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The Impact of *Brown* on the Brown of South Texas: A Micropolitical Perspective on the Education of Mexican Americans in a South Texas Community

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This article identifies the Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968 as a pivotal event in the educational history of Mexican American students in south Texas. It presents elements of the Civil Rights Movement, including the Brown decision, the rise of Mexican American political organizations, and the actions of community youth. The authors use oral histories that they and their high school students produced between 1997 and 2002, through the work of the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development, a nonprofit organization founded by the authors and their students. Through the use of secondary literature, local stories, and micro–macro integrative theory, this study describes how the Brown decision and other national events affected Edcouch-Elsa schools between 1954 and 1968.

Keywords: *Brown v. Board of Education*, Chicano epistemology, education, leadership development, Llano Grande Center, Mexican American.

We came to this country in 1968, the year that historians claim changed the world. We settled in a place where people committed themselves to taking a stand, to taking political action, and to claiming their constitutional rights. The Supreme Court of the United States modeled this kind of commitment 14 years before we arrived, and young people in our new community were building upon courage similar to what the Court had shown. As these youths sought to remedy their plight in the schools, they searched for their own freedom, and by extension, the liberation of a community. They fought a status quo predicated on a system of values that was not only fundamentally incongruent with their own, but one that also appeared to destroy rather than sustain a healthy local community.

The landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 provided an impetus for profound changes in public schools across

the United States. *Brown* reversed the historic 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which permitted legal segregation of schools and thereby established the “separate but equal” doctrine. As the Court rejected the half-century practice of segregation, however, it also suggested that American schools could proceed “with all deliberate speed”¹ as they worked toward racial integration. Following the Court’s lead, some states changed at a very slow pace. Texas, for example, failed to implement any significant policy until November 1970, when Federal Judge William Wayne Justice announced Civil Order 5281, which called on the Texas Education Agency to enforce school integration, as per the spirit of *Brown*, in all Texas public schools (Kemerer, 1991).

States’ failure to make changes engendered events of passionate discontent. African Americans and Mexican Americans across the country felt that justice was not being served in the aftermath of *Brown*. In Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African American students were determined to integrate Central High School in 1957, only to be rebuffed by National Guard troops ordered by segregationist state governor Orval Faubus. In the spring of 1968, more than 10,000 Mexican American students in East Los Angeles organized school “blowouts”² to vehemently protest segregationist practices and other discriminatory conditions in selected high schools. Later that year, two full years before William Wayne Justice’s order, students at Edcouch-Elsa High School in Elsa, south Texas, also demonstrated their frustration against a racist educational environment by walking out of school. The Little Rock case was a direct response to a school system’s inability or unwillingness to respond to the *Brown* mandate. Similarly, Mexican American students called attention to the failures of their schools to live up to the ideal of *Brown* and the promise of fairness and justice in their schools.

This article tells the story of the Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968 and its impact on the educational systems in south Texas (see map, Figure 1, p. 507) through the narratives of those who participated. The article is grounded in the voices of people whom we view as collaborators and participants in the research process and in the creation of the larger community

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story. The essay combines theory and practice as we use both primary and secondary sources to examine the following questions:

- What forces contributed to sociopolitical and educational changes in the Edcouch-Elsa community?
- What conditions operated in this particular school in the decade after *Brown*, as described by residents of this south Texas community?
- Who were the main agents for social and institutional change in this community?
- What lessons were learned from this research work?

Methodology

Data Collection

As south Texas educators, we have had the privilege of teaching in the local schools and founding the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development, a nonprofit organization based at Edcouch-Elsa High School. Most of the data used in this article were collected between 1997 and 2002 as part of the Llano Grande Oral History Collection and were woven into the text as an integral part of the narrative. We conducted more than 200 oral histories of elders, walkout participants, and other local community members. We employ grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in a theoretically critical manner³ and collaborative inquiry as a framework for data collection. The collaborative inquiry process commits us to listening and privileging local story, voice, and analysis. Typically, teams of two or three teachers and students visited a community member's home for a formal interview, or the interviewee traveled to the video lab of the Llano Grande Center for an interview. The majority of the interviews were videotaped and transcribed, and many of the stories therein are embedded as part of the curriculum design for classes at Edcouch-Elsa High School. We collected data in written, oral, video, and pictorial representations. Gómez-Peña (1996) and Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity have contributed to our thinking; along these lines, we integrate the uses of print, video, and other artistic forms to gather, present, and celebrate our data.⁴

Students and teachers also organized public seminars and conferences, such as a 30-year retrospective of the Walkout of 1968. More than 100 community members participated in a commemorative daylong symposium organized by high school students, which featured presentations by participants of the Walkout of 1968 and others involved in the event. The conference was conceived as part of an oral history project that students and teachers planned as a way to teach themselves and the larger community about the history of resistance and social change in their hometown.

Ontological Issues

We grew up in the Edcouch-Elsa community, went away to college, and returned as teachers and researchers. Thus we straddle the fence between insider and outsider status, although we have seldom felt like outsiders. To be

sure, we more frequently feel the outsider tension in the context of our roles as university researchers. Furthermore, consistent with Villenas (1996), we feel an obligation to practice research with a different consciousness and for a greater purpose than solely creating knowledge. This research venture is grounded in a reciprocal mode where researchers learn from the researched and the researched learned from the researchers. The intentionality of this practice often allows for relationships to build and even flourish. Being indigenous (insider) researchers also gives us a point of reference and ontological congruence with the community that is difficult to find in more traditional research experiences, particularly those of outsider researchers who come into communities with what Scheurich (1997) calls "ontological blind spots." The insider consciousness holds us accountable to ourselves and to our research partners.

We do not claim to be objective. We are encouraged by critical constructivist epistemologies that challenge the notion of objectivity and use research as praxis (Freire, 1973; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002; Hurtado, 2003; Lather, 1986; Trueba, 1999). In that regard, we find Pizarro's (1998) argument for a Chicana/o epistemology and methodology for the purposes of empowerment particularly compelling. We share and collect stories for the purpose of giving power to the stories and the people who tell them. We are all players in making our reality come to life. We employ this critical constructivist epistemology because if we humans created the reality we live as marginalized people and communities, then we too can construct a different reality (Lather, 1991; Scheurich, 1997; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002).

