

Lessons from a “Pequeña República”  
Lancasterian Education, State-Making, and the Crisis of Patriarchal Authority in Early  
Post-Independence Mexico

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department  
of History.

Chapel Hill  
2012

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## Abstract

ANGELICA CASTILLO: Lessons from a “Pequeña República”  
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(Under the direction of John C. Chasteen)

The role of primary schools within the process of early post-independence Mexican state-making has been largely overlooked. In this study, I argue that primary schools, specifically those utilizing the Lancasterian educational method should be studied further because they yield important insights into the troubled course of Mexican nation-building during the first two decades following independence. The writings of elite Mexico City officials and lowly primary school teachers reveal that not only were Lancasterian schools considered especially effective in the training of a new citizenry, the schools were perceived to be actual representations of the republican society post-independence state-makers aspired to construct. When studied as microcosms of the greater republic, Lancasterian schools thus introduce an issue which has rarely been addressed in the study of early post-independence Mexico: generational conflicts between insubordinate minors and patriarchal authorities were a major obstacle in the creation of a stable Mexican state.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On November 11, 1835, José Francisco Zapata, an ailing, perpetually underpaid, but still indefatigable primary school teacher in Mexico City, penned a letter detailing an educational project defined in equal parts by enthusiasm and frustration. In the beginning sections of the letter, a missive concerning improvements to the Lancasterian educational method then being utilized by municipal primary schools throughout the city, Zapata's conviction in the superiority of instruction under the aforementioned method is palpable. "In our schools," he writes, "children breathe in a pure atmosphere . . . [and] everything combines to sustain the candor and innocence of their age." He further emphasizes that within these schools, young boys were advantageously positioned to learn how to be good husbands, strong fathers, loyal friends, and most importantly, "men useful to the *patria*."<sup>1</sup> But as the letter reaches its conclusion, Zapata's enthusiasm transforms into frustration. He contends that laziness, stubbornness, and rank disobedience on the part of students have stymied both the Lancasterian method and his efforts as an educator. Unquestionably agitated, he declares: "We instructors see in students an insufferable burden . . . a weight that overwhelms us." Of his youthful oppressors he adds: "Students view the instructor as a captor, an enemy, the instrument of their martyrdom."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Adiciones a la cartilla de enseñanza mutua... propuestas por el C. José Francisco Zapata*, AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Instrucción Pública, en General, 1828 a 1836, vol. 2478, Expediente 330, 1835.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

What was happening within Zapata's classroom to inspire such shifts in perspective? We will never be privy to the full details, but Zapata's experience as a troubled primary school instructor merits further attention. His story is significant because it provides rare insight into the internal workings and conflicts of one of the most understudied sites of early nineteenth-century Mexican state-making, the Lancasterian primary school classroom.

Following the War for Independence of 1810-1823, Mexico's leading citizen faced the daunting task of constructing an orderly, self-sustaining, republican nation-state. The vicissitudes of war had left the Mexican economy in shambles, and the threat of a Spanish re-conquest remained pervasive. The movement for independence had also opened the way for the multi-ethnic, lower class sectors of the country to wield a political and military influence that unsettled members of the most privileged classes. Nevertheless, in the earliest years of the post-independence period, a sense of enthusiasm and hope was prevalent in the discourse of new national leaders. This was partially due to the fact that they had great faith in the reformative capabilities of mediums such as public education. Through the spread of public education, Mexican state-makers, educators, and reformers hoped to create a well-ordered, cultured, and economically productive nation. It was within this context that Lancasterian primary schools gained prominence in Mexico's leading urban centers.

First articulated in 1816 by the English educator Joseph Lancaster, the Lancasterian method of mutual education was imported to Argentina in 1818, and thereafter spread throughout Spanish-speaking Latin America.<sup>3</sup>The Lancasterian method

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<sup>3</sup> Jesualdo Sosa, *La escuela lancasteriana* (Montevideo: Museo Histórico Nacional, 1954), 49.

placed great emphasis on peer-to-peer instruction and functioned around the central tenets of discipline, order, and efficiency. It also championed a strictly regulated system of rewards and punishment that would teach children to be active and productive citizens while instilling in them respect and submission to authority.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, in the immediate aftermath of the Mexican War for Independence, the Lancasterian method rapidly gained the endorsement of leading Mexican citizens concerned with generating a governable, economically productive, and refined citizenry.

However, by the late 1830s, the testimony of José Francisco Zapata, a Lancasterian primary school instructor, reveals that this post-independence educational innovation was not working as well as its proponents expected. In a series of letters and reports addressed to his employers in Mexico City's municipal government, Zapata indicates that despite its apparent superiority over other forms of instruction, the Lancasterian method was rendered useless by children he paints as intractable, disobedient, and just shy of irredeemable. His young charges failed to submit before authority even though the philosophy and organization of the Lancasterian classroom were carefully structured to ensure this would not happen.

Zapata's case is compelling for a number of reasons. Despite of the efficiency and disciplinary effectiveness ascribed to the Lancasterian method, Zapata demonstrates that schools utilizing this model could still be sites of disorder and generational conflict. Also, we only know of Zapata's troubles because he considered the problem of insubordinate minors significant enough to have government officials become involved. Why were youthful misbehavior and insubordination causes for so much frustration in the case of

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<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Tanck Estrada, "Las escuelas lancasterianas de la ciudad de México: 1822-1842." *Historia Mexicana* 22, no. 4 (1973): 496.

this particular individual? And why was the issue of misbehaving children something Zapata believed his employers needed to be made aware of? Finally, what actions might his problems with insubordinate schoolchildren have prompted in government officials dealing with similar challenges to state authority outside the classroom?

In view of these considerations, I will analyze José Francisco Zapata's experience as a Lancasterian primary school teacher during the early post-independence period in order to consider how the generational tensions and conflicts within Lancasterian primary schools both reflected and potentially influenced the course that Mexican state-makers took in forging an exclusive and oligarchic nation-state. I argue that upon learning of a crisis of patriarchal authority taking place within Lancasterian classrooms, spaces that represented testing grounds for the liberal republican political order state-makers hoped to establish, these leading citizens may well have been encouraged to focus their energies on expanding higher education instead. This privileging of higher education combined with constitutional limitations such as literacy requirements for the right to vote ensured that by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, political decision-making rested squarely in the hands of a wealthy, privileged few.

## Chapter 2

### The Lancasterian Classroom as a “Pequeña República”

Despite the fact that the Lancasterian educational method became widely accepted in Mexico and other countries throughout post-independence Latin America, Lancasterian primary schools and primary education in general have been largely overlooked by historians of early nineteenth-century Mexico. The scarcity of primary sources detailing the internal functions of Mexican primary schools, the schools’ limited reach and efficiency, and the Mexican state’s minimal involvement in the regulation of its public school system during the first four decades of nationhood have contributed to the lack of engagement demonstrated by historians. Even historians of education such as Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and Anne Staples have signaled early post-independence primary education as an afterthought in the modernizing and nation-building schemes of the country’s foremost leaders. Vázquez indicates that it was not until the late 1850s that Mexican officials even began widespread efforts to inculcate a sense of national identity through devices such as the teaching of patriotic history in primary schools.<sup>5</sup> Anne Staples, one of the few historians to have produced a book length study on education during the early nineteenth century, suggests that only within the realm of higher

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<sup>5</sup> Josefina Vázquez de Knauth, *Nacionalismo y educación en México* (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1970), 42.



