# Education for a New Race: White Schools, Child Labor, and Creating the Mexican in the Equality State, 1917-1941

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**Abstract**

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What has been the historical role of public schools in creating segregation and race? This study looks at the schooling experience of Mexican, Mexican American, and white children—all viewed as white under the law—in Wyoming in the first half of the 20th century to address this question. The public schooling experience of Mexicans in Wyoming illuminates the centrality of public schools and school people in circumventing the legal white status of Mexicans in the state and serving as a stand-in for formal Jim Crow laws. In fact, schools became the architects of race with school people such as teachers, principals, and superintendents being the final actors in the race formation process that distinguished whites from Mexicans regardless of citizenship status. In Wyoming, public schools created the Mexican race.

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***Para mi gente, para la raza***

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*Para mi mamá*

I need to acknowledge and thank my mom, Gail Renee Vasquez. Without her I would not exist, and more importantly I would never know about our connection to Wyoming. This dissertation is not just the story of my people but the story of a shared educational history with my mom and her family. This is for you Pilar Vasquez; my mom's father, the grandpa I never knew. I hope I made you proud mom and gave your dad's schooling experiences justice.

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***Para mi/For me***

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR CITATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AUC | Auraria Remembered Collection |
| BVP | Bernard Valdez Papers |
| CBQ | Val Kuska/Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy (CB&Q) Railroad Papers |
| CIP | Clemente Idar[Beet Workers' Association] Papers |
| CMAH | Thomas F. Mahony Collection |
| DCC | Rocky Mountain Council on Inter-American Affairs—Denver Commission on Community Relations Records |
| FKCP | Francis King Carey Papers |
| GRHP | Grace Raymond Hebard Collection |
| GWSCC | Great Western Sugar Company Collection |
| HMCR | Home Missions Council Records of North America |
| LCHP | Lester C. Hunt Papers |
| LCO | La Cultural Oral History Collection |
| LCP | Lawrence Cardoso Collection |
| MRSP | Milward R. Simpson Papers |
| NARA | National Archives and Records Administration |
| PSR | Political Science Records; Inter-American Education |
| PST | Paul S. Taylor Collection |
| RG 12 | Record Group 12: Office of Education |
| RG 16 | Record Group 16: Secretary of Agriculture |
| RG 59 | Record Group 59: Secretary of State Records |
| RG 69 | Record Group 69: Works Projects Administration |
| RG 102 | Record Group 102: Children's' Bureau |
| RG 224 | Record Group 224: Office of Labor--War Food Administration |
| RG 228 | Record Group 228: Committee on Fair Employment Practice Records |
| SMJC | Stuart Marshall Jamieson Collection(SMJ) |
| SRE | Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada. Acervo Histórico Diplomático. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores |
| SSOC | Spanish-Speaking Oral History Collection |
| UWPR | University of Wyoming President's Records —James Morill |
| WFL | Wyoming Federation of Labor Collection |
| WSA | Wyoming State Archives |
| WTH | William T. Ham Collection |

## Chapter 1

## Introduction

"[T]here had never been any segregation in the schools of Wyoming."—Governor Milward Simpson of Wyoming, 1957[1]

On September 11, 1956, a group of white parents—called the Committee of Citizens—attended a school board meeting in the small agricultural town of Worland, Wyoming, protesting that their children were experiencing discrimination because they were forced to transfer to a new school, the recently desegregated West Side School known as the Mexican or Spanish School in the community. Edith Scollard, one of the parents, specifically protested against "her children integrating with the Spanish element in the school system."[2] In one example, Scollard mentioned that her children were now going to be placed in a second grade classroom with majority Spanish children. At the meeting, the principal of the school read the school census out loud and revealed that out of a classroom of thirty-eight students, only four were Spanish-speaking or children of Mexican descent. Scollard was informed that the school board could not promise that her child would not be transferred and that the attitude of the board had always been that of equality throughout the school system. The meeting recorder made note of the exchange writing, "Mrs. Scollard's issue was racial and one against integration."[3]

The incident at Worland was not an isolated affair but instead signaled the collapse of a Jim Crow schooling system in Wyoming—known as the Equality State—that had specifically targeted children of Mexican descent in sugar beet producing communities which occurred in the

[1] Milward Simpson to Charles C. Diggs, Jr., October 18, 1857, box 161, folder 5, Milward I. Simpson Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.
[2] "Board Meeting of Worland School District Record of Proceedings," September 11, 1956, Minutes of Annual Meetings, School District No. 6(Worand, Wyoming), Washakie County Records, Wyoming, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, Wyoming.
[3] Ibid., 2.

immediate aftermath of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954/55.[4] Throughout most of the 1920s, school assignments in sugar beet communities or "sugar towns" such as Worland were based primarily on economic class and migrant status rather than race. Mexican (both U.S. born and immigrant) children regularly attended schools with "white" Americans as well as children regarded as "foreign" or of an immigration class such as German-Russian and Japanese children throughout the sugar beet districts of Wyoming.[5] Even when school officials worked with sugar beet companies to develop schools accommodated to migrant labor, racial segregation was never advanced either by sugar beet representatives or school authorities, and the children of sugar beet workers attended the same schools as other children in the community.[6] However, during the Great Depression exclusionary and discriminatory schooling practices targeting Mexican American and Mexican immigrant children became the norm in a number of sugar beet communities throughout the state. The racial educational policies would not change until the World War II era, when segregation against Mexican children collapsed not just in Wyoming but in most of the sugar beet producing areas of the Mountain States—Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, Wyoming—by 1956.

My dissertation seeks to unpack the Mexican/Mexican American schooling experience in Wyoming and answer the following research questions:

- How did racial segregation and integration of Mexican American children in schools evolve in the so-called "Equality State"?
- Why did the distinction between "whites" and "Mexicans" become the main measure in the application of schooling standards in most sugar beet communities during the Great Depression rather that migrant status or labor class status?[7]

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[4] Mountain States includes Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming

[5] For an example, see: Jess Cosby. Testimony from: *Immigration From Countries of the Western Hemisphere: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the U.S. Senate, 70th Congress,* First Session, 1928, p. 340.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Elizabeth Johnson, *Welfare of Families of Sugar-Beet Laborers: A Study of Child Labor and Its Relations to Family, Work, Income, and Living Conditions in 1935,* Bulletin.247(Washington: Government Printing Press, 1939),47.

- What made racial segregation in Wyoming unique compared to other states in the American West?
- How does this complicate the historical narrative of the racialization of Mexicans, whiteness, and American citizenship in the American West in the first half of the 20th century?

## Why Wyoming?

"Wyoming is a land of opportunity. Few questions are asked of a newcomer concerning his past or ancestry. It is not altogether rhetoric to say that a man is accepted for what he is and what he can do."—*Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People*[8]

The history of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant school segregation is complex, often misunderstood, and still developing. Though Mexicans resided in several states across the nation, most of the existing literature examines their experiences in the Southwest or the state of California. Still, even their experiences in those locations are under-researched. Speaking to this complexity, historian Rubén Donato and legal scholar Jarrod Hanson recently argued, "Even those familiar with Mexican Americans' education and historical experiences in the American Southwest are unclear about the intricacies of their segregation."[9] The literature on the Southwest has largely argued that segregation, as applied to Mexicans in the U.S., was *de facto* with no official state sanction; instead segregation was established by local politics and customs.[10] To this date no state statutes have been found which required or explicitly sanctioned the segregation of Mexican American or Mexican immigrant children in public schools.[11] Nevertheless, most Mexican Americans attended segregated schools, lived in marginalized

[8] Ibid, 162-163.
[9] Rubén Donato & Jarrod Hanson, "Legally White, Socially 'Mexican': The Politics of De Jure and De Facto School Segregation in the American Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review* 82 (2012): 203.
[10] Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*, 252.
[11] Historian Gilbert González complicates the "de facto" designation by arguing, "although there were no laws that mandated the practice of segregation, educators did invoke the state power granted to school administrators to adapt educational programs to the special needs of a linguistically and culturally distinct community," in Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*, 45. A similar argument was presented by Meyer Weinberg in "De Facto Segregation: Fact or Artifact?" *Integrated Education*, 1 (1963), 30.

neighborhoods, and toiled in the lowest sectors of the labor market stratified by race during the first half of the 20th century.[12]

In the Southwest, Mexicans/Mexican Americans experienced a hardened racial line that nullified their legal whiteness in the wake of the Treaty of *Guadalupe Hildalgo* (a topic discussed in a subsequent chapter). Nowhere was the stark racial contrast between white and Mexican more apparent than in the public school system. In the first three decades of the 20th century segregation of Mexican/Mexican American children gained momentum throughout the region, especially in California and Texas which experienced the largest influx of Mexican immigration.[13] By 1928, segregation was standard practice and Mexican schools were commonplace. In Southern California alone, sixty-four schools were ninety to one-hundred percent Mexican.[14] By the 1930s, ninety percent of all Mexican/Mexican American children were segregated in South Texas schools.[15] Segregation targeting Mexican/Mexican Americans was not confined just to public schools but instead was a larger phenomenon that historian Albert Camarillo recently named "Jamie Crow":

> Jamie Crow constituted a structure of discrimination, exclusion, and separation in the Southwest that, unlike Jim Crow laws for blacks in the South, was not based fundamentally on state or local legislation. Jamie Crow was anchored more by social practice and cultural customs, though the institutional polices and practices he shaped did arise to restrict opportunities and rights among Mexican Americans. The color line that Jamie Crow drew separated the great majority of people of Mexican origin from whites;

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[12] Molina, *How Race is Made in America,* 2. Note the distinction we make of schools that voluntarily were composed of Mexican children and taught by Spanish speaking teachers versus schools that Mexican children were involuntarily placed in separate from other children and without parental permission. Examples of these labeled "Mexican Schools," or "Spanish Schools," in rural Colorado are in the handwritten volumes of school director and school board archival records for the school districts of Conejo and Costillas, available at the Colorado Department of Archives and History in Denver. See also, J. F. Murray, *Ninth Annual Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Colorado December 1894* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing,1895), 37 and Nathan B. Cov, *Eighth Annual Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Colorado December 1892* (Denver: Smith-Books Printing, 1893), 153.

[13] Lawrence Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931,* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).92.

[14] David Torres-Rouff, "Becoming Mexican: Segregated Schools and Social Scientists in Southern California, 1913-1946", *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol.94, No. 1(Spring 2012): 91-92.

[15] Gross, 267.

> it was a marker established as much by cultural, religious, and national-origin axes of differentness as by skins color and ideas of inherent racial inferiority.[16]

However, Jamie Crow would not be just a Southwest phenomenon for long. The career of schooling segregation in Wyoming invoked Jamie Crow but also deviated from patterns in the Southwest in other major aspects.

Wyoming as a site of study lends itself to original analysis of racial discrimination in public schooling, as well as national discussions on immigration policy, civil rights, and the construction of whiteness. As currently the least populous state in the Union, Wyoming has historically been known for its landscape rather than its social history.[17] In educational history, Wyoming as a subject of study is almost non-existent.[18] In Mexican American and Latino educational history, it is non-existent despite the fact that Wyoming would be home to the seventh largest Mexican population in the U.S., in terms of percentage of overall state population and numbers in the early 20th century. The fact that racial segregation in Wyoming's public schools existed to varying degrees by the late 1930s—Mexican room to Mexican school—in almost every major agricultural community in the state makes it a fruitful place to examine the experiences of Mexican Americans in schools and the role of schools in shaping their racial lives. In fact, studying these issues in Wyoming provides a contrast to much of the literature that exists on Mexican Americans and schools. [19]

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[16] Albert Camarillo, "Navigating Segregated Life in America's Racial Borderhoods, 1910s-1950s" *Journal of American History* 100, no. 3(December 2013):.649-650.
[17] Eugene B. Berwanger, "The Absurd and the Spectacular: The Historiography of the Plains-Mountain States: Colorado, Montana, Wyoming," *Pacific Historical Review*, V. 50, 4(November 1981): 445-474.
[18] The notable exception is the work of historian Frank Van Nuys in *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*(Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002). However, Van Nuys work almost exclusivity focuses on the educational work of University of Wyoming professor Grace Raymond Hebard.
[19] J.A. Caudill, "A Survey of Certain Phases of the Public Schools of Lovell, Wyoming", MA Thesis, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, 1938, pp. 5, 46-47; "Increase Staff", *The Billings Gazette,* March 16, 1934, p. 15; "New Worland School Opens Doors Monday", *The Billings Gazette,* November 29, 1936, p. 12;

Unlike in the Southwest, where the Mexican population was present in some form of another since the annexation of a large part of Mexico in 1848, the Mexican population in Wyoming was almost entirely recruited there. The state was desperate for laborers because of its small population, and sugar beet interests heavily recruited from Mexico and other parts of the US. While white agricultural interests in the Southwest never had to create an extensive campaign to attract workers, those in Wyoming had no choice and used schools as a carrot to entice potential workers to bring their families with them. This particular reality significantly influenced how whites in Wyoming created schooling for these and the children of other laborers. It also meant that Mexicans in Wyoming experienced schooling in a way different from in the Southwest such as California and Texas. Thus, in Wyoming schooling were not just viewed as critical to community cohesion but were explicitly connected to labor, immigration, and racial policy.

Studying Wyoming also offers an opportunity to address the complexity of Mexican American and Mexican school segregation directly. For instance, by the 1940s, Wyoming schooling policies for students of Mexican descent mirrored the Southwest and racial distinctions were policed hard in schools. However, originally, Wyoming's schooling policy was much more flexible. In the Southwest, in states such as California and Texas, racial segregation in public schools worked in concert with the increase in Mexican immigration and as Mexicans were integrated into lowest sectors of a larger industrial agricultural economy. This was not so in Wyoming. Although Wyoming also experienced a wave of Mexican immigration in the 1910s and 1920s and Mexicans/Mexican Americans were largely regulated to stoop labor in the sugar beet industry, their educational experiences were more diverse and the norm was to attend

desegregated schools. For instance, all laborers, whether Mexicans, Mexican Americans, or German-Russians—all of them considered foreign, attended schools together.

Wyoming also offers a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between Mexican and European immigrants who, in the beginning, were treated similarly, but who became differentiated once the racialization of Mexicans began happening during the Depression Era. Unlike the cases in the Southwest, where Mexicans were treated much like African, Asian, and/or Native Americans in local statutes and school policies and kept separate from native whites, that was not the case in Wyoming. Instead, Mexicans were principally viewed on par and if some cases of a "better class" than German-Russians, an identifiable European ethnic group.[20]

In Wyoming, Mexican/Mexican American and German-Russian residents shared experiences such as work in the sugar beet fields and most of all *schooling*. However, it was in the schoolhouse, where both groups had the most intersection, that racial differentiation between the groups would begin and be policed. For instance, it was school officials that made the ultimate choice to separate German-Russian and Mexican children, effectively making German-Russians white and Mexicans a "race of their own."[21] Whereas Southwest and California officials used racialized language and policy as a vehicle to drive a wedge between Mexicans and whites, the rationale for segregating Mexican children in Wyoming and naming them as "colored" occurred only *after* segregation was established (specifically naming Mexican children as "dark skinned" and in need of English language proficiency).

My research into Wyoming positions schooling and educational policy not as peripheral to the race formation process in the state but foundational. It probably played the same role in

[20] For a discussion of German-Russian settlement in Wyoming, see: Donald Hodgson, "The Other Germans in Wyoming" *Annals of Wyoming* 63(Autumn 1991):145-149.
[21] Natalia Molina, "'In a Race All Their Own': The Question to Make Mexicans Ineligible for U.S. Citizenship," *Pacific Historical Review*, V. 27, No.2(May 2010): 167-201.

other communities and states, but most existing scholarship does not focus on that phenomenon.[22] In Wyoming, it is unavoidable. The general public, school officials, and government officials looked to public schooling policy as the ultimate measure of the "whiteness" of the Mexican people in their state. Even in cases where housing segregation existed and where separate "Mexican colonies" were created for the local Mexican communities in Wyoming this did not automatically translate to segregated schooling.[23] Additionally, each community that developed segregation for Mexican children in Wyoming did so with different strategies: from a segregated classroom, to a segregated track, to an entire segregated school. regardless of degree of segregation, in each Wyoming community schools hardened the lines between Mexicans and whites.

Additionally, the study of Wyoming problematizes the scholarly consensus of the segregation of Mexican and Mexican American children as *de facto* versus *de jure*. The prevailing scholarship rightfully argues that no Jim/Jaime Crow educational laws ever targeted children of Mexican descent. However, scholars such as scholars such as Ruben Donato, Jarrod Hanson, Will Maslow and others have argued for a more nuanced view of *de facto* segregation since the impact was the same: racial segregation.[24] The study of Wyoming further problematizes this distinction by demonstrating that school districts and officials in the states utilized federal funds and explicitly named racial segregation as "socially desirable" as their rationale for building a segregated school with said funds. In other words, segregation as applied to children of Mexican descent in Wyoming was not only state but federally sanctioned. This blend of

[22] For more on the connection between housing and schooling segregation, see: David G. Garcia, *Strategies of Segregation: Race, Residence, and the Struggle for Educational Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).
[23] Ibid.
[24] Donato & Hanson, "Legally White"; Wil Maslow, "De Facto Public School Segregation," *Villanova Law Review* V.6, No.3(1961): 353-376.

federal/state policy (*de jure)* and local practices (*de facto*) actions approved creating segregation where it did not previously exist. In Wyoming, schooling policy stood in for formal Jim/Jaime Crow laws.

A study of Wyoming also forces a re-envisioning of the origins of desegregation. By World War II, the Mexican American community was directly challenging segregated schooling in communities across Wyoming.[25] By 1956, in Wyoming, the segregation of Mexican American children was a moot issue.[26] In California, Texas, and even Colorado, desegregation litigation concerning schooling would last well until the 1970s.[27] Legal challenges in California and other states were necessary to undermine racial segregation while there is currently no evidence that a major Mexican American desegregation litigation ever occurred in Wyoming.[28] Not only does Wyoming challenge scholars to complicate and expand the ways in which segregation develops in schools but also the many ways desegregation manifests. Thus, although Wyoming highlights the pervasiveness of Jamie Crow in the American West it also demonstrates how the uniqueness of place and space complicate how race and schooling were intertwined.

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[25] Historian Carlos Blanton called this the "language segregation trap," see: Carlos Kevin Blanton, "A Legacy of Neglect: George I. Sanchez, Mexican American Education, and the Ideal of Integration, 1940-1970," *Teacher College Record*, Vol. 114, (June 2012): 9.

[26] By 1957 the West Side School [Mexican school] was no longer in use. See: *Survey of School Building Needs in Worland School District, Washakie County, Wyoming.* (Department of School Services of Division of Adult Education and Community Service and College of Education, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, June 1957) 2, 26-27.

[27] Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., "The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation, 1950s-1980s", *Journal of Latinos and Education,* Vol. 4, No.4, 2005, pp. 221-236. Wyoming is not mentioned once in

[28] Currently there is no evidence of a legal suit challenging the segregation of Mexican American children in Wyoming, this is not to say Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans did not protest against discrimination, there is ample evidence that as early as the 1910s, Mexicans objected to marginalization, see: "L.E. Rios Amenazadi de desterrarlo 1918", Leg. 631, Exp. 1, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada. Acervo Histórico Diplomático. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. Mexico City, Mexico.

## Study Overview and Discussion of the Literature

"Education for a New Race: White Schools, Child Labor, and Constructing the Mexican in the Equality State, 1917-1941," studies the Mexican/Mexican American schooling and labor experience in Wyoming from the early 20th century to the onset of World War II. This dissertation will document and analyze how racial segregation developed in four different communities: Lovell, Powell, Torrington, and Worland. Lovell and Powell would house a separate "Mexican room" that both communities called the "Mexican school" or "Spanish room" interchangeably. Torrington and Worland would construct separate schools (Grades 1-4) for its Mexican student population. However, the origins of said segregated schools were quite different. In the case of Torrington, segregation developed out of German-Russian parent protests, whereas in Worland, the schoolboard created a schools specifically for its Spanish-speaking or Mexican descent population. Thus, this dissertation documents the multiple ways schools were used to create the Mexican race.

My periodization is based on the recruitment of Mexican labor with the advent of the sugar beet industry during the World War I era and documented desegregation attempts by the beginning of World War II.[29] The Great Depression, New Deal, and the advent World War II will be discussed in great detail as watershed moments when the meaning of race changed rapidly. In Wyoming, changing racial meanings prompted by the 1930s economic collapse drastically changed the view of the Mexican worker and, as a consequence, Mexican American children in American pubic schools. The economic and social changes unleashed by World War

[29] T. Joe Sandoval, "A Study of the Spanish-Speaking Population In Selected Communities in Wyoming,"(master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1946), 49; Kim Ibac; William Howard Moore, "The Emerging Civil Rights Movement: The 1957 Wyoming Public Accommodations Stature as a Case Study", *Annals of Wyoming,* Vol. 73, No. 1, Winter 2001: 2-13.

II unhinged the traditional role of Mexican/Mexican American labor in the state leading to the collapse of Jamie Crow in the early Civil Rights era.

My dissertation builds on three distinct scholarly traditions: whiteness studies, the history of Mexican American education, and the Mexican/Mexican American worker experience in the American West. This overlapping literature is necessary since the schooling of Mexican children was always discussed in race, labor, and immigrant terms.

*Whiteness Studies*

Paul S. Taylor, an economist, who traveled the country in the 1920s and 1930s to study Mexican labor found that in sugar beet communities of Northern Colorado, many people considered "unassimilated" Europeans outside the boundaries of whiteness. Specifically, he found in sugar beet communities that when race was discussed white, German-Russian, and Mexican dominated the racial discourse, noting:

> Another problem arises with the term "white". It is a mistake to think that because whites and Negroes are used as opposing terms that "white" always refers to color. In northeastern Colorado one encounters the strange popular usage which in its terminology divides the community into three: "whites", meaning English-speaking Americans or Americanized Europeans; "Mexicans" meaning indiscriminately Mexicans from Old Mexico and Spanish Americans; and "German Russians"("Russians" or "Rooshians"), who are still a large and sufficiently unassimilated group not to be covered by the term "white".[30]

In Wyoming this same racial lens was at display and most pronounced in public schools, with German-Russian and Mexicans considered part of the same class and schooled with whites. Thus, Wyoming demonstrates that whites "are not born…they are somehow made" and they are not all made equally.[31] In order to explain how German-Russians remained integrated with

[30] Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States Volume I,* "Mexican Labor in the United States Valley of the South Platte Colorado" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930)104.
[31] As cited in Phoebe Godfrey, "The 'Other White': Mexican Americans and the Impotency of Whiteness in the Segregation and Desegregation of Texas Public Schools", *Equity and Excellence in Education,* Vol. 41, No.2: 206.

whites in Wyoming schools while Mexicans became increasingly racialized as non-white and non-American this dissertation will engage with whiteness studies scholarship.

Whiteness studies focus on the construction of whiteness—how diverse groups in the United States came to identify, and be identified by others, as white—and what that has meant for the U.S. social, political, and economic order. Scholars such as David Roediger, Noel Ignatiev, and Karen Brodkin have all documented how immigrants from various European countries became white on the East Coast largely in contradistinction to blacks.[32] Roediger has produced the most scholarship on the subject, recently arguing that Southern/Eastern Europeans were "in-between people" in the early 20th century.[33] However, the racialization of whiteness or "becoming white" has been challenged. For instance, historian Thomas Gugleilmo in his study of Italians in Chicago in the early 20th century, argued despite being viewed as culturally inferior and racially different, Italians were still viewed as white and no social barriers were institutionalized making Italians "non-white."[34] In other words, Italians and other Southern/Eastern European immigrants were never "in-between people" and were always included in the boundaries of white social citizenship, even when they were not American citizens.[35] "Education for a New Race" complicates the traditional literature on whiteness by positioning the racialization of whites in the American West at the center of analysis and highlighting how the category of white became dependent on the racialization of the Mexican,

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[32] See: David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Verso Publishing, New York, NY, 1991; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White,* Routledge Classics, New York, NY, 1995; Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says Race in America,* Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

[33] James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class'," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, No.3 (1997), pp. 3-45; David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs,*(Basic Books, New York, NY, 2005.

[34] Thomas Gugleilmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)10-11.

[35]Cybelle Fox; Thomas Guleilmo, "Defining America's Racial Boundaries: Blacks, Mexicans, and European Immigrants, 1890-1945", *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 118, No.2,334

not blacks. Unlike studies of the eastern U.S. the immigrant makeup of Wyoming was much more diverse with Mexicans, not Europeans, as the largest immigrant group.[36] Although this dissertation will draw heavily from whiteness scholarship, the themes discussed in the work of Matthew Jacobson, and Zoe Burkholder deserves special discussion.[37]

Matthew Jacobson's work *Whiteness of a Different Color: The Alchemy of Race* studies the construction of European immigrants as white from a long historical period from 1790-1965. Jacobson's racial history examines how white Americans racially perceived European immigrants, not how immigrants racially identified themselves. His work reveals the troubling and close relationship between race, ethnicity, and nationality where increased European immigration created a "variegated whiteness" where some immigrants were more white than others, meaning that they were closer to the Anglo-Saxon ideal in the U.S. racial schema. By World War II, according to Jacobson, race, viewed as nationality for most of the early 20th century, and color morphed into the "Caucasian" race and came to include all European immigrants with white Americans. Jacobson, however, discusses very little of the role public schools played in creating the Caucasian race. In this area the work of Zoe Burkholder is most useful.[38]

The work of Burkholder in *Color in the Classroom: How American Schools Taught Race* applies Jacobson's argument to public schools, especially how white teachers taught about race in classrooms. Burkholder demonstrates public schools were seminal institutions in creating and

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[36]Elizabeth Broadent,"The Distribution of Mexican Populations in the U.S." University of Chicago, Chicago,Illinois, August, 1941, Dissertation, p.117.
[37] For overviews of whiteness scholarship, see: Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History*, 89 (June 2002), 154-73; Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 60 (Fall 2001), 3-32; Barbara J. Fields, "Whiteness, Racism, and Identity," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (Fall 2001), 48-56; Daniel Wickberg, "Heterosexual White Male; Some Recent Inversions in American Cultural History," *Journal of American History*, 92 (June 2005), 136-57.
[38] Zoe Burkholder, *Color in the Classroom.*

dispersing popular notions of race and were highly influenced by developments in the social sciences. For instance Burkholder highlights that, "public schools became the site of one of the most audacious antiracist campaigns in American history—the joint effort of anthropologists and educators to revise what they called the 'race' concept in American schools during World War II."[39] Like Jacobson, Burkholder posits World War II as the great racial turn in inclusion of all European immigrants as race became defined in color terms. *Color in the Classroom* focuses almost exclusively on the view of European immigrant students, although Burkholder does acknowledge that once the Caucasian race notion developed, antiracist policies in classrooms were all but eliminated until the *Brown v. Board* public school desegregation ruling in 1954. However, there is little discussion on how these whiteness debates impacted other groups, specifically Mexican Americans, since her focus is on European immigrants in the eastern U.S.

"Education for a New Race" builds on and complicates the traditional narrative of "whiteness" presented by Jacobson and Burkholder. For instance, both authors position World War II as the watershed moment when color and race became one category as white and Caucasian become one, fully encompassing all European immigrants. However, this was not the case in Wyoming as displayed in the Torrington and Worland examples. The emergence of segregated schools demonstrates that the color-culture collapse occurred much earlier, specifically with the New Deal in Wyoming. By the dawn of World War II, the race question was answered in Wyoming: German-Russians were white, and Mexicans were not. More importantly, Wyoming positions Mexicans not Europeans as the quintessential "in-between" people regarding whiteness.[40] Mexicans were legally white but functionally non-white depending on their locality. As argued previously, in the 1920s Mexicans were more akin to Europeans in

[39] Ibid, 109.
[40] Katherine Benton-Cohen, "Other Immigrants: Mexicans and the Dillingham Commission of 1907-1911", *Journal of American Ethnic History,* Vol.30, No.2 (Winter 2011): .33.

Wyoming whereas in the Southwest they were viewed and treated as non-white. That Mexicans/Mexicans Americans in Wyoming became the focus of racist treatment by both "white" Americans and European immigrants once whiteness was redefined to exclude them during the Great Depression illuminates their previous "in-between" status.

*Mexican/Mexican American Labor and Industrial Agriculture*

Mexican labor has been employed in Wyoming since it was created as a Territory. However, the advent of the sugar beet industry in the state created a large and permanent presence in state on an unprecedented level. Nowhere was the new importance of Mexican labor and the sugar beet industry demonstrated than the testimonies of Wyoming Senators Frances Warren and John Kendrick who rallied against any form of immigration restriction that would disrupt the flow of Mexican labor. The senators' stance on Mexican labor was most vivid during the 1928 congressional hearings to restrict immigration from the western hemisphere. In particular, Kendrick pointed to Wyoming's sparse population and lack of industry to justify the *absolute* necessity of Mexican labor. Kendrick ended his testimony by arguing, "So that they have disturbed the order of things not at all. On the other hand, they have brought unusual benefits because they supply a form of labor that, in itself produces more labor for white man than could be had any other way."[41] During the 1920s, Mexican/Mexican Americans were not a race problem, but welcomed as a sign of the expansion of industrial agriculture in the state. In order to fully understand the impact of Mexican labor on the economy and social environment of Wyoming, this dissertation will engage with Mexican American labor history and the development of industrial agriculture in the American West in the first half of the 20th century. Specifically, my treatment of Wyoming builds on and intersects with the discussion of industrial

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[41] Testimony: Senator John B. Kendrick. *Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration. Hearings Before The Committee on Immigration United States Senate.* Seventieth Congress (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1928) 70-71.

agriculture and Mexican labor by historians such as David Monetejano's, Neil Foley's, and Kathleen Mapes's treatments of laborers in the cotton and sugar beet belts of the Southwest and Midwest respectively.