As agents for community change, we use a pedagogy of place that creates a new reality. It is a pedagogy based on the assets of people and grounded in a value system that respects people's dignity. This teaching and learning motivates and invites participation. We do this work in order to grow the mind, the spirit, and the relationships in our community. This process helps us as we strive to make informed decisions about how we teach, learn, tell stories, and shape institutions. We do research in order to privilege this knowledge. We appropriate the research venture to go beyond the traditional scholarly exercise, and use it as a pedagogical tool, an organizing strategy, and a community-building venture.

Constructing Epistemology

This article is reflexive in nature; we (the authors) put ourselves in the middle of the text. Although this approach runs counter to the conventional positivistic paradigm, it is essential as we create space for stories from our community, as well as our own personal stories. Such practice has gained prominence in the recent literature among researchers who have posited clear and compelling Chicana/o methodological and epistemological research positions and strategies (Pizarro, 1998; Pizarro & Montoya, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Villenas, 1996; Trueba, 1999; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002). These scholars have created a particular discourse within the educational research community that values organic methodological strategies. In this tradition we employ critical race

theory's strategy of story as a method of research, as a way to create the narrative, and as a vehicle for self-discovery and identity building (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995). Race informs our epistemological position, which builds on the critical constructivist tradition. Family and community fuel the unconditional support and mentorship needed for an organic pedagogy to thrive.

Our epistemology provides the space for local intellectuals to participate in the data collection and analysis process (Pizarro, 1998). This action disrupts the traditional research mode wherein the researcher is typically the sole inquirer. Because a good amount of the research was conducted through high school classes, the product of this research practice is the emergence of a youth and adult research community. The research process and methodology that we employ create the space for people to develop skills. Through this process we have seen people grow and become advocates for their community and their children. The pedagogical contributions go beyond learning research skills; rather, the process emphasizes the role of youths and adults engaged in discovery and recovery of their community, their family, and themselves. We consider ourselves learners, teachers, community activists, and researchers who practice a collaborative inquiry process to both engage academia and create teaching and learning material for our students and colleagues. We privilege knowledge that is highly valued at the micro level but rarely present in social discourse, public schools, and college classrooms.

Framework for Analysis

The theoretical framework for our analysis derives from micro–macro integrative theory (Ritzer, 1996). Ritzer asserts that various forms of this model exist, but he advocates a hybrid model that prevents extreme separations of the two; the dual construction restricts the analysis of data through a binary lens. Instead, we construct a constant communication between the micro and the macro. This connection formulates itself as a dialogical process that is reciprocal between the micro and the macro realities. The process makes sense of the relationship and ongoing dialogue between the micro community in south Texas and the driving forces of the *Brown* decision at the macro national level.

Our framework attempts to connect the micro political development of this region, particularly as enunciated by people's stories, with the macro federal judicial mandates. We see the micro–macro deliberation as an organic process that helps us make sense of the world around us both in schools and in the traditional political arena. "Micro" in our case refers to the local community history, its political culture, and its unfolding demographic development. "Macro" refers to the developments that occurred nationally and globally, such as World War II, the G.I. Bill, the *Brown* decision, and the Civil Rights Movement. This analysis is informed by critical theory and is deliberate in its attempt to disrupt the traditional power structures and the prevailing discursive regimes (Foucault, 1984; Foley, 1995). As critical race theory espouses, disruption becomes the agenda because the storytellers demand it (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995). This

framework is also consistent with the claim that schools are microcosms of the larger society. Within this context we propose that schools as micro communities also employ structural agency and that they, too, help to shape the larger society. This article deliberately focuses on the micro level by highlighting the impact of the Walkout of 1968 on the larger community.

The Walkout of 1968: A Summary

In the summer of 1968 Héctor Ramírez, an Edcouch-Elsa High School student who had just complete his junior year, found a ride to Michigan with a local family that made the trip every year as migrant farm workers. Héctor's destination was not the fields of southwestern Michigan; instead, he went to Detroit to work on an automobile assembly line. As Héctor worked in the factory that summer, he learned firsthand how powerful, organized labor unions addressed unsatisfactory working conditions. He learned lessons in organizing, planning, and mobilizing people as he came into contact with labor leaders. The labor experience in Detroit would transform him. He returned to south Texas early that fall with a new awareness of the power of mass organization. Héctor acted as a principal leader of the Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968.

On the morning of November 14, 1968, at precisely 8:10, a number of Mexican American student protesters stormed out of the classrooms chanting "Walkout! Walkout!" thus igniting a massive student boycott of Edcouch-Elsa High School. More than 150 students followed as they chanted phrases of protest against what they charged was an unjust educational system. The Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968 became the tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) in a shift of power from White (Anglo-American) to brown (Mexican American) in south Texas. After decades of a dominant segregationist culture throughout the region, Mexican American high school students in this agricultural community forcefully challenged the power structure in the schools and in the community at large.

A Political Culture and System: Community Building, Schools, and Access, 1920s-1940s

José Tamez was born in 1924 in the middle of rich farmland that soon became Elsa, Texas. "I was born in Elsa," he said, "before Elsa was Elsa." The Tamez family came to south Texas as part of a wave of early 20th-century Mexican immigrants who came to clear the south Texas brush, in preparation for the emerging agricultural industry (Cornelius & Bustamante, 1989; Gamio, 1931).⁵ As the adults worked, the Tamez children went to school. Tamez recalls, however, that for Mexican⁶ children access to school was often difficult. "One of the experiences that most shaped me as a child," he said, "was that when it rained we had to walk a long distance to catch the bus. . . . One rainy day my father walked with us to the bus stop because he wanted to ask the bus driver to drive closer to our home." The bus driver's response would be etched in José's mind forever. "When my father asked the bus driver, the

