PROBLEMS IN THE EDUCATION, MEXICAN AMERICANS

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INTRODUCTION

Mexican American students attending Chicago's public schools are not being properly educated. Problems such as high drop-out rates, language, culture-gaps, immigration, teacher/student ratios, and others are common among the high schools. Organizations are not taking action in alleviating the present educational problems in their community.

Mexican Americans in Chicago present a mystery to many white Americans and to those who study there. The city of Chicago has taken in many different foreign people, assimilating and acculturating them, but the Mexican American appears to stand out as the exception. Mexican Americans in Chicago have long held to their language, traditions, their total culture and have also continued to accept and/or occupy a low social status. I ask myself: Why have Mexican Americans failed in the school system and in climbing the social ladder? Or is it that the school system has failed to adequately educate the Mexican American?

Many questions have bothered me in relation to the school's failure with Mexican Americans. Why am I the only student that ever graduated from college even though thirty or more other Mexican Americans graduated from high school in the last two years of my attendance to high school? Why did many of my friends drop out before graduation? How can it be explained that most of us were labeled "low achievers"? My first explanations in my reasoning was that the unity and strength of my "Mexican" culture was so great, that those who dropped out, were low achievers or never wanted to go to college. They were simply resistant to the Anglo culture and would refuse to aspire for any form of education.

I did not accept these simple explanations and became increasingly interested in the factors involving the schools themselves.

I took the opportunity as part of my school requirements to write a paper on the Mexican American and public education in the city of Chicago. I dealt with the 18th Street community in the South - West side of Chicago. The 18th Street community is basically a Mexican and Middle-European community, made up of Polish, German, and Bohemians. Within the paper I will only deal with the Mexican American population.

Events lead me to look ahead of the simple answers and explanations related to the problems faced by Mexican Americans in this particular community. The second part of the paper deals with some of these problems, such as language, age, immigration, student-teacher ratio, and culture gaps between the Mexican and the host culture (Anglo).

The purpose of the paper will be a way to share with readers, Chicanos and other peoples, what it means for me and other millions that share my skin color, culture, language and pride to be part of a great people. This paper will also attempt to show how the public school system in Chicago (specifically looking at one high school) has long neglected the Mexican American student.

The paper is divided into three (3) parts. The first part deals with the Spanish-speaking in Chicago, characteristics which will include population, family structure, income, labor force rates, occupation, unemployment, transportation, and other important and pertinent information necessary to have a clear picture of the Spanish-speaking in Chicago. The Census Data book was very helpful in providing the vital information.

The next section deals with a brief look at one of the community high schools and the problems of language, culture gap, age, immigration, ratio between teachers and students, drop out rates, etc. Within this section I looked at the history of the school in terms of school population, money in public budget, programs, and purpose of education or philosophy held by teachers and administrators.

The third section of the paper deals with the community's participation in alleviating the perceived problems in the community schools. I take a specific look at an organization fully involved and concerned about students and education. A community group made up of community members that are mostly parents of students attending a near-by high school. Their success and/or failures are looked at and their ability to survive are also explored.

The last section deals with what has been accomplished in the struggle to improve the school in the community and the visible approaches or recommendations tried by other groups.

I will use the term Mexican Americans to refer only to a group of people that are of Mexican parentage, or are originally from Mexico. I have taken the liberty to use this simple definition to alleviate any misunderstanding by the reader.

The paper will help me as a Social Worker to further understand my culture and my people. As a member of an oppressed people I dedicate myself to the liberation of all oppressed and all suffering people of this country. I am sure that this paper will guide me to this personal goal.

As member of the Atlanta University School of Social Work I truly believe that my friends, teachers and fellow students will become

aware of the neglect placed upon Mexican Americans by the larger Anglo society. It is not a question anymore, it is a fact.

When anyone asks why I wrote this paper, I hope after reading it the reader will know.

Guess who's coming to dinner? I guess it's our turn.

David Velez Carrillo
February, 1975

SCOPE AND METHOD

In planning my research I was confronted by some difficulty. A large number of books, studies, and papers exist, but few were of any use and their value was in question. Those relevant to school and education were of two general types: (1) studies or works written relating socioeconomic factors and occasionally cultural values to success or failure in school; (2) the explanations of conditions that students face in the educational system. The majority of books and studies told the story of the "way it is," but few gave answers to the many questions that I was looking for. In general the literature demonstrated that: (1) Mexican Americans are not successful in school, they drop out, speak Spanish, and are poor.

Because of the lack of valuable and substantial works I had to solve the problem. My total research was done on the basis of interviews, discussions, and observations by myself. The paper is not an extensive piece of work and it is not supposed to answer many or even few of the questions of the nation. It is a study of a particular community and one particular school along with prlblems, needs, and solutions that groups in the community are acting on.

I visited different community agencies and community groups to get a clear picture of the community and to understand the needs and concerns of the community popualtion. Included in my research I visited schools and discussed the school situation with principals, teachers, and students. Large-scale survey of students and schools

was called for, but this could not realistically be done. The study was broken down into two phases. One, I searched for literature on the subject that would help me in understanding the subject; although fre valuable works were found. Secondly, I interviewed parents, teachers, students and school officials. Sometimes the interviews were tape recorded but in most cases I took notes during the interview. The research was taken and was concentrated in the 18th Street community and schools.

The interviews focused on six areas of concern: (1) the experience of the individual being interviewed with Mexican American community; (2) description of community served by the school; (3) nature of school organization, special programs, and so forth; (4) interviewee's perceptions of Mexican American children, personalities, families, community; (5) achievement in school contrasted with between Mexican American students and other groups; (6) reasons for success or failure in school by Mexican American students. Also, included are questions on teacher's personalities, no-Spanish rules, etc.

Of course someone will question my research method, but I believe that interviewing and observing allowed me to get into the "hidden" meanings and reasons beneath. What was presented to me or what I saw without questioning.

CHAPTER I

SPANISH-SPEAKING IN CHICAGO

This chapter will deal with a general description of the Spanish-speaking population of the city of Chicago. It is based totally on the selected data from the 1970 Census and describes general population characteristics, the makeup of the Spanish-speaking population, citizenship, mobility, transportation, housing, education, school enrollment, etc. There are comparisons that will be made between the eight-county Chicago metropolitan area; and several major cities in the U.S. with a large Spanish-speaking population.

For the purpose of this chapter and others to follow the general definition of Spanish-speaking will include all those persons who reported Spanish as their mother tongue, that is, the language usually spoken in the person's home.

The figures shown along with numbers are based on data from official U.S. Bureau of the Census sources.

General Population Characteristics

According to the 1970 U.S. Census, the Spanish-speaking population of the city of Chicago was 247,343. This represented 7.3% of the city's total population of 3,369,359. Based on available census data it has been estimated that there were approximately 110,000 Spanish-speaking in Chicago in 1960. Therefore, the population increase over the decade was 137,000 or 125%.

In the suburban portion of the eight-county Chicago metropolitan area in 1970, there were 116,496 Spanish-speaking persons, 2.7% of the total population. It is estimated that in 1960 the Spanish-speaking population of the suburbs was 55,000, resulting in an increase of approximately 110% over the ten year period.

