

SUMMARIES OF
THE FIRST FIVE REPORTS
OF
THE MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION STUDY

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SUMMARY OF MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION REPORT I

ETHNIC ISOLATION OF MEXICAN AMERICANS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE SOUTHWEST

Three basic findings stem from the Commission's study of the demographic characteristics and ethnic isolation of Mexican American students and staff in the Southwest: (1) public school pupils of this ethnic group are severely isolated by school district and by schools within individual districts; (2) for the most part, Mexican Americans are underrepresented on school and district professional staffs and on boards of education, i.e., they constitute a substantially lower proportion of both staff and board membership than they do of enrollment; and (3) the majority of Mexican American staff and school board members are found in predominantly Mexican American schools or districts.

There are about two million Spanish surname students, including Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Latin Americans, in the public schools of the continental United States. The second largest minority group in the public schools, they constitute about 5 percent of the total U.S. school population.

Approximately 1.4 million, or 70 percent of the Spanish surname pupils, attend school in the five Southwestern States of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Almost all of these pupils are Mexican Americans. The largest minority group in the schools of the region, they comprise 17 percent of the total enrollment. More than four-fifths are in two States, California and Texas, with nearly 50 percent in California alone. However, Mexican Americans constitute more of the enrollment [38 percent] in New Mexico than in any other State.

The Mexican American population is primarily urban. The majority of Mexican American pupils attend school in large urban districts that have enrollments of 10,000 or more. In each State one or more of the large urban districts contain a significant proportion of the Mexican American enrollment: Los Angeles, Calif.; San Antonio, El Paso, and Houston, Tex.; Denver, Colo.; Albuquerque, N. Mex.; and Tucson, Ariz.

Within each of the States the Mexican American school population is concentrated in specific regions or geographic areas. In Texas nearly two-thirds of all Mexican American pupils attend school in the counties located along or near the Mexican border. In this area, about three of every five students are Mexican American. To a lesser

extent Mexican Americans also are concentrated in the counties of north-central New Mexico, southern Colorado, southern Arizona, and in the agricultural valleys and southern coastal areas of California.

While Mexican American pupils are unevenly distributed among the States and concentrated in specific geographic areas within each State, they are also concentrated or isolated in districts and schools of the Southwest. About 404,000 Mexican American pupils, or 30 percent of this ethnic group's enrollment in the Southwest, attend schools in approximately 200 predominantly [50 percent or more] Mexican American districts in the region.

The largest number of predominantly Mexican American districts is in Texas. Ninety-four predominantly Mexican American districts, almost all of which are located in the southern part of the State, contain nearly 60 percent of the State's total Mexican American enrollment. About 20 percent of Texas' Mexican American students attend school in districts which are nearly all [80 percent or more] Mexican American.

Most of the other predominantly Mexican American districts are in California and New Mexico. Together, these States contain as many predominantly Mexican American districts as Texas [about 90]; however, the total Mexican American school population of these districts is much smaller. They include only about 94,000 Mexican American pupils [55,000 in California and 39,000 in New Mexico].

The isolation of Mexican American pupils in predominantly Mexican American districts results in part from their concentration in specific geographic areas of each State. However, many of these students are isolated in districts which are contiguous to predominantly Anglo districts. In San Antonio, five districts located in the heart of the city are predominantly Mexican American and contain 90 percent of all Mexican Americans in the area. Well over one-half of the Anglo public school enrollment is in eight predominantly Anglo districts which surround the core city. Each of the five predominantly Mexican American districts borders on one or more of the Anglo districts.

A large proportion of the Mexican American

enrollment in the Southwest also tends to be concentrated in a comparatively small number of schools. Approximately 1,500 schools [12 percent] are predominantly Mexican American. They house about 635,000 pupils, or 45 percent of the total Mexican American enrollment in the Southwest. Nearly 300,000 pupils, or more than 20 percent, are in schools which have between an 80 and 100 percent Mexican American student body. These pupils are most severely isolated in schools in Texas and New Mexico. In these two States, two-thirds of all Mexican American students attend predominantly Mexican American schools. In Texas about 40 percent are in schools nearly all-Mexican American. Students of this minority group are least isolated in California, where less than 30 percent are found in predominantly Mexican American schools.

At the elementary school level, Mexican American experience the greatest degree of ethnic isolation. One-half of the Mexican American elementary students attend predominantly Mexican American schools, while about 35 percent of their secondary school enrollment is in predominantly Mexican American schools.

A major aspect of the Commission investigation was directed to ascertaining the extent to which the Mexican American composition of schools does not closely resemble that of the districts in which they are located. Schools with a Mexican American enrollment significantly at variance with that of the district's school population were considered to be ethnically imbalanced.

In applying the concept of ethnic imbalance to the Mexican American enrollment in the schools, a 15 percent standard of deviation is permitted. Thus, schools are categorized as imbalanced only if the Mexican American composition is more than 15 percent greater or less than the composition of the district.

Three facets of ethnic imbalance were examined: (1) its presence throughout the Southwest; (2) its presence in both large and small districts; and (3) its presence in both predominantly Mexican American and Anglo districts.

Several important findings emerge when the Mexican American composition of the schools in the Southwest is compared to that of the districts in which they are located:

(1) A considerable proportion of Mexican American students in the Southwest attend ethnically imbalanced schools. About 30 percent are in

schools that have a Mexican American enrollment in excess of the 15 percent standard of deviation. Three percent are in schools that have a disproportionately low Mexican American enrollment below the 15 percent deviation. Two-thirds are ethnically balanced schools.

