding the \textit{jefe} would guarantee sufficient labor supply to pick the onions.

In practice, the \textit{jefes} negotiated directly with the "government man." Farmers who tried to hire field hands faced refusal, pending guidance from the official. However seamless the flow of labor from one field to the next appeared in this formalized ritual, Texas did not operate in a vacuum. Competition for labor between states still existed, and migratory patterns long established by families influenced behavior. Despite the efforts of the TSES to "curb all useless migration of labor...thousands of workers still go annually to the beet fields of Michigan, Ohio, Nebraska, and Minnesota."\footnote{27}

Drawn first by agricultural labor opportunities, then, influenced by kinship, economic opportunity, or by the availability of a friendly place for worship, increasingly, Mexican American families like the Escobedos chose to settle in Michigan. In addition to Grand Rapids and Traverse City, Kalamazoo attracted many families to urban life in cities considerably smaller than Detroit. Others settled in smaller southwestern Michigan towns, such as Fennville, Lawrence, Coloma, and Paw Paw. School districts serving these communities experienced modest increases in enrollment of students coming from homes where Spanish predominated. In each of those elementary schools, there came a moment in the teacher's lounge when the topic conversation turned to the number of "Mexican kids we have this year that did not go back to Texas."\footnote{28}

To the extent that schools felt these demographic changes, attention had focused on the educational needs of migrant children. This proved true especially in rural districts where since New Deal programs first reached out to this population. Typical of federal programming in that era, the local political structure tended to define delivery of service.
The needs of these students were addressed, if at all, primarily by itinerant educators employed by regional educational bureaucracies known in Michigan as Intermediate School Districts (ISD). Rather than a classroom assignment lasting a traditional school year, these teachers typically worked part-time “on site.” For years, classroom teacher in the local elementary school in a Michigan farming community could spend a career without ever having a Mexican American child in the classroom, despite the vital role the family’s labor played in the local economy. The delivery of services remained one step removed from the K-12 routine. With the transition from a largely migrant population to an increasingly resident population between the 1940s and 1970s came a number of questions many of these educators had never asked themselves: How would they react to students and parents who knew only Spanish? Parents would have their own questions. Would the child’s quietness in a new environment lead to ridicule? Would the teacher ask when the child would return to Mexico? On such student, Arturo Alvarado, stood in a Michigan classroom in the 1950s, embarrassed before his peers by having to admit that “he was two years behind because of following the harvests.”

The Michigan Department of Education estimated in 1968 that “1,500 migrant children have enrolled in twenty-four of Michigan’s schools.” An amendment to Title I of ESEA (P.L. 8910-10) enacted in late 1968 set aside funds for educational services for migrant children under the auspices of the Office of Special Programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Benton Harbor, then the epicenter for the Michigan fruit industry, along with Grand Rapids, Traverse City, Adrian, Saginaw, and Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant served as pilot sites for demonstration projects aimed at development of Head Start programming for migrant children.
During periodic program evaluation cycles requiring community input, questions arose from within the Mexican American community about the efficacy of educational services designed and delivered primarily by Anglos, as well as direct accusations of apathy. In the estimation of Esmerelda Saez, a teacher aide, “The directors in the school are not interested in the education of Mexican children.” If school and state officials wanted a “realistic program,” she asserted, “directors and teachers employed in the program should be Spanish-speaking, preferably Mexican-American.” Others testified that school districts sometimes made commitments to ease political pressure, then reneged when it came time to implement. Maria Llena Castellanos recalled that as a teacher aide employed by the Caro Community School District, she was told that the school intended to hire four teacher-aides “from the migrant stream” to work with Mexican-American children. Trust in the school evaporated when officials told her they could find just one candidate, but Castellanos claimed she “was aware of others who could have been recruited.” 30

Ivene Vasquez, born in Zeeland, Michigan, and raised in the larger neighboring city of Holland. “When I was born they were still migrant workers and then they soon moved to Holland, and my Dad went from migrant worker, a very typical path, to go from migrant workers to working in a fruit packing, or in the canneries, in that case in Holland it was Heinz…” She recalled her mother’s expression for masking her shame when it became necessary to seek help for her children’s needs. The English translation, “I put on my leather mask, my leather face,” conveys the need to sublimate one’s pride while striving to keep, as Ivene put it, her “dignity intact.” 31 Amidst the dark moments of
these enormous challenges came glimpses of light. Ivene said her mother always remembered

...the kindness of one of the teachers, at the end of the school year, you know, because she didn’t have sneakers for my brother, for him to be in gym, and you couldn’t go to gym unless you had sneakers, and the teacher said, ‘look,’ she goes, at the end of the school year, she told my Mom, she said ‘these kids, they don’t care. They kids that have so much.’ She’s showing all these shoes that were thrown away because kids left ‘em in their lockers. And so she found some that would fit my brother and so she was able to have some shoes for him for the following year. So at times, the parents, and yourself, as a student, are gonna have to go through it—you know, maybe feel humiliation.³²

Anchored by a church, and spurred by entrepreneurship, shops and service providers soon appeared in the neighborhoods open to Mexican Americans for residential housing.

In the agricultural regions of the state, Mexican children appeared seasonally, only to be blown back toward Texas by the cold north winds of the approaching Michigan winter. These routes exposed the traveling farm workers to a spectrum of bigotry, while challenging their own sensibilities. Recalling his experiences on the Texas-to-Michigan circuit, Arturo Alvarado observed his compadres’ reaction, “Chicanos who had been living...near the Mexican border were surprised to see Whites working with Chicanos, Blacks, and other poor people.” The children experienced abusive English in the varied accents of Anglos and African Americans.³³ Parents also became
attuned to the variations in school options from one state to the next. According to
Arturo Alvarado, programs serving preschool aged children were especially welcomed,
but as the children got on the bus, the parents “would silently say, ‘Ojala que los traten
bien.’ (I hope they will treat them well).”34

Establishment of the Mexican American
Community in Kalamazoo

In 1937, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics traced the route taken by many
migrants workers, indicating that a
thin stream of migrant families works its way northward with the berry
crops from the Gulf to Lake Michigan, a few following the whole way
from the strawberry harvest of northern Florida in the spring to
Tangipahoa Parish in Louisiana, next to Judsonia in central Arkansas, then
to Paducah, Ky., Vermillion or Farina, Ill., and Benton Harbor, Mich.
After the berry harvest they pick grapes and peaches in Northern
Michigan.35

A closer look at the stream finds it teeming with portraits of cultural adaptation
and retention. For example, Irene Escobedo arrived in Kalamazoo in 1943, during what
she described as the “Pearl Harbor War.” Along with her two sisters, her parents enrolled
Irene in Lincoln School on Burdick Street. A language barrier proved to be an early
challenge.

…we were the only Hispanics there at Lincoln School. We didn’t now the
English language, we learned language in Texas, we were born and raised
in Texas, but we...started out in a Spanish school...so when we got here we had to learn the English language to make ourselves understandable. It was hard, but we got by.\textsuperscript{36}

Later, Irene and her sisters attended Kalamazoo Central High School. When her father found steady work with the Brown Company, one of several paper companies central to the Kalamazoo economy at the time, more family members joined the Escobedos. Similar stories slowly led to the establishment of a small, but distinctive Mexican American community in the post WWII era. For her classmates, going to school with someone of Mexican heritage raised innocent, and sometimes hurtful, questions:

"I didn't feel out of place, because everybody—I suppose when there's only one minority they treat you nice—they were nice to us...but some of them did look at us like 'uh, what is she? What are they?' 'Where did they come from?' What planet did they—"\textsuperscript{37}

A quarter-century later, as the MCRC hearings drew to a close in late April 1969, a \textit{Kalamazoo Gazette} editorial made it clear that the Mexican American community retained an alien identity, if not virtual invisibility. Stripping away the sheen of denial, \textit{The Gazette} acknowledged the unfinished business facing the city:

There are many people here, as there are in other communities throughout the land, who either disclaim that problems of racism exist or close their eyes to what has been clearly visible, or turn deaf ears to sounds of protest. They ignore ugly reality.\textsuperscript{38}
For whites and African-Americans, the boundaries of race relations changed in Kalamazoo in the late 1960s as Mexican American groups and individuals stake claims for a place at the policymaking table in local government and in the schools.\textsuperscript{39} For more than a generation, families of Mexican heritage established residence in Kalamazoo, but their numbers remained too small to appreciably influence the political culture. The 1930 census, for example recorded thirty-one “Mexicans” among the 54,786 people living in Kalamazoo. By 1970, the official count would rise to 805 out of a population of 79,722. Within this relatively small number, individuals and groups of community activists emerged as a distinctive new voice for the Kalamazoo, especially in terms of the schools. By 1980, the population nearly doubled and the millennial census of 2000 recorded the city’s Mexican American population at 3,362, or 4.4% of the total.

The language used by the \textit{Kalamazoo Gazette} in autumn of 1969 reveals the tension building among elements of the increasingly diverse city. The Mexican American, according to the mainstream newspaper, “feels his problems are largely unseen in a community which overlooks his problems in its preoccupation with the troubles of black people.” The United States Catholic Conference estimated Michigan’s Mexican American population at the time included 125,000 former migrant workers, of which 25,000-30,000 resided in southwest Michigan. The \textit{Gazette} reported 750-1,500 people of “Latin American descent” in the “close-knit” community.

In June 1965, an alternative news source for residents of Kalamazoo appeared in stores on north side, the business and cultural center of the city’s African American population. Barbara Mion, a white woman who worked in the office of Judge Charles A. Pratt, Kalamazoo’s first African-American Circuit Court judge, edited and published
Focus News monthly for several years, then bimonthly. Through this lone vehicle for minority perspectives, we can trace the emergence of a politically active Mexican American community found voice in the city, but the story remains incomplete. A review of the content of Focus from its inception finds nearly four years went by before the first acknowledgement of a new dimension to minority affairs.

Beginning in May 1969, perhaps prompted by the MCRC hearings, Mion devoted increasing column space to the affairs of the “Spanish speaking community,” with a profile of John Castillo of Kalamazoo. Familiar with many aspects of racial and ethnic relations in Kalamazoo, Castillo joined the MCRC staff in September 1967 after serving as a consultant for the Migrant Program at Western Michigan University. Three days into the hearings in Kalamazoo, the MCRC appointed this member of the executive boards of the Kalamazoo Chapters of the NAACP and La Raza Unida to serve as District Executive of the Commission’s Battle Creek office. Perhaps Castillo’s leadership role in the local NAACP chapter accounts for the prominence of the article, but the steady stream of feature articles about the Mexican American community in Kalamazoo suggests a deeper commitment to a minority population previously ignored by the minority press. It seems reasonable to conclude that Mion’s connections within the African American community share the perception of local whites that whatever the circumstances facing the Mexican American population in Kalamazoo, nothing should take their eyes off “the prize,” as leaders frequently reminded impatient followers.