Chicago ranked fourth in total Spanish-speaking population among central cities in the U.S. in 1970. It ranked behind New York, Los Angeles, and San Antonio. Chicago also ranked last on a percentage basis among the major cities listed, having only 7.3%. The total population of the Spanish-speaking in the U.S. was 9.6 million in 1970, 4.7% of the total population.

Figure 1. Spanish-Speaking Population in Major Cities and U.S.

	Spanish-Speaking Population	Percent of Total Population
New York	1,278,630	16.2%
Los Angles	481,668	17.1%
San Antonio	335,950	51.4%
Chicago	247,343	7.3%
Miami	151,914	45.4%
Houston	139,624	11.3%
U.S. Total	9,589,216	4.7%

The city has several major concentrations of Spanish-speaking. The Spanish-speaking population of West Town, Humbolt Park and Logan Square with a 1970 Census number of approximately 76,000 is predominantly Puerto-Rican.

Another concentration is located in the community areas of Lower West Side and South Lawndale (centered along 18th and 26th Streets). This area has a total population of 107,000 of which the Spanish-speaking, who are mostly Mexican Americans, number 44,500 or 41% of the total population.

Another large Spanish-speaking area lies along the western edges of the north lake shore community areas of Lincoln Park, Lakeview and Uptown. About 40,000 Spanish-speaking live in this area.

Two other concentrations of Spanish-speaking in the city are in New City (47th and Ashland) and in South Chicago, both primarily Mexican American. New City numbers about 8,000 and South Chicago about 12,000.

There are also several smaller concentrations of Spanish-speaking in various other communities such as Woukegan (4,680), Toliet (3,195), Chicago Heights (2,884), Blue Island (1,745) and Elgin (2,933).

After comparing the 1960 and 1970 Census data, it is noted that Spanish-speaking population increased over the ten year period in most of the concentrations mentioned above.

Most of the Spanish-speaking concentrations in Chicago are expanding in area as well as in population. The southwest concentration (18th - 26th Street area) is expanding southwesterly towards the city limits and southward along Holsted. The northside concentration is expanding north and the 47th and Ashland and South Chicago concentrations are slowly expanding outwards.

The Spanish-speaking population sums a highly mobile population. Seventy-two percent or about 152,490 of the Spanish-speaking population five years old and over living in the city in 1970 had moved since 1965. About 87,500 of the Spanish-speaking had lived in a different house within the city in 1965; 4,800 had lived within the Chicago area but outside the city; 11,800 had lived in the U.S. outside the metropolitan area; and 33,500 had lived abroad. In comparison to other large cities, the Spanish-speaking population in Chicago had the second highest percentage of people who had moved between 1965 and 1970.

In 1970, the largest group among Chicago's Spanish-speaking population was of Mexican origin. Migration of Mexicans to Chicago began during the 1920's and by 1930 there were about 20,000 persons of Mexican foreign stock (first and second generation) in Chicago. The Mexican American group of 1st and 2nd generation Mexicans decreased in numbers during the depression years but began increasing again during

World War II and through the 1950's and 1960's to reach 45,000 by 1960 and 80,000 in 1970. In addition there were about 25,000 persons of third generations or more in 1970 for a total Mexican American population of 106,000 or 43% of the total Spanish-speaking in Chicago.

Slightly over half (51%) of the Spanish-speaking population in the Chicago suburbs in 1970 were of Mexican origin. In the U.S. as a whole, there were 4.5 million persons of Mexican origin, 1.4 million Puerto Ricans, 540 thousand Cubans, 800 thousand from other parts of the America's, Europe, etc., and 1.8 million non-Spanish-speaking persons living in Spanish-speaking households.

Chicago is the only city with a substantial population of both Mexican Americans (43%) and Puerto Ricans (32%). Cities whose Spanish-speaking population is predominantly of Mexican origin are Los Angeles (75%), San Antonio (92%), and Houston (77%).

Figue 2. Origin of Spanish-Speaking Population in Chicago

Place of Origin	Foreign Born	Foreign Parentage	Native Parentage	Total	Percent
Mexico	38,556	42,268	25,000	106,000	43%
Puerto Rico	0	0	78,372	78,372	32%
Cuba	11,798	2,093	1,000	15,000	6%
Other American	10,980	3,111	1,000	15,000	6%
Other (Europe, etc.)	1,500	800	200	2,700	1%
Non Spanish Origin	2,200	6,700	20,500	30,000	12%
Total	66,754	55,111	125,478	247,343	100%

In 1970, almost 200,000 or 80% of the total Spanish-speaking population of Chicago were citizens. About 180,000 were native citizens

including 67,000 Mexican Americans and the 78,000 Puerto Ricans. The remaining 20,000 citizens, 30% of the total foreign-born Spanish-speaking population in the city, were naturalized citizens. By comparison, 69% of the total foreign-born non-Spanish-speaking population were naturalized citizens.

Age and Family Charactersitics

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Spanish-speaking population in Chicago is their relative youthfulness. In 1970 the median age of the Spanish-speaking population was 20.3 years. This was ten years lower than that for the non-Spanish-speaking population (30.5 years). Moreover, 46% of the Spanish-speaking population were under 18 compared with 31% for the non-Spanish-speaking.

The city's Spanish-speaking population was slightly older as a group than that of the Spanish-speaking population of the suburbs where the median age was 19.3.

For Chicago's Spanish-speaking population, the average number of persons per family was 4.4 in 1970, a figure considerably higher than the 3.5 for the non-Spanish-speaking population of the city.

In the suburbs, Spanish-speaking families were slightly larger than those in the city and had on an average 4.6 persons per family.

Figure 3. Median Age and Percent Under 18 of the Spanish-Speaking Population in Major Cities and the U.S.

CITY	MEDIAN AGE	PERCENT UNDER 18
Houston	19.9	46.5%
San Antonio	20.0	46.0%
Chicago	20.3	45.8%
New York	21.0	44.6%
Los Angeles	23.5	40.3%
Miami	35.4	28.0%
U.S. Total	20.7	45.0%

The presence of family members other than the husband, wife, and children, such as grandparents and married children, is sometimes given as the reason for large families among the Spanish-speaking. In Chicago, family members, apart from husband, wife, and their unmarried children, amounted to 6% of the total family population as compared to 7% for the non-Spanish-speaking.

The incidence of subfamilies among the Spanish-speaking was also relatively low. A subfamily is a family (married couple or one parent plus their children) related to and living in the same housing unit with another family.

The generalization that Spanish-speaking families are more stable than average sums to hold true in Chicago. In 1970, slightly over 17% of the Spanish-speaking families were single-parent families compared to 23% for the non-Spanish-speaking. Of those Spanish-speaking persons 14 years old and over who had ever been married, 9% were either seperated or divorced in 1970 compared with 12% on the non-Spanish-speaking. Furthermore, 20% of the Spanish-speaking

children under 18 were living with one parent or no parent compared to almost 30% for the non-Spanish-speaking.

Income

The income of Spanish-speaking families as a group in 1969 was less than the income of the remainder of the families in Chicago regardless of the specific income measure used--median family income, proportion with low incomes, or per capita income.

Spanish-speaking families in Chicago had a median income in 1969 of $8,369 compared to $10,394 for the non-Spanish-speaking. In Chicago's suburbs the median for Spanish-speaking families was $10,908, considerably more than that for the city. Chicago's Spanish-speaking population had the highest median family income among the six cities with large Spanish-speaking concentrations.