(2) The extent of ethnic imbalance differs sharply among the five States. Even in New Mexico and Texas, the extent of imbalance does not vary appreciably from that in other States although in each of these two States two-thirds of the Mexican American pupils are isolated in predominantly Mexican American schools. Many of these schools fall within the 15 percent deviation and are ethnically balanced.

(3) Four of the largest school districts in the Southwest account for a significant percentage of the Mexican American students who are in schools that have a disproportionately high Mexican American enrollment. Each of these districts—Los Angeles, Denver, Albuquerque, and Tucson—contains proportionately more of the students in these imbalanced schools than their share of the total Mexican American enrollment in each respective State.

(4) Although these four large districts account for much of the imbalance in their States, ethnic imbalance is not necessarily contingent on the size of district. There is considerable ethnic imbalance in small or medium sized districts as well.

(5) The extent of imbalance is not influenced by the ethnic composition of the district. Imbalanced schools can be found in both predominantly Mexican American and predominantly Anglo districts.

For example, in Harlandale Independent School District, a large district located in the south-central part of the city of San Antonio, about half of the Mexican American students attend schools that have a disproportionately high Mexican American enrollment. In two small predominantly Mexican American districts in south and west Texas, there is nearly complete segregation of Mexican American and Anglo pupils at the elementary school level. In the Tucson School District, which is predominantly Anglo, three-fourths of the Mexican Americans are in schools that have a disproportionately high Mexican American enrollment. In two small predominantly Anglo districts—one in northern Colorado and the other in the central coastal area of California—about 90

percent and 50 percent, respectively, of the Mexican American students are in schools that have a high Mexican American enrollment.

California alone of the five Southwestern States has taken action to eliminate ethnic imbalance in its schools. This State has enacted a law to eliminate and prevent the growth of segregation in the schools caused by patterns of residential segregation. The law declares a school to be imbalanced "if the percentage of pupils of one or more racial or ethnic groups differs by more than fifteen percentage points from that in all schools of the district."⁷⁷ It also requires districts having imbalanced schools to study and consider alternative plans to correct such imbalance.

Utilizing information gathered in October 1968 and applying the 15 percent measure of racial and ethnic imbalance, the California State Department of Education has determined that 222 of the State's 1,138 school districts have imbalanced schools. These districts contain approximately 1,800 imbalanced schools or slightly more than one-fourth of the 6,600 schools in the State. According to the California procedure for measuring imbalance, 46 percent of the Mexican American enrollment in the State attends ethnically imbalanced schools.⁷⁸ In December 1969 these districts were requested to file notice with the State department of education of their intent to study and consider possible alternative plans for preventing and eliminating racial and ethnic imbalance. Twenty-five districts have been removed from the list of those maintaining imbalanced schools. The overwhelming majority of the remaining districts [189] have declared their intention of studying plans to eliminate imbalanced schools. Only eight districts have declined to declare such an intention.

The Commission's report also examines the representation and school assignment of Mexican Americans holding the following school positions: classroom teachers, school principals, assistant or

vice principals, counselors, librarians, other professional nonteaching school staff, secretaries, custodians, and teachers' aides. Except for those in the positions of custodian or teachers' aide, Mexican Americans comprise substantially less of school staff than they do of enrollment. Also, with the exception of counselors and custodians, Mexican Americans on school staffs are more likely to be found in predominantly Mexican American schools than are students.

Mexican Americans are grossly underrepresented among teachers. Of approximately 325,000 teachers in the Southwest, only about 12,000, or 4 percent, are Mexican American, while about 17 percent of the enrollment is Mexican American. In contrast, proportionately more teachers than pupils are Anglo. Furthermore, black teachers, although they are also underrepresented, outnumber Mexican American teachers by almost two to one. School systems in Texas and California employ three-fourths of all Mexican American teachers. Most of the other Mexican American teachers [15 percent] are found in New Mexico.

Proportionately more Mexican American teachers [55 percent] than pupils [45 percent] are found in predominantly Mexican American schools. One-third of the teachers are in schools whose enrollments are 80 percent or more Mexican American. Although the larger number of Mexican American teachers is assigned to predominantly Mexican American schools, they still constitute a very low percentage of teachers in these schools, mainly because so few members of this ethnic group are employed as teachers.

A much higher percentage of Mexican American teachers in Texas than in California are in predominantly Mexican American schools. More than 80 percent of all Mexican American teachers in Texas are assigned to schools that have at least a 50 percent Mexican American enrollment; more than 60 percent of the Mexican American teachers are in schools with an enrollment that is at least 80 percent Mexican American. The distribution of Mexican American teachers in California is roughly the reverse of that in Texas. In California more than 80 percent of all Mexican American teachers are assigned to schools in which pupils of this ethnic group *do not* constitute the majority of the enrollment. Two-thirds of Mexican American teachers are in schools in which less than 25 percent of the enrollment is Mexican American.

An even smaller proportion of principals than teachers is Mexican American. Of approximately

⁷⁷ California State Department of Education. *California Laws and Policies Relating to Equal Opportunities in Education*. Sacramento 1969, p. 3.