education is it possible to see national leaders truly aspiring and working to create a new national society.<sup>6</sup>

In *Recuento de una batalla inconclusa*, Staples contends that higher education and literary or scientific academic culture were what “really mattered in nineteenth-century Mexico” because Mexican national leaders and elite citizens dedicated the majority of their patronage and attention to institutions for higher learning while leaving primary education to be the “poor relation” of the academic world whose fate was to be determined by overwhelmed and mostly inefficient local governments.<sup>7</sup> A reason for this overt favoritism on the part of Mexico’s leading classes was that they preferred to develop educational institutions that reflected commerce and enlightenment to foreign observers all too willing to consider Mexico a pre-modern land of uncivilized savages.<sup>8</sup> Staples also indicates that the scarcity of funding and capable school instructors and the difficulties of establishing schools in isolated rural areas all helped stem the early enthusiasm that state-makers had for widespread public and primary education.<sup>9</sup>

Primary schools still require further investigation, however. Schools which followed the Lancasterian method of mutual education especially merit further consideration because they were fashioned to be microcosms of the greater nation. They were places in which national leaders could see how the new liberal republican political

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<sup>6</sup> Anne Staples, “Alfabeto y Catecismo: Salvación del Nuevo País,” in Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, ed., *La educación en la historia mexicana* (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2009), 73.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Staples, *Recuento de una Batalla Inconclusa: La educación Mexicana de Iturbide a Juárez*, (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2005), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Staples, *Recuento de una Batalla*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 423.

order of the post-independence era would (or could) work, and how it might be reproduced by subsequent generations of Mexican citizens.

As an example, from the moment of its establishment on November of 16, 1823, one of the first Lancasterian schools in Mexico City, *Filantropía*, was identified as a “pequeña república.” While introducing his audience to the responsibilities held by adult instructors within a Lancasterian classroom, one of *Filantropía*’s founders, Manuel Codorniu y Ferraras, stated that “the director . . . presides over every activity completed within this *tiny republic*.”<sup>10</sup> But more than a simple appellation given to the Lancasterian classroom in order to emphasize its value as a producer of Mexico’s new republican citizenry, the designation, “pequeña república,” indicated that, in the words of historian Eugenia Roldán Vera, the Lancasterian educational institution was a “representation of the [liberal republican] political order it aspired to construct.”<sup>11</sup> For these reasons, having emerged as products *and* reflections of the sociopolitical context, Lancasterian schools—such as the one José Francisco Zapata administered—let us examine how national sociopolitical processes were experienced by common Mexican citizens, but also, how processes taking place within the primary school classrooms might have helped set the course nineteenth-century national leaders followed in structuring the Mexican state and nation.

Turning to Zapata’s particular experience once again, we are able to see that for all that the Lancasterian method was designed to produce honest, well-behaved, and

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<sup>10</sup> Manuel Codorniu y Ferrara, *Discurso inaugural...en la apertura de las escuelas mutuas...* (México: Imprenta de M. Rivera, 1823).

<sup>11</sup> Eugenia Roldán Vera, “El niño enseñante: infancia, aula y Estado en el método de enseñanza mutua en Hispanoamérica independiente,” in Barbara Potthast and Sandra Carreras, ed., *Entre la familia, la sociedad y el Estado* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2005), 82.

respectful citizens, his students continued to appear “dishonest”, “fickle”, and “defiant” miscreants whose penchant for thievery and insubordination drove him to distraction. Zapata, in effect, had a major crisis of authority on his hands, a crisis of *patriarchal* authority in which his prerogatives as an adult and paternal figure were routinely challenged by recalcitrant minors.<sup>12</sup> But during this time in early post-independence Mexico, Zapata was far from being the only representative of the Mexican state disturbed by the activities of fractious or insubordinate dependents.

Almost from the very instant of its inception in 1823, the fledgling Mexican Republic saw the specter of popular sovereignty rise to haunt elites of all factions, backgrounds, and vested interests. Through a series of demonstrations and riots which echoed Hidalgo’s popular insurgency in 1810, *el pueblo* of Mexico City and other major locations throughout the country demonstrated that they now believed the new post-independence government needed to work for the good of the common man. According to historian Timothy Anna, the struggles for popular sovereignty that rocked the country between 1828 and 1830, represented the first major attempt in Mexican history to “carry to its logical conclusion the principle that the State represents the people,” but he further emphasizes that this was a process “massively resisted by the vested interests.”<sup>13</sup>

Even as his counterparts outside the school launched campaigns to restore order and to safeguard the future progress and well-being of the republic by containing the mobilization of popular sectors, José Francisco Zapata underwent a similar struggle to

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<sup>12</sup> For purposes of this study, I will be using Steve Stern’s definition of patriarchy as a system of social relations and cultural values wherein males exert superior power, influence, and authority within familial cells and in which authority within familial cells serves as a fundamental model for social authority more generally. See Steve J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 21.

<sup>13</sup> See Timothy Anna, *Forging Mexico: 1821-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 212.

maintain discipline and re-establish order within the tiny world of his classroom. The society/school reflection worked in both directions. It is my contention that the tensions and conflicts which developed between patriarchal authority figures and insubordinate minors within primary schools such as the one run by José Francisco Zapata helped convince national leaders that primary education was not an effective medium for creating the state and society they desired. Having learned from subordinates such as Zapata that even within the ideal environment of the Lancasterian classroom, children (often from the mobilizing popular sectors that were creating so many ‘problems’ at the time) remained unruly and uncontained, state leaders may well have limited their efforts to promoting higher education for the establishment of their ideal Mexican republic. As the years progressed, this construction turned out to be an oligarchic state that barred the majority of the Mexican population from self-governance.

Through a case study on Zapata and his experiences within a tiny Lancasterian republic, we can observe a crisis of patriarchal authority in post-independence Mexico. This is a crisis that is generally overlooked in the narratives of chaos, tragedy, and unfulfilled national promise which currently prevail in nineteenth-century historiography, but it is one that proffers an explanation for why education, a medium that could have served to grant Mexico’s diverse population a place within the state that emerged from independence, became instead a mechanism through which elite state makers forged a tiny and exclusive ‘official nation.’

### Chapter 3

#### The Crisis of Patriarchal Authority in Colonial Latin America

In an 1813 article, *El Diario de México* complained that the authority of husbands and fathers had been vastly diminished of late.<sup>14</sup> To understand why the generational tensions in José Francisco Zapata's classroom can be used to understand the social tensions prevalent in the rest of early post-independence Mexican society, it is necessary to consider the socio-political discourses of patriarchy and legal minority in use throughout Latin America during its centuries of colonial rule. Almost from the moment of contact between old and new worlds, Spanish colonizers began to conceive of their colonized Amerindian subjects as dependents, foreshadowing the establishment of a philosophy of government in which the authority of a father over his children coalesced with the sociopolitical authority that Spanish kings wielded over their colonial subjects in the Americas.<sup>15</sup>

As Bianca Premo, one of the few historians to have extensively addressed the construction of legal minorities in late colonial Latin America, indicates, "one of the most salient and commonly understood political philosophies of Spanish rule of the Americas cast the king in the role of father to a wide array of 'colonial' children, including

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<sup>14</sup> See "Sobre los medios de promover mayor números de matrimonios." *El Diario de México*, March 23, 1813, p. 375.

