

and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). Lee's work exposes absences and suggests new opportunities to further collapse the racial binary in education history research.

doi:10.1017/heq.2022.32

Rubén Donato and Jarrod Hanson. *The Other American Dilemma: Schools, Mexicans, and the Nature of Jim Crow, 1912–1953*

Albany: SUNY Press, 2021. 192 pp.

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In 1944, Gunnar Myrdal published *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, a study of race, inequality, and the “American Creed.” Though he focused on Black-White race relations, Myrdal noted that throughout the United States, wherever ethnic Mexicans lived, they experienced social, political, and economic exclusion similar to that of African Americans. Using this observation as an entry point for analyzing ethnic Mexican education in the pre-*Brown* era, Rubén Donato and Jarrod Hanson’s excellent collection, *The Other American Dilemma: Schools, Mexicans, and the Nature of Jim Crow, 1912–1953*, brings together previously published yet recently revised articles that, taken as a whole, provide “a more coherent, complicated, and connected story” of ethnic Mexican and African American education histories (10).

The Other American Dilemma makes two key interventions in Mexican American educational historiography. Drawing on a wide array of primary sources from Kansas, Louisiana, Texas, Colorado, and Mexico, Donato and Hanson argue that the experiences of ethnic Mexicans were, in fact, similar to that of African Americans, and they take a relational approach to understanding how “communities engaged in attempts to ‘race’ the Mexican population . . . to maintain social control” (4). Though Jim Crow and Juan Crow looked much alike in daily life, the framework for justifying each one was different. Legislation at the state level explicitly outlined, supported, and maintained a Black-White segregated society. There was no legal framework for segregating ethnic Mexicans on the basis of race, at least not in the same manner as that of segregating African Americans. Juan Crow “evolved in a way where laws did not have to be ratified in order to foster their [ethnic Mexicans’] separation” (4).

The majority of the scholarship on Mexican American educational history focuses on the Southwest, especially Texas and California. Throughout the region, public school administrators proclaimed that the segregation of ethnic Mexican children was tied to their pedagogical needs, that Mexican children could not speak English

and did not have the same intellectual abilities as their Anglo peers—even though neither teachers nor school administrators ever tested them to assess their skills. This pedagogical justification, common throughout the Southwest, was not necessarily used in other areas, and here is where Donato and Hanson make their second significant contribution. Examining case studies in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, and Texas, the authors uncover how, despite the lack of any explicit state legislation, local communities across the country excluded ethnic Mexicans, using whatever justification, pedagogical or otherwise, made the most sense to them.

Chapter 1, written with Gonzalo Guzmán, unearths *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone et al.*, the long-forgotten 1914 ethnic Mexican-initiated desegregation case that was heard in Alamosa, Colorado. Living far from the US-Mexico border and working without help from the Mexican Consulate, the plaintiffs argued that their children were segregated solely on their race. The defendants claimed that since they understood Mexicans to be Caucasian, race could not have been the reason for their segregation. Not only does this chapter push back the date for Mexican Americans' use of the court system to combat educational segregation—previously, the first case was thought to be the 1925 *Romo v. Laird* case in Arizona—it also demonstrates the mutability of their use of race as a tool for control.

Chapter 2 investigates the relationship between “race, education, and the local political economy” in the Jim Crow south by uncovering a 1915 incident in Cheneyville, Louisiana, in which a schoolboard member blocked Mexican children from entering the school building. Cheneyville residents, unsure about where these children fit into the Black-White dichotomy on which their social structures rested, used the children’s “mestizo appearance” as the “racial marker that kept them out of school” (40). Chapter 3, focused on the advent of Mexican American school segregation in Kansas from 1915 to 1935, elucidates the ways in which White communities racialized Mexican Americans to keep them separate, despite their small numbers and their absence from school segregation laws. As such, “Mexican children learned that becoming proficient in English and being ‘Americanized’ did not move them into the educational mainstream” (69).

Chapter 4 examines the correspondence between Mexican consuls, ambassadors, and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations to uncover several vignettes that unpack both how Mexican government officials handled complaints of their citizens and how US government officials responded. As illustrated in this chapter and in others, a major strength of the text is the use of records from the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City, where the Mexican Consulate’s archives are housed. The transnational dimension that these records bring to the work spotlight the ethnic Mexican communities that asserted agency in asking for help, and illuminate how they understood their own exclusion. Many wrote to the Mexican Consulate for aid, disclosing details about their feelings, as well as about the communities that segregated them.

In the final chapter, the authors shift from analyzing similarities in ethnic Mexicans’ and African Americans’ segregation to the way their respective exclusions have been interpreted and remembered. Donato and Hanson challenge the discourse surrounding de facto and de jure segregation, noting that “given the attention the

Brown decision and its aftermath received, Americans have come to understand school segregation as a Black-White issue” (102). This widespread belief has consequential implications for Mexican American educational history, in that “the segregation of Mexican Americans has been framed by scholars as de facto because it was the product of local custom and because state governments in the Southwest never sanctioned it” (103). Upending this widespread interpretation, the authors argue that “policies resulting in the segregation of Mexican American students were intended to keep them apart from White children, no matter the pedagogical or other rationale provided, and should retroactively be considered de jure segregation” (104). Donato and Hanson convincingly contend that, as long as it engenders racial segregation, any “government action”—whether it is a formal law at the state level or a resolution at the local level—should be considered de jure segregation (104). Categorizing Mexican American segregation as de facto obfuscates the “deliberate and racial nature” of it (104).

Written in clear, straightforward prose, *The Other American Dilemma* will be of interest to scholars of education history, Mexican American history, the history of the Mexican Consulate, and ethnic studies, and is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate students alike. Using transnational sources to uncover connections between ethnic groups in the United States, this essential text forces us to think more capaciously about how we understand Mexican American and African American educational histories, and the connections between the two.

doi:10.1017/heq.2022.33

Molly Rosner. *Playing with History: American Identities and Children’s Consumer Culture*

New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021. 193 pp.

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The relationship between objects and mythmaking has long fascinated scholars and critics who examine how cultural information and value systems can be accessed through material forms. In *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes famously described ordinary things, including toys, revealing the ways they accumulate abstract meaning. The expansive scholarship on American material culture has aimed not only to read and decode those systems, but also to explore how the seemingly neutral facts of everyday things can have agency—how these discourses organize, frame, or reinforce, often unconsciously, a broad range of identities and cultural values. Molly Rosner’s *Playing with History: American Identities and Children’s Consumer Culture*,