David Montejano, in *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986,* his groundbreaking work on Mexican Americans in Texas, argued that the emergence of industrial agriculture created a new social system in Texas that redefined Mexicans as an inferior race regulated to migratory labor. As he states, "Segregation, in other words, was not merely a natural unfolding of previous foundation or legacies—not just an immigration of more prejudiced Anglos or an assimilation of the old. This was a new society, with new class groups and class relations, with the capacity to generate an 'indigenous' rationale for the ordering of people".[42] His work is of particular importance to Wyoming because Montejano argued one of the most defining characteristics of the new racial order in Texas was the establishment of a segregated Mexican school system throughout industry agricultural districts of the state.[43] Thus, the emergence of Mexicans schools in Wyoming illuminates the development of a new racial order on par with social system in the cotton belt of Texas. However, unlike Texas, in Wyoming the new racial order and Mexican schools were byproducts of New Deal legislation in the state not just the development and expansion of industrial agriculture. Thus, segregation as applied to Mexicans/Mexican Americans in Wyoming was sanctioned by both federal and state authorities and was not just a reflection of local social custom.

Foley's discussion of cotton culture in West Texas, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture,* builds on the thesis of Montejano with his study of racial positioning of the tri-racial workforce—black, white, and Mexican—in the cotton

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[42] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987) 162.
[43] Ibid, 168.

fields of West Texas. Foley argues that as Mexicans were increasingly integrated into cotton culture in Texas, and the presence of white migrants increased as corporate farming displaced many white farmers, poor whites were increasingly on the verge of being designed a different race.[44] This racial dynamic in the cotton fields of Texas has a direct relationship with the sugar beet fields of Wyoming. In Wyoming, a tri-racial workforce also developed as European immigrants (German-Russians), Mexican/Mexican Americans, and Japanese made up the workforce that toiled in Wyoming's sugar beet fields. Like in Texas, as industrial agricultural expanded in the state so did the dependency on Mexican/Mexican American labor as Mexican immigration increased in the state. By the 1930s, Mexicans had completely displaced German-Russians and Japanese in the sugar beet fields and were to become a different race. However, Texas and Wyoming deviated from their shared path in the Great Depression, with labor needs as the driving force of race designations. Whereas government policies and regulation of cotton during the Great Depression displaced more white farmers and created a large white migratory class, federal intervention accelerated the inclusion of German-Russians into the white race in Wyoming.[45] By the end of the Depression, German-Russians were accessing relief on the same scale as white Americans, and by 1937 were calling themselves "of the white race".[46] That left Mexican Americans in Wyoming at the bottom of the racial hierarchy and the only laborers in the sugar beet fields.[47] Although there were many similarities between the sugar beet and cotton industry, local politics and state histories did create divergent paths in the racialization of Mexican labor and children.

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[44] Foley, 65, 69-70
[45] Ibid.
[46] Henry Schaechterle to William T. Ham, Loveland, Colorado, September 22, 1937, Box: 2, Folder: Child Labor 1937-1935, William T. Ham Papers, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.
[47] This was not just confined to Wyoming, see: Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State, From the Progressive Era to the New Deal,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, "Chapter 4: The Mexican Dependency Problem"

Kathleen Mapes' treatment of Michigan's sugar beet industry in *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics,* adds a critical element not discussed much in the work of the aforementioned authors: child labor. Although Foley and Montejano acknowledge that schools were critical to holding Mexican labor in Texas, the use of child labor is not at the forefront of their analysis of industrial agriculture.[48] As Mapes brilliantly describes, the advent of the sugar beet industry in Michigan created an unprecedented use of family migrant labor not seen in previous farming techniques in Michigan.[49] The use of child labor in Michigan caught the attention of child labor reformers such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Children's Bureau and the National Child Labor Committee. Both organizations argued the work by families in the sugar beet industry was nothing more than industrial "factories without walls". [50] Child labor reformers looked to public schools to end the child labor problem by arguing for more rigid enforcement of compulsory attendance laws.[51] However, Mapes demonstrates that child labor reformers were virtually silent on the use of Mexican/Mexican American child labor in Michigan, and instead focused on the plight of European immigrant—mostly German-Russian—children instead. In this regard, the analysis of Wyoming demonstrates that local child labor reformers, especially Professor Grace Raymond Hebard of the University of Wyoming, took a different approach, instead focusing on both European and Mexican immigrant children equally in the early and middle 1920s, then transitioning to an almost exclusive focus on Mexican children by the Great Depression. Hebard's focus on Mexican/Mexican American children coincided with Mexican domination of the sugar beet labor force in Wyoming by the late 1920s. Nevertheless, Mapes' assessment of the sugar beet industry illuminates how

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[48] Foley, 118,122.

[49] Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant labor, Industrial Agriculture and Imperial Politics,* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

[50] Ibid, 185.

[51] Ibid., 178.

engrained child labor was in the sugar beet industry and thus the necessity to study the public schools in order to understand the full impact of the sugar beet industry. Wyoming schools were not only critical sites for sustaining migrant labor for the sugar beet industry, but were also seminal sites for racializing Mexican children and differentiating them from white children as my dissertation will demonstrate.

*Mexican American Educational History*

In Wyoming, public schools have always been sites to not only identify labor systems in a community but more importantly prevailing racial attitudes and relationships. For instance, at the same 1928 congressional hearing to restrict immigration from the western hemisphere in which Wyoming Senators Kendrick and Warren testified, a sugar beet farmer, Jess Crosby from Cowley, Wyoming, also testified for the need for Mexican labor.[52] Crosby affirmed the testimony of the Wyoming senators arguing that Wyoming wanted and needed more sugar beet fields and factories and thus needed more Mexican labor. When Crosby mentioned he hired and housed Mexican families to work on his farm, members of Congress, specifically George Schneider of Wisconsin, immediately asked about the children and how they were treated in schools:

> Mr. Crosby: Well, there were two of the children that came this year there were 12 or 14 years old. The rest were small babies.
> Mr. Schneider: Now, when it comes to the 1st of September, what facilities are there for educational purposes for the children?
> Mr. Crosby: We have good schools in Wyoming and they are compelled under the age of 16 to go to school, unless they have graduated from the grades.
> Mr. Schneider: Do these children go to school when school opens?
> Mr. Crosby: These two children that happened to be on my place did go this year, and they have always. They have never objected to going to school; in fact, they want to go.

[52] Testimony: Jess Crosby, *Immigration from the Counties of the Western Hemisphere. Hearings Before The Committee on immigration and Naturalization House of Representatives.* Seventieth Congress. First Session. February 21 to April 5, 1928(Washington.; Government Printing Office) 339-340

> Mr. Schneider: Is that the rule generally with people that employ Mexicans in your district that the children go to school?
> Mr. Crosby: Yes; we have a number of Mexican children in school.
> Mr. Schneider: How do they get along with white children? Do they go to the same school?
> Mr. Crosby: They go to the same school. They are a little slower to learn than the white children.
> Mr. Schneider: Do the white people accept them alright?
> Mr. Crosby: Yes; the white people accept them all right. [53]

The testimony of Crosby was not unique but was the case throughout most of the Wyoming. Before the Great Depression, Wyoming was more "progressive" in that Mexicans went to school with other whites and the "white" racial category had not fully excluded them yet. However, what is more revealing about the short discussion of schools are the racial ideologies at display, as Senator Schneider demonstrates when he asked, "Do the white people accept them [Mexicans] alright?"[54] Thus, the study of the Mexican experience in the public schools in Wyoming demonstrates that the changing nature of Mexican/Mexican American schooling was tethered to a complex matrix that included the changing role of the Mexican worker in the sugar beet industry but also changing perceptions of white and Mexican racial categories. Although this dissertation will engage with a large number of studies from the history of public schooling in the U.S and Mexican American education history in general, the works of Gilbert Gonzalez, Ruben Donato, and Hillary Moss are especially relevant.

Gilbert Gonzalez's *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* directly attributed the economic role Mexican family labor played in agriculture in determining their educational trajectories. Gonzalez demonstrates how the industrial agricultural system that placed Mexicans in a subordinate class and inferior race position was mapped onto public schools. As Gonzalez notes, "The migratory educational experiment most clearly illustrates the correspondence

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

between education and the economy. The relationship is more easily recognized because the educational institutions consciously elaborated programs that were openly based upon the socioeconomic relations in agriculture."[55] Gonzalez shows how the so-called "migrant education problem" developed in almost every state in the Southwest where schools served as mere labor camps for children until they could reenter the harvest cycle or legally join the family migrant stream. Wyoming demonstrates this phenomenon was not just confined to the Southwest. However, in Wyoming the development of segregation in schooling was not just a direct result of the place of child laborers in the sugar beet industry. In places such as Torrington, Worland, or sugar beet communities throughout the state the development of racial segregation in schools increased as whiteness and American citizenship were increasingly dependent on the racialization of Mexicans as "non-white". Thus in Wyoming, the racialization of Mexicans as "non-white" and their loss of "in-between" racial status were the impetuses of segregation in schools not labor systems.

For this study on Wyoming, Ruben Donato's historical treatment of the Mexican immigrant and Mexican American (Hispano) schooling in *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960*, is particularly useful. In Donato's treatment of the schooling of Mexican/Mexican Americans he addresses two major historical questions—how race and color affected schooling and how space and place complicate them. In Colorado, Donato demonstrates there were major differences between the perception and treatment of mostly migratory, dark skinned, Mexican immigrants in Northern Colorado versus a largely Mexican American or Hispano population in the South. Although anti-Mexican sentiment developed wherever sugar beet cultivation developed in the state, the degree to which the white

[55] Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*(Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2nd Edition, 2013) 42.

community responded to the "Mexican problem" was quite different depending on the locale. For instance, the segregated Mexican schools and Mexican worker agitation was much more prevalent in Northern Colorado where most Mexicans were non-citizens, migrant, and of darker skin color. In contrast, Mexican Americans in the South were more akin to Spanish-Americans of New Mexico, where many had developed their own political and social institutions to combat the worst of Anglo-based racism. However, in Wyoming there was geographic distinction, the development of the Mexican race in the sugar beet communities and Jamie Crow that followed was a state wide phenomenon remarkably similar to the racial conditions in Northern Colorado.

The emergence of a pervasive segregated environment for the overall Mexican community, notably in public schools, in Wyoming intersects with the work of Hilary Moss in *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America*. Although the studied racial group and periodization are different, the historical questions posed in Moss' study inform my dissertation. Particularly, Moss asked "why public schools and white opposition to African American education expanded simultaneously."[56] The answer, in part, is that public schools were critical sites to lay claim to citizenship and to debate them in class and increasingly racial terms. As Moss asserts: "The common school movement ... empowered white children, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, to claim citizenship, but it also reinforced white efforts to withhold civil rights from African Americans."[57] *Schooling Citizens* illuminates how access to public (common) schools became increasingly contested as blacks gained more enfranchisement in places such as New Haven and Boston. However, in areas where slavery was maintained such as Baltimore, the reliance on black labor and complete exclusion of blacks from the city's public schools, the white reaction was more tolerant towards educational demands by

[56] Hillary Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in the Antebellum America,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 3.
[57] Ibid., 13.

Baltimore's free black community. Thus, Moss demonstrates that schools were influenced by local circumstances and economies but yet shared a contested notion of national citizenship, that is "who—and who could not—claim American identity."[58] In Wyoming, the question of national citizenship in schools, as in the antebellum North, turned racial and excluded the undesirable "Mexican" by the 1930s. As in Moss' study, race became the primary badge of status as whites increasingly claimed access to public schooling for themselves. In Wyoming, white Americans and German-Russians, previously lumped with Mexicans, looked to public schools to reassert their white racial identity and set the boundaries of the Mexican race with the advent of the Great Depression.

The Great Depression did not just destabilize notions of white labor and relief but had a direct effect on public education. For the sugar beet industry, the Great Depression and New Deal relief reset the relationship between the industry and the federal government, and more importantly between the Mexican worker and the industry. Not only did the federal government enact two major interventions with the 1934 and 1937 Sugar Acts that increased sugar quotas but for the first time made child labor restrictions a qualifier for government subsidies. The child labor restrictions in the sugar beet industry were the first time in American history that children working in agriculture were restricted. The impact was immediate in public schools. Throughout the sugar beet districts of the Mountain States, this effectively eliminated the migrant education problem as countless schools eliminated special education programs designed to accommodate to local child labor demands. However, as Mexican/Mexican American children were increasingly integrated and were able to follow a normal schooling schedule, calls for racial segregation reached unprecedented levels by 1937. Thus, as in Moss' example as Mexican/Mexican American children became more enfranchised, it was the very moment that public schools were

[58] Ibid., 196.

viewed as reserved for "whites" and segregated schools were built for Mexican children regardless of citizenship.

### Sources of Evidence

The research for this dissertation encompasses an exhaustive amount of archival research—digitized testimonials, local, state, federal—relating to the Mexican/Mexican American experience in Wyoming and schooling in the Mountain States. Not only is my archival research national in scope but it includes international perspectives on domestic issues from archives in Mexico City, Mexico. Additionally, my archival research is diverse and gives an equal attention to collections on labor histories as well as records relating to schools and education. My evidence collection highlights the importance of work on Wyoming and how it relates to a larger framework of Mexican immigration and Mexican American racial, educational, and labor history.

The research on Wyoming demonstrates the connection between domestic and international race projects. For instance, the pioneering work of historian Solsiree del Moral on schooling in Puerto Rico makes this clear in her assessment that, "Education was at the heart of an imperial project informed by US racial ideologies."[59] The connection of the schooling experiences of Mexican and Mexican American children in Wyoming to national polities on immigration and international relations with Mexico demonstrates this connection between school, racial ideologies, and U.S. imperial ambitions were also connected to how said groups were treated in the continental U.S.

Beyond traditional primary documentation such as archival research and other forms of official documentation, this research also included a number of oral histories both conducted by

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[59] Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire*: *The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952*(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 28.

the author and those already recorded. The stories that developed from the oral narratives presented a narrative of Wyoming schools thought only to exist in Jim Crow decisions of the South or border areas of the U.S.-Mexico border. More importantly, the stories revealed that both parents and children remembered their schooling experiences most vividly than in any other Wyoming institution. As one interviewee remarked, "things got so bad [in Wyoming] they even made us our own school."[60] The evidence demonstrates not only was the intent of school policy to create racial boundaries but it was also how students and parents experienced said policies.

## Outline of Dissertation

The introduction identifies the framework for the dissertation and builds a case for the study of Wyoming as a way to complicate an understanding of the relationship between racial formation, labor, and public schools. It will locate Wyoming as part of a national story of racial inclusion and differentiation; as white came to include *all* Europeans while excluding Mexicans/Mexican Americans, effectively ending their "in-between" racial status. Additionally, this chapter will intertwine the study of the Mexican/Mexican American schooling experience in Wyoming to the larger fields of whiteness studies, labor history pertaining to industrial agriculture, and Mexican American educational history. It ends with a brief outline of my dissertation.

Chapter 2 will place Wyoming in a larger discussion of Mexican racial subjectivity. This chapter will lay the groundwork for understanding Mexicans as a race distinct from whites with schools and educational policy being at the center of said distinction. Focused on the periodization from 1910-1929, Chapter 2 analyzes a number of incidents ranging from Mexican diplomat and parent protests regarding the segregation of Mexican children to lawsuits filed by

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[60] Susie Alamos interview in Elizabeth Mendoza, "The Mexicanization of the Yakima Valley, 1940-2007" (BA thesis, Dartmouth College, 2008), 43. (In authors possession)

Mexican Americans to combat school segregation. With Mexicans being legally white, the white and Mexican public at large looked to public schools to clarify where the Mexican belonged in the U.S. racial order of the early 20$^{th}$ century.

Chapter 3 examines the sugar beet industry and child labor impact in Wyoming's public schools. Specifically, this chapter will chart the legislative debates and schooling campaigns surrounding child labor beginning in the early 1920s that quickly targeted the sugar beet industry in the state, since the use of child labor in the industrial centers of Wyoming was almost non-existence. The child labor issue also morphed into a concern about the future of Wyoming's residents (Wyomingites), since the majority of child laborers in the state were considered of "foreign stock," specifically children of German-Russian, Japanese, and most of all Mexican immigrants.

The majority of this chapter will be devoted to the career of Professor Grace Raymond Hebard of the University of Wyoming, a nationally recognized Americanization advocate and educator, and her role in Wyoming's Child Welfare Committee, created by Governor Frank C. Emerson. Hebard led an intrastate study and campaign to create a schooling policy that allowed "beet children" to assist their families but also maintain a normal school schedule. The goal of the campaign focused on integration with "American" or "non-contract" children in the normal school system. The educational campaign for beet children was informative because it engaged all aspects of the sugar beet industry ranging from the Mexican worker, sugar beet factory managers, child welfare advocates, and the governor of Wyoming. The mission of this chapter to demonstrate how pervasive the schooling problem in sugar beet districts was and to illuminate how the schooling of Mexican/Mexican American children in Wyoming throughout the 1920s focused on their labor-class status and eventual Americanization, not on racial segregation.

Chapter 4 examines the advent and expansion of racial segregation targeting Mexican/Mexican Americans in Wyoming during the Great Depression. Specifically, this chapter traces the redefinition of the Mexican race and the whitening of American citizenship in Wyoming throughout the 1930s, resulting in the creation of segregated Mexican schools and classrooms throughout the sugar beet districts of the state. This chapter will focus on the deportation of Mexican immigrants in Wyoming and the racialization of New Deal policies in the state that explicitly left out Mexican/Mexican Americans. Not only did state officials allow for racial differentiation—one white, one Mexican—in the distribution of relief funds and jobs, but they also allowed communities to use New Deal funds to enact segregation, usually applying and using federal grants to create new segregated schools. The racialization of the New Deal occurred in the backdrop of increased federal oversight and regulation of the sugar beet industry.

During the 1930s the sugar beet industry was on the verge of collapse, as sugar prices dropped on a massive global scale, the federal government intervened. In an effort to save the sugar beet industry, the 1934 and 1937 Sugar Acts were passed offering new tariffs and subsidies. However, there were two major caveats with the Acts, the elimination of child labor under 14 years of age in the sugar beet fields, and an agreed upon minimum wage for sugar beet workers, overwhelming of Mexican decent. For the first time in the history of American agriculture, the federal government was regulating child labor. The consequences were immediate, school districts throughout the Mountain States experienced an increase of Mexican American children, and Mexican American/Mexican sugar beet workers could now go to the federal government demanding equitable treatment in the sugar beet fields. The impact was an increased demand for segregation by white community members and increased demand of Mexican descent sugar beet workers for fair treatment via unionization. The mission of this

chapter is to demonstrate how racial segregation in Wyoming, especially in public schools, was not a de facto localized affair. Instead, Wyoming demonstrates that the segregation of Mexican/Mexican Americans was a highly orchestrated affair that included the cooperation of local citizens, state officials, and the federal government.

Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, revisits the significance of Wyoming by linking the American West with a larger discussion of whiteness and the role public schools played in creating race and class boundaries for Mexican immigrants and, most of all, Mexican Americans. Specifically, the study of the Mexican/Mexican American schooling experience in Wyoming demonstrates the consequences of the ascendency of the Caucasian race to include all European immigrants. This racial reconfiguration normalized the segregation of Mexican Americans/Mexicans as the standard racial order that was contingent on both direct state and federal intervention as the experience during the Great Depression and World War II illuminated. This dissertation challenges the notion that segregation as applied to Mexican Americans was de facto and based on mostly on local custom but was part of a larger national racial project. Ultimately, my dissertation inserts the Mexican race into a larger national debate of the creation of the whiteness in the American West and the seminal roles of labor systems and public schooling played in that process.

## Chapter 2

## "Are They Caucasians?": Public Education and Debating the Mexican in the American West in the Early 20th Century

*La Niñez Mexicana es Excluida de las Escuelas Públicas del Estado de California, Estados Unidos: Bajo disposiciones odiosas que hieren profundamente los sentimientos de nuestra nación, Los Mexicanos son colocados a igual altura que los individuos de raza de color*. (Mexican Children are Excluded From the Public Schools in California: Under odious regulations that profoundly wound our national sentiments, Mexicans are restricted to allocations the same as those for the colored race.)—*Orientación*, Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, July 17, 1919[1]

In 1919, a group of Mexican immigrant parents wrote to the Mexican consul in San Francisco protesting California's Board of Education's alleged plan to exclude their children from their "Anglo-American companions of the white race."[2] Channeling what historian Neil Foley has termed a "Faustian pact with whiteness," Mexican parents greatest objection was to the reported placement of their children in schools with black children and black teachers.[3] Mexican parents specifically named the southern California communities of Brawley, El Centro, and Santa Paula where Mexican children were placed in segregated schools with black children. In El Centro, reports indicated that Mexican parents withdrew their children from the public schools and started their own school hiring a Mexican teacher from Mexicali in Baja California. The incident made national news in Mexico, as newspapers reported that attempts to segregated

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[1] "Mexican Children Are Excluded from California Schools," *Orientacion* headlines, RG 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.(hereafter cited NARA)

[2] In 1919, the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction responded to allegations by the Mexican government of racial segregation in schools by citing a pedagogical justification, not race or nationality see "California Segregation 1919." File: 311.12/409, RG 59; "Charge Against Schools Denied: Will. C. Wood Finds That Mexican Children Segregated Only When Backward," *The San Diego Union*, June 29, 1919

[3] Ibid.; For a more in-depth discussion of this Faustian pact with whiteness, see: Neil Foley, *Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and the Faustian Pact with Whiteness, in* REFLEXIONES 1997: NEW DIRECTIONS IN MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES 53 (Victor J. Guerra ed., 1998); Neil Foley, *Quest for Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Mexican children in public schools would further estrange relations between the U.S. and Mexico.[4]

The U.S. Secretary of State responded swiftly to said accusations and called on California's governor and school superintendent to address the concerns of the Mexican government. Writing to Governor William D. Stephens and the Mexican consulate, Will C. Wood—school superintendent of California—indicated no such racial exclusion existed in the areas named by the Mexican parent protests.[5] In locales where Mexican children attended school with black children, the superintendent argued this was simple a district boundary issue where both black and Mexican families lived in the same school district. In areas where Mexican children were in their own classrooms and schools separate from white children, Wood argued said exclusion was based on pedagogical grounds; "they did not know our language."[6] The superintendent added that said segregation was legal if based on their abilities to learn. Ending his letter, Wood argued that he did not find segregation based on nationality or racial grounds. If any segregation existed, it was based on English-language proficiency and nothing more and would end once Mexican children could carry the same work as American children. "In my judgment, such segregation based upon such grounds is not only perfectly legal but eminently desirable from the standpoint of the non-English speaking children themselves."[7]

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[4] Interestingly even more recent discussion of race and immigration from the Mexican perspective have left schooling and educational policy out of the immigration debate, see: Benjamin C. Montoya, '" A Grave Offense of Significant Consequences': Mexican Perspectives on U.S. Immigration Restriction during the late 1920s" *Pacific Historical Review* V. 87, No.2(Spring 2018): 333-355. From a vantage of Mexican immigration and U.S. schooling, see: Victoria-Maria MacDonald and Gonzalo Guzman, "Revolution and World War I Civil Rights?: Transnational Relations and Mexican Consul Records in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929," *Education Histories* 4, 5(December 28, 2017).
[5] Report from Will C. Wood, Superintendent of Public Instruction of California to Honorable William D. Stephens, Governor of California. June 26, 1919. File 311.12/409. RG59 NARA.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

The incident in California serves as a stand-in for the larger racial narrative that informed the schooling segregation targeted children of Mexican descent throughout the Southwest, South, and eventually Wyoming. Many Mexican Americans adopted a racial logic that began during Spanish colonial rule, remained in place once Mexico became an independent country, and informed Mexican American attitudes after the end of the Mexican-American war. That logic, which privileged whiteness/light skin and European origins, made many Mexicans and Mexican Americans hypertensive to any hint of racial discrimination in public schooling. To Mexican and Mexican American parents, Mexican diplomats, and U.S. officials, public schooling was a means to achieve access to the white race and all the privileges that came with it.

This chapter establishes the groundwork for understanding Mexicans as a people distinct from whites. In particular, it demonstrates the nexus of schooling as a boundary setter for U.S. citizenship, language policy, diplomatic rights, and ultimately setting and defining notions of race. Because both the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and domestic law suits confirmed that Mexicans were white, officials used schools as a way to dispute that and police the boundaries around whiteness. This chapter begins with an overview of the racial subjectivity of Mexicans in the 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century as the racial segregation of Mexican and Mexican American children began to develop. The second part of this chapter documents the role public schooling played in diplomatic disputes between Mexico and U.S. from 1910-1929 to demonstrate how the schooling of Mexican children effectively circumvented articles in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As this chapter documents, it was the public school that caused the most ire from not only local officials but also foreign representatives of Mexico and the United States as they looked to educational policy to declare the space where "Mexicans" would fit in the U.S. racial order.

## Mexican Racial Subjectivity and Public Schooling

The history of Latin America and Mexico in particular highlight a racialized and pigment conscious society.[8] Deep-seated antipathies to black and indigenous peoples stemmed from the three hundred yearlong Spanish colonial racial caste hierarchy that placed them at the bottom of the hierarchy, with this system in Mexico from 1521-1821.[9] The Spanish colonial casta policies affirmed the royal government and Catholic Church's sanction of racial mixing with Indians and Africans, while still maintaining a hierarchy. This racial hierarchy was designed to secure European heritage in Spain's colonial possessions in the Americas, privileging those born in Spain (*peninsulares*) and their offspring born in the New World(*criollos*), two groups at the top of the racial/ethnic/Catholic baptized/slave status classification system.[10] At times the castas consisted of over forty categories of combinations of indigenous, Spanish, and African peoples.

As historian María Elena Martinez explained, "the main casta categories with specific portions of Spanish, Indian and black blood, made certain mixtures compatible with purity, and distinguished between people who descended from Spaniards and Indians and those who had African ancestry."[11] These distinctions eventually influenced "colonial power relations, individual and group identities, and the Mexican definitions of purity, race, and

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[8] For an excellent review of race and racism in Latin America see, Peter Wade, "Racism and Race Mixture in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review*, 52(3): 477-485.

[9] For a historiographic overview see Peter Wade, "Afro-Latin Studies: Reflections on the Field." Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies (1) April 2006: 105-25; Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, eds. Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Black in Latin America (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

[10] For how this played out in Mexico and Peru see, Ilona Katzew(ed.), *Contested visions in Spanish Colonial World*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteeth-Century Mexico*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

[11] María Elena Martinez, Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 166-7.

nation."[12] According to historian James H. Sweet, the status of Afro-mestizos and other mixed race individuals continued to decline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in *New Spain*. Even when Spanish colonial rule ended, and the newly established nation of Mexico, established in 1821, did away with legal racial categories(castas), the color consciousness and hierarchy remained. One vivid example comes from the work of historian Ramon Gutiérrez's analysis that revealed "the darker a person's skin, the closer one was presumed to be to the physical labor of slaves and tributary Indians," seems to capture the continuing color and race consciousness in modern day Mexico.[13]

In May 1846, the United States formally declared war on Mexico beginning the U.S-Mexico War. The U.S. declared war after a skirmish occurred between U.S. and Mexican forces in disputed territory along the Mexican border and American soldiers were killed. President James Polk, in his war messages to Congress, declared that "American blood was shed on American land," although Mexico never recognized the U.S. claims to the territory. When the war ended and the U.S. triumphed, the U.S. doubled its territory and one hundred thousand residents of Mexico became American citizens. With regard to the U.S. racial order of the era, the one-hundred thousand new residents did not fit nicely into the racial norms of black/white, slave/non-slave of the era.[14] According to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo, which ended the war, these new Americans were granted citizenship, in what could be considered to be the first mass naturalization of people in the U.S.[15]

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 198-9.
[14] Historian Jim Anderson how critical the 19th century was in setting the racial norms in the U.S., however, there was no discussion of how Mexican Americans influenced national discourse of race at the time, see James D. Anderson, "Race Conscious Educational Policies Versus a 'Color-Blind Constitution": A Historical Perspective," *Educational Researcher*, Vol.36, No.5(June-July 2007):249-257.
[15] Some scholarship has argue that Mexican Americans are among the oldest minorities in the U.S, see: Ruth Laughlin, "Coronado's County and Its People," *Survey Graphic* V. 29, No.5(May 1940): 277-278.