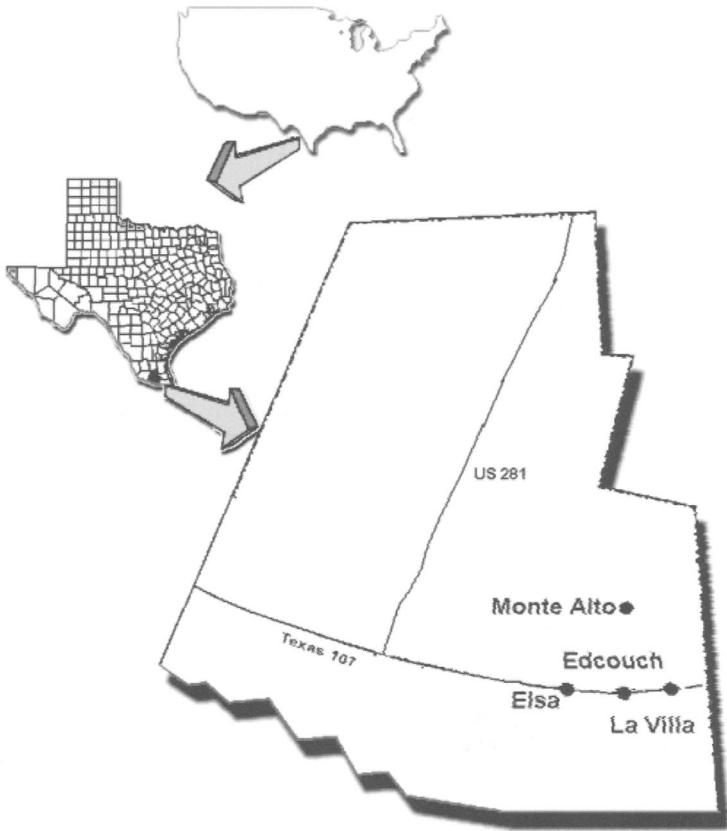


Figure 1. Map of Hidalgo County in south Texas, showing Edcouch, Elsa, and neighboring rural communities. Designed by Jason Rodríguez, an intern at the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development.

Jailed Protestors Released



CANDLELIGHT VIGIL --Kearney III candles, about 100 to 175 persons waited across the street from the Hidalgo County jail while jailed Edgouch Elias stopped signalled a response with their cigarette lighters from inside their dark cells Friday night. The vigil, beginning with a handful of youths and parents, swelled to about 175 persons late Friday night after the arrest of four student demonstrators arrested on charges of loitering on school property. The vigil ended when the students were released on surety bonds at about 1:45 a.m., Saturday.

Figure 2. Vigil at the Hidalgo County jail (McAllen [TX] Monitor, November 17, 1968, courtesy of Pablo and Ofelia Ramirez, Elsa, TX).



Figure 3. Three student leaders, from left, Mirtala Villarreal, Martina González, and Patsy Jacinto (*Harlingen [TX] Valley Morning Star*, November 15, 1968, courtesy of Pablo and Ofelia Ramírez, Elsa, TX).

driver said, 'No! Mexicans aren't supposed to get educated anyway. You are meant to work in the fields.' " Creating schooling opportunities for the Mexican American agricultural labor force was counterproductive. The bus driver appeared to have understood the rules of the game. Historical documentation supports José Tamez's story. Early 20th-century anthropologist Paul Taylor found repeated testimonials that pointed to the role of the Mexican American worker in the economy and social structure of south Texas. Taylor interviewed numerous Anglo farmers in central and south Texas who unabashedly argued that Mexican American children had no business going to school. Educating Mexican Americans would upset the roles already defined by the regional political economy (Taylor, 1934; Montejano, 1987; Kantor & Tyack, 1982; Spring, 1996; San Miguel, 1987).

Just as the American educational system of the 19th century responded to the needs of an increasingly industrial society, educational institutions in south Texas mirrored the regional economic realities (Spring, 1995). The new south Texas political elite responded to farming interests by building on the common school system of the early 20th century (Beane, 1942; David Mycue, personal communication, April 14, 2003). Shortly after the founding of Edcouch and Elsa, the community leadership sought to convert the Carlson Common School into an independent school district. They created the Edcouch-Elsa Independent School District in 1929 and followed the segregationist policies that governed the Carlson Common School as well as the San José Ranch School for Mexican American children (Beane, 1942). Among the early tasks, the founding board of trustees established an elementary school system segregated by race. Mexican American children in Edcouch would attend the North Edcouch Elementary School, which would be located in the middle of El Rincón del Diablo.⁷ The school would be housed in two army barracks brought in from Harlingen, Texas. In Elsa, Mexican American children would attend Los Indios Elementary School to be located on Lot 25 on the north side of Elsa. This school would also be housed in a wood-frame building, similar to the barracks. In contrast, Anglo children would attend the newly constructed Edcouch Elementary School, otherwise known as the Red Brick School.

José Tamez's story encapsulates the thinking that informed policies that created towns and schools in south Texas. According to Tamez, Mexican children were taught just enough English to understand their *patrones* (bosses). "We rarely made it out of grammar school," he said. Edcouch-Elsa school policy created a segregated system that reflected the values of the ruling power. A group of Anglo farmers founded the school system as an effective vehicle through which the economic, political, and social status quo could be perpetuated (Spring, 1995; San Miguel, 1987), enabling them to retain power. "There were some things that were not fair in the early years of the community," stated Elsa farmer Niles Anderson. "But that's the way things were, . . . and we tried our best to take care of one another."

Contreras and Valverde (1994) assert that while progress has been made, it has been very slow in coming. Other scholars, such as González (1990), argue that a persistent pattern of segregation—particularly before 1954, although the

remnants remain strong—is the continuation of the legacy of conquest dealt to Mexican people as a result of Mexico’s defeat during the Mexican–American War. Spring (1996) and San Miguel (1987) place Mexican American children as part of a larger group of Americans subordinated and marginalized by the dynamics of economy, politics, and race. They further argue that schools have subjected Mexican American children to the systemic patterns of cultural reproduction of values and beliefs of Anglo America. Specific case studies by Baeza (1992) and Calderón (1950) support these theses. Through oral history recollections, for example, Baeza found the Centennial School for Mexican American children in Alpine, Texas, operated well beyond the *Brown* case in 1954, even though attending segregated schools did active damage to the children. Calderón taught at the North Edcouch Elementary School between 1949 and 1950, as part of his fieldwork for his M.A. thesis at the University of Texas at Austin. He documented a profound incongruence between the school for Mexican American children on the north side of town and the school for Anglo children on the south side. Menchaca and Valencia (1990) found, in their research on California schools during the early part of the 20th century, that segregation was yet another manifestation of an Anglo–American racist ideology that called for the control and domination of Mexican American people and other minority groups. A series of political and economic developments since early in the 19th century nurtured this pattern of thinking. Segregation in Edcouch-Elsa schools occurred within this ideological and historical backdrop.

Conflict and Political Culture: Challenging Segregation, Creating Access, 1942–1960s

Early one morning in the fall of 1942, Tila Zamora drove her 6-year-old daughter, Rosie, to the Red Brick School in Edcouch. Mrs. Zamora and her husband were respected members of the community. They owned and operated Farmacia Zamora, a modest but thriving pharmacy located on the Mexican American side of Elsa north of the railroad tracks. Mrs. Zamora understood that taking Rosie to the Red Brick School was a bold move, because she knew that only Anglo children attended it. She was surprised, nevertheless, to find Superintendent Wilson waiting for her at the front steps of the school.