<sup>15</sup> Carolyn Dean, "Sketches of Childhood" in Tobias Hecht, ed., *Minor Omissions: Children in Latin American History and Society* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 21.

adults.”<sup>16</sup> This political philosophy trickled down to all levels of colonial society, as legal minority was ascribed to individuals of diverse social backgrounds. In addition to biological age, markers of gender, race, and class gradually subjected women, children, slaves, and Amerindians to the authority of powerful Spanish or criollo men through the concept of legal minority. In colonial Latin American society, the existence of a political philosophy of *minorización* which equated the subordination of children to adults with the subordination of social dependents such as women and slaves to elite, white men ensured that virtually every individual in colonial society was ruled by (usually) male patriarchal figures for much, if not all, of their lives.<sup>17</sup>

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Spanish monarchy under the influence of Enlightenment era philosophies calling for greater faith in the rationality, reason, and productive capabilities of the common man, propagated reforms that gave rise to a crisis of patriarchal authority in public and private spheres alike. The sense that patriarchal figures were starting to lose their authority over dependents due to the corrupting influence of liberal Enlightenment philosophies generally (and in pedagogy, especially) heralded the coming rift between Spanish “Father Kings” and their restless Americano “children.” When the wars for independence did finally erupt between the Spanish metropole and its American kingdoms, the crisis between patriarchal authorities and their dependents did not fade away, but rather resurfaced as the struggle that new *padres de la patria* would have in cementing their absolute authority.

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<sup>16</sup> Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Premo, *Children of the Father King*, 6.

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, the Spanish peninsula suffered from industrial decline and an economic depression that threatened the monarchy's position as a global power. To strengthen the Spanish state and to increase the monarchy's wealth, Spain's Bourbon monarchs enacted commercial and administrative reforms that by the mid-eighteenth century had become a broad campaign to spread select tenets of the Enlightenment—such as the value of work, initiative, and productivity—for purposes of stimulating the material well-being and progress of the empire.<sup>18</sup> As a direct result of these reformative impulses, children of all castas and classes became the focus of increased attention from the monarchy. Stories and essays concerning children's education and upbringing became more and more prominent in late colonial Mexican newspapers.<sup>19</sup> The same concern for children was evident in Peru, with educators, doctors, and others writing extensively about the prevention of infant mortality and the improvement of children's physical and mental health.<sup>20</sup>

In the realm of education, the influential Spanish Enlightenment philosopher and statesman Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos called for a shift from instruction in *buena costumbres* to *buena crianza*. *Buenas costumbres* emphasized courtesies most useful to the children of the upper classes, whereas *buena crianza* involved a rational education in ethics, civility, and productivity which could provide the empire with useful subjects.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Tanck Estrada, *La Educación Ilustrada* (México D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1977), 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> Dorothy Tanck Estrada. "Imágenes infantiles en los años de la insurgencia. El grabado popular, la educación y la cultura política de los niños." *Historia Mexicana* 59, no. 1 (2009), 259.

<sup>20</sup> See Claudia Rosas Lauro, "El derecho de nacer y de crecer. Los niños en la Ilustración, Perú, siglo XVIII," in Pablo Rodríguez and María Emma Mannarelli, eds., *Historia de la infancia en América Latina* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2007), 215-216.

<sup>21</sup> Premo, *Children of the Father King*, 145.

With a shift to the teaching of *buena crianza*, the monarchy was signaling the need to extend primary education to a wider array of colonial subjects, a challenge which at least some educators in the city of Puebla in Mexico took up when they set about designing an educational pamphlet on children's civic responsibilities that came illustrated with a picture of mestizo, criollo, Indian, and mulatto youths at play together outside a school.<sup>22</sup> Looking to increase its opportunities for wealth and material progress, Bourbon monarchs extended greater importance, attention, and protection to the children of long neglected popular sectors because they now represented a valuable and untapped source of labor and productivity.

By promoting these types of social reforms, however, the Crown unwittingly created a situation in which traditional patriarchal figures increasingly began to feel that their authority over children and social dependents was unraveling. In the case of Peru, Premo's *Children of the Father King* documents the emergence of satirical writings and poetry by Lima elites who felt that the gender and generational order of their homes was in complete disarray due to the influence of Enlightenment philosophies on childhood and equality.<sup>23</sup> The new pedagogies, laws, and ideas brought over from the peninsula also led to increasing insubordination suffered by school officials and instructors in Lima's educational institutions. According to Premo, students taught according to Spanish Enlightenment pedagogies "waged open battles with school officials" and protested that they "attended school to learn rather than to obey." Taught to value their ability to think and to act as productive members of colonial society, students now

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<sup>22</sup> Tanck Estrada, *Imágenes infantiles*, 258.

<sup>23</sup> Premo, *Children of the Father King*, 172.



demanded that their superiors treat them with less severity and indicated that they considered the king to be the only person with “the ultimate authority to discipline them.”<sup>24</sup>

Bianca Premo analyzes a crisis of patriarchy taking place in late colonial Lima, but there are indications that similar tensions existed in late colonial Mexico. It was in this context that *El Diario de México* published a series of essays decrying a tendency for Mexican youths to refuse to marry and lamenting the inability of their fathers (whose paternal authority was now “almost unknown”) to command their obedience in the matter.<sup>25</sup> In a letter to the same newspaper two years later, another frustrated father revealed that he was unable to overturn his daughter’s decision to marry an unsuitable companion because a law which protected the marriage choices of young couples gave her the opportunity to marry whomever she pleased, her father’s wishes notwithstanding.<sup>26</sup> The late Bourbon legal and pedagogical reforms that frustrated patriarchs were empire-wide directives.

The wars for independence would replace the political discourse of fealty and obedience to a “Father King” with a new discourse of “Patria” with special honor for “Padres de la Patria.”<sup>27</sup> This semantic shift is significant because it reflects how core

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<sup>24</sup> Premo, *Children of the Father King*, 148.

<sup>25</sup> See *El Diario de México* issues from March 12, 1813 to March 23, 1813.

<sup>26</sup> "Remitido." *El Diario de México*, June 25, 1815, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> A very flattering instructor in Puebla illustrates this shift particularly well when we see how he refers to an audience of esteemed patrons at his institution as “padres de la patria” upon whose shoulders rests the well-being of Mexico and its youth. See “Arenga con que Don José María Malpica abrió en Puebla los exámenes públicos de primeras letras el 23 de Octubre.” *El Diario de México*, November 25, 1806, p. 351. Also see Mónica Quijada’s essay “¿Qué Nación? Dinámicas y dicotomías de la nación en el imaginario hispanoamericano” in Antonio Annino and Francois Xavier Guerra, eds., *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica, Siglo XIX* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 291.

colonial philosophies (such as patriarchy as an organizing principle for society) were transferred into the post- independence era under a thin republican veneer. The concept of patriarchal rule was not the only thing that survived the tumult and wars of the 1810s, however. At the end of Mexico's war for independence, the late colonial impulse to make education more widely available, to improve Mexican society, and to promote material progress also survived. But as in the case of late colonial Peru, even after independence, Enlightenment-era pedagogical and social reforms got a mixed reception. Leading intellectual and political figures of Mexican society were enticed by the promise of prosperity, progress, and national success. On the other hand, the reforms necessary to attain these achievements also threatened to undermine the very hierarchies and divisions that national leaders considered crucial for the country's survival as an independent republic. Evidence of this tension lies in the conflicts and anxieties that arose with the practical functioning of the Lancasterian method in early post-independence Mexico City.