Another possible explanation for expanding coverage appears in July 1969 in an editorial piece by Mion under the heading “Barbs and Bouquets.” She describes an
incident at the Galilee Baptist Church resulting from her attempt to cover a meeting of
the Black Community Caucus conducted on 14 July:

Your editor happens to be white, and in the course of her
journalistic pursuits...was refused entrance to the meeting. Other news
media were not refused. Their representatives had dark skins. We see a
lot of irony in this since we feel that FOCUS is very highly esteemed in
the minority community...Suffice it to say at this time, we think this is a
good record—being only the first time refused consideration (at least that
we know of) by someone in the minority community. Your editor has
always been warmly received—and aided—by the black community in
these past four years. On this premise, we shall carry on.40

Mion places this half of the editorial, with the sub-heading titled “The Pangs of
Discrimination and Separatism,” above a section labeled “‘El Macriado’ Tells Of Grape
Boycott”), then recommends readers to subscribe to the bi-monthly newsletter of the
United Farm Workers Organizing Committee of the AFL-CIO. A subtle
acknowledgement that her outreach efforts might be misinterpreted comes in the form of
a helpful hint encouraging potential subscribers to indicate whether they would prefer a
Spanish or English language version of fledgling union’s newsletter. Perhaps Mion’s
obvious shift to include Mexican Americans within the scope of her reporting represents
a business decision, but the timing suggests that she experienced some disillusionment
with the way she perceived her recent treatment at the hands of African Americans. In
any case, due in large part to the public airing of dirty laundry breeched by the MRC

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report, the local print media, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* and *Focus News* expanded news coverage for and about the Mexican American community.

Coverage of topics of particular interest to members of the Mexican American community in Kalamazoo increased steadily in the *Focus News*. Four articles appear on one page of the January 1970 issue alone. The most prominent of these features the annual Our Lady of Guadalupe fiesta, “a religious-social affair” held a few weeks before at St. Augustine’s Church. The article reminds the reader that El Grupo del Rosario meets weekly. A smaller headline leads to a brief notice for a handbook from the U.S. Government Printing Office for forty-five cents entitled *Mexican-Americans, A Handbook for Educators*, a book describing, among other things, “what Mexican Americans bring to the school.” A third story calls attention to the appointment of Jose Escamilla as chair of an unnamed “steering committee which represents the Mexican-American community in Kalamazoo County.” The brief article notes that Escamilla served at the same time as president of the local 426 of the AFL-CIO’s United Paper Makers and Paper Workers. Each of these three articles hints at community activism, suggesting *Focus* successfully carved out a place as a reliable source of information for politically active Mexican-Americans in Kalamazoo.

By early 1970, Midwestern tastes previously catered to by Michigan staples like Chicken Charlie’s, or Bill Knapp’s restaurants encountered various versions of Mexican cuisine, for Kalamazoo featured three such establishments. Alicia and Tony’s opened in February 1969 at 707 Portage Road. An article in *Focus News* celebrating the restaurant’s one-year anniversary contains a helpful description of a tortilla for the uninitiated, characterizing it as “a base for much of the servings...a pancake-like disc
made of corn dough.” In addition to the Alicia Delgadillo and Antonio Romo’s jointly-operated business, the Orta family served “Mexican style” dishes on Burdick Street. These owners served primarily the resident Spanish-speaking community. The mainstream market found their first fast-food version of Mexican food at El Taco, located in the 8000 block of South Westnedge Avenue, an overwhelmingly white section of the community. Another indication of this trend in both demographics and food popularity is the opening of a fourth Mexican restaurant at 207 E. Paterson on the industrial north side of Kalamazoo, a section of town far more familiar with non-whites.  

The local public radio station, WMUK, announced in July 1971 that Saturday broadcasts would feature “between 6 and 7 a program designed for Spanish-Americans in Western Michigan which includes the seasonal influx of Spanish-speaking migrant workers who harvest crops. John Castillo of the MCRC who played a key role in bringing host Gladys Calderon to the microphone, described the program as “unique in the Midwest.” WMUK’s FM signal in 1970 transmitted over a 60 mile radius from Western Michigan University.  

Further evidence of the interest in meeting the needs of this growing portion in the city, the public library obtained grant monies to begin an outreach program for residents in need of reading materials in Spanish. Beginning July 1974, funding provided for employment of a part-time Spanish-speaking staff member to be a conduit to the community to identify interests. By February 1975, the collection included “classics, cookbooks, popular books, magazines, and one newspaper; also records.” A Kalamazoo Public Library employee, Mrs. Shamp, estimated “around 2,000” potential users in
Kalamazoo County, but stated that “it is slow trying to get people to use a library who have never used it before.”

By 1969, Jaime Garcia, the courageous student who addressed the KPS Board a year earlier, had emerged as the leader of the Brown Berets, a group of Kalamazoo area Chicanos with ties to other Mexican American activists. El Grupo Del Rosario Mexicano (The Group of the Mexican Rosary) became the most prominent such organization in Kalamazoo. El Grupo met regularly at St. Augustine Catholic Church in the 1960s and 1970s, led in its early years by Herman Delgadillo. Leadership of such a group required external and internal diplomacy. This characterization of the generation gap from the Kalamazoo Gazette captures inter-generational dynamics

Much like young militant blacks who are concerned with black pride and black identity, these young Mexican Americans are turning back to their Mexican heritage and language... these youths prefer to be known as Chicanos, a traditionally derogatory word, instead of Mexican-Americans. They seek a reemphasis on the learning of Spanish by the young and a renewed pride in their history.

In terms of the local minority press, El Grupo received more coverage than any other Mexican American organization. Focus News gave the annual election of officers front page coverage in June 1970, indicating a change from the incumbent Herman Delgadillo to the newly elected Abraham Cardosa. They made the front page again for the announcement of a fund raising dance. Irene Escobedo mentioned that St. Joseph Catholic Church in Kalamazoo began conducting mass in Spanish at about this time.
“We were lucky,” she said, “we had this priest that went to Mexico to learn Spanish and he speaks it perfect. So thirty-five years ago like I said we started with a small group and they brought priests from different countries that spoke Spanish.” The churches appear to be interwoven within the social fabric of the Mexican American community in Kalamazoo, suggesting an exchange of community organizing strategies occurred between the clergy and the congregation. Further inspiration came from the Chicano/a students at Western Michigan University. Through the cross-pollination of ideas the Mexican American community in Kalamazoo produced the leadership to mobilize parents to effectively apply pressure to the school system.

Mexican Americans and the Educational Establishment in Kalamazoo

Of the boys and girls seated behind desks on a typical school day in the 1968-1969 school year, Mexican Americans comprised less than one percent of the enrollment in Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS). Most of those attended one of the five elementary schools that together served serving 93% of all minority children. The MCRC report issued in September 1969 noted 118 “Spanish-surnamed” students. Just under 14% of the students in KPS were African American. The advent of a significant increase in the number of Spanish-speaking children foretold changes in the ways that school personnel would interact with Mexican American families and advocacy groups. The widening generational divide among Mexican Americans becomes evident as leaders of new organizations demand a voice in the operation of the Kalamazoo Public School (KPS), employing strategies similar to those by the Chicano movement in Texas.
The Michigan Civil Rights Commission Report forced Kalamazoo Public Schools to recognize what members of El Grupo del Rosario Mexicano and the Brown Berets knew from individual experience: the educational environment for Mexican American children seemed alien and cold. The students “face a severe language barrier,” and an uncertain racial status in the eyes of school officials, for whom “some Spanish-speaking children are classified as non-white, and others are classified as white.”

The MCRC summary concluded that “a de facto segregated school district, reflecting the city’s segregated housing pattern.” Housing options in the city of Kalamazoo for “nonwhites” seemed to constrict in the 1950s and 1960s, according to testimony given by Isabel Galligan of the Greater Kalamazoo Council to the MCRC. Of the eleven most-populated cities in Michigan, Kalamazoo ranked second worst in terms of dilapidated housing and also had the highest percentage of such dwellings occupied by non-whites. In four contiguous census tracts located on the city’s north and east sides, the non-white population increased from 12% to 40% from 1950 to 1960, while the white population in the same tracts declined by 30%. A “fair housing” ordinance adopted by the city in 1965 serves as an indicator of the prevailing political culture, because owner-occupied rental properties for one or two families were exempted. Until amended in 1968, the ordinance also lacked any provision for enforcement by local officials or for criminal proceedings against violators.

The range of complaints about discriminatory practices included the public schools, but in light of the discussion in Chapter Three concerning the problematic nature of the race issue for the National Education Association, it is significant that the Kalamazoo Education Association received critical mention from the MCRC, though the
report mentions the union directly just once in its recommendations. Specifically, the
MCRC called upon the Board and the teachers’ union to “negotiate a provision in the
master contract with the Kalamazoo Community [sic] Education Association that the
employment screening committee include minority group members” to advance
“affirmative recruitment of minority personnel.” Addressing the darkest corner of the
classroom, the MCRC recommendations called for a “student grievance program in order
to allow minority group students to confront effectively racist behavior on the part of
teachers and administrators.” Few issues cause as much internal strife for the union
membership as occurs when accusations of unprofessional behavior by a teacher are
believed to be true by fellow teachers, but the union protects the member anyway.

Slipping into a “circle the wagons” posture, KPS sought to minimize the need for
care about systemic racism in the district. In a revealing defense of the professional
staff, Superintendent John Cochran characterized the attitudes of the faculty as
representative of the community. For community activists like Andre Robert, such talk
merely substantiated his complaints about racial and ethnic bias. Robert joined the
Education Task Force of Action Now to address issues of discrimination in KPS. During
his testimony to the MCRC in April 1969, he told hearing officers about a walk-out by
some Kalamazoo Central High School teachers who took offense to in-service training
which they interpreted as holding the teachers responsible for “creating racial tension at
the school.” Minutes of KPS Board of Education meetings during this era indicate
parental concerns about teacher responsibility for the tense climate in the secondary
schools remained a recurring topic for several years.

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Historians Wayne Urban and Marjorie Murphy's work on race, ethnicity, and gender discrimination within the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers described a mottled record of local and state affiliates operating under the national organization consumed by the competitive calculus of dues-paying members. The MCRC Recommendations instruct the Kalamazoo Board of Education to “assess the employment practices of unions using school facilities to assure that they are committed to affirmative action programs,” but the even the best school policies do not trump the power of peers. This study of KPS during a very difficult period raises important issues about racism within the rank-and-file of teacher associations at the local level. Under intense external pressure, union leaders and school administrators could find common ground and maintain internal solidarity by shielding those guilty of inappropriate conduct.

Although college campuses across the nation played prominent roles in changing race relations, Western Michigan University managed to avoid the harsh spotlight of the MCRC report. The attention given to the report by the local press, however, did appear to spur damage control efforts; some pro-active and some reactive in nature. Thomas Coyne, spokesperson for WMU, tried to put the best face on the virtual absence of Mexican Americans from the campus of twenty thousand students by stating, “Our effort this summer has been to provide contact points for members of the Mexican-American Community.” According the Coyne, “the main thing is that the students and parents know that they can think in terms of a college education and that the students don’t give up.” One collaborative effort between WMU and the Mexican American community made the front page of the Focus News in April 1970, when El Grupo del Rosario
established a loan fund of $400 with the university. A seemingly optimistic conclusion to the article revealed the dimensions of the problem, "Already this fall some half-dozen will be new enrolled at KVCC [Kalamazoo Valley Community College] or one of the local four-year institutions."54

As an important regional center for teacher education, WMU benefited from federal monies directed at the educational needs of the children of migrant farm workers. For example, WMU teamed with the Van Buren Intermediate School District to establish "migrant project schools" in 1969, funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Hugging Lake Michigan, heavily rural Van Buren County lies directly west of Kalamazoo, sitting squarely in the heart of the fruit belt. For WMU students, proximity to the fields and orchards meant opportunities to work directly with students and their families. The grant provided funding for up to fifty juniors or seniors to serve as teacher aides. In addition, the State of Michigan announced in the summer of 1969 a collaborative effort with the State of Texas calling for Michigan to "obtain the services of Texas teachers and aides."55

Through the institutional eyes of Western Michigan University and the City of Kalamazoo, addressing Mexican American needs meant programs for migrant workers and their families, rather than services for full time residents. Acting on this interpretation of local demographics, perhaps, and caught in the glare of the spotlight shone on Kalamazoo by the MCRC report, City Manager James Caplinger managed to put himself at the center of the controversy. In a twenty-four minute statement, Caplinger responded to the unflattering report at the City Commission meeting on 30 September
1969. His explanation of the city's failure to recognize the needs of its Mexican American population included this telling remark:

I would hasten to point out, however, that it is estimated that as many as 30 per cent of those people are in this country illegally and therefore resist, and in fact avoid, all possible contact with this or any other governmental united because if discovered immediate return to Mexico is probable.56

Embedded in Caplinger's problematic comments lies the identity of the Mexican American in Michigan as a migratory actor in the state's proud agricultural tradition, rather than as a resident committed to community life as symbolized by home ownership, the epitome of the American dream. Caplinger's data proved faulty, but the sentiments he expressed likely reflected general perceptions of the community, to paraphrase Superintendent Cochran's explanation of racism among school personnel.

