

Struggling for Educational Autonomy:
The Significance of Schooling in New Mexico's Transition to Statehood

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Education

University of Washington

2016

Committee:

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

College of Education

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the significance of schooling in New Mexico's transition from territory to state during the first two decades of the 20th century. I argue that education in New Mexico was substantially affected by state-level debates over what it meant to become part of the union.

Schools became the battleground for questions over whether or not people in New Mexico could be absorbed into the American cultural model, a question that was tied to race, language, and citizenship. This manifested as a struggle between Anglos and Nuevomexicanos for control of the schools, and between curricular agendas of cultural preservation or Americanization. Using three case studies, I demonstrate the various ways schools were tied up in the statehood transition, both before and after entering the union. This investigation contributes to a broader understanding of education nationally by addressing the unique characteristics of the Southwest context, including its political history, extended territorial status, rural geography, and the influence of Nuevomexicano leadership.

Keywords: *New Mexico, statehood, Americanization, rural education, borderlands, citizenship*

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Terminology

The labeling of groups of people within the United States context can be contentious and fiercely debated. I choose to utilize the term *Nuevomexicano* throughout this thesis to describe the Spanish-speaking population living in New Mexico through its transition from Mexico to the United States, and from territorial status to statehood. *Nuevomexicano* refers broadly to both those elite classes who trace their lineage back to Spain, and mestizos who continued to emigrate across newly formed borders and became generationally folded into this Southwest cultural context, enriching it, and expanding upon it. Erlinda Gonzalez-Berry and David R. Maciel write,

We have used numerous identity labels—*Nuevomexicano*, *Chicano*, *Mexican American*, *Mexicano*, and *Hispano*—interchangeably, but we have favored the term *Nuevomexicano*. When all is said and done, this is the label that best identifies a culture and a people whose roots reach deep into the brown earth of their homelands and across its cultural borderlands.¹

This is the rationale I deferred to when selecting terminology for this research. I will occasionally use the label *Mexican American* or *people of Mexican descent* to refer more broadly to people living in the greater Southwest region. I also utilize the label *Hispano* when referring specifically to the white elite landowners of Spanish descent who wielded the most power early on in New Mexico's territorial period. Lastly, I use the term *Anglo-American* when referring to English-speaking settlers who were regarded as "white" regardless of their ethnicity.

¹ David Maciel and Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 7.

Introduction

Public schools in the United States have fostered some aspects of Americanization since the onset of common schooling. Since the mid-1800s, educational leaders have consistently promoted common schools as “vital for assimilating foreign-born children into American life.”² Normal schools also surged during the 19th century, training primarily young, Anglo women to work in support of broadly assimilative goals. Chris Ogren calls the period from 1870 to 1900 “the heyday of the state normal school,” a movement that ensured the growth of common schooling in most regions of the country.³ Simultaneously, the second half of the 19th century saw a dramatic increase in immigrants; at least 15 million newcomers entered the United States legally between 1865 and 1900, with further expansion of immigrant populations occurring after the turn of the 20th century.⁴ The high enrollment of immigrant children in public schools along with the political tension leading up to World War I made for even more explicit use of the school as a tool for assimilation into dominant American culture. National unity became a powerful priority in the face of growing diversity during this time. At the start of the 1918-1919 school year, Detroit Superintendent Charles Chadley stated, “Systematic teaching of patriotism and citizenship will be emphasized this school year.”⁵ The declaration was echoed in school districts all over the United States, as the Pledge of Allegiance became a daily ritual, the

² Jeffrey Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 51.

³ C. Ogren, *The American State Normal School: An Instrument of Great Good*, 2005 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁴ Linda C. Noel, *Debating American Identity: Southwestern Statehood and Mexican Immigration* (University of Arizona Press, 2014).

⁵ Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism*, 61.

campaign for mandatory civics and citizenship classes spread, and bilingual schools were shut down.⁶

Much of the existing scholarship about Americanization focuses on cities in the Eastern U.S., and yet, Americanization was an issue in other regions of the country as well. Around the same juncture in history, portions of the Southwest were facing a different transition, but one equally relevant to questions of unity and nationalism. During the first decade of the 20th century, the territories of Arizona and New Mexico remained locked in a political stalemate over whether or not they would become official states in the rapidly expanding nation. This deliberation was wrapped up in the debate about “who could be an American and what the boundaries of that American should be.”⁷ The borderland territories were home to tens of thousands of people who were regarded as racially, linguistically, and culturally distinct from the Anglo-American standard against which difference was continually measured, despite being legally classified as white by the federal government. The heightened Americanization agenda did not bypass the Southwest, but the historical autonomy of a decentralized school system in the territories of New Mexico and Arizona made for challenging terrain for the implementation of Americanization curricula. New Mexican and Arizonan people of Mexican descent were strong defenders of their educational autonomy and of the right to maintain their cultural identity, particularly through the transmission of Spanish.

The connection between language, identity, statehood, and schooling in the Southwest was strong throughout this critical period in history. My writing will focus on New Mexico, the territory with the most Hispano leadership and political representation in the United States

⁶ Frank Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism*.

⁷ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 4.

during this time. In 1900, the U.S. census cites that about half of the 195,000 residents of New Mexico were people of Mexican descent.⁸ Of these approximately 90,000 people, 90% were U.S. born citizens, and thus able to vote and hold office within the territory.⁹ This voter base and historical presence in the region was unlike other parts of the country, where ethnic diversity came primarily from more recent immigrants from various European countries. Nuevomexicanos faced a daunting challenge at the turn of the 20th century: how to appeal to U.S. interests in order to obtain state status, while simultaneously resisting many of the assimilationist efforts that were aimed more broadly at immigrants and anyone not embodying the American ideal perpetuated by an Anglo dominated United States.

Linda Noel writes,

During the course of the statehood debates, several perspectives—exclusion, assimilation, pluralism, and marginalization—emerged regarding how and whether people of Mexican descent should be incorporated into the nation-state... The participants of the day did not use the terms exclusion, assimilation, pluralism, or marginalization, but their writings and speeches suggest that they generally coalesced around or provided support for one of these four positions.¹⁰

Noel's writing explores the ways that these four positions "had profound effects on the definition of "American" during a critical period of nation-building."¹¹ From 1900 to 1920, Noel argues that pluralism was the primary perspective in New Mexico. While her investigation focuses on political leadership around a range of constitutional and legal issues, my investigation will focus specifically on schooling. How did schooling figure into the transition to statehood? To what extent was schooling affected by state-level debates over what it meant to become part of the Union? How did issues of Americanization play out in schools? And what does the New Mexico

⁸ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6–8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

case contribute to our understanding of education nationally? These are some of the questions I plan to address through my investigation of education in New Mexico during this time period.

The fight for educational autonomy in the borderlands dates all the way back to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which transferred political control of thousands of acres of land from one country to another. At the onset of a new century, the power struggle over education was deeply embedded in questions of statehood. I argue that in New Mexico, schools were the primary battleground for this political debate, both before and after being accepted into the union. I also argue that the path to New Mexican statehood was deeply embedded in long-standing power struggles between Nuevomexicanos and Anglo Americans over the ability to maintain educational autonomy.

New Mexico as a geographic focus of my investigation offers unique characteristics for inquiry, such as a strong presence of Nuevomexicano leadership, the agenda of maintaining cultural identity, and the extended prevalence of the Spanish language within the public sphere. The transition from territory to state was a process heavily embedded in questions of identity and belonging—namely, whether or not regions heavily populated with people of Mexican descent could and should be incorporated into the folds of American nationalism. Not unlike schools in other regions of the United States, schools in New Mexico served as vehicles for identity formation. However, variations in schooling formats and a lack of territorial oversight resulted in discrepancies in what kinds of identities were taught and fostered, some of which challenged the Anglo-American ideal of citizen building. The presence of Catholicism clashed with Anglo Protestant beliefs, and the use of Spanish as a language of instruction was a direct assault on the Anglo agenda of unity through the English language. The prevalence of Nuevomexicano educators as leaders and teachers also challenge the dominant narrative of the evolution of

common schooling in the United States. Victoria-María Macdonald writes about her experience attending school in Maryland during the 1960s and 1970s and states, “How and why Latino peoples became a part of the United States was not mentioned in the curriculum.”¹² The truth is that they have been an integral part of the formation, evolution, and identity of this country since its political conception. Yet forty years later, when I attended public school in Washington State, that chapter was still missing.

In the past few decades, great strides have been made in documenting and writing the history of Latinos in the United States. Scholars such as Carlos Blanton, Victoria-María Macdonald, Laura Muñoz, Linda Noel, George Sánchez, Ruben Flores, and Lynne Marie Getz have cued my interest, informed my research, and inspired me to take up questions of my own. Macdonald writes, “Our task now in this stage of scholarship on Hispanic-American education is to encourage and undertake the nitty-gritty work of early research in any field...returning to documents which have proved so fertile to our research (annual school reports, census records, school board records) with an eye more attuned to the concerns and provisions of schooling for Hispanics.”¹³ By investigating the influence of Nuevomexicano educators on cultural identity and language, the trajectory of the power struggle over schools in New Mexico, and the relationship between education and statehood, I absolutely accept the challenge to dig deeply and meaningfully into this history.

¹² Victoria-María Macdonald, *Latino Education in the United States : A Narrated History from 1513-2000*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1.

¹³ Victoria-María Macdonald, “Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or ‘Other’?: Deconstructing the Relationship between Historians and Hispanic-American Educational History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2001), 413.

Part I: The Southwest Context

Borders are set up to define places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.

*Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera*¹⁴

The geographic space where the Southwestern United States meets Northern Mexico is a site heavily influenced by “cycles of conquest.”¹⁵ As Martha Menchaca writes, “the first cycle was launched by Spain and the second by Mexico, culminating in the third cycle, when the United States took possession of most of Mexico’s northern frontier.”¹⁶ Schooling was present through each wave of colonization, ranging in agenda and format from Catholic missions to Indian boarding schools to rural community schools. The territorial status within these lands resulted in extended periods of time without a centralized education system. This carved out room for such variation in school format, agenda, and teacher identity, namely, for the presence of Spanish as the language of instruction, a prevalence of rural community schools, and a high number of Nuevomexicano educators. By investigating the history of education in the borderlands, a series of windows open through which to understand struggles for control of the schools, as well as to illuminate the creativity, flexibility, and resistance of a relatively untapped counter narrative. In this chapter, I provide a historiographical discussion of the scholarly literature that illuminates this counter narrative.

¹⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands : The New Mestiza = La Frontera*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987), 25.

¹⁵ Term first coined by Anthropologist Edward Spicer (1988) and referenced in: Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race : The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture (Austin, TX, USA University of Texas Press, 20010101).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

Many scholars are answering Macdonald's call to take up research about the historical intersection of U.S. history and Latino peoples with themes of culture, identity, nationalism, civil rights, education, and policy. My contribution to this knowledge base investigates the history of Nuevomexicano education and its impact on the transition from territory to statehood. In Laura Muñoz's (2013) dissertation, "Desert Dreams: Mexican American Education in Arizona 1870-1930," she justifies her focus on Arizona by stating, "historians have ignored the Mexican Arizonan educational experience, subsuming events here under a broad Southwestern history."¹⁷ Muñoz takes up an investigation into cultural citizenship, and how it "evolved in different educational settings from elementary school classrooms to higher education, in different regions of Arizona and among different sets of historical actors including Euro-Americans, Mexican-Americans, parents, students, and teachers."¹⁸ Her research highlights the role of Mexican American representation in the formation of the Arizona school system. She examines racialization, gender, and power in the context of the formation of schooling in the Arizona territory. Arizona and New Mexico are often lumped together in discussions about their statehood trajectory, partially because they entered into the union only one month apart, but my investigation will examine some of the unique characteristics of New Mexico that differentiate its statehood bid from other territories in the Southwest.