## Chapter 4

### Educational Dreams and State-Making in the Early Mexican Republic

At dawn on September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest with an unorthodox interest in women and French Enlightenment thinkers, gathered the impoverished, mostly indigenous residents of the village of Dolores and initiated what would become a fourteen year odyssey for independence from Spain. A complex and tumultuous process of revolution and counterrevolution, Mexico's war for independence ushered in a new era of rural and urban poor participation in the kingdom's political affairs. Hidalgo's peasant uprising was mainly fueled by rural underclass resentment against the ruling aristocracy, but as the process of insurgency against Spain continued, members of the Mexican elite appealed to individuals from all sectors for support in the struggle against the monarchy.<sup>28</sup> Further proof of the rising power and political significance of the popular sectors is the fact that the forces of the discontented Americano Agustin de Iturbide only succeeded in wresting Mexico's autonomy from the Spanish crown by forming an alliance with the popular insurgent forces of the dark-skinned, mestizo leader Vicente Guerrero.<sup>29</sup> For better or for worse, with independence, the field of politics and government was finally opened to Mexico's multi-ethnic lower

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<sup>28</sup> See Eric Van Young, "Islands in the Storm: Quiet Cities and Violent Countrysides in the Mexican Independence Era." *Past & Present* (1988), 132-133. And Silvia M. Arrom, "Popular Politics in Mexico City: The Parian Riot, 1828." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1988)263.

<sup>29</sup> Vicente Guerrero, a man of mulatto and mestizo ancestry, was described as having 'country mannerisms' and lacking polish. He would later be given the epithet "El Negro" by critics and dissenters of his troubled 1829 presidency. See Anna, *Forging Mexico*, 217.

sectors, and as the decade of the 1820s progressed, *el pueblo* continued to demand increased participation in the state and autonomy over their own affairs. The newspaper *Correo de la Federación Republica* affirmed: “The majority of the people ought to govern.”<sup>30</sup>

In the first few years following independence, popular class political mobilization was not immediately perceived to be a threat by national leaders. The Mexican constitution of 1824, modeled on the Spanish liberal constitution of 1812, made political participation a right for individuals of all the native born population (with the exception of vagrants, criminals, and women), conferring suffrage regardless of wealth or literacy.<sup>31</sup> The country was still imbued with enthusiasm and hope for the future so soon after the success of the struggle for autonomy from Spain, and liberal politicians cultivated a popular following for the strength they gained at the polls during local elections.<sup>32</sup> Most importantly, however, during the first years of the new republican political order, Mexico’s leading figures generally had great faith that through the reformative and ordering capabilities of mediums such as public education, they would be able to create a well-ordered, cultured, and economically productive nation and society.

For example, although they belonged to distinct political and ideological camps, influential figures such as the conservative politician Lucas Alamán and the liberal ideologue José María Luis Mora shared similar views on the importance of public education. Alamán spoke of instruction as “one of the most powerful mediums for

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<sup>30</sup> Quotation found in *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>31</sup> Silvia Arrom, *Containing the Poor: The Mexico City Poor House, 1774-1871* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) 35.

<sup>32</sup> Stanley Green, *The Mexican Republic: The First Decade, 1823-1832* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 90.

prosperity.” José María Luis Mora, on the other hand, considered public education to be crucial in the improvement of popular class morality.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, when called to defend the 1823 law of *enseñanza libre* which opened schooling to free enterprise to help spread public instruction throughout the country, Mora declared that “a multitude of schools likely provide faulty instruction in reading and writing, but they still teach, and for the masses, it is always a benefit to *learn something* instead of nothing at all.”<sup>34</sup>

This last assertion by Mora emerged from an honest recognition that he and other concerned citizens faced quite a challenge in turning their educational aspirations for the country into a reality. Historian Alejandro Martínez Jiménez estimates that in the final decade before Hidalgo’s *Grito de Dolores*, only thirty thousand of about five million adults in the country were literate. With the constant upheaval and political turmoil of the decade that followed, it is unlikely that the numbers of literate Mexican residents had increased very much or at all by the time of independence in 1822.<sup>35</sup> These dismal figures were in large part due to the exclusive and underdeveloped educational apparatus that was in place throughout the colonial era.

For example, in 1802, forty three primary schools of varying sorts provided basic instruction in literacy, orthography, and religious doctrine to 2,700 boys throughout

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<sup>33</sup> Alamán and Mora are cited and discussed in Vazquez de Knauth, *Nacionalismo y educación*, 24-25.

<sup>34</sup>Through *enseñanza libre*, private citizens were encouraged to establish schools at their own discretion and to administer them as they wished with the sole provision that the schools uphold Christian religious doctrine and utilize Spanish as the official language of instruction. Critics of *enseñanza libre* became concerned that such minimal involvement by the state would lead to a profusion of poorly run schools with little concern for the quality of education they offered. Mora responded with “Verdad es que una multitud de escuelas enseñarían mal a leer y escribir, pero enseñarían, y para la multitud siempre es un bien aprender algo ya que no lo pueda todo.” See Leonel Contreras Betancourt, *Escuelas lancasterianas de Zacatecas en la primera república federal, 1823-1835* (Guadalupe, Zacatecas: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2005), 66.

<sup>35</sup> “La educación elemental en el Porfiriato” in Vázquez, ed., *La educación en la Historia de México*, 105.

Mexico City, about forty six percent of the male primary school age population estimated to exist in 1790.<sup>36</sup> However, the further one traveled from the boundaries of Mexico City, the lower these numbers plunged. The resources, infrastructure, and public interest available in large urban centers like the vice-regal capital became scarce once in the rural countryside.<sup>37</sup> Even in Mexico City, where primary schools were estimated to reach a higher percentage of the school age population than anywhere else in the country, educational institutions were often badly in need of repairs, supplies, and funding.<sup>38</sup> The quality of education offered from one institution to another could also vary quite a bit. Some instructors firmly guided their students through lessons on orthography and reading. In many cases, however, colonial officials questioned the ability of other instructors to even teach these subjects.<sup>39</sup>

By 1820, these circumstances had not changed much, and when the country finally gained its independence two years later, Mexican state-makers faced the challenge of reforming an inefficient and inadequate educational apparatus with minimal resources but a great deal of urgency. It was within this context that the *Compañía Lancasteriana de México* emerged to present Mexico City's premiere citizens with a tantalizing opportunity. The *Compañía* introduced city leaders to an educational project that

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<sup>36</sup> These schools were both free institutions (known as *escuelas pías*) sponsored by local churches, convents, or the municipal government and private schools known as *escuelas particulares*. In 1802, there were also seventy schools for girls, public and private *amigas* which had a registered student population of about 3,000 students. Tanck Estrada utilizes census information from 1790 to deduce that there were about 5,800 primary school age boys in Mexico City (children between the ages of five and twelve years of age). There was no census data for the number of primary school age girls in 1790, so it is difficult to estimate what percentage of primary school age girls might have been enrolled in Mexico City's *amigas* in 1802. See Tanck Estrada, *La Educación Ilustrada*, 197 and 201.

<sup>37</sup> Tanck Estrada, *La Educación Ilustrada*, 177.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

promised to help them quickly and inexpensively instruct a new generation of productive and governable Mexican citizens.