“Good morning Mr. Wilson,” said Mrs. Zamora, “I’m here to enroll my daughter Rosie in this school.”

The superintendent responded by reminding her that Mexican American children already had their own school.

Mrs. Zamora was determined. “Mr. Wilson,” she said, “I’ve been preparing Rosie to come to this school since the day she was born. She’s ready for this school.”

Wilson would not relent and effectively denied Rosie enrollment in the Red Brick School. But Mrs. Zamora was resolute. She went straight home that day to write a letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt requesting that he take immediate action against the injustice waged against her daughter.

Guajardo and Guajardo

Within weeks, Superintendent Wilson received a directive. It came from Washington, D.C., and had been forwarded to the Texas Superintendent of Schools in Austin and then to Edcouch-Elsa. In October 1942, Rosie became the first Mexican American student to attend the Red Brick School in Edcouch.

The Rosie Zamora situation forced Edcouch-Elsa to examine its segregationist policy for the first time. The response from Washington via the Texas Superintendent of Schools informed the Edcouch-Elsa Independent School District that it could not deny Mexican American children access to school because of their race. The correspondence did suggest, however, that the school district could institute a language proficiency test for the purpose of admitting students although it could not discriminate on the basis of race—except against Negro children (O. Zamora, personal correspondence, October 13, 1942). Edcouch-Elsa school authorities reacted to the directive by implementing an English-language test. Rosie passed the test, but it was a clear policy move to conserve the segregationist status quo. Until the President of the United States and the State of Texas intervened, the Edcouch-Elsa Independent School District firmly followed the separate but equal doctrine as articulated in the historic *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896.

Several years after Rosie enrolled in the Red Brick School, her younger brothers were also admitted. Other English-speaking Mexican American children followed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Nevertheless, as the Supreme Court suggested, the progress of integration transpired “with all deliberate speed.” At the same time, the Mexican American elementary schools gained importance as places to funnel the increasing number of Mexican American children. At these schools children were generally taught by Anglo teachers. Though learning English was a top priority, “many Mexicans repeated first grade,” Lupita Guzmán recalled. Guzmán attended the Mexican American school in Elsa in the 1930s and 1940s and also remembered that many kids had “just stopped going when they were 11 or 12 years old and still in the first or second grade.”

Calderón observed that the physical structures of the Mexican American school were clearly inferior and created poorer learning environments than the newer buildings and facilities at the Red Brick School. The ethnic composition of the faculty also added to the inequality. Mexican American students had difficulty in understanding Anglo teachers, and Anglo teachers often had little patience for underskilled Mexican American students.

While school and community leaders maintained control and perpetuated Jim Crow–like conditions, Edcouch and Elsa were not immune to global forces at work during the 1940s and 1950s (Woodward, 1974). The Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor and the emergence of Nazism in Western Europe affected south Texas as much as any other region in the country. Dozens of Edcouch and Elsa residents played a central role in defining what some have referred to as America’s greatest generation (Brokaw, 2000). Pedro Salinas left his job at the Valshing packing shed in Elsa to volunteer in the U.S. Army. “I helped to liberate Dachau, 1945,” he recalled. Ruby Peña of Edcouch took a job in Corpus Christi during the war, processing and working with prisoners

of war and Japanese internment camp detainees. Martín Hinojosa Johnston was aboard the U.S.S. Missouri when “we signed the treaty to end the war with Japan in 1945.” Guadalupe Garza and Guillermo Carreón of Elsa served valiantly during the Normandy Invasion in June 1944. Carreón earned two Purple Hearts and a Silver Star for his heroism.

As south Texans returned from the battlefields of the Pacific and Western Europe, they brought with them a new awareness of themselves as Americans. “When we came back,” recalled Pedro Salinas, “we expected more.” Salinas and a host of his contemporaries took advantage of the American GI Bill shortly after their return. “I remember carpooling with several others from Elsa to go to barber school,” he said. Tila Zamora, buoyed by her victory in the Rosie experience in 1942, mobilized the Mexican American community to vote to gain representation on the Edcouch-Elsa School Board. She was particularly impressed with the efforts of local women as political organizers and campaigners. In the decade after the war, Mrs. Zamora led the efforts to gain three seats for Mexican American residents on the Edcouch-Elsa School Board.

Jacinto González, the lone Mexican American voice on the School Board in the 1930s, frequently addressed issues of inequality in the Edcouch-Elsa schools. He worked to improve the conditions at North Edcouch Elementary, which was the Mexican American school in town. The school district built its physical and policy infrastructure according to the prevailing principles of “separate but equal,” said his son Jacinto Jr. “He frequently butted heads with the Anglos.” The elder González had to present his objections carefully, because it was generally unacceptable that Mexican American people challenge Anglos in power. Shortly after the Rosie Zamora victory, her father Ben Zamora ran for a seat on the School Board and won. While on the board Mr. Zamora emerged as a strong advocate for the rights of Mexican American children, but, like González, he found that one sole voice yielded only minimal impact.

The growing Mexican American population, coupled with the community’s heightened sense of itself as an American community deserving to be treated justly, brought on further changes. When Juan Morón and E. A. Carreón gained seats on the School Board in the 1950s, they too contested the status quo. Blanca Morón recalls her father telling her a story about a highly charged debate held at a board meeting regarding the inferior conditions at the North Edcouch Elementary School. When one Anglo board member argued that the facilities at the Mexican American school were tolerable, Mr. Morón whipped back, “If the school is as good as you say, why don’t you send your daughters there?”

Despite the gains, the broader movement to integrate American schools had little impact on Edcouch-Elsa schools. “Control here was pretty firm,” said Esteban González, who attended the Mexican American school in Edcouch. Mexican American children who endured the humiliation but were fortunate enough to have teachers who liked them “had a chance to get to the high school,” said González. “But in the 50s and 60s most of the kids in that school were migrants, and when they fell behind, the school did little to help. . . .

That is how we were kept out of high school.” The agricultural economic base clearly affected the educational progress of Mexican Americans in Edcouch-Elsa, and the schools compounded the problems by failing to respond to the needs of an increasing number of migrant students. “As kids left school,” said González, “they became part of the labor stream, . . . some for life. Things may’ve been different if the schools had encouraged kids to stay instead of encouraging them to leave. . . . To me, that’s where things went wrong.”