The proportion (63%) of Spanish-speaking families in Chicago with an income under $10,000 was greater than that for the non-Spanish-speaking (47%). There were relatively fewer (25% vs. 28%) in the intermediate category ($10,000) to ($15,000). In the highest income range ($15,000) and over, there was only half the proportion of Spanish-speaking families (12%) as there was non-Spanish-speaking (24%).

Using a definition of poverty, which includes family size in addition to income, the Census Bureau classified 16% of Chicago's Spanish-speaking families as having an income below the poverty level. This was about 50% higher than the figure for non-Spanish-speaking families (10%). In Chicago's suburbs 7% of the Spanish-speaking families were under the poverty level.

In 1970, 32% of Chicago's Spanish-speaking families were receiving public assistance in comparison to 37% for the non-Spanish-speaking. Nationwide, comparable percentages were 30% for the Spanish-speaking and 21% for the non-Spanish-speaking.

In Chicago the average income per Spanish-speaking person was $2,218, approximately $1,300 less than the $3,515 for the non-Spanish-speaking. Comparable figures for the suburbs were $2,755 and $4,092 respectively. Among the six cities with a large Spanish-speaking population, Chicago ranked third in average income behind Los Angeles and Miami. The principal reason Chicago ranked first in median family income but third in average income per person is because Chicago had relatively larger families than either Los Angeles or Miami.

Labor Force Characteristics

The participation of Chicago's Spanish-speaking population in the labor force in 1970 was relatively high. Some 64% of the Spanish-speaking persons 16 years and older were in the labor force compared to 60% of the non-Spanish-speaking. The rate for Spanish-speaking males at 84% was considerably higher than that for non-Spanish-speaking males (76%). However, the rate for females was lower than that for non-Spanish-speaking females (44% vs. 47%).

The unemployment rate of 6.0% among Chicago's Spanish-speaking labor force was higher than 4.3% for the non-Spanish-speaking. This was true for both males (5.3% vs. 4.0%), and females (7.5% vs. 4.6%).

There is also some indication of underemployment from available census sources. For example, 65% of the employed Spanish-speaking males in Chicago worked a full 50 to 52 weeks during 1969 as compared to 70%

for non-Spanish-speaking males.

Occupation of the Spanish-speaking workers in Chicago were concentrated in the low-skilled blue collar occupations in 1970. Figure 4 shows that about 50% of Spanish-speaking workers in 1970 were operatives and laborers as compared to only 26% for non-Spanish-speaking workers.

Figure 4. Occupations of Spanish-Speaking in Chicago

City	Professionals & Managers	Sales & Clerical	Craftsmen	Operatives & Laborers	Services
Chicago	7.9%	18.5%	13.1%	50.6%	9.9%

Spanish-speaking were greatly under-represented in the white collar occupations. For example, only 8 percent were professionals or managers compared with 19% for the non-Spanish-speaking.

In Chicago the Spanish-speaking were under-represented in every industry except in manufacturing where 56% of all Spanish-speaking workers were employed as compared with only 30% of all non-Spanish-speaking workers. There were relatively more Spanish-speaking workers in government in the suburbs than in the city although the reverse was true for the non-Spanish-speaking.

Chicago ranked highest among the six cities in the proportion of Spanish-speaking workers employed in the durable manufacturing industry, second in transportation, and third in non-durable manufacturing. Chicago ranked second to last in government workers and construction, and last in communications and utilities, wholesale retail, financial, service, and professional industries.

The median earnings of Chicago Spanish-speaking males were $6,386 in 1969, considerably lower than the $7,954 for non-Spanish

speaking males. Spanish-speaking females earned $4,039 as a median, 15% less than the $4,744 for non-Spanish-speaking females.

The gap was considerable for Chicago's Spanish-speaking male operative and female clerical workers. Their median earnings were 17% less than the median earnings for non-Spanish-speaking workers in the same occupations. Spanish-speaking professionals earned 16% less and craftsmen 15% less. The gap somewhat less for Spanish-speaking male laborers and demale operatives where it was 11% less than that for respective non-Spanish-speaking workers. The impact of these earnings gaps on the Spanish-speaking population is substantial because of the large proportion of male operatives in the Spanish-speaking labor force, and the relatively lower participation rate of Spanish-speaking females.

Both Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking workers depended heavily on the private automobile to get to their jobs in 1970. Fewer Spanish-speaking (39%) were drivers compared to non-Spanish-speaking (44%). More were passengers in autos (13% vs. 10%), however. In terms of public means of transportation to work, more Spanish-speaking workers took a bus (31%) than the non-Spanish-speaking (26%) and fewer took a subway, elevated train, or railroad (7% vs. 10%).

Education

In 1970 the Spanish-speaking population of Chicago as a group had much less formal schooling than the non-Spanish-speaking population. The median number of school years completed was 8.7 compared to 11.3 for the non-Spanish-speaking. Spanish-speaking males had slightly more education than females (8.8 vs. 8.6). The Spanish-speaking in the suburbs had a median of 10.2 years compared to 12.4

for the non-Spanish-speaking.

Figure 5. Educational Level of the Spanish-Speaking Population Over 25 Years of Age in Major Cities and U.S.

City	Median School Year Completed	Percent Completing High School
Los Angeles	10.3	39.8%
Miami	9.2	39.0%
Houston	9.0	32.7%
Chicago	8.7	27.1%
New York	8.5	20.1%
San Antonio	7.8	25.0%
U.S. Total	9.6	36.0%

Another indication of the low level of education, only 27% of the Spanish-speaking 25 years of age and over in the city had completed high school compared with 45% of the non-Spanish-speaking population. Slightly over 10% of the Spanish-speaking population had completed some college versus 18% of the non-Spanish-speaking population.

Comparison of data for various age groups indicates that members of the younger generation of Spanish-speakers have more education than their elders although there is still a wide gap separating them from the non-Spanish-speaking population of the same age group. Thirty-six percent of Chicago's Spanish-speaking population 18-24 years old had completed four years of high school compared with only 27% of those 25 years and older. In comparison, however, 62% of the non-Spanish-speaking population in the 18-24 years old bracket had completed high school while 45% of those in the 25 years old and over bracket had completed high school.

Figure 6. School Enrollment of the Spanish-Speaking and Non-Spanish-Speaking Population of Chicago - April, 1970

Age	Percent Enrolled	
	Spanish	Non-Spanish
3 and 4 years old	9.1%	12.7%
5 and 6 years old	74.6%	80.5%
7 to 13 years old	95.6%	97.1%
14 and 15 years old	93.3%	95.9%
16 and 17 years old	77.6%	87.9%
18 and 19 years old	40.7%	51.7%
20 and 21 years old	11.9%	27.8%
22 and to 24 years old	6.2%	16.3%
25 to 34 years old	3.8%	6.9%

The "drop-out" problem of Spanish-speaking youth can be identified by looking at enrollment for youths 16-17 years of age. In 1970, 22% of Chicago's Spanish-speaking youth in this age group were not enrolled in school which is almost double the figure of 12% for the non-Spanish-speaking in the same age group.

In the suburbs, 17% of the Spanish-speaking 16-17 years of age were not enrolled in school as compared to 7% of the non-Spanish-speaking. In the U.S. as a whole, 17% of the Spanish-speaking in the same age group were not enrolled vs. 11% of the non-Spanish-speaking. Chicago ranked second highest among the six cities in percent of 16 and 17 year olds not enrolled in school.