In the first week of October 1969, the Board of Education chewed over the unpalatable findings of the MCRC report. In addition to being chastised for overseeing a racially divided school system in terms of blacks and whites, the members of the now had to face the issue of the underserved Mexican American population. Trustee Margaret Minott expressed concern that while Mexican American students were "apparently on the increase," nonetheless they "feel very much left out" of the current discussion of race relations in the schools. Superintendent Cochran echoed her sentiments.57 But the agenda for the afternoon found the table laden with the calls to action by conservative elements in the community. The work of the Citizens' Committee, a group ostensibly dedicated to racial justice in the schools, reached fruition in the form of a litany of recommendations couched in thorny threats. Trustee Bruex, elected the previous June,
responded to the locally generated Citizens’ Committee Report, by insisting that the Board policy gives it sufficient legal authority to adequately deal with any school employee who practices overt acts of racial discrimination in the performance of his or her duties...I am quite concerned that no witch hunt be conducted which will undermine the morale of our teachers and administrators.\textsuperscript{58}

Bruex rejected the Citizen’s Committee Report on Race Relations on procedural grounds, questioning how any such recommendations could get to the Board without any consultation with the faculty. At its next meeting, the Board, except Trustee Bruex, voted to “accept” rather than “adopt” the recommendations. This outcome represents the extremes of the democratic experience at the grassroots level, wherein an elected body of white school trustees faces down a group accusing it of sheltering racist employees.\textsuperscript{59}

That October evening in 1969, the two most important elected bodies in Kalamazoo, the City Commission and the Board of Education, stood on the banks of a rising river infused with higher citizen expectations, flooded with a sense of newly won legitimacy. On that particular evening, city manager Caplinger took most of the heat. Kalamazoo’s Mexican-American community leaders successfully presented a unified front in expressing their offense at Caplinger’s remarks. That night, several Mexican-American leaders spoke at a press conference convened at the Knights of Columbus Hall at 219 Cedar St, a few blocks from the Commission meeting. Abraham Cardosa, a longtime Kalamazoo resident, said, “We are proud people. We are hurt by this statement. I know I have been ignored for years.” Echoing these feelings, Jose Escamilla described Caplinger’s comments as “very disgraceful for us as Mexican-Americans.” Herman
Delgadillo of El Grupo Del Rosario described Caplinger’s remarks as tantamount to Caplinger having “slapped us in the face.” Carmen Sandoval, the Migrant Education Coordinator for neighboring Van Buren County, charged that Caplinger “has slandered a substantial number of citizens of this community.”

Faced with these expressions of outrage for more than two weeks, on 20 October Caplinger retracted one of his most incendiary remarks. Regarding his previous statement that thirty percent of the people of Mexican heritage in Kalamazoo were illegal immigrants, Caplinger declared, “I know now that such estimates are not correct as relating to Kalamazoo. He sought to reestablish himself by insisting that, “Both as a government official and personally, I care about establishing communications with the Mexican-American community and the city government.” The beleaguered city manager concluded in lame condescension, “I have seldom met with such a tactful, understanding and proud group of people.”

The body politic of Kalamazoo struggled to adapt as the small Midwestern city faced new realities. Among whites, African Americans, and Mexican Americans, citizen groups like the Citizen’s Committee kindled sparks then dissipated, while others, such as El Grupo, appeared at school board or city commission meetings for months on end. At the 18 May 1970 Board meeting, for example, representatives of Action Now Education Task Force told the trustees “our schools are racist institutions.” Proof came in the form of “grossly inadequate” textbooks used by social studies teachers that fell woefully short in their treatment of minority groups, as Action Now spokesperson Andre Robert charged. Board member Minott made a similar observation four months earlier, quoted
in the minutes as believing "every child in school, every black child, every child of Spanish-American descent, has been damaged by the American History program." 62

More than a year later, on the eve of the winter holiday season, the KPS Board met on 21 December 1970 to consider language addressing disciplinary action against staff members found guilty of acts of "overt racism," as described by seven indicators included in a report from the Racial Balance Committee. Among the offenses deemed as grounds for dismissal, item seven punishes for "failing to introduce comparative cultures particularly pertaining to blacks, Mexicans and American Indians when called for by the curriculum." The ensuing discussion found Board members Bruex, Luff and Thomas uncomfortable with the use of the word "racism" in the context of the recommendations under consideration. In the end, the word "discrimination" amended the original phrase, leaving the Board with a new policy for dealing with "overt discrimination," and a troublesome public relations problem brewing among conservatives in the community who saw the Board caving in to pressure from a convergence of minority interests. 63

If conservatives saw the Mexican American community in Kalamazoo as monolithic, they were mistaken. A dependable source of evidence of generational divisions, schools often aggravated family tensions by placing a different emphasis on language usage at home and school than parents (or grandparents) deemed appropriate. The Gazette described the problem as one threatening to "divide the Mexican-American family itself," with many households shared by "a generation of young Mexican-Americans who do not speak Spanish well-- and who sometimes lose respect for parents and elders who cannot speak English well." 64
Several factors account for the establishment of a summer program for children of migrant workers by KPS in the summer of 1973, including the availability of funding through the State of Michigan. William G. Milliken, the amiable moderate Republican governor, first stepped into George Romney’s chair following Richard Nixon’s decision to name Romney, former President of American Motors, to serve as Secretary of Transportation.

Local activist Jose Escamilla’s commitment and visibility as a community organizer made him an obvious choice when KPS established a Migrant Education Advisory Committee, a community-based body formed in accordance with federal and state funding requirements that called for citizen involvement in planning processes. But a letter from Escamilla to the Board, read by President Dale Pattison at the Board meeting on 16 July 1973, requested that the “Kalamazoo Public Schools should state its position with regard to the migrant program and its Advisory Committee,” an indication of trouble between this key figure and school leaders over the district financial support of the program.65 The Advisory Committee had invited the new Superintendent, Dr. William Coats, to attend its regular meeting on the evening of 12 July, but Coats chose to sit down with just Escamilla and Garza instead. As he later explained to the Board, Coats reasoned that since Percy Clark, the Director of Student Services charged with running the Migrant Program also “met with these gentlemen and the Committee on several occasions,” and that they were “pretty much over the hump regarding the concerns” that KPS intended to cut back on delivery of these new services.

Subsequent questions from Board President Pattison and newly trustee Charles Warfield, who, like Pattison, also held professorships at WMU, reveal the summer
program served twenty-eight children. The State of Michigan provided funding to allow the district to hire three full-time bilingual teachers, a resource previously unavailable. Coats told the Board “there were probably between 60 and 70 migrant children” and a total of “between 140 and 150 Spanish speaking students in the system.” Warfield pointed out that the Board should not discuss the issue and leave the impression all migrants speak Spanish.

A new, albeit short-lived program aimed at migrant students brought Mike Ramirez and more than three dozen other young Mexican Americans to Kalamazoo in 1974 as recipient of a four-year scholarship offered by the United Migrants for Opportunity, Inc. (UMO), operated under the aegis of the U.S. Department of Labor. Significantly, Ramirez recalled that all forty awardees in 1974 were male. “Some from Michigan,” he said, “most of them were from South Texas... from the valley towns like McAllen, Wes Laco [sic], Pharr...” These students would form the small core group of Chicano activists at WMU engaged in local and national concerns. Influenced by the work of Cesar Chavez, Ramirez and other members of what became known as the Hispanic Student Alliance, then as the Latino Student Alliance, organized local participation in the grape boycott. Reflecting upon how his own migrant experience shaped his activism, Ramirez recalled:

As... someone who just came out of the migrant stream... I was learning about the issues, again the college experience was giving me the opportunity for me to explore... especially social activism. When I was a migrant I never saw that as an issue because again were [sic] so concerned with working.
With many of the UMO scholarship students literally having exchanged burdens of fruit for textbooks, the WMU Chicanos encouraged fellow students to boycott grapes and “here in Michigan they were boycotting yellow wines.” As the Focus News had reported as early as April 1969, local activists encouraged such consumer boycotts. 69 Ramirez, however, indicated bolder actions as part of the strategy in the early 1970s, stating, “…a lot of us were involved in the boycotts and also the marches…I participated in the fifty-five mile walk for Chavez between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids…” 70

During the summer of 1975, KPS, six years after a harsh rebuke by the MCRC for ignoring its Mexican American students, faced new realities shared by thousands of public school districts across the nation. Issuance of the “Lau Remedies” by U.S. Office of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in July 1975 established federal guidelines for districts with twenty or more pupils in whose primary language was not English. Sixteen months after the Lau v. Nichols ruling by the Supreme Court determined language of instruction to be a matter of civil rights, the strength of local Mexican American activists increased, while the range of options available to school personnel narrowed. Envisioned originally as a learning barrier faced primarily by the Spanish-speaking population, the Chinese-American plaintiffs in the case the Court decided in January 1974 questioned why bilingual services could be available for children of one language family but not another. 71

When the KPS Board met in August 1975 for the first time since the distribution of the Lau Remedies, seven members of Kalamazoo’s Spanish-speaking community approached the microphone during audience participation time. Newly elected President Keller recognized Mr. Montez of Division Street, who asked how the district would
implement bilingual programming. Citing the importance of a high school education, Montez told the Board that the system faced a “dropout rate of 19 percent” among resident, not migrant, students. At least one of the Board members questioned Montez’ use of the term “pushouts” to describe some of the teens who left school, but Superintendent Coats intervened by saying Montez “operated in a very professional manner and has been involved in several meetings with administrators of the Kalamazoo Public Schools.” Well-prepared for his presentation, Montez distributed multiple copies of Michigan Public Act 294, the bilingual education statute recently enacted and included in the State of Michigan General School Laws. Coats told the Board he would contact Montez the following day to “indicate some of the things that have developed” recently in terms of guidance from Lansing and Washington. If Coats believed his political skills could keep the lid on this phase of the meeting, the comments from the next audience member, Jose Escamilla, likely changed his mind. Escamilla reminded the Board of his service as chair of the Migrant Education Advisory Committee. Although his now resided in the neighboring community of Vicksburg, his eleven children attended KPS between 1953 and 1960. Drawing upon years of observation and from the lives of his own children, Escamilla reminded those present that, “these problems are not new…they have been here a long time.” He described a meeting he attended with KPS administrators in September 1972, where assurances that “the schools would do something about their concerns but the promise was not fulfilled.” A testy exchange between Coats and the Board President ensued. President Keller huffed that the “Board does obey the law,” to which Coats opined that his “concern was not with the law as it is sufficiently vague to allow the school system to
do whatever it wants to do.” He stated the district to date had received no guidelines from the State, but that his priority remained “meeting the needs of the students in the system and to help them learn at a competitive rate.”