Established in Mexico City in 1822, the *Compañía Lancasteriana de México* was a philanthropic organization composed of well-to-do Mexican gentlemen interested in promoting the social well-being and education of the city's "needy" sectors.<sup>40</sup> The *Compañía* founded its first successful school, named *Filantropía* in 1823, and held an elaborate public inauguration to introduce an audience of esteemed patrons to the wonders of the Lancasterian method of mutual education. During his inaugural address in November of 1823, *Compañía* founder Manuel Codorniu y Ferraras described an institution where students would receive instruction superior to anything ever offered in the schools of the old colonial regime. In a well-regulated, efficient, and inexpensive process lasting between one to two years, students would be kept "continually occupied" learning the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic while simultaneously receiving lessons in the "decency and decorum required of a cultured society." According to Codorniu, the linchpins of this superior model were its emphasis on peer-to-peer instruction and its more effective disciplinary practices.<sup>41</sup>

To successfully instruct the large numbers of students that a single school could accommodate (often 100 students or more), the actual teaching of lessons was delegated to specially appointed student instructors. Selected for their proficiency in learning and exemplary behavior, these student instructors, known as *monitores*, dictated lessons to

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<sup>40</sup> Tanck Estrada, *Escuelas lancasterianas*, 494. And *Sistema de enseñanza mutua, para las escuelas de primeras letras de los Estados de la República Mexicana*. 2nd ed. México: Imprenta de C. Agustín Guiol, 1833.

<sup>41</sup> Manuel Codorniu y Ferraras, *Discurso Inaugural*.

their less advanced fellows and helped maintain order in the classroom. The adult director of the classroom in the meantime focused on supervising the activities of all students, teaching and appointing student instructors, and resolving issues of discipline. Codorniu y Ferraras also emphasized that within the Lancasterian classroom, students would no longer face the brutal whippings and punishments common in traditional institutions.<sup>42</sup> Lancasterian students would instead undergo measures designed to encourage good comportment through the use of example before fellow peers.

For instance, a student who neglected his hygiene could be made to wear a sign reading “unwashed” or “dirty.”<sup>43</sup> Theft or other more serious forms of rule-breaking could lead to confinement in a separate room titled “jail” where the culprit would await a “trial” in which he would be defended and judged by a group of peers. Good behavior and academic progress were likewise encouraged through the examples that students set for each other. Student instructors gained their positions of responsibility and authority over fellow students through exemplary behavior and skill in learning. Their lofty position in the school hierarchy and the small economic remuneration they received for their duties were supposed to encourage other children to work hard and behave well in the hopes of one day receiving appointment as a monitor.<sup>44</sup>

The school Codorniu y Ferraras and other proponents of the Lancasterian method described would have been housed in a spacious building with room for numerous long tables and matching benches arranged neatly, one row after another, before a teacher’s

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



platform at the front of the class.<sup>45</sup> Ten students were to occupy a row and were designated a ‘class.’ The only sounds to be heard were the creaking of benches, the scraping of writing implements on well-worn surfaces, and the resonating commands of student instructors dictating lessons from various points in the classroom. Standing on a bench located front and center of all classes, a student-instructor known as the *monitor general de la clase*, called out the order in which class instructors dictated lessons and examined the work of their pupils. Also at the front, but usually occupying a corner from which all rows could be observed, a third student instructor known as the *monitor de orden*, stood vigilant and observant of any breaches in conduct and discipline. Presiding over this entire panorama from the raised platform at the head of the classroom, the lone adult instructor in the school supervised the activities of all students before him, and in general, sustained the order of things within this “pequeña república.”<sup>46</sup>

The Lancasterian educational model proved to be particularly appealing to Mexico City officials because by the time of José Francisco Zapata’s account in 1835, the method was in use in all of the primary schools sponsored by the municipal government.<sup>47</sup> The method’s central tenets of discipline, order, productivity, and efficiency meshed perfectly with the political and ideological values of post-independence state-makers and allowed them to see how the liberal republican political

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<sup>45</sup> See Tanck Estrada, *La Educación Ilustrada*, 233 for an illustration of the ideal Lancasterian school and the previously cited *Sistema de enseñanza mutua, para las escuelas de primeras letras de los Estados de la República Mexicana* for the specifications required in each classroom.

<sup>46</sup> Codorniu y Ferraras, *Discurso Inaugural*.

<sup>47</sup> See *Informe rendido por el C. José Francisco Zapata como resultado de la visita que por orden del Presidente de la Comisión del ramo práctico en los establecimientos municipales de instrucción primaria*. AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Instrucción Pública, en General, 1828 a 1836, vol. 2478, Expediente 327.

order they wished to establish in the country functioned on a smaller scale within the classroom. Key practices within the Lancasterian classroom such as the increased role of students in teaching and supervising their fellows were a reflection of the notion that educated and more capable Mexican citizens were responsible for guiding and regulating the activities of their less capable or knowledgeable compatriots. The constant supervision and direction that students received from an adult director, also indicated, however, that even though as citizens of a liberal republic they now had greater influence over their own affairs, students (and the social dependents they represented) must still defer to superior authority. There no longer existed a “Father King” who oversaw the actions of his colonial children, but there was a republican state apparatus composed of *padres de la patria*, usually elite “representatives” of the common people who were responsible for determining federal outcomes. Finally, the system of rewards and punishment utilized within the Lancasterian classroom worked to enlighten students as to the value of effort and progress *within* the boundaries of hierarchy and order enforced by an all-seeing adult school director representing the Mexican state.

The most telling example of how the political order within the tiny Lancasterian republic was supposed to work lies in the ultimate punishment given for misbehavior within the classroom. An errant student found guilty of repeated or severe infractions was to be expelled from the school in as public a manner possible in order to impress upon him and his fellows the gravity and consequences of transgressing the established order and hierarchies.<sup>48</sup> Expulsion from the classroom for transgressive behavior seems routine enough, but when that classroom is explicitly identified as a “pequeña república,” a

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<sup>48</sup> Codorniu y Ferraras, *Discurso Inaugural*.

microcosm of the nation, this act gains historical significance. Mexican state-makers chose to do something analogous after the liberal republican political order within and outside Lancasterian primary school classrooms fell apart in the early 1830s, the context during which José Francisco Zapata's tale of patriarchal anxiety and frustration unfolds.

## Chapter 5

### Generational Tensions and Crisis in the “Pequeña República”

Genteel philanthropists such as Manuel Codorniu y Ferraras and other influential men in Mexico City had great expectations for the educational method introduced by the *Compañía Lancasteriana* in 1823. By the end of the decade the *Compañía* had succeeded in opening several new establishments for the education of boys and girls, and the Mexico City municipal government had adopted the method for use in all public primary schools throughout the city.<sup>49</sup> In view of José Francisco Zapata’s travails in 1835, however, it becomes evident that the Lancasterian method of mutual education did not always work as successfully or efficiently as its proponents expected.

Had Zapata had his way, a day in his schoolchildren’s lives would have been highly regimented and ruled by deference to any number of authorities. In his ideal world, upon rising for school each morning, a child would wash his face and hands carefully, trim his nails if he found they had grown too long, and ensure the cleanliness of his clothing. He would then ask for his parents’ blessing before departing for lessons. On the way to school, the child would avoid playing with dirt, rocks, and mud, and he would refrain from frolicking with other children, even if they were friends. He would also resolutely avoid rubber-necking any street melees or similar disturbances, choosing instead to walk “quietly and well-behaved” to his destination. Upon arrival in the classroom, the child would greet his school director and join the members of his class to

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<sup>49</sup> Tanck Estrada, *Escuelas lancasterianas*, 497.

study, all without sporting, pushing, speaking, or unsettling his fellows. He would then spend the rest of the school day following the directives of his instructor and responding promptly when addressed, always quiet and well-behaved.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, for José Francisco Zapata, this model schoolboy seemed to exist only in his most personal imaginings. In a somewhat mysterious, undated document filed alongside other missives directed to his employers at the *Comisión de Instrucción Pública*, Zapata wrote down this vision of a schoolboy's day, perhaps as a rough draft for other letters or perhaps simply as an exercise in textual catharsis. Whatever the purpose of this undated document, the account his employers at the *Comisión de Instrucción Pública* were actually meant to receive was quite different. One letter in particular, signed and dated by Zapata on November 11, 1835, reveals that he perceived himself to be literally under siege from the combined forces of insolent school boys and their angry parents, all over the question of discipline within the structured and orderly world of the Lancasterian classroom.