Carlos Blanton is another scholar who investigates the history of the Latino experience in the American Southwest in his most recent work on the biography of reformer, activist, and intellectual, George I. Sánchez. His examination of education through the life of Sánchez highlights the ways Nuevomexicanos with class status were able to use flexible racial identity to

¹⁷ Laura Munoz, "Desert Dreams: Mexican American Education in Arizona, 1870--1930" 2006, 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

navigate social spaces dominated by Anglos. My research also offers many examples of Nuevomexicanos who employed these flexible identity strategies throughout New Mexico's path to statehood, including New Mexico Governor, Octaviano Larrazolo. Nuevomexicanos were legally classified as white by the federal government, a status granted to them in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. However, except for a very few Hispano elite, most Nuevomexicanos were mestizos who experienced their own forms of de facto segregation and discrimination. Leadership, like Sánchez, who used their racial and citizenship status to navigate Anglo dominated spaces were critical players in the educational trajectory of people of Mexican descent in the United States.

Blanton's book, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas* addresses questions of language and identity in education, with a focus on the political push and pull between Texas' lack of centralized education system and its desire to enter in the Union on the path to statehood.¹⁹ New Mexico followed a similar trajectory on its path to statehood, but many years after Texas. Blanton's exploration of the changing status of language and its impact on the Texan statehood debate sheds light on the scenarios that played out in many other regions of the Southwest.

Perhaps the most comprehensive investigation into the history of education in New Mexico comes from Lynne Marie Getz's work, *Schools of Their Own: The Education of Hispanos in New Mexico, 1850-1940*. Getz offers a distinctive examination of the political and social circumstances that were characteristic of the educational experience in New Mexico between the mid-19th century and the mid-20th century. She demonstrates how the growing presence of Anglo settlers and the growing desire to qualify for statehood intersected with

¹⁹ Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*, 1st ed., Fronteras Series ; No. 2 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

Hispano efforts to “preserve and sustain their culture even while learning to survive in a world dominated by Anglo-Americans.”²⁰ In the first chapter of her book, she addresses the “myth of Hispano resistance,” a challenge to the perspective that Nuevomexicanos did not care about education during the territorial period. She explores the fight for power over the schools that played out between Anglos and Nuevomexicanos before statehood and the continued struggle over educational autonomy for Nuevomexicanos after joining the union. Getz highlights the contributions of academic activist George I. Sánchez, educator D.B. Morrill, professor Loyd S. Tireman, and superintendent Nina Otero-Warren as leaders who worked toward supporting educational advancement and opportunity of Nuevomexicanos. She also exposes how the agendas of many progressives contained “little-examined assumptions about cultural superiority” and “defined a particular community as missing elements.”²¹ The presence of this deficit mindset is positioned in contrast to leaders who supported the educational autonomy of Nuevomexicanos and “stressed the advantages of bilingualism rather than treating it as a handicap.”²²

Despite their differing positions on approaches to language education and school governance, Getz explains that most leaders in New Mexico shared a common goal of supporting the education of Hispanos. She contrasts the agenda in New Mexico with Southern states whose state leadership fought aggressively to block any programs intended to support the educational advancement of African Americans. Getz argues that by comparison, most people involved in educational efforts in New Mexico wanted to implement programs specifically to support Hispanos, they just differed over how to implement them, and who would maintain control. Getz explains how the cultural legacy in New Mexico was distinct from both the segregated South as

²⁰ Lynne Marie Getz, *Schools of Their Own : The Education of Hispanos in New Mexico, 1850-1940*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

²² *Ibid.*, 116.

well as other Southwestern states.²³ She states that bilingualism and biculturalism were not necessarily sanctioned by the state; at best they were reluctantly tolerated. However, the persistence and power of Nuevomexicano community leadership to maintain traditions of language and culture provides a powerful example of resiliency and adaptation at a time when other communities were either being marginalized from educational opportunities or aggressively assimilated into dominate Anglo culture.

Returning to Linda Noel's work, her comparative explanation of various attitudes toward people of Mexican descent in the Southwest provides important context for my examination of the role of schooling in New Mexico's path toward statehood. In her comparison of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, she describes dominant policy perspectives in each state for positioning people of Mexican descent in the context of the United States. She states that leadership in New Mexico primarily utilized a pluralist perspective to incorporate Nuevomexicanos into the Anglo-dominated perception of nationalism. By aligning Mexican heritage with Spanish heritage, Hispano leaders in New Mexico made the comparison that to be Spanish-American or *Hispano-Americano* was no different than being German-American or Polish-American, and that there was a shared identity for people of Mexican descent and any immigrant from Europe. Alternatively, the state of Arizona had a far smaller population base of Mexican descent, and an Anglo dominated government. Arizona's leadership utilized marginalization of people of Mexican descent to try to gain admittance into the Union, which included positioning the territory in opposition to neighboring New Mexico. In 1902, Marcus Aurelius Smith, Arizona's first delegate to congress had adopted the position that Arizona was more American than New Mexico. Noel writes, "Smith further noted that the percentage of

²³ Ibid., 12.

people of Mexican descent was declining, and that those who remained were safely under the control of their employers.”²⁴ Arizona marginalizationists consistently argued that people of Mexican descent would have no influence in government affairs and thus would not interfere with the perceived homogeneity of the United States.²⁵

By comparison, with respect to California and Texas, Noel states that the number of people of Mexican descent was quickly outnumbered by Anglos, and thus less of a factor in achieving statehood. However, she points out that California policy was characterized primarily by the presence of exclusionist perspectives toward people of Mexican descent, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s when the many of the temporary worker programs were at their height. Both California and Texas rallied for deportation measures during this time period, actively pushing people of Mexican descent out of cities, using violence and intimidation to scare workers off the job.²⁶ The attempt to position people of Mexican descent as temporary and removable aspects of communities had a lasting impact on how the nation would continue to define who could and should be considered “American.”

Noel’s work has offered me a valuable wide-angle lens through which to interpret my research on schooling in New Mexico. In my investigation, I looked for examples of the pluralism perspective cited in Noel’s book. Through this process, I also found examples of the other three perspectives she references: assimilation, marginalization, and exclusion. My work will explain how an examination of educational examples in New Mexico exposes perspectives and agendas within New Mexico that directly impacted its entrance into the United States as a state.

²⁴ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

Along with Muñoz, Blanton, Getz and, Noel, scholars such as Sara Deutsch, David Maciel, Erlinda Gonzalez-Berry, Rosina Lozano, Ruben Donato, and Martha Menchaca all address themes of identity, race, language and citizenship in the borderlands region. The recent surge in investigation is evidence of Victoria María Macdonald's claim that "shifts in mainstream historiography provide a richer understanding of the complex intersection between Anglo, Native American, and Hispanic cultures that have not only occupied, but created educational institutions in the Southwestern and Southeastern United States since the 1500s."²⁷ My goal will be to contribute to the growing body of literature about this region by examining several examples of how schools were at the frontlines of the debate over language, identity, and Americanization as New Mexico navigated its tumultuous entry into statehood.

The Long History of Colonial Education in the Borderlands

Throughout the Spanish colonial project from the late 15th through the early 19th centuries, religion and education were tightly intertwined, and a number of schools in pueblos such as Santa Fe were informally used to teach Catholic doctrine, Latin, and Spanish with the goal of assimilating indigenous peoples into "*gente de razón*" [people of reason].²⁸ Gallegos writes that most of these educational efforts by the church were aimed at Pueblo Indians from the region or Plains Indians taken from farther north and brought to missions and boarding schools in borderland states.²⁹ Gallegos also writes about the practice of purchasing Plains Indian children and educating them in literacy and religious doctrine within the homes of the families who purchased them. This practice was not uncommon, and local authorities upheld the expectation that all children (purchased or not) would be provided a certain level of religious and

²⁷ Macdonald, "Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or 'Other'?", 50.

²⁸ Bernardo P. Gallegos, *Literacy, Education, and Society in New Mexico, 1693-1821*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

cultural education within the home. The forced acquisition of Spanish, and conversion to Catholicism were both heavily embedded in early processes of schooling, and were used to replace indigenous languages and cultural practices. The changing status of languages is a theme that runs through all of Central and South America, from the use of Quechua as an indigenous language of power during the Inca Empire, to the imposition of Spanish and the banning of Quechua, among many other indigenous languages.³⁰

The concept of *mestizaje* emerged early in the Spanish colonial project, as mixed-race children of indigenous peoples and Spanish colonizers were increasingly common. The children from these unions were first considered to be on the fringes of society and were often equated with illegitimacy.³¹ As time went on, the racial construction of mestizos became one of ambiguity. In terms of status, “mestizos enjoyed a higher social prestige than Indians, but were inferior to the Spaniards. They were also often ostracized by the Indians and the Spaniards and did not enjoy certain legal privileges accorded to either group.”³² Occupying a social and political no-man’s-land, mestizos often had to choose which identity to affiliate with, Spanish or Indigenous. I use the term *mestizo* to refer to the growing population of racially mixed-people who eventually came to be the face of the Mexican state, independent from Spain yet rooted in the lasting impacts of colonialism and indigenous histories.

Much of the turmoil present during the early transition from Spanish to Mexican independent rule reflected a desire to bring together a heterogeneous people, stratified for generations by hierarchies of bloodlines and royal decree. Reséndez writes, “Different groups

³⁰ María Elena García, *Making Indigenous Citizens : Identities, Education, and Multicultural Development in Peru* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³¹ Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, Latin America Otherwise (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

³² Menchaca, Martha, *Recovering History, Constructing Race*, 63.

and individuals sought to engage, represent, and understand the emerging nation. Conscious of being present at its birth, contemporaries could not help but feel an overwhelming sense of wonderment and novelty. But in truth, lurking behind these feelings lay the power of colonial institutions.”³³ The Mexican state that fought so hard to obtain independence was geographically vast, multilingual, multicultural, and struggling to establish a new identity, independent from Spain.³⁴ In the tumult of Mexican independence, efforts at unification and nationalism fell short in the borderlands along the Río Grande. The young nation lost Texas in 1836 to secession and the Mexican American War soon followed.

After three years of conflict, Mexico and the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, effectively ending the war. However, the terms of the treaty articulated the exchange of 15 million dollars to Mexico for a swath of land that stretches through present-day California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and part of Arizona.³⁵ Not more than five years later, the United States acquired another 30 thousand square miles of land through the Gadsden Purchase.³⁶ This third cycle of conquest solidified the United States’ hold on the Western half of the country and with it, the governance of thousands of people. The racial, cultural, and linguistic identities of peoples living in the borderlands shifted and morphed with the changing power structures. Spanish, once a colonizing language of power and subjugation became a second-class language, and one that had to fight for status and value in the face of Anglo settler-colonialism. As Macdonald writes, “Before the war, Mexicans had not been

³³ Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier : Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 58.

³⁴ Carlos Fuentes, *El espejo enterrado*, 1. ed. en México: junio de 1998., Taurus bolsillo (Madrid: Taurus, 1998).

³⁵ James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004); MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

³⁶ MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

immigrants to the region; after the war they became immigrants, colonized people on their former land.”³⁷

People of Mexican descent within the territories of Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico tried to preserve the Spanish language as long as possible. Most densely populated areas utilized an additive approach to language learning by teaching English along side Spanish, trying to uphold the guarantees about cultural preservation promised to Mexicans in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In Texas, the Anglo government technically required the teaching of English in public schools, but in practice *Tejanos*, German, and French immigrants maintained their languages within schools through the 1890s.³⁸ One leader in bilingualism during this time period was Superintendent Jacob C. De Gress, a German immigrant who believed that “a bilingual climate was essential for the growth and support of the public schools.”³⁹ De Gress believed that bilingualism was a “positive agent of ‘Americanization,’” a position that came into direct conflict with other policy makers and educational leaders of the times.⁴⁰

The Gold Rush of 1849 brought a huge influx of Anglo immigrants to California, and their influence on language and policy was profound.⁴¹ A significant clash over land, language, and religion soon followed. By 1866, California School Law section 57 stated, “Children of African or Mongolian descent, and Indian children not living under the care of white persons shall not be admitted to public schools.”⁴² Although the implications of this provision with

³⁷ Ibid., 56.

³⁸ Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*.