Describing himself as a refugee from Cuba, Mr. Fernandez of Wallace Street rose to thank Dr. Coats, saying “they wanted to preserve their native language and heritage.” This comment signifies that Chicano ideology and the quest for cultural democracy alone do not explain the politics of bilingual education. Fernandez touched a nerve, prompting comments from three more Board members. Mrs. Marr, another Trustee, observed that “it would be beautiful if we could have bilingual teachers at each level…but having a bilingual teacher in each class would not be financially feasible at this time.” Since no government agency or community activist had ever expressed this expectation, Marr’s condescending remarks further showed an emerging division between Superintendent Coats and his employers. When the next citizen, Mr. Agustin Torres, rose to speak and pointedly thanked Coats for the “encouragement given them at this meeting,” adding that he hoped “something could be done to alleviated these concerns so their children would not feel neglected,” the minutes hint at a further breakdown of effective communications, for Board Secretary Tyler chose this moment in the meeting to ask Coats to “share with the Board as a whole the results of the meeting with Mr. Montez,” a statement hinting at suspicion that the Superintendent selectively communicated with his seven employers.

Since at least 1967, when racial tension resulted in closing Kalamazoo Central High School for one week, issues of race and ethnicity factored strongly into the results of each election to the Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education. Analysis of
meeting minutes during this period of time show deepening divisions between conservatives and liberals, with issues of race, ethnicity and nature of federalism in local school districts as the litmus tests for assignation of said labels. Based on the context of this meeting in August 1975, when the next citizen rose to address the Board, his comments suggest a ruffled sense of patriotism. Identifying himself as Casey Cohen, he said he represented Americans and asked that at the beginning of each school day the school children recognized this great nation which gives us the right to freedom of education and that the Board adopt a policy of beginning the school day with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. 76

This comment hints at the growing sense among conservatives that embracing bilingual education suggested weakening English as a unifying force. Using essentially the same argument advanced by Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers, conservatives harkened to the imagined golden era when the immigrant experience included baptism in the holy waters of English. As the room temperature climbed during the tense meeting, Trustee Marr noticed no comments were made about Cohen’s efforts to rally ‘round the flag, but “just because the Board did not respond right now does not mean that they are not going to be responsive.”

Duane Roberts, a local civil rights activist, suggested the Board divert some of its $100,000 grant for dropout prevention funded by the Emergency School Aid Act to address the needs of Spanish-speaking students. Coats replied “there is a certain amount of money there to deal with students having adjustment problems.” Increasingly concerned that earlier remarks did not play well, Trustee Marr insisted “this did not mean
she does not want to help any foreign speaking student or that she does not want to see
the dropout rate reduced, but it was unfair to take her words out of context.” Recognizing
the intensity of the moment, Secretary Tyler expressed concern that “the discussion was
becoming emotional as to whether there are funds available.” As if on cue, Mrs. Manuel
Santega, mother of six children, then told the Board that her children benefited from their
tutor in the migrant education program. Reminding those present that advocates of
bilingual education did not seek the demise of the Republic, she stated that since her
children “were in America they should speak English and give the Pledge of Allegiance
to the flag.”

The mixture of raised expectations among Spanish-speaking families and near­
total frustration on the part of school officials regarding mandates explains much of the
tone of the exchanges between citizens and school officials at the KPS Board meetings in
the summer and fall 1975, when advocacy groups like El Grupo del Rosario and its
counterparts in other districts understandably expected action.

On a statewide basis, the Michigan State Board of Education developed a position
statement on the subject of bilingual instruction in 1977. Yet, Michigan addressed the
“Education of the Non-English Speaking Person” six years earlier when the State Board
deemed the issue the second of a set of twenty-two goals that resulted from input from
“hundreds of Michigan citizens” in a series of hearings over an eighteen-month period.
The wording of the goal, which begins with a reference to “students who native tongue is
one other than English,” but concludes by mentioning the need to serve the students,
“regardless of out-of-school experience with non-standard English.” The phrase “non­
standard English” in the early 1970s connotes African American culture and “Ebonics,”
terminology directed to the linguistic differences resulting from the distinctive experiences of people living in enslavement and segregation. The combination of these two populations, suggests the process of negotiating final language called for linkage to be embraced by Mexican American and African Americans involved in the process.

The eighth goal adopted by the State Board in 1971 offers another example of how the dominant white population attempted to navigate the crosscurrents of race and ethnicity, using language many conservatives resented for its apparent leveling of all cultures. The Board called for student to gain “an understanding of the values systems, cultures, customs, and histories of his own heritage as well as of others.” The language in these two goal statements reflects the triangulation involved in establishing education policy acceptable to stakeholders responsible for representing key constituencies.

In the absence of federal mandates, however, local circumstances dictated the response of school districts when citizens or professional staff advocated for bilingual programming. Kalamazoo did not apply for federal funding under Title VII in the initial rounds of bilingual education “demonstration projects” under Title VII of ESEA since the awarding of the first grants in 1969, but Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Pontiac, Detroit, Dearborn, Muskegon and Lansing all provided these services.

Between some educational services for the children of migrant workers incorporating bilingual instruction methods and the projects funded under Title VII, then, by the time of the Lau v. Nichols ruling in January 1974, the State of Michigan, took several steps to meet the needs of students and the demands of parents in the Mexican American community. Subsequent to the Lau ruling, but prior to the issuance of the “Lau
"Remedies" by the Ford administration in the summer of 1975, Governor Milliken signed into law Public Act 294, which stipulates that

beginning with the 1975-1976 school year the board of a school district having an enrollment of 20 or more children of limited English-speaking ability in a language classification in grades K-12 shall establish and operate a bilingual instruction program for those children.79

The legislation, spurred by the Supreme Court's ruling, required the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to issue reports annually to the governor and legislature regarding the status of bilingual programming in schools feeling the impact. The first of these reports, produced early in 1977, documents the scrambling of school officials to comply with the new law as the 1975-1976 school year commenced. Mexican American community activists monitored districts closely, as seen by the kinds of questions the Kalamazoo Board of Education fielded at meetings that August and September. A statement included in the Introduction to the "Report on Bilingual Education, 1975-76" prepared by MDE undoubtedly caused teachers and administrators charged with implementation to laugh or cry (if they read it): "Since August 25, 1975, the Department has worked vigorously to assist and guide school districts in the implementation of P.A. 294 with the assignment of the first Bilingual Education Specialist to the Department."80

Considering that many schools opened for classes at that time of the summer, this statement suggests that since the passage of P.A. 294 in October 1974, many districts, including Kalamazoo, had received no direction regarding the new mandate.

Acknowledging the poor timing, but taking no responsibility, MDE observed that "the concept of bilingual education is still widely unknown and underdeveloped in the
local and intermediate school districts and in the local communities.\(^81\) Apart from countless technical questions concerning the interpretation of the new law, significant issues involving curriculum and instruction arose from mandates under Section 392 of P.A. 294 requiring affected schools to “operate a full-time program of bilingual instruction in the courses…required by the [local] board for completion of the grade level in which the child is enrolled.”\(^82\)

Furthermore, the State Board of Education required superintendents to submit a report by the “beginning of the 1976-77 school year…describing the local district’s plans for implementation,” based on guidelines issued to districts in May 1976. MDE officials turned to the districts operating pilot projects for progress reports, only to receive scathing feedback that carried a strong sense of victimization on the part of administrators and teachers. The *Report on Bilingual Education, 1975-76* concluded that it would take more than a year to develop a model program, but the number of objectives stakeholders want to achieve makes development very challenging. To make matters worse, MDE did not monitor local districts or provide assistance at any point as programs were getting underway.\(^83\)

Between the Board meeting on August 4 and the first September meeting, Superintendent Coats orchestrated a major production to put the best face on the status of programming at KPS. The presentation began with a reading of the Preamble to Constitution of the United States in Spanish by Isabelle Seelbinder, one of three bilingual instruction aides employed by KPS. Explaining the “about \(\frac{3}{4}\) of our school have this population,” Clark described current and projected staffing needs.\(^84\) With students spread out in several buildings and only three aides, the Board members seemed displeased with
the ratio of staff members to students. Coats suggested the possibility that instead of hiring two additional aides that the district might hire a certified teacher, but the logistical problems of serving the students would not disappear. After thanking the presenters, Board President Keller invited members of the audience to “come up to the microphone.” To the surprise of no one, Jose Escamilla spoke first, gently reminding the Board that he recommended the approach Clark described two years earlier. At that time, the Board opted for the Migrant Program only. Escamilla challenged the Board to expend local monies and not depend on dollars from Lansing or Washington.

Almost a year later, in August 1976, KPS appointed a Bilingual Education Parent Advisory Committee in accordance with Federal and State guidelines. Under the 20-student rule, the Advisory Committee at KPS proved to be more diverse than discussions at previous Board meetings revealed. The seventeen member group included ten individuals with Hispanic surnames, three of Indian (South Asia) heritage, and one representative each for the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Latvian members of the community.

Of the ten individuals representing the growing Spanish-speaking population in Kalamazoo, four had played a prominent role since the late 1960s in trying to bring about change in their public schools. Joining organizations that are part of the policymaking mainstream does pose risks for being co-opted or assimilated, but doing so presents voices that would otherwise remain unheard. The power structure of the school district needed time to adapt to the concurrent challenges of accommodating a diversifying community and complying with shifting policy directives from federal and state officials concerning bilingual education.
Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the experience of the Kalamazoo Public Schools provides significant insights of how successful lobbying by a coalition of interests amplified local voices sufficiently to enact new programming. During the eight years elapsed since that September evening in 1968, when Jaime Garcia addressed the Board of Education, the stature of the Mexican American community in the political culture of Kalamazoo had increased significantly, as evidenced by their prominence on the Bilingual Education Parent Advisory Committee. Considerable thought goes into allocating seats for stakeholder groups such as this one. One must assume that the other participants also made themselves known to the school district through strong advocacy for the unmet needs of their children, so those meetings must have been among the most extraordinary exhibitions of participatory democracy. From virtually the moment of its inception in 1976, the Committee operated as plug-in point for the grassroots connection to the federal power grid. In subsequent years, as resentment of the rigid Lau remedies led to Congressional action to modify federal guidelines in 1978, such groups would serve as the conduit back to the ethnic networks. As discussed at the close of Chapter 3, conservative opponents of bilingualism, such as Albert Shanker of the AFT, would condemn this new element in the political culture as self-serving and effectively shielded from the norms of school politics as a type of protected species.
Notes to Chapter V

1 Garcia’s plea on September 30, 1968, is recorded on page 149 of the bound copy of Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education Minutes 1968-69. The Kalamazoo Public Library holds original copies of the minutes in its Local History room. The December 1970 edition of Focus News mentions on page 7 that Jaime later enrolled in agricultural studies at Michigan State University in East Lansing. This may be noteworthy since Jose Angel Gutierrez mentioned in The Making of a Chicano Militant that the MSU campus in East Lansing as being one of the most militant campuses in the Midwest for Chicano activists.

2 United States Commission on Civil Rights. School Desegregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan (Washington, D.C: U. S. GPO, 1977). Page 1 of the report provides background: “In September 1968 and May 1970, prior to desegregation, school were closed for several days because of racial incidents. The 1970 closure covered all schools for 1 week. Some early school dismissals were required during the 1970-71 school year.”