In Edcouch-Elsa, as in other places across the country, progress toward effective school integration after *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 occurred “with all deliberate speed” (Wilkinson, 1979). While school leaders delayed policy changes, the rapid demographic shift in the schools could not be slowed. As expectations were raised in the Mexican American community during the postwar period, the number of Mexican American children transitioning from grammar school to high school increased significantly. When Rosie Zamora graduated in 1954, she was one of 21 Mexican Americans in a class of 38, the first year where more than half of the graduates were Mexican American.

Even as the population increased and as more Mexican American children stayed in school, the schools failed to respond to the needs of the evolving demographic. The Central School was built in 1950, although it merely replaced the Red Brick School as the new elementary school for Anglo children; after 1950, Mexican American children were enrolled at the Red Brick School as part of the school district’s plan. In 1961, the school district finally revoked its policy of forbidding Spanish from being spoken in school. Countless testimonials prove that high school faculty members and administrations continued to punish Mexican American students for speaking Spanish well into the late 1960s. “We were also completely absent from any of the textbooks,” recalled Esperanza Salinas, “except when the Texas history book referred to us as Greasers. They called us Greasers!” Jorge Salinas, who was a staunch supporter of the Walkout of 1968, concurs with the critics of the Anglo-controlled status quo. “It was an oppressive environment for us in the schools and in the economy,” he argues, “and we had to stand up for ourselves.”

The Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968: The Stories

Fourteen years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, our father borrowed a 1962 Ford pickup truck and crossed the Rio Grande River with his wife and young children. Papi and Mami rode up front and the boys rode in the back of the half-ton truck, nestled amid the remainder of our worldly possessions. On the last day of 1968, we immigrated into the United States. The two of us, our older brother, and another little one on the way, would soon enroll in the Edcouch-Elsa public schools, a school district enveloped in deep turmoil as a result of a contentious school walkout that had occurred just one month prior to our sojourn from Mexico. Dozens of students and hundreds of community members orchestrated an impassioned and highly publicized response to what they viewed as a system of educational, political,

and economic control defined by historic segregationist policies and practices. The Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968 was a manifestation of what *Brown* was intended to accomplish legally but could not achieve politically or socially. It was a demonstration of power by Mexican American youths against an elite structure rooted in the segregationist culture of Jim Crow, and it became a turning point in the self-definition of a community that had previously been bound by economic and political control.

In part, the Edcouch-Elsa walkout was another sign of the turbulence and activism of the 1960s (Gitlin, 1987). Taking inspiration from the antiwar, the Black Power, and the civil rights movements of the time, youth leaders at Edcouch-Elsa High School exerted their own will in protest against educational and political injustice. The Chicano movement of the late 1960s, born out of the political activism of Mexican American college students across the country, also played an important role in the walkout.

The walkouts in East Los Angeles in the spring of 1968 provided a model for Edcouch-Elsa. Chicano college students in Los Angeles pushed their civil rights agenda by helping to organize student demonstrations. The United Mexican American Students (UMAS), the Brown Berets, and other East Los Angeles organizations helped mobilize high school students as they staged successful boycotts. The historic walkouts in Los Angeles precipitated the demise of the old Anglo school administration and replaced it with a more diverse body of leaders that included a significant number of Mexican Americans (Navarro, 1995).

The Edcouch-Elsa case also received inspiration and assistance from a Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) chapter based at Pan American College in nearby Edinburg. Freddy Sáenz, a 15-year-old student at Edcouch-Elsa High School, emerged as a key figure in the context of MAYO's participation. Freddy's older sister Lali was deeply involved in the work of the organization; she would later be involved in the Colegio Jacinto Treviño chapter. "As far back as the spring of 1968 Freddy complained at home about things that were going on in the school," she recalled. Lali understood Freddy's story all too well. As a 1965 graduate of Edcouch-Elsa High School, she had first hand experience of the adverse conditions at the school. By the spring of 1968, Lali began to share Freddy's story with her peers at MAYO. "We just wanted a better education," she said.

A semblance of burgeoning activism leading into the summer of 1968 was measurably altered because many of the student activists headed north with their families as migrant farm workers. While Héctor underwent his politicization on the assembly line in Detroit, the Sáenzes and many others toiled away in the fields of southwestern Michigan, the San Joaquín Valley of California, and the Texas Panhandle. Summers were for work; political activism would have to wait for the fall, when everyone returned to Edcouch and Elsa. "The summers were for going with our families to work in the fields," recalled Esteban González. "That's how we made a living."

Both young men and women played essential roles in creating the Walkout of 1968. Héctor Ramírez inspired students, organized meetings at his

house, and became one of the spokespersons for the students. Mirtala Villarreal surfaced as a strong leader and inspired other female students to become involved. She, too, organized numerous meetings at her house in Edcouch. Esteban González and Raúl Alaniz emerged as emotional and outspoken leaders. Lali Sáenz played a critical role in organizing the students effectively and leveraging outside resources. Lali brought in MAYO. "And those guys really taught us how to organize . . . we had structured meetings, wrote goals and objectives . . . that kind of stuff," said Freddy Sáenz.

Lali, Mirtala, and scores of other young women played a pivotal role in executing the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout of 1968. Delgado Bernal (1998) argues that Chicanas were invaluable participants in the 1968 East Los Angeles School blowouts. Although they have not received proper credit for their leadership roles in the blowouts, Chicanas were crucial to the movement, particularly as they used their sophisticated social networks to organize large numbers of participants. In Edcouch-Elsa, women exercised very similar roles. Nelda Treviño spoke of the numerous occasions where she and her sister Mirtala organized large numbers of students and adults for meetings in their home in Edcouch. Nelda also suggested they were expected to perform certain gender specific roles, such as preparing food for the gatherings and organizing materials for the meetings. They accepted some of the traditional gender expectations, but they rejected others. In short, like Chicanas elsewhere (Gándara, 1982; Segura, 1993; Vásquez, 1995), these women used a sense of power as they determined the roles they would play.

Lali became focused on organizing in September 1968 after she and her family "returned from working in the fields up north." When Freddy came to her, she claimed she was ready to organize because she had "worked during the summer in Michigan as a Migrant Education Aide and had met political people including some Quakers who educated [her] on how to address issues." Lali also alerted Raúl Yzaguirre of the new Colonias del Valle Organization, who then encouraged her to "organize the parents." Lali's important role, then, was about bringing in MAYO and other outside resources.