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁴¹ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Ethnic Mexicans in Historical and Social Science Scholarship,” in *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, ed. James A. Banks and Cherry A McGee Banks, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2003), 261–87; MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

⁴² MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*, 66.

regard to Spanish-speaking Mexican-American children remained somewhat ambiguous, it did establish the legal possibility of exclusion on racial grounds. This exclusionary bias led to increased numbers of Catholic schools, where *Californios* attempted to maintain their language, culture and independence.⁴³ However, the cost was prohibitive, and gradual land loss hurt Mexican Americans economically, making the private Catholic schools difficult to sustain.⁴⁴

Arizona and New Mexico were able to preserve bilingual education longer than California or Texas. The rural geography, sparse population, and extended period of territorial status were three reasons that the area was able to continue to operate bilingual schools without much oversight.⁴⁵ The high concentration of wealthy Hispanos was another reason New Mexico was distinct from other regions of the United States. Maciel and Gonzalez-Berry write,

Early in its development there emerged in New Mexico an influential and well-to-do Hispanic elite that set the structural and social parameters of the region. This group managed to retain its privilege and after 1848, it shared power with Anglo-Americans. In no other region in the country has a Chicano elite wielded power and influence as in New Mexico. In all walks of life—politics, education, labor, business and cultural production—this elite has functioned as an influential group that has greatly impacted the institutions and social interactions in the state.⁴⁶

These states also had the support of educational leaders who believed in bilingualism, not unlike Austin and De Gress. An Anglo superintendent named John T. Hogue felt strongly that teachers in Arizona should speak both Spanish and English. In 1899 he stated, “In all districts where the Spanish language prevails I respectfully suggest that the teachers employed should have a practical knowledge of that language, otherwise, they will be unable to do either themselves or

⁴³ MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

⁴⁴ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Ethnic Mexicans in Historical and Social Science Scholarship”; MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

⁴⁵ MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

⁴⁶ Maciel and Gonzales-Berry, *The Contested Homeland*, 1.

the pupils justice.”⁴⁷ Similarly, New Mexico’s government was fully bilingual, each year releasing the territorial laws in both Spanish and English. Even in 1880, Anglo Governor Lew Wallace delivered his address in both languages, demonstrating the acceptance and status of the Spanish language in New Mexican society.⁴⁸

But by the early 1900s, almost all areas of land acquired in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were feeling the impact of policy changes that explicitly excluded Mexican Americans from teaching or learning Spanish or from receiving education in general. For example, compulsory schools laws were often not enforced for Mexican American children in California, due to economic reliance on agricultural work.⁴⁹ In the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Mexicans had become the new “immigrant laborers of choice,” replacing Chinese and Japanese immigrants who had provided the bulk of manual labor during the California gold rush.⁵⁰ The irony lies in the fact that many of these Mexicans had not immigrated at all, and had lived on the same land for multiple generations.

The social and political transition that occurred in the borderland states of present-day California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas represents a historically significant process of identity formation. Reséndez articulates, “the Mexican American war appears less as a one-time event that sealed the fate of this region and more like a catalyst that rekindled longstanding national identity struggles fueled by ongoing and powerful structural transformations.”⁵¹ Understood in this context of a massive social and political restructuring, an examination of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁸ Governor Lew Wallace, “Governor’s Proclamation,” November 13, 1880, “Official Papers and Proclamations,” Box 1, Folder 5, Governor Lew Wallace Papers, Collection Number 1959-174, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

⁴⁹ MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

⁵⁰ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Ethnic Mexicans in Historical and Social Science Scholarship,” 266.

⁵¹ Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 240.

education in New Mexico at the turn of the 20th century can offer broad-reaching insights into the historical context of the borderlands, the changing status of language, and the territory's transition to statehood.

The Politics of Statehood

New Mexico was the second-to-last of the continental U.S. territories to achieve statehood, entering into the union in 1912, followed one month later by Arizona. Leading up to its entrance, Nuevomexicanos were torn over how to position themselves to gain access to the most rights and freedoms. This often meant coming up against contradictory educational agendas. Gonzalez-Berry writes,

On the one hand [Nuevomexicanos] firmly believed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed them the right to preserve their cultural legacy, including native-language rights. On the other, given that territorial status had denied them full material and civil benefits, they were eager to achieve statehood, and they understood that the tenets of the national policy—English language proficiency and “Americanization”—were linked to admission and attendant privileges and benefits.⁵²

Congressional leadership often pointed to an inadequate education system and the use of Spanish in schools as a reason to keep New Mexico out of the union.⁵³ When it became clear that there were substantial benefits to be gained from statehood, there was a decline in the sanctioned use of Spanish as a mode of instruction. In the creation of a state constitution, one hundred New Mexicans came together to write the document. Of this group, thirty-two were Nuevomexicanos. Although they lacked majority, they were still able to persuade the other convention representatives to include many rights for Spanish-speaking New Mexicans, including the right to use their language, the right to vote and to run for political office, the right to maintain

⁵² Maciel and Gonzales-Berry, *The Contested Homeland*, 175.

⁵³ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*.

religious freedom, and equal access to the courts and the schools.⁵⁴ Despite an ever-expanding demand for English-only instruction in most of the country, New Mexico's constitution also contained laws that would "guarantee language rights by protecting a limited and transitional type of bilingual education for its public schools."⁵⁵

Up until statehood, most of New Mexico's schools had been operating without the oversight of a centralized state education system. The range in schooling was vast, from private catholic institutions, to small one-room schools houses in rural areas, to larger urban public high schools serving mostly Anglo students. Schools were often segregated due to geography, reflecting the communities in which they were located.⁵⁶ Admission to the union meant a push to centralize and standardize education across the new state. It also meant changes in governance for many rural schools and privately run schools, and sometimes the placement of Anglo teachers in Nuevomexicano communities. These efforts to standardize education and force English upon entirely Spanish-speaking communities were most often unsuccessful. Getz writes, "teachers who knew Spanish were using it in the schools with good results. But the majority of teachers, not knowing Spanish, denied its effectiveness in teaching, leading to disastrous results for the Spanish speaking children of New Mexico."⁵⁷

The admission to statehood created a lot of convoluted laws about language use in schools, and some historians argue that leaders squandered "the opportunity to sanction the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁵ Blanton, Carlos Kevin, *George I. Sánchez : The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration*, Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 28.

⁵⁶ Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940*, Reprint edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Getz, *Schools of Their Own*.

⁵⁷ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*, 34.

bilingual, bicultural school system that had developed through local practice.”⁵⁸ In 1919, the governor of New Mexico, Octaviano Larrazolo, received a letter vehemently advocating for New Mexican educators to be proficient in both English and Spanish. The writer claimed that Spanish-speaking children in rural New Mexico “have an inherent, indefeasible right to an education, not a parrot-like makeshift; they must have a teacher who knows sufficient Spanish to interpret, translate, and make them understand their own idiom.”⁵⁹ This anonymous letter, signed only by “A Teacher” makes claims about railroaded legislation and wasted money for educational efforts that were not serving rural New Mexican students.

This is one of many examples that demonstrate how the transition from territory to state did not necessarily solidify or clarify state educational standards. In fact, in many situations, it reignited debates over language use and cultural preservation that dated back to the guarantees extended to Nuevomexicanos in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Later in 1919, with the support of other educators who demonstrated success with the bilingual method, an act was passed requiring teachers in rural school districts to be literate in both Spanish and English. Governor Larrazolo supported these policy changes and took up the charge of advocating for students in rural districts by using his own strong background in bilingualism and biliteracy to ground his stance. However, Larrazolo was also working alongside an Anglo dominated Department of Education who did little to promote or uphold these moves in legislation. In practice, most communities were still left to their own devices to decide whether to implement bilingual teaching or not, given the teacher population available to them at the time.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁹ “A Teacher to O.A. Larrazolo,” 1919, Octaviano A. Larrazolo Papers, 1841-1981 (bulk 1885-1930), MSS 614 BC, Box 1, Folder 18, New Mexico Digital Archive.

⁶⁰ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*, 33.

Even if official policy was poorly upheld, Nuevomexicanos still worked within sites of interest convergence to take advantage of opportunities to maintain Spanish literacy where possible. One of the ways they were able to frame Spanish language maintenance is related to Ruíz's framework of *language as a resource*.⁶¹ Three years after achieving statehood, the Panama Canal opened, and along with it, new economic and political interests in Central America. Nuevomexicanos had to tread carefully in this political space if they wanted to promote the use of Spanish. There was a growing understanding that the utility of Spanish as a foreign language was acceptable, yet in New Mexico, Spanish was not foreign. Legislation was drawn up to specify the teaching of Spanish as a separate subject, or as a means of explaining English words to Spanish-speaking students.⁶² While this allowed Nuevomexicanos to utilize their language skills in some cases, it came at the cost of forcing Spanish into the restrictive and limited "utility" framework of language use, rather than positioning it as a right for cultural transmission.

In Lozano's comparative study of Spanish language maintenance in Puerto Rico and New Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s, she tries to parcel out why Spanish maintenance efforts in New Mexico eventually failed, while a similar Spanish language initiative was successful in Puerto Rico.⁶³ She describes how Nuevomexicano Spanish language advocates tried to appeal to national interests by arguing, "Spanish language abilities were indispensable to U.S. international policy and goals." They fully embraced Ruíz's "language as a resource" rhetoric.⁶⁴ Puerto

⁶¹ Richard Ruiz, "Orientations in Language Planning.," *NABE: The Journal for the National Association for Bilingual Education* 8, no. 2 (1985): 15–34.

⁶² Maciel and Gonzales-Berry, *The Contested Homeland*.

⁶³ Rosina Lozano, "Managing the 'Priceless Gift': Debating Spanish Language Instruction in New Mexico and Puerto Rico, 1930-1950," *Western Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2013): 271–94.

⁶⁴ Ruiz, "Orientations in Language Planning."

Ricans, on the other hand, “claimed Spanish as a means to signal their independence from the United States.”⁶⁵ They stood by an agenda of “language as a right” while also positioning themselves in opposition to the United States. Though a territory like New Mexico, early in its territorial standing dominant interests in Puerto Rico did not pursue the prospect of statehood. By remaining within territorial status there was a freedom on the island to pursue an ethnic and linguistic identity distinct from the American identity. One could argue that a more aggressive resistance to English would have helped the survival of Spanish in New Mexico, but would it have come at the cost of forfeiting statehood? There is no doubt that Spanish language maintenance and entry into the union were directly at odds as political agendas, one of the primary reasons why schooling was put on the frontlines of this political push and pull.

Norton writes, “Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space.”⁶⁶ Language is not neutral. It is integral in cultural practices and plays a principal role in how we define ourselves and are defined by others. Sánchez writes about the concept of “hybrid identities,” the emergence of a Mexican American identity, and the way cyclical migration patterns on the borderlands impacted identity construction. He cites a quote from Renato Rosaldo:

[T]he borders between nations, classes, and cultures were endowed with a curious kind of hybrid invisibility. They seemed to be a little of this and a little of that, and not quite one or the other. Movements between such seemingly fixed entities as nations or social classes were relegated to the analytical dustbin of cultural invisibility. Immigrants and socially mobile individuals appeared culturally invisible because they were no longer what they once were and not yet what they could become.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Lozano, “Managing the Priceless Gift,” 293.

⁶⁶ Nancy H. Hornberger and Sandra McKay, *Sociolinguistics and Language Education, New Perspectives on Language and Education* (Bristol ; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2010), 350.

⁶⁷ George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1993), 11.

I argue that this “cultural invisibility” is one that impacted Nuevomexicanos in the wake of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. No longer citizens of Mexico, and struggling to fit into an Anglo-dominant American culture, Nuevomexicanos navigated this cultural in-between by using language as a primary vessel of ethnic identity transmission.

Getz discusses the refusal of Nuevomexicanos to fully acculturate to an American identity by making the claim that schools became a primary space in which they could define their own cultural boundaries. Nuevomexicanos “tenaciously held on to their self-identity, as defined by their religion...familial patterns, and their language, the symbol and vehicle of cultural unity.”⁶⁸ There was an understanding that education, and the embedded nature of language within education institutions, would play a key role in Nuevomexicanos’ ability to maintain ethnic distinctiveness. As Getz writes, “Anglos and Hispanos alike recognized the power of the school to promote acculturation and assimilation. Whoever controlled the school and its curriculum had a hand in determining the fate of the culture and the welfare of the people.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*, 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

Part II: Historical Voices in Conversation

We need more than just the heroic stories of militant resistance. Stories of accommodation, collaboration and outright defeat are just as important because they give us ways to understand our position as caused rather than just existing. If we want to give people a sense of agency, of having always been actors as well as acted upon, we must be willing to tell stories full of contradiction that show the real complexity of the causes of their current conditions.