3 Michigan Civil Rights Commission. Report and Recommendations into the Status of Race Relations in the City of Kalamazoo 1969 (Lansing: State of Michigan, 1969), 2. Among these recommendations, the MCRC urged the Kalamazoo police department to “re-evaluate...the minimum height standard for police applicants,” out of concern its “impact on the recruitment of officers from the Spanish community.”

4 Extensive research about the Fruit Belt of Michigan, conducted under the direction of Kristin Szylvian of Western Michigan University, in cooperation with Ft. Miami staff led to the unveiling in autumn 2006 of an exhibition at the Fort Miami Heritage Society of
Michigan, "World's Largest" - The Benton Harbor Fruit Market and Southwest Michigan's Fruit Belt.


8 3,595 were recorded as “native born” and the rest, 7,983, as “foreign born.” *15th Census of the United States: 1930 Population Volume II General Report Statistics By Subjects* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 65. This represents a tiny fraction of the Texan population of over 5.8 million, where 318,647 Mexican-Americans resided. Census figures categorized these residents into two categories of identity: “native” (178,088 people) and “foreign” (140,559) meaning in all likelihood they were born in Mexico.


1936. Discussing the meaning of the term “migrant,” he suggested “defining migrants as roughly those field workers and their families, and packing-shed workers and their families, who follow crops in periodic movement, in groups or as part of a well-defined movement commonly recognized as a movement of migrants, so that for a few months, if not the full year, migratory labor becomes a way of life…”


12 Ibid, 491.

13 Ibid,

14 For the Thumb area of Michigan, the first frost often occurs as early as mid-September.

15 Ibid, 493

16 Alvarado and Alvarado, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in Michigan, 23-25.

17 Taylor ibid. 42

18 “Michigan Hires Latin-American Specialist,” Michigan Civil Rights Commission press release issued 22 October, 1971. Barbara Mion Collection Box A-3173. Western Michigan University Regional Archives, Kalamazoo, MI. Successful at St. Anne’s High School as a scholastically and athletically, Mejia earned a master’s degree in social work from the University of Michigan at the age of twenty-eight. Five years later, he was
appointed to the position of Assistant Director of the MCRC’s Latin-American Programs Unit.

19 The source for this data appears to be a report by the Michigan Department of Education on migrant education contained in Box 1 Department of Education Compensatory Education Services Migrant Education Subject Files, A-S, 1968-69, File RG76-45 B1 F1 Clippings and Articles Collected.


adapted labor recruitment practices


22 Lewis T. Nordyke, “Mapping Jobs for Texas Migrants,” *Survey Graphic* 29 (No. 3 March 1940): 152. [http://newdeal.feri.org/survey/40a08.htm] (8 September 2007). The figure given refers to farm evictions since 1930. Among the by-products of World War Two, the Bracero program enabled 200,000 Mexicans to come across the border from 1942 to 1947 alone to ease the labor shortage, with subsequent extensions of the agreement between the United States and Mexico running to 1964, when the program
was terminated. The bilateral agreement offered certain safeguards for the incoming workers, with few enforcement mechanisms implemented.

23 Ibid., Paragraph 22.

24 Ibid., 152.

25 Nordyke, 152.


27 Nordyke, 152.

28 The imaginary conversation derives from a career in rural school districts in southwest Michigan.

29 Arturo Rocha Alvarado, Cronica de Aztlan (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1977), 83. The questions raised here attempt to summarize the hopes and fears Alvarado articulates in this passage of his memoir.

30 Untitled document (cover page missing) from Michigan Department of Education found in Box 1 Department of Education Compensatory Education Services Migrant Education Subject Files A-S, 1968-69. File RG76-45 B1 Fl. p. 11

31 Ivene Vasquez, transcript of interview conducted by Julia Cardoso, 13. Oral History Project. Western Michigan University Regional Archives, Kalamazoo, MI.

32 Vasquez interview, 13.

33 Arturo Rocha Alvarado, Cronica de Aztlan, 71

34 Ibid., 83.

36 Irene Escobedo, Transcript of Interview A, 1, conducted by Julia Cardoso on unspecified date. Oral History Project. Western Michigan University Regional Archives, Kalamazoo, MI. Sharon Carlson, Director of the WMU Archives, and Elspeth Inglis of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum have collaborated on an oral history project aimed at capturing the experiences of Mexican American, African American, and Native American residents of Kalamazoo. This set of interviews (A and B) with Escobedo, along with those Julia Cardoso conducted with Mike Ramirez and Ivone Vasquez, are the first from this new collection to be used in a research project. They were conducted in 2006.

37 Irene Escobedo, transcript of Interview B, 9, Oral History Project. Western Michigan University Regional Archives, Kalamazoo, MI.

38 Ibid, 2

39 The story of race relations in the City of Kalamazoo and the desegregation of the Kalamazoo Public Schools merits scholarly examination. The 1970s found the school district mired in litigation or acting under federal court injunction, with significant consequences for housing patterns and school demographics in the years immediately following Federal District Court Judge Noel Fox’s ruling in 1971. The follow-up report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan*, issued in April 1977, provides an excellent starting point for study of blacks and whites, but barely touches upon the circumstances facing Mexican Americans.

41 Focus News. January 1970. 6 Box A 3173 Barbara Mion Collection. Western Michigan University Regional Archives. Kalamazoo MI.

42 Focus News. February 1970. 4 Box A 3173. Barbara Mion Collection. Western Michigan University Regional Archives. Kalamazoo MI.


459. Local History Collection. Kalamazoo Public Library. Kalamazoo, MI.

45 Kalamazoo Gazette 21 September 1969. Mexican-American File, Kalamazoo Public Library Local History Collection, Kalamazoo, MI.

46 Focus News. November 1970. 1 Barbara Mion Collection. Western Michigan University Regional Archives. Kalamazoo MI.

47 MCRC Report on Race Relations in Kalamazoo, 11.

48 MCRC Report on Race Relations in Kalamazoo, 14


50 Ibid., 13.

51 Ibid., 12.

52 Ibid., 12.

53 Ibid., 9.

54 Ibid., 9.

56 James Caplinger, quoted in article by Arthur Sills in Kalamazoo Gazette, 7 October 1969, Mexican American Folder, Vertical File, Kalamazoo Public Library Local History Collection, Kalamazoo, MI.


166. Kalamazoo Public Library Local History Collection, Kalamazoo, MI.

58 Ibid., 164.

59 Candidates for trustee positions on a Board of Education in Michigan typically file petitions in March for June elections. Based on professional experience, citizen committees, whatever their purpose or ideology, tend to be springboards for individuals interested in public service. Community members who exhibit the leadership qualities to organize an effective lobbying effort directed at the Board of Education often develop a following or at least name recognition sufficient to win election. It would not be unusual in turbulent times in a school district for ten petitions to be filed for one or two contested seats.

60 Kalamazoo Gazette, 7 October 1969. Mexican American File, Kalamazoo Public Library Local History Collection, Kalamazoo, MI.


Dale Pattison, a WMU history professor, represents the kind of citizen activist turned board candidate referred to earlier in the discussion of the path from protester to policy-maker.

An African American member of the faculty in the College of Education, the liberal Warfield and the conservative Pattison operated at polar opposites philosophically. Their years together on the KPS Board of Education in the 1970s present scholars of race and education with a marvelous opportunity for a study of an important relationship at a critical juncture in local, state, and national history.

Miguel (Michael, or Mike) Ramirez, transcript of interview conducted by Julia Cardoso, 3. Oral History Project. Western Michigan University Regional Archives, Kalamazoo, MI.


74-75. Local History Collection. Kalamazoo Public Library. Kalamazoo, MI.

73 Ibid, 74-75

74 The circumstances facing Cubans in those cities and regions in the United States merit extended treatment—certainly more than this brief mention. James Crawford’s piece in Education Week on 1 April 1987 (“Bilingual Education Traces Its U.S. Roots Back to the Colonial Era”) suggested the “modern” bilingual education movement can be traced to the politically powerful and economically well-connected Cubans in the shortly after the revolution in Cuba sent thousands of these families into South Florida in the early 1960s.

As mentioned in the historiography section of the Introduction, James Crawford’s Educating English Learners: Language Diversity in the Classroom, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Bilingual Education Services, 2004) and preceding editions published under the title Bilingual Education: History, Politics, Theory, and Practice are among the most frequently cited. Crawford is a former publisher of Education Week who has devoted much of the past twenty years to the issues of bilingualism, biculturalism and English-only practices.

75 Ibid., 76. Superintendents risk damage to trust by privileging some Board members with information while withholding it from others.

76 Ibid., 76-80.
77 Ibid., 79.


79 Bilingual Instruction in Michigan, 5-6.


81 Ibid, 4.

82 Ibid, 4.

83 Ibid, 11

84 Minutes of the Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education, 2 September 1975.

85 Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education Minutes 1976-77.

Local History Collection. Kalamazoo Public Library. Kalamazoo, MI.
CONCLUSION

The advent of federal bilingual education policy in the 1960s-1970s represented a change in the mission of public schools from Americanizing students to preparation them for life in a multicultural society. This became problematic within the political culture of school districts as they grew entangled with identity politics and thus became associated with an agenda of cultural retention instead of assimilation. From vocational education in the Progressive Era to victory gardens in World War II, local school districts embraced federally defined missions. When the federal government challenged the social order, in race, religion, and then language, it led to the revitalization of grassroots conservatism, and ultimately to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Despite the decidedly non-English national motto, "*E pluribus unum,*" intense overlapping debates in the United States today over immigration policy, educational reform—even about the status of English itself-- comprise the most complex set of public policy challenges in the recent history of the United States. This study looked to policy developments in the first half of the twentieth century to glean insights about the interaction between the federal government and local K-12 school districts on the frontiers of bilingual education. The distinctive political cultures of Waco, Texas and Kalamazoo, Michigan, reflect the influences of their respective cultural and physical geography affected the responses by these communities to the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (BEA). During the years when participation was not mandatory, these factors
created conditions for conflict or accommodation, as determined largely by interactions between school personnel and community activists. *Lau v. Nichols* took the basic question of whether or not a district would offer bilingual/bicultural programming out of the hands of local actors, but it fueled anti-Washington resentment, especially toward the courts and the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education. As the last significant development in federal policy regarding K-12 education during the ambitious presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, this examination of the BEA suggests the dynamics of federalism, often described as either a top-down or bottom-up hierarchy, might be better described as a loop, or as I have termed it, a “policy echo.” The experiences of the Waco Independent School District and Kalamazoo Public Schools validate John Kingdon’s notion of policy windows and converging streams of ideas, individuals and issues.

To conduct this investigation of bilingual education policy, I established the historic role of the public school teacher as the link between federal education policy and the student. Throughout the twentieth century, reformers of all political stripes viewed public schools as a focal point for engineering social change. Students comprise an essentially captive audience, so the opportunity to use schools to remake society proved irresistible to succeeding generations of politicians and educators. Beginning with the National Vocational Education Act of 1917, patterns of interaction between public schools and the federal government from the Progressive era through the 1930s and 1940s established new linkages between Uncle Sam and the schools. These relationships typically recognized the sanctity of local turf, but also established expectations for annoyances related to satisfying incessant demands for compliance (if not accountability) by federal authorities.
The gradual expansion of the function of the public school teacher as agent of nationalism reached its apex in the anti-Communist fervor of the 1950s, as millions of American students began each school day by pledging allegiance to "one nation under God."\(^1\) Despite the infusion of thousands of veterans of World War II and Korea into the teaching corps as a result of the GI Bill, that era of loyalty oaths and whispering campaigns against suspected "Reds" found the teaching profession caught between the forces of conformity and academic freedom. One of the great ironies of teaching profession is that the sense of powerlessness teachers often feel when confronting institutional bureaucracy resides in the same position that makes the teacher omnipotent in the eyes of the child. It cannot be assumed that teachers leave their own biases in the staff parking lot before attending the faculty meeting. The delicate matter of insensitivity by teachers to student diversity proved problematic for schools and unions alike, whose joint inability to purge bigotry and gender bias from the classroom stained the profession. Unfortunately, school administrators and elected trustees faced the same situation.