Though granted "legal whiteness" since only whites were allowed citizenship and naturalization at the time, "Mexican Americans" were never viewed by most white Americans as part of the white race and thus were rarely allowed to access any benefits from their legal status. For instance, as historians Reginald Horsman and Ronald Takaki have demonstrated, the U.S.-Mexican War was fraught with racial rhetoric centered on a war between Anglo-Saxon and "mongrel" Mexican races .[16] In fact, when U.S. troops occupied Mexico City in 1847 and U.S. politicians advocated taking all Mexican territory in what was called the All Mexico Movement, many white Americans worried that adding so many new citizens would create a new race problem on par with slavery and Indian removal.[17] The All Mexico Movement failed as fear of a new race problem won out, but the presence of so many new Mexican American citizens stoked fears of how to handle a large population of racially mixed people in newly acquired territory.

The Treaty included clear boundaries around their new status. The Treaty stipulated, "those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall be under the obligation to make their election within one year…and those who shall remain in the said territories after the expiration of that year, without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States."[18] Article IX then granted U.S. constitutional protection to Mexicans electing citizenship, "and be incorporated into the Union of the United States and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of

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[16] Reginal Horseman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial-Saxonism*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th Century America*(New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 161.
[17] John Douglas Pitts Fuller, *The Movement for the Acquisition of All Mexico, 1846-1847*
[18] "Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; February 2, 1848," The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp#art8. Accessed March 4, 2016.

the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution."[19] Because U.S. immigration laws at the date of the Treaty (1848) only permitted individuals of the "White" race to become naturalized, Mexicans, by default, were considered part of the White race. However, even whiteness by default had clear limitations. For instance, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo also stipulated that Mexican claims to American citizenship would be based on a willingness to "give up [their] Mexican character."[20] Thus the foundation of Mexican claims to whiteness was based on dispossession—Spanish language, Mexican citizenship, cultural origin. In order to stay in the U.S. and enjoy the privileges of citizenship, Mexican Americans were only given two options: give up your land, home, and culture or return to Mexico.

Mexican American claims to citizenship and whiteness were solidified, at least legally, in the Texas supreme court ruling, *In Re Rodriguez* (1897), when Ricardo Rodriguez's application for naturalization was challenged on grounds he was not "White or of African descent (by 1897, blacks had been granted citizenship through the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution)." Rodriguez was a Mexican national who lived in San Antonio for over ten years and in 1896 applied for final approval for his naturalization application. The judge ruled in favor of Rodriguez despite his complexion resembling "copper color or red men."[21] He based his ruling on the mass Mexican naturalization in 1848, arguing the Texas state constitution and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo conferred the rights of citizenship to "all Mexicans, without discrimination as to color".[22]

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Maria Josefina Saldana-Portillo, *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States*(Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 141.
[21] Steve H. Wilson, "Brown over 'Other White': Mexican Americans' Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in School Desegregation Lawsuits", *Law and History Review* 21, No.1(Spring 2003):153.
[22] Ibid.,152.

Shortly thereafter, Mexican American activists used the Treaty to battle the racial segregation of Mexican children in Texas public schools. The young future labor organizer and activist Clemente N. Idar under the headline, "Mexican as well as Mexican American Children are excluded from the Public Schools: Consul Miguel E. Diebold Resumes his Investigations," in his father's Laredo, Texas, newspaper *La Crónica* in 1910 argued that:

> Don't think that we are looking for a scandal; we only demand a right. To the Japanese, the Irish, the Scottish, English, Italians and to some many other nationalities that arrive in large numbers immigrating to this country, are given no trouble with regard to attending the public schools of the States of the American Republic. Why are they placed for the Mexican and Mexican American? In light of which law? What constitutional principle? Are we perhaps not recognized as part of the white race? Have the articles of the [Treaty of] Guadalupe Hidalgo already been forgotten? [23]

Idar specifically called for an international treaty to secure educational rights and made it clear that no state or domestic law allowed for the segregation of Mexican children in public schools; in other words, the U.S. government said Mexicans were white. Doubling down on the access that whiteness afforded Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Idar added, "why are they [Mexican American children] not admitted with the American kids despite that the articles of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo specify that we shall be recognized as part of the White race, and *being White there is not a school in the world that can negate us the entrance into their institution*." (emphasis added) Idar, like many of his fellow Mexicans of U.S. or Mexican birth, fought against segregation of their children in the public schools and were insistent that their consular

[23] Clemente N. Idar, "Tanto los niños Mexicanos como los Mexico-Americanos, son excluidos de las Escuelas Oficiales. El Cónsul Miguel E. Diébold reanuda sus investigaciones *La Crónica*." (Laredo, Texas) Dec. 24, 1910. For biographical information of Clemente N. Idar, his siblings and father Nicasio Idar who was editor of La Crónica, see Cynthia E. Orozco, "Idar, Clemente Nicasio," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 15, 2016,**http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fid04** and Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Idar, Nicasio," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 15, 2016,**http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fid02**. Idar's reference to the Japanese in this essay is an issue that had only recently been resolved between the Japanese and U.S. through diplomatic negotiations concerning school segregation in San Francisco in *Aoki vs. Deane* (1907). Charles M. Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 48-68.Translation of Spanish language materials in this essay by Patricia García Gómez.

representatives bring this issue to the Mexican Ambassador in Washington, D.C. for attention and remediation. However, much like in the case in California, Texas school representatives cited English language deficiency as the reasoning for any segregation in schools.[24]

**Fighting for Whiteness in Schools**

Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants did not just look to schools to affirm their rights of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo but to allow full incorporation into the U.S. society. *La Crónica*, a Laredo newspaper whose tone reflected Tejano—Mexican Americans who claimed Texas as their homeland—beliefs, a 1910 editorial reflected the faith in public schooling in uplifting Mexican people. "The 'Mexican element' [should] adapt a strategy to achieve the dignity and position that it deserves, leaving the shadow of ignorance that humiliates it, and this strategy is education."[25] The author optimistically stated, "all lines of work are open for the educated Mexican."[26] For many Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrant parents, this translated to asserting and proving their whiteness in public schooling.

In many ways the claims to whiteness in the early 20th century to combat educational segregation for Mexican children confirms what legal scholar Ian Haney Lopez convincingly claimed in *White By Law*, that the legal system determines what a person's race is and how it is experienced.[27] In this case, Mexican Americans had no state law or any other law outside of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to claim educational rights. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, Mexican Americans' "whiteness" was confirmed by the courts. However, instead of

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[24] Historian Carlos Blanton called this the "language trap," see: Carlos Kevin Blanton, "A Legacy of Neglect: George I. Sanchez, Mexican American Education, and the Ideal of Integration, 1940-1970," *Teacher College Record*, Vol. 114, (June 2012): 9.
[25] Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: Howa Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 43.
[26] Ibid., 47.
[27] Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), as cited in Maria Josefina Saldana-Portillo, "How many Mexicans [is] a Mexican worth?": The League of United Latin American Citizens, Desegregation Cases, and Chicano Historiography," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, 4(Fall 2008):820.

granting access to rights of full social citizenship, instead legal whiteness became an "unenforceable law" since the American public at large considered Mexicans a racial "other."[28] Scholars such as Ruben Donato, Jarrod Hanson, and legal scholar and historian Laura Gomez has aptly defined Mexican Americans as a group that was, "Legally white, but socially 'colored.'"[29] No where would the social status of Mexicans as *colored* manifest itself more than in public schools, as Mexican parents combating and protested racial segregation in public schools almost on the onset of the 20th century.

In 1912, Jose Langoria, of Mission, Texas, wrote to the Mexican embassy arguing that his rights were violated because his child was not allowed to attend the local public school of her choice.[30] Longoria was adamant that he wanted his daughter to attend the local "English-speaking" school—officially known as "Public School No.1"—so she could learn English.[31] However, his request was denied by the local school board. The incident resulted in the U.S. Secretary of State intervening and writing to the Governor of Texas, asking about the exclusion of Mexican children in Mission.[32] The question of educational access became a minor international incident between U.S. and Mexican officials as the Texas governor demanded the superintendent of the Mission school district explain the rationale for educational exclusion to the Mexican embassy.

Writing to the Governor of Texas, the superintendent gave a very detailed description of the landscape of the racial and educational community and described the local Mexicans as of

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Ruben Donato, Gonzalo Guzman, and Jarrod Hanson, "Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone et al.: Mexican American Resistance to School Segregation in the Hispano Homeland, 1912-1914, "Journal *of Latinos and Education* 16, no.1(2017), 14.
[30] Embassy of Mexico to U.S. Secretary of State, October 28, 1912. RG 59, File: 811.42712/5
[31] Alvey Adee, Acting Secretary of State, to the Governor of Texas, October 31, 1912, RG 59, File: 811.42712/5.
[32] C.E. Godby, School Superintendent and Secretary of the Board, Mission, TX, to His Excellency, Gov. O.B. Colquitt of Texas, November 7, 1912, RG 59, File: 811.42712/6.

the "Mexican race, some being legal citizens, voters and taxpayers of America, while others are citizens of Mexico."[33] At the same time, he focused his argument on language needs and indicated that there were two schools: one for English speaking students and the other for non-English speaking "Mexican" children. The rule of the district was that Mexican children needed to attend the "Non-English" school, partly because of their race and partly because of their lack of English language knowledge, until the seventh grade and then were eligible to attend the English speaking school. In this case, the racial markers of Mexicans were not just phenotype but language as well in publics schools.[34] The superintendent ended his letter by arguing that Longoria was not a citizen of the U.S. and that his daughter was only working at a second grade level and thus could not attend the English-speaking school.[35] According to the school district, Langoria's rights were not violated because his daughter was allowed access to the Spanish-speaking Mexican school. Here, there was no discrimination because the Mexican children had access to a school and could eventually enter English-speaking albeit on the timeline set up by white school administrators.[36] Here, once again, whiteness was being conferred by white school officials vis-à-vis racialized views of English speakers and schooling segregation. However, Mexican Americans would not always use access to public schooling as a means to achieve whiteness. In other cases, Mexican Americans used public schools as a means to define their own racial boundaries, even if that was outside the white race.

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Scholars have argued that Latinos have been historically racialized on ethnic grounds such as language use and citizenship status as opposed to phenotype. See: Tomas Almaguer, "Race, Racialization, and Latino Populations in the United States," in Ramon A. Gutiérrez and Tomas Almaguer(eds.), The *New Latino Studies Reader: A Twentieth-First Century Perspective*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016): 210-235.

[35] C.E. Godby. Op.cit.

[36] The role of white school people in constructing the education of non-whites has been principally explored with other non-whites such as African Americans, see: William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education* (New York: Teacher College Press, 2001). Less attention has been given to the same phenomena with respects to the Mexican American/Latino experience, see: David G. Garcia, *Strategies of Segregation: Race, Resistance, and Struggle for Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018),4.

In one such case, in Colorado, Mexican Americans asserted a strong nonwhite racial subjectivity. *Maestas v. Shone*, a 1914 desegregation court case in Alamosa, Colorado—a state that forbade any racial distinction in its schools—Mexican American plaintiffs argued that their "whiteness" was not locally recognized but it did not matter in the context of Colorado because *no segregation* was allowed in the state's schools.[37] School board officials in Alamosa, as reported in a Wyoming newspaper tracking the case, explained that they created a segregated school for Mexican American children for pedagogical purposes: the Mexican American children needed to improve their English skills and to be thoroughly Americanized in a separate context. Mexican American parents, on the other hand, complained to the state school superintendent that their local school board forced Mexican children to attend their own separate school based on race/ethnicity and not for pedagogical reasons.[38] The debate in Colorado foreshadowed more famous cases out of California and Texas of the early/middle 20th century where Mexican/Mexican American parents and local school board officials wrestled over segregated schooling.

Testimony from the *Maestas* case illuminates the instability of the whiteness for Mexicans in the U.S—regardless of citizenship—in public schools as white school people debated the role of language, race, and citizenship in the realm of public school. William Barnard (W.B.) Mooney from the Colorado State Teachers College, who testified as an expert witness for the Alamosa school board, argued that the segregation of non-English speakers was designed to, "fit the child instead of the child being made to fit the school" and pointed to the segregated schools for German-Russian students as an example of a good model for segregated schooling.[39]

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[37] "Court Decides Mexican School Case Against Board," *The Alamosa Independent-Journal* (Alamosa, CO.), March 20, 1914.
[38] "Mexican Children Demand Schooling With American," *The Denver Post* (Denver, CO.), January 14, 1914.
[39] Ibid.

Oral arguments quickly dispensed with the German-Russian example once it was agreed that their segregation was premised on class grounds based on their status as agricultural workers in the sugar beet industry. Instead, the arguments began to focus on the racial status of Mexicans in the early 20th century. The case and the argument regarding the racial status of Mexican Americans was covered widely in the press, with a newspaper headline in Denver stating, "ARE THEY CAUCASIANS?", and the author writing, "Mexicans are not a distinct race, but are Caucasians, and therefore cannot be discriminated against as members of a different race by Americans…." The Mexican American plaintiffs disagreed with the claims of the Alamosa school board assertion that they were of a separate "Mexican race," as important, that any segregation in public schools was illegal in the state.[40] The claim to being non-white demonstrates that not all Mexican Americans engaged in a Faustian pact with whiteness and directly challenged an imposed racialization by white school officials.[41]

The attorney for the school district specifically made the case that Mexicans were not a separate race from whites and thus the school case was not a race matter. Instead, he focused on the pedagogical arguments for the segregation. Scholars have demonstrated how similar debates occurred not just in the American West but in almost every state where Mexican and Mexican American students were present.[42] The Mexican American plaintiffs won the case on grounds that Mexican American children could not be arbitrarily segregated in public schools. the fact

[40] Donato, Guzman, Hanson, *Maestas*, 6.
[41] The lawyer for the Mexican American parents, refereed to supreme court decisions in Iowa and Kansas regarding the segregation of black children, to assist Mexican Americans in their case, see: "Alamosa Must Stop Its Segregation of Mexicans," *The Denver Catholic Register* (Denver, CO), March 26, 1914, 2. Also see: Laura Pulido, "Checkered Choices, Political Assertions: The Unarticulated Racial Identity of the Asociación Nacional México-Americana" in *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader*. Edited by N. Elia, D. Hernandez, J. Kim, S. Redmond, D. Rodriguez, and S. See, (Durham: Duke University Press): 463-476.
[42] For examples outside the American West, see Ruben Donato and Jarrod Hanson, "*Porque tenian sangre de 'NEGROS'"*: The Exclusion of Mexican Children from a Louisiana School," *The Association of Mexican American Educators Journal* V.1, No.1(2017): 125-145; Julie Weise, "Mexican Natioanlisms, Southern Racisms:Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. South, 1908-1939," *American Quarterly* V. 60, No.3(September 2008):

that the Mexican American children who testified demonstrated proficiency in English certainly aided the case. In an embarrassing moment for the Alamosa school board, during one testimony by a student from the "Mexican school," the student answered questions in English from the lawyer before the court interpreter finished translations. In another example, two teachers from the Mexican school testified that although they were bilingual in Spanish and English and district policy encouraged the use of Spanish, they found little need to use Spanish because most of the Mexican American children knew English. Despite the damning testimony and ruling in favor of the plaintiffs there was still a pedagogical caveat. The judge in the case ruled that Mexican children needed to demonstrate mastery of English before entering any school besides the local Mexican school. The case of Mexican Americans and Mexican children in schools makes it clear that schools were not just places where race policy was implemented, but were themselves architects of race policy.

Other cases against the segregation of Mexican children were initiated by the Mexican government, specifically the Mexican consuls, during the early 20th century.[43] For instance, in 1916, the Mexican consul in New Orleans wrote to the U.S Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, regarding the forced exclusion of Mexican students in Cheneyville, Louisiana. Specifically, Mr. Ford, a school board member, refused to allow Mexican children to attend the local White school because they were "mixed with Negro blood".[44] Mr. Ford reportedly went to extreme measures, sitting at the school entrance refusing Mexicans entrance. Responding to the protest by the American and Mexican officials and the Louisiana governor, the County Superintendent, D.B. Showlater, sent a dispatch informing the high school principal that Louisiana had no state law

[43] For a more lengthy discussion of said cases see: Victoria-Maria MacDonald and Gonzalo Guzman, "Revolution and World War I Civil Rights?: Transnational Relations and Mexican Consul Records in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929," *Education Histories* 4, 5(December 28, 2017).

[44] "Louisiana Segregation", File: 311.12/80, Box: 3560, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration(NARA)

allowing for the segregation of Mexican American students, Mexicans were not mixed with Negro blood, and thus the school must admit the Mexican American children.[45] The Cheneyville affair demonstrates the complexity of race and schooling. Although legally white, Mexican Americans fell victim to Louisiana's Jim Crow laws and were barred from a white school because of their suspected proximity to "blackness.[46] Additionally, it speaks to the different racial environment of the South versus the West or Southwest. The association of Mexican children with African Americans was a reaffirmation of the Black-White binary in the South, where "off white" or "ambiguous" groups were placed in the Black category.

Mexican immigrant parents, through their consular representatives, insisted that the white status of Mexicans demanded their placement in only *white* schools, not Mexican nor Black ones. Complaints of placement with black children were made from the towns of El Centro, Brawley, and Santa Paula, California. In fact, sociologist Paul Taylor reported that one of the reasons that Mexicans established the Benito Juarez Society in El Centro in 1919 was "the desire for a school for Mexican children separate from the colored children."[47] Indeed 1919 was the year that the San Francisco consul also received complaints concerning placement of Mexican children with Black children and with Black teachers. From San Bernardino, Mrs. Grace C. Stanley, County Superintendent reported, "no negro teachers are employed in the county," but that "some negro children have been admitted." In 1921, residents of Charco, Texas objected that Mexican children were excluded from the "American" school and "required to go to a place where colored people assemble for

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States. Vol. I, Imperial Valley*. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 64

religious worship."[48] This complaint did not indicate that they were being educated *with* Black children but merely taught in a Black church.[49] The same year, Mexican and Mexican American parents in Calipatria, California also reported being excluded from white schools and placed in Black schools.[50] While placement with Black children was cast in the press as the most objectionable form of segregation, segregation away from White or "American" children as they were often called, was similarly offensive. Public schools were seen as a means to achieving whiteness.

However, Mexicans challenges to school segregation was not just based on an affriation of being white or anti-blackness but against racial segregation itself. In one such case, Dwight Murrow, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, received a petition from a group of Mexican students at the Agustin Rivera High School in Mexico City on May 13, 1929 protesting the exclusion of Mexican students from the schools in San Bernardino, California.[51] Allegedly, the San Bernardino County School Board recently passed a measure forcing Mexican children into segregated schools intended for Black and Asian students.[52] Other accounts alleged that Mexican children were denied access to public schooling altogether unless they identified as "Oriental" or "Negro."[53] The high school students found the treatment to be a humiliation to Mexico. In a provocative denouncement of racial prejudice in U.S. public schools the students of the Agustin Rivera school argued:

> Present-day culture has done away with various ancient scientific prejudices, among which is discarded as absolutely discredited by learning THAT RACE; but if this were

[48] Report from Will C. Wood, Superintendent of Public Instruction of California to Honorable William D. Stephens, Governor of California. June 26, 1919. File 311.12/409. RG59.
[49] Charco, Texas. File No. 311.12/445 RG59.
[50] Letter from Charles Hughes, U.S. Secretary of State to the Governor of California, Sacramento, CA. October 28, 1921. Re: Calipatria, CA Oct-Nov. 1921. File 311.12/442. RG59
[51] "Petition from Pupils of Agustin Rivera High School" 1929, File: 811.4016/103, RG 59 NARA.
[52] Ibid.
[53] "HUMILIATION FOR MEXICO," Enclosure No.2, p. 1. File: 811.4016/103, RG 59 NARA.

> not so, it would be enough to remember the most elemental humanitarian principles, and above all the learned words of Washington: "My policy is very simple—friendly relations with all the nations of the world…" and those other words of the Apostle: "There is neither Jew nor Roman, Greek nor Scythian, but we are all one in Jesus Christ"—principles and standards which should be used by governments and the governed of all peoples of the earth in modifying the criterion of superiority.[54] (translated from Spanish)

In one short two-page document, the Rivera high school students challenged racial segregation of Mexican children—indeed, all children-- as unscientific, against Christendom, and counter to American values that professed friendly relations with all nations. The author of an editorial on the petition from Mexico City printed in *La Prensa*, a Spanish language newspaper in San Antonio, Texas, hoped the petition would lead to a unanimous protest that the entire Mexican nation supported and swift intervention by Ambassador Murrow, "in doing Mexico, not a favor, but *justice*."[55]

## Conclusion

As historian and legal scholar Laura Gómez has written, Mexican Americans were legally White but socially "colored," and schools were the epicenter of this status. Mexican racialization was in full display in the desegregation struggles between Mexican/Mexican American parents, Mexican consuls, and white school officials as they sought to determine whether racial boundaries around "Mexican" existed in the absence of state and local laws. These battles illuminate the role of public schools in creating both empire and race as demonstrated in the pioneering work of historians Gilbert González and, more recently, Clif Stratton. As Stratton argued, "[S]chools within the bounded national space often served as domestic colonial institutions, espoused narratives that projected American power onto both foreign and domestic geographic and populations, and created distinctive paths to citizenship that

[54] "Petition," Ibid.
[55] "WITH REGARD TO RACES," Enclosure No.3, Ibid. Ultimately, the Mexican consul of Los Angeles, CA determined that alleged segregation in San Bernardino appeared to be the result of negative propaganda. See Morrow to U.S. Secretary of State, May 22, 1929, File: 811.42712/28, RG 59.

many native-born and indeed many naturalized whites hoped would strengthen the boundaries of race and nation."[56] Despite attempted diplomatic negotiations, lawsuits, and parent protests to stem the tide of marginalization and segregation of the majority of Mexican Americans, the United States' racial ideology trumped respect for international treaties and congressional decrees. Schools became vital sites in marking and policing the boundaries of whiteness not just in the Southwest, South, but throughout the American West, exemplified in the experience of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants in Wyoming

[56] Cliff Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 3.

## Chapter 3

## "Wyoming Comes to the Fore": Negotiating Race, Immigration, and The Education of Sugar Beet Children in Pre-Depression Wyoming, 1917-1930

If you have the sugar beet industry in your community and you are in school work as a teacher, superintendent, or trustee, it is safe to say that your citizenship and your resourcefulness in your profession are receiving a test.—Simon Rae Logan, School Superintendent, Hardin, Montana, 1924[1]

### Introduction

In the summer of 1929, the school board in Torrington, Wyoming, elected to build a new school in its sugar beet factory district.[2] The new school, known as the South Torrington School, was built to meet the special educational needs of child workers in the surrounding sugar beet fields (beet children), specifically from Mexican, Mexican American, and German-Russian families.[3] Before this time, beet children, regardless of race, nationality, or labor status, attended the city school with *all* children in a desegregated setting.[4] Usually, beet children were placed in classrooms—called opportunity rooms— designed to integrate them fully into Torrington schools. Once the school was built and the beet children segregated, the school became controversial and a source of racial/ethnic tension. Fighting was a constant problem in the school and the German-Russian parents objected to their children mixing with the Mexican and Mexican American children so strenuously that they withdrew their children from the two-room

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[1] S.R. Logan, "Schools and Sugar Beets," *Montana Education*, Vol.1, No.3(November 1924):18.
[2] "Secure Contract for Erecting School Building", *The Torrington Telegram,* July 18, 1929; "Schools Open on Sept.9th—Corps of Teachers Selected", *The Torrington Telegram,* August 15, 1929.
[3] Please see: Donald Hodgson and Vivien Hills., "Dream and Fulfillment: Germans in Wyoming", in *Peopling in High Plains: Wyoming's European Heritage,* ed. Gordon Olaf Hendrickson, Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives, 1977; Hodgson, "The Other Germans in Wyoming" *Annals of Wyoming* 63, Autumn 1991, pp. 145-149; For education: Rondall C. Teeuwen, " Public Rural Education and the Americanization of the Germans from Russia in Colorado: 1900-1930", M.A. Thesis, Colorado State University, 1993; Kathleen Legg, "That young girl should be in school, not out drilling wheat!": The Germans from Russia, Race, and Americanization in Northeastern Colorado, Seminar Paper, Colorado State University, 2005
[4] A.H. Dixon, Superintendent of Public Schools, Goshen County, Wyoming, to Grace Raymond Hebard, November 29, 1929, Grace Raymond Hebard Papers(GRHP), American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.

school.[5] The German-Russian parents threatened to strike the entire Torrington school system unless they were allowed to attend the city classrooms with the white children. Responding to the parents' protest, the superintendent, A.H. Dixon, allowed German-Russians to reenter the city schools rather than force them to return to the South Torrington School build for all beet children. Consequently by 1930, the school intended for all beet children became exclusively a Mexican school.[6]

The incident at Torrington was not an isolated affair but mirrored the role of public schools in negotiating and setting the color line across the state during the pre-Depression era.[7] Public schools became the main site of racial negations in the state for Mexican and German-Russians as child labor and immigration increased rapidly in Wyoming as the labor intensive sugar beet industry spread across the state in the 1920s. Wyoming was not alone, the sugar beet industry and its recruitment of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant family labor converted a labor issue into a race and schooling one that included all the Mountain States. New areas of Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming were introduced to a demographic shift in their sugar beet communities on an unprecedented scale.[8] This accompanied national trends during the 1920s when the Mexican transitioned from a regional "race problem" of the

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[5] For more on the German-Russian "racial animosity" towards Mexicans see: Mary Ellen Coca interview, Worland, Wyoming, March 28, 1983, p. 5, Booklet 1, Box 15, Lawrence Cardoso Papers, American Heritiage Center, Laramie, Wyoming; Interview notes of A.H. Dixon, April 28, 1931, p. 1, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP; Duvan Lujan Interview, August 5, 1973, p. 11-12, Spanish Speaking Peoples in Utah- Oral Histories, Box 5, Item 137, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah; Sheriff Lee, Templeton, Brighton, Colorado, field notes, p. 123, Carton 11, Folder 25, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California; "Mexican boys attacked in Brighton, Colorado", August, 1925, File: 311.1213, Record Group 59, Secretary of State Records, National Archives, College Park, Maryland; Interview Professor R.W. Roskelley, 9/22/40, pp.1-2, Carton 1, Folder 12, SMJP;

[6] For a short history of the de facto Mexican school in Torrington, see: Juanita Patton to Grace Raymond Hebard , January 18, 1930, Box 3, Folder 1, Grace Raymond Hebard Papers, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming(hereafter cited GRHP); Interview notes of A.H. Dixon, April 28, 1931, p. 1, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP; Juanita Patton Interview, 9/22/1940, Carton 1, Folder 12, Stuart Marshall Jamieson Papers(hereafter cited SMJP), Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

[7] Mountain States includes Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming

[8] Many in Wyoming connected the sugar beet industry with the introduction of foreign people, see: "The 'Yellow Peril' in Platte County," *The Wheatland World* (Wheatland, WY), December 15, 1920.

Southwest to a national immigration and racial concern.[9] In states such as Wyoming, with a lack of immigration and overwhelmingly white population, the demographic and economic transformation quickly changed its communities.[10] For instance, in 1920, Wyoming's population was almost 98% white.[11] During the 1920s, Wyoming's demographics changed with the introduction and expansion of the sugar beet industry as some communities saw the Mexican population become almost a third of the entire community.[12] Nowhere would the growth of the Mexican population be more impactful and debated than in Wyoming's public school system.[13]

This chapter examines the role Wyoming public schools played in the race making—racialization—of Mexicans in the pre-Depression era (1917-1930).[14] This chapter argues that the racial status of Mexican in public schools was negotiated and in flux in Wyoming during the 1920s. Throughout the 1920s, Mexican children in Wyoming were not discussed as a statewide race problem in the same realm as Asian, Black, and Native American children. Whereas the racial status and schooling of other non-whites was decided by 1920, for Mexican children, their racial status was fluid producing inconsistent schooling policies throughout the state. In most cases Mexican children attended schools, in other cases, they received special educational services based on their role as child laborers, but they were never the only group the received said services. In only the rarest of cases were Mexican children placed in their own room or

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[9] Paul Schor, "Mobilising for National Prestige? Challenging Federal Census Ethnic Categories' in the USA (1850-1940)," *International Social Science Journal* 57, no.183(March 2005):92.
[10] Danielle R. Olden, "Shifting the Lens: Using Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory to Re-Examine the History of School Desegregation," 252;
[11] Wyoming's population was always overwhelming white from 1870-1920 the percentage of white increased from 95% to 98% of the state, see: Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790-1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970-1990, For Large Cities And Other Urban Places In the United States," Working Paper No. 76(U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), Table 51.
[12] Elizabeth Broadbent, "The distribution of Mexican population in the United States, "(PhD. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1972),
[13] "Wyoming Education Stats, 1927-1928," Folder 31, Carton 10, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.
[14] I abide by the definition of racial formation as "the sociohistorical process which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed." See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s*(New York: Routledge, 2015), 109.

school during this time, and that was temporary.[15] However, school officials played a central role in solidifying the racial status of Mexicans, where in many cases the final decision to segregate or not to segregate Mexican children based on race came down to one superintendent, principal, or even one teacher.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the race question in Wyoming schools pertaining to Asian, Black, and Native American children during the territorial and early state era. Next, it examines the expansion of the sugar beet industry and the creation of the sugar beet child in Wyoming schools with particular attention to how Mexicans and German-Russians became the focus of discussion in the state's public schools in the 1920s. Afterwards, the chapter uses the example of the 1928 Congressional hearings to restrict Mexican immigration to signify how white Wyomingites demonstrated a racialized view of Mexicans but were not yet settled on their racial status in the state especially in relation to white people. This chapter ends by analyzing Wyoming's Child Welfare Commission's interstate campaign focused on ending the attendance problem of *all* children of the sugar beet industry from 1929-1930. Wyoming school officials wanted to include and Americanize Mexican and German-Russian children alongside white children countering most calls for segregation. By 1930, however, the class narrative surrounding the educational status of Mexican children was increasingly replaced with racial rhetoric and calls for segregation in schools with the onset of the Great Depression.