Housing

Persons per room is frequently used as a measure of overcrowding, that is whether or not there is adequate living space for each person in

a household. Households with more than one person per room have traditionally been considered overcrowded by urban analysis. Based on this definition, there was considerable overcrowding among Chicago's Spanish-speaking in 1970. Twenty-four percent of the Spanish-speaking households were in housing units with more than one person per room as compared to 9% for the non-Spanish-speaking. This is due somewhat to the large family size of the Spanish-speaking, although for economic reasons many are probably living in smaller size housing units than they would prefer. For example, 36% of the five-person Spanish-speaking households and 74% of the households with six persons or more were overcrowded in 1970 compared to only 17% of the households with two to four persons. In each category approximately twice as many Spanish-speaking households were overcrowded when compared to non-Spanish-speaking households, except in the category of six or more persons.

The availability of adequate plumbing facilities is considered the best measure of housing quality available from 1970 Census data. Adequate plumbing consists of the availability in the housing unit of hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower for the exclusive use of the occupants.

In Chicago, 96% of the housing units occupied by Spanish-speaking persons had complete plumbing facilities. In comparison, 97% of Chicago's non-Spanish-speaking population lived in housing units with complete plumbing facilities.

In 1970, the great majority of the Spanish-speaking households were renters (82%). Among Chicago's non-Spanish-speaking population the rate was 60%. The median gross rent of $110 for the Spanish-speaking was lower than the $124 for the non-Spanish-speaking

population of the city. Gross rent is the monthly rent plus the average cost of utilities and fuel.

The renters tend to live in smaller apartment buildings than the non-Spanish-speaking. For example, 31% of Spanish-speaking households lived in 3 and 4 room flats in 1970, compared with 19% of the non-Spanish-speaking. Renters also tend to live in older buildings. The renters also paid a smaller proportion of their income for housing than the non-Spanish-speaking. For example, 31% of the Spanish-speaking households paid 25% or more of their income for rent as against 39% for the non-Spanish-speaking, and 19% paid 35% or more compared with 25% of the non-Spanish-speaking. In the suburbs 26% of the Spanish-speaking renters paid 25% or more vs. 33% of the non-Spanish-speaking and 14% paid 35% or more compared with 19% of the non-Spanish-speaking.

The Spanish-speaking had a relative low rate of home ownership. In 1970, 18% of the households owned their own homes as compared to 34% for the non-Spanish-speaking. The median home value was $18,900 in comparison to $21,336 for the non-Spanish-speaking.

The houses of Spanish-speaking tend to be older than those of the non-Spanish-Speaking. Seventy percent of the units owned by the Spanish-speaking in 1970 were built prior to 1939 as compared to 60% for the non-Spanish-speaking. In 1970 the non-Spanish-speaking owned more units built in the 1950's than the Spanish-speaking--19% vs. 9%.

Of the households in 1970, 57% had automobiles as compared to 61% non-Spanish-speaking households. In the suburbs the percentages were 87% and 91% respectively. A telephone was available to 64% of Chicago's Spanish-speaking households. The comparable percentage for the non-Spanish in Chicago was 85%. In the suburbs the percentages

were 82% and 95% respectively.

CHAPTER II

FROEBEL HIGH SCHOOL: CASE IN POINT

This chapter will deal with Froebel High School, located in the Pilson community. I will deal with such topics as: student enrollment, teachers, administrators, Mexican-American cultural factors, language ability, Bilingual-Bicultural programs, disciplinary process, communication and decision making.

The process of obtaining my data was done by relying on interviews with teachers, school administrators, students and community people. My interviews with people were not prepared in advance so that the interviewee did not know what questions I was going to ask. My purpose for doing my interviews in such manner was so that I could obtain objectivity as much as possible.

Although it seemed desirable to interview many people, it couldn't be done for lack of time.

Student Enrollment

Froebel's students number 540. Three hundred and forty are freshmen and the remaining 200 are sophmores. Of these five hundred and forty students 90% are Mexican American, 4 to 5% are Puerto Ricans and 4 to 5% are Polish, Bohemian or Croatians.[1] The citywide number of Mexican American students is 28,249 or 5.2% of the total student population in the city of Chicago. The total population in Chicago is 544,971 students.[2] However, as in Froebel High School, Mexican

American students are enrolled in proportions greater than their percentage in the total population (this is true for Blacks as well), and they are along with Puerto Ricans increasing their enrollment in the public schools.

Froebel High School is in Area B, covering the southwest-central part of the city. There are 27 districts and they are grouped into three areas: A, B. and C. In District 19 in Area B, 44.8 percent of the 19,348 students in 1973 were Latin, most of Mexican background.

In addition to linguistic, cultural and political variations between the groups represented at Froebel, there is the difference in enrollment pattern making delivery of services a supposedly complex task. There does exist some diversity in national origin within the community of Pilsen where Froebel is located, which demonstrates the need and the importance of specialized programs and a staff sensitive to particular needs of such groups and primarily the 90% student enrollment of Mexican Americans.

Teachers

Froebel's teachers number a total of 32. If Mexican teachers were represented in proportion to the Mexican American student population at Froebel (90%) there would be at least 28 currently employed.[3]

An analysis of the survey shows six Latino teachers, seven Black teachers and 19 Anglo teachers. Even these figures show a disproportionate number of Mexican American teachers to Mexican American students.

The same seems to be true for the rest of the city where:

of 426 schools with Latino enrollment, 303 had no permanent Latino teaching staff. In terms of students, 1,814 Latino high school students and 12,674 Latino elementary school students attended school with no Latino teachers.

Various educators and school officials have expressed their desire to include teachers of bilingual students that are from the same cultural background.

If we take the total student population at Froebel (540) and devide by (32) teachers we find that every teacher is responsible for at least (17) students. Although during my observations of the school I noticed that some teachers seemed and were more concerned about other students numbering more than (17).[4]

Some teachers appeared to be ~~non~~-interested in the student body and were simply there to receive a bi-weekly check. Lack of concern and sensitivity on the part of teachers surely affects the student's behavior, performance, and perception of school.

A school official mentioned the fact that teachers were generally concerned and did care about the student body. I have reasons to believe after my observations that this certain school official was either covering up or denying that certain teachers were not at all concerned. Perhaps even the school official was afraid to "stick-out his neck" and reveal some real truth about the matter.

Administration

There is a vast structure of administrative positions between the classroom and the Chicago Board of education.

Of the 1,706 administrative and supervisory personnel reports

in 1971, 58 or 3.4 percent were Latinonos. There were no Latinos at the level of superintendent.[5]

The school official I interviewed at Froebel was an assistant principal that had been assigned to Froebel two years before. He is Mexican American and he has seen quite a few positive changes in the school programs, curriculum, and community relations since his appointment to the school.

There is another Mexican American holding the position of Administrative Aide. His title says very little of his duties. His main duties consist of counseling students that have some discipline problems with teachers or other students.

The highest level of formal authority in Chicago's public schools is the 11 member Board of Education. At the present time the Board includes one Latino.