⁷⁸ This figure includes Mexican American pupils who are in imbalanced schools in which either too few or too many students of one or more of the racial and ethnic groups are represented. It is higher than the percentage of Mexican Americans which the Commission estimates to be in imbalanced schools. This discrepancy results, in part, from the fact that the Commission has counted only those pupils in schools that have an imbalanced Mexican American composition while the California department has also included those students in schools whose composition of other racial and ethnic groups is disproportionate to that of the district.

12,000 school principals in the Southwest, less than 400 [3 percent] are Mexican American. More than 90 percent of all Mexican American principals are employed in Texas, California, and New Mexico. As with teachers, proportionately more principals than students are Anglo. Further, Mexican American principals are outnumbered by black principals.

Mexican American principals are even more likely than either pupils or classroom teachers to be assigned to predominantly Mexican American schools. Nearly 65 percent of Mexican American school principals are found in schools in which Mexican American pupils form the majority of the enrollment. More than 40 percent are in schools in which from 80 to 100 percent of the pupils are Mexican American. However, Mexican Americans represent a very low proportion of all principals assigned to predominantly Mexican American schools. This is true primarily because so few Mexican Americans are employed as principals.

Employment and school assignment patterns for Mexican Americans in other nonteaching professional positions such as assistant principals, counselors, and librarians, is similar to that of Mexican American teachers and principals. Very few occupy such positions, and those who do, are, for the most part, assigned to schools that are predominantly Mexican American. To a greater extent Mexican Americans are employed as teachers' aides or as nonprofessionals, especially custodians, rather than as professionals.

In the area of the Southwest surveyed by the Commission, approximately 480, or about 7 percent of more than 6,750 professionals employed in school district offices, are Mexican American.⁷⁹ About 50 of the 480 are superintendents or associate or assistant superintendents. The majority of Mexican Americans holding these positions are in New Mexico. Most Mexican Americans in other district level professional positions are in Texas and California. Mexican Americans constitute a smaller proportion of total district professional staff than they do of enrollment. Generally, they

occupy a larger proportion of the work force in the positions of social worker, attendance officer, Federal programs director, and community relations specialist than they do in other district level staff positions. Almost half of the Mexican Americans in the survey area who hold staff positions in district offices are employed by districts that are predominantly Mexican American. More than 70 percent of the 235 persons so situated are in Texas. The majority of those employed by districts not having a predominantly Mexican American enrollment are found in California.

Mexican Americans are also underrepresented on local boards of education. Of approximately 4,600 school board members in the Commission's survey area only about 470, or 10 percent, are Mexican American. Slightly more than two-thirds of these Mexican Americans serve on boards in Texas and New Mexico. Nearly 70 percent of the 470 Mexican American board members are found in predominantly Mexican American districts. However, even in predominantly Mexican American communities, this ethnic group is generally underrepresented on the board of education. About 175 Mexican American board members, or 55 percent of the 320 who are in predominantly Mexican American districts, serve on a school board in which they constitute the majority of members. Nearly all [113] of those serving on predominantly Mexican American boards are in districts that are 80 to 100 percent Mexican American in school population.

⁷⁹ The Commission's survey conducted in Spring 1969 covered districts in the Southwest that have an enrollment which is 10 percent Mexican American or more. The Commission also utilized data from the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Fall 1968 racial and ethnic survey, which included the same districts surveyed by the Commission as well as those that have less than a 10 percent Mexican American enrollment. The discussion relative to students, teachers, and principals was drawn from the HEW survey as tabulated by the Commission.

SUMMARY OF MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION REPORT II

THE UNFINISHED EDUCATION

The basic finding of this report is that minority students in the Southwest—Mexican Americans, blacks, American Indians—do not obtain the benefits of public education at a rate equal to that of their Anglo classmates. This is true regardless of the measure of school achievement used.

The Commission has sought to evaluate school achievement by reference to five standard measures: school holding power, reading achievement, grade repetitions, overageness, and participation in extracurricular activities.

Without exception, minority students achieve at a lower rate than Anglos: their school holding power is lower; their reading achievement is poorer; their repetition of grades is more frequent; their overageness is more prevalent; and they participate in extracurricular activities to a lesser degree than their Anglo counterparts.

School Holding Power

The proportion of minority students who remain in school through the 12th grade is significantly lower than that of Anglo students, with Mexican Americans demonstrating the most severe rate of attrition. The Commission estimates that out of every 100 Mexican American youngsters who enter first grade in the survey area, only 60 graduate from high school; only 67 of every 100 black first graders graduate from high school. In contrast, 86 of every 100 Anglos remain in school and receive high school diplomas.

For Mexican Americans, there are sharp differences in school holding power among the five States. Of the two States with the largest Mexican American school enrollment—California and Texas—holding power is significantly greater in California where an estimated 64 percent of the Mexican American youngsters in the districts surveyed graduate. Texas, by contrast, demonstrates the poorest overall record of any of the States in its ability to hold Mexican American students. By the end of the eighth grade, Chicanos in the survey area have already lost 14 percent of their peers—almost as many as Anglos will lose by the 12th grade. Before the end of the 12th grade, nearly half, or 47 percent, of the Mexican American pupils will have left school. In 1968, there were approximately 290,000 Mexican Americans enrolled in grades 1 through 6 in Texas public schools. If present holding

power rates estimated by the Commission continue, 140,000 of these young people will never receive a high school diploma.