“Yesterday,” Zapata recounts in the letter to the *Comisión de Instrucción Pública*, “the Arroyo children took two slates. The instructors Carrillo and Vidal recovered the items from where they had been hidden, and then they made the Arroyos kneel. I approved of the punishment because I witnessed the search and recovery of the stolen items.” Zapata continues to describe how, upon exiting the classroom at the end of the day, the Arroyo children were reprimanded once again for pushing each other while descending the staircase, potentially incurring great harm as a result of this behavior. “They were only reprimanded for this act,” emphasizes Zapata but then notes that the

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<sup>50</sup> *Adiciones a la cartilla de enseñanza mutua.*

reprimand generated no change in the children's behavior. Much to his dismay, this would not be the end of his encounter with the Arroyos. Later that day, the father of the children, a Don Ignacio Arroyo, descended "like a fury" upon the unsuspecting instructor, angrily protesting his children's punishment, threatening to accuse Zapata in city newspapers, and generally subjecting the teacher to all manner of slanderous allegations. Zapata even attests that "he very nearly struck me; he would have done so had I not grasped his hands to contain him, and then removed myself from close proximity to prevent any further abuse."<sup>51</sup>

As could be expected, Zapata felt very disturbed and quite bitter about the entire affair. He had invested a large amount of time supervising the progress of the three Arroyo brothers and had, by his account, succeeded in helping two of the boys improve their reading and writing skills. Despite these accomplishments, however, his only reward had been exposure to insults and gross treatment at the hands of their father. He morosely concludes that "no sensible man should embrace [the teaching profession] unless powerful necessity requires him to consume this bread mixed of gall and vinegar."<sup>52</sup>

Why had the ideal environment described by Manuel Codorniu y Ferraras unraveled so completely in practice within Zapata's Lancasterian classroom? Who or what was to blame for Zapata's woes? What did Zapata indicate could be done to rectify the situation? Zapata acknowledged in this missive and other documents penned for the *Comisión de Instrucción Pública*, that he faced various challenges to the effective

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<sup>51</sup> *El preceptor José Francisco Zapata se queja de los malos tratamientos de los padres de sus discípulos motivados por las ligeras penas que les impone*, AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Instrucción Pública, en General, 1828 a 1836, vol. 2478, Expediente 329.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

administration of his school. A very significant obstacle was the lack of teaching supplies and implements. He was constantly running short of the *carteles* needed for reading and arithmetic lessons and lacking adequate writing samples for even the most basic lessons in orthography.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as the Arroyo incident illustrates, parents were also heavy contributors to Zapata's woes. Not only did they make him the target of their wrath and vengeance when they considered that he had disciplined their children unjustly, but they all too often blamed him for their children's stunted educational advancement and failed to enforce their children's regular attendance at school.<sup>54</sup>

However, in addition to suffering from the actions of misguided parents, Zapata is quite clear in signaling that the individuals at the heart of his struggle were students, children, his own insubordinate dependents. They were the sector of Zapata's schoolroom society that did not obey, did not cooperate, and did not act as befitted their subordinate position. Zapata reveals to employers that a few days before the encounter with Don Ignacio Arroyo, three of his students ambushed his *monitor de orden* outside the school and gave him a thorough beating. The *monitor de orden* was the highest ranking student instructor within the classroom, the most advanced and well-behaved boy who through achievement and comportment had gained the right to oversee his fellows' discipline and activities. According to Zapata, a monitor was to be given the respect and obedience given the Director because the monitor represented the Director's person and authority.

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<sup>53</sup> See *Adiciones a la cartilla* and *Informe rendido por el C. José Francisco Zapata... por orden del Presidente de la Comisión del ramo....*

<sup>54</sup> *El preceptor José Francisco Zapata se queja de los malos tratamientos...* And Zapata's response letter to *El supremo gobierno pide una noticia estadística de los establecimientos de instrucción primaria existentes en esta municipalidad*. AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Instrucción Pública en General, vol. 2479, Expediente 379.

So by attacking and disrespecting his *monitor de orden*, Zapata's students were, in effect, attacking and disrespecting *him*.<sup>55</sup>

The implication of the attacks on the *monitor de orden* and the episode with the Arroyo children is that Lancasterian pedagogical philosophies and disciplinary expectations aside, the children in Zapata's classroom were not abiding by the tenet of absolute obedience and subordination to the patriarchal authority figure in their classroom. Perhaps the children could not ambush him physically as they could an individual of their own age or physical stature, but they could ignore his directives and send their parents to confront him on more equal footing. Zapata does not go as far as to state that this was in fact what the Arroyo children had done after being subjected to his reprimands, but the sense that this was so is pervasive because he expresses the idea that the children had transformed him into a plaything, the object of their derision.<sup>56</sup>

In Zapata's view, "the most important virtues for a child to have, aside from Christian and moral ones, are . . . docility, obedience, and respect for their superiors." Because of their age, their dependent status, and their needs, children were to defer to their parents, their teachers, and their superiors. Moreover, if "even adults had to obey and subordinate themselves to those authorities who governed them, then even more reasons existed for why children needed to submit to those who ruled them."<sup>57</sup> This was really the crux of the matter. In José Francisco Zapata's world, hierarchies of power and

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<sup>55</sup> In his view, "the school director's obligations to his students . . . are the same which nature and reason have imposed upon parents," and "parents . . . give them [school directors] . . . all of the authority they have received from God to educate their children." See *Proyecto de reglamentación de las escuelas presentado por C. Francisco Zapata*. AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Instrucción Pública, en General, 1828 a 1836, vol. 2478, Expediente 344.

<sup>56</sup> *El preceptor José Francisco Zapata se queja de los malos tratamientos*.

<sup>57</sup> *Adiciones a la cartilla*.



authority still existed, and even adults like him had to submit to the rule of others. Mexico was an independent republic, but it was not a nation characterized by wide social equality. Nor did Zapata wish it to be so. For within his own tiny republic, a microcosm of the greater nation, he desired the preservation of “the purity of customs,” such as obedience to figures of authority. The progress of his subordinates (the children) and the success of his nation (the school), rested upon, indeed depended entirely on his students’ “subordination and performance of what they are ordered to do.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, José Francisco Zapata was a loyal citizen of the newly independent Mexican republic with the heart of a colonial era patriarch and a long list of patriarchal prerogatives to stand by and defend against the onslaught of youthful aggressors. Frustrated and overwhelmed, Zapata wrote to his superiors at the *Comisión de Instrucción Pública* seeking intervention (of a kind he does not specify), and for better or for worse, revealed to them that despite the new pedagogical method and the efforts of a hard-working employee, his tiny republic was falling apart.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> *El preceptor José Francisco Zapata se queja de los malos tratamientos.*

## Chapter 6

### Lessons Learned?

How common was José Francisco Zapata's tale of patriarchal anxieties and generational tensions among fellow educators in Mexico City and abroad? If we go by the information that can be gleaned directly from the archives, his experience seems unique, for the majority of writings that I discovered for other primary school educators in the city detailed issues of funding and lack of pay.<sup>60</sup> Despite the apparent silence of other Mexico City educators, however, Zapata's tale should not be discarded as an anomaly because it fits within a more general (and even international) trend of patriarchal anxieties over the threat of insubordinate, misbehaving social minorities.