In summary, demographic data demonstrates that Latino student enrollment is much greater the proportion of Latinos as teachers and administrators. Hiring patterns of Latino teachers during 1971 suggest that this situation will continue. The Latino representation in administrative positions is lowest of all.[6]

Mexican American Cultural Factors

Researchers agree that differences in culture are widespread and very significant for the education of children. Although there are some major differences in language and lifestyle within the various Latino groups, they all participate in what is called the Hispanic cultural tradition.

James G. Anderson and William H. Johnson, professors of educational administration at New Mexico State University, cite several

specific cultural characteristics in some Mexican American people in the Southwest and probably true in Chicago, including the following:

1. Emphasis on the central importance of the family;
2. Orientation to the present (rather than the past or future);
3. Limited stress on material gain as a primary goal;
4. Emphasis on the father as the main authority figure;
5. Subordinate, domestically-oriented role for women;

and adequate academic achievement. After visiting a couple of bilingual classes and discussing this matter (culture factors) with teachers I was impressed to know that at Froebel the student's cultural background is respected and dealt with sensitively, his or her academic and psychological development is therefore enhanced. Findings by others have supposedly shown that acculturation for the Mexican American is the cure--all for all his problems. I tend to disagree on the whole question and feel very strongly that bilingual and bicultural education is the tool by which Mexican American students can achieve a healthy personality development, and enhance his academic achievement.

In the area of self-image, several studies have indicated that Mexican Americans who identify themselves with their own culture develop a more stable sense of identity while growing up.

In forcing students to reject their cultural backgrounds, the schools become one cause of student's educational and psychological problems.[1] This can be understood as culture conflict.

While talking to some teachers, they argued that Mexican students are culturally deprived.

6. A fatalistic, desting-oriented outlook on life;

2. 7. An accommodating, cooperative attitude toward the solution of problems; and

3. 8. An emphasis on being rather than doing.[7]

The extent of these traits can vary. But, variations between Mexican American and Anglo are more significant. Dr. Ramirez identifies eight areas in which Mexican American cultural values and those of Anglo students may come into conflict, among them:

- Student's loyalty to family group.
- Student's loyalty to national origin.
- The cultural value attached to the "machismo" or maleness of the student.
- The cultural definition of sex roles.[8]

These and other cultural factors are very important in the manner by which a school or simply a teacher responds or teaches a Mexican American or other minority student.

Cultural themes, values, language structure, personal styles, and psycho-linguistic skills are, therefore, all aspects of a student's personal identity which are related to his or her ethnic cultural background.

Froebel's biligual-bicultural program seems to enhance the healthy personality development or disadvantaged, that their home environment does not provide the skills, personality characteristics, or experiences for a student's success at school. These teachers (few in number) still blamed the student for the problem he faced at school. Other teachers including the assistant principal believed that although Mexican American students are culturally different, different does not imply deficiency. They themselves agree that contributory courses of failure are found within the school itself.

In general, Froebel's teachers were sensitive to the cultural

background of Mexican American students and saw the fact of being Mexican American as a strength rather than as a weakness.

Language Ability

In 1972, of the 26,869 Mexican students in Chicago, 16,484 used Spanish as their primary language, this was 61.3%.[9]

Only a handful of teachers interviewed believed that Spanish spoken by students was a "problem" and other teachers saw this as an asset for the students. Schoolmen imply that the "language" problem is a prime determinant of school failure instead of recognizing that school practices demanding standard (middle-class) English ability are at least partially responsible.

The administrative aide at Froebel believed that communication between student and teachers was done on the basis of talking at their own level without correcting or non-verbally punishing the student for speaking Spanish or English with an accent. In general the teachers interviewed believed that speaking Spanish was not a problem for teachers and/or students, but argued that speaking two or more languages enhanced the achievement and learning of students.

While discussiong this matter of language with students the overall response was that they "liked" to have a school program in Spanish but generally preferred a dual program of instruction where classes were taught in both English and Spanish. The students that had arrived to the community from Mexico during the past two to three years also wanted a bilingual program taught in both languages.

Teachers felt that the majority of students wanted to be taught

in their first language but that it was important to teach also in their second language (English).

Bilingual - Bicultural Programs

The following is from the Chicago Board of Education booklet entitled, A Comprehensive Design for Bilingual Education:

> Bilingual education is an approach that brings together three distinct elements: bilingualism, bicultural education, and curriculum. The elements are woven together within the organizational structure of the school system.
>
> Bilingualism, stated most simply, is communicating in two languages. For school purposes, bilingualism is learning to listen, speak, read and write in two languages; learning to raise the level of proficiency of each language from a limited use and knowledge to a competency of being completely at home in both languages; and learning to solve problems encountered in daily living by using each language . . .
>
> Bicultural education is the teaching of the values, mores, institutions, ethnic background, and history of the native and target cultures so that the student can be comfortable in either, and function as a well-adjusted individual.
>
> Curriculum in the bilingual education setting is a systematic group of courses or sequences of subjects taught and studied in two languages, using textbooks, resource books, reference books, etc.

Many Mexican American students that I talked to felt that they didn't know neither Spanish nor English well. They felt that they were not sure to which culture they belonged.

The Froebel bilingual/bicultural program seems to be reaching at least those students that lack any knowledge of English. Most of these students come directly from Mexico and not from another state in the U.S. Others in Chicago are not so lucky, in fact, only about 4,000 Latinos including Mexican Americans in Chicago's schools receive instruction which can be classified as bilingual education under the Board of Education's definition.[10]

Studies have shown that students taking English as a second language retards the rate of learning and disrupts the normally ordered process of learning carried out, especially in young children.

The opposite is also true, that bilingual/bicultural education shows the development of literacy in the native language enhances the ability to learn English.

Evaluations of state-funded centers outside Chicago have been done and they show significant success. There has been no evaluations for such centers in Chicago and even if all Chicago's centers operated optimally, however, 36,000 Latinos including Mexican Americans whose first language is Spanish would still be unaffected.

The shift from traditional school organization, based on a standard curriculum taught in English, to bilingual organization represents an extreme modification of the institution. The shift from the traditional school organization to a bilingual/bicultural program at Froebel has been very recent, within the last two years. This happened after parents and students spoke up and organized themselves to attain some changes within the school. One of these changes was going from old traditional methods of teaching to the new bilingual/bicultural programs.

I see one danger in these State or Federally funded bilingual/bicultural programs. If these new and "fantastic" programs fail to help educate the Mexican American students then the burden will be shifted back to the family. And as seen before the family or home environment is then (as before) blamed for the problems faced by students within the school system. If the programs fail then government can easily say that Mexican American will always fail. Government has always said this anyway, but government would have some

data although not sufficient to put the blame on the child, his culture, his language, his family and his environment.

Will these programs then become the first and last attempt to help Mexican Americans? Perhaps.

Disciplinary Process

Schools with large percentages of Mexican American students tend to maintain order rigidly. "Mexican Schools" tend to be less permissive than Anglo or mixed schools within the same district.

Froebel High School seemed different than how authors descrbe the school situation in the Southwest. As I walked through the halls at Froebel I heard students talking in Spanish to each other, the teachers and the administrators. Signs along the walls advertising upcoming dances or school activities were all written in Spanish and English. Students felt comfortable talking to others in Spanish without any fear of being punished or "thrown" out of school. Some Southwestern schools still keep the "No-Spanish" rule and even go as far as sending home the student that is caught speaking Spanish. Is this not saying that the Spanish language is inferior? And does this not mean also that culture, food, values, beliefs, etc. are also inferior to the English and Anglo way of life? Is this not then the way to destroy a culture and a people?