*Aurora Levins Morales, The Historian as Curandera*⁷⁰

In 1919, Governor Octaviano Larrazolo wrote a letter to a father in Colfax County, that began, “*Muy señor mío,*” [My dear sir...] and ended, “*Su atto. servidor,*” [Your attentive servant.]⁷¹ The letter’s content was a respectful and formal response in Spanish to questions of educational access for a rural Nuevomexicano community far from the state capital. Multiple letters about the issue followed from Governor Larrazolo to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the County Superintendent for the district in question. As a Nuevomexicano leader navigating New Mexico’s recent acceptance into the union, Larrazolo embodied a flexible racial identity that allowed him access to Anglo dominated spaces, while maintaining a fierce defense of the rights of his Nuevomexicano community. The correspondence between Larrazolo, Nuevomexicano community members, and Anglo educational leadership offers a rare example of the challenges and consequences that existed in New Mexico immediately after entering into the union, including educational access, curricular agenda, and the struggle for power over the schools. An examination of archival sources adds complexity to New Mexico’s statehood transition, and further demonstrates the ways that education was deeply embedded in this political change. After providing a brief discussion of the statehood context, this chapter will

⁷⁰ Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine Stories: History, Culture, and the Politics of Integrity*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998), 31.

⁷¹ “O. A. Larrazolo to José Sánchez,” October 17, 1919, “Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919” Folder 150, Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

describe and discuss three primary source cases about schooling in the early statehood period drawn from the New Mexico State Archives and Record Center in Santa Fe.

Linda Noel writes, “Before [Arizonan and New Mexican] statehood became a prominent national issue, most Anglo Americans gravitated toward one of two strategies for handling newcomers and maintaining national unity: exclusion and assimilation.”⁷² These positions played out in the passage of laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and in the widely held perspective that all European immigrants could become American through education and immersion within the American environment. In the late 1800s, people of Mexican descent were not at the forefront of these debates about what constituted an “American” at the national level, and the Mexican-U.S. border remained relatively open, with cyclical and often unreported migration patterns.⁷³ Noel writes that the immigration of Mexicans “was of such minor concern that the commissioner general of immigration neglected to mention the subject in any of his reports until 1906.”⁷⁴ A number of factors led to increased migration and a new national awareness of the growing number of people of Mexican descent in the Southwest, including the onset of the Mexican Revolution in 1911 and the rising wage differential between the U.S. territories and Mexico. Additionally, there was a surge in active recruitment of Mexican nationals as agricultural laborers in the wake of the European quotas and Asian exclusions institutionalized by the 1917 and 1924 U.S. immigration laws. People of Mexican descent had always been part of the context of the American West, both under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and through continued migration, but it wasn’t until New Mexico and Arizona began

⁷² Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 25.

⁷³ Noel, *Debating American Identity*; George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*.

⁷⁴ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 68.

serious negotiations toward obtaining statehood that questions arose about whether or not they could and should fit into the Anglo ideals of American national identity.

Alongside this debate was the question of whether or not Nuevomexicanos even wanted to become part of the Anglo- dominated society or whether they preferred to opt out in favor of maintaining ethnic distinctiveness and cultural unity, which encompassed language, religion, and political representation.⁷⁵ For most Nuevomexicano residents at this time, they had not immigrated to the United States; the United States had come to them. Navigating this political change while maintaining language, culture, and land rights alongside the growing Anglo settler community proved challenging. Lynn Marie Getz writes, “Anglos pointed to Hispanos’ lack of interest in building schools as proof of their resistance to progress. Despite the newcomers’ conviction that cultural factors impeded economic growth in Hispanic New Mexico, a closer look reveals a far more complicated set of variables at work than the stereotypes seized on by contemporary Anglo observers.”⁷⁶ New Mexico’s first school law was passed in 1856, just a few years after territorial government was established. It declared that schools would be supported by property taxes and that they would operate under the control of territorial government. Nuevomexicano voters quickly overturned the law. This action led to the misconception that Nuevomexicanos were against education. Their rejection of the school law was used against them as evidence of their resistance to education, which, in turn, was used as one of the many arguments to keep statehood out of reach until the early 20th century.

According to Getz’s analysis of the issue, Nuevomexicanos were not in opposition to schooling, but rather to the loss of local control a territorial government-managed school system

⁷⁵ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

would have meant.⁷⁷ She writes, "Subsequent legislation, however, demonstrated that local people had not opposed schools or even taxing themselves to pay for school, but simply wanted to have control over the local funding of education."⁷⁸ By overturning the law, they could continue to operate their schools in relative autonomy and without much oversight. This meant more freedom in the language of instruction, curriculum, and structure of schooling to fit the local context and population.

Nuevomexicanos fought hard to maintain autonomous control of their schools, and they succeeded for many decades. According to McDonald, in 1875, only 5% of schools in New Mexico were conducted exclusively in English (7 out of 131). All other schools functioned completely in Spanish (86 of 131) or bilingually in both languages (38 of 131).⁷⁹ In 1891 legislators passed the first law requiring English to be used in public schools. This action could be viewed as one of the first official steps on the path to being accepted as a U.S. state. But the battle over statehood continued for another 20 years. Unlike other regions of the Southwest, the territory had a Nuevomexicano base large enough to make an impact on policy. This political base held seats in office, maintained leadership roles within the territory, and controlled many aspects of society, including its educational establishments. This made the move toward statehood a complicated one. In the 1890s, Nuevomexicanos were divided over whether to remain a territory or to push to join the union. Most political leadership, including the governor at the time, Miguel Antonio Otero, saw potential benefits in the support that would be extended by the federal government if New Mexico became a state, but communities also recognized that this transition would come at a cost. Statehood certainly meant a state controlled education

⁷⁷ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*; MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*.

⁷⁸ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*, 13.

⁷⁹ MacDonald, *Latino Education in the United States*, 69.

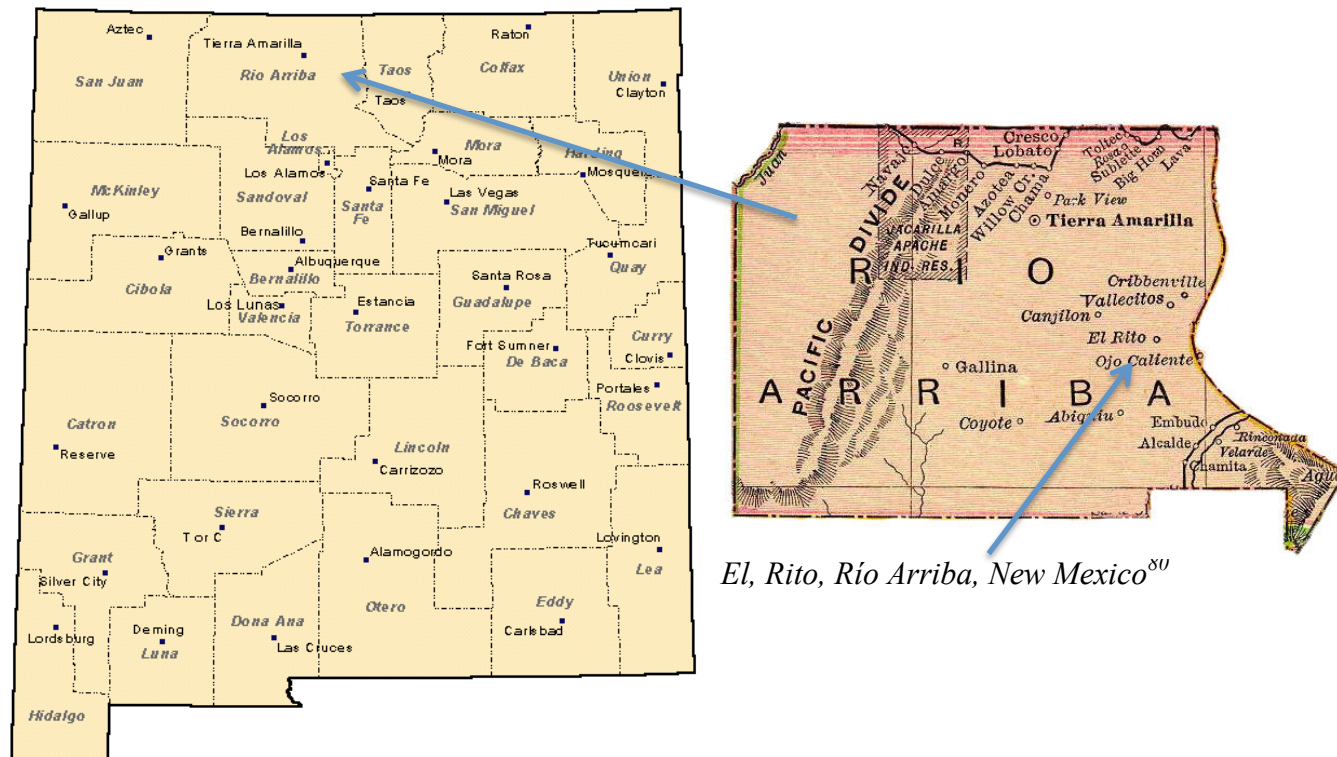
system, far more centralized than the system operating at the turn of the 20th century. Not only that, but the resistance Nuevomexicanos expressed in overturning the 1856 school law would not hold this time. It was in the political interests of Nuevomexicanos who had power to gain entrance to the union and the subsequent privileges it would grant the territory, including access to federal funding. These same benefits would not necessarily accrue to more ordinary Nuevomexicano families and communities. For these reasons, Nuevomexicanos were not as unified in the statehood debate as they had been over territorial school law.

Although Linda Noel's book, *Debating American Identity: Southwestern Statehood and Mexican Immigration* argues that New Mexico's statehood trajectory chiefly exemplified the position of pluralism, I argue that examples of assimilation, marginalization and exclusion also occurred, particularly in educational contexts. The first case that highlights this is the case of the El Rito Spanish American Normal School. Though pluralist ideals lead to its creation and territorial funding, the school is also an example of Nuevomexicanos responding to exclusion, as they were almost entirely restricted from entering other institutions of higher education. My second primary source example tells the story of Mr. Armendaris, a teacher who ran his school almost entirely in Spanish, and who refused to close it down when a new state school was built across the street. The scenario can be interpreted as resistance to the assimilationist pressures coming from the Doña Ana County superintendent, who believed the school should be considered an alien institution, and its students truants for opting out of the new state-funded public school. My third example will highlight the marginalizing practices that took place in other parts of the young state as new schools appeared in many rural areas, thanks to new access to funding. This case, occurring the same year as the example of Mr. Armendaris' resistance, offers an opposite conflict over children of Mexican descent being denied entry into one of the

new public schools that opened in their town. Together, the three examples highlight some of the details of conflicts that played out during this political transition.

The period immediately before and after 1912 was a time of transition and identity formation. The Southwest as a whole was still figuring out how to become part of the greater United States, and what that should look like. The following examples show how schools in New Mexico between 1900 and 1920 represented more than a place to educate children. They were battlefields for the political struggle over statehood and platforms for debates over who got to claim American identity. They also address the relationship between education and statehood, demonstrating how joining the union significantly affected schooling.

El Rito Spanish American Normal School: Pluralism meets Interest Convergence



*El Rito, Río Arriba, New Mexico*⁸⁰

Early in New Mexico's bid for statehood, it became clear that the use of Spanish was a deterrent for admission to the union. Noel writes,

Exclusionists stressed language difference to persuade other Anglo Americans that people of Mexican descent could not assimilate. Exclusionists such as senators Beveridge, Quarles and Nelson all believed that Americans must speak English; they perceived territorial residents' lack of use or knowledge of the language as evidence of their unassimilability, and a threat to national cohesion.⁸¹

Politicians and Anglo educators wanted to address language-learning head on. During much of the time leading up to statehood, rural schools in New Mexico were "often staffed, through political patronage, with sons, daughters, wives, or widows of long-established families."⁸² Few teachers had any form of secular credential or training apart from their willingness to accept the

⁸⁰ "Río Arriba County 1895" (Global Landforms DataBase, n.d.), New Mexico Digital Map Library; "Quick View Map of Counties" (Perry-Castañeda Library, n.d.), New Mexico Digital Map Library.

⁸¹ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 31.

⁸² Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 67.

teaching role in order to uphold the values and traditions found within the community, including the use of Spanish.