College entrance rates reveal an even greater gap between Anglos and minority group students. Nearly half the Anglo students who begin school continue on to college, but only about one of every four Chicano and black students do so.

Among the five Southwestern States, minority high school graduates have the greatest likelihood of entering college in California. There, 51 percent of black graduates in the districts surveyed go on to college as do 44 percent of Chicanos. In Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, however, fewer than one out of every three Chicano high school graduates undertakes higher education.

Reading Achievement

Throughout the survey area, a disproportionately large number of Chicanos and other minority youngsters lack reading skills commensurate with age and grade level expectations. At the fourth, eighth, and 12th grades the proportion of Mexican American and black students reading below grade level is generally twice as large as the proportion of Anglos reading below grade level. For the total Southwest survey area the percentage of minority students deficient in reading reaches as high as 63 and 70 percent in the 12th grade for Chicanos and blacks respectively. In the eighth grade the Chicano youngster is 2.3 times as likely as the Anglo to be reading below grade level while the black student is 2.1 times as likely.

Reading achievement becomes significantly lower for children of all ethnic groups as they advance in age and in grade level. For minority children, however, the drop is more severe than for Anglos. At the fourth grade, 51 percent of the Mexican Americans and 56 percent of the blacks, compared with 25 percent of the Anglos in the survey area, are reading below grade level. By the eighth grade, corresponding figures are 64 percent for Mexican Americans and 58 percent for blacks. Further deterioration occurs by the 12th grade despite the fact that many of the poorest achievers have already left school. At this stage, 63 percent of the Mexican Americans are reading below grade level as are 70 percent of the blacks and 34 percent of the Anglos.

The severity of reading retardation also increases the longer the Chicano and black youngsters remain in school. In the fourth grade, only 17 percent of the Mexican American and 21 percent of the black students are reading two or more years below grade level. By the 12th grade, however, two of every five Mexican American children and more than half the black students are at this low level of reading achievement.

Interstate comparisons reveal low achievement levels in reading for minority students in all States. In the California survey area 63 percent of the Chicanos at the 12th grade level are reading below grade level, while 59 percent of the black students at the same level are experiencing reading deficiencies. In Texas, two-thirds of all Mexican Americans and more than 70 percent of all black 12th graders fail to achieve grade level expectations in reading. By contrast, in none of the five States does the percentage of Anglos reading below grade level reach such high proportions. In fact, in only one State, Arizona, does the Anglo proportion approach the high percentages of minorities reading below grade level.

Grade Repetition

In the survey area, the Commission found that grade repetition rates for Mexican Americans are significantly higher than for Anglos. Some 16 percent of Mexican American students repeat the first grade as compared to 6 percent of the Anglos. Although the disparity between Mexican Americans and Anglos at the fourth grade is not as wide as in the first grade, Mexican American pupils are still twice as likely as Anglos to repeat this grade. The two States with the highest Mexican American pupil population, Texas and California, reveal significant differences in repetition rates. In the Texas schools surveyed, 22 percent of Chicano pupils are retained in first grade as compared to 10 percent in California.

The purpose of grade repetition is to increase the level of achievement for the retained student. In fact, the students' ultimate achievement level does not generally improve and, in addition, grade repetition predisposes the student to drop out before completion of high school.

Overageness

Another measure of achievement directly related to grade repetition is overageness for grade assignment. The Commission found that Mexican Americans in the survey area are as much as seven times as likely to be overage as their Anglo peers. The most significant difference appears in the eighth grade where more than 9 percent of the Mexican American pupils are overage as compared to a little more than 1 percent for the Anglo students. In the Southwest as a whole the degree of overageness increases for Anglos and blacks throughout the schooling process, but actually decreases for Chicanos between the eighth and 12th grades. The probable explanation for this phenomenon is that a very large percentage of overage Mexican American pupils leave school before graduation. The Commission estimated that at least 42 percent of overage Mexican American students in the eighth grade do not continue in school through the 12th grade.

Again, comparing the two largest States, the difference is impressive. More than 16 percent of Chicano eighth graders are overage in Texas. In California only about 2 percent are overage.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Involvement in extracurricular activities makes the school experience more meaningful and tends to enhance school holding power. The Commission found, however, that Mexican American students are underrepresented in extracurricular activities. This is true whether Mexican Americans constitute a majority or a minority of the student enrollment in a school.

Thus, under all five measures of school achievement minority children are performing at significantly lower levels than Anglos. This report has sought only to present objective facts concerning the differences in school achievement between minority and majority group students, not to account for them. Nevertheless, the Commission believes these wide differences are matters of crucial concern to the Nation. The ultimate test of a school system's effectiveness is the performance of its students. Under that test, our schools are failing.

MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION
REPORT III

THE EXCLUDED STUDENT: Educational
Practices Affecting Mexican
Americans in the Southwest

SUMMARY

The basic finding of the Commission's study is that school systems of the Southwest have not recognized the rich culture and tradition of the Mexican American students and have not adopted policies and programs which would enable those students to participate fully in the benefits of the educational process. Instead, the schools use a variety of exclusionary practices which deny the Chicano student the use of his language, a pride in his heritage, and the support of his community.