**Negotiating and Settling the Race Question in Wyoming Schools, 1869-1917**

Historians such as Nancy Beadie, D. Michael Bottoms, Cliff Straton and others have documented the critical role of public schools and education in constructing race in the American

[15] The Mexican School was developed in Powell, Wyoming, and evolved into just a first grade class room, see: "In The Grades, "The *Powell Tribune* (Powell, WY), January 10, 1924; "Mexican Children in Powell School", *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT), January 13, 1924.

West during the Reconstruction era and end of the 19th century.[16] They found that provisions for schooling and race went hand-in-hand in establishing statehood.[17] Building on the framework of historian Elliot West and his notion of the "Greater Reconstruction," public schools in the American West were not only central in state building but also in solving the *race problem* in that they ensured the future of the color line. This is articulated best by historian Matthew Gardner Kelly, in his work on schooling in California in the early state era, where he documents how school people looked to racial segregation as a way to form not just a strong state but a distinctly "American" space. Kelly argued, "[T]hrough the rigid maintenance of segregated schooling and the separation of 'white' and 'nonwhite' students, early school leaders sought to make California an American space."[18]

An examination of Wyoming adds a critical element to understanding the relationship between schools and the Greater Reconstruction since Wyoming public school people and government representatives directly defined schools as a solution to any race problem that developed in their state. For instance, in his inaugural address to the legislative assembly of the Wyoming territory in 1869, Governor John Allen Campbell described education as "the foundation of a new State, this should be the corner stone, for without it no durable political fabric can be erected." Campbell made a direct link between the schoolhouse and adherence to democracy in Wyoming and loyalty to the nation. In many ways, Campbell—a Civil War

[16] For an excellent historiographical essay on the matter, see: Nancy Beadie, Joy Williamson-Lott, Michael Bowman, Teresa Frizell, Gonzalo Guzman, Jisoo Hynn, Joanna Johnson, Kathryn Nicholas, Lani Phillips, Rebecca Willington, and La'akea Yoshida, "Gateways to the West, Part II: Education and the Making of Race, Place, and Culture in the West, "History *of Education Quarterly* V. 57, No.1(February 2017): 94-126.
[17] Nancy Beadie, "War, education and state formation: problems of territorial and political integration in the United States, 1848-1912," *Paedagogica Historica* V. 52, Nos.1-2(2016):58-75; D. Michael Bottoms, *An Aristocracy of Color: Race and Reconstruction in California and the West, 1850-1890*(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013); Cliff Straton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Path of Good Citizenship*(Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
[18] Matthew Gardner Kelly, "Schoolmaster's Empire: Race, Conquest, and the Centralization of Common Schooling in California, 1848-1879," *History of Education Quarterly* V.56, No.3(August 2016), 447.

veteran on the Union side—viewed the school as a way to remake the nation in the wake of the Civil War. He argued that the most devoted defenders of the Union came from areas where schoolhouses were the most numerous and thus knew the value of free institutions. However, Campbell held the school in a distinct place in state and community building, even stating that, "[T]he church follows the school house" in community cohesion. He ended his discussion on education with a call for a "universal, free, common school education."[19] Although Campbell's address could be read as mostly rhetoric, Wyoming communities especially in the state era linked settlement and development with the presence of a "first-class school."[20] Although Campbell did not mention race once in his address—outside the discussion of Native Americans—race played a central role in the development of educational policy as Wyoming transitioned from a territory to a state.[21]

In Wyoming, public schooling was always understood as a means to address and preserve the racial order in the state.[22] In particular, Wyoming's first school code specifically targeted Black children. Black children were the only children ever invoked in Wyoming's territorial and state constitution despite being the overwhelmingly minority in the state. During the first legislative session establishing Wyoming as a territory in 1869, a provision was included allowing for the segregation of "colored [Black] pupils."[23] The 1869 provision never received much explanation but it followed similar measures at the time responding to the end of the Civil

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[19] "Governor's Address to the First Legislative Assembly of Wyoming Territory," October 13, 1869, 14

[20] Many communities in the state linked the school to permanent settlement, see: "School District Meeting," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), April 23, 1908.

[21] Governor Campbell was well aware of the position of Native Americans in Wyoming and racial tension, clearly arguing, "It is our duty to see that these treaties, which are the most sacred of laws, should be faithfully carried out on our part. The Indian is jealous of his rights, and when his domain is invaded, it is the white race he holds responsible, and not any particular individual, its is on the nearest of the race that he wreaks his vengeance." Governor's Address, 16.

[22] Ibid.

[23] T. A Larson, *History of Wyoming*, Second Edition, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 226; A.C. Monahan and Katherine M.Cook, *Educational Survey of Wyoming*(Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917), 12.

War and possible fear of black migration from the South.[24] The provision allowed for the building of a separate school if a district had more than "fifteen or more colored children."[25] That such a low population was necessary to create a segregated school speaks volumes about the limited acceptance of a black presence in the young territory.[26] For instance, in 1869, when the permissive segregation law was passed, the Black population of the entire territory was only 183 making up at most just two-percent of the entire population.[27] Currently, there is no evidence that Wyoming ever enacted the permissive segregation law, however, this does not mean that it was free from controversy or there were no attempts to segregate Black children. In this regard, the attempt to create a segregated school for Black children in Cheyenne, Wyoming, then the territorial capital, in 1885 deserves special attention.

In March 1885, a petition was distributed among white residents of Cheyenne, Wyoming, asking for a separate school be built for the local "colored children."[28] Several newspapers accounts gave a glimpse into how white citizens justified racial segregation in public schools at the time, with one paper noting:

> In Cheyenne they are agitating the question of a separate school for the colored children. It has been the history of this plan that where the colored children had good teachers they improved more rapidly than when mixed with white children. There are several reason or this, one of which is, they are soon made to feel their inequality among the whites; another, they compete better among themselves.[29]

The event set off a citywide debate on the racial segregation in the state. Though many whites favored the separate school, other white and black residents argued that the permissive

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[24] One motivation for white philanthropy and support for the schooling of black children in the South, was to control their migration, see James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1865-1935*(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
[25] Larson, *History of Wyoming,* 226.
[26] This was not limited to Wyoming. States that had permissive segregation laws such as Arizona, had a very low threshold for Black children also, with Arizona setting the limit at twenty-five students, see: Pauli Murray, *States' Laws on Race and Color*, 36.
[27] Gibson and Jung, "Historical Census Statistics," Table 51.
[28] "Educational—The Color Line Petition," *The Cheyenne Sun* (Cheyenne, WY), March 23, 1885
[29] "No Title," *The Sundance Gazette* (Sundance, WY), May 9, 1885.

segregation law needed the consent of the black community. Some argued that it was illegal without the consent of the Black community because, "the United States law forbids the making of any race or color line in public institutions…..If the colored people do not want separate schools they certainty will not be forced upon them."[30] In one editorial that argued "colored people should determine the matter," the author critiqued the very idea of whites determining the educational fate of black children:

> As it is, it is not believed a colored teacher will be put in the schools, and thus they have no representative among the teachers or directors. Oh, yes, says Mr. Objector, they are represented by the white trustees and teachers. Well, sir, suppose we turn the other end of the stick, and in a town where the colored people are the majority they represented the white people by having all colored trustees and teachers—perhaps there would be no growling. Now, it is not fair to give them a school and teacher of their own, or give them a teacher in the mixed schools?

No separate school was ever built, and the controversy quickly ended, at least publicly. By November the mattered was settled, with one school news report stating, "The late alleged 'color line' trouble at the West End school is all moonshine, or something worse. The only trouble that occurred was outside of and had nothing do with the school, whatsoever."[31] No segregated school for Black children was built, but the schooling of Black children in Wyoming reached a national audience as Wyoming applied for statehood in 1889.

Wyoming was one of the few state's to make a direct and explicit connection between schools and racial policy as the basis for statehood.[32] Despite the permissive segregation law, Joseph Carey, a Wyoming state delegate to the Congressional Committee on Territories,

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[30] "Separate Schools," *The Cheyenne Sun* (Cheyenne, WY), March 31, 1885. Its unclear what legislation the author is referencing, most likely it is the 1875 Civil Rights Act, however, said Act was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883.
[31] "Our Schools," *The Cheyenne Sun* (Cheyenne, WY), November 7, 1885.
[32] J.W. Powell, J.M. Carey, M.A. Smith, *Admission of Arizona, Idaho, and Wyoming into the Union* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 38-39.

specifically cited Wyoming's policy of opening its school doors to Black children as a solution to the race problem when testifying for statehood:

> Mr. Carey: The people of Wyoming have accomplished much. They have hands willing to work for the good of the Republic. Their legislation has been broad and liberal. *There is no question of race*. Our first legislature, unanimously Democratic, opened the doors of her public schools to blacks as to the white children….(emphasis added)
> Mr. Barnes: You say there is no distinction in schools?
> Mr. Carey: No.
> Mr. Barnes: How many colored people have they in that Territory; how many colored children?
> Mr. Carey: I can not[sic] say. I suppose there are fifty colored children going to the public schools in Cheyenne alone. *You understand that I referred to this matter to show that we have a homogenous people, there is no conflict between different races in that Territory*.[33] (emphasis added)

Carey, was not pressed on this matter further, and did not mention that Wyoming still had a permissive segregation law.[34] Interestingly, he made no mention of the "color line" affair that happened in 1885 that specifically involved the fifty colored children in Cheyenne. Nevertheless, Carey was very clear, there was no color line in Wyoming's schools but with one major caveat: the Black population was so small that there was no need for segregation. That the "race question" was mentioned at all as a requirement for statehood demonstrates how whiteness was a prerequisite for statehood and was acknowledged by Wyoming state officials.[35]

Public schools and educational policy at large have consistently been part of race-making and whiteness in the U.S. As documented in the work of Jason E. Pierce, the American West was viewed as the "white man's west."[36] The American West was promoted as place where the race and immigration problems of the South and East Coast were not present or could be contained.[37]

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[33] Ibid.
[34] It's unclear if Carey was citing the permissive segregation law in his testimony but it is interesting that he cited the first legislature that had legislation that named "colored children."
[35] This is well documented in the case of New Mexico, see: Linda C. Noel, *Debating American Identity: Southwestern Statehood and Mexican Immigration* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014); Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destines: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).
[36] Jason E. Pierce, *Making The White Man's West: Whiteness and The Creation of the American West*
[37] Ibid.

As Wyoming demonstrates, Carey cited the public schools as a means to safeguard the color line in the state. In the case of Wyoming, public schools were a place where racial status was, "both the location of this debate [on whiteness] and the institutionalization of its outcome."[38] In 1890, less than a year after Carey's testimony, Wyoming was granted statehood and maintained its permissive segregation law targeted Black children in its school laws.

Wyoming, like many Western States, had Indian Reservations that forced segregated schooling and educational neglect on indigenous children.[39] The federal government attempted to address the schooling of indigenous children as soon as Wyoming became a territory, and the Wind River Reservation for the Shoshone and Arapaho tribes was established in 1868.[40] However, the educational experiences of indigenous people in Wyoming was one of neglect. The federal government was unable to adhere to its 1868 treaty that promised a schoolhouse and teacher for every 30 students and instead depended on church groups such as the Baptist and Episcopal churches to fulfill schooling needs. The church groups viewed the tribes on the reservation in a paternalistic sense with one schoolmaster arguing, "The Shoshones have yet to understand fully the importance of an education….In no instance I believe has a savage people been civilized in a few years, and in the case of the North American Indians, history will most likely repeat itself."[41] It would not be until 1884 that the federal government built it first boarding school on the reservation.

In Wyoming, the schooling experience of indigenous children on the reservation reflected their racial position in the state and nation. As scholarship on the Indian Boarding

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[38] Fear-Segal, xv.
[39] Currently, there exists no lengthy scholarly account of the public schooling experience of Native Americans in Wyoming.
[40] The treatment of Native Americans in what would become Wyoming territory and then state was marred in violence and racism, for an account of this violence, see: Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggle Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013)
[41] *Places of Learning, 182.*

school experience demonstrates although called “Indian schools” and on the reservation, said schools were still “white” in the sense that they followed a Euro-American or white standard of public schooling and sought to assimilate indigenous children into whiteness.[42] However, as scholars of American Indian education have documented, the practice of segregation and the creation of off-reservation boarding schools that educated students from a variety of nations (the pan-Indian identity happened off not on the reservations) actually served to create a “pan-Indian” identity and structure their status as “non-white.”[43] Or as historian K. Tsianina Lomawaima has argued:

> The United States government established Indian boarding schools to detribalize and individualize Native Americans. They set out to mold a “successful” student—obedient, hardworking, Christian, punctual, clean, and neatly groomed—who would become a successful citizens with the same characteristics….We need to understand the reality of school life…that tribal and pan-Indian identity were reinforced, not diluted in Indian schools.[44]

Thus, schools both mirrored and created the racial status of Native Americans in Wyoming, a fact that did not change even with the passage of the federal 1934 Johnson-O'Malley Act which encouraged Indian children to attend “white” schools off the reservation.[45] Throughout the Pre-Depression Era, much like the experience with Black children, Wyoming education policy played a seminal role in the racial formation of Native American children.

For most of Wyoming's history, racialized education policy targeted and specially named African and Native American children. However, there was also a sizable Asian American and Asian immigrant population, mostly of Chinese and Japanese descent in the state as well. Yet

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[42] For a review of this please see: Ruben Donato and Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., “Latino Education in Twentieth-Century America: A Brief History,” in Enrique G. Murillo, Jr., Sofia A. Villenas, Ruth Trinidad Galvan, Juan Sanchez Munoz, Corinne Martinez, and Margarita Machado-Casas(eds), *Handbook of Latinos and Education: Theory, Research, and Practice*(New York: Routledge, 2010), 27-62.
[43] K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of the Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 129.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Clayton B. Fraser, Mary M. Humstone, and Rheba Massey, *Places of Learning: Historical Context of Schools in Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 2010), 182.

school and state officials apparently felt no need to target this group for educational purposes due to other laws in place. For instance, in the Congressional testimony for Wyoming statehood in 1889, delegate Carey was asked about the Asian—Chinese—presence and he responded, "The Chinamen cut no figure. They have not claimed citizenship."[46] Immigration laws and anti-Asian miscegenation laws in Wyoming assured a small and segregated Asian population in the state. With the 1924 Immigration Act, Asians in Wyoming and nationally were excluded from immigration and naturalization further solidifying their non-white status in the state.[47] In other words, in Wyoming, public schools did not dispute the racial standing of Asians. This reflected national and international trends, where the schooling of Asian children—principally of Chinese and Japanese descent—once debated fiercely in the public became less of concern with immigration and naturalization restrictions.[48] In a telling example form the work of historian Timothy J. Stanley of the Chinese schooling experience in Victoria, British Columbia, white Canadian school officials and the public abandoned their calls for racial segregation in schools once federal law barred Chinese immigration and naturalization. In other words, schools were no longer needed to reaffirm the color line for Asians since other laws firmly placed them as "non-white" and "alien."[49] This would not be the case for Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants in Wyoming in the early 20th century.

As Wyoming school officials settled on schooling policies for most of its non-white children, immigration law and the rapid growth of the sugar beet industry would change the educational landscape of the state in the 1920s. By 1930, Mexicans were the largest non-white

[46] J.W. Powell, J.M. Carey, M.A. Smith, *Admission of Arizona, Idaho, and Wyoming into the Union* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 39.
[47] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004)
[48] Charles Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976)
[49] Timothy J. Stanley, "Bringing Anti-Racism into Historical Explanation: The Victoria Chinese Students' Strike of 1922-23 Revisited," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* Vol.3, No.1(2002): 164.

racial group outnumbering Asian, Black, and Indigenous combined by over a two-to-one margin.[50] Mexican children presented a number of challenges for school officials. For instance, they were "legally white", there were no federal or state laws that clearly marked their racial status as "colored." Additionally, Mexican workers were a necessity for the growing sugar beet industry in the state, particularly since Wyoming had little to no economic diversity. Thus, the racial status of Mexican children in Wyoming schools was met with inconsistent policies, as a number of school districts took different measures to address the so called "race problem" posed by the growing presence of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant children in their schools.

### Class, Immigrant, or Racial Status? Wyoming's Sugar Beet Industry, Mexican Labor Colonization and Creating Beet Children, 1917-1923

The presence of Mexicans/Mexican Americans in Wyoming dates back to territorial days of the late 19th century, however, a permanent Mexican/Mexican American population was distinctly a 20th century occurrence. [51] The majority of the Mexican/Mexican American population settlement was a consequence of the expanding sugar beet industry and the accompanying company colony or "worker colonization" strategy of the 1920s. [52] The colonization strategy was a massive achievement that included the creation of over four hundred and fifty labor houses throughout the Mountain States of Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and

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[50] Eri Hulbert, *The Public Welfare Services of the State of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Charities and Reform Board, 1934), 130; State Planning Board State of Wyoming, *Population in Wyoming*(Cheyenne, WY, October, 1935), Graph IX.

[51] Mexican labor was recruited early by railroad companies such as the CB&Q and Union Pacific Railroads for track work throughout Wyoming, See: "Mexican Immigration to Wyoming", Lawrence Cardoso Notes; Lawrence Cardoso Papers (LCP), Box 9, Folder 6; Antonio Rios-Bustamante, "Wyoming's Mexican Hispanic History," *Annals of Wyoming* 73:2(Spring 2001)

[52] By the 1920s the sugar beet industry developed into one of Wyoming's main cash crops. To understand the importance of Mexican labor and the sugar beet industry to Wyoming, please see the testimony of Wyoming senators, Francis Warren and John Kendrick during the 1928 Congressional hearings to restrict Mexican immigration in *United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Immigration. Restriction Of Western Hemisphere Immigration. Hearings before the Committee on Immigration, United States Senate, Seventieth Congress, First Session, on S. 1296, a Bill to Amend the Immigration Act of 1924; S. 1437, a Bill to Subject Certain Immigrants, Born in Countries of the Western Hemisphere, to the Quota under the Immigration Laws; S. 3019, a Bill to Amend the Immigration Laws and for Other Purposes. February 1, 27, 28, 29; March 1 and 5, 1928* (Washington:U.S. Government Printing Office., 1928):67-72.

Wyoming by the end of the 1920s.[53] In Wyoming alone, the Great Western Sugar Company and the Holly Sugar Company created sugar beet factories and established Mexican colonies throughout the state. The vast recruitment strategy focused on potential workers from the Southwest and central Mexico, as one union member of the Mexican American Beet Workers' Association remarked:

> The sugar beet industry is indisputably one of the mammoth achievements of the American spirit of enterprise. By rough estimate it is generally said that there are 90,000 people of different racial origins employed by this industry, most of whom are of Mexican extraction, the percentage of Mexicans born and reared in the United States being the largest, and the number of those retaining their Mexican citizenship not being much over 24%.[54]

The recruitment of Mexican and Mexican American labor by the sugar beet industry was so successful that historian Kathleen Mapes declared the sugar beet industry, "the most important employer of Mexican and Mexican American labor in the 20th century."[55] In Wyoming alone, the sugar beet industry was responsible for the explosion of the Mexican population in the state, from 2,051 in 1920 to 7,174 in 1930, making Wyoming the state with the seventh highest percentage of overall Mexican/Mexican American population in the U.S.[56] The rapid increase of was based on the recruitment of families and transformed a labor problem into a schooling one.

One of the main strategies for recruiting Mexican families to the labor colonies was the added benefit of the colony towns' education systems.[57] For instance, the Great Western Sugar Company developed recruiting videos in Spanish targeting Mexican American and Mexican

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[53] Testimony C.V. Maddux. *Immigration from Countries of the Western Hemisphere.* February 21 to April 5, 1928(Washington: Government Printing Press, 1928), 614
[54] Beetworkers Association, Ft. Lupton, Colorado Meeting, February 1, 1929, Box 4, Folder 10. Clemente Idar Papers. Benson Library. University of Texas at Austin.
[55] Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*, 221.
[56] Broadbent, "The Distribution of Mexican Populations in the U.S.," 71.
[57] "Editors Note", *Through the Leaves*, Vol. XII, No.11(November 1924): 542.

laborers showing schools built for Mexican children.[58] In fact, schooling was always an integral part of the sugar beet companies' colonization attempts.[59] The Great Western Sugar Company declared the educational benefits provided for Mexican sugar beet children as lending a "humanitarian impulse" to their proposal to make the beet workers remain during the Winter.[60] In another example in Delta, Colorado, the Holly Sugar Beet Company and the local school district developed a "Spanish School" for the local company Mexican colony.[61] Even the noted labor economist Paul S. Taylor believed that despite irregular attendance, as good as or better education was offered in the beet areas than in areas from which Mexicans migrated, principally Old Mexico, New Mexico, and to a lesser degree Texas.[62] In certain school districts in Montana, public schools were paid for by the sugar companies and were operated by public school officials. Known as "harvest schools" they allowed children working in the beet fields to attend summer sessions in lieu of attending during the sugar beet harvest.[63] Montana was not alone, as Colorado and Nebraska also participated in revised schooling schedules for its children working in the beet fields. Schools were so central to Mexican colonization in the sugar beet industries that many communities refused to allow the establishment of Mexican colonies and sugar factories on the basis that they did not want to educate Mexican children.[64]

The expansion of the sugar beet industry and the explosion of beet children in the school districts developed into a large state problem as early as 1922. As the sugar beet industry grew

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[58] "Escuela De Ninos En Una De Las Colonias de los Trabajadores" Beet Labor Film, Great Western Sugar Digital Collection. Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. http://lib.colostate.edu/archives/greatwestern/item.php?id=1021731600
[59] Deutsch, 139.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Donald Alexander McNaughton, "A Social Study of Spanish-American Wage-Earners in Delta, Colorado,"(Masters Thesis, University of Colorado, 1943), 27; "Holly Sugar Company Foreman interview," "Field Notes 1917," Carton 11, Folder 25, PST.
[62] Taylor, *South Platte Valley*, 103.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 210.

in Wyoming, so did the growth and visibility of child labor usage in the state to school people and the public. Recognizing the growing problem, James R. Coxen, Director for Vocational Education, noted the current limitation of child labor laws in Wyoming especially those in the beet fields acknowledging, "It seems that children are most exploited in the beet fields and this law would not relieve the situation at all."[65] Coxen was directly referencing an exemption in the labor laws that allowed families in agricultural work to use child labor if not doing so would cause economic hardship.[66] This effectively made sugar beet families and their children exempt from the state's labor laws causing an immediate schooling problem. The ineffectiveness of child and labor laws in Wyoming to address the growing beet labor problem in the state mirrored the failure of federal laws to do the same.

In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a national child labor law that forced states to enact their own laws.[67] However, Wyoming passed its first child labor law and created a governor appointed Child Welfare Commission the following year.[68] Largely a byproduct of the failed national move to have a constitutional amendment barring child labor, the move was heralded by national child welfare agencies as a victory for children's rights in the state. Representatives of the National Child Labor Committee commented that the legislation "changes Wyoming from the most backward to the front rank of child labor protection." [69] Prior to 1923, Wyoming was viewed as a region where child labor laws were not necessary because child labor did not exist in the state. With the advent of company colonies and family recruitment of Mexican and German-Russian families, child labor became a more pressing issue and state

[65] James R. Coxen to Grace Raymond Hebard, December 30, 1922. Box 2, Folder 25, GRHP.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "Child Labor Law," October 22, 1922. Box 2, Folder 25, GRHP.
[68] "Legislation Passed," *The American Child*, Vol. V, No.4 (April 1923): 1.
[69] "Wyoming Comes to the Fore." *The American Child*, May 1923, 6.

officials took action to protect children.  Employers of children in sugar beet fields, however, were exempt from the new legislation.

Some Wyoming officials took issue with the sugar beet industry's ability to continue to employ youth in their fields and its impact on public education.  For instance, Wyoming's Commissioner of Education, Lewis C. Tidball, Jr., wrote to one of the chief architects of the 1923 child labor law, Dr. Grace Raymond Hebard, commenting:

> As I see the Child Labor situation in the state is not at all serious at the present time except in one field….It seems to me, however, that the serious case of Child Labor in the state is in the beet fields. From what I know of the beet field situation I do not believe that is simply a question of these children being out of school for a certain length of time, although I think that phase of the matter is serious. From what I can learn labor in the beet fields is hard labor for an adult and I do not believe  that the fact that it is agricultural labor makes it an less injurious for a child than any other kind of child labor requiring similar hours and as much effort.[70]

Tidball knew that any child labor laws targeting the sugar beet industry would meet fierce resistance from the beet industry and families in the fields.[71]  Still, he and other school officials, community members, and social welfare advocates viewed the industry as countering any true attempts to Americanize children from sugar beet families and believed it was worth the fight.

By 1924, national advocacy groups—private and public—such as the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) and the federal Children's Bureau singled out the sugar beet industry for its usage of child labor, particularly from immigrant and "foreign" families.[72] Their reports in Montana, Nebraska, and Kansas and especially Wyoming emphasized the connection of the industry to bringing foreign social elements into their communities,.  In one telling study from

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[70] Tidball to Hebard, March 19, 1924, Box 2, Folder 26, GRHP. Also see, "Children Exploited in the Beet Sugar Fields," *The Casper Herald*(Casper,WY), February 4, 1922.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Historians such as Kathleen Mapes and April Merlaux have argued that the works of the NCLC and Children's Bureau left out the Mexican child during the 1920s, instead focusing on European immigrant children. see, April Merlaux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 147-173; Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 166-185.

the NCLC of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, American children also viewed sugar beet labor as the realm of foreigners. When one white boy was asked if his father worked in sugar beets he responded, "Naw, my papa don't work beets. We're Americans. Just 'Roosians' and "Mexes" do beets." [73] That both Mexican and German-Russian families worked in the sugar beet fields, made them racially similar but also distinct from the white American communities. This distinction between German-Russians, Mexicans, and Americans was not confined to Nebraska but also extended to Wyoming.

In Wyoming just as other Mountain States, laboring in the sugar beet fields became known as the work of "foreigners" and not Americans. In a telling discussion of reclamation projects in the Powell Valley of Wyoming, an editorial argued only Americans should be farmers on reclamation projects and linked child labor in beets as defining characteristics of foreign peoples stating,

> "These projects are not for the purpose of introducing the farming systems of the lower standard Europeans or oriental countries. American parents do not believe in working their boys and girls in the beet fields as the Japanese and Mexicans do. *American culture makes it necessary that boys and girls be in school most of the year*."[74](emphasis added)

Although an editorial, the comment was based in a larger sentient of the view of child labor and those considered to be "true" Americans. Child labor was marked as foreign and countering assimilation. The lack or inconsistent enrollment in public schools was a sign of both a racial and citizenship distinction in Wyoming.

In Wyoming, school officials did not embrace the anti-Mexicans sentiment of some their communities and looked to public schools to address the sugar beet problem. Most school officials embraced more of an immigrant narrative (rather than a racial narrative) to address the

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[73] Sara A. Brown and Rosie O'Sargent, "Children in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Platte Valley of Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 67(1986): 273.

[74] "One-hundred Percent American Projects," *The Powell Tribune*, May 10, 1923.

schooling situation of child laborers in the sugar beet industry. This was largely a consequence of the presence of German-Russian families in the sugar beet fields as well. School people looked for collaborative strategies to include both Mexican and German-Russian families in deciding the educational fate of their children. In one example a Wyoming country superintendent discussed how one community addressed the problem of schooling in sugar beet communities void of any language based on racial distinction but instead focusing on a foreigner narrative:

> In the capacity of County truant Officer I made a tip to the city of A., where we have the only foreign element in our county. These foreigners are all beet workers. The City Superintendent and I went to see the parents who were keeping the children out of school. Then we called the parents together at a meeting with the School Board. At this meeting we mutually agreed and arranged for the length of time that could be given to the beet meant to get out their crops and the age of the child that might be temporality allowed to go into the beet fields to get out the beet crops before the heavy frosts and snows came. This has worked out very successful so far. *We are trying to see that all the children in the community are having the change for education, and at the same time we are endeavoring not to jeopardize industries that have become established in the locality*. (emphasis added) [75]

Many sugar beet communities allowed families to obtain permits so their children could work in the beet fields for a short period of time.[76] Failing to take heed the warnings of fellow Wyomingites and others opposed to the sugar beet industry's role in schooling and in child labor Wyoming school officials allowed a temporary exemption to become normal policy as communities adopted a permanent "short period" in their school districts. Thus, beet children, and especially Mexican and European ethnic children, namely German-Russians, became the principal educational problem of school officials in the state during the 1920s. In public schools, the sugar beet industry put German-Russians and Mexicans in similar racial positions to most

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[75] "How Schools and Farmers Work Together in Wyoming" *The American Child*, Vol. 7, No.3 (March 1924): 7.
[76] Ibid.