In 1909, centralized systems of common schooling in other parts of the country had been well established for decades. As part of these systems, most states also established normal schools for the training of common school teachers. By the 1880s, normal schools had become the dominant teacher training institutions in the Northern United States. The characteristics of pre-state New Mexico, however, sound very similar to the general state of schooling in the rest of the country 100 years prior. Ogren writes, “During the decade following the American Revolution, rudimentary schooling had gradually become widespread while remaining remarkably unsystematic. In rural areas, locally controlled school districts had short, rather chaotic sessions and were subject to the whims of the community.”⁸³ In the early 1800s, the desire to organize schooling gained national momentum in the North and resulted in a policy demand for training large numbers of educators in a standardized and controlled way, thus the emergence of normal schools. The Southwest territories of New Mexico and Arizona were largely left out of this national movement, with most local schooling occurring under the direct or indirect sponsorship of the Catholic Church. Upon realizing that a centralization and standardization of schools under secular authority could be an important factor in the bid for statehood, New Mexican officials began thinking about teacher credentials, and a more professionalized and secular form of teacher training. This led to the emergence of several normal schools, including schools in Silver City, Albuquerque, and El Rito, all founded at the tail end of the normal school movement in the rest of the United States.⁸⁴ The El Rito School was

⁸³ Ogren, *The American State Normal School*, 10.

⁸⁴ Ogren, *The American State Normal School*; Sigfredo Maestas, *Children of the Normal School, 60 Years in El Rito, 1909-1969* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2011).

located in Río Arriba County, in the North central region of the territory. Founded through a unique example of Anglo and Nuevomexicano educational collaboration, territorial governor L. Bradford Prince teamed up with Hispano leaders Veneslao Jaramillo and Solomon Luna to create the first normal school specifically designed to train Spanish-speaking teachers.

The El Rito Spanish American Normal School was established on the premise that teachers fluent in both English and Spanish would effectively teach the vast rural population of Spanish speaking Nuevomexicanos better than teachers who employed the English-only method.⁸⁵ In 1891, the school code promulgated by territorial Governor Bradford Prince stated, “where the only language spoken is Spanish, the teacher shall have a knowledge of both English and Spanish.”⁸⁶ Twenty years later, Governor Prince would become one of the founders of the El Rito Spanish American Normal School. Prince backed the school alongside Venceslao Jaramillo, a former member of the territorial House of Representatives. In Sigfredo Maesta’s detailed account of life at the El Rito Normal School, he states the following about Jaramillo’s role in New Mexico’s territorial government: “He became known for his even temper, his intellect, and, most importantly, his ability to hear all sides on important questions and to achieve concurrence in their resolution. He managed to earn the respect and friendship of Miguel A. Otero and L. Bradford Prince,” both former governors of the New Mexico territory.⁸⁷ Otero was governor following Prince’s tenure, but his agenda was less aligned with education, and more focused on statehood. As Maestas writes,

The key to Venceslao Jaramillo’s success was his and L. Bradford Prince’s knowledge, experience, and political acumen. They knew that the business establishment and prominent politicians desired statehood. State government was aware of the zeal with which joining the Union was awaited, and it was willing to do everything possible to

⁸⁵ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*, 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁷ Maestas, *Children of the Normal School, 60 Years in El Rito, 1909-1969*, 21.

ensure statehood. The nation saw New Mexico as a territory inhabited largely by Indians and Mexicans, foreign speaking, by their reckoning, and this popular impression, often fueled by the pulp-fiction market, had to be tempered.⁸⁸

The school was an opportunity to professionalize the use of Spanish in schools, and to appeal to the territorial board regarding the best practices and pedagogy for language learning. In 1909, the school was able to move forward with a small grant, gleaned from the territorial board through the influence of former governor Prince, in the amount of \$4,500.⁸⁹ With this money, the board and its supporters went about publicizing the school to Spanish and English speaking communities alike, composing the first class of the El Rito Normal School.

The establishment of this school occurred at a time when there was rampant exclusion of people of Mexican descent from institutions of higher education in the U.S. Duetsch writes, “Poverty, lack of public high schools in Hispanic counties and discrimination had almost entirely excluded all but the wealthiest Hispanics from higher education. Only seven of the eighty-seven people who graduated from New Mexico’s public high schools in 1913 were Hispanic.”⁹⁰ The El Rito Normal School emerged not only as a solution to support the territory’s bid for statehood, but also as an alternative to the ethnic exclusion Nuevomexicano students were facing from other institutions of higher education.⁹¹

In the first half of the 1909-1910 school year, the school enrolled 34 students. By the start of the second semester, the number had risen to 59.⁹² Recruitment spread throughout the territory

⁸⁸ Ibid., 22–23.

⁸⁹ “A Commendable Example,” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, 1909, “Clippings,” Folder 6, L. Bradford Prince Papers, Collection number 1959-174, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

⁹⁰ Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 66.

⁹¹ Institutions of higher education that were in operation in 1909 include New Mexico State University, New Mexico School of Mines, University of New Mexico, New Mexico Military Institute, and New Mexico Normal School in Silver City, established in 1894.

⁹² “A Commendable Example.”

in both English and Spanish speaking communities. One of the biggest hurdles in recruiting Nuevomexicano students was the fear that families had of sending their sons and daughters away from local communities. In the State Archive Center in Santa Fe, a folder contains a number of letters and newspaper clippings from the first year of the El Rito Normal School. One of the documents in this folder is a letter from school president Fidelfo Baca, urging Nuevomexicano parents to send their children to the school. It appears in several formats—including newspaper clippings and a more expanded version, printed on letterhead and tri-folded.⁹³ This version could have been mailed to families or distributed door to door. One section of the letter reads,

Las ventajas que ofrece esta Escuela Normal para el adelanto intelectual como queda dicho no necesita encomios, solo se espera el empuje de los padres de familia. Vuestros hijos poseen el idioma de sus madres, dejadles que se perfeccionen en él, y bajo métodos prontos y eficaces aprendan el que es indispensable para el porvenir, y el cual exige nuestra forma de gobierno, pues sin este sus hijos no pueden progresar en las escuelas y en el mundo.⁹⁴

[The advantages that this Normal School offers for intellectual advancement as stated do not need commendations, they only wait for the push from parents. Our children have the language of their mothers, let them perfect it, and under quick and efficient methods, learn what is indispensable for the future, what our form of government requires, for without this your children cannot progress in schools and in the world.]

The appeal to families is two-fold. On the one hand, the letter talks about the intellectual advancement that is open to their children and the opportunity to use their mother tongue as a resource. On the other hand, Baca is reminding families how few opportunities are actually open to Nuevomexicano youth in terms of higher education—impressing upon them the idea that this

⁹³ “Advertising the Spanish American Normal School,” n.d., “Clippings,” Folder 6, L. Bradford Prince Papers, Collection number 1959-174, Number 14032, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Baca, Fidelfo, “Spanish American Normal School,” n.d., “Clippings,” Folder 6, L. Bradford Prince Papers, Collection number 1959-174, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

⁹⁴ Baca, Fidelfo, “Spanish American Normal School.”

is the only school that will offer academic and career advancement to young people from rural, Spanish-speaking parts of New Mexico.

Within the same letter to families, Baca states the following about the goals of the institution:

La realización de los ideales y la solución de aquellos problemas educacionales para el desarrollo intelectual y del carácter de la juventud de habla castellana, y su preparación para la noble profesión de maestros o para emprender sobre bases sólidas, la carrera vertiginosa por el camino tortuoso de la vida en estos tiempos de reconstrucción, es el fin primordial de esta institución.⁹⁵

[The realization of ideals and the solution to educational problems for the intellectual development and character of Spanish-speaking youth, and their preparation for the noble profession of teaching, or to undertake a solid foundation in the breakneck race through this torturous path of life in times of reconstruction, is the primary purpose of this institution.]

Baca's letter is strongly worded, appealing to the challenges and ideals of Nuevomexicano communities during this time period. The letter goes on to talk about the location of the school, the community in which it is situated and the welcoming, acceptance of neighbors toward the school's future students. He breaks down the tuition costs, and the packing list, trying to answer questions and quell worries all at the same time. Articles in Spanish reflecting condensed versions of the letter were published in *La Revista de Taos*, which was a Spanish language newspaper, and *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, an English newspaper with a Spanish branch called *El Nuevo Mexicano*.⁹⁶ English articles also appeared, one of which states that Mr. Baca traveled to the County Teacher's Institute in Taos and the Mission School at Los Ranchos to encourage enrollment in the new El Rito school.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "Escuela Normal Hispano-Americano," *La Revista de Taos*, n.d., "Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919," Folder 150, Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

⁹⁷ "Advertising the Spanish American Normal School."

At the end of the first year, the school received attention for graduating their first class of certified teachers to work in some of the more than 550 rural schools in New Mexico. The newspapers celebrated the success of the school, calling it “a commendable example” and “a model of neatness and careful administration from top to bottom.”⁹⁸ One article published by the *Santa Fe New Mexican* in 1910 wrote almost exclusively about the impressive success of running a school on only a \$4,500 appropriation with no deficit, and stated that the school had “justified its establishment.”⁹⁹ The focus on cleanliness, finances, and inherent worth of the school highlights some of the doubts and skepticism that may have been present upon its formation.

Perhaps one of the most interesting statements written in these newspaper articles came at the end of a short account of the annual exhibition of the school published in the *New Mexican*. The article states, “There is only one regret that *The New Mexican* can express, and that is that there were no Spanish-American names on the program of exercises on commencement day.”¹⁰⁰ Maesta’s book gives a class list from the first year of the school, in which 32 out of the 46 students have Spanish surnames.¹⁰¹ The article in *The New Mexican* dated May 28th, 1910 states the following student names on the commencement program of exercises: Ralph Dixon, Belle Woods, Lenora Woods, Mae Madole, Bertha Livesly, and Gretchen Dixon.¹⁰² These students are

⁹⁸ “Spanish American Normal School First Annual Commencement,” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 28, 1910, “Official Papers and Proclamations” Box 1, Folder 5, Governor Lew Wallace Papers, Collection number 1959-085, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

⁹⁹ “A Commendable Example.”

¹⁰⁰ “Normal School Commencement Program,” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 28, 1910, Folder 80, Subseries: Santa Fe Public Schools, Series 5: Educational Records, Adella Collier Collection, Collection 1978-030, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

¹⁰¹ Maestas, *Children of the Normal School, 60 Years in El Rito, 1909-1969*, 167.

¹⁰² “Spanish American Normal School First Annual Commencement.”

six of the 14 names on the full student list that do not have Spanish surnames. It certainly begs the question, why are only Anglo students presenting at the commencement for the Spanish American Normal School? What does this tell us about the face of the normal school and the way it was presented to the public? Could this be interpreted as an appeal to Anglos, demonstrating that they, too, are benefiting from such a school? An appeal to the territorial government would have also been critical during the school's first years, to ensure that it would continue to receive funding in the years that followed.

Sara Deutsch makes the claim that the El Rito Normal School was “plagued with problems from the start,” referencing its “miniscule appropriation” and characterizing the students as “overage, undereducated, and sporadic in attendance.” Her analysis claims that the minimal impact of the El Rito School actually contributed to the growth of Presbyterian Mission schools in the early 1900s. She writes, “With the one experiment geared specifically to remedy the educational flaws of Hispanic New Mexico so far from a raging success, the way lay open for the women missionaries... The Anglo women missionaries represented a cultural contact at once diffuse and intense, one that penetrated deeply into the Hispanic hinterland and found few Anglo competitors for influence.”¹⁰³ The Presbyterian Mission Schools may have reported higher enrollment overall than in the early years at the El Rito Spanish American Normal School, but I argue that its significance should not be dismissed. The political appeal made by founders Jaramillo and Prince demonstrates a critical intersection of statehood and education during this time period. The school was conceived through the political navigation of statehood priorities, and the need for educational opportunities in rural, Spanish speaking regions of the territory. The school, which as far as is known was the only bilingual normal school ever established in the

¹⁰³ Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 67.

United States, offers a unique example of how language and education were deeply embedded in New Mexico's journey into the Union.