The suppression of the Spanish language is the most overt area of cultural exclusion. Because the use of a language other than English has been cited as an educational handicap as well as a deterrent to Americanization, schools have resorted to strict repressive measures. In spite of the fact that nearly 50 percent of the Mexican American first graders do not speak English as well as the average Anglo first grader, they are often compelled to learn a new language and course material in that language simultaneously during the first years of their educational experience.

One-third of the schools surveyed by the Commission admitted to discouraging Spanish in the classroom. Methods of enforcing the "No Spanish Rule" vary from simple discouragement of Spanish to actual discipline of the offenders.

There are various programs which may be used by schools as a means of meeting the English language difficulty encountered so frequently among Mexican Americans. Each reflects a distinct attitude and methodology for remedying English language deficiencies. The three most important programs are Bilingual Education, English as a Second Language, and Remedial Reading.

Bilingual Education is the only program which requires a modification of the traditional school curriculum. It is also the program which best utilizes both the bilingual and bicultural aspects of the children involved. In Fiscal Year 1969, HEW

committed \$7.5 million for 76 bilingual programs, 51 of which were for the Spanish speaking in the Southwest. Bilingual Education holds great promise for both the Mexican American and Anglo students, yet it is the most infrequently used. Only 6.5 percent of the Southwest's schools have bilingual programs, and these are reaching only 2.7 percent of the Mexican American student population—only one student out of nearly 40.

Programs in English as a Second Language (ESL) are much more limited in scope than Bilingual Education and also less effective for Mexican Americans. The sole objective of ESL is to make non-English speakers more competent in English. No effort is made to present related cultural material.

Unlike Bilingual Education, ESL requires no modification of the school curriculum. An estimated 5.5 percent of the Mexican American students in the Southwest receive some kind of instruction in English as a Second Language. This is about twice as many as are receiving Bilingual Education.

Of the three program discussed, Remedial Reading is the most limited in scope. It requires no change in the school curriculum and the least training of teachers. Using a strictly monolingual approach, Remedial Reading has been much more accepted in practice than either Bilingual Education or ESL. This program addresses itself to just one aspect of the language problem—poor reading achievement. By the 12th grade, 63 percent of all Chicano students read at least 6 months below grade level. More than half of the Southwest's schools offer Remedial Reading courses, yet only 10.7 percent of the region's Mexican American students are actually enrolled in these classes.

A close examination of the nature and use of these three programs reveals several interesting facts. The frequency of use of each program is inversely proportionate to the degree of curriculum change involved and to the extent of teacher training required.

ESL and Remedial Reading do not significantly modify the school; they are intended to adjust the child to the expectations of the school. These programs focus on academic achievement which is not the problem itself, but rather a symptom of the broader problem of language exclusion. Bilingual Education has the greatest potential for Anglo and non-English speaking students as well,

but it requires a great deal of curricular change and, consequently, is used only infrequently.

Furthermore, none of these programs reaches a substantial number of Mexican American students. Even Remedial Reading, which is offered in the largest number of schools, is reaching only one of five Chicano students who, by school measurements, need it.

Suppression of use of the Spanish language in schools is the area of cultural exclusion most easily identified and documented. A second exclusionary practice is the omission of Mexican American history, heritage, and folklore from the classrooms of the Southwest. Exclusion of heritage is generally manifested in two ways—through the textbooks and through the omission of course material and school activities relevant to Mexican Americans. The Study found that the curricula in most schools fail to inform either Anglo or Mexican American students of the substantial contributions of the Indo-Hispanic culture to the historical development of the Southwest. Only 4.3 percent of the elementary and 7.3 percent of the secondary schools surveyed by the Commission include a course in Mexican American history in their curricula.

In addition to course content, exclusion of heritage is also manifested in the cultural selectivity of schools. School and classroom activities, to the extent that they deal with Mexican American culture, tend to stress only the superficial and exotic elements—the “fantasy heritage” of the Southwest. This results in the reinforcement of existing stereotypes and denies the Mexican American student a full awareness and pride in his cultural heritage.

The exclusion of the Mexican American community is the third area of cultural exclusion examined in the Commission's Study. To determine the extent of community involvement or exclusion, the study examined four specific areas: contacts with parents, community advisory boards, community relations specialists, and consultants on Mexican American education.

Teachers and administrators utilize notices sent home and PTA meetings most frequently as methods of communicating with parents. While an estimated 4,000,000 persons in the Southwest identify Spanish as their mother tongue, only 25 percent of the elementary and 11 percent of the secondary schools send notices in Spanish to Span-

ish speaking parents. This automatically excludes a large segment of the population and has “the effect of denying equality of educational opportunity to Spanish surnamed pupils,” according to a Health, Education, and Welfare memorandum. The study also revealed that 91.7 percent of the Southwest's elementary schools and 98.5 percent of its secondary schools do not use Spanish as well as English in conducting their PTA meetings.

Community advisory boards are an untapped resource which could serve to activate community needs and opinions. Only one district in four actually has a community advisory board on Mexican American educational affairs. Furthermore, of the advisory boards which are recognized by school districts, fewer than one in four met more than five times during the 1968-69 school year. In districts which are predominantly Mexican American, the community representatives listed in-service training of teachers in Mexican American culture and history as their primary concern.