Teachers seem to be threatened because they can't understand the

the student speaking Spanish. Also statements such as "It is impolite to speak Spanish in front of a person who does not speak it" are common. The students are then seen as enemies and violating the "rules" of the school.

The teachers at Froebel were confortable in hearing Spanish being spoken and not being able to understand what the students were saying. This was the major and most positive change that I saw in the Froebel school.

Students were able to speak in any of two languages and not feeling ashamed about it. It was a refreshing feeling to see this because just a few years ago I was not allowed to speak Spanish in school. At least some changes are being made.

The drop-out problem at Froebel is about 12% of the total student population. According to the assistant principal, this rate is highest during the first year of attendance to school (Froebel). He continued to say that this first year is critical to the incoming student because if he stays the first year he will probably continue to attend school.[11] The "push-out" problem as it has been called in Chicago has various reasons. Dr. Isidro Lucas gave a few reasons as to why Puerto Rican students drop-out. These reasons probably hold for Mexican Americans. They are as follows:

> Lack of self-confidence, defensiveness, and revolt against a hostile environment play a more important role in the process.
>
> ... pupils have lower aspirations for the future the older they are and the longer they have attended school in the city. Many of them let their lack of interest and possivity ease them out of the school situation...
>
> ... youths turn to gangs or other peer groups not accepted by society. There is an increase in the size and militancy of these groups, that is due to

spreading defiance of the system that rejects them...[12]

These reasons given about Puerto Rican students probably hold for Mexican American students also. The Mexican American and Puerto Rican are both non-Anglo, speak Spanish, have a Hispanic culture, are lower in the socio-economic ladder than the Anglo, see their family as the center of all things, are religion oriented, etc.

As far as discipline problems and the discipline process at Froebel, it seems as if the administrative aide along with the staff are giving the student certain responsibilities and a contract comes into existence between school and student. The student is responsible for daily attendance, mature behavior, respect for rules and regulations. If any of these are broken the contract is broken. The student is not automatically suspended or excluded. For disobedience or misconduct the parents of the student are notified and a decision is reached by administrative aide, parents and student. The student is allowed to speak for himself and present his own defense, if any. The student is involved in the decision making and final outcome which seems to me a very humanistic way of dealing with problems.[13]

The goal of this process is to involve the student, make him responsible for his own behavior and teach him to be able to speak up for himself in any situation. Counseling seems to be the main device used at Froebel in dealing with problems. And it seems very effective.

Students did admit that it seemed fair and that if they did get suspended that it was their fault. Of course others never did admit any fault at all.

Teachers and other staff seemed very sensitive and understanding of students. Although at times there were decisions that were made that did not seem so fair to the students themselves.

College Enrollment

There are few Latino college students in Illinois. The high drop-out rate for Latino students in Chicago's schools is one obvious reason. According to the 1970 Census, there were 6,857 Illinois Latinos (described as "persons of Spanish language") under 35 years of age enrolled in college. Racial and ethnic data compiled in 1970 by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, however, lists only 2,309 Latino college students in Illinois.

Latinos numbered approximately one percent of the Illinois undergraduate population. At the graduate and professional student level Latinos numbered only 252 out of a total of 32,760 in 1972, or 0.8 percent. These percentages are less than one-third of the percentage of Latinos in the total Illinois population, which was estimated to be 3.3 percent in the 1970 Census.[14]

The numbers of college students needs to increase quite rapidly. The effort should begin at the high-school level of education so that students will finish and continue on to college. Colleges and universities should make major efforts to attract Mexican Americans and other minorities into their classrooms. Colleges are not making such efforts as they should. What colleges often do is admit a very small number of students from the minority groups and have these students as their "token" students. The effort should be made to educate the minority groups on the national level not only in one section of the state or the country.

College enrollment has increased in the last two years from students that attend Froebel High School. Exact figures were not given but some figures were known according to the assistant

principal at Froebel.[15]

The point is that increased attendance in college is necessary. Increased enrollment at high schools and primary schools is also a must. If this doesn't happen then the White-Anglo society in which minorities find themselves can never survive. Educated minorities is one way to brake the chains placed on us by the Anglo society.

NOTES

[1]Interview with Henry Romero, Froebel High School, Chicago, Illinois, 18 February 1975.

[2]Illinois Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Billingual/Bicultural Education - A Privilege or a Right? (Chicago: Illinois Advisory Committee, 1974), p. 9.

[3]Henry Romero, op. cit.

[4]Henry Romero, op. cit.

[5]Illinois Advisory Committee, op. cit., p. 10.

[6]Illinois Advisory Committee, op. cit., p. 12.

[7]James G. Anderson and William H. Johnson, "Sociocultural Determinants of Achievement Among Mexican American Students," ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, March 1968.

[8]James G. Anderson, op. cit.

[9]Racial Survey of Students (September 29, 1922): Chicago Board of Education.

[10]Illinois Advisory Committee, op. cit.

[11]Henry Romero, op. cit.

[12]Dr. Isidro Lucas, Puerto Rican Dropouts in Chicago: Numbers and Motivations, March 1971 (Researched under grant from Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare), p. 61-62.

[13]Interview with Jose Rodriguez, Froebel High School, Chicago, Illinois, 18 February 1975.

[14]Illinois Advisory Committee, op. cit., p. 55-56.

[15]Henry Romero, op. cit.

CHAPTER III

MEXICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY REACTIONS TO SCHOOLS AND PROBLEMS

This chapter will deal with an examination of the Mexican American community of the 18th Street in Chicago. There has been no thorough research done on Mexican American views on school and the problems found in these schools. What I will write will come mostly from interviews and observations while working and visiting people in the community. How a community, a parent and a student views education and school could create some confusion. It could be argued by some that an individual or a community views education in a positive manner but views "school" quite on the contrary.

Something else that did interest me while talking to students and parents was the question of community involvement giving positive or negative effects to changes or corrections in the school system.

I will concentrate on the Pilsen's Neighbors Community Council and their activities in the community relating to school and the problems in the system.

The 18th Street Mexican American community is located to the southwest of the downtown area on Chicago's Lower West Side.

The striking characteristic of this corridor is the continuous movement of populations, within and out of the area. Mexicans predominantly from Mexico, migrate into the older sections of 18th Street.

The area extends approximately two and a half miles from east to west.

The community is Chicago's port-of-entry for Mexican Americans and Mexicans from Mexico. A great number of the Mexican population has arrived in Chicago within the last ten years directly from Mexico. Approximately 20% are from Texas and only 5% of the individuals in a recent survey were Chicago-born.[1] Similarities in Mexican culture and language provide an overriding cohesiveness among the different groups in this community.

With the construction of the University of Illinois Chicago campus, many of the Mexicans living to the North of 18th Street were displaced and began to move into the vacated dwelling units of the Middle-European population that occupied this section of the city prior to the 1880's. By the end of 1960's the Mexican sector of 18th Street's population had increased from 30% to almost 70% of the residents. Most of the migrants of this period came directly from Mexico.[2]

The 18th Street community has a total population of 45,000 people, 36,000 of these being Mexican, 2,000 Puerto Ricans and 1,000 Blacks. Rents average about $88 a month. Close proximity to potential employment, decreasing Middle-European population and availability of Mexican goods and services makes 18th Street a highly appropriate area for settlement. An individual can do quite well in the community without speaking English. This lack of English capability nevertheless has its negative aspects for many. People remain uninformed to opportunities and events in the local community and the wider society.