Far from Washington, D.C., the local school board meeting breathes life into the American concept of self-governance by offering citizens the opportunity for direct engagement with locally elected trustees. When a series of post-WWII federal court decisions, highlighted by *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), rumbled across the landscape, the white power structure shook in communities facing their first experiences with civil rights litigation. This power structure included highly respected teachers, administrators and school board members. Those years surely (and sorely) tested the belief systems of countless individuals, because after four decades of mutually supportive interactions in matters, the federal government challenged the status quo of the social
order in thousands of communities. Since the early twentieth century, federal education policy initiatives survived the legislative process in Congress in large part because their sponsors knew of the significance of local control of public education. In the case of aid for vocational education, recognition of the needs of their rural constituents, members of Congress included significant boosts in aid for agricultural education. As noted in the discussions of Lyndon Johnson and the National Youth Administration (NYA); and of Western State Teachers College President Paul Sangren’s handling of work-study programs; significant decision-making authority remained firmly in the hands of local officials.

During World War II, a different kind of political dynamic arose out of the failure of the federal government to anticipate or respond to the impact mobilization had on school districts. The Lanham Act represents a federal approach seen by critics as too little, too late. When one considers victory gardens, however, the American home front during the 1940s does offer a model of a remarkably effective public policy that drew on the successful experience of the Great War two decades earlier. Perhaps the universality of the human need to sustain life through consumption of food made the difference, or perhaps successful engagement of national, state, and local gardening associations account for the public response. In either case, this appears to be a salient topic for further research, especially in light of concerns about the American food supply.

This research affirms that schools serving African Americans joined enthusiastically in the challenge to maximize both the production and the conservation of food during World War II. In the years following the war, the same segregated schools that had embraced their patriotic duty despite the tyranny of local sovereignty now
embarrassed the American family, especially in international affairs. As society wrestled with the meaning of the American credo in terms of race, another defining issue emerged as the nation's demographic make-up became more diverse: where is the locus of decision-making for the determination of the instruction for children who do not speak English?

Previous generations dealt with the same question, of course. At the time of Lyndon Johnson's birth in 1908, rural communities in Texas (and across the nation) dealt pragmatically with language acquisition issues. Children whose parents spoke German, Czech, Swedish, Italian or Spanish as public schools developed during the latter half of the nineteenth century faced highly localized options, depending on the activism of the larger immigrant contingent in a given town. As a ninth grader, Johnson himself experienced the discomfort of the language "outsider" when he attended school in the heavily Germanic Hill Country, because of his weak German language skills in a setting where some classes were conducted in German. Throughout his career, LBJ would try to persuade teachers and their employers to see the federal government as an ally, but the perception of Washington, D.C. as an irritant grew. If Johnson's successors intended to reduce the profile of the federal government, they failed. On the contrary, Nixon's domestic agenda and the Ford Administrations actions in the aftermath of the Lau v. Nichols ruling in 1974 fueled the growing backlash against perceived federal encroachment into school governance. Dissatisfaction with Ford among conservatives led an array of forces opposed to centralization to coalesce around the candidacy of Ronald Reagan. The former actor-turned-Governor of California posed a formidable challenge to the incumbent Gerald Ford for the Republican presidential nomination in
1976, effectively marking the demise of the once-substantial moderate wing of the party. Despite winning the nomination, Ford lost the GOP at the grassroots level.

The axiom attributed to the late Speaker of the House, Tip O’Neill, that “all politics is local,” deserves this corollary: “and school politics is the most local of all.”

Making the case that the political culture of a school district determines the actual implementation of federal policies required that this framework included analysis of the role of teachers’ associations as stakeholders in the education policy community at the local, state, and federal level. The workplace represents a community, too, where management and labor often struggle to maintain a shared sense of collaboration across the lines and boxes of the organizational chart.

Based on the foundation established in the first three chapters, case studies of the interplay between the locally elected school officials in Waco, Texas and Kalamazoo, Michigan confirmed increased participation in school politics by local activists during a time in the early-to-mid-1970s when bilingual programming for non-English-speaking students moved from voluntary to mandatory as a result of the 1974 Lau ruling. Under the threat of further sanctions by the federal courts, both school districts successfully utilized the strategy of co-opting the leaders of local Mexican American organizations to move away from confrontation. Groups like the Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans in Texas and El Grupo del Rosario in Kalamazoo, Michigan, benefited in many ways. Both groups conducted community organization activities of many kinds, but proved especially effective in confronting school issues through direct engagement on many fronts. In so doing, they advanced the needs of their children and moved closer to the top of the agenda for the school districts. These organizations achieved high levels of
credibility across ethnic lines, and in raising the issues of bilingual and bicultural education, they expanded access to the local political culture.

For generations, communities in the United States pooled resources to provide a common educational foundation for their children, subject to the prejudices of those whose gender, race, ethnicity, or social class bestowed upon them the power to favor one child over another. They employed teachers who did not enjoy the protection tenure laws would later extend to educators in strong labor states. From the first hagiographic portrayals of George Washington as the Great White Father to the conduct of duck-and-cover drills during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the public school teacher served as the primary agent of group socialization infused with patriotism. Teachers in thousands of American classrooms dutifully carried out their assignments as the Sandmen and Sandwomen of the American dream, leading their charges in pledging allegiance to a republic based on nationalistic individualism.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, public school officials' expectations as to how their teachers would Americanize new arrivals varied widely, reflecting the political culture of each local school district. By the time anti-German sentiments peaked in 1917, however, the locus of decision-making shifted and state and national pressures encroached on the traditional jurisdiction of public schools by calling for English-only instruction. In 1920, the chief administrator of Boston Public Schools expressed dismay over the response by schools to the arrival of immigrant children. Arguing that any Americanization accomplished by the schools represented nothing more than an "unconscious by-product," Superintendent Frank Thompson saw certification procedures as one target for reform, because
nowhere in them is there a test of acquaintanceship with the problem of Americanization. We furnish special classes sometimes for non-English-speaking children, but we do so entirely for the purpose of enabling these children to enter without delay the regular grades.⁴

None of the many challenges facing those charged with transforming the “other” into Americans superseded the teaching of English. Today, we might glean from memories handed down in Homeric fashion at multi-generational family gatherings that teachers once instilled generations of children of all cultural backgrounds with the ambition and skills to read, to write, and to speak English. From such quintessentially American experiences, one could draw the cursory conclusion that by introducing bilingual education, schools effectively lowered the temperature of the melting pot. This assessment, however pleasing to opponents of bilingual methodology, or to those who nostalgically recall such a level of efficacy, simply remains unproven.

Many factors limited the acquisition of English language skills. One suspects that given the persistence of child labor, ongoing efforts to isolate females, patterns of transience or settlement, as well as dropout rates, the actual mastery of spoken and written English attributable to the labors of public school teachers probably fell short of what English-only advocates perceived to be the case, then or now. Nevertheless, the acquisition of English language skills remains a key chapter in the saga of the immigrant’s journey from the lowly status of “other” to the loftier place held by hyphenated-Americans.⁵

Since 1907, when the Dillingham Commission began staggering statistical investigation of the immigrant experience in the United States, policy-makers sought to
quantify the effects of the twin forces of cultural retention and acculturation on migrating peoples to rationalize their own biases. Running at capacity, the economic engine of American capitalism consumed human resources at a pace conducive to open doors for immigrants. If slowed for any reason, the same machinery disgorged the surplus labor. The linkage between poverty and immigration remained compelling for the architect of the Great Society. “As a son of a tenant farmer, I know that education is the only valid passport from poverty.” With these words, Lyndon Johnson, once a teacher at the English-only “Mexican” school in Cotulla, Texas, signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Courting Mexican American voters throughout his political career, Johnson expressed concern about their second-class status long before he attacked injustices facing African Americans. His enthusiastic promotion of programs like Head Start derived from his own teaching experience, where the local district lacked the resources to break the cycle of poverty.

Johnson’s presidency marked a significant period of transition for governance in the American system of K-12 education. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 set off waves of change that washed over school districts across the nation. The rhetoric of Johnson’s War on Poverty portended the tide of community-based federal programming about to flood the system. Quietly, in small towns in Texas where thirty years earlier LBJ learned to navigate the burgeoning New Deal bureaucracy as State Director of the NYA, schools dared to break away from English-only instruction, the source of the stream that would converge with the rising expectations of the Mexican Americans. With the promise of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the stage appeared set for all parents to have a voice in the operation of their schools. The Open Housing Act of 1968 promised to provide African
American children with access to schools previously segregated by restrictive housing ordinances.

The civil rights movement and Lyndon Johnson's ambitious domestic agenda strained intergovernmental relations more than at any time since 1945. Influenced by Cold War geopolitics, and pressured by domestic employers for a steady supply of cheap labor, President Johnson supported basic changes in U.S. immigration law enacted in 1965. The resulting changes in the American profile foreshadowed demands for cultural pluralism affecting virtually every institution from the community school to the Supreme Court. These were essential contextual factors not only for enactment of the 1968 legislation, but for passage of subsequent amendments and for court rulings through 1978.

During this same period of time, Canadians adopted new policies regarding bilingual education. With shared roots in a decentralized model for public education, Canada's path led in a different direction than her neighbor's, but one can see different shadings of the issue of identity developing there as in the United States. Matthew Hayday's discussion of Canada's coming to terms with bilingualism and its impact on Canadian nationalism raises some of the same issues this paper confronted. The conflation of bilingual education as a classroom strategy with bicultural education as a means of achieving a higher level of pluralism created tension in the Canadian confederation due to persistent concerns about Quebecois separatism. These questions involving the language of instruction are truly global, for the surge in the circulation of people and cultures in the post-Cold War environment presents communities across the
globe with similar questions about the role of schools as transmitters of the dominant language.

The case studies of Waco, Texas and Kalamazoo, Michigan, demonstrated how the confluence of developments involving landscape, language, and law brought Mexican Americans into public policymaking at the local school district level in Texas and Michigan. The experiences of parents and school personnel in those communities illustrated a concept of federalism I label “policy echo.” This occurs when policy decisions made at the local level resonate in Washington, D.C. and the federal reaction elicits a response from constituents at the local level. This back-and-forth effect so evident in the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 supports this model of federal-local dynamics in education policy.

The legislative origins of the BEA can be traced to decisions made by teachers, administrators and elected trustees in handful of elementary school buildings in Texas to abandon English-only curriculum and instruction. After the initial legislative success of a coalition spearheaded by Senator Ralph Yarborough, the National Education Association, and a host of Mexican American organizations across the political spectrum, the actual budgeting process for Title VII funds became hotly contested as the “guns and butter” dilemma constrained domestic spending. When the use of federal funds to educate Spanish-speaking students in California raised equity questions in that state’s Asian American community, the consequent litigation leading to the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling in 1974. The reauthorization of BEA that year reflected Congressional consideration of the Supreme Court’s decision, but the issuance of regulations by the U.S. Office of Education in the summer of 1975 effectively made Uncle Sam the principal of any school with 20
children of the same language background. The "Lau Remedies" took what once amounted to a rather nebulous legislative vehicle to fund experimental projects aimed at Spanish-speaking constituencies to the level of a major civil rights issue that contributed to the demise of the moderate wing of the Republican Party.