Contacts with parents and community advisory boards are methods by which the schools can communicate directly with the Mexican American parents and community. When these methods prove unsuccessful in the establishment of free communication, a community relations specialist may be called in to serve as a link between the people and the power structure. Schools often rely heavily on this individual to bridge the communication gap with the linguistically and culturally different community. The study demonstrated that 84 percent of the surveyed districts did not use community relations specialists at all. Thus, in spite of the need, most school systems have not established this type of liaison with the barrio.

The data concerning the use of Mexican American educational consultants are very similar; school districts are not availing themselves of experts who can help them determine and resolve their serious failures in educating Mexican Americans.

Cultural exclusion is a reality in public schools of the Southwest. This report has documented exclusionary practices in the vital areas of language, heritage, and community participation. Until practices and policies conducive to full participation of Mexican Americans in the educational process are adopted, equal opportunity in education is likely to remain more myth than reality for Mexican American students.

Summary

In this fourth report on Mexican American education in the Southwest, the Commission has examined the effects of the Texas school financing plan on Mexican American students in Texas.⁵⁷ Specifically it looks at disparities in:

1. State aid to local school districts, in particular the Minimum Foundation Program, which provides 96 percent of State education funds.
2. Property valuation within districts.
3. Property tax effort, or the rate at which property is taxed within school districts.
4. The economic burden of property taxes on Mexican American and Anglo citizens.

On all four counts predominantly Mexican American districts come out second best in comparison with predominantly Anglo districts. State aid does little to equalize the disparities in revenue between these school districts. As a consequence, the amount of money spent for the education of many Chicano students is three-fifths that spent to educate Anglo children.

How Education is Financed in Texas

The cost of financing public elementary and secondary education in Texas is shared by Federal, State, and local governments. Ten percent of the total cost is financed by Federal aid. Local school districts provide 40 percent, mainly through revenues from property taxes and the State meets the remaining 50 percent.

Most State aid [96 percent] is apportioned under the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP). The [MFP] has two facets: one which establishes the MFP budget, and the other which determines the proportion of that budget which will be paid by the districts.

The MFP budget is established according to an allo-

⁵⁷ As stated in the Introduction, Texas is the only State examined in this report because it is only in Texas that the majority of Mexican American students are in predominantly Chicano districts. Data on Texas can be analysed and disparities clearly seen in the comparison of educational funds available to Chicano as opposed to Anglo districts. In the other Southwestern States, most Mexican Americans are in predominantly Anglo districts, thus making it difficult to compare the financial support of education of most Chicano and Anglo students by district. There is evidence that intradistrict disparities in the financing of education exist in these States. Unfortunately, data necessary to examine the scope and nature of these disparities are not available at this time.

cation formula which designates what the MFP will finance and how much can be budgeted for each item. Essentially three costs are covered by the MFP: (1) salaries for teachers and other professional personnel; (2) school operating expenses; and (3) transportation costs. The number of personnel for whom salaries will be paid is based on the number of students in average daily attendance. Salaries for teachers and other professional personnel are calculated according to their educational attainment and creditable experience. The amount allocated for operating expenses is based on the number of teachers employed by the district, for which the State provides MFP salary aid. Transportation costs are based upon the number of students living 2 miles or more from school, the number of miles traveled, and the condition of the roads.

After the MFP budgets for all districts are computed, they are combined and approximately 20 percent of the total costs is set aside for payment by all districts. That part of MFP costs paid by districts is called the Local Fund Assignment (LFA).

All districts do not meet 20 percent of their own MFP costs. Some pay proportionately more, some pay less, depending on their taxpaying ability. All counties in the State share the total LFA burden according to their economic ability as determined by the county Economic Index. All districts within each county, in turn, divide the county LFA according to the percent of total county assessed valuation present in each district. It is in this manner that district Local Fund Assignment is set and the proportion of the total budget financed both by the State and the district determined. Some districts—about one in six—receive tax credits whereby their Local Fund Assignment is decreased and State aid is increased by an equal amount. Tax credits are granted to those districts in which specific types of nontaxable property are located, such as certain Federal and State land, and to those districts which are unable to raise their Local Fund Assignment even when taxing themselves at the maximum rate allowed by the State.

State aid is allocated in two forms: the flat grant, a uniform amount per pupil which is awarded to all districts regardless of wealth, and equalization aid, which is allocated to those districts in which the Local Fund Assignment and State flat grant aid does not meet the total Minimum Foundation Program budget.

Because the MFP does not cover all costs of educa-

tion in Texas, districts are allowed to tax themselves beyond that needed to meet their LFA costs. Legal maximum tax rates, the amount of property values in the district, and the economic burden which taxpayers are willing or able to bear determine the amount of additional funds that can be raised.

Inequities

The Texas school finance system results in discrimination against Mexican American school children. Predominantly Mexican American districts are less wealthy in terms of property values than Anglo districts and the average income of Chicanos is below that of Anglos. These circumstances existing, the State of Texas has devised an educational finance system by which the amount spent on the schooling of students is a function of district and personal wealth. The end result is that the poor stay poor and those receiving inferior education continue to receive inferior education.

1. Minimum Foundation Program

The main root of inequity in educational finance in Texas is the Minimum Foundation Program. Based on the formula for calculating district MFP budgets, predominantly Chicano districts qualify for substantially smaller budgets than Anglo districts. Average MFP budgets range from a low of \$283 per pupil in predominantly Chicano districts to a high of \$325 in districts 20 to 30 percent Mexican American.