Eugenia Roldán Vera, one of the few historians to have explored the internal functions of Lancasterian education in connection with broader socio-political processes in Latin America, reveals that in early post-independence Colombia, observers of the Lancasterian method nervously commented on the possibility that it might teach students to defy their superiors: *La petulancia e insubordinación de algunos estudiantes . . . están dando a sus padres y familia el pesar de adiestrarse en la desobediencia e irrespeto a las leyes y a sus superiores.*<sup>61</sup> Within the local context of Mexico City, José Francisco Zapata

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<sup>60</sup> See *El maestro de lectura de la lancasteriana D. José María Santana sobre separarse de su destino*. AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Compañía Lancasteriana de México, Vol. 2444, Expediente 8, 1830. And *Fizel Gertrudis renuncia el empleo de maestra de la amiga de San Cosme y pide el pago de lo que por sueldos se le debe*. AAMEX, Fondo: Ayuntamiento, Colección: Instrucción Pública en General, vol. 2479, Expediente 415.

<sup>61</sup> *Gaceta de Colombia*, February 25, 1827, cited in Eugenia Roldán Vera, *El niño enseñante*, 80.

figured as one of many educated citizens then reacting against the perceived transgressions of subordinate social dependents. In national politics, reaction against lower class subordination was the order of the day.

By the end of the decade of the 1820s, Mexico had become the site of intense political struggles between *yorkino* and *escoces* Masonic groupings who roughly divided along the lines of class, economic interest, and attitudes toward a federalist form of government. *Escoceses* were generally understood to be members of the former colonial ruling classes, Spanish sympathizers, and centralists who wished to concentrate the power of the Mexican Federal State in Mexico City. *Yorkinos*, on the other hand, had lodges in states throughout the country, invited membership and support from individuals of multi-ethnic and less affluent class background, and generally seemed to call for more widespread participation in political decision-making.<sup>62</sup> The political skirmishes between these two camps finally reached an explosive high point with the presidential elections of 1828.

By September of that year, the victory of the *escoces* candidate Manuel Gomez Pedraza over the former independence leader and *yorkino* candidate Vicente Guerrero seemed assured. Not at all pleased with this outcome, on November 30, 1828, *yorkino* sympathizers staged an armed rebellion at an old armory known as the *Acordada*. A few days later, their victory against the *escoceses* seemed assured when news arrived of Gomez Pedraza's departure into exile and president Guadalupe Victoria's capitulation. But then in the wake of this victory for the *yorkinos*, Mexico City was thrown into further chaos when a crowd of "insolent plebeians" suddenly stormed the *Parian*, a complex of

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<sup>62</sup> Anna, *Forging Mexico*, 176 and Green, *The Mexican Republic*, 90-91.

luxurious shops and merchant storerooms.<sup>63</sup> The incident, now known as the Parian riot, lasted through the night of December 4<sup>th</sup> and resulted in millions of pesos worth of property damages and losses for property owners and local residents. The incident actually resulted in very few recorded deaths and was contained fairly quickly in comparison to the last riot to have assailed Mexico City in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, but according to historian Stanley Green, the Parian shook propertied Mexicans to the core and came to symbolize the tangible results of democracy unrestrained by the “civilizing hand of society’s men of substance.”<sup>64</sup>

Because the *yorkinos* enjoyed the support of the lower classes and in the days of the Acordada rebellion had been joined by thousands of popular class supporters who embraced Vicente Guerrero as their candidate, *yorkino* leaders such as Lorenzo de Zavala, Guerrero, and others were heavily blamed for unleashing an uncontrolled and violent mob upon the city.<sup>65</sup> Vicente Guerrero won the presidency as a result of the rebellion at the Acordada, but his short tenure would forever be tainted by the infamy of the Parian.<sup>66</sup> More importantly, having experienced the power and violence of an unrestrained mass generally believed to be composed of the city’s lower sectors, elites of all political backgrounds and vested interests began to coalesce around the central notion that the country needed less democracy. This political ideal, so widely touted in the

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<sup>63</sup> Arrom, “*Popular Politics*,” 245.

<sup>64</sup> See Green, *The Mexican Republic*, 161. According to Eric Van Young, even during most active moments of the Independence Wars, Mexico City and most of the large cities in Mexico remained untouched by the violence. See Eric Van Young, “Islands in the Storm: Quiet Cities and Violent Countrysides in the Mexican Independence Era.” *Past & Present* (1988) 136.

<sup>65</sup> Arrom, “*Popular Politics*,” 251.

<sup>66</sup> Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, *Dos décadas de desilusiones* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2009), 20.

earliest days of independence, was now irrevocably “stained by association with riot, plunder, and the threat of class war.”<sup>67</sup>

In the months following the chaos of the Acordada and the Parian, Mexico City officials worked tirelessly to reestablish order and public tranquility. The governor of the Federal District and former *yorkino* sympathizer, José María Tornel y Mendivil, outlawed street gatherings and wakes, prohibited carrying arms, and halted the sale of liquor.<sup>68</sup> In addition to instituting measures that would regulate the activities of Mexico City’s lower class sectors, the country’s leading representatives also made another highly significant move that would affect popular class political mobilization throughout the entire republic. The new Constitution of 1836 introduced literacy and wealth requirements for suffrage for the first time.<sup>69</sup>

By the mid 1830s, elite citizens and influential state leaders were reacting in a very concerted fashion to reign in the threat of unrestrained popular class sectors, which they no longer considered capable of wielding the responsibilities that came with democracy. Within this context, José Francisco Zapata experienced the challenges of running a classroom with a bare minimum of supplies, little remuneration, and a marked lack of cooperation and deference from his young charges. It was the spirit of the times. Zapata’s troubles with defiance in the classroom represent a single recorded experience in the mid 1830s, but the anxieties he reveals were common. In 1905, critics of the

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<sup>67</sup> Arrom, “*Popular Politics*,” 267.

<sup>68</sup> *Se restringen las reuniones en las calles: la portación de armas, el toque de campanas, la venta de licores, portar envoltorios después de las oraciones y dispone realizar rondines y establecer vivac.* AAMEX, Fondo: Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Colección: Bandos, Leyes y Decretos: 1825-1925, Caja 2, Expediente 60, Fecha: 6 de Diciembre 1828.

<sup>69</sup> Arrom, “*Popular Politics*,” 268.

Lancasterian method of mutual education which had finally been debunked with the dissolution of the *Compañía Lancasteriana de México* in 1891, declared that the national experiment had failed because of a spirit of insubordination among the student monitors upon whom the system depended:

Los partidarios de la enseñanza mutua creyeron haber encontrado en ella un medio para propagar la fraternidad entre los hombres. . . Todo esto es muy bello pero desgraciadamente la verdad no corresponde a tan hermosos ideales. Los monitores investidos del mando en una edad precoz, se enorgullecían, se volvían déspotas para con sus compañeros de escuela y hasta con los miembros de su familia.<sup>70</sup>

In the wake of Mexican independence patriotic thinkers were still inclined to believe that authority in the family held wider ramifications for the society and nation.<sup>71</sup> If, in a post-Parian context with the attendant fears of violent popular mobilization, state officials believed that schools were encouraging insubordination among students, would these elite officials have been inclined to continue funding and encouraging those schools?