MAYO was born in the mid 1960s as an offshoot of the political activism of older Mexican American civil rights organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the United Farm Workers labor union. In 1967, MAYO's clarified mission called for an aggressive strategy aimed at addressing the historic discrimination against Mexican American children in Texas public schools. The central focus of MAYO's initial activity was in the barrios on the west side of San Antonio and on the campus of St. Mary's University. Young Chicano leaders such as José Angel Gutiérrez, Mario Compeán, and Willie Velásquez provided the initial leadership at St. Mary's. Within a few years, these student leaders created institutions such as the Southwest Voter Registration Project and the Raza Unida Party. Under their leadership, MAYO would also lead the organization of thirty-nine school walkouts throughout the state of Texas (Navarro, 1995).

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other civil rights activists sought to desegregate schools for

Black children by looking strategically for court cases such as *McLaurin* (1950), *Brown* (1954), and *Swann* (1971). Similarly, organizations such as the LULAC and the American G.I. Forum supported litigation to integrate brown children in cases such as *Méndez* (1946) and *Delgado* (1948). Working outside the courts, however, MAYO activists in Texas looked strategically for communities such as Edcouch and Elsa, where a growing discontent toward the schools fomented.

MAYO's emerging strategy focused on mitigating the laws of discrimination against Mexican American children in schools. It proposed to do this by advocating bilingual education curricula, hiring more Mexican American teachers and administrators, and expanding school curricula to include Chicano history and culture courses. Contemporary research persuasively argued for the value of each of the issues on MAYO's agenda. The research of George I. Sánchez (1940) in education, Américo Paredes (1959) in anthropology, and Julián Zamora (1972) in sociology all supported MAYO's positions. Interestingly, MAYO's bold platform fell short of challenging the public schools systematically. Its approach called for changing the curriculum and training new personnel, but it did not challenge the manner in which educational policy was created, how students and teachers were trained, or how anyone was evaluated.

In the fall of 1968 when Lali Sáenz began to brief her fellow MAYO members about Freddy's stories, the group began to mobilize. At Edcouch-Elsa High School MAYO found fertile ground of profound discontent among Mexican American students and their parents.

The history of American schools is replete with stories of the placement of certain minorities according to the values of the dominant ruling group. The Edcouch-Elsa experience was no different. Greta Davison reflected those values, applying them conscientiously to her work as a high school counselor and pre-college placement officer. Mrs. Davison's display of power with the Mexican American children was consistent with what oppressive educators have done with Native American children, African American students, and others (Spring, 1995; Fowler, 2000).

In April 1968, 17-year-old Alicia Tamez walked into Mrs. Davison's office at Edcouch-Elsa High School. Alicia asked Mrs. Davison for help in filling out a college application. "I want to go to Pan American, Mrs. Davison, to study to be a teacher. It's been my dream since I was a kid," said Alicia.

"Now, Alice, I don't believe college is a good idea for you," the counselor said. "Why don't you think about going to secretarial school instead?"

Alicia was in shock. While growing up in Elsa in the 1950s, she had frequently played school with her cousins, always convincing them that she should be the teacher. Mrs. Davison had dealt her a crushing blow; Alicia did not know how to respond. "I walked out of her office humiliated, sat outside her doorsteps, and wept," she recalled years later as she sat in her office as Superintendent of Edcouch-Elsa Schools. Alicia's story points to the persistent attitude toward Mexican American students as innately deficient (Valencia, 1997). The story further supports the growing literature that

describes the historic marginalization of women of Mexican origin in cultural contexts and in institutional scenarios (Flores-Ortiz, 1997).

Unfortunately, Alicia's story was not an isolated incident. "I went to la oficina de la Davison," said Esteban González, "and she told me that I should go to the army to serve in Vietnam."

"La Davison told me," said Raúl Alaniz, "that I shouldn't even apply to college. 'The military is your best choice. . . .' She said this as she was giving out college applications to a bunch of the Anglo kids. And I was an A student."

Numerous other Mexican American students share similarly painful stories of being insulted, humiliated, and "put in [their] place." As for Raúl Alaniz, he simply "had had enough." His encounter with the guidance counselor alone, he suggested, was enough reason to stage a boycott of the school.

Dalia Hernández was 15 years old and a freshman at Edcouch-Elsa High School on November 14, 1968. She walked out without hesitation because she, too, had endured repeated humiliation in the schools. "I'm not one who hates others, but I hated the Anglo coaches who made fun of me because of my weight and because of my language," said Dalia. Anglo coaches apparently singled out overweight Mexican American girls. "They made you wear shorts, run laps, and do push-ups, . . . but they didn't make the White girls do that," Dalia continued. The thin girls, regardless of race were treated better, unless they spoke Spanish. "We got spanked for speaking Spanish in school," she said. According to Dalia, only thin, English-speaking Mexican American girls had a chance to be treated well. "Imagine the pressure," she said, "of having to be like them." Dalia was clearly developing a consciousness of resistance. This consciousness is what Anzaldúa (1990) refers to as *la conciencia de la mestiza*. Indeed, even as the coaches exercised a perverse power over Dalia, demonstrated a distinct bias against many of her peers, and practiced outright use and abuse, the experience helped Dalia build still greater resiliency.

Mari Rodríguez was an eighth-grader who walked out.⁸ "I knew there was some organizing going on . . . my brother was involved in some of it, but I was not," she recalled. "When I heard the commotion that morning, and all the yelling in the hallway, I decided to go, too." It was an easy decision for Mari. She recalled that as an eighth-grade cheerleader, it was difficult to make the cheerleading squad because tryouts were held during the summer. Many Mexican American girls who wanted to be cheerleaders could not try out because they were migrant farm workers. For those who did make the squad, things were tough. "It was the Mexican cheerleaders who did all the cleaning and all the work that we were all responsible for." As they cleaned the restrooms, Dalia, Mari, and other Mexican American female students were expected to play roles that resembled those of domestic laborers. This echoes the findings of Zambrana (1994) and Zavella (1987), who suggest a variety of ways that young Mexican American women are expected to prepare for employment as domestic workers for White, middle-class families.

To Mari's dismay, her participation in the walkout had humiliating effects. "The School Board forced my mother to publicly apologize for my behavior and to say that I was wrong in walking out," she recalled tearfully. High school

administrators took great care in documenting every participant of the walk-out. Within days after the walkout, the school announced that all participants were expelled. They could return to school, however, if the students (with some exceptions) took their parents to a School Board meeting where they would publicly read a statement of apology prepared by school administrators. "My mother was so humiliated," said Mari. "She was basically put to public shame . . . because I stood up for justice." In addition, the school stripped Mari of her homecoming queen honors, which she had earned just days before the walkout. "I cried when they took that away from me," she lamented, still tearful 30 years later.