This examination of the modern implementation of bilingual education programming in the late 1960s through the 1970s finds conservatives tended to view considered this not just as an educational strategy but as part of a political agenda that threatened a heretofore hegemonic culture. In 1968, when the U.S. Office of Education first issued guidelines for districts planning to submit applications, some potentially problematic phrasing appeared that advised applicants of their responsibilities in the area of bicultural education did not register as a concern. The redefinition of the mission of participating schools serving non-English-speaking children, which now included the "study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue," clearly indicated that Chicano ideology extended beyond the Mexican American community into the institutional mainstream. The Manual for Project Grant Applicants and Grantees further emphasized that "a complete program develops and maintains the child's self-esteem and a legitimate pride in both countries."8

One also senses that the traditional role teachers played as agents of Americanization were lost amidst many other elements of the counter-culture of the 1960s, or perhaps the wording rang hollow in the absence of mandates. What did Americanization mean anymore? In any case, from the issuance of the Lau Remedies in the summer of 1975 until Congress responded to some of the judicial and bureaucratic excesses with the reauthorization of BEA in 1978, the Republican Party made
considerable political hay from a host of flag-waving, jingoistic issues. Perhaps this
tactic was best symbolized by opposition to President Jimmy Carter's successful
negotiation of treaties narrowly ratified by the Senate in March and April 1978 that
restored Panamanian sovereignty over the Canal Zone in 1979. Reagan tapped into at
least three generation of voters steeped in the great American narrative by their own
school experiences by questioning the direction of the nation. For hundreds of school
districts across the United States with at least twenty students in a language group, the
requirement to develop plans to establish "legitimate pride" in Mexico, or any other
nation, coincided the year-long celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of
the American republic in 1776.

The awkwardness of the moment would not be lost on significant portions of the
membership of such fixtures in the political establishment of the 1960s and 1970s as the
League of United Latin American Citizens and the G.I. Forum. These groups tended to
agree with many white conservatives that biculturalism would serve to isolate Mexican
American youth, rather than integrate them into the mainstream of the U.S. economy.\(^9\)
As Blanton observed, although Ronald Reagan welcomed federal funds for bilingual
education as Governor of California, as President he grew disenchanted with "enforcing
Carter-era regulations on bilingual education and civil rights."\(^10\)

As front-line agents of either the status quo or of change, teachers play the key
normative role outside the home. What happens when a significant number of teachers
do not like the mission assigned to them? Until voting rights could be secured, the school
could not help but fall short as the public institution closest to the home and governed by
locally elected trustees. Yet the full extension of the franchise in the 1960s, coupled with
the successful litigation strategies by NAACP and LULAC made the classroom a crucible for burning away the residue of segregationist practices across the nation. Depending on local circumstances, as in the cases of Waco Independent School District and the Kalamazoo Public Schools, the issuance of court-orders mandating the use of school buses to transport students across school attendance boundaries to achieve racial balance did not occur until the 1970s.

In an environment where the perception of the federal government shifts from one of a shared mission to one of usurping local control, which accelerated after the Great Society, bilingual education mandates represented excessive influence by special interests. Since advocates of bilingual programming often made references to bicultural education and appreciation for Mexican heritage, the language instruction issue became associated with the separatist aspects of the Chicano agenda. The extension of stakeholder status by federal, state, and local agencies accompanied formal and informal attempts at what became known as “affirmative action” across the public and private sector, including the NEA, AFT, and their counterparts representing boards of education and administrators.¹¹

As these portraits of episodes of federal involvement have illustrated, reformers in the Progressive era assigned a significant role to Washington, D.C. in the vocational education movement. The emergence of the modern high school by the early twentieth century, accompanied by upward trends in age limits for compulsory education, placed teachers, principals, and school counselors squarely in the business of sorting and selecting children for collars blue or white. Further federal reliance upon schools as partners in the implementation of its policies developed by the mid-1930s, when the
National Youth Administration engaged K-12 officials with colleges participating in work-study projects to prevent dropouts and boost literacy skills among the unemployed. The extraordinary expansion of the federal presence in the schools peaked during WWII, as the call for patriotic sacrifice made these community centers for countless groups keeping home fires burning. Always subject to the expansion and contraction of enrollment due to shifts in the labor market, school districts in the swirling wartime economy received some assistance through the Lanham Act of 1940.12

Governance in the public school district rests on basic principles of representative government, and each functions as a distinctive political culture, indeed, virtually as a fourth level of federalism. The command and control mechanisms within the system, however, weaken significantly at the classroom level. Conversely, this weakness becomes the teacher's strength. The remarks made by students in Texas and Michigan about the positive and negative influences of individual teachers remind us of the enormous responsibility society assigns to these vital employees of the community. Imbued in this transference of state and parental authority to the teacher via the common law doctrine of in local parentis resides a sense of unity of purpose among adults. Parents and teachers alike, however, form formal and informal factions based upon perceived mutual interest. The institution reflects the cross-currents of the internal and external political culture, where lines of authority and decision-making blur. Prior to the BEA, English-only practices echoed much of the tension associated with the historic conflict between the rhetoric of individualism and the technologies of conformity exercised by teachers in public schools. Replicating this tension, unresolved issues of group and individual identity reflected frictions old and new within the
increasingly unionized ranks of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA).

Internal struggles and policy differences not only prevented merger of the AFT and the NEA at the national level, they also embroiled activists in state and local organizations in divisive debates. In some respects, the two unions switched places between 1964 and 1980. At the time LBJ took office, the AFT arguably espoused more of a traditionally liberal ideology than the NEA. Until then, the NEA neither embraced collective bargaining nor had it desegregated state affiliates. In stark contrast, the AFT stood firmly for civil rights. By 1980, however, the NEA exemplified the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, while the AFT's rhetoric sounded increasingly like that of the Republicans. Reagan's election must be seen in light of his ability to convince conservative Republicans and frustrated FDR/JFK Democrats that the federal government stepped out of bounds with its intrusions into the affairs of local school districts.

Conservative or liberal as individuals, educators organized into professional associations sought to exercise influence over policy matters affecting their classrooms, even in the absence of collective bargaining rights. Historian Adam Fairclough traces the origins of political activism by teachers to the "intensely partisan culture" of the nineteenth century, a time when the vast majority of people who taught "moved in and out of the classroom: they were also lawyers, planters, farmers, sharecroppers, newspaper editors, and ministers." School affairs, synonymous with civic affairs, required one to exercise, not refrain from exercising citizenship skills. As established by previous studies
of teachers' unions, factors such as class consciousness, race and community norms left many teachers torn over the issue of unionism and professionalism.

In some ways, the answers to the call by David Montgomery and others for closer examination of real union behavior in actual plants and communities serves to confirm that the "union idea," as Nelson Lichtenstein bemoans in *State of the Union*, has shifted from a quest for dignity and influence over methods and pace of production to the bargaining of wages and benefits. In the 1960s, teachers' unions demanded both. Reminiscent of Saldivar's use of the phrase "Janus-faced" Murphy's and Urban's work suggests a similar duality in the workplace democracy of organized schools: one as a union member and one as a faculty member.

The differing positions of the NEA and AFT at the national level toward bilingual education were clear, but my research revealed nothing about the dynamics of the rank-and-file at the local or state association level specifically related to this important issue. This gap needs to be filled. Based upon my own professional experience as an activist in the Michigan Education Association (MEA) in Southwest Michigan during mid-to-late 1970s, I would expect that oral histories taken from the membership at the time would find many "Reagan Democrats," who questioned the more liberal state and national organization. Personnel who depended upon federal funding for their positions occupied distinctive places in the political culture and seemed privileged in comparison to those funded by the traditional blend of local and state monies. The MEA has played a significant role in Michigan's system of public education, but unlike the struggle of the United Auto Workers, scholarly attention to this key union remains minimal.
Among the working conditions that fueled the growing demand for collective bargaining among school employee groups in the 1960s and 1970s was the arbitrary and often capricious approach to hiring matters. The inattention to these matters in the NEA's official record of the "New Voices of the Southwest" symposium indicates the Association's growing internal identity crisis. When photographs and quotations were selected for use in *New Voices of the Southwest*, the editors failed to include a single photograph of or a statement by a classroom teacher.\textsuperscript{15}

Even if teachers have not fully told their side of the story, this did not prevent noted linguist Theodore Andersson's from sharing his view of the inability of the K-12 system in the United States to meet the educational challenges implicit in sharing a porous border with Mexico. Andersson conveyed a sense of condescension toward the nameless actors in the school districts he subtly mocks. Among the leading scholars whose advocacy of bilingual education in the 1960s propelled the issue into the forefront, Theodore Andersson bluntly stated that, in retrospect, "it was difficult to find teachers who were both convinced of the value of Spanish as a medium of instruction and able to teach this varied subject matter in Spanish." Bruce Gaarder of the U.S. Office of Education found that the local programs operating prior to enactment of BEA tended to fall short of what "true" bilingual schooling would entail. He found schools favored "'bilingual' individuals usually drawn from the community, rarely required to be literate in the non-English tongue, and paid disproportionately low wages."\textsuperscript{16} My study found no evidence to contradict these harsh assessments. The only evidence of advocacy by teachers at the local level comes when issues of job security for teachers intersect with
accusations of discriminatory or culturally insensitive behavior toward Mexican American students.

Disappointed with the results after a decade of implementation programs across the country, Andersson conceded that “not even administrative favor and the financial support of two successive Bilingual Education Act grants have been able to counterbalance the shortage of adequately prepared teachers and the indifference of parents and the public.”17 In Andersson’s estimation, the support of Bruce Gaarder of the U.S. Office of Education and Joshua A. Fishman, author of Language Loyalty in the United States, were essential to promotion of the BEA. He also credited the organization that became known in 1964 as the Southwest Council on Bilingual Education with publication of important reports on innovative programs, funding sources and findings on educational research.18 Gaarder detected a gap between emerging local programming initiated by what might be called a coalition of the willing and what he referred to as “true bilingual schooling.” To many educators and school board trustees, such phrasing represented the kind of elitist Washington omniscience that leads people to resent what Alabama Governor George Wallace famously called “pointy-headed intellectuals who couldn’t park a bicycle straight”19

The problem of implementing change in the K-12 system goes far beyond the issue of bilingual education. Four decades ago, the former executive director of the National School Boards Association, Harold Webb, addressed the issue of “patterns of public control” from the American point of view in an essay for Canadian Education and Research Digest. Webb examined the issue in terms of sheer numbers, citing 60 million Americans involved in education on a full-time basis as teachers, administrators or as
students. "Add to this number the 110,000 (local) school board members...and the
several hundred members of our state boards of education...I believe there is no single
control pattern that is emerging in U.S. education. Rather, it is a non-pattern that is most
typical."