The primary cause for these disparities can be attributed to State salary aid. Professional staff salaries constitute about 90 percent of all costs covered by the MFP. Aid for salaries is based on the education and experience of the persons employed. Anglo districts attract better qualified staff, and as a result the MFP provides a larger budget for these districts. About one of every three professionals in primarily Anglo school districts has a master's degree in contrast to one of every five in districts that are predominantly Mexican American. Further, teachers with emergency permits, many of whom have no college degree, are concentrated in Chicano districts. The Texas Governor's Committee on Public School Education noted in its 1969 report that the main reason more highly qualified teachers are in Anglo districts is that these teachers do not want to work in Chicano districts. In some cases, predominantly Mexican American districts are even unable to fill positions to which they are entitled under the MFP. When all these disparities are taken to-

gether, they amount to lower MFP budgets in predominantly Mexican American school districts.

2. Local Fund Assignment

The Local Fund Assignment, or that portion of MFP costs the districts must pay, is also characterized by several discriminatory features. Foremost among these are: (1) the use of assessed property values as the basis for computing district Local Fund Assignment, and (2) the granting of tax credits by which the LFA of a few fortunate districts is reduced and State aid increased by an equal amount. In Texas, property is assessed at less than its market or sales value. Though the ratio of assessed to market value may not vary within districts, they may and do vary between districts. In terms of both market value and assessed value, Mexican American districts are poorer than Anglo districts. Average market value per pupil ranges from a high of \$66,940 in districts 20 to 30 percent Mexican American to a low of \$20,810 in districts 80 percent or more Chicano. Assessed value per pupil in the two types of districts is \$16,520 and \$7,225 respectively. By the measure of assessed valuation districts 20 to 30 percent Mexican American are about 2.3 times wealthier than districts 80 percent or more Mexican American. By the more accurate and valid measure of market value, they are 3.2 times wealthier. The use of assessed value in determining Local Fund Assignments creates the false impression that Chicano districts have more taxpaying ability in relation to Anglo districts than they actually do.

Tax credits also benefit predominantly Anglo districts more than they do Mexican American districts. Credits to Anglo districts amount to about \$4.02 per pupil compared to \$1.55 in Chicano districts.⁵⁸

The end result is that even though predominantly Mexican American districts pay less per pupil in LFA than Anglo districts, they must levy a higher tax rate to raise their LFA. Local Fund Assignments range from a high of \$69 per pupil in districts 20 to 30 percent Mexican American to a low of \$27 in districts 80 percent or more Chicano. However, the rate at which these two types of districts must tax themselves to raise their LFA is 11 and 13 cents per \$100 of market value, respectively.

⁵⁸ This excludes El Paso Independent School District, which is 55 percent Chicano. This district, the single largest beneficiary of tax credits, receives about 15 percent of all credits that are applied to reduce a district's LFA obligation.

3. Supplements to the Minimum Foundation Program

An additional source of disparity in financing the education of Chicano students is the fact that districts are allowed to supplement the MFP. This means that Anglo districts with a high tax base and in which residents have high average personal income are able to provide additional funds with less effort than Chicano districts.

Effective tax rates are higher in predominantly Chicano districts than in most Anglo districts. The tax rate in Chicano districts averages 55 cents per \$100 of market value. Average tax rates are lowest [42 cents] in districts 20 to 30 percent Mexican American.⁵⁹

There is evidence that even within districts the property tax burden falls most heavily on Mexican Americans, even though they are probably less likely than Anglos to own their own businesses or homes and, if so, more likely to own property of lower sales value. Corporations and individuals that own property and pay the tax bill are not always those upon whom the tax burden ultimately falls. Property taxes on rental housing and most business properties are generally passed on to the consumer by adding the cost of the tax to the price of goods or services. The "shifted" cost of the tax hits the poor the hardest. The burden of taxes on other types of property, such as owner-occupied housing and farms, also falls most heavily on low-income people. Families spend a smaller proportion of their income on housing as family income rises. Further, low cost housing is often assessed at a higher ratio to market value than higher priced homes. As a

⁵⁹ Tax rates are commonly expressed as an amount per \$100 of assessed value. Because the ratio of assessed to market value varies, the tax rate expressed in terms of assessed value should be multiplied by the assessment ratio to obtain comparable, effective tax rates expressed in relation to market value.

quence, individuals in the lowest income brackets pay proportionately twice as much of their income in property taxes than do those at upper income levels. The average yearly income of Mexican Americans is significantly lower than that of Anglos. Thus, it is not surprising that income per student declines steadily as the proportion that Mexican Americans comprise of district enrollment increases. These disparities attain gross dimensions. Income per pupil in districts 80 percent or more Mexican American is less than half that in districts 10 to 20 percent Chicano. Based on these facts, it is obvious that residents of predominantly Mexican American districts are paying proportionately more of their income to property taxes to support the education of their children than residents in primarily Anglo districts.

The basic conclusion of this report is that Mexican Americans are not receiving a financial return commensurate with the drain on their pocketbook. Per pupil expenditures are substantially lower in Chicano than in Anglo districts. Expenditures range from a high of \$484 per pupil in districts 20 to 30 percent Chicano to a low of \$296, or about three-fifths that amount, in districts 80 percent or more Mexican American.