Wyoming communities as immigrants, foreign, and as an identifiable racial group distinct from white Americans not in the sugar beet fields.

**Immigration Policy, Race, and Schooling in the Powell Valley, 1924-1928**

After passage of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, which placed quotas on the number of immigrants who could enter the country, the racial demographics of the sugar beet industry work force in Wyoming changed. The federal immigration law converted Wyoming's broader immigration issue into a Mexican one. What was once a multiracial group of immigrants working in the fields in the early 1920s was almost majority Mexican American and Mexican by 1927 since German-Russian immigration was effectively cut off. Historians such as Sarah Deutsch, Kathleen Mapes, April Merleaux, and Mark Reilser all demonstrate that the sugar beet industry appealed to Congress that restricting Mexican labor and immigration would destroy the industry.[77] Despite many calls by Congress members to restrict Mexican immigration, the sugar beet industry was successful, and no immigration restrictions were placed on the Western Hemisphere.

The failure of Mexican immigration restriction in 1928 had an immediate influence on the sugar beet fields of Wyoming and the state's public schools. Connecting immigration restriction to changes in the sugar beet labor force, one Wyoming farmer noted, "About the only two classes of farm labor that we have tried in our experience has been the Russian and the German. Of course, he is out of the picture because we can't get enough of them in there to do the labor, and those that have stayed in there have rented farms or they become renters later, and

[77] Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 122-123; Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics*(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 143; April Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness*(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 147; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940*(New York: Greenwood Press, 1976), 177.

it leaves us right up to the question of either employing the Mexican to do our work or having nobody."[78] The change in work force demographics came during a time of active recruitment of Wyoming communities for sugar beet factory workers. As the sugar beet labor force became increasingly Mexican/Mexican American, public schools became the central site where the racial, class and immigration status of Mexicans/Mexican Americans was debated and institutionalized ranging from full inclusion to outright separate classrooms.

Powell, Wyoming's stance towards the racial status and schooling of its Mexican and Mexican American students deserves special attention since it demonstrates there was no singular understanding of where Mexican/Mexican American children should be educated during the 1920s. In 1924, the Powell school district created a new department to address the influx of a large number of Mexican/Mexican American children who entered the primary grades. The school district decided to use an old schoolhouse to teach the children who did not know English. The segregated school in Powell currently stands as the earliest known segregated school for non-whites, outside of the Indian boarding school system, in Wyoming. The "Mexican School," as it was named in official ledger, in Powell initially consisted of twenty students aged 6 to 18 years old.[79] J.J. Champlin of the Shoeshone (Wind River) Indian Reservation was recruited to teach the Mexican children, "having had considerable experience in teaching among the Indians."[80] That Powell officials decided to hire a former teacher of Native Americans and considered him particularly fit to teach Mexicans/Mexican Americans speaks to a racial understanding of Mexicans/Mexican Americans as approximating "Indians" and not whites. But even with the establishment of the Mexican school, white community members made calls to

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[78] *Immigration from Counties of Western Hemisphere*, 341.
[79] Interestingly the school gained fanfare outside of Powell, especially in Billings, Montana, but was barely mentioned in the Powell press: "Mexican Children in Powell School", *The Billings Gazette*(Billings, MT), January 13, 1924.
[80] Ibid.

view Mexicans and Mexican Americans in citizenship terms, not racial terms. In one telling editorial, Mexican Americans were viewed as American regardless of their racial ancestry:

> Nearly sixty percent of the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the Powell Valley are American citizens. *They are not Mexicans; perhaps they have never seen Mexico. Their admixture of Spanish and native American blood make them in no sense Mexicans.* Not that Mexican blood is anything to their discredit, but they simply are not Mexicans, so why give them that designation. A goodly portion of them come from the state of New Mexico, where the Spanish language is so generally spoken, hence we call them Spanish-Americans. They grew up under the Stars and Stripes, they do not celebrate the September 16th Independent Day of the Mexicans, they have been in constant contact with American civilization and American ways. Contrasted with these, there is the forty-percent portion of the beet working population who come from Old Mexico. These are Mexican aliens—good folks in their way but not American citizens. *We should learn to differentiate between those two classes of Spanish speaking folks*.[81] (emphasis added)

The segregation of Spanish speaking or Mexican children—though not Mexican American children, in the author's view, was necessary. In Powell, however, school officials did not distinguish between Mexicans and Mexican Americans and both groups would be confined to the first grade until the 1930s when the school board attempted to create a new segregated school for the Mexican children. Despite the development of a segregated classroom, it would be the last time a "Mexican School" was named in official ledger in Powell, and the racial status was openly debated in the community, including voices from the local Mexican/Mexican American community**.**

Mexicans/Mexican Americans regularly advocated for the high quality schooling of their children. In 1927, the main newspaper of Powell—*The Powell Tribune*—started a Spanish page targeting the local Mexican sugar beet community. The newspaper hired Juan A. Pacheco, a former county superintendent from Mora, New Mexico, to be the main editor of the Spanish

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[81] "This and That" *The Powell Tribune* (Powell, WY), May 26, 1927. Also see: "To Our Spanish American Friends," Ibid.

page.[82] In its inaugural issue, the Spanish page devoted much attention to the education of Spanish speaking pupils congratulating two Mexican American girls on graduating on to high school.[83] The Spanish page devoted a number of articles discussing the educational status of Mexican American and Mexican children not only in Powell but the surrounding Valley. Pacheco called on parents to send their children to school arguing:

> A good education is the best thing a parent can leave a child. Nothing is certain in this world. If a father dies in debt it is the state creditors who take the property and the children are left with nothing. But with a good education, a child can learn to earn an honorable living. For instance, this year, for the first time we had Spanish speaking children enter the local high school. We hope they are successful in their educational endeavors. We are never too old to learn. Do not discourage boys and girls who are 20 years old or older form entering school. Just because of their age, does not mean they cannot learn. In many cases, the oldest children are the most eager to learn. Since education is the best legacy we can leave our children, we should give the ultimate sacrifice to ensure our children are able to go to school.[84]

Pacheco was not the only individual calling for Mexican/Mexican American children to be in school. For instance, Superintendent Ralph McGaughey of Powell Schools placed an article in the Spanish page calling for Mexican American and Mexican parents to send their children to school.[85] The focus on education reflected the increasing settlement of Mexican American and Mexican families in the area. By 1927, the Shoshone Valley was home to the largest concentration of Mexican American and Mexican children in the state.[86]

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[82] "Tribune's Page in Spanish Edited by Former County Superintendent from New Mexico", *The Powell Tribune*(Powell, WY), May 26, 1927; "To Our Spanish Speaking Friends," *The Powell Tribune,* May 26, 1927.; "Nuestro Editor De La Pagina Espanol Tendra Que Irse," *The Powell Tribune*, August 4, 1927.
[83] "*Dos Muchuchas De Habla Espanol Graduan En La Escuela Graduada de Powell*", Th*e Powell Tribune,* May 26, 1927.
[84] "La Mejor Herencia", *The Powell Tribune*, September 8, 1927.
[85] "Los Ninos De Seis Anos En Adelante En Deben Ser Enviados A La Escuela", *The Powell Tribune*, October 6, 1927. Also see, "Acerca De Lo Importante Que Es Que Los Padres De Familia Se Preocupen Por Instruir A Sus Hijos," *The Powell Tribune,* October 6, 1927; "Comenzaran Las Excuelas En Powell Y Su Cecindad, El Martest, Septiembre 6", *The Powell Tribune*, August 25, 1927.
[86] "Sixty Families of Beetworkers To Spend Winter in Powell" *The Powell Tribune*, September 15, 1927.

The tensions surrounding the racial status of the Mexican laborer and the education of Mexican American and Mexican children would be on full display when Wyoming state officials and farmers testified in Congress to make sure no restrictions were placed on Mexican labor immigration in 1928 during hearings on whether to extend the National Quota Act to the Western Hemisphere. The 1928 hearings are particularly important because, as historian Natalia Molina has argued, the 1928 hearings were the closest Mexicans came to being defined and codified as racially non-white in immigration law.[87] However, scholars have neglected the educational policy component of those hearings.

Public schooling was always a central component of the immigration debates of the 1928 hearings. Those who testified in favor of restrictions on Mexican immigration argued, "another problem with immigration is the school problem."[88] Those who testified in favor of Mexican restriction openly worried about the eventual consequences of desegregated schooling with white and Mexican children with one testimony stating, "Other problems are also appearing on the horizon, for example, the school problem, with its inevitable certainty of friction between the native white children and the Mexicans, and the more serious racial problem of intermarriage of interbreeding."[89] Historian Peggy Pascoe, in her seminal work on miscegenation, argued that interracial marriage was the foundation of white supremacy in the Jim Crow era.[90] That advocates for Mexican immigration restriction connected miscegenation to public schooling illuminated the role of public schools in maintaining racial boundaries.[91] As one testimony pointed out, "Our great Southwest is rapidly creating itself a new racial problem, as our old

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[87] Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made In America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 43.
[88] United States Congress Senate, *Immigration From Countries of the Western Hemisphere*, 682
[89] Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration, 188.
[90] Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.
[91] For the seminal discussion of the Mexican immigration debate please see, Mark Reisler, *The Sweat of Their Brow*

South did when it imported slave labor from Africa."[92] Simply, Mexicans were not just an immigration problem but a race one, and restrictionists used public schools as the main examples of the racial problem Mexicans posed.

Wyoming state representatives, however, argued that Mexicans posed no racial problem in the state specifically citing the role they played in the state's economy and their treatment in public schools as evidence. Wyoming's two senators, former Governors John Kendrick and Frances Warren, and sugar beet farmer from the Powell Valley, Jess Crosby, testified on the continued need for Mexican labor. Senators Kendrick and Warren both testified that Mexican labor was a necessity in the state to maintain the sugar beet industry. Here the testimony of Kendrick was most direct declaring, "I say to you in all sincerity that if you do prevent us from getting that Mexican labor you are going to destroy the beet sugar industry of my State."[93] Not only were Mexican immigration and labor an economic necessity for the state but they did not constitute a race problem in Wyoming. Kendrick argued that Mexicans were an entirely different people from the "Mongolians and the Malays," two groups targeted for exclusion, and did not pose the same racial threat.[94] Kendrick did not discuss the racial status of Mexican laborers but instead focused on their laboring-class standing as a source of advancement for white men in the labor market arguing:

> I have not come in close contact with those[Mexicans] who have come among us as laborers in the [sugar] fields, but I do know that of all the alien races they amalgamate the least with the white man; they live entirely in a separate way. They are really an orderly people in our country. We see them come and cultivate our beet fields in the summer and many disappear with the fall and winter. So that they have disturbed the order of things not at all. On the other hand, they have brought unusual benefits, because they supply a

[92] Ibid.
[93] John D. Kendrick Testimony. *Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), 72.
[94] Francis E. Warren Testimony. *Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), 68

> form of labor that in itself produced more labor for the white man than could be had any other way."[95]

Kendrick's testimony invoked language that racialized Mexicans as non-white but also a necessary labor pool since the 1924 Immigration Act effectively eliminated the German-Russian labor stream to Wyoming. This language, which historian Natalia Molina terms "racial scripts", gave racial meaning to Mexicans as a permanent agricultural labor class. The Wyoming senator ended his testimony by arguing restricting Mexican labor would "destroy the sugar beet industry in my State."[96]

The testimony of senators or sugar beet representatives favoring Mexican immigration was not unique in the 1928 hearing. However, Wyoming was the only state that sent a farmer to discuss the issue of Mexican immigration, and the status of educating sugar beet children became a highlight of the testimony.[97] Crosby affirmed the testimony of the Wyoming senators arguing that Wyoming wanted and needed more sugar beet fields and factories and thus Mexican labor. When Crosby mentioned he hired and housed Mexican families to work on his farm, members of Congress, specifically George Schneider of Wisconsin, immediately asked about the children and how they were treated in schools:

> Mr. Crosby: Well, there were two of the children that came this year there were 12 or 14 years old. The rest were small babies.
> Mr. Schneider: Now, when it comes to the 1st of September, what facilities are there for educational purposes for the children?
> Mr. Crosby: We have good schools in Wyoming and they are compelled under the age of 16 to go to school, unless they have graduated from the grades.
> Mr. Schneider: Do these children go to school when school opens?
> Mr. Crosby: These two children that happened to be on my place did go this year, and they have always. They have never objected to going to school; in fact, they want to go.

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[95] John D. Kendrick Testimony. *Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), 71.
[96] Molina, 2.
[97] Testimony: Jess Crosby, *Immigration from the Counties of the Western Hemisphere. Hearings Before The Committee on immigration and Naturalization House of Representatives.* Seventieth Congress. First Session. February 21 to April 5, 1928 (Washington.; Government Printing Office, 1928) 339-340.

> Mr. Schneider: Is that the rule generally with people that employ Mexicans in your district that the children go to school?
> Mr. Crosby: Yes; we have a number of Mexican children in school.
> Mr. Schneider: How do they get along with white children? Do they go to the same school?
> Mr. Crosby: They go to the same school. They are a little slower to learn than the white children.
> Mr. Schneider: Do the white people accept them alright?
> Mr. Crosby: Yes; the white people accept them all right.
> Mr. Schneider: What is their condition of health and clothing and cleanliness, etc.?
> Mr. Crosby: The Mexican that I have had to deal with were reasonably clean people. They live well. They provide for their children with good clothes and are very fond of their children and take good care of them.
> Mr. Schneider. Where there is quite a number of them that way, doesn't it discommode the school facilities by putting a lot of itinerant children into the schools?
> Mr. Crosby: It does; but the majority of those children that start to school only stay until they move south the 1st of November.
> Mr. Schneider: Isn't it true that only a small percentage of the children learn to speak English?
> Mr. Crosby: Practically all of the children learn to speak English. They learn much faster than the older people. [98]

Crosby's testimony illuminates the intersection of immigration policy, race, and schooling. Once again Wyoming representatives employed school policy to demonstrate how the state addressed race. In 1889, it was used to demonstrate a tolerant attitude towards African Americans, and in 1928, schools were used to demonstrate Mexicans posed no race problem in the state. Eventually, Wyoming's interest in maintaining the Mexican in the sugar beet fields in the state and in its public schools won out, as Congress decided against any restrictions on Mexican immigration in 1928. However, the debate surrounding the inclusion of Mexican and other sugar beet children in Wyoming's schools did not subside once the immigration matter was settled.

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[98] Ibid.

**Deciding the Racial Status of Beet Children: Grace Raymond Hebard, Child Labor, and the Educational Campaign, 1929-30**

Between 1929 and 1930, Wyoming school and state officials launched an intrastate campaign to develop an educational policy for its sugar beet children, a policy that centered on their labor class status not their race and ethnicity exclusion. At the root of the problem was their irregular school attendance. The educational campaign consumed the governor-appointed Child Labor and Welfare Committee led by Dr. Grace Raymond Hebard, a University of Wyoming professor and Americanization advocate.[99] Hebard and the Committee focused on creating an educational policy allowing sugar beet child to "catch-up" and integrate with American children outside of the sugar beet industry.[100] As Hebard noted, "in this way, directly or indirectly, the two sets of children come into contact which helps in an educational democracy."[101] Here the Committee embraced a view of the Mexican and sugar beet child as an "immigrant" child worthy of Americanization at a time when similar movements almost exclusively focused on European immigrants or ethnics nationally.[102] The placing of Mexican children in white schools as a form of Americanization is in direct contrast to the traditional scholarly account by historians who track segregated schools and classrooms devised for the purpose of Americanization English language acquisition.[103] Hebard wanted Mexican, German-Russian, and all sugar beet children to be with white American children, any special educational services she suggested was to meet

[99] For an in depth discussion of Hebard's Americanization and overall education career see: Frank Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*(Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002).
[100] This educational policy is mentioned repeatedly during the education campaign, but was especially emphasized when Hebard corresponded with Thomas Mahony of the Mexican Welfare Committee in Colorado, see Hebard to Mahony,January 18, 1930, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP.
[101] Hebard to E.D. Morgan, Wyoming Commissioner of Education, February 15, 1930. Box 3, Folder 1, GRHP.
[102] See, "Lawrence A. Cardoso, "Nativism in Wyoming 1868-1930: Changing Perceptions of Foreign Immigrants, "*Annals of Wyoming* Vol.58, No.1 (Spring 1986): 27-28; Rene Galindo, "'The Nativist Legacy of the Americanization Era in the Education of Mexican Immigrant Students," *Educational Studies* 47:323-346; Jeffry Mierel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[103] Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*, (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2013), xiv, 38.

said goal. In fact, the issue of English language acquisition was not discussed in Wyoming until much later when segregation was in place. The campaign itself demonstrated the fluid nature of the beet child in the state, as even the discussion of who was a beet child fluctuated between a focus on Mexican, German-Russian, and all "foreign children."

Hebard's support for an "industrial Americanization" program for "aliens" in Wyoming was emblematic of the Progressive Era..[104] The entire campaign balanced creating an educational policy allowing beet children to make up the school time missed while in the beet fields with protecting the sugar beet companies' financial interests. It was a difficult balance. In her words, "It is in no way to be antagonistic of the interest of sugar that I am trying to awaken an interest in this project, but it will be to the advantage of the Mexican child who will become illiterate, then ignorant, and then an undesirable citizen that I venture on this campaign."[105] Though she explicitly mentioned Mexicans in her letter to a colleague, the educational campaign itself did not exclusively focus on Mexican children. In other correspondence, she openly referred to Mexican, German-Russian, foreign, and beet children interchangeably as she began her study of educational policy that could be adopted statewide.

Hebard's interest in the sugar beet child issue ultimately brought her in contact with the Mexican problem in Colorado, and specifically the Knights of Columbus' Mexican Welfare Committee. The Mexican Welfare Committee in Colorado was established in 1924 at the height of the sugar beet boom and massive Mexican labor influx in Northern Colorado. The chair of the committee was Thomas F. Mahony, one of Colorado's least known activists although he rallied

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[104] Other historians have called such a policy racist however, the position of Hebard is much more complicated since Mexican families also refused to opt into an educational model impacting the family labor system of sugar beet work.

[105] Hebard to Johnson, Manager Sugar Beet Factory,RE: Mexican children project, January 31, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1. Hebard seconded such an opinion with Senator John B. Kedrick, See: Hebard to Kendrick, Wyoming Senator, January 14, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1

against the injustices of the sugar beet industry and was one of the few major figures in the Mountain West to directly advocate for Mexican workers and families.[106] The correspondence between Hebard and Mahony demonstrates the different perception of the Mexican in Colorado versus Wyoming and more importantly their differing solutions to the sugar beet labor problem. In Mahony's view, the schooling of Mexican beet children was clear,: it was a racial issue. In Hebard's view, Mexicans faced the same issues as other immigrants and she identified their issues based in immigrant status or laboring class status, not race or ethnicity.

In Colorado, the schooling of Mexican Americans and Mexicans in the state was understood as a racial issue as early as the late 19th century. Southern Colorado was home to communities and counties that were majority Mexican American before Colorado became a state in 1876. Thus, by the early 20th century, Colorado had a history of Mexican Americans in schools, and their numbers significantly impacted their racialized status in the state. For instance, as early as 1909, there were accounts of segregated schools for Mexican Americans in southern Colorado.[107] The racism Mexican Americans faced in Colorado schools eventually led to one of the earliest known desegregation cases from the Mexican American experience in Alamosa, Colorado, in 1914.[108] The Mexican American plaintiffs won the suit but anti-Mexican sentiment and segregated schooling expanded in the state as Mexican immigration and migration boomed in the state in the 1910s and 1920s. This history and context, where the racial status of Mexicans was fixed, informed the vantage point that Mahony brought to the beet children situation in Wyoming.

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[106] The Most in depth discussion of Thomas Mahony and his role in the Mexican Welfare Committee is discussed in Donato, *Mexicans and* Hispanos, 13-29.
[107] Donato, Guzman, Hanson, *Maestas v. Shone*, 3
[108] Ibid, 13.

Mahony, unlike Hebard, squarely blamed racism and the nature of the sugar beet industry as the main culprit for the Mexican child schooling problem. Also, Mahony believed a cooperative relationship with the sugar beet industry was unattainable and took a stand against the use of child labor in the sugar beet industry arguing "child labor conditions in the beet districts in Colorado are a crime against childhood. Reports show conditions are now better in other states."[109] Mahony's reflections on the Colorado problem not only demonstrated his philosophy based in Catholic social justice as a member of the Catholic order the Knights of Columbus, but the treatment and view of Mexicans as a race problem in Colorado. In a letter to Hebard, he argued:

> You will find, I am sure, that the Mexican child is in the beet fields not so much because of the parents desire to profit by their labor as by force of economic necessity. In Colorado their being out of school is due more to race antagonism on the part of the local school boards and to the pressure on the part of the growers and possibly of the many lenders in town whom the grower owes, who are only interested in the crops. While it may not seem to be so, they [Mexicans] are a very sensitive race and to avoid the slights and slurs and other indignities shown their children in the schools the parents of them keep them out.[110]

Mahony's statement is from a position where Mexicans no longer were identified primarily as a sugar beet class but instead as a separate and distinct race. Hebard's consistent response to Mahony was based in a child labor or class discourse, not race. Also unlike Mahony, she reaffirmed the cooperative education model as the best means to foster an educational

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[109] Mahony to Hebard, RE: Mexican contract labor and schools, December 7, 1929, Thomas F. Mahony Papers(TMP), CMAH 1/08.

[110] Mahony to Hebard, RE: Mexican labor problem in Wyoming, July 20, 1930, TMP, CMAH 1/10; See also F.A. Ogle, Superintendent of Weld County, Colorado, to Hebard, January 3, 1930, "School boards, in some sections of Colorado, are of the opinion that the Mexican children should be excluded from the public schools, and in these districts there is no effort on the part of the board to require the children to come to school. They find themselves in a rather serious predicament when some American family insists on keeping their children out of school.", GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1.

democracy.[111] Her solution to the Mexican sugar beet child labor problem was based firmly in an educational solution not one that recognized racism as the root of the problem. In a letter to Mahony, she explained:

> I recommend that special provision be made to take care of the sugar beet Mexican children for education in public schools, asking that a special teacher or teachers be employed in each sugar beet district to take care of the children who come in six or seven weeks late and by intensive teaching try to get them by the following New Year up with the white children.[112]

The idea of an intensive session during the fall for beet children to Hebard prevented full segregation and embraced a form of educational democracy. Hebard never deviated from her "special session" proposal while corresponding with Mahony or throughout her participation in the Mexican sugar beet labor educational committee. Hebard's emphasis on class and education was more reflective of the perception of Mexicans and the sugar beet problem in Wyoming during the period rather than an unyielding faith in Progressive Era ideology.[113] The origin of her class based model was shaped largely with her correspondences with the sugar beet factory towns of Worland and Torrington during the educational campaign for sugar beet children. Her interaction with the schooling of beet children in Worland and Torrington reaffirmed her position that an educational program meeting the special needs of the sugar beet class could fix the "child

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[111] Hebard to N.D Morgan, Wyoming Commissioner of Education, February 15, 1930, "In this way, directly or indirect, the two sets of children come into contact, which helps in an educational democracy.", GRHP, Box 3, Folder 2

[112] Hebard to Mahony, RE: Mexican child labor problems, January 18, 1930, TMP, CMAH 1/10; Mahony already mentioned a similar plan in some districts in Colorado was unsatisfactory thus far, but Hebard maintained her faither in her special session for Mexican beet children, See: Mahony to Hebard, December 7, 1929, TMP, CMAH 1/7

[113] Hebard was full aware of the conditions facing Mexican sugar beet laborers outside of Wyoming. Mahony sent her a number of newspaper clippings and reports by him and the Mexican Welfare Committee, See: "Restrict Mexican Immigration" and Charles C. Teague "A Statement on Mexican Immigration", Kenneth L. Roberts, "The Docile Mexican" ,Box 13, Folder 10: Mexicans 1928; Also: Thomas Mahony address, "Industrial Relations in the Beet Fields of Colorado", April 21, 1931; Thomas Mahony address, "Wages of Unskilled Workers in Colorado" May 27, 1939; "Address by Thomas Mahony leads Charity Conference to Name Important Board", May 29, 1929; "Colorado Farmers May Lose Mexican Labor Because of Injustice in Beet Fields", 1930, GRHP, Box 1, Folder 4: Sugar Beets 1929-31.

beet labor" problem in Wyoming despite the race antagonism present in Colorado and sugar beet districts outside of the state.

Hebard's perspective on the issue gained traction after Governor Frank Emerson and Amy Abbott, Secretary to the Governor, drove through Worland on the way home from a social workers meeting in Thermopolis and happened upon workers—including children—harvesting the sugar beet fields. There, they spoke to Jim Delao, the Mexican foreman for the Holly Sugar Factory, who told them about the importance of creating better a educational policy for sugar beet students. Abbott wrote, "As I talked with the Mexican foreman I was impressed with the desirability of securing the co-operation of the Mexicans themselves through promotion and appreciation of what an education means to their children."[114] Delao's greatest objection to the beet work for children were the long hours and the interference with school attendance. Delao, much like Hebard, discussed the issue as a labor one, not a race one. Mexican parents and children would like to attend school on a normal basis, but a normal school schedule threatened the economic integrity of the family. According to Abbott, Delao explained that "The Mexican children, considering their disadvantages, appear equally bright as other Wyoming children, generally speaking, but the issue of concern was not the intelligence of Mexican children but the family contract labor practice of the sugar beet industry. [115] Hebard's solution to the problem was not having the sugar companies increase the wages of adult workers but to create a "special session" for beet children so they could catch up to their "American" counterparts with special instruction.[116]

[114] Ibid.
[115] Clipping, "Hebard's Special Session.," Ibid.
[116] Hebard's belief in the ability of Mexian and beet children to academically catch up to their American counterparts was reeated throughout the educational campaign; see: Hebard to County Superintdent of Schools, December 19, 1929, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1;

Hebard's discussion with C. H. Studebaker, Superintendent of Worland Schools, is by far the most vivid representation of the labor-class status of Mexicans in Wyoming before the Great Depression. Although Worland had a history of anti-Mexican sentiment, especially during the 1910s,[117] Hebard's discussion with Studebaker demonstrates such a history did not directly translate to similar treatment regarding Mexican children—at least in private correspondence and public statements about the issue. That there was a clear distinction between the Mexican child and adult in Worland speaks to the racial fluidity of Mexicans at the time. Studebaker defended the intellectual and moral capacity of Mexicans when he met stiff resistance after he tried to enroll all Mexican students in the schools during the normal period:

> What I have said about the Mexicans applies also to the Russian-German element we have here. Of the two classes though, the Mexicans are the better. Once the Mexican children start school they go through to the end of the year without trouble, while the other are hard to handle, and a very irregular in attendance.[118]

Studebaker's statement is important because Mexicans were not just equated to German Russians, an ethnic European group, in labor class terms but Mexicans were considered of a "better class.". This perception of Mexican students in Worland also extended into the schooling practices.

The education of Mexican sugar beet students in Worland stands as an interesting case study in showcasing Wyoming's differing view of Mexicans in 1929. Unlike most sugar beet

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[117] The border conflicts on the U.S-Mexican border of the 1910s resulted in a rise of American nationalism targeting the Mexican population of the Big Horn Basin, especially Worland see: "All Mexicans Vamoose P.Q.D", *The Worland Grit*, September 15, 1918, p.5; "Anti American propaganda in Mexico ceased, we should suppress anti-Mexican propaganda here", *The Worland Grit*(Worland,WY), April 17, 1919, p.2; Juano B. Rojo to Robert Lansing, U.S Secretary of State, Frank Polk Lyon, Acting Secretary of State regarding "se informa que algunos ciudadanos estadounidenses que residen en Worland, Wyoming discriminan a los mexicanos que viven en la misma población", 2 al December 31, 1918, legajo 580.3/15, Archivo de la Embajada de México en Estados Unidos de América(AEM); U.S Department of State to Juan B. Rojo regarding "se informa que una comunidad de mexicanos en Worland, Wyoming ha sufrido actos de discriminación, es por ello que el Departamento de Estado ha intruido a las autoridades correspondientes en esa ciudad, tomar medidas para evitar los actos cometidos contra los mexicanos", 14 de dicembre, legajo 576.1/9, AEM; L.E Rios to Ignacio L. Bonillas, Embajador de Mexico en Estados Unidos de America, regarding "Sentimientos de hostilidad contra mexicanos en compañías azucareras y otros negocios en Wyoming", 10 de octubre al 6 de diciembre de 1918, legajo 631.1/58, AEM.