Webb's remarks fit the situation with bilingual education policy perfectly, but he
did not address a variable capable of trumping all other factors—nature itself. For these
systems operate within a larger context of a physical environment responding to changing
land use patterns or the occurrence of a flood, tornado, or other traumatic natural disaster.
The internal divisions of ethnicity, class, or partisan leanings can be healed or
exacerbated by natural disasters or human interventions in the environment. Changes in
the agricultural labor market resulting from the Bracero program during WWII brought
more workers out of the Rio Grande Valley to West Michigan. The political
establishment in Kalamazoo, Michigan, viewed Mexican Americans as seasonal denizens
of the orchards and vineyards of the fruit belt. The numbers of these migrants would
rise with the bounty of the harvest or fall when a late freeze bites tender buds in
springtime. In 1969, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, after all, found the City of
Kalamazoo and its school district to have ignored the existence of a resident Mexican
American community populated with families who spoke Spanish at home. The church-
based coalition of politically active Chicanos and older "establishment" figures
developed at St. Augustine's parish identifying itself as El Grupo del Rosario, likely
engaged in the broader Movimiento within the kind of network Marc Rodriguez found in
cities in Wisconsin, but the level of campus activism in Madison greatly exceeded
anything seen at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.
David A. Kaplowitz appropriately relocates LULAC as a key player in the advancement of bilingual education policy, but the findings of my research suggest his presentation of the Ford Administration underplays outreach to La Raza Unida by Ford’s lieutenants. More significantly, he does not link the issue of bilingual education to the Ford/Reagan campaign in 1976, though he cites Reagan’s supposed opposition to it as appealing to his conservative base in 1980. My work with the Teeter Collection enabled me to demonstrate that the Ford Administration clearly took the Mexican American vote in Texas into consideration with both funding and personnel decisions in their campaign to secure the Republican nomination in 1976, appealing to the broad spectrum from La Raza Unida to LULAC. Reagan and his supporters, which increasingly included “Reagan Democrats,” successfully exploit the controversial emphasis on bicultural education, which seemed a direct contradiction to the melting pot imagery popularized by the bicentennial celebration.

One thing is certain—the resumption of school after summer recess found teachers conferring about the number of Spanish-speaking children, speculating about how long the families would be in town. Relationships developed over the course of many harvests, and families working the vineyards in communities like Hartford, Lawton and Paw Paw in Southwest Michigan in late August through the first frost in October repeatedly worked for the same growers. School officials in these small districts recognized family names. Within the first month of classes, each school would carefully account for every pupil possible, because of the allocation of funding on a per pupil basis. In some districts, extraordinary efforts to get the children registered and in attendance for the official count day, such as special bus runs or use of school cars and personal
vehicles, paid off in the form of full-time funding for children the district would rarely educate for more than a week.\textsuperscript{22} This situation exemplifies the significance of the distinctive culture of each school building. One cannot help but think of the students themselves, wondering as Arturo Alvarado did as he enrolled in yet another school, if “perhaps the principal would not make a bad face when they showed up.”\textsuperscript{23}

The principal would not wish the school’s culture to be disrupted, so the administrative response Alvarado dreaded suggested too many schools may have overlooked the possibility that its learning environment could be enriched, as well. As demonstrated by the inclusive planning processes mandated for applicants for federal education grants, schools benefited by engaging Mexican American activists in the work of task forces and committees. At the local level, this meant that school officials might appoint citizens, or a group of parents might appoint their own spokesperson to serve on their behalf. Either path increased the visibility and viability of advocates of Brown Power. Not only did broader representation of stakeholders promise to ease tensions and to provide valuable leadership experiences, it held the potential to co-opt key figures in this growing segment of the community. In a pattern seen in Waco, Texas and Kalamazoo, Michigan, mothers and fathers who stood before their local Board of Education to express concerns about treatment of their sons and daughters would become likely nominees for seats at the table. By establishing the “landscape” of the Bilingual Education Act and its evolution over the course of the 1970s, the findings of the project demonstrate that the Mexican-American pressure groups moved from confrontation to collaboration as part of the district’s response to the problem.
Notes to Conclusion

1 President Eisenhower approved the addition of the phrase “under God” to the Pledge in a signing ceremony on 14 June 1954 (Flag Day). The flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, and school prayer all remain key rallying points for the conservative movement through this writing.

2 Robert Caro, *Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 100. Caro points out that Johnson’s embarrassment may have stemmed also from the donkey he rode to the Albert School, four miles from his home at the time. Lyndon’s mother, Rebekah Johnson, tutored children from German families in English at her home.


8 Quoted in Theodore Andersson, “Bilingual Education: The American Experience?”


10 Kevin Carlos Blanton, _Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas_ (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 150.

11 Wayne Urban and Marjorie Murphy raised embarrassing issues for educators whose own local and state affiliates of the national teachers’ unions. The Michigan Education Association made significant efforts to diversify its key UniServ links to LEAs, notably by recruiting a Mexican American labor organizer from Arizona in the mid-1970s to serve a number of school districts in southwest Michigan. He did not represent any of the districts with the largest numbers of Mexican American children, however.

12 “Fritz” Lanham of Texas obtained support for an amended version of the bill within a few months, feeling considerable pressure from local officials to give them access to more resources to meet exploding enrollments.

13 In the 1960s, organizations like the Texas Classroom Teacher’s Association, the Texas State Teachers’ Association and the Texas Colored Teachers’ Association faced distinctly different circumstances as professional educators than did teachers in Michigan, where longstanding AFT and NEA affiliates grew stronger throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The American Federation of Teachers did not even have a Texas affiliate until 1979.


17 Andersson, "Bilingual Education," 429.

18 Ibid., 429

19 This phrase frequently appeared in speeches by George C. Wallace before and during his campaigns for President in 1968 and 1972. Time Magazine May 29 1972


21 For a wonderful blend of original scholarship and K-12 social studies curriculum, see the project conducted by the Western Michigan University Department of History with the Heritage Museum and Cultural Center of St. Joseph, Mi., Preserve the Fruit Belt: An Educational Guide to Local and Regional History, (St. Joseph, MI: Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, 2006).

22 These insights come from my career in public education in southwest Michigan, including over nine years as a school superintendent in St. Joseph and Kalamazoo Counties.

## APPENDIX:
**CHRONOLOGY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>FEDERAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</th>
<th>TEXAS (WACO) BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</th>
<th>MICHIGAN (KALAMAZOO) BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</th>
<th>CANADIAN BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
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<td>Regulation 17 requires Ontario elementary schools to teach in English only.</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Texas adopts Article 288 of Texas Penal Code (English-only in public schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1953</td>
<td>Tornado devastates downtown Waco, sets in motion series of urban renewal projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1953</td>
<td>Latin American Christian Center established in Waco</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1963</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lester Pearson becomes Prime Minister of minority government</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of Bilingual and Bicultural Commission (meets through 1965) marks federal commitment.</td>
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<td>DATE</td>
<td>FEDERAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</td>
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<td>June 1965</td>
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<td>Publication of <em>Focus News</em> offers alternative press to minority community</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1965</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Federal election; Pearson continues as PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1966</td>
<td>National Education Association symposium in Tucson, Arizona; “New Voices of the Southwest” promotes bilingual education</td>
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<td>November 1966</td>
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<td>Coalition of Texas educators/activists meet in El Paso to follow up on NEA symposium</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1967</td>
<td>Senator Ralph Yarborough (D-TX) introduces Bilingual Education Act</td>
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<td>DATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1967</td>
<td>White House Conference on Mexican American Affairs in El Paso, TX</td>
<td>Chicano Movement mobilized by Johnson’s visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1967</td>
<td>Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of ESEA) approved by Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1968</td>
<td>President Johnson signs BEA</td>
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<td>Pierre Trudeau succeeds Lester Pearson as Prime Minister; serves until 1979</td>
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<td>April 1968</td>
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<td>September 1968</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jaime Garcia, student at Kalamazoo Central HS, addresses Board of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1969</td>
<td>Richard Nixon succeeds Lyndon Johnson as President</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1969</td>
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<td>Michigan Civil Rights Commission conducts hearings on race relations in Kalamazoo</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1969</td>
<td>Bilingual Education bills introduced in Texas legislature by Senator Bernal and Representative Truan.</td>
<td>Focus News runs first articles on Mexican American community in Kalamazoo</td>
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<td>July 1969</td>
<td>July 1969</td>
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<td>Canada adopts Official Languages Act, setting in motion changes in federal role in education</td>
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<td>August 1969</td>
<td>Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans incorporates (meetings began in 1967)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1969</td>
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<td>Trudeau announces intent to use federal funds to advance bilingual education</td>
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<td>May 1970</td>
<td>U.S. Office of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issues memo about language minorities, triggering litigation in California that will become the <em>Lau v. Nichols</em> case decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1974</td>
<td>Waco ISD Board of Education hears complaints from parents of Mexican American students</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1970</td>
<td>Waco ISD Superintendent Downing responds to complaints</td>
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<td>Canada finalizes the Federal-Provincial Program of Cooperation for the Promotion of Bilingualism in Education; program to be reviewed every five years.</td>
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<td>DATE</td>
<td>FEDERAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</td>
<td>TEXAS (WACO) BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1971</td>
<td>Waco Human Relations Commission funds dropout study; data will inform subsequent grant applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1971</td>
<td>Forty-one school districts in Texas receive funding for bilingual programs.</td>
<td>State Board of Education adopts goal of serving the non-English speaking student</td>
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<td>December 1971</td>
<td><em>USA v. State of Texas</em> decision calls for overhaul of curriculum and use of bilingual/bicultural approaches by Texas schools.</td>
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<td>February 1972</td>
<td>Nixon re-election campaign memo suggests targeting Mexican American voters</td>
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<td>June 1972</td>
<td>Campaign memo suggests Nixon meet with Mexican President</td>
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<td>June-August 1973</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kalamazoo Public Schools operates summer program for migrant students</td>
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<td>July 1973</td>
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<td>Federal court orders Waco ISD to work</td>
<td>Kalamazoo Public Schools establishes community</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>with Waco Alliance of Mexican Americans</td>
<td>advisory committee for migrant education programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>on federal grant proposal</td>
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<td>November 1973</td>
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<td>Waco ISD submits grant application</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>under Emergency School Assistance Act</td>
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<td>in compliance with court order.</td>
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<td>December 1973</td>
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<td>Waco ISD Board of Education reaches</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>out to Waco Alliance of Mexican</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Americans for continued collaboration</td>
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<td>January 1974</td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Supreme Court determines</td>
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<td>bilingual education a civil rights</td>
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<td>issue in <em>Lau v. Nichols</em>, mandating</td>
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<td>services for non-English speaking</td>
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<td>August 1974</td>
<td>Congress removes income qualification and retains emphasis on native culture</td>
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<td>August 1974</td>
<td>Nixon resigns; Ford assumes Presidency</td>
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<td>January 1975</td>
<td>OCR issues compliance survey for 333 districts affected by Lau decision</td>
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<td>July 1975</td>
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<td>Governor Milliken (R) signs Public Act 294, establishing state requirements for bilingual education based on Lau</td>
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<td>August 1975</td>
<td>U.S. Office of Education distributes “Lau Remedies” detailing school responsibilities</td>
<td>State legislation makes bilingual classes for upper elementary students optional for districts.</td>
<td>Mexican American community members confront Kalamazoo Board of Education about district plans re: Lau</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1976</td>
<td>Ronald Reagan defeats Ford Republican Presidential primary, winning all 100% of Texas delegates</td>
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<td>July 1976</td>
<td>Ford White House and campaign working with Mexican American organizations</td>
<td>Ford addresses GI Forum</td>
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<td>August 1976</td>
<td>Ford wins Republican nomination; promises Mexican Americans increased support</td>
<td>Kalamazoo Public Schools establish Bilingual Parent Committee</td>
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<td>September 1977</td>
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<td>Michigan State Board of Education issues position statement on bilingual education.</td>
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<td>November 1978</td>
<td>President Carter signs amendment to BEA which emphasizes transition to “regular” classrooms</td>
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<td>May 1979</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trudeau’s Liberal Party loses to Conservatives</td>
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<td>November 1980</td>
<td>Election of Ronald Reagan signals ascension of conservatives.</td>
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