The State of Texas has devised a system of school finance by which expenditures on education are strongly tied to the property wealth of the district and the personal income of district residents. Although the State Minimum Foundation Program may have been intended to correct fiscal inequities, it has proved far from successful in practice. The Texas Minimum Foundation Program can perhaps best be described as a repressive jumble of provisions and conditions that do not adequately reduce financial disparities between Anglo and Mexican American districts and insure that significantly less is spent to educate Chicano children than their Anglo counterparts.

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The basic finding of this report is that the schools of the Southwest are failing to involve Mexican American children as active participants in the classroom to the same extent as Anglo children. On most of the measures of verbal interaction between teacher and student, there are gross disparities in favor of Anglos.

Thus teachers praise or encourage Anglo children 36 percent more often than Mexican Americans. They use or build upon the contributions of Anglo pupils fully 40 percent more frequently than those of Chicano pupils. Combining all types of approving or accepting teacher behavior, the teachers respond positively to Anglos about 40 percent more than they do to Chicano students. Teachers also direct questions to Anglo students 21 percent more often than they direct them to Mexican Americans. In addition, Mexican American pupils receive significantly less overall attention from the teacher, measured by the extent to which teachers address their students in a non-critical way. In light of these findings, it is not surprising to have also found that Mexican American children participate less in class than do Anglos; they speak less frequently both in response to the teacher and on their own initiative. The total picture that emerges from this study of classroom interaction is one in which Mexican American students are ignored compared to their Anglo counterparts.

The classroom is the setting in which a child's schooling takes place and the interaction between teacher and students is the heart of the educational process. The importance of certain types of interaction for student learning has been documented in previous studies. It has also been explained how all elements of this interaction, taken together, create a climate of learning which directly affects educational opportunity. Consequently, the discovered disparities in teacher behavior toward Mexican Americans and Anglos are likely to hinder seriously the educational opportunities and achievement of Chicano pupils. These findings raise disturbing questions concerning the ability of our schools to meet the educational needs of all students adequately.

Some would argue that the schools and teach-

ers are not responsible for these disparities in teachers' behavior toward Mexican American and Anglo students. They would argue that these disparities are a result of characteristics of Chicano pupils, such as differences in language and culture, attitudes toward school, and academic achievement levels.

As a group, Chicano pupils do differ from Anglo pupils in language, culture, and economic background. A large proportion of Chicano pupils enter school speaking very little English or with serious difficulties in using the language.⁷⁰ In addition, the culture, values, and familiar experiences of Chicano students often differ substantially from those of Anglo students and those on which the school program is based. The differences between the background characteristics of Chicano students and the language and culture of the schools are major obstacles to the educational progress of Chicano pupils. These discrepancies between the school and the home are one of the main causes of the lower participation and achievement levels of Chicano pupils in school.

The differences in language and culture may partly explain but cannot justify the disparities in classroom interaction documented in this report. It is the responsibility of the school and the teacher to accept the child as he comes to school and to orient the program to his cultural and linguistic needs. This, the schools of the Southwest have failed to do.

Only a very small percentage of schools in the Southwest have implemented language programs to remedy the English language deficiencies of Mexican American students. The content of the curriculum in most classrooms is designed to be relevant almost exclusively to the middle class child of the dominant society. The textbooks and source materials rarely make use of the skills and experiences which are familiar to children of Spanish speaking backgrounds. Similarly, teachers are seldom trained to incorporate the interests

⁷⁰ According to principals' estimates in the Commission's 1969 survey of schools and districts, 47 percent of Mexican American first graders do not speak English as well as the average Anglo first grader. See U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *The Excluded Student*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

and experiences of Chicano children into classroom discussions. In effect, the language and cultural background of Mexican American students is virtually excluded from the school programs in the Southwest.⁷¹

This exclusion takes its toll on the attitudes and achievement of Chicano pupils. Without the benefit of adequate language programs, many Mexican Americans fall behind academically in the early school years and are never able to catch up. The omission of their culture, values, and familiar experiences from the design of the educational program causes many Mexican American pupils to feel that the school is an alien environment with little relevance to them. These early school experiences of Chicanos thus set in motion the cycle of lowered interest, decreased participation, poor academic performance, and lowered self-esteem which is so difficult to break in the later school years. The schools bear major responsibility for this cycle of educational failure.

The failure of many schools in the Southwest to create settings conducive to the education of Mexican Americans invariably makes the teacher's job more difficult. However, there is still much that the teacher can do to encourage and help the Chicano student. The teacher can demon-

strate respect for the Chicano student by incorporating the culture and personal experiences of Chicano pupils into the classroom lessons and discussions. The teacher can encourage the student's participation by accepting and building upon his contributions and can try to provide him with the help needed to keep up with the academic material. However, the disparities in teacher behavior toward Anglo and Chicano pupils documented in this report indicate that Chicanos are not receiving the benefits of these types of teacher instruction in the classroom. Instead, the pattern of teacher-student interaction only mirrors the educational neglect of Mexican American students found throughout the educational system.

It is the schools and teachers of the Southwest, not the children, who are failing. They are failing in meeting their most basic responsibility—that of providing each child the opportunity to gain the maximum benefit of education and develop his capabilities to the fullest extent. In the Commission's view, the schools of the Southwest will continue to fail until fundamental changes are made. Changes are needed in the way teachers are trained and in the standards by which they are judged, and changes are needed in educational programs and curriculums so that all children may be reached.

⁷¹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *The Excluded Student*, *op cit.*