The El Rito Spanish American Normal School fits into Noel's account of New Mexico as reflecting a pluralist agenda, but it poses questions about exclusion practices against Nuevomexicanos as well. Because pluralism for Nuevomexicanos was defined by an alliance to European Spanish heritage, calling the El Rito School *Spanish-American* aligns with this rhetoric. The work of Jaramillo and Prince in negotiating the school's validity also reflects pluralist agendas. Noel states, "Most pluralists were people of Mexican descent who were well educated, bilingual, and political and economic leaders in their communities."¹⁰⁴ Venceslao Jaramillo perfectly exemplifies this description, as does his desire to educate and professionalize Nuevomexicanos from rural areas, simultaneously raising the status of the Spanish language. However, the El Rito School is not only an example of pluralism. Its existence can also be interpreted as a response to the exclusion of Nuevomexicanos from other institutions of higher education in the territory.

Ogren's book, *The American State Normal School* examines the evolution of Normal Schools in the United States from the mid 19th century through the early 1900s. The movement was so heavily based in New England and the Midwest, that the founding date for the El Rito School in 1909 puts it near the end of the Normal School movement. Ogren's book gives no mention of the Spanish American Normal School, demonstrating just how unusual it was in both agenda and curriculum. The period Ogren cites as "the heyday of normal schools" falls between the years of 1870 and 1900. During this time normal schools became a platform for the spread of democratic ideals and education reforms throughout the country. Ogren writes,

¹⁰⁴ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 47.

At the head of the Progressive movement was the new middle class' "search for [bureaucratic] order," and a "culture of professionalism" that was incubated in American universities. State normal schools, which had been slower to take hold than other antebellum reforms, were very well suited to this new ideology as they prepared students to assume positions in the school bureaucracy through occupational training. These wider social beliefs were the bedrock for the expansion and growth that assured firm footing for state normals between the 1870s and 1900s.¹⁰⁵

Besides the state normal schools, Ogren writes about the rural version: county normal schools; smaller, more locally based schools that offered "bare-bones preparation for rural teaching."¹⁰⁶

The El Rito School would fall into this category, but though history may place it in a lower caliber of education during its early years, its enrollment list alone demonstrates the increased number of students of Mexican descent who were receiving access to higher education. In comparison, Ogren writes of other regions of the Southwest, "From Texas to California, some Latino students enrolled in Catholic colleges, while a very few were able to attend state universities. On majority white campuses, pioneering black and Latino students, as well as Jews, Catholics, and members of other ethnic minority and immigrant groups, remained outside mainstream campus life."¹⁰⁷ This was not the case at El Rito, as Nuevomexicano students made up the majority of the student body. Maestas writes about the challenges facing the Normal school in its early years, but he also speaks to the resiliency of the school's first students, "their efforts and accomplishments, and for overcoming the less-than-desirable academic environment that circumstances created."¹⁰⁸ Further testifying to its significance is the fact that the school continued to operate, to adapt, and to evolve into how it is known today—as Northern New Mexico College.

¹⁰⁵ Ogren, *The American State Normal School*, 56.

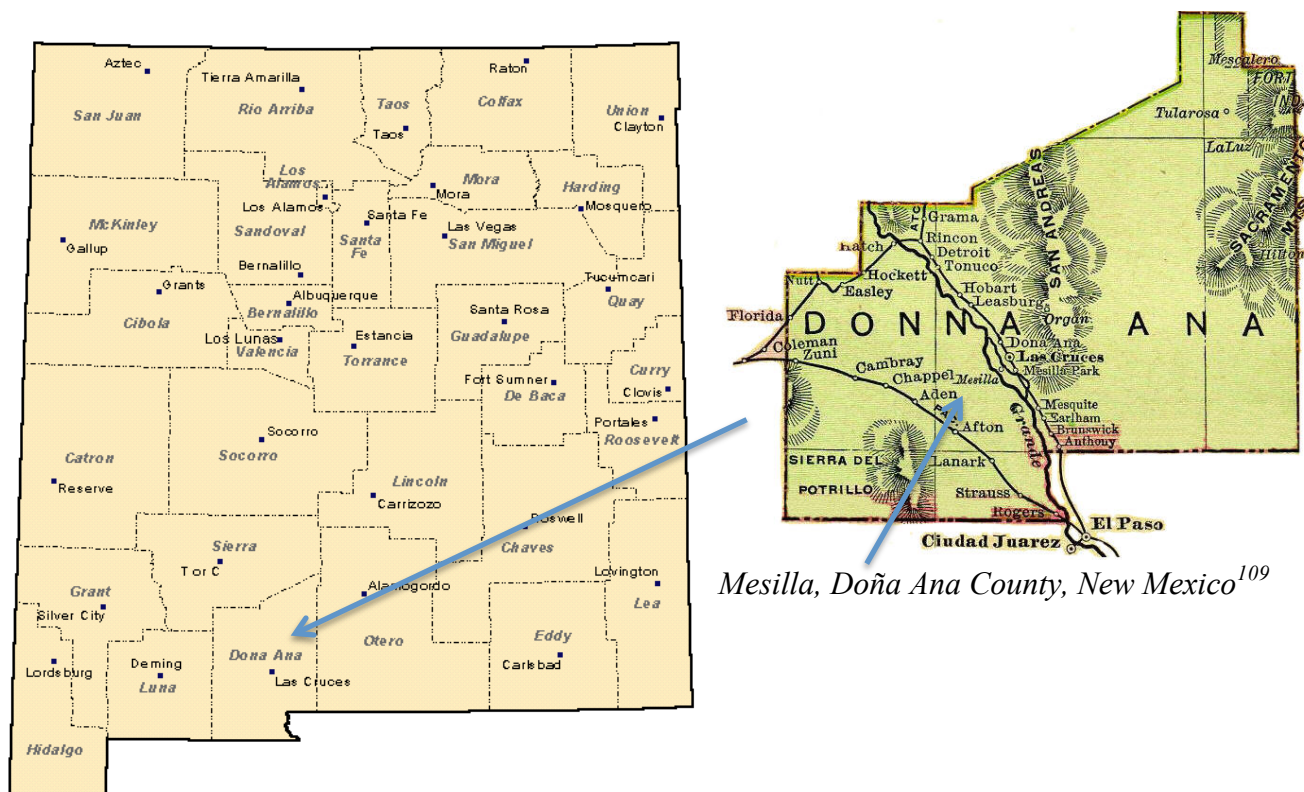
¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Maestas, *Children of the Normal School, 60 Years in El Rito, 1909-1969*, 28.

The El Rito Spanish-American Normal School represents a key juncture in the political history of the state of New Mexico, demonstrating an intersection between language and statehood. Its founders, Prince and Jaramillo, were active players in navigating the political agendas of the time, appealing to Anglo interests while simultaneously trying to raise the status of Spanish. A study of the school also offers several questions for future research. Namely, what does the rhetoric for student recruitment expose about the potential exclusion Nuevomexicanos may have faced from other institutions of higher education? With a student body that was overwhelmingly of Mexican descent, what did it mean that the school had entirely Anglo names on the school's first commencement program? And considering the Anglo and Nuevomexicano collaboration at the school's conception, does this offer a rare example of cross-cultural collaboration for access to education? Where else did this collaboration take place in the history of New Mexico and the greater Southwest? There is no doubt that in its agenda, student population, and foundation, the El Rito case offers a distinctive contribution both to the history of rural schooling and to the history of normal schools.

The Case of Señor Armendariz: Resistance to Assimilation



Mesilla, Doña Ana County, New Mexico¹⁰⁹

About ten years after the El Rito Normal School was established, another county in the southernmost part of the state was engaging in a different kind of educational struggle, one that demonstrates how the assimilation perspective was a powerful pressure in New Mexico, especially after the territory joined the Union. As a new state in 1912, New Mexico had more support for centralizing a public education system. Getz writes that thirty-seven new school buildings were built between the years of 1913 and 1915 funded by a combination of state aid and donations from parents.¹¹⁰ The new schools were often built to replace the varying conditions of local schools, many of which were deemed to be of poor quality and detrimental to the health of the children attending.¹¹¹ The move to transition from the subpar conditions of

¹⁰⁹ “Dona Ana County, 1895” (Global Landforms DataBase, n.d.), New Mexico Digital Map Library; “Quick View Map of Counties.”

¹¹⁰ Getz, *Schools of Their Own*, 29.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

many local schools to the newer buildings also came with a transition in curriculum. Getz writes that in addition to financially supporting some school construction, Nuevomexicanos also “took leading roles in the educational developments of the early statehood period.”¹¹² But some aspects of the curriculum were continually debated, specifically regarding the instruction of Spanish-speaking children. In the years immediately following statehood, “Hispanic state legislators repeatedly introduced measures that allowed for some use of Spanish in instruction, while the state department of education reminded teacher of the importance of using English.”¹¹³ Despite this contradiction in rhetoric, school laws in 1915, 1917 and 1919 continued to sanction the use of Spanish in schools for the purposes of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children. In addition to these limited parameters for the use of Spanish, local educators came up with their own methods for teaching Spanish-speaking students, some with a higher agenda for maintaining Spanish than others. In some instances, as demonstrated by the following example, this caused tension between state and local school leadership.

From 1919 until 1921, Octaviano Larrazolo was the Republican governor of New Mexico. He was a former teacher who believed in supporting the preservation of linguistic and cultural rights of Nuevomexicanos, and who exemplified a pluralist perspective of integration into the greater United States.¹¹⁴ He was a naturalized U.S. citizen from Mexico who eventually served as the first Mexican-American senator. As Noel writes,

Larrazolo took great pride in his ethnicity and argued for the preservation of rights for people of Mexican descent, yet he did not embrace a “Mexican” or even “Mexican-American” label. Despite his immigrant status, he and other people of Mexican heritage referred to themselves as *nativos* (native-born), *nuevomexicanos* (New Mexicans), and increasingly *hispanos* (Spanish), or *hispano-americano* (Spanish-American). In other

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 30–31.

¹¹⁴ Noel, *Debating American Identity*, 43.

words, they advocated a pluralist concept of belonging in the United States as Americans of Spanish descent.¹¹⁵

Larrazolo's position on *hispano-americanos* was that they were Americans of Spanish ancestry, no different from the European ancestry of Anglo-Americans. He stressed these shared ties to Europe, dispelling arguments about class and race difference. His political position made him appeal to Anglo agendas when necessary, while his Mexican roots and proud bilingualism also shared linguistic and cultural identity with Nuevomexicanos. In many ways, he embodied through his flexible identity the political turmoil playing out over questions about best practices in education, with regard to language, curriculum, and the transition to a centralized system. As a result, he was often involved in arguments over the political battle for linguistic preservation or American assimilation that played out in communities throughout New Mexico.

One such plea for help came in the form of a letter from the Superintendent of Doña Ana County, R.E. McBride in April of 1919. McBride wrote to Larrazolo irate about a school in his district in the town of Mesilla. According to McBride, the school was across the street from a new public school that had recently been built. The teacher of the school in question was named Mr. Armendaris, and he ran his school entirely in Spanish, much to the frustration of Superintendent McBride. In one of several letters to governor Larrazolo, McBride writes,

In the matter of the Armendaris school in Old Mesilla I have to report that he has notified me that he has established a "course in English" with a Miss Frieze as teacher. He does not say what this course offers but I understand that it is not in keeping with the requirements of the State Board of Education. The young lady in question is not a certified teacher and I doubt her ability to speak English let alone teach it. Before I take any further steps I would ask that if possible yourself or some accredited member of the Board of Education visit this school with me and take the matter under consideration to determine what next, if anything, to do.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ McBride, R.E., "R.E. McBride to J.H. Wagner," April 1919, "Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919" Folder 150, Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Mr. McBride's request to have a State Education Board member come to his county in order to assess the validity of this Spanish school was fulfilled by a Mr. Wagner, the state superintendent of public instruction. The full report gives a scathing comparison of the Spanish school as compared with the local public school.