[118] Studebaker to Hebard, November 13, 1929, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1.

communities throughout the West, the Worland school district took a firm stand against any calls for segregating its Mexican populace. As Studebaker explained to Hebard, "There has been talk here several times of segregating these students [Mexicans], but we school people have always opposed it, first because it would increase our expense, which we can ill afford, and that we feel we would be doing a poor job of Americanizing them in that way."[119] For instance, the other Holly sugar beet districts in Colorado—Delta and Swink—already had separate schools and classrooms for Mexican American children. Swink had a Mexican company colony that was larger than the town itself, but yet, the Mexican school only went to 4th grade. [120] Whereas sugar beet districts throughout the West openly pursued segregation schooling polices for Mexican students during this period and many simply refused to educate Mexican sugar beet students, Worland did not take such a stance.

However, Worland's system was not entirely opened to Mexican sugar beet students. The primary grades incorporated a separate "sugar beet" division, allowing special attention for late coming sugar beet students to catch up academically.[121] To Hebard and other school officials this was an example of a "special session" working to alleviate the sugar beet child labor problem. Worland was not the only school district taking special measures for its Mexican and German Russian child beet workers. Torrington, the other factory town, took special measures to solve the child labor education problem in its beet fields. Hebard and the Committee eventually used Torrington as a model to address the sugar beet child labor problem in the state.

Torrington's Mexican colony was established in 1927 with the construction of the company colony in South Torrington next to the newly built sugar factory. Two short years later, the Torrington school board decided to build a two-room schoolhouse close to the Mexican

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[119] Studebaker to Hebard, December 11, 1929, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1.
[120] "Principal of School, Swink, Colorado", p.44, PST, Carton 11, Folder 12.
[121] Studebaker to N.D Morgan, July 7, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 2.

colony named the South Torrington School. The school was not designed specifically for Mexican students but instead provided an opportunity for both German-Russian and Mexicans students to catch up and then transfer to the other schools in town. According to a teacher there:

> Last year, Mr. Dixon asked me to take an Opportunity Room here, which included all the backward children up to the sixth grade. Most of these were the Mexicans and German Russians who had been working in the beet fields….During the summer the school board built a two room building near the Mexican colony….The children who had been attending since September were sent to Torrington to make room, and the beet children were given to us…Then the Russian children's parents objected to their being in the school with Mexicans so strenuously that they were taken out and placed in the regular Torrington schools.[122]

The South Torrington School issue is powerful in demonstrating how Wyoming viewed German-Russians and Mexicans. White Wyomingites viewed Mexicans and German-Russians in class terms, they were both sugar beet workers and should be in the same school. The German-Russian response or dissociation with Mexicans demonstrates a shift in identity or a claim to "whiteness" was an omen of the future as German-Russians dissociated with Mexicans further.

For Hebard and other members of the Committee, the South Torrington school appeared to be the best solution to the beet child education problem, despite the protestations of the German Russian parents:

> Intense work with the essentials of education it has been demonstrated, even in this state, particularly South Torrington, entering the schools with special mature instructors, has resulted in the Mexican children being able when January comes to go into the classes with those children who did not have to work in the sugar beet fields.[123]

To Hebard, the Torrington example proved "special sessions" could work in her vision of an educational democracy. Even compared to summer schools and other educational interventions presented elsewhere in the Mountain West, Hebard considered the Torrington example as the most effective.

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[122] Mrs. Juanita Patton to Hebard, Lingle, Wyoming, January 18, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1
[123] Hebard to Mr. G.M. Drummond, General Superintendent Holly Sugar Corporation, February 15, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1.

The Committee and Hebard's pragmatic approach to the Mexican sugar beet problem—creating special sessions for beet children to catch up with their white peers—met resistance from some Wyoming school officials. R.L. Massie, the superintendent of Crook County Schools, wrote Hebard a letter after hearing her speak in Laramie in 1930. In it, he questioned the practicality of Hebard's proposals:

> The thing that appeals to me is this: Even tho[sic] these children[beet children] are capable of learning faster than the average child and could be taught the elements during the winter so they could enter second grade the next year, would they not be in the beet field as long next year as this one and need the same special care that was needed before?....It seems to me that these children should be supplied with special schools each year to be conducted during the entire time between harvest and seeding time because they will certainly be at work each year as they grow older and if we are to prevent an increase illiteracy and make Americans citizens of them very special precautions must be made.[124]

To Massie, the problem was not the sugar beet students but the sugar beet industry. In this way, Massie mirrored Mahony's assessment about schools and the sugar beet industry, that the industry fixed the status of beet children and that there could never be true inclusion. As long as these children were working in the sugar beet fields they could not be incorporated into the normal school system, and other special previsions besides special sessions, needed to be made. Despite the calls for an educational democracy and belief in a cooperative model, the industry itself forced a vicious educational cycle on sugar beet communities. Sugar companies needed workers, family labor was needed, children were taken out of school, and special remedial educational services became a necessity eventually leading to segregation as Mexicans became racialized as "non-white."

[124] R.L. Massie, Superintendent of Schools, Crook County, Wyoming, to Hebard, April 6, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 2

## Conclusion

During the pre-Depression Era, Wyoming public school policy toward Mexican American and Mexican American children remained unfixed. Although never viewed as white, Mexicans were also distinguished from other "non-whites" like blacks, Native Americans, and Asians, and were most often put in the same category as German-Russians because of their common labor in the beet fields. However, during the Great Depression and especially the New Deal era, the conditions that fostered conditional inclusion transformed to racial segregation. Instead, of countering local anti-Mexican prejudice, the sugar beet industry and local business leaders instead adopted and reinforced the local prejudice during the 1930s. In the schools of Wyoming, it was the Mexican American and Mexican child who experienced the worst of this phenomena as schools and communities that once viewed the Mexican child as future citizens of the U.S. and Wyoming residents instead viewed race and color as the main marker of difference, resulting in the mass adoption of racial segregation in public schools targeting the Mexican child.

## Chapter 4

## Education for A New Race: Creating and Schooling the "Mexican" in Wyoming during the Great Depression, 1930-41

Education can be made a force to equalize the conditions of men. It is no less true that it may be a force to *create, class, race, and sectional distinctions.* —United States Advisory Committee on Education, 1938[1](emphasis added)

### Introduction

In the spring of 1934, in the midst of the Great Depression, a special roundtable was convened at the regular Parent Teacher Association meeting in Worland, Wyoming. The major topic of discussion was the construction of a new school for the Mexican American or "Mexican" element in the community.[2] The meeting ended with a hearty "yes vote" in favor of constructing the segregated school and securing aid from the local sugar factory, the Wyoming State Emergency Relief Administration, and another government relief agency.[3] In applying for federal and state aid for the new school, Worland officials deviated from the reasons historically cited for segregating Mexican American children including their perceived lack of English proficiency and/or their child labor status, instead opting for a *racial* segregation rationale.[4] For instance, in their Public Works Administration (PWA) application under "Justification" for the school, Worland officials wrote, "That the Mexican children may be segregated from the white children, the project is socially desirable."[5] Despite the racial premise given, Worland's PWA

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[1] As cited in Paula Fass, "Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal," *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 91. No.1 (November 1982): 57.

[2] "P.T.A. Meeting", *The Worland Grit* (Worland, Wyoming), March 29, 1934

[3] In some school districts throughout he Mountain States, schools paid for by the sugar companies and operated by the public school officials were maintained for children of sugar beet workers. See: S.R. Logan, "Schools and Sugar Beets," *Montana Education* 1, no. 3 (November 1924): 20; Ruben Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 73.

[4] For a summary of the reasons cited for segregating Mexican American children, see: Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., and Ruben Donato, "Latino Education in the Twentieth-Century America: A Brief History", in *Handbook of Latinos and Education: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Enrique G. Murillo Jr., (New York: Routledge, 2010), 30.

[5] The application also listed the number of relief clients as 45 and unemployment as 310 for the entire county, see: Wyoming WPA Project Files, Reel 107, OP 65-83-272, Document #7396, National Archives, and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, 7396.

application was approved.[6] The federal grant approval was noteworthy, with one local newspaper reporting, "Mexican school children…[will] have their own segregated school buildings in Worland, it was revealed…by the Wyoming PWA organization."[7] In the winter of 1936, the school was completed, and over one hundred Mexican American children were bussed from their former integrated school to the new segregated Mexican school.[8]

The incident at Worland was not an isolated affair but instead mirrored a reconfiguration of race relations and proliferation of segregated schooling targeting the Mexican "race" throughout the state during the Depression era.[9] As outlined in the previous chapter, throughout most of the 1920s Mexican school assignments in sugar beet communities were based on laboring class and perceived immigrant status rather than race.[10] Mexican American and Mexican immigrant children regularly attended schools with "white" American, German-Russian, and Japanese children.[11] Even when school officials worked with sugar beet companies to develop schools accommodated to migrant labor, racial segregation was never advanced either by sugar beet representatives or school authorities.[12] However, what started during the Great Depression and was solidified during the New Deal were racially charged exclusionary and discriminatory schooling practices targeting Mexican American and Mexican immigrant

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[6] "P.W.A Approves Grant For Mexican School Here", *The Worland Grit* (Worland, Wyoming), October 3, 1935. Wyoming State Archives.
[7] "Want Separate School," *The Lovell Chronicle* (Lovell, WY), July 4, 1935.
[8] "New Worland School Opens Doors Monday", *The Billings-Gazette* (Billings, Montana), November 29, 1936.
[9] Mountain States includes Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming
[10] A separate classroom was set up on Powell school grounds for an influx of newly arrived Mexican children in Powell, Wyoming. J.J. Champlin, an Indian schoolteacher, was brought in to lead the new class. After 1924, there was no discussion of the class, see, "Mexican Children in Powell School, *"The Billing Gazette,* January 13, 1924.
[11] For an example, see: Jess Cosby. Testimony from: *Immigration From Countries of the Western Hemisphere: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the U.S. Senate, 70th Congress,* First Session, 1928, 340.
[12] Ibid.

children. By 1941, as the U.S. entered World War II, segregated Mexican rooms and schools were observed across the state, in a clear departure from the 1920s.[13]

This chapter examines the advent and expansion of racial segregation targeting Mexicans in the schools of Wyoming during the Great Depression. I argue that schools actually *created* race and were not a simple reflection of pre-existing racial divisions.[14] Specifically, this chapter traces the emergence of the Mexican "race" in the 1930s, resulting in the creation of segregated Mexican schools and classrooms throughout the sugar beet districts of the state. This chapter begins with a discussion of Wyoming's school system and the status of the Mexican/Mexican American child in the early Depression years (1930-33). Next, it traces the racialization of New Deal Era federal and state relief policies that defined and structured Mexicans/Mexican Americans as an "alien" race and impact of said policy on schools. Not only did Wyoming state officials allow for racial differentiation—one white, one Mexican—in the distribution of relief funds and jobs, but they also allowed communities to use New Deal funds to create segregation, usually applying and using federal grants to create new segregated schools.[15] This chapter ends with a discussion of the construction of the segregated Mexican or Spanish school in Worland as the racialization of Mexicans/Mexican Americans was finalized.[16]

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[13] By 1943 all New Deal programs were abolished or transferred to war production, see: Cassity, *Building Up Wyoming*, 215, 223. Also see, Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

[14] Historian Timothy Stanley makes a similar argument on his analysis of Chinese-Canadian pupils in Victoria, British Columbia, see Timothy Stanley, "Bringing Anti-Racism into Historical Explanation: The Victoria Chinese Students' Strike of 1922-23 Revisited," *Journal of Canadian Historical Association*, Vol.13, No.1 (2002): 165. However, Stanly does not place public schooling as distinct in the racialization process.

[15] Worland was not the only community to apply for New Deal funds to create or improve upon a segregated school for Mexican children, see "Ask Bids For Constructing Of New School Building," *The Powell Tribune*(Powell, WY), September 30, 1937; "Construction Delayed Proposed Mexican School Building," *The Powell Tribune*(Powell, WY), November 11, 1937.

[16] For more on the importance of the guide to showcasing regional culture, see Susan Schulten, "How To See Colorado: The Federal Writers' Project, American Regionalism, and the 'Old New Western History," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 36, no.1 (Spring 2005): 49-70.

**Wyoming and Schooling in the Early Depression Era, 1930-1933**

Historian T.A. Larson, in his definitive work on the history of Wyoming, placed the start of the Great Depression in Wyoming in 1920.[17] In a state dominated by extractive industries such as mining, petroleum, and coal with an over reliance on federal subsidies, Wyoming's economy began its downturn with the fall of prices of petroleum and coal in the 1920s.[18] The only exception was the sugar beet industry, which expanded greatly during that decade (discussed in Chapter 3). Many Wyoming residents looked to the sugar beet industry to create factory jobs that did not exist in the state and to secure further federal reclamation projects. Although sugar beets were the state's chief cash crop it never accounted for more than ten percent of the state's industry, and the state remained poor.[19] Simply, Wyoming was a poor state entering the Depression, and left as one. From the view of public schooling, the Depression was particularly devastating.

Nowhere was the Depression felt more in Wyoming than its public school system. The economic collapse throughout the nation and in Wyoming devastated the school budgets in Wyoming. The steep decline in agriculture and business activity curtailed the tax base in the state. In 1929, the state had a taxable valuation at $447, 954, 000, whereas in 1935 the valuation dropped by 33% to $300,022, 218.[20] From 1931-1932 alone, income for schools dropped from $7, 715,448.80 to $6,727, 036.58, almost a million dollars.[21] School districts responded to the decrease in budgets through a variety of mechanism such as firing teachers, cutting school

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[17] T.A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 411.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Michael Cassity, *Building Up Wyoming: Depression- Era Federal Projects* in Wyoming, 1929-1943(Cheyenne: Wyoming Historical Preservation Office, 2013), 15, 82; Eri Hulbert, *The Public Welfare Services of the State of Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Charities and Reform Board, 1934), 123.
[20] Paul Andrew Hassler, "Some Effects of the Great Depression on the State of Wyoming, 1929-1934," (master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1957), 1.
[21] Ibid., 4.

personnel, consolidating rural schools, pushing for centralization, and changing equalization laws that were contingent on continued student enrollment.[22] Nowhere was this restriction more pronounced than in new educational facilitates. For instance from 1929-1932, the budget allocation for building new school buildings dropped by over 70%, effectively stalling the expansion of public schools in the state.[23] Before the New Deal, Wyoming's education system was in such need of relief that the Wyoming State Stock Growers Association proposed closing all public schools for one-year.[24]

On the eve of the New Deal, Mexican children were still in the sugar beet fields not in schools. As the state's economy collapsed, so did its ability and attention to enforce child labor and compulsory school attendance laws. This was especially acute in some sugar beet districts where schools adapted the school sessions to mirror the sugar beet harvest.[25] The assessment by Wyoming public welfare officials acknowledged the state's failure to solve the child labor problem in the state in regards to schooling, "These individuals who are not given fair chance to attain normal adulthood, are bound virtually, to be an expense to society."[26] Juanita Patton, a teacher of beet children, simply gave up on educators solving the sugar beet problem, stating, "As for getting them into school while the beet season is on that is a problem for someone else….although it would be nice if the Mexicans could make a good living and let their children go to school nine months…However, this is out of my province."[27] The failure of school officials to take Mexican children out of the beet fields and put them into classrooms reinforced a dim

[22] Ibid.
[23] "Child Welfare in Wyoming," 14.
[24] Hassler, 4-5.
[25] "Child Welfare in Wyoming," 17. This was an expansion of similar measures before the Depression. See: *Places of Learning: Historical Context of Schools in Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Historical Preservation Office, 2011), 103.
[26] Hulbert, 23.
[27] Patton to Abbot, January 8, 1931, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP.

picture of the educational system in the state overall.[28] In terms of school attendance, Wyoming was listed 40th in the nation with regard to its attendance rate. A report by the American Legion, who openly opposed Mexican immigration in Wyoming, gave a racial context to the state's standing, "The other remaining states are southern states with *large negro populations,* all of the 'old south' region with the exception of Texas. Wyoming should not be content to be classified with the generally educationally retarded section of the United States in a single factor!"[29] (emphasis added) The emphasis by the American Legion on the "negro populations" of the U.S. South as both a race and educational problem would be an omen for Wyoming entering the New Deal. Wyoming school people and white community members would adopt a similar view towards its Mexican students regardless of citizenship as the Depression worsened.

**The Mexican Race and Child in Wyoming on the Eve of the New Deal, 1930-1933**

The 1930s can be considered the nadir of race-relations for Mexicans in the United States during the 20th century.[30] In 1930, the U.S. Census Bureau created for the first and only time a racial category just for "Mexicans" as a way to differentiate them from native white Americans.[31] The 1930s also saw an unprecedented deportation program that targeted aliens. .This was especially acute in sugar beet communities where in many cases sugar companies and local charity organizations coordinated repatriation to move Mexicans out of depressed areas.[32]

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[28] Newspapers acknowledged the American Legion's report. See: "Child Welfare Work in Wyoming Neglected," *The Worland Grit*(Worland, WY), February 1, 1934.
[29] American Legion, p.23. The American Legion was also opposed to Mexican immigration in the state. See: Mark Reisler, "Passing Through Our Egypt: Mexican Labor in the United States, 1900-1940,"(dissertation, Cornell University, 1973), 260.
[30] Also in 1930 the U.S. Senate voted to restrict immigration from Mexico, "News Bits About Our City, Our Country, and Elsewhere," *The Cheyenne Citizen* (Cheyenne, WY), May 18, 1930.
[31] For more on the controversy surrounding the categorization of the Mexican race see, Jennifer L. Hochsild, and Brenna M. Powell, "Racial Reorganization and the United States Census 1850-1930: Mulattoes, Half Breeds, Hindoos, and the Mexican Race, *Studies in American Political Development* 22, no.1(Spring 2008): 59-96; Natalia Molina, "'In a Race All Their Own': The Question to Make Mexicans Ineligible for U.S. Citizenship," *Pacific Historical Review* (May 2010), V. 97(2): 167-201; Patrick D. Lukens, *A Quiet Victor for Latino Rights: FDR and the Controversy over "Whiteness"*(Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012).
[32] Merleaux, 248; "Mexico Offers Aid To Its Subjects," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), January 6, 1938.

The deportation drives disproportionately focused on Mexicans—regardless of citizenship—due to the racialized view of them as “welfare dependent” and the proximity of Mexico.[33] Repatriation of Mexicans became so widespread that many in the Mexican community feared accepting or applying for any relief due to fear of deportation.[34] The repatriation program eventually would deport almost 500,000 people of Mexican descent.[35] Many communities throughout the U.S. experienced a massive depopulation of Mexicans. As early as 1932, Wyoming newspapers acknowledged the massive repatriation of Mexicans back to Mexico.[36] Wyoming alone saw almost two-thirds of its foreign born Mexican population depart by 1940.[37] However, Wyoming still had the largest portion of Mexican population of all Mountain States outside of the Southwest (e.g. Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico). [38] In public schools this anti-Mexican sentiment resulted in moves to expand racial segregation targeting Mexican Americans. Mexican Americans and the Mexican consulate resisted such racist moves vehemently, and the battle played out in the courts.[39]

For instance, in 1930, members of the newly formed Mexican American civil rights organization, the League of United Latin American Citizens, filed *Salvatierra v. Del Rio ISD* contesting the segregation of children of Mexican descent into a “Mexican school.”[40] Lawyers representing Mexican American parents argued segregation of Mexican children was illegal

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[33] Fox, 129-132.
[34] Ibid., 134.
[35] Franciso E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexicans Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*(Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974).
[36] Hassler, 68.
[37] Lawrence Cardoso, “Mexican Immigration to Wyoming,” LCP, Box 9, Folder 6.
[38] Ibid.
[39] See “The Mexican Government and Segregation” in F. Arturo Rolsales(ed.), *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican-American Struggle for Civil Rights* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2000), 151-152.
[40] Ruben Donato and Jarrod Hanson, “Legally White, Socially ‘Mexican’: The Politics of De Jure and De Facto Segregation in the American Southwest, “*Harvard Educational Review*, V.82, No.2 (Summer 2012): 202-225; Richard Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality*(New York: New York University Press, 2008), 1-7.

because Texas had no Jim Crow laws that required the segregation of Mexican children and thus Mexicans were "legally white." The recatergorization of Mexican in the U.S. Census made their "legal whiteness" an increasingly contested title throughout the 1930s.[41] The school district countered, and eventually the courts agreed that Del Rio did not practice racial segregation. Instead, the court found that Mexican American children posed a special educational problem because of their use of the Spanish language, and thus the school district was engaging in pedagogical segregation, which was permitted in Texas. Although other desegregation cases occurred in the 1930s, this case marked a shift in segregationist rationale for Mexican American children throughout the Southwest shifting from racial reasoning to an educational one.[42] This shift was well documented in a 1933 survey of Spanish-speaking children throughout the Southwest by the U.S. Department of the Interior that found that there was much desire to segregate Mexican children by the request of white parents. It was illegal to segregate Mexican children on account of race or nationality, so instead segregation was achieved on another ground: the educational needs and gaps peculiar to Mexican children.[43]

In Wyoming, with the largest Mexican imprint of the northern Mountain States, the status of the Mexican laborer and the Mexican child became increasingly more salient as the Depression expanded. On February 18, 1931, Governor Frank C. Emerson died, and by the end of the year the Committee on Child Labor and Welfare lost its chairwoman, Hebard.[44] The

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[41] For an example that played out in El Paso, see Mario T. Garcia, "Mexican Americans and the Politics of Citizenship: The Case of El Paso 1936," *New Mexico Historical Review* 59(Spring 1984): 187-204.
[42] Ibid. For a discussion of the desegregation victory during this era in *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (CA—1931), see Donato & Hanson, 214-215; Mike Madrid, "The Lemon Grove Desegregation Case: A Matter of Neglected History," in Anaida Colon-Muniz and Magaly Lavadenz(eds.), *Latino Civil Rights In Education: La Luche Sigue*(New York: Routledge, 2016), 47-57.
[43] Annie Richards, "The Education of Spanish-Speaking Children in Five Southwestern States," in Carlos E. Cortes (ed.), *Education and the Mexican American* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1974), 9.
[44] In 1931, Hebard left the sugar beet education issue. Partially, she left to finish and promote her book *Sacajawea: A Guide and Interpreter of Lewis and Clark* (1933), however, her failing health the untimely death of Governor Emerson were major motivators for her to quit the educational campaign. See: Amy Abbot to Hebard, March 4,

collapse of the Committee coincided with an increasingly racist tone of many members of the Committee and frustration on the part of many educational leaders regarding how to solve the Mexican beet children problem in the state. In their final report on the sugar beet labor problem in Wyoming, the committee offered no viable recommendations on the best means to educate children in the sugar beet fields.[45] Beatrice McLeod, Wyoming State Director of Special Education, in one of her last correspondences with Hebard on the Mexican schooling issues lamented what seemed to be intractable issues and suggested "that further investigation is necessary to determine the educational needs of these children."[46] Though the Committee came to no definitive conclusions, its members began to explain the issues as racial rather than based on immigrant or labor class status. The end of the Governor Frank Emerson's Child Welfare Committee was a devastating blow to the fate of Mexican American children in the state. As observed in the Committee's campaign, school and state officials were central in combating calls for racial segregation in Wyoming's public schools. With the Committee gone, the educational fate of Mexican children was now left in the hands of communities that held anti-Mexican sentiment.

Thomas Mahony's, head of Colorado's Mexican Welfare Committee member, correspondence with Hebard is a case in point. Though Colorado sugar beet factories employed German-Russians and native white Americans along with Mexicans/Mexican Americans, he described how Mexicans/Mexican Americans, in particular, were becoming targets as the economic situation in the state deteriorated. In his last correspondence with Hebard, he predicted

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1930, Box 22, Folder 13, "Then of course the governor's death was a stunning blow from which it is impossible to recover promptly"; Abbot to Hebard, March 10, 1931, Box 22, Folder 13, "He[Governor Miller] advised me to urge you not to resign. So far he has no plans outlined for this committee….".

[45] Emerson's Child Welfare Committee, *Sectional Survey of the Educational Needs of Children Working in the Beet Fields of Goshen County, Wyoming*, Cheyenne, WY, 1930.

[46] Beatrice McLeod to Hebard, December 19, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 2.

Mexican sugar beet workers were in for a "terrible winter".[47] In Colorado, the Great Depression exasperated the anti-Mexican sentiment in sugar beet districts already present in the 1920s.[48] However, Mahony observed a change in the 1930s anticipating a larger shift in the relationship between the sugar beet industry and Mexican laborers, stating:

> The company and others[sic] seem to be adopting a rather "hard-boiled" attitude towards them. I am receiving many reports of laborers not receiving their pay for the spring work. In a good many instances in addition to this, they are being driven off from ranches. A good many seem to have the idea that because of general unemployment throughout the country they can be rehired for fall work at a price less than the price specified in contract. "[49]

The "hard boiled attitude" described by Mahony was not isolated to Colorado but extended to Wyoming. By the end of 1930, the tone in Wyoming began to change as both Hebard and educators throughout Wyoming began to describe the education of Mexican sugar beet students in racial and cultural terms minimizing the discussion of "sugar beet" students in general. Nothing displayed the drastic racialization more than one of Hebard's last correspondences regarding the beet children issue with fellow Child Welfare Committee member and future president of the state's Board of Education, J.J. Early:

> It looks as if I wore[sic] emergency, temporarily perhaps, in making the preparation for six or seven weeks of special instruction for these children, who even though Mexican and *dark skinned* are human beings. …*Not for publication, I would like to say I believe that Wyoming would be economically, socially, and educationally better off today if we had no Mexican laborers within our boundary*. There would be a period, of course, of semi-adjustment that might be depressing, but ultimately there would be a standard of living and social equilibrium, which we do not posses now in some localities where there are numerous Mexicans.[50] (emphasis added)

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[47] Mahony to Hebard, July 24 1930, TMP, CMAH 1/10

[48] For more on the anti-Mexican sentiment in Colorado during this period see, Tom Romero III, "Observations on History, Law, and the rise of the New Jim Crow in State-Level Immigration Law and Policy for Latinos, *American Quarterly* 66, No.1 (March 2014): 153-160.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Hebard to J.J. Early, December 25, 1930, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 2.

The anti-Mexican sentiment and attention to racial characteristics—skin color—was a stark contrast to Hebard's discussion of Mexicans earlier in the educational campaign. The attention to skin—a biological trait— demonstrates that Hebard and her colleagues were transitioning to a racial difference rationale to explain the condition of the Mexican child in Wyoming schools.[51] Initially, the discussion of educating Mexican sugar beet children centered on their eventual inclusion into the citizenry of Wyoming.[52] Hebard's faith in that plan collapsed by the end of 1930 as the Great Depression worsened. In its place was a new faith in the racial segregation of Mexican children to solve a schooling problem that was increasingly viewed as a social problem in Wyoming. Before the New Deal, many Wyoming communities began to look to ways to segregate Mexican children at the moment economic constraints prevented them for doing so.

This change was reflected in areas such as the Torrington school district where Mexican children continually found themselves shut out of the normal public school system, associated with poverty, and discussed in racalized terms. Juanita Patton, who was now teaching exclusively Mexican children by 1931, discussed the problems of teaching at a segregated school. Patton referenced social discrimination as the source of isolation of Mexican children stating, "A few came to the regular grade school in Torrington, but the white children fought them and called them dirty Mexicans, and the ones that came were not happy."[53] She also noted that Mexicans were not only cut out of the school system but the welfare system in the community. Many Mexican children did not come to school because of lack of clothing, shoes, and poor hygiene. In response, school officials had to create a "sort of Red Cross" to assist the

[51] Central to racial different was developing an aesthetic to race such as seeing and naming skin color difference. See: Mark Smith, *How Race Is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
[52] Hebard to Senator Kendrick, January 14, 1930, Box 3, Folder 1, GRHP.
[53] Patton to Abbot, January 8, 1931, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP.

Mexican students.[54] However, Patton's concern for the welfare of Mexican children was not based on a belief in the eventual inclusion of Mexicans into Wyoming society, but was racial paternalism. She clearly marked Mexican and white children as opposites, and never discussed Mexicans and German-Russians as the same student population, which was not the case before segregation (as discussed in the previous chapter). For instance, when writing to Amy Abbot of the Child Welfare Committee to describe the experience of Mexican students in the South Torrington school, Patton referenced Mexicans as racially and nationally different than whites, stating, "Can you put yourself in their place, a lone white child in Mexico?"[55] Once allowed into white schools, German-Russian children ceased to be a named educational problem even though many still worked in the sugar beet fields.[56]

Juanita Patton was both a sympathetic and problematic advocate and teacher of Mexican children. Although acknowledging the discrimination faced by Mexicans in Wyoming and noting that whites commonly referred to Mexicans as just "dirty Mexicans" in the community, many times she also described the Mexican population as "child like," prone to drunkenness, engaged in wife beating, and unable to manage their finances, effectively making them complicit in their community standing.[57] More importantly, she never questioned the segregation that emerged in her school, even though she noted that racial segregation in her school emerged out of racial negotiations between German-Russian parents and white school officials. Patton was not alone in this analysis, A.H. Dixon, the school superintendent in Torrington, shared this view. In a telling

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[54] Mrs. Juantia Patton to Stuart Marshall Jamieson; Mexican school teacher to Stuart Marshall Jamieson, p.1, Stuart Marshall Jamieson Collection (SMJC), Carton 1, Folder 12: Colorado Interviews, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

[55] Patton to Amy G. Abbot, January 9, 1931, p.2, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP.