The school is an important setting where culture and language of the migrant comes into conflict with the wider society.

Many of the community leaders like Roman Rodriguez view the 18th Street schools as a major problem and identify inadequate bilingual programs as the contributing factors. An estimated 85%

of the children who begin public school in 18th Street will not complete high school, and recent figures on reading ability levels among the lowest in the city. Only 15% of the Mexican population has graduated from high school and the average years of school completed by adults is the seventh grade.

The mean age of the Mexican male head of household is forty-one years. Most are laborers, operators, craftsmen or work in the retail trades. The mean age for the Mexican female is 30 years and those working are in clerical or factory positions. Surveys show that there are close to 6 people per household.

In recent newspapers and articles on economic and social status in Chicago, the Sun-Times rated the 18th Street area as 84th in a total of 85. This was based on such indicators as rent, average education, job level, home value and family income. This study indicates the typical inner city pattern of deteriorated neighborhoods adjoint to a city's downtown area.

The median income is $8,000 per year. During 1970 only 1.3% of the residents of 18th Street were on welfare, while an extremely low 2.3% were unemployed during the time the 1970 Census was given. These figures are considerably higher than the national average and present a striking contrast to welfare and unemployment rates for other "ghetto" populations.

Approximately fifteen to twenty percent of the community's businesses are owned by Mexicans.

Gangs are a major element in the 18th Street Community. They consist of boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one. Street workers estimate gang members to total approximately 3,000. Such gangs have recently been able to form relatively effective alliances so

as to participate in community affairs and in the Chicano movement.[3]

Perception of School and Education

After talking with students and parents around Froebel High School and the community, there is an indication that Mexican Americans generally view education positively, sharing the American belief that "getting a good education" is a way to get ahead.

Some Mexican American parents were unclear as to the number of years necessary to complete a career or get a professional degree. Others were unrealistic about educational goals for their children.

The general idea of Mexican American parents is that schools are staffed by highly trained professionals having the best interest of their children at heart, often failing to recognize that a child's parents are very important in the success of the student in school. This could be a reason why so few parents did not fully understand the necessity to attend parent meetings or questioning the progress of their children. School officials in turn believe that parents are not concerned with school or the child's education because they (the parents) are not involved in parent organizations or school activities.

The problem of communication between parents and school staff is a major one. The average community citizen in Pilsen doesn't speak or understand English well therefore there is a wide gap in communication. This problem was easily seen by staff at Froebel High School so now parents organizations are holding their meetings in English and Spanish. This helps the parent identify with the school system while at the same time helping to destroy the communication gap that existed at Froebel.[4] School policies are also very often not understood by the parents of the students attending Froebel. Having an

assistant principal at Froebel makes the burden of explaining much easier. The assistant principal is Mexican American and speaks Spanish very well.

Parents believed that the school program was designed for the "gringos", or the Anglos. But, recently the new bilingual/bicultural programs along with the alternative program have changed the design to meet not only Anglos but Mexican American needs as well.

In general most of the parents interviewed showed a high level of satisfaction with the school system. They mentioned the fact that:

> ...with the new program at Froebel and the bilingual programs the kids will do fine. Maybe now we can get the kids off the streets. I am so happy...[5]

While talking to some of the students I found that they saw Mexican American and Black teachers as understanding, "cool," nice, just like friends, etc. As Celia Florez talk me:

> I've been here in the U.S. only 3 years but I'm real happy, you know. You can talk to the Mexican teachers although they are rough on you. You can also talk to the Black teachers, they don't act any different. But man, you can't talk to these "gringo" teachers, they think they're shit.[6]

Students wanted teachers coming from all types of backgrounds:

> I hope that when they open the new school the teachers will not all be Latinos or Mexicans. I think teachers should be mixed so we can know other kinds of teachers...[7]

Most students agued that variation in teachers was desirable and would benefit the students a lot more.

Most students also saw themselves as being able to discuss prlblems or even question the authority of Mexican teachers while having some fear and less freedom to disagree with Anglo teachers.

As far as dropouts were concerned, they gave the reason that the family needed their financial help as the primary reason and that school

was boring as their second most common reason for dropping out. The dropouts believed that teachers could have been more understanding and helpful with problems faced by the students.

Some students "liked" the lower grades much more than the senior years in school. The reasons given were such as: no teacher on your back all the time, I could do as I wanted more often, no detentions, not too much boring work, etc.

There is no doubt that students and parents approve of education. Yet many do not find school a rewarding experience or cannot afford to continue.

Influence and Action By Community

The relationship between the school and the community is a crucial factor in the success or the failure of school and education.

Staying in school and finally graduating from high school supposedly promises a higher status and a good job for the graduate. This is not always true. The Pilsen community does not require that workers have a high school diploma. In the area of Pilsen there are high school graduates and non-graduates working side by side. The student is aware of this so the first question that comes to his mind is, "Why graduate, I can't get ahead anyway."

While looking at the dropout rate in Pilsen, one should not avoid to examine the local job market, discrimination in employment as well as the nature of social roles and statuses of the Mexican American in Pilsen.

If these "rewards" for finishing high school are withheld because of social discrimination then there is no need to go on. Academic performance may be devalued because the student sees no

relationship between it and the realities of the future.

Action has been taken successfully by only one community organization. The Pilsen Neighbors Community Council has been in existence for a few years but has done a tremendous job in bringing about changes in the community. Most people working for the community council are volunteers with a few paid secretaries and community organizers. Their total number of staff is not known to this date. One day it can have hundreds of people working for a common goal and other times it is only a handful of people. The people I talked to seemed bery dedicated to their cause and their job and within the past two years they had and still are working toward bringing some change to the educational problems of the area.

The Chicago Board of Education showed these statistics:

1. A 77% dropout rate from the freshman to the graduating class.

2. A median reading score (taken from a nationwide test in the 11th grade) of 13% - city wide it is 29%, nationwide it is 50%.

3. There are 3,200 children of high school age in Pilsen area. Only 800 are now attending school.

4. Of the 423 8th grade students now enrolled in Cooper Upper Grade, 180 have already indicated to counselor that they will not go to high school. It is estimated by teachers and counselors that only 41, approximately one out of ten, will ever graduate from high school.[8]

These statistics are enough to say that a change or something had to be done. Pilsen Neighbors began working and on November 20th, 1972, this group of parents held a community meeting with Mr. Joseph Lee, the District 19 Superintendent of Schools. Fifty parents attended. The meeting began an uninterrupted fight for a new school.

Frequent meetings between the Board members and officials have

been held, and definite progress has been made.

Then on June 13, 1973, the Chicago Board of Education by a vote of 8 to 1 approved the construction of a new high school for the Pilsen area.

However, after analyzing the extent of this victory, the Pilsen Neighbors realized that it is only the first step in the struggle to brake the cycle of miseducation for Mexican American students in Pilsen.

The Pilsen Neighbors Council asked that the new Pilsen community high school be established immediately in provisional quarters and that it operate on a pilot basis until the planned building is completed. This pilot program is now taking place at Froebel High School where 90% of the students are Mexican American.