Emotions were intense that historic autumn in 1968, and to this day many people who were close to the event remain angry. "At the hearings, Pipken [the high school principal] said they had no rule that punished students for speaking Spanish . . . what a lie!" said Raúl Alaniz, "He paddled me, and he paddled a bunch of other Mexicanos." Most of the students had deep disdain for administrators. "To me, they were just a bunch of rats. . . . I didn't respect any of them." Not even the lone Mexican American administrator on staff, assistant principal Juan Godena, was immune from being loathed. "Godena era un vendido [he was a sell-out]," said Alaniz.⁹

Esteban González recalled that Anglo teachers generally did not respect Mexican American students. He felt he was unjustly branded as troublemaker by the teachers, who formed that opinion of him without knowing him. "Only Rudy Cisneros respected me," he said. "He was the only teacher that took the time to get to know us, . . . and to this day we remain good friends." The walkout unleashed passions and emotions that many of the participants had not experienced before, and have not felt since.

Those who opposed the walkout also displayed deep emotions and viewed it as a big mistake. Frances Anderson served on the high school faculty for many years before the walkout. She thought it was one of the worst experiences in community history. "We lost some very good people because of that boycott," she said, referring to the rapid exodus of Anglo teachers from Edcouch-Elsa High School in the years that followed. A long-time resident of Elsa, Mrs. Anderson also left the faculty a few years after the walkout, for political reasons. Gloria García, a close friend of Mrs. Anderson's, taught at the high school in the late 1960s, and she too disagreed with the student boycott. Ms. García claimed that the students were misguided rabble-rousers who were misled by outside agitators. Willie Rae Fisher also taught at the high school and similarly found the walkout to be "unfortunate" and "unnecessary." Fisher acknowledged that she was aware of some trouble with "discrimination against the Latins, but it wasn't bad enough" to merit a massive walkout.

For Principal Pipkin and Superintendent Bell, the walkout would not be tolerated. Although both saw it as a serious act of insubordination, they initially misjudged the students' resolve. In the days leading up to November 14, Mexican American student leaders drafted a list of grievances against the school. With the assistance of MAYO organizers, the students developed a list of 15 demands that they presented to the School Board. Students demanded that

they be allowed to speak Spanish on campus. They demanded that the school create programs to address the obstacles faced by migrant students. They demanded that courses on Mexican American history and culture be offered. They demanded that the notorious and discriminatory college counseling practices become inclusive. They demanded that the facilities at school be repaired or updated: "Give school buildings a facelift. . . . [We] want to be proud of our school," they said. They demanded that "blatant discrimination" against Mexican American students at the school stop immediately (*List of Demands*, 1968).

The student committee presented the demands to the School Board on November 4, 1968. The board, however, did not acknowledge the demands. Instead, it passed a policy to respond to student and community grievances. According to the policy, people with grievances must follow a specific process. Grievances must first be taken to the school principal. The principal then notifies the superintendent, and the superintendent reports to the School Board. According to student protesters, the board ridiculed the student demands. "We were not taken seriously. . . . I don't think they could accept that we could have power," said Esteban González. Many Anglos saw Mexican Americans as laborers and little else. Bill Foerster was one example. "I was shocked when I first went to the bursar's office my freshman year in college and the person on the other side of the counter was Mexican," he said. "There was something wrong with that picture." Similarly, the Anglo administration at Edcouch-Elsa had difficulty in viewing Mexican Americans as capable of masterminding an effective movement. When the board emphatically rejected the student demands, the students resolved to walk out.

The administration acted firmly and swiftly with the student protesters. More than 150 students walked out, and each was identified through a diligent identification process that included teachers, counselors, and administrators. "Pipkin had teachers taking notes of who was out there," recalled Freddy Sáenz, "so I told the students to scramble, move around, in order to confuse them." But Pipkin's staff was efficient and every student on the list of participants was effectively dismissed from school, pending further action. After the first day, many students found strength in the protest and encountered wide support from the community. So they followed with a second day of protest on November 15. On that day, Pipkin exhorted the police to incarcerate several of the youths whom he viewed as particularly troublesome. "I remember I was getting ready to eat [while on school grounds]," recalled Freddy Sáenz, "when all of a sudden a cop came from behind and said, 'You're under arrest.'" Nine students were incarcerated that day. Immediately, approximately 175 community members shifted their protest from the school to an area outside the county jail for an all-night vigil (*McAllen [TX] Monitor*, November 17, 1968; see Figure 2, p. 508, for photograph that appeared with that issue's article on the walkout—one of many newspaper articles that covered the event).

The series of highly-charged events convinced the students and their supporters to seek legal recourse. Within days, local attorney Bob Sánchez and lawyers from the nascent Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) filed suit against the Edcouch-Elsa Independent School

District for violating the students' rights to exercise their First Amendment right to peaceably protest. On December 17, 1968, Federal District Judge Reynaldo Garza heard the case before a spirited audience crowding the room at the federal courthouse in Brownsville. "I heard from both sides," recalled Judge Garza, "and I ruled that the school was wrong because they had violated the students' right to hold meetings and to protest." At one point during the hearing, Freddy Sáenz was on the stand outlining the series of student grievances. "All of a sudden," recalled Sáenz, "Superintendent Bell jumps from his seat in the audience and begins to argue with me. Judge Garza snapped at Bell and said 'Sit down, Smiley; nobody's talking to you.' You should've seen la Raza yell and laugh with excitement. No Mexican had ever talked to Bell like that and gotten away with it."

Beyond its political and historical importance, the December 17 case is rich with cultural meaning. Judge Garza's nuanced comical retort to Bell directly disrupted the traditional discursive court-speak. As he lashed out at the superintendent, he disrupted the traditional power structure that suggested that no Mexican American could speak to an Anglo in that manner. He used humor in an environment where only legalistic language is used. Furthermore, he spoke in a south Texas vernacular English that elicited an uproarious response. Judge Garza turned his court of law into a court of public opinion—clearly a counter-hegemonic practice.

Judge Garza's ruling on December 17 also marked the first education-related victory for MALDEF, an emerging civil rights organization born just months before the walkout. MAYO similarly gained great notoriety as an organizing vehicle. Edcouch-Elsa would become the first of some 39 school walkouts that MAYO helped to orchestrate between 1968 and the early 1970s (Navarro, 1995). The activist energy and spirit of many Mexican American communities were unleashed during that time. The movement forced many changes in school leadership, particularly in the ethnic representation among principals, superintendents, and School Board members.