[56] As late as 1946 it was observed that Mexican children were not the only one's working in the sugar beet fields but yet were the only one's targeted for segregation, the following study does not name German-Russians: T. Joe Sandoval, "A Study of the Spanish-Speaking Population In Selected Communities in Wyoming,"(master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1946), 48.

[57] Patton to Jamieson, 5, SMJC.

interview of Dixon in 1931, he explained that anti-Mexican sentiment of the Russian-German parents was a critical factor in racial segregation in the Torrington schools where the Russian-German parents boycotted the school where they were placed exclusively with Mexicans.[58]

The relationship between German-Russians and Mexicans was central in creating race in the sugar beet communities of Wyoming. For instance, Paul S. Taylor, noted economist and pioneering Mexican labor researcher, noted that although European, German-Russians were not considered fully white in sugar beet communities:

> In northeastern Colorado one encounters the strange popular usage which in its terminology divides the community into three: "whites", meaning English-speaking Americans or Americanized Europeans; "Mexicans" meaning indiscriminately Mexicans from Old Mexico and Spanish Americans; and "German Russians"("Russians" or "Rooshians"), *who are still a large and sufficiently unassimilated group not to be covered by the term "white"*.[59](emphasis added)

Such a division was also noted in a number of Wyoming sugar beet communities, who considered the use of child labor by a number of German-Russian families, to be "not American" and a sign of racial difference (see Chapter 3). In Worland, Mexican Americans noted that it was the German-Russians who made it a priority for their children to not to play with Mexican children. One woman commented, "Well, when I went to school some of the white kids, most of your Russians, they would tell their kids you know you can't play with them and Mexicans were you know, you just didn't hang around with them…."[60] However, German-Russian families also linked their educational fates to the presence of Mexicans in the sugar beet industry acknowledging, "Well, in one way it was the best thing [increase use of Mexican/Mexican American labor] that ever happened to German-Russians, because their children were in school

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[58] "Notes taken from Mr.Dixon's interview April 28, 1931," p.1, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP.
[59] Although noted as "strange," Wyoming demonstrates this racial system was much more widespread. See: Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States Volume I,* "Mexican Labor in the United States Valley of the South Platte Colorado" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), 104.
[60] Mary Ellen Coca Interview, p.5, LCP.

year round."[61] In other words, "school was the place German-Russians could be converted from German-Russian immigrants into American citizens."[62] Or where German-Russians became white.

The German-Russian experience in Torrington and Wyoming is a reminder of the central role of school people in creating race. The final decision on segregation came down to Superintendent Dixon who allowed German-Russians to attend any school of their choice with white children, showcasing the power of school authorities to create race. Once the South Torrington School became segregated, Dixon fully embraced a racial view of education. For instance, when Dixon was interviewed in 1931 by a University of Wyoming student about the school, he observed, "The beautiful part of our system here in Torrington is that the school tries to let the Mexican put himself into his environment and not mold the environment to the Mex."[63] As the interview proceeded, Dixon was more specific about the "Mexican environment," stating:

> The Mexicans in this Colony like to be called the Spaniard. They have the clear eye, high forehead, smooth features, etc., but most of them are the offspring from the Indians and are not as high class as the Spanish of this type. However, it should be remembered that these Mexicans are the lowest of the low working classes who live in Mexico.[64]

His view of the German-Russian element, especially students, was a striking contrast, He stated "[T]he Russian-Germans are quite regular in school and are in the main trustworthy as well as conscientious about their work."[65] Dixon failed to reconcile or explain the placement of German-Russian children in the same school with Mexicans in the first place, considering the school was

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[61] Chad Delano Shaw, "Twice Separated Without A State: German-Russians in Weld County, 1900-1920,"(masters thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2006), 101.
[62] Ibid., 92, 96.
[63] Dixon Interview, 1931, GRHP, p. 1. Also a report conducted by Wyoming's Governor Emerson Child Welfare Committee published a report of Torrington in 1930, also stating that the school was open to "all children but only Mexican children attended."
[64] Ibid, 9.
[65] Ibid, 3

best suited the Mexican child.[66] Additionally, the attention to racial attributes and "color" was a marked contrast from his discussion of Mexicans as simply a "foreign element" shown in his correspondences with the Wyoming Committee for Child Welfare in 1929 (See Chapter 3).[67] For Dixon, the Mexican was a distinct racial other from whites, including the previously racially ambiguous German-Russians, and the South Torrington school operationalized and fixed this racial view.[68]

**A New Deal, A New Race: White and Mexican Relief in Wyoming, 1933-1935**

The schooling of Mexican children in Wyoming must be understood within the context of labor and relief policies that emerged during the New Deal since it is those policies that helped racialize Mexicans. Although Wyoming was the last to opt into the New Deal, it had one of the highest aid per capita than any state in the county.[69] For many communities, federal aid resulted in construction booms and created related jobs. However, despite the influx of aid, issues of distribution became controversial and racial. For instance, with the establishment of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration [FERA] in the state in 1933, many whites in Wyoming protested giving relief aid and jobs on the same basis as white residents.[70] In fact, many whites

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[66] This also was a clear deviation from the original intent of the Wyoming Child Welfare Committee to solve the Mexican child absenteeism problem, see: Grace Abbott, *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Chief of the Children's Bureau to the Secretary of Labor* (D.C.: Government Printing Press, 1930), 33.

[67] Due to the use of child labor in the sugar beet fields, Mexican, Japanese, and German-Russians were all viewed as a "foreign element" in Wyoming's sugar beet communities, see "American parents do not believe in working their boys and girls in the beet fields as the Japanese and Mexicans do. American culture makes it necessary that boys an girls be in school most of the year." In "One Hundred Per Cent American Projects," *The Powell Tribune*, May 10, 1923.

[68] Kevin Fox Gotham, "Racializing the State: The Housing Act of 1934 and the Creation of the Federal Housing Administration", Sociological Perspectives, Vol. 43, No.2, pp.294-295; Michael Omi & Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to 1980s*, New York: Routledge, 1994.

[69] Dan W. Greenburg, *Public Works in Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Planning Board 1935), 162-165; Miranda Rae Jones, "The Economic History of Wyoming during the Great Depression,"(master's thesis, The University of Arizona, May 2017 ),31; Liza Nicholas, *Becoming Western: Stories of Culture and Identity*(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 139-140.

[70] Helen T. Hence, "Racial Elements[Platte County]", WPA #1363, p.3-4, WPA Collections, WSA.

resented just visiting the same relief office as Mexicans.[71] This hostility was widely acknowledged and criticized by some whites, as one teacher stated, "I find that aliens [Mexicans] suffer just as much, die just as fast and get as hungry as Americans."[72] Anti-Mexican sentiment that festered in the early Depression years would now be enacted in state policy with the infusion of New Deal relief. Thus relief in Wyoming served to inform racial boundaries and cater to white interest; setting the stage for the expansion of racial segregation for Mexican children in Wyoming's schools.

Before the New Deal, whites were mostly ambivalent about the presence of Mexicans, particularly since it was assumed that they were confined to work in the sugar beet fields and posed no economic challenge to white workers.[73]. The New Deal broke this ambivalence. Accelerating the end of white tolerance was the change in the paternalistic relationship between the sugar companies and Mexican beet labor. Whereas during the 1920s, the welfare of Mexican labor was largely the responsibly of the sugar beet factory, the Depression fractured this relationship as sugar companies pushed Mexican laborers on local relief rolls. Even the "store credit" system from factory town grocery stores, which Mexican families survived on during the winter, collapsed, as local grocery stores failed to sell to Mexicans unless given assurances of payment from the sugar companies and state relief officials.[74] Federal officials noted that Mexican beet workers were in a state of virtual peonage designed by state relief officials and sugar companies, "In all but one county visited the policy of the state relief administration was to carry beet workers during the winter months but to cut them off as soon as they secured a beet

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[71] Some relief office had special days for "Mexicans only." See: "E.R.A. News," *The Torrington Telegram* (Torrington, WY), May 2, 1935.
[72] Patton to Hebard, January 18, 1930, p.2-3, Box 3, Folder 1, GRHP.
[73] John B. Kendrick to June E. Dowey, January 4, 1930, Box 3, Folder 1, GRHP.
[74] Mrs. Juantia Patton to Stuart Marshall Jamieson; Relief Worker to Stuart Marshall Jamieson, Stuart Marshall Jamieson Collection (SMJC), Carton 1, Folder 12: Colorado Interviews, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

contract." Government agents added, "The resulting situation is that the beet worker lives on his credit during the season as soon as he receives his pay practically all of it is turned over to the store and he lives on credit again…."[75] Thus in Wyoming, the New Deal relief system subsidized the beet industry and institutionalized a once informal paternalistic relationship in sugar beet communities. Here in a trademark of racialization, the racial status of the "Mexican" in Wyoming insured they remained in a permanent class status as a beet worker.[76] In a strange contradiction, the relief policies created by the state and implemented by white relief officials caused many white communities to resent caring for the "sugar company's Mexicans."[77]

In a period of less than five years, Wyoming had changed from a state where Mexicans faced a more fluid racial environment to one with the most vivid anti-Mexican sentiment.[78] As noted by members of the Wyoming Charities and Reform Board, Mexicans in the state stood out as one of the populations receiving the least relief. As early as 1934 officials acknowledged anti-Mexican sentiment was central factor for said situation.[79] A confidential letter from Elizabeth Johnson, head of the federal Children's Bureau, to Nels Anderson, head of the labor division of the WPA, found that the Wyoming Emergency Relief Administration allowed counties to implement a wage differential system based on race-—white and Mexican—where Mexicans made 25 cents an hour versus 45 cents for white workers on work relief projects.[80] This race wage differential was in place in Big Horn, Park, and Washakie County and further solidified the

[75] Elizabeth Johnson to Nels Anderson, November 29,1938, Box 98, File 20-164-8, RG 102, NARA,3. This was also recognized in Colorado, see Ed C. Johnson, Govenor of Colorado, to Harry Hopkins, October 5, 1934. File: CMAH4, Thomas Mahony Collection, University of Norte Dame Special Collections.
[76] For more on this see, Steve Martinot, *The Rule of Racialization: Class, Identity, Governance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), N11, 222.
[77] Johnson, 80.
[78] Johnson, *Welfare of Families of Sugar Beet Laborers,* 72. Also see, "ERA News,", *The Torrington Telegram* (Torrington, WY), May 2, 1935; Eri Hulbert, *The Public Welfare Services of the State of Wyoming*(Cheyenne: Wyoming Charities and Reform Board, 1934), 108.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Elizabeth Johnson to Nels Anderson, November 29, 1938, Box 97, Folder: 20-164-8, Record Group 102, National Archives Records Administration, College Park, MD; Johnson, *Welfare of Families*, 72

differentiation between German-Russians—now considered white—and Mexicans.[81] Wyoming was one of the only state's where this practice was observed.[82] The anti-Mexican sentiment reached notoriety as a 1934 study of the beet fields of the Mountain States revealed migrant Mexican sugar beet laborers viewed Wyoming as the worst state to obtain relief compared to Montana and even Colorado.[83]

Few factors demonstrate the racializaton of Mexicans in Wyoming more than their treatment by relief agencies. Mexicans throughout the sugar beet communities were classified as "aliens" undeserving of aid. Wyoming passed a very restrictive relief policy where only citizens and aliens-with-first-papers were eligible for relief. This had an adverse impact on many Mexican adults, many of who were not citizens.[84] Some whites in Wyoming blamed Mexican residents themselves for the discrimination they faced, with some whites stating, "One reason for dislike of Mexicans is their refusal to become naturalized."[85] However, sociologists Cybelle Fox and Irene Bloemraad noted Mexicans naturalized at such a low rate compared to their Southern and Eastern European immigrant counterparts because of the racism they experienced.[86] For instance, as one "dark skinned" Mexican immigrant from Wyoming explained to the Mexican consul in Denver, "What else can I do. *I'm black*, and they'll never accept me as an American. If my father went back to Mexico. I'd go too."[87] (emphasis added) This was echoed in much of the

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Elizabeth Johnson, Welfare of Families of Sugar Beet Laborers: A Study of Child Labor and its Relation to Family work, Income, and Living Conditions in 1935, U.S Department of Labor, Children Bureau, Bureau Publication No. 247, Washington, D.C., 1939, p. 72.
[84] Cybelle Fox, 206.
[85] Patton to Jamieson, p.5, SMJC.
[86] Cybelle Fox and Irene Bloemraad, "Beyond 'White By Law': Explaining the Gulf in Citizenship Acquisition between Mexican and European Immigrants, 1930," *Social Forces* 94(1): 181-208.
[87] Interview of Juanita Patton, September 22, 1940. Carton 1, Folder 12, SMJP.

white community as one farmer in Torrington remarked to a relief agent, “If you ask me all them Mexicans should be deported; they’re completely useless. Either deport or let them starve.”[88]

Mexican Americans protested the rising tide of racist sentiment in a variety of ways including letter-writing campaigns. In one case, a Mexican beet worker from Worland wrote to L.T. Cox, the Deputy Labor Commissioner, pleading for intervention stating he had not received the balance of the money alleged due to him from his employer, proclaiming, “me and my family are starving to death.”[89] Others protested to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, which caught the attention of the sugar representatives in Washington D.C., as one official noted, “Max Alva, of Lovell, Wyoming, and others in that state have written frequently, in some cases enclosing resolutions, drawn up by local groups of workers deploring conditions in that state.”[90] One worker went so far as to write President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

> I am sending you this application list to show you that there are many families in Park County of Wyoming that they don’t want to pay even wages on the S.E.R [State Emergency Relief] like they do to the white men. The employer’s want to pay the Spanish American people just half of he wages they pay the white people. Do you suppose this is right? I don’t believe so. They pay fifty cents to the white men and twenty-five cents to the Spanish American. [91]

His pleas fell on deaf ears. In one dramatic case, a Mexican American woman—Della Loma—sued the country welfare board in Sheridan, another sugar beet district, for discrimination and demanded relief for her family.[92] The case garnered widespread local attention and was regarded

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[88] Relief Worker Diary, Torrington, Wyoming 1938, SMJC, Carton 1, Folder 13
[89] Ibid.
[90] “Memorandum for Mr. Dudley Brown,” September 13, 1934, Box 1, Folder Misc., Sugar Beets, 1933-1935, William T. Ham Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming. There were also protests send to the Secretary of Labor from other parts of the American West, see Jean Flexner, “When Wages Are Not Paid,” *American Federationist* 43, No.7 (July 1936): 688-689.
[91] J.W. Duram to President Roosevelt, Re: Spanish Americans paid ½ amount of wages paid to white men on ERA projects, April 12, 1935, Box 330, Folder Wyoming Complaints, Record Group 69, NARA, College Park, MD.
[92] “Seek Writ Ordering County To Provide Relief For Family, “ *The Sheridan Press* (Sheridan, WY),February 15, 1938.

as the first of its kind in the state.[93] The need for relief and economic security for Mexicans was not lost to schoolteachers. As one Mexican school teacher from Torrington noted, "there can be no school where there is not a certain amount of security—security from starvation."[94] Despite the harsh conditions they faced many Mexicans asserted their rights in New Deal Wyoming.[95]

The worsening conditions of the sugar beet industry, dire need for relief in sugar beet communities, and the avalanche of protests by Mexican and Mexican American beet workers forced federal intervention, with the passage of the 1934 Sugar Act, including a minimum wage scale for beet workers and a child labor clause. [96] The child labor provision caused little protest by sugar beet officials and politicians, who saw their biggest concern as the increasing unionization and radicalization of Mexican workers. [97] Many viewed the curtailing of Mexican child labor in the sugar beet fields as a pathway towards higher wages for Mexican heads-of-families with many arguing said action would lead to, "freedom from premature toil in the beet fields and improved opportunities of school attendance for the children, together with higher wages, increased work opportunities, and improved living conditions for their families."[98] However, it would be the child labor restrictions implemented in 1935 that would be most impactful. For Wyoming, the 1934 Sugar Act—renewed in 1937— brought the Mexican child into a racialized New Deal.

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[93] "To Press Case Seeking Relief For Mrs. Loma," *Sheridan Press* (Sheridan, WY), February 22, 1938.
[94] Patton to Jamieson, p.3, SMJC, Carton 1, Folder 12: Carton 1, Folder 12: Colorado Notes and Interviews.
[95] This was in response to widespread exclusion of Mexicans on relief rolls. See: "Officials Study Relief Problem: Aid Sought For Families Cut From Relief Rolls," *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT), December 10, 1936, Folder: Relief Wyoming, Box 251, RG 69, NARA.
[96] The Sugar Act of 1934 was also known as the Jones-Costigan Amendment to the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) that designed sugar beets/crop as a basic commodity in an attempt to salvage the domestic sugar production in the U.S. Also see, "Conclude Hearings On Sugar Question," *The Lovell Chronicle*, October 4, 1934.;"Sugar Beet Labor Provisions Signed," *The American Child* XVI, No.9(December 1934):2.
[97] Merleaux, 255-256.
[98] Johnson, 83.

With the passage of the federal act, sugar beet growers could not apply for federal loans or assistance if they utilized child labor under 14 years old.[99] A survey from the National Child Labor Committee found widespread compliance with the clause in the sugar beet industry, reporting, "statements by land owners, renters, and laborers indicated that the child labor provisions of the 1935 contracts had been carried out in both in the letter and spirit of the law."[100] In communities like Lovell, Torrington, and Worland, this had an immediate impact as local newspapers called on growers and the sugar beet industry to comply with the Sugar Act.[101] According to a 1935 survey by the U.S Department of Labor's Children Bureau, the usage of child labor ages 6-12 dropped from 22.5% to 7.35% in northern Wyoming.[102] Combined with the issue of relief, the Sugar Act curtailed the "beet child" and increased the presence of Mexican children in the Wyoming schools, an unwelcome addition in many white communities.

As part of the Sugar Act, a number of agents from of the Children's Bureau of the federal Department of Labor were sent to sugar beet producing states to assure that anti-child labor provisions were being observed.[103]. In Northern Wyoming—Big Horn, Park, and Washakie Counties—agents found educational neglect of Mexican beet children. In one glaring example, one school district actively discouraged Mexican children from attending school. In many communities, it was discovered that the restriction of child labor did not translate into increased

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[99] Adela J. Ballard, "The Migrant Mexican", November 14, 1933, p.3, Home Mission Council Records, Box 15, Folder 11, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

[100] Charles E. Gibbons, "The Beet Fields Revisited," *The American Child* XVIII, No.6 (September 1936): 1.

[101] "Child Labor Beet Contract Provision Cited", *The Worland Grit,* June 27, 1935; "Child Labor Provision Cited In Beet Contract, *The Lovell Chronicle* (Lovell, WY), July 4, 1935; "Child Labor Rules Cited, " *Torrington Telegram* (Torrington, WY), July 4, 1935.

[102] Johnson, *Welfare of Families of Sugar Beet Laborers,* p. 86. The study also found that by 1935, 15% of child workers from 6-12 years old were working in Worland, Wyoming, the third highest reported in the Children's Bureau study, see William T. Ham, "Sugar Beet Labor under the AAA," *Journal of Farm Economics* 19, No. 2(May 1937): 645.

[103] "Employers Pay Back Wages—Gained By Efforts of AAA Representatives," *The Wyoming Labor Journal* (Cheyenne, WY), October 4, 1935.

enforcement of compulsory attendance laws in the state.[104] In one case agents found that in an unnamed Wyoming town, school officials "at their own discretion, refused to admit children who did not enroll in the first 15 days of the school term."[105] This policy chiefly affected Mexican children since many were from migrant families. One Mexican family who were permanent residents of the town, had to enroll their children almost 2-years late, with one child entering the first grade at nine years old.[106] In another community, it was found that children from a local Mexican colony were not offered school bus services. In the winter it was noted that many Mexican children from the colony had to run as fast as possible to school in an effort to keep from "being thoroughly chilled."[107] The 1935 study by the Children's Bureau discovered that race displaced class in public schools. The most common distinction made in the application of school-attendance standards was that of "whites" and "Mexicans."[108]

### Creating the Mexican Race: Segregated Mexican Rooms and Schools in New Deal Wyoming, 1935-1941

. Anti-Mexican sentiment and calls for racial segregation in Wyoming schools were acknowledged in the 1920s and grew louder in the early 1930s. As detailed in the previous chapter, a more fluid view of the Mexican child, resistance by school officials, and the economic reality of school districts blunted most action on segregation. However, by the time the 1934 Sugar Act was passed though, racial segregation was on the rise as educational services expanded in the state. As a 1934 article, stated, "Politics may make strange bedfellows, but a first rate depression does a lot of other things. Seemingly many old theories have been upset, and some new ideas have been given a chance to function. How much of permanent value may be

[104] Johnson, 47.
[105] Johnson, 48.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., 73
[108] Ibid., 47.

latent in some of these is yet to be seen."[109] Reflecting this important development, an evaluation by the President's Advisory Committee on Education stated "the impetus given to education by the emergency problem constitutes one of the most significant developments in the history of the United States." [110] For the Mexican child in Wyoming the New Deal was a watershed moment as race and racism defined their public education and citizenship status in the state.

In the wake of the New Deal and the passage of the 1934 Sugar Act, Wyoming witnessed the creation of segregated Mexican rooms and entire schools in sugar beet communities with a noticeable Mexican student population. Although communities adopted different types of segregation ranging from a segregated grade room to and entire school, segregation was expanded in schools across the state. The explanation of the need for segregation took on an overtly racist tone in some instances, a tone that was at odds with how Mexican students had been described in the past. In Torrington, what was once the South Torrington School for German-Russian and Mexican children was exclusively for Mexican students by 1935 and recorded as "Torrington's Mexican School" in superintendent reports and newspaper reports.[111] In Torrington, it was public policy that no children from the Mexican Colony or Mexican District were allowed in the city schools.[112] In Lovell, a segregated ungraded classroom, recorded in official ledger as the "Mexican Room," was reserved only for "maladjusted" Mexican children– all Mexican children were considered maladjusted. These children, a paper explained, "are

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[109] "Schools For Everyone," Wyoming Emergency Relief Administration News Bulletin, No.5(November 12, 1934),2.

[110] Joseph E. Parker, "WPA Aids Education," *Montana Education*, Vol. XVI, No.4 (December 1939): 15.

[111] Goshen County Superintendent of School Reports, *Annual Reports 1930-1931*, p.12, Goshen County Records, WSA.

[112] "News From The Public Schools of Torrington," *The Torrington Telegram* (Torrington, WY), September 14, 1933; "Mexican School News," *The Torrington Telegram* (Torrington, WY), December 5, 1935. For a larger discussion of the school see, "Notes Taken From Mr. Dixon's Interviews April 28, 1931," p.1-4, Box 3, Folder 2, GRHP.

backward because they are unable to speak the English language, and the white children do not accept them into the social life of the school. This condition gives rise to an educational problem."[113] In neighboring Powell, officials debated the creation of an entirely separate school based on the same logic ultimately opting to create a segregated school for its Mexican children.[114] Only after population pressures demanded a new school for white students, did the Powell school district abandon its plans for a Mexican school but still maintained a segregated Mexican classroom.[115] Basin, the school board actively recruited a teacher to just teach the Mexican children in the community.[116] Even in schools outside of the sugar beet districts, Mexican children experienced discrimination. In one account from the mining community of Sunrise, a Mexican student recalled, "speaking Spanish was strictly forbidden, and Mexican students were beaten if they strayed into their home language."[117] In Worland, Wyoming, an entirely new school was built exclusively for Mexican children with New Deal funds. The school was interchangeable called the Mexican or Spanish School.

The segregated school is Worland is a particularly ripe example since the city created a separate school, not just a separate classroom, for Mexican American/Mexican children. Worland serves as a case study that racial understandings not demographic, economic, or labor pressures created and accelerated segregation in the Wyoming schools. Unlike most

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[113] J.A. Caudill, "A Survey of Certain Phases of the Public Schools of Lovell, Wyoming" (masters thesis, University of Wyoming, 1938) 5, 46-47.

[114] "Problem Faces School Board of Providing Room For Grade School," *The Powell Tribune* (Powell, WY), March 18, 1937; Ask Bids For Construction Of new School Building In Powell, "*The Powell Tribune* (Powell, WY), September 30, 1937; "Construction Delayed Proposed Mexican School Building," November 11, 1937.

[115] "New Building Plans Of School Board To Avail Themselves Of Federal Assistance," *The Powell Tribune* (Powell, WY), July 28, 1938.

[116] "Increase Staff" *The Billings Gazette* (Billings Montana), March 16, 1934.

[117] This is not to say Mexican children did not experience discrimination in other communities that deviated from earlier experiences, for an account in the mining districts of Wyoming see Ronald Mize and Alicia Swords, *Consuming Mexico Labor: From The Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), xvi; Timothy Dean Draper, "'A Little Kingdom of Mixed Nationalities': Race, Ethnicity, and Class in a Western Urban Community—Rocky Springs, Wyoming, 1869-1969"(Dissertation, Northern Illinois University), 233-234.

communities, Worland had weathered both the Depression of the 1920s and 30s well.[118] As a small county, with a diverse farming economy, and with sugar beet factory, the 1930s was described as the "construction decade."[119] In an early survey of relief conditions in Wyoming, Washakie County (Worland) found it ranked last in percent of population on relief in the state. Of this only 2.1% were Mexican although they made up almost 10% of the entire county.[120] Almost 98% of all relief families in Washakie County were white. Unemployment was steady throughout the county reaching its peak in the winter months, but never exceeding over 400, thus consistently ranking the lowest of counties that produced sugar beets. But yet it was in Washakie County, where racial segregation in public schools reached its apogee in the state. Such a development is even more interesting considering in the early 1930s, the education of the Mexican child was temporarily in the background of public community concerns.

From 1930-33, there was no discussion of segregating Mexican students in Worland in the local newspapers or the school board minutes. In fact, there was no discussion of the beet child problem publically in the community.[121] Although there was some discussion about deportations of Mexicans, little was discussed on the status of educating Mexicans during this period.[122] For instance, a report from the Mexican consul in Denver, Colorado, found that 14,068 Mexicans were deported to Mexico from Colorado and Wyoming by 1933, including Worland. [123] Still, the schooling of the local Mexican American and Mexican children was seemingly a non-issue. Interestingly in early 1934, the school board minutes indicated there was

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[118] "Worland Known Over the Nation," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), January 6, 1928.
[119] Ray Pendergraft, *Washakie: A Wyoming County History* (Powell: Saddlebag Books, 1985), 178-180; "New Worland School Opens Doors Monday", *The Billings-Gazette* (Billings, Montana), November 29, 1936.
[120] For data see, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930: Population, Volume 3, Part 2, 1387.
[121] A passing reference was made to "beet families" in some newspaper accounts of schools. See: "County Schools Open In Record Attendance," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), September 8, 1932.
[122] There is no mention of the Mexican or foreign student population in any of the Board of Trustee Minutes for the Worland School District from 1930-33. See: Washakie Co. School Board of Trustee Minutes, 1930-33. Wyoming State Archives (WSA). Cheyenne, WY.
[123] "Beet Field Work Aids Employment," *The Worland Grit,* August 10, 1933.

some protest on the division of the elementary grades on A-C levels/tracks, because students in the "C"—lower track—felt marginalized.[124] At said time all students regardless of race were placed in all educational divisions based on ability.

This inattention changed during a special roundtable convened at the local Parent Teachers Association meeting in the spring of 1934. The major topic of discussion was construction a separate school for the "foreign" or Mexican element in the community.[125] Russian-Germans, unlike Mexicans, would attend the 'regular' white schools. The special roundtable was headed by elementary school Superintendent Frank Watson and included G.C. Muirhead of the governor appointed and New Deal funded, Wyoming State Planning Commission.[126] The meeting ended with a "yes" vote in favor of constructing the segregated school and securing aid from the local sugar factory, the Wyoming Emergency Relief Administration, and other government relief agencies. Muirhead was the one who suggested the school district should apply for relief funds to fund the construction of the segregated school.[127] The meeting demonstrated the continued collaboration between school officials and the sugar beet industry. For the Mexican American/Mexican community the continued collusion between white factory owners, state representatives, and white school officials regarding school policy left Mexican children in Wyoming vulnerable to shifting attitudes toward race. After the meeting, the matter of segregation was then presented to the local school board for approval.