Although a preoccupation with improving public education and extending it to the farthest reaches of the Mexican republic never disappears from the official rhetoric of nineteenth-century state-makers, the evidence for these ideas never becoming more than rhetoric is significant. Historian Rosalina Ríos Zúñiga has demonstrated that what little funding was made available for the improvement and expansion of educational institutions was usually directed to institutions for higher learning such as law schools

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<sup>70</sup> Roldan Vera, *El niño enseñante*, 81.

<sup>71</sup> As the newspaper *La Mosca Parlera* puts it: “El bien y la virtud de las familias, hatan la prosperidad de los pueblos: la paz y riqueza de estos, fundaran la paz y la abundancia de las provincias, y la felicidad... de estas elevaran a la nación Mexicana al rango más alto de magnificencia y gloria.” See “La Comparación y la Plegaria.” *La Mosca Parlera*, July 12, 1823, p. 2.

and medical schools.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, although the numbers of primary schools did increase steadily throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, their numbers were never large enough to keep up with the fast growing national population. Additionally, in large cities, where the majority of these new institutions were founded, private philanthropic organizations such as the *Compañía Lancasteriana de México* were left to their own devices in opening and administering new primary schools.<sup>73</sup> This favoritism of higher education and neglect of primary education is telling because, as the institutions charged with instructing children in the most basic skills of reading and writing, primary schools had the potential to reach and influence the greatest number of the republic's population.

By the late 1850s sources demonstrate that institutions run with the Lancasterian method had an unsavory reputation. Costumbrista renderings of primary schools—such as the character sketch of a teacher presented in *Los Mexicanos Pintados Por Sí Mismos*—depict embattled petty tyrannies. In this satirical, comedic sketch, a brutish and ignorant Lancasterian school teacher beats his students at the slightest (or no) provocation in order to cover up his own shortcomings as an instructor, and he really only succeeds in teaching his hapless students that violence and brutality are the only things that can be

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<sup>72</sup> According to Ríos Zúñiga, elite politicians and letrados in the state of Zacatecas spent most of their efforts on secondary or professional educational institutions because these were the sites which would form “those who will one day wield great social power.” See the essay “Separar y homogeneizar. Instrucción pública y ciudadanía en Zacatecas, 1825-1845.” in Sonia Pérez Toledo and René Amaro Peñaflores, eds., *Entre la tradición y la novedad: la educación y la formación de hombres ‘nuevos’ en Zacatecas en el siglo XIX* (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, 2003), 105. See also Anne Staples lengthy investigation of higher education in *Recuento de una batalla inconclusa: la educación de Iturbide a Juárez* (México D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2005).

<sup>73</sup> The *Compañía lancasteriana* was especially able to spread the Lancasterian method of mutual education during its tenure as Directorate of Public Education between 1842 and 1846. During this time and the rest of its existence until its dissolution in 1891, *Compañía* members produced a steady stream of reports and requests asking state officials to aid them in the maintenance of their schools and functions since funds and supplies were always in short supply. See Vázquez de Knauth, 31.

expected from figures in positions of authority.<sup>74</sup> In another far less circulated but still significant source, an affluent landowner from the outskirts of Mexico City named Francisco Becerra wrote the Secretariat of Public Instruction to ask that his son not be forced to attend a public school in the city for fear the child would be taught (whether by the instructor or his fellow students is not clear) to be a degenerate individual with no morals and respect for authority.<sup>75</sup> Nothing of the old reformist spirit seemed to remain.

By the turn of the century, the statistical measures of the effectiveness and reach of Mexico's public and primary school system are sobering. Census figures taken in 1895 reveal that of nearly thirteen million people counted, more than ten million could not read or write. By 1900, only about 20 percent of the Mexican population was literate.<sup>76</sup> If we add to these extremely high percentages of illiteracy the fact that wealth and literacy requirements for suffrage were instituted with a few breaks in Mexico until the second decade of the twentieth century, then what emerges is a vision of early nineteenth-century state-making in which education was utilized to help separate the Mexican population into two distinct classes of citizens, those who would be governed and those who would

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<sup>74</sup> See the character sketch "El Maestro de Escuela" featured in *Los Mexicanos Pintados Por Si Mismos: Obra escrita por una sociedad de literatos* (México, D.F.: Biblioteca Nacional y Estudios Neolitho México, 1935), 218-220.

<sup>75</sup> *Francisco Becerra pide permiso para que su hijo continúe sus estudios en casa bajo la dirección de un profesor*. AGN, Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, Caja 286, Expediente 39, 1858.

<sup>76</sup> These dismal numbers were undoubtedly produced in part due to the fact that regular state involvement in the administration of the country's public school system did not even become legally mandated until the time of Benito Juárez's Reforma or practiced until the positivist effervescence of the Porfirian era reinvigorated efforts for educational reform. See Marta Robles, *Educación y sociedad en la historia de México* (México D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1977), 64-65. For the figures on literacy, See Fernando Solana, Raúl Cardiel Reyes and Raúl Bolaños Martínez, eds., *Historia de la educación pública en México* (México, D.F.: Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1982), 80. And Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff. "The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World." *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 4 (2005), 914.



do the governing. The absence of primary schooling helped maintain an elite, educated, and exclusive 'official nation.'<sup>77</sup>

In sum, what is gained if we are able to identify the patriarchal anxieties evident in José Francisco Zapata's plaintive descriptions of his classroom with those of Mexico's ruling class generally in the early 1830s? Historians John Tutino and Steve Stern have identified such anxieties in rural and urban poor contexts and have discussed the tensions which resulted when former colonial patriarchs discovered that, after the independence wars, their patriarchal authority was challenged by former (usually female) dependents.<sup>78</sup> No one has really explored the same patriarchal anxieties in the context of elite relations with Mexico's popular sectors even though as Tutino has pointed out "the relations of dependence that linked elite patriarchs with their dependent kin also extended throughout the sectors of colonial society."<sup>79</sup>

To recognize Mexico's ruling elite as a gaggle of discomfited colonial patriarchs can help us better understand how they enshrined the principle of popular sovereignty in the 1820s only to erect, in the 1830s, an 'official nation' defined by property and literacy. In the post-independence era, absent a "Father King," Mexico's traditional landowning, commercial, and aristocratic elites were the ultimate *padres de la patria*, and they meant to maintain their patriarchal authority. Their new republic would be forged under social

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<sup>77</sup> See Andrew Kirkendall's use of this concept in "Student Culture and Nation State Formation" in Sara Castro-Klaren and John Chasteen, ed, *Beyond Imagined Communities: reading and writing the nation in nineteenth-century Latin America* (Maryland: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>78</sup> See Stern, *The Secret History Gender*, 253-256 and John Tutino, "The Revolution in Mexican Independence: Insurgency and the Renegotiation of Property, Production, and Patriarchy in the Bajío, 1800-1855." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, no. 3, 396.

<sup>79</sup> John Tutino, "Power, Class, and Family: Men and Women in the Mexican Elite, 1750-1810." *The Americas* 39, no. 3 (1983), 378.

rules that were slow change, religious truths that were presumed to be unchallengeable, and colonial social hierarchies that were considered to be the natural way.

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