Closing Reflections

Shortly after our arrival from Mexico, our father found employment at the Galloway dairy farm, where Mr. Galloway allowed our family to reside in one of the one-room frame houses that he provided for his laborers. A year later we moved into a three-bedroom unit in a federal housing project on 3rd Street in Elsa; we would spend the next eight formative and terrific years in that housing project. Patsy Jacinto and her parents lived next door to us. There was a certain mystery to Patsy. She attended the local college, and her father frequently spoke about the excitement and turmoil that had surrounded Patsy's life when she was a student at Edcouch-Elsa High School during the late 1960s. Mr. Jacinto spoke of the courage she had displayed at such a tender age, and how she was part of a group of youths that had transformed the life of the community. We didn't know it at the time, but our next door neighbor Patsy had been in the middle of the historic Walkout of 1968 (see Figure 3, p. 509).

Neither the *Méndez* case in 1946 nor *Brown* in 1954 provided the necessary conditions or power to implement progressive changes in communities such as Edcouch and Elsa. Fourteen years after the *Brown* decision, and in the aftermath of an impressive display of power by Mexican American youths in this community, the public schools were more segregated than ever, as Anglos began to leave the community; the Walkout of 1968 effectively precipitated the flight of Anglos from Edcouch and Elsa. As the Anglos left, they also took most of their economic resources from the community. This process left a void in positional leadership that would be quickly filled by Mexican Americans. Still to be determined, however, was the question of where the power rested.

Landmark judicial decisions such as *Brown* do not always change the face of local communities, but data from the Edcouch-Elsa High School Walkout of 1968 suggest interplay between macro events and micro activity. The students who walked out took control of their schools, their politics, and their history. As we uncovered this reality, current high school student researchers gained awareness about the history of their community and their school, and the power of organized action. Through this work we have learned lessons that inform a research agenda for this historically marginalized community. We identify four areas where this research can have an impact: (a) the way we do research; (b) the way we define policy; (c) the methods and strategies used for teaching and learning; and (d) the interconnection between the experience of local people and the influences and forces of the macro politics and events.

We join others who posit alternative epistemologies based on race, class, and gender (Pizarro, 1998; Pizarro & Montoya, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Villenas, 1996; Trueba, 1999; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002). Using these epistemological and methodological strategies in traditionally marginalized communities opens new opportunities for researchers and communities alike. Grounded in praxis, this research creates opportunities for action-oriented results that contribute to the literature, the creation of new theories, and solutions for responding to oppressive conditions. As part of the decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 2002), we have also employed multiple strategies that contribute to the process of self-discovery and historical reconstruction. Through the use of critical pedagogical processes, we have trained youth as researchers and storytellers and have created spaces for community partners to analyze their own texts. Through these strategies we have created new knowledge and precipitated community change.

This change has also contributed to the way in which we approach public policy. The practice of formulating, defining, adopting, implementing, and evaluating public policy has traditionally been left to the “experts.”¹⁰ Research on the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout of 1968 teaches us that people who are most affected by policy should be part of creating it, just as they should be part of defining it. Equally important, those who research the policy (such as our high school student researchers) have a stake in how the past is told, and how the future is shaped.

Adopting policy does not always equate to change. *Brown* as well as other landmark decisions passed with little support for implementation in many communities. States and municipalities across the country, especially in the South, resisted the spirit of *Brown*. Indeed, change occurred “with all deliberate speed.” The need for change is critically important because it relates to issues of representation, advocacy, and resources, particularly as demographic shifts move toward a Latino majority population in states such as Texas. In this context, appropriate representation and advocacy are important if Latino communities are to exercise the power to affect policy and affect change. Schools in this country have historically been charged with preparing an educated citizenry—the present time is no different. An educated citizenry is needed to inform, define, and implement policy that will respond to communities’ needs (Wilson, 1997). The Edcouch-Elsa Walkout of 1968 teaches us that youth citizen action can create community change, perhaps even the kind of change that nurtures sustainable communities.

The *Brown* decision and the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout of 1968 show an interesting interplay between the macro and micro social and political developments. The historic and ennobling promise of *Brown* is profound, but it remains unmet in many communities and for many children. Since the *Brown* decision, segregation has persisted in public schools across the country; but resistance to persistent segregation has also occurred. In November 1968, more than 150 youths from a rural south Texas community challenged their school system. They were determined to enforce the change that the United States of America promised but failed to provide.

Notes

Both authors contributed equally to the writing of this article.

¹“With all deliberate speed” refers to Justice Earl Warren’s opinion in *Brown II* in 1955, in which he recommended that the nation proceed with the desegregation of schools cautiously and deliberately.

²“Blowouts” were school walkouts by students in East Los Angeles schools in March 1968. The events in Los Angeles led to walkouts by Mexican American students in other parts of the country, although the subsequent walkouts gained greater traction in Texas.

³This implies that the analysis and direction of the research is informed on the ground and by dialogue. At the core of the conversation, however, is the awareness of the historical and persistent power dynamics, which have often been unequally and disproportionately manifested.

⁴The Llano Grande Center has employed digital storytelling, youth radio, periodic newsletters, journals, and local television for teaching, learning, and research.

⁵Mexican families lived in this borderland region for generations before Texas was annexed by the United States in 1845. The population typically was distributed throughout the sprawling ranches, until agricultural interests took hold of development efforts early in the 20th century. In response to the economic opportunities, a large number of Mexican immigrants came into the area. A robust immigrant influx continues to this day.

⁶The terms “Mexican” and “Mexican American” are used as the particular storyteller or interviewee used them. When we interviewed elders, for example, conversations usually transpired in the Spanish language, and elders rarely used “Mexican American” as a descriptor. Instead, they commonly used “Mexicano,” which we translate to “Mexican.” In most other cases, we use “Mexican American” as a more generic descriptor.

⁷“The Devil’s Corner,” one of the larger Mexican American neighborhoods in Edcouch.

Guajardo and Guajardo

⁸In 1968, eighth-graders attended Edcouch-Elsa High School.

⁹Godena remains the only person who declines to be interviewed about the walkout; more than 30 years later, he maintains that he is simply following the federal judge's gag order on the case.

¹⁰This process is usually controlled by technocrats who have been trained to craft public policy. Often, however, they have minimal other professional experiences. Community, for the most part, is left out of this process.

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The Impact of Brown on the Brown of South Texas

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Guajardo and Guajardo

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