A general statement at the beginning of the report has two bullet points. The first reads as follows:

1. Mr. Manuel Armendaris established a one room school across the street from the public school in Mesilla. Mr. Armendaris neither speaks or understands the English language. Until recently all instruction has been given in Spanish. For this reason, the Council of Defense closed the school upon the grounds that such a school was entirely an alien institution.¹¹⁷

The first interesting point in this report is the statement that Mr. Armendaris speaks no English. In the letter from Superintendent McBride to Governor Larrazolo he states that Mr. Armendaris had notified him that the school would have a course in English. Assuming McBride speaks no Spanish, this conversation must have happened in English. A second point of interest is that the Council of Defense—not the State Department of Education, was the authority that the State Superintendent invoked to close the school. Between the years of 1917 and 1921 the United States formed the Council of National Defense (CND), a nonpartisan committee to help in a number of non-military defense activities, including but not limited to “promoting public health, promoting child welfare, promoting Americanization among those born in other countries, and promoting English-Only laws.”¹¹⁸ The council's involvement in this case demonstrates some of

¹¹⁷ “Memo to the State Director of Public Instruction,” April 1919, “Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919” Folder 150, Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

¹¹⁸ Green III, Walter G., “Council of National Defense and State Defense Councils,” *The Electronic Encyclopaedia of Civil Defense and Emergency Management* (University of

the pressures for national unity that were at work during this time and how they played out within states and localities. In 1916, Congress asked that each state form additional branches of the CND, with the purpose of “overseeing production and conservation of fuel and food, mobilizing labor, coordinating the sale of war bonds, and investigating alleged disloyalty.”¹¹⁹ The fact that this school drew the attention of the CND demonstrates that the use of Spanish in this context was not only up for debate about best practices in education, but that it was positioned as a direct threat to national unity and security. The second point in the report’s general statement says,

2. Dr. McBride has closed the school twice as an illegal school not meeting the requirements regarding the course of study, the teaching of the English language in the United States, etc. Each time Mr. Armendaris has reopened the school finally stating that he would make this a legal school by employing a teacher to give instruction in English.¹²⁰

The second bullet point tells a surprising story—that this school had been closed down multiple times, and that each time Mr. Armendaris disobeyed the requests of the school board and continued teaching anyway. The pattern of closing and opening the school is indicative of a much larger political power struggle, one in which the school symbolized a threat to Superintendent McBride, yet a right for the Nuevomexicano families who attended. It also raises questions about why and how the school board thought it had the authority to close a private school. Since the students were paying a small fee to attend, the school presumably should have been able to operate autonomously.

Progressives of the early 1900s embraced a vast range of responses to dealing with immigrants. Van Nuys states, “A significant proportion of progressive Americanizers hoped to

Richmond), accessed April 29, 2016,
<https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~wgreen/ECDnatdefcounI.html>.

¹¹⁹ Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West*, 45.

¹²⁰ “Memo to the State Director of Public Instruction.”

reshape aliens into citizens through conformity to a presumptive Anglo-American cultural model.”¹²¹ He goes on to write, “By uniting new citizens with the native-born, Americanization promised to broaden the national experience through ‘a mutual giving and taking of contributions from both new and older Americans.’”¹²² The challenge New Mexico posed for progressives is that definitions of immigrant and citizen were blurred by the political history of the state. The progressive agenda of assimilating students through the schools was met with far more resistance in New Mexico than in other parts of the country because of the long-standing tradition of autonomous educational institutions developed through many years as a territory. Not only that, but the students in Mr. Armendaris’ school may well have been citizens of the United States, and residents of the land for many generations.

The rest of the comparative review between Mr. Armendaris’ school and the new public school review touched on several areas, including Methods of Instruction, Textbooks, Building and Equipment, Qualifications of Teachers, and Fees. The school charged a fee of \$1.50 per month for pupils to attend, presumably covering the cost of Mr. Armendaris’ salary and the materials and supplies used by the pupils. These sections of the report show that the school was not only criticized for its use of Spanish, but that the building itself came under scrutiny. The report reads, “The room used for this school is in a large adobe house. The only door opens out into the hall and furnishes the only means of ventilation, as the three windows, two on the left of the pupils and one in front are usually closed. Home made double desks and benches are being used...the floor is very filthy.”¹²³ Never mind that an easy remedy for the “ventilation problem” would be to open the three windows, in comparison, the public school across the street is

¹²¹ Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West*, 35.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Memo to the State Director of Public Instruction.”

described to be “well ventilated, lighted and attractive in every way. The children were neat and clean in appearance and interested in their work. They spoke to the visitors in English.”¹²⁴

The focus on cleanliness and attractiveness of both the building and the children reflects common biases against Mexican Americans throughout the United States during this time period. Even through the 1940s and 1950s my own grandmother would meticulously check my mother and uncles for lice at the breakfast table each morning, because, as she said, “we can’t have anyone calling you dirty Mexicans.” Natalia Molina writes about “the pathologizing of Mexican culture and Mexican spaces” through the public health system during the first two decades of the 20th century.¹²⁵ Her book, *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* demonstrates how health care workers and the press positioned Mexican communities as crude and primitive based on “unacknowledged racial norms” that resulted in “unequal healthcare for groups at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.”¹²⁶ She states, “The *Los Angeles Times* ran headlines such as ‘Shocking. Filth, Disease, and Poverty Rampant’ in stories describing Mexican neighborhoods with high IMRs (Infant Mortality Rates).”¹²⁷ The language used in the comparative analysis of the Spanish and English schools seems to echo with the undercurrent of some of these stereotypes.

Perhaps the final section of the report speaks most directly to the debate over Americanization and cultural preservation, and the struggle for power that played out between these two schools. The summary of the evaluation states,

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*, American Crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 78.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 77.

¹²⁷ Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*, American Crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 77.

The Public School is standard in every respect. The boys and girls in the public school in Mesilla are being trained to become efficient citizens of the United States. The influence for good of a school such as this on the lives of these boys and girls cannot be overstated.

In direct contrast to this is the other school which pays no attention whatsoever to courses, standards, etc., leads away rather than towards American citizenship. Such a school is a detriment to the progress of education in this state.¹²⁸

McBride finishes the report with a request to close the school and the declaration that he will fine families for truancy if their children do not immediately enroll in the new public school. One has to ask, why did Nuevomexicano parents continue paying tuition and sending their children to Mr. Armendaris' school in the face of closures and criticism from the superintendent, and with another free public school readily available to them? What priorities, values, and agendas did they hold that were not reflected in the new public school, but that were reflected in Mr. Armendaris' school?

Mr. Armendaris' action of opening and reopening his school after requests for closure from the Council of Defense can be interpreted as resistance to the progressive push for Americanization that seems to align with many of the concerns voiced by Superintendent McBride. Governor Larrazolo's appeal to Anglos regarding the common European heritage of Nuevomexicanos did not hold up in this instance, as the school under scrutiny was labeled "an alien institution." Progressivism of the time "sought to tame Western society of its frontier characteristics," which included "imposing discipline and restraint" on newly standardized elements of society, including business, labor, and education.¹²⁹ The push back against such linguistic and cultural difference in Mr. Armendaris' school aligns with this assimilationist agenda, which came not only from the superintendent, but from national rhetoric around the melting pot of American, and the role of education as a social tool to promote homogeneous and

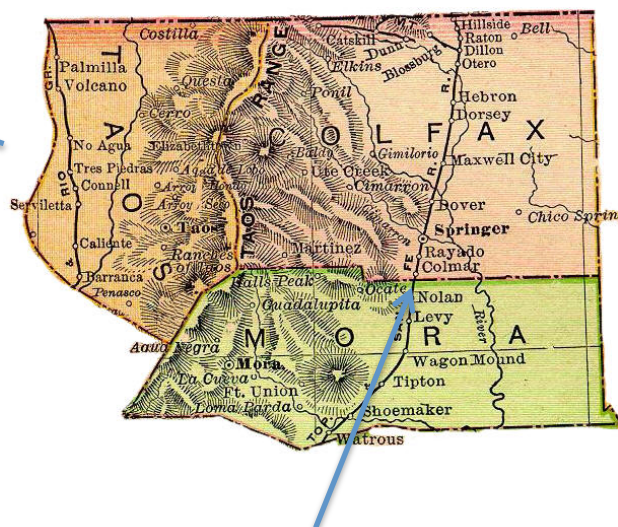
¹²⁸ "Memo to the State Director of Public Instruction."

¹²⁹ Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West*, 34.

“efficient citizens of the United States.”¹³⁰ The fact that Superintendent McBride took his local concerns all the way up to Governor Larrazolo demonstrates how Mr. Armendaris was a clear threat to the cultural ideals that McBride held for his county, and that were reflected in the broader context of American society.

¹³⁰ “Memo to the State Director of Public Instruction.”

Conflict in Colfax and Mora County: Exclusion and Marginalization



Colmor, border of Mora and Colfax Counties, New Mexico¹³¹

In the same year of 1919, a very different debate was playing out in the northern part of the state between a school in Colfax County and Nuevomexicano families from neighboring Mora County. Contrary to the debate in Doña Ana County, this conflict revolved around exclusion, not assimilation. Once again, Governor Larrazolo was the recipient of letters about the issue, this time from both sides of the debate. The first letter is dated October 17,th 1919 and it comes from Governor Larrazolo himself. It is addressed to a José Sánchez responding to the issue of children from his county being excluded from the nearby Colmor School. I can conclude from the content of the governor's letter that he was responding to a letter dated earlier that he received regarding this matter, but the archive provided no evidence of this original correspondence. Larrazolo writes,

¹³¹ "Taos, Colfax, Mora County, 1895" (Global Landforms DataBase, n.d.), New Mexico Digital Map Library; "Quick View Map of Counties."

He recibito la carta de Ud. en la que me informa de la conducta del maestro o maestra de la escuela que está cerca de Colmor, pero sin embargo en el condado de Colfax, rehusándose de recibir los niños que residen en Colmor, sobre pretexto de que son residentes del condado de Mora.¹³²

[I received a letter from you informing me of the behavior of the teacher from the school that is close to Colmor, but nevertheless in Colfax County, refusing to receive children who reside in Colmor, under the pretext that they are residents of Mora County.]

Upon examining a county map, the town of Colmor is in fact on the county line with Mora and Colfax Counties. The borders would have been even more ambiguous in 1919, as the boundaries were drawn over already settled and established land. According to the address stated in the letter, Mr. Sánchez lives in the town of Colmor, so it is logical that he would want to enroll his children in the local school. Larrazolo makes immediate promises to Sánchez, assuring him that the children in his community will not face such a negative reception again, and must be allowed entry to the Colmor School. He states,

Con esta misma fecha estoy escribiendo al superintendente de escuelas del condado de Colfax, pidiéndole dé orden al maestro o maestra de su comunidad para que reciba sus niños. De la misma manera estoy escribiendo al superintendente de instrucción pública del estado, Señor Wagner, suplicándole dé orden al dicho superintendente del condado de Colfax al mismo efecto.¹³³

[On this same date I am writing to the superintendent of schools in Colfax County, asking him to order the teacher in their community to receive your children. In the same way I am writing to the superintendent of public instruction of the state, Mr. Wagner, beseeching that he order the superintendent of Colfax County to the same effect.]

Larrazolo kept his promise to contact the superintendent in Colfax County, and the state superintendent. Several days later he received their responses, however his demands were not readily met.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state, Jonathan H. Wagner put pressure on the Colfax County superintendent, R.C. Bonney regarding the twenty children in question.

¹³² “O. A. Larrazolo to José Sánchez.”

¹³³ Ibid.

The response from Superintendent Bonney, however, deferred blame to the Mora County Superintendent and the Mora County educational board for refusing to consolidate the districts.

Colfax County Superintendent Bonney writes in a letter to State Superintendent Wagner,

I tried all summer to induce the Mora County board to form a consolidation with us under the new law passed last legislature covering this particular matter. Mr. Alfredo Lucero, County Superintendent of Schools nor anyone in his board will pay attention to my letters and have entirely ignored the proposition of joining with us. For that reason I have excluded children from Mora County, thinking it might cause their board to weigh the matter.¹³⁴

Superintendent Bonney admits that this exclusion is an attempt to use the students in question as bargaining chips to pressure the Mora County School Board to go through official channels to consolidate with Colfax County. The refusal from Mora County Superintendent could be read several ways—Superintendent Bonney clearly sees it as an irresponsible rejection to his proposal. However, I question what it would mean to consolidate the two school boards. Would there be a transfer of power? Certainly only one County Superintendent would prevail if the two counties merged. Would it mean relinquishing power on the part of a county headed by a superintendent with a Spanish surname into an Anglo-led county? It reminds me of the example of New Mexico’s first educational legislation of 1855, when the proposal to centralize schools under a state territorial government was overturned by Nuevomexicano voters because it meant losing local control of their schools. It was misinterpreted as proof that Nuevomexicanos lacked a vested interest in education. Superintendent Bonney writes with a similar tone regarding the failure of Mora County to agree to consolidate, but ignores the fact that any merger of two autonomous districts means a transfer or consolidation of power. Mora County Superintendent Lucero was surely weighing this decision and what consequences it would have for his district.