During the Worland School Board of Trustees meeting in 1934, Frank Watson once again brought up the matter of a segregated school, "Mr. Watson brought up the matter of a separate school building for foreign children near the foreign settlement. It was thought the matter was

[124] "Annual Meeting of School District No. Six," June 18, 1934, Board of Trustee Minutes, Washakie County, Worland, Wyoming.
[125] "P.T.A. Meeting," *The Worland Grit*, March 29, 1934.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

worth looking into to see what might be accomplished."[128] Watson's suggestion of a segregated school symbolized ascendency of race in marking citizenship in Worland and with Watson, in particular, considering he supported Worland school officials' opposition to segregating Mexican children as recently as 1929. The calls for segregating Mexican children grew louder as Worland school officials wrote letters to the chairman of the Wyoming State Planning Board and the Holly Sugar factory manager, inquiring about possible assistance in building a separate school for the "non American" students, "the Board feels the segregation of this class of pupils in a separate building will be for the good of both classes of students." The secretary of the school board added, "Knowing the Holly Sugar Corporation has co-operated in other places along this line, the Board asked that the matter be taken up with you and solicit such co-operation here. We have in mind that possibly some Government Relief Agency would co-operate also." [129] Worland officials probably thought their chances were quite good given that the Holly Sugar Company gave assistance to schooling Mexican children in other towns.[130] The same school officials also asked the Wyoming Commissioner of Education and Government Relief Agencies for some additional assistance.[131] In follow-up school board meetings, the "Mexican School' was recorded in official school board minutes.[132] The naming of the "Mexican School" is significant because it negates a pedagogical basis for segregating Mexican American children and

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[128] "District No.6, Director's Meeting Feb. 10,1934," School District No.6 Board of Trustee Minutes,. Washakie County Schools. Wyoming State Archives.

[129] Board of Trustees, School District No.6 to L.E.Laird, Superintendent Holly Sugar Corporation, Worland, Wyoming, July 9, 1934, Re: Separate School for non-American children. Washakie Co. School Board of Trustee Minutes. Wyoming State Archives; *First Biennial Report State Planning Board 1935-1935*(Cheyenne: State Printing Office, 1937), 2.

[130] "C-6 Welch, Principal of School, Swink, Colorado, " Folder 12, Carton 12, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, 44-46; Paul S. Taylor Notes, segregated school in Delta, separate room in Swink. Donto, *Mexicans and Hispanos*, 70, 72.

[131] Board of Trustee Minutes, School District No. 6, November 9, 1934, Worland, Wyoming. Washakie Co. School Board of Trustee Minutes. Wyoming State Archives. By 1935, school board minutes mentioned the Mexican school, see "School District No. 6 Directors Meeting, March 15, 1935 " Board of Trustee Minutes, School District, No.6, Worland, Wyoming, Washakie, County.

[132] "School District No. 6 Directors Meeting March 16, 1935," School District No.6 Board of Trustee Minutes,. Washakie County Schools, WSA.

documents a racial reasoning. In a 1974 desegregation case in Oxnard, California, similar language in school board minutes from the 1930s was used in a ruling against the school district. The court ruled that terms such as Mexican school demonstrate segregation in Oxnard was not voluntary or based on educational standards but racial.[133]. Soon after Worland officials received federal and state support they moved quickly to construct the school, which opened in 1936.[134] Worland represents one of the few cases where federal documentation exists confirming New Deal funding was explicitly approved and used to segregate Mexican children.[135] Said action also violated Wyoming school law that forbade any distinction or discrimination in public schools, "on account of sex, race, or color."[136]

On the eve of the opening of the segregated school, a front-page article in the newly established *Wyoming News* justified the new school to the general public as a racial project:

> The new grade school in the Mexican Colony, which is being built for the children of the Spanish-speaking people to segregate them from the regular schools, is being rapidly completed. The school will be a model building….It is the intention of the board, as soon as practical, to employ only the best grade teachers of the Spanish race….with the ever increasing attendance of more children in the regular schools here it has been impossible to accommodate them and it was decided by the educational board here that by segregating the children of the different race, it would work out more economically and more satisfactory to all concerned. As the Mexican labor is always in demand here in the valley, the children growing up will be developed into the highest class of citizens.[137] (emphasis added)

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[133] For detailed but concise discussion of said matter see, Joe C. Ortega and Peter D. Roos, "Chicanos in the Schools: An Overview Of the Problems and the Legal Remedies," *Norte Dame Law* Review, Vol. 75, No. 51(October 1975): 79-81; Richard Valencia, *Chicano Students and The Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality* (New York: New York University Press, 2008): 67-70.
[134] "School Started in New Spanish Bldg." *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), December 3, 1936.
[135] The author was unable to find a situation matching the condition in Worland in any of the secondary literature on the history of Mexican American education. Examples do exist where federal funding was used to improve or build updated Mexican schools but none that demonstrate said funding was used to create segregated schools where none existed previously.
[136] Wyoming's anti-discrimination law in schools was established in 1889, see: Pauli Murray(ed.), *States' Laws on Race and Color* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1950), 521.
[137] "Spanish School Is Nearing Completion," *The Wyoming News* (Worland, WY), October 16, 1936.

The newspaper never mentioned any pedagogical justifications or that Dr. Hebard and Worland schools officials regarded the segregation of the races in schools as detrimental to developing the "highest class of citizens" as recently as 1929. Additionally, that all children of the "Spanish race" were necessarily segregated was never fully explained given that a cohort of Mexican children in the upper grades (middle school) were allowed to attend and were observed as "very good students."[138] The attention to the increase in population was ironic considering the overall Mexican population in Wyoming was decreasing.[139] Thus the response by the white community to schooling the Mexican child was based on a change in racial views and the presence of a more stable Mexican student population. As political scientist Benedict Anderson so aptly demonstrated, sometimes imagined communities are more powerful than real ones.[140] In this case, the imagined view of the Mexican as a distinct and lesser race than whites justified racial segregation.

The construction of the Mexican School in Worland in 1936 constituted a drastic policy change from the community that once considered Mexican children a "better class" than German Russians. Worland not only promoted their new Mexican School but embraced openly the new inferior status of the Mexican student. For instance, the main newspapers of the county, *The Wyoming* News, The *Worland Grit*, and *The Northern Wyoming Daily News,* ran a weekly column on "Worland Grade Schools" with a separate "Spanish School" section in an almost celebratory tone of segregation.[141] Also, the newspapers reported specifically on news from the Mexican colony in Worland, called "News At The Colony" celebrating the new settlement just

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[138] Studebaker to Hebard,, November 13, 1929, Box 3, Folder 1, GRHP.
[139] According to Mexican consul records from Denver, Colorado, from 1929-1933, almost 14, 068 Mexican citizens were returned to Mexico from Colorado and Wyoming. See: "Beet Field Work Aids Employment," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), August 10, 1933.
[140] Robert Miles, *Racism After 'Race Relations'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 56-59.
[141] Starting in 1936 whenever *The Worland Grit* (renamed *The Northern Wyoming Daily News* in May 1939) ran a story about the "Worland Grade Schools" a separate "Spanish School News" was present.

build for the Mexican population at the same time as the school.[142] Everything about the school was modern, a product of New Deal relief in action. The school was described as a "fine facility" that was a modern brick school with four rooms and teachers for each of the four grades.[143] As noted by Worland school officials and WPA reports, "only a few of the best" ever made it to the 8th grade and rarely did any go on to graduate high school.[144] Thus, racial understanding of Mexican educational achievement were mapped onto the Mexican/Spanish school insuring the underachievement of Mexican children.[145]

The facilities at the Worland Mexican School were in stark contrast to the Mexican Schools of the Southwest characterized by historian Gilbert Gonzalez as vastly inferior to white schools having, "inadequate resources, poor equipment, and unfit building construction."[146] Even studies of Worland from the post-World War II era described the Mexican school as a "fine facility."[147]. Scholars have debated the rationale of building a segregated school that was modern and in some cases more attractive than white schools. Some argued that said actions were political in nature and meant to appease Mexican parents.[148] However, educational scholar and Mexican American civil rights leader George I. Sanchez advanced a more insidious justification: it made segregation more permanent.[149] Illuminating this view was Sanchez's comments regarding improving segregated Mexican schools as opposed to full racial integration:

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[142] For an example, see "News At the Colony," *The Wyoming News* (Worland, WY), January 5,1936.
[143] T.Joe Sandoval, "A Study of Some Aspects of the Spanish Speaking Population of Selected Communities in Wyoming", Masters Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1946, p.47; See also: "Two Teachers in Grade School Resign", *The Worland Grit,* April 13, 1939.
[144] WPA Report on Worland,
[145] These mirrored similar developments in the American West. See: David Gariia and Tara Yosso, "'Strictly in the capacity of Servant": The Interconnection Between Residential Segregation in Oxnard, California, 1934-1954," *History of Education Quarterly* Vol.53, No.1 (February 2013): 68.
[146] Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute Press,1990) 22.
[147] Sandoval, 47.
[148] Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 104
[149] For the most extensive treatment of George I. Sanchez's career, see: Carlos K. Blanton, George I. Sánchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

> It is exceedingly easy, and therefore particularly dangerous, to want to make the segregated school more efficient and more attractive. Usually, this means that it becomes increasingly difficult to eliminate segregation since the segregated institutions has been made more attractive, more palatable, and sometimes has attainted a peculiarly prized prestige….But as I have said in past addresses, the segregated school is a concentration camp—you may gold plate the fence posts and silver plate the bobbed[sic] wire and hang garlands of roses all the way around it, it is still a concentration camp!![150]

In Worland, the Mexican School was the most modern and newest school in the community, but yet no white children ever set foot in the school. Whereas the architecture and conditions differed from most Mexican schools of the era, the emphasis on an Americanization curriculum in a segregated space was the same.[151] In the Mexican/Spanish School all instruction was designed to solve an English-language proficiency problem and to teach Mexican children, as one alumnus described, "how to be American."[152] This was a clear departure from the pre-segregation era, when instruction was focused on remedial education with the final outcome of integration.

Also a clear departure was the distinction made by Wyoming education officials between the Mexican child and parent during this time. Mexican parents were also targeted for Americanization education throughout the state illustrating a consolidation of a distinct "Mexican" racial category in Wyoming during the 1930s.[153] WPA officials observed similar accounts focused on Mexican adults throughout the state. For instance one account from another sugar beet district in Platte County focused on the education of Mexican adults, "It was our privilege to attend at one time the meeting of a class in Platte County where one of our teachers was instructing a group of Mexican beet workers in the rudiments of the English language and business procedure…This appealed greatly to those *childlike people from below the border* who

[150] As cited in Carlos Kevin Blanton, "A Legacy of Neglect: George I. Sanchez, Mexican American Education, and the Ideal of Integration, 1940-1970," *Teacher College Record*, Vol. 114, (June 2012): 9.
[151] Both Gonzalez and Torres note that Americanization curriculum and focus on English language acquisition came after segregation was established; Gonzalez, 204-204; Torres-Rouff, 109.
[152] "Grade School Notes," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), March 25, 1937.
[153] As noted by *The Worland Grit*, "No teaching at all is done in Spanish. If any other instruction other than speaking in English is needed, dramatization is used." See: "Grade School Notes, " *The Worland Grit,* March 25, 1937.

under the sympathetic instruction given made rapid progress.[154] (emphasis added) Similar classes were described throughout the state where the Mexican community was very vocal of their appreciation of said courses.[155] Although Mexicans were not the only group recorded as taking "Americanization" courses, they were the center of racial descriptors such as "childlike" and the assumption that all were foreign-born. Many teachers emphasized the skin-color of Mexicans attending night school, with one account from Torrington stating, "There were twenty-three or four men, their *dark faces* bent over their primers, learning to read and others doing their sums."[156] In Worland, adult education for Mexican beet workers was promoted as a relief activity, to assist but not change their status as a beet laborer.[157]

The creation of the Mexican school in Worland not only reverberated through Wyoming but reflected a larger racial project where racial segregation was demanded throughout the Mountain States. As a researcher from the Children's Bureau noted about the entire Mountain States, "The public schools in the locales where the Mexican work…are not anxious to receive them [Mexican children] and in many districts do not encourage them to enroll but almost discourage them."[158] In Scottsbluff County, Nebraska, it was observed that, "The prejudice against the Mexican is very great. In Nebraska they house separate schools for the race[s] because the 'white' people object to them [Mexicans] attending 'white schools.'"[159] An earlier 1924 study of Scottsbluff, by the National Committee on Child Labor on the sugar beet industry found segregation to be rare, "Their [Mexicans] children attend the public school and only in rare

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[154] E.E. Dagley, "Wyoming Narrative Report, Works Progress Administration, January 21, 1937 to February 20, 1937," Box 60, File Wyoming March 37, RG69, NARA, 15-16. In Worland, similar adult education was developed
[155] "For Earmarked Emergency Adult Education," Folder: Wyoming Projects, Box 33, RG 69, NARA; "Mexican Night School Is Closed," *The Worland Grit* (Worland, WY), March 11, 1937.
[156] E.E. Dagley, "Wyoming Narrative Report January 21, 1937 to February 20, 1937,"15, Folder: March 37, Box 60, RG 69, NARA.
[157] "Arithmetic Most Popular Subject At New Mexican Night School Here," *The Worland Grit,* February 9, 1939.
[158] "Re: Findings in the Sugar Beet Industry," November 13, 1935. Folder: 20-164-8, Box
[159] Mary Skinner to Mrs. McConnell, November 3, 1935, Box 98, Folder: 20-164-5, RG 102, NARA.

instances are separated from other children into classes or rooms by themselves."[160] By the end of 1936 when the Worland Mexican school was open, racial segregation of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant children was observed in every Mountain State, effectively creating a Mexican and non-Mexican social world in relief, medical care, and schooling.[161] This affirmed an expansion of racial segregation in public schools that was well in place in the Southwest in the 1920s but encompassed almost all of the American West by the end of the 1930s.

The segregation of Mexican children was never about solving an educational problem but a race one. [162] For Wyoming's white community the Mexican/Spanish school solidified racial boundaries or as historian David Torres-Rouff aptly argued, "segregated schools…simultaneously functioned as architects of race and as signifiers of Mexican Americans' subordinate status in the realm of social and political citizenship."[163] Some Wyomingites considered it similar to the racism experienced by blacks in the segregated South. For instance Susie Alamos, an alum of the Mexican school in Worland, remembered, "We came from a town where they treated you like colored people….In fact, I'll tell you how bad that town was, while we stayed there so long, they built us our own school, they wouldn't let us go with [whites] to school. They did our own school and we had to go to the Mexican school."[164] White community members, like John Davis, also remembered the segregated experience: "I didn't go to school with a single person of Mexican descent until the 6th grade they had a separate (but

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[160] Sara Brown, Robie Sargent, *Children Working in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Platte Valley of Nebraska* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1924), 67.
[161] This is not to say Mexican children did not experience discrimination in other communities that deviated from earlier experiences, for an account in the mining districts of Wyoming see Ronald Mize and Alicia Swords, *Consuming Mexico Labor: From The Bracero Program to NAFTA* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), xvi; Timothy Dean Draper, "'A Little Kingdom of Mixed Nationalities': Race, Ethnicity, and Class in a Western Urban Community—Rocky Springs, Wyoming, 1869-1969"(Dissertation, Northern Illinois University), 233-234.
[162] David Garcia, Tara J. Yosso, Frank Bajaras, "A Few of the Brightest, Cleanest, Mexican Children," 8.
[163] David Torres-Rouff, "Becoming Mexican: Segregated Schools and Social Scientists in Southern California, 1913-1946," *Southern California Quarterly* 94, no.1 (Spring 2012): 93.
[164] Susie Alamos interview in Elizabeth Mendoza, "The Mexicanization of the Yakima Valley, 1940-2007" (BA thesis, Dartmouth College, 2008), 43. (In authors possession); Sandoval, "A Study of Some Aspects of the Spanish Speaking," 65.

probably not equal) school called the 'Spanish school.' We on the east side of the tracks didn't think much about this situation, just seeing it as the way life was lived. Hispanic kids sure did; they were very sensitive to being discriminated against."[165]

These remembrances were distinctly different from the public face of the state. In 1941, the WPA travel guide for Wyoming depicted the state as "a land of opportunity…where few questions are asked of a newcomer concerning his past or ancestry. It is not altogether rhetoric that man is accepted for what he is and what he can do."[166] Racial segregation in the state's schools was discussed as an abnormality of the territorial era and Mexican Americans were largely absent from the rest of the narrative. . Such a glowing depiction of the "Equality State" contradicted the lived experience and unpublished WPA material of Mexicans in Wyoming. While one WPA report found that there were fewer "prejudices against Mexicans in certain circles that one would find directed against the negro group," it also found that "in other communities the prejudice against the Mexicans would be greater than that manifested against the negroes."[167] That Mexicans and blacks were interchangeable at the bottom of the racial ladder signaled the lowly status of both groups. In fact, the few black students in Worland were forced to attend the Mexican School.[168]

At the same time WPA reports vilified Mexicans being for being unwilling to assimilate and Americanize, German-Russians were considered so completely assimilated that they were "hard to distinguish from other men and women of the community." At one time Mexicans and

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[165] John Davis, "The good and the bad from then and now," *The Northern Wyoming Daily News* (Worland, WY), January 28, 2014. For an account of desegregation in Worland see "Board Meeting of Worland School District", September 11, 1956, Board of Trustee Minutes, Washakie School District No.6, Worland, WY, WSA; Mary Ellen Coca Interview, March 28, 1983, Loose Files, Box 15, LCP. According to Coca's account integration in Worland was piecemeal until completed in the 1960s, this description substantiates the description in Jennifer Majera, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 2.
[166] Ibid, 162-163.
[167] E.E. Dagley, "Wyoming Narrative Report Works Progress Administration February 21-March 20, 1937," p. 63-65, Box 60, File Wyoming March 37, RG 69, NARA.
[168] Mary Ellen Coca Interview, p.3, Box 14, Loose Files, LCP.

German-Russian were discussed as the same group in educational matters. By the end of the 1930s, German-Russians were contrasted to Mexicans signaling their racial standing as non-white. The Japanese presence was described as a race that did not pose a racial problem, did not marry outside their race, and their children were excellent students. However, this was not the case for the Mexican populace who were defined as distinct from all other racial groups and the only people targeted for segregation. The reports described that the "Mexican or Spanish race" recently had a segregated settlement built for them and also that, "plans were being made at present to build a school for the Mexican children, locating it in their own locality."[169] Their educational experiences were described in much detail as a group that did not make much progress in school and "not many graduate from High School." That so much attention was paid to Mexican difference and their schooling illuminates how they were both *the* schooling and race problem of the community, if not the state. The Mexican school in Worland was in operation until 1955, following the repeal of the 1869 permissive school segregation law.[170]

**Conclusion**

For most of the 1920s, Wyoming school and state officials viewed Mexican children as future residents of the state who could be assimilated. Its public schools treated and viewed Mexican American and Mexican children akin to European ethnics and immigrants who were to be educated along with native whites in order to Americanize them. Even when they were separated, they were grouped with other beet children. School officials throughout the state adopted an inclusive form of American citizenship that portrayed children of Mexican decent as

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[169] "New Mexican Colony Nearing Completion," *The Wyoming News* (Worland, WY), October 12, 1935; Robert Smith, "Racial Elements", p.4; "Worland, Wyoming," p. I, WPA File #1252, WPAC.

[170] The last time the "Spanish School" was mentioned was 1954, see "Mexico is Topic of Club Program," *The Billings Gazette*, May 2, 1954. In 1955 the Spanish School was referenced as the West Side School in the media, "Worland School Opening is Set," *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT), August 20, 1955. A survey of Worland schools in 1957 found the West Side School or Mexican School no longer in use and a sharp decline in the local Mexican American population, see *School Building Needs: A Report of a Survey in Worland School District* (College of Education, University of Wyoming, March 1957), 2, 26-27.

future voters and citizens that needed the same educational advantages as other children in the state. Wyoming educators advocated that together—beet and native white children—in the same schools would build better citizens in the state and be a true educational democracy.

The Great Depression and New Deal changed educational policy for Mexicans. White school officials and community members quickly embraced and celebrated racial segregation as the best education for Mexican children. Thus, the Mexican school became a living symbol of racial difference and signifier of Mexican Americans' subordinate status. This transition was not lost on Mexican Americans who attended Wyoming schools in the 1920s, as Julia Leyva of Worland who noted, "Things change you know. They change from what they used to be. I don't know why because when I was in school, I remember Mexican and White all mixed together you know in the lower grades."[171] To answer Leyva's question, notions of race changed in Wyoming. To be white in Wyoming was contrasted to being Mexican, and public schools were at the center of this racial definition.

[171] Julia Leyva Interview. Transcribed October 4, 1983, p.3, Oral History Project. Washakie County Museum and Cultural Center, Worland, Wyoming.

## Chapter 5

## Conclusion

### Schools as the Architects of Race

"My cousin was in the Navy—Lucio and he came down and he went into the Cheerio Bar. [in Worland, Wyoming] He says, 'How come I can wear this uniform and fight for the nation [during World War II] and they won't serve me a drink?' He walked out of there. *Things change you know. They change from what they used to be. I don't know why because when I was in school, I remember Mexicans and White all mixed together you know in the lower grades."*(emphasis added) —Julia Leyva, 1983[1]

"I didn't go to school with a single person of Mexican descent until the 6th grade they had a separate (but probably not equal) school called the 'Spanish school.' We[whites] on the east side of the tracks didn't think much about this situation just seeing it as the way life was lived. Hispanic kids sure did; they were very sensitive to being discriminated against."—John Davis, 2014[2]

Historian Natalia Molina, in *How Race Is Made in America,* argued, "Race is not made in just one moment or by just one powerful person or group. Instead race is created across time by various players who attached different (and sometimes contradictory) meanings to both cultural and structural forces."[3] In Wyoming, no other group, force, or institution was more important in the racial formation of Mexicans than public schools. The state's sparse populous, that was almost entirely white, and recruitment of Mexican/Mexican American labor, its dependence on agricultural work to support the local economy, the lack of legal or legislative policies regarding racial separatism, its persistent lack of economic development, federal treaties and other external pressures all impacted how local officials used schools to police the boundaries around race and make Mexican Americans a racial other from whites. In many cases, it was the only institution that could make and hold the color line in Wyoming.

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[1] Julia Leyva interview, transcribed October 4, 1983, p.3, Oral History Project, Washakie County Museum and Cultural Center, Worland, Wyoming.
[2] John Davis, "The good and the bad from then and now." *Northern Wyoming Daily News* (Worland WY), January 28, 2014.
[3] Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 139.

Over the course of almost two-centuries, the racial reality of Mexicans/Mexican American shifted and had deep implications for how they experienced American public schools. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted naturalized citizenship, which was synonymous with whiteness at the time. Despite their legal status, Mexican Americans failed to receive the full social and civic benefits of being "white."[4] This was especially true in the early decades of the 20th century in the Southwest and California as racial segregation in public schools proliferated on a massive and immediate scale following the explosion of Mexican immigration. In Wyoming, the Mexican experience would initially follow another path but the connection between schooling and race formation was just as prevalent.

Public schools in Wyoming were positioned as the main institution that addressed race directly in both its territorial and state eras. During Congressional testimony in 1889, a Wyoming territorial representative—Joseph Maull Carey—promised a federal commission deciding whether Wyoming would receive statehood, "There is not question of race….[Wyoming] has opened the doors of her public schools to blacks as well as to white children."[5] When pressed further if race distinction existed in Wyoming schools, Carey simply stated, "No."[6] With the state's ratification of the 14th Amendment, which barred states from treating its citizens differently based on race, the lack of segregation in Wyoming schools served as evidence of the state's openness and readiness to enter the Union. Once granted statehood, Wyoming quickly established a Board of Immigration using public schools to encourage settlement and create a citizenry:

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[4]Marc Simon Rodriguez, "More Than Whiteness: Comparative Perspectives on Mexican American Citizenship from Law and History, " *La Raza Journal* 18, 79(2007), 82.
[5] J.W. Powell, J.M. Carey, M.A. Smith, *Admission of Arizona, Idaho, and Wyoming into the Union* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 39.
[6] Ibid.

> The first important thing to be considered when moving to a new home is the educational advantages offered by the State in question. *There is nothing else so important a factor in the life of a great state or nation as the education of its children, for it is schools that will train the coming citizenry and control the destiny of America.* Realizing this, Wyoming has made exceptional provision for the maintenance of its schools. (emphasis added)[7]

Eventually said schools would not only be used to establish a new state citizenry but eventually a new and separate race.

Even in the early part of the 20th century, Mexicans/Mexican Americans were not always considered a separate group, at least not as a distinct racial group separate from whites. Until the 1930s, German-Russians and Mexicans/Mexican Americans were both marked as "others" because of their labor class status and their use of child labor in the sugar beet industry. In fact, some native whites—U.S. born and English speaking—considered Mexicans/Mexican Americans superior to German-Russians because of their consistent attendance in school after the end of the sugar beet season and the support of Mexican parents. The onset of the Depression, however, brought a shift in how Mexicans/Mexican Americans were identified in the local racial order. Competition for scarce resources and federal funds fueled antipathy toward the group, and they began to be racialized in a way different than before. Schools became a vital marker in the new racial order. Though neither German-Russian nor Mexican/Mexican American parents completely left the sugar beet fields or stopped using child labor, German-Russian parents were successful in petitioning to get their children out of the schools for laborers and into the schools for native white children—which meant all white children then went to school together. In effect, public schools served to racialize Mexicans "downward" and German-Russians "upward" to white. Whereas Mexicans/Mexican Americans and German-Russians had been treated similarly as laborers, once racial segregation was

[7] Chas. S. Hill, "Schools" in *Wyoming: The State of Opportunity* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Board of Immigration, 1913).

established, Mexicans were then treated more like African Americans in that they were kept separate in schools. In Worland, for instance, the few black children in the community also attended the Mexican school.[8] That black and Mexican children both attended the same school calls into question the fact that some school officials declared that segregation was based on pedagogical or linguistic justifications and/or immigrant status grounds. Instead, it illuminates a purely racial rationale for the segregation of Mexican children. In Wyoming, to be black was to be Mexican and to Mexican was to be black—or at least distinct and far from white.[9]

This case study of Wyoming demonstrates the roles of schools in structuring whiteness in the absence of laws and legislation. In Wyoming, no laws named Mexicans or Spanish speakers as a specific group of people in any sense. By all measures—naturalization laws, miscegenation laws, school laws—Mexicans were part of the white race. The only institutions that specifically named Mexican or Spanish speakers as a race were public schools and classrooms. Not only did schools and classrooms make Mexicans "colored" but they also associated the Spanish language with immigration and non-whiteness—despite the fact that many German-Russians were immigrants and did not speak English either, and the fact that many Mexican American children spoke fluent English. As historian Rosina Lozano has demonstrated, this effectively racialized and nationalized Spanish as a non-U.S. language, bound to Latin America (especially Mexico) and native only to non-whites.[10] This had a profound impact on Mexican and Mexican American children throughout the first several decades of the 20$^{th}$ century.

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[8] Mary Ellen Coca Interview, March 28, 1983, Loose Files, Box 15, Lawrence Cardoso Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.
[9] E.E. Dagley, "Wyoming Narrative Report Works Progress Administration February 21-March 20, 1937," p. 63-65, Box 60, File Wyoming March 37, RG 69, NARA; Hulbert, *The Public Welfare Services in the State of Wyoming*, 132.
[10] Rosina Lozano, *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 16, 177-178.

Also, this dissertation reminds historians of education that school policy is never just a local matter. In the case of Wyoming, the local was never only local. Not only did U.S.-Mexican relationships underpin educational policy but national labor and immigration policy did as well. That Mexican children would be hyper-racialized during the Great Depression and have this racialization become more fluid at the advent of World War II (a topic for a later study) was no accident. Lacking no clear legal boundaries, federal New Deal funds and labor and immigration initiatives like the 1928 immigration hearings and 1934/37 Sugar Acts opened and closed services and the US-Mexico border. Wyoming school officials had no choice but to be responsive to those pressures, and they used schools to police the boundaries around access accordingly, becoming implementers of immigration, labor and race policy.

The experience of Mexican American and Mexican children in Wyoming schools during the first half of the 20th century should complicate the assumption that schools and educational policy were tangential to racial history in the United States. Schools and school people exerted such a powerful role in racialization in Wyoming that they acted as a substitute for formal Jim/Jaime Crow laws with teachers, principals, and superintendents, being the final decision makers in the segregation of Mexican children. In some cases, white school officials superseded white parent demands for segregation Mexican children thus actively creating and maintaining racial integration, but in many others white school people and parents worked together to keep their children separate.[11] Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that educational policy was not as the "great equalizer" it was supposed to be. Instead, public schools gave rise to the creation of the "Mexican race," and altered their educational experiences and opportunities in a

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[11] For one such example, CH. Studebaker to Grace Raymond Hebard, December 11, 1929, GRHP, Box 3, Folder 1.

way that would negatively impact the group for years to come and hamper any true inclusion into the American citizenry.

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