The Neighbors were simply suggesting that the Board of Education allow the Pilsen Community to carry out a pilot program that has proven successful at the Disney Magnet School in 1969.

Some of the reasons why Pilsen Neighbors united and demanded a new high school were the following:

> ... the school system having eliminated 77% of the students supposedly the deaf, retarded, discontents, malcontents, slow-learners, dissatisfied, discouraged, trouble-makers, is supposedly left to deal with 23% industrious, ambitious, and bright students...average results could be resulted. But that is not the case ...college is out of the question for the vast majority of even the 23% who make it.
>
> ... Harrison High School has vacant seats; therefore according to the Board of Education, we do not need a high school in Pilsen... But Harrison is not overcrowded because 77% of the people who are supposed to be there are not there... to us our children are not satistics... our future plans do not hold that three out of four of our children should end up as janitors, factory workers, or welfare recipients... our goals are higher.[9]

The Pilsen Neighbors expressed the failures of the school system as:

> The failure to develop students who are truly bilingual, competent to speak, read, and write, in both Spanish and English...
>
> Failure to teach basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic...
>
> Failure to link education to the cultural experience of the students and to build cultural pride in either language...
>
> Failure to prepare students for meaningful careers...
>
> Failure to involve public education with the pressing needs of the community...
>
> Failure to involve parents and community members in day to day governance of the schools...
>
> Failure to make the school a learning center for the community...[10]

The Pilsen Neighbors has recently taken action through long marches, demonstrations, community meetings, and planning sessions.

Decisions that have been made by the Board of Education can be linked to directly to the community's willingness to take action in order to force decision. They represent important victories in the struggle to make the schools more responsive to the community's needs.

The objectives of the community high school's educational program are:

1. Develop student competence in academic skills in English and Spanish.
2. Develop students to think and act responsibly and independently for their benefit and the community's.
3. Provide students with skills relevant to survival in the present urban setting.
4. Help students understand their culture and heritage.
5. Prepare students for careers.

6. Offer educational programs in response to needs of the community.

7. To offer programs to adults and those young who already have been pushed out of school.[11]

To be successful, the new community high school must go far beyond the typical patterns of community involvement in an educational program.

The community council has asked the Board of Education that the school be governed by a board of parents, students, other community members, school staff, and representatives of the Board of Education.

Also Pilsen Neighbors has asked for at least 75% of the teachers to be bilingual/bicultural, believe strongly in the capacities of the students, ability to develop relationships with students, counsel and encourage students, willing to put in time necessary to make new program successful.[12]

This has been totally the work of Pilsen Neighbors with the support from the rest of the Pilsen Community. Great strides have been made and further strides will be made.

On Thursday, 5 of December 1974, El Manana Newspaper of the Pilsen Community had this story on the front page:

> Governor Walker announced construction of high school for the Pilsen Community.
>
> ... the project will cost over 9 million dollars
> ... the plaque on the school building will say:
> Constructed By The Pilsen Community.[13]

This has been only one of the many struggles that Mexican Americans in the nation will be fighting for. One step, one step at a time. For the sake of the children of tomorrow...

NOTES

[1]Mary Bakszysz, and Kay Guzder, Description of 18th and 26th Street Communities, Community Research Unit. Not dated.

[2]Mary Bakszysz, op. cit.

[3]Stephen L. Schenzul, The South Lawndale Area, (Chicago, Illinois, April, 1971).

[4]Interview with Henry Romero, Froebel High School, Chicago, Illinois, 18 February 1975.

[5]Interview with Julia Parrales, Chicago, Illinois, 19 February 1975.

[6]Interview with Celia Florez, Froebel High School, Chicago, Illinois, 18 February 1975.

[7]Interview with Dolores Florez, Froebel High School, Chicago, Illinois, 18 February 1975.

[8]Chicago Board of Education, Statistics on Chicago Schools, (Chicago, Illinois), 1972.

[9]Interview with members of Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, Chicago, Illinois, 21 February 1975.

[10]Pilsen Neighbors, op. cit.

[11]Pilsen Neighbors, op. cit.

[12]Pilsen Neighbors, op. cit.

[13]"Walker Signs," El Manana, 5 December 1974.

CONCLUSION

White America and the educational school system has produced a Mexican American people ready to participate in the industrial and agicultural economy of the United States. The school system is still (believe it or not) preparing Mexican Americans with the "appropriate" skills for low status: minimum education which include minimum English knowledge, low reading and math skills, etc. The American (Anglo) school system and education system as a whole has failed to totally Americanize the Mexican American. Therefore the larger Anglo society has control over the non-Americanized Mexican. He is "different" so we treat him as being different.

Changes are happening daily, but the school system is not able or willing to keep up in its total practices. I strongly suggest that society should begin to analyze what is happening today and what can be prevented also. If we take only the Mexican American group and insure that the young achieve and stay in school, higher group status, along with elimination or unemployment, underemployment, dependency on welfare, juvenile delinquency, and adult crime can be achieved. But I doubt very much if white America wishes to do this for Mexican Americans or for any minority group. It is now up to Mexican American leaders in the community and along with social workers, educators, elected officials, etc. to begin the long struggle of providing the rightful education, the needed education. At this time I truly believe it is the way to survive in this country.

The school system has continually blamed the Mexican American group for its own low status and for being the cause of its own problems. Those children that can be "assimilated" can be saved. This is the way the school system believes and this is the way it functions.

Description of the Mexican American by non-Mexican Americans have given support to the educator's and school's position and belief of "Mexican Americans" being "inferior." Studies performed have some common failings: they are based on old research, demonstrate little if any insight into the nature of culture, society, or language, they still describe the Anglo stereotype Mexican American.

By identifying the problem as being the home and culture, the educational system proceed to remedy the situation. The school is and must eliminate cultural difference in all Mexican Americans. New programs now appearing in schools are not geared to help the Mexican American get an education, they are geared to destroy the student, destroy his family and destroy the group.

Millions of dollars are spent on these new programs but I doubt if any will help the Mexican American student. Most if not every single program is out to make Americans out of non-Americans. This goes for all groups (minority) in this U.S. of A.

A difficult situation exists, but the modification of certain practices or conditions could bring about some needed changes within the school system.

The question is not to change the child or the family, but it should be to incorporate distinct cultures into the school and its curriculum.

In order to come to at least a minimal solution to the educational problem some steps are necessary. The schools must

change their staffs, curriculum, and organization.

Not only should teachers be "prepared" to teach but also the administrators should be prepared to administer schools where a large Mexican American student population exists.

Teachers along with administrators should be aware of the culture and the impact on personality and behavior; have awareness of the Mexican American culture; and understand the role of the school and make the necessary changes.

For schools, government and others involved it is necessary for Mexican Americans to respond by pressure because nothing else has worked. The pressure applied on the 18th Street Community was a clear and obvious example of what community unity and pressure can do.

I cannot offer the solution to the problems faced by Mexican Americans in the school system because there is no single "solution" to the situation.

I have suggested some changes that should happen in reference to schools, programs, teachers, administrators and others, but at this point I strongly believe that the unity and "push" that Mexican Americans can have would have a greater impact on needed changes.

It can be predicted that society will react negatively to pressures from Mexican American groups. People like you and me must encourage them to make the change.

Hoy, no mañana.

Today, not tomorrow.

Good job answering questions regarding information — Documented — PASS (B+ grade)

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