¹³⁴ “R.C. Bonney to J.H. Wagner,” October 30, 1919, Folder 150, “Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919” Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In both of Bonney's letters to Wagner and Governor Larrazolo, he describes the new school in Colmor as "a fine new building" and "a fine new four room school house."¹³⁵ The newness of the school sounds like something to preserve or to be earned. Superintendent Bonney also mentions in a letter to State Superintendent Mr. Wagner, "If we admit those children at this time it will require one more teacher. It might be well to offer them school privilege for this year if they will employ a teacher for the Colmor school, and perhaps, by another year they might conclude to consolidate with us."¹³⁶ Despite the fact that it is unlikely all the children from Mora County are the same age, the state superintendent suggests putting them in their own classroom with a teacher from their county. Despite the clearly superior quality of the new school, the new students would need to be segregated into their own classroom, rather than incorporated and spread amongst the four established classes. It seems in the case of the Colmor school, every possible hurdle is put in the path of allowing entry to the students in question. It isn't until the last dated letter in the set that the delay is named as being at all racially motivated. Mr. Sánchez writes in a letter to Governor Larrazolo dated November 15, 1919,

Estoy esperando el resultado de la escuela porque estoy mirando la grande necesidad de escuela para estos niños. Senor, aquí está una persona que vive en el condado de Mora y fueron retirados sus niños de la escuela y hace algunos días que los volvieron a recibir en la misma, tal vez porque son de nacionalidad Americana y nosotros somos Mexicanos, y no podemos tener permiso.¹³⁷

[I am waiting for the result of the school because I'm looking at a great need for school for these children. Sir, here is a person who lives in Mora County and their children were removed from school and a few days ago they were again received in the same way,

¹³⁵ "R.C. Bonney to Octaviano Larrazolo," October 20, 1919, Folder 150, "Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919" Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico; "R.C. Bonney to J.H. Wagner."

¹³⁶ "R.C. Bonney to J.H. Wagner."

¹³⁷ "José Sánchez to O.A. Larrazolo," November 15, 1919, Folder 150, "Miscellaneous School Matters, 1919" Governor Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, Collection 1959-097, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

perhaps because they are of American nationality and we are Mexican, and we can not have permission.]

Mr. Sánchez finally openly posits the question of exclusion from the Colmor School based on race, when he points out, “they are of American nationality and we are Mexican.”¹³⁸ Throughout the correspondence between Governor Larrazolo, and both the State and County Superintendents, the question of racial exclusion is not openly stated. But it would not be a reach to suggest that there was a racial motivation for denying the students in question entry to the school. Although racial segregation was never legally applied to students of Mexican descent, there are numerous examples of de facto segregation that impacted Mexican students in all of the borderlands states.

The case of *Romo v. Laird* in 1925 addressed the de facto segregation that occurred between two schools in Arizona, the Eighth Street School for Mexican children, and the Tenth Street School for Anglo children. Although the segregation of Mexican students was never explicitly written into state law, the practice was long-standing. When parent Adolpho “Babe” Romo tried to enroll his four children in the Tenth Street Anglo School under the grounds that its teachers were better qualified and certified, he was denied. After taking the issue up to the Maricopa County Superior Court, it was exposed that the Eighth Street School teachers did not carry full credentials and were student teachers, as opposed to the fully certified teachers in the Tenth Street School. Based on the conclusion that the schools were in fact unequal, Romo’s children were allowed entry to the Tenth Street School under the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. However, the segregated nature of the two schools did not actually change for any other children until long after 1925. Other cases addressing the de facto nature of Mexican segregation include *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930), *Alvaro v. Lemon Grove* (1931), *Mendez v.*

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Westminster (1946), *Delgado v. Bastrop* (1948) and *Gonzalez v. Sheeley* (1951).¹³⁹ In both the Lemon Grove and Westminster cases, Mexican students were segregated based on surname and a “Mexican look.” Powers writes, “Whether instituted by law, informally sanctioned by government officials, or enacted through local custom, whites used segregation to maintain group boundaries and to denote the lower social, political and moral status of non-white groups.”¹⁴⁰

In the first two decades of the 1900s, New Mexico offered a unique racial context for these dynamics of exclusion, because nearly half the population was of Mexican descent. Without an obvious Anglo majority, many of the segregation strategies employed by whites in power in other parts of the country were not as effective, or even possible. This does not mean examples of discrimination and exclusion did not exist. In this example, there seem to be endless reasons offered by the Anglo superintendents for keeping the children of Mora County out of the new Colmor School: staffing, space, and political mergers. The final letter in the correspondence from José Sánchez has no response on record, so there is no way of knowing if the students were eventually admitted, or if the conflict over resources and space continued. The question he poses over the role that race played in this situation of exclusion reminds us of the racial climate of the time—one in which questions of belonging and definitions of “American” were spread throughout the United States by progressives. What other examples of racial discrimination occurred in New Mexico’s schools during this time? How does the racial construction of people of Mexican descent, falling outside the black-white binary, add complexity to the historical narrative of race and education?

¹³⁹ Jeanne M. Powers, “Forgotten History: Mexican American School Segregation in Arizona from 1900–1951,” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 41, no. 4 (October 21, 2008): 471, 476 doi:10.1080/10665680802400253.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.

The role of Larrazolo in this case is also intriguing and poses questions about the young governor's political agenda. When Noel points out the pluralist position he represented publically, she demonstrates how it helped in his election as governor and his subsequent role as the first Mexican American United States senator. But does his personalized correspondence, in Spanish and English, between a parent in Mora County demonstrate a deeper agenda, one in which the needs of Nuevomexicanos in rural counties could have equal weight to the decisions of Anglo school district officials? How many similar cases did Governor Larrazolo involve himself in during his time in office? Can we compare him to other Nuevomexicano leaders and academics penetrating Anglo dominated spaces, such as George I. Sánchez? Regarding Sánchez's racial positioning, Blanton writes, "He emphasized Hispanicity to professional, mostly Anglo audiences. To *Mexicanos*, however, Sánchez discussed his heritage quite differently. Throughout his life Sánchez made multiple contradictory claims to larger identities such as whiteness, Mexican-ness, and *mestizaje*."¹⁴¹ Blanton also references the first Democratic U.S. Senator from New Mexico, Dennis Chavez, elected in 1935, who "shifted definitions of himself in order to advance his political agenda."¹⁴² It is reasonable to say that Larrazolo's attention to the Colmor School conflict was part of his commitment to support the rights of Nuevomexicanos in his state. It is also clear from this example that the centralization of public schooling had a significant impact on the access some communities had to equal education.

¹⁴¹ Blanton, Carlos Kevin, *George I. Sánchez*, 15.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Conclusion

In the beginning of this investigation, I sought to better understand how schooling figured into the statehood transition, and to what extent education was affected by state-level debates over what it meant to become part of the union. In each one of my examples, the political transition from territory to state is embedded in the agenda, access, and content of schooling. However, the cases also leave lingering questions and ample opportunity for further research.

Jaramillo and Prince, founders of the El Rito School, demonstrated the ability to develop higher education opportunities for Nuevomexicanos, while appealing to the union with a push to professionalize teaching in rural, Spanish-speaking communities. Questions still remain about this case, however. Primarily, why would a class dominated by students with Spanish surnames present a commencement program with only Anglo students? It makes me wonder who was in charge of the funding for the school, and what government officials signed off on that first \$4,500 appropriation. Who was the school appealing to with their first year commencement ceremony? To more deeply interrogate this case, I would look into the financial records of the school, and reach out to other researchers who have investigated the school's history, such as Sigfredo Maestas. I would be most interested to see what curriculum was presented and what cultural agenda it prioritized. The curricular agenda of the school would better explain who had the most power in this educational space. Tracking these changes over time would reveal how that power evolved or was transferred.

In Mr. Armendaris' case, it is clear that joining the union impacted local schools through the standardization of public education and the push for a progressive agenda of Americanization, but the role of the Council of Defense in this case raises further questions. Van Nuys writes that the bulk of partnerships between State Council's of Defense and State

Education Boards occurred between 1918 and 1920.¹⁴³ The Armendaris case falls right into the middle of this timeframe. Further investigation into the role of the New Mexico Council of Defense might shed light on the power struggle that took place in Doña Ana County, or in other parts of New Mexico. Furthermore, comparing the community dynamic of a school that had self-selected to isolate itself from the greater English-speaking community is an interesting comparison to Mirel's insight on immigrant communities in other parts of the country. He writes, "Historian Maxine Seller argues that community-based organizations and groups in immigrant neighborhoods were so influential with regard to Americanization that, to a large extent, these newcomers Americanized themselves."¹⁴⁴ I would posit that because Nuevomexicanos were not immigrants, they did not form these highly assimilative communities that might have been found in other more urban hubs with many immigrant enclaves. Yet the Americanization efforts directed toward other immigrant groups were the same efforts directed toward Nuevomexicanos and Mr. Armendaris' school. How does the Council of Defense's role in New Mexico public education compare to other parts of the country? Was it disproportionately used as a policing force in New Mexico compared to other states that offered less resistance?

Finally, the Colmor case demonstrates that even in New Mexico, a state where Nuevomexicano leadership and representation was strong, there were still examples of exclusion in education, and a struggle over who benefited most from the new resources gleaned from statehood. In a recent article by Ruben Donato, Gonzolo Guzman and Jarron Hanson, they highlight the significance of a court case in Alamosa, Colorado in which students of Mexican decent were being segregated in a separate school. The case is relevant to the Colmor case, because like Nuevomexicanos who had lived in the region for generations, the plaintiffs in the

¹⁴³ Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West*, 62.

¹⁴⁴ Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism*, 102.

Colorado case “were historically removed from Mexico and had deep roots in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Because of the longstanding roots of many Mexicans in the San Luis Valley and the plaintiffs’ status as American citizens, the Mexican Consulate was not used as a resource either politically or legally in the community’s fight against segregation.”¹⁴⁵ This Colorado example and the Mora County example both raise questions about race, citizenship and de facto forms of segregation. The families in Mora County never took the issue of exclusion to court from what I was able to find, but further investigation regarding the segregation of Mexican Americans in the United States is still ripe for inquiry. How many other such cases exist? How has race impacted the trajectory of education for people of Mexican descent throughout history?

A striking element of the Colorado case is that the plaintiffs in the case “rejected their legal White status, claimed that they were racially distinct, and used the Colorado State Constitution to challenge segregation because it was illegal for schools to distinguish and classify children in public schools according to color or race.”¹⁴⁶ This is the first time this strategy was used. The Mora County case raises questions about the racial construction of Nuevomexicanos. The Johnson-Reed act of 1924 began what Natalia Molina calls, “an era of race-making.”¹⁴⁷ How did race-making play out in New Mexico, particularly within its historical context of Hispano power, citizenship, and resistance to Americanization efforts? What other

¹⁴⁵ Donato, Ruben, Guzman, Gonzolo, and Hanson, Jarrod, “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 in Education*, June 1, 2016, 4, doi:10.1080/15348431.2016.1179190.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴⁷ Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America - Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 29), 2.

cases remain to be discovered that would further shed light on the racial construction of Mexican Americans in the United States?

New Mexico's transition from territory to state is a valuable example of the power and influence of education in political decisions. Investigations like this, which focus attention on the history of education in the American Southwest, offer new insights into the complexities of rural education, normal schools, and the construction of race and citizenship in the United States. By examining these themes within the context of New Mexico, I seek to contribute to the body of knowledge which addresses the question Victoria-María Macdonald posed about interrogating how and why Latino peoples came to be part of the United States. By examining the unique trajectory of statehood in New Mexico and posing questions for further investigation, I hope to expose a richer and more complex narrative of schooling, demonstrating the power, significance, and long-standing presence of Latinos in the broad scope of U.S. educational history.

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