

**EXAMINING THE LIVES OF FIVE MEXICAN AMERICAN FEMALE
EDUCATORS WITH MORE THAN 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
IN SOUTH TEXAS BORDER SCHOOLS**

A Dissertation

by

GEORGEANNE RAMON-REUTHINGER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2005

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Examining the Lives of Five Mexican American Female Educators With More Than
25 Years of Experience in South Texas Border Schools. (December 2005)

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This study was a qualitative study that explored the lives of Mexican American female educators with more than 25 years of experience teaching in South Texas border schools. The purpose of the study was to explore the participants' views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, both formal and informal, within the contexts of community, political climate, family, religious, and educational institutions.

A nonrandom, purposeful sample of five classroom teachers was used. Data were collected through extended interviews with participants. Data were unitized, coded, categorized, and compared to yield emerging themes. The narrative data yielded stories of overcoming barriers such as prejudice, classism, racism, and segregation. The participants identified family members and teachers as persons who most impacted their own lives as teachers.

Guided by the participants' constructions of educational experiences, the study revealed stories of a collective struggle for educational equity. Through constant comparison analysis, major constructs emerged, specifically, the participants'

resiliency in the face of difficulties and barriers and protective factors in their lives. This study concluded that the participants used resiliency traits to reach their education goals. These traits included social competency, a sense of purpose, positive expectations for the future, autonomy, and strong religious belief. The protective factors were: (a) families' high expectations despite difficult economic situations, (b) opportunity for responsible participation at home and at school, and (c) autonomy/strong religious faith and evidence of a strong caring adult in their lives. The participants' stories of struggle provided a backdrop upon which they voiced their perceptions regarding education and educating Mexican American students.

DEDICATION

First, I would like to express my thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus, who has never left my side. This work is dedicated to the people who empowered me to travel on the present educational journey. I wish to dedicate this work to my husband and best friend, David L. Reuthinger, Sr., and to my son, David L. Reuthinger, Jr., who has always had wisdom beyond his years. Both are a light unto my path. I dedicate this work to my mother, Josefina Ramon, who taught me to love to read and my late father, Jorge Ramon, who taught me by example the value of hard work. I dedicate this work to my late uncle, Ernesto Ramon. Although my uncle had no formal education, he was a great teacher. He exemplified a joy for sharing knowledge with caring and patience. He taught me about astronomy, elementary physics, leather tanning, animal husbandry, vegetable gardening, and how to make the best sling-shot in the neighborhood. He was my second father and was never too busy to go on a new adventure. My wish is that every child would have such a friend.

I also dedicate this work to my aunt, Maria de la Luz Ramon, who has been a constant source of encouragement to me. I also dedicate this work to my great aunt, Lola Shorey, the keeper of our family history. I dedicate this work to my sisters Reina Sarabia, a teacher, and Florita R. Tijerina, a counselor, and to all Mexican American students who struggle towards educational equity. Last, but not least, I dedicate this work to the voices of the exemplary teachers who informed this study.

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I am grateful to the Lord for the gifted teachers that He has always placed in my life. I was raised in a neighborhood and town where literacy was not the norm. Neither my father nor my mother had a high school education when I was growing up. My parents' hopes and dreams were for their daughters to have an education. I want to thank my dissertation advisor and chair, Dr. Patricia Larke, for her belief in me. Dr. Patricia Larke, with her ability to inspire her students to "rise to the occasion," made me better than I was. With her generosity of scholarship and drive to show her students the way, she made it possible for me to successfully prepare and present at national and international education conferences. She is an unforgettable educator who will, no doubt, continue to inspire and change countless lives. Dr. Larke made my parents' dreams for me a reality.

I also thank the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Juan Lira, Dr. Hector Ochoa, and Dr. Norvella Carter. Dr. Juan Lira's tenacious dedication was evident in my life as we spent hundreds of hours sharpening skills of developing and writing research projects. His character and scholarship casts a long shadow in the educational community. Dr. Hector Ochoa's generosity of scholarship has been a constant encouragement for me as I work in the public schools of South Texas. Dr. Ochoa's voice is a strong advocate for students everywhere. I want to thank Dr. Norvella Carter for her example of commitment to student success. I thank my committee most sincerely for believing in me. My committee was made up of brilliant scholars of color who are inspiring professors and exemplary human beings. I will

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Looking back at my educational journey, I realize that teachers hold the power of the future in their hands. There is no profession that has more of an impact in the future of a nation than her teachers. I have been extraordinarily blessed by teachers in my life. I gratefully acknowledge each one.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Like African Americans and others, Latinos also have a long history of struggle for equal educational opportunity, although the nature of the struggle may be different. Mexican Americans are the Latino group with the most extensive experience in the United States, as many Chicanos say, they didn't cross the border; the border crossed them. (Nieto, 2004, p. 22)

Although Mexican American teachers have made great contributions to the education of Mexican American students, their voices have long been ignored in the production and compiling of educational research. An array of research in the humanities, education, and social sciences has been published since the 1960's focusing on people of color. Much of this research challenges existing interpretations, paradigms, assumptions, and methodologies and provides pertinent data on long-neglected topics (King & Mitchell, 1990; Slaughter, 1988). But, the history and narratives of Mexican Americans is still largely excluded by social scientists. This research project is a qualitative study that presents the lived experiences of five Mexican American women who have more than 25 years of experience teaching in classrooms in South Texas border schools. It is an important study because it sheds light on a not too distant past and the narratives of one marginalized group whose voices have not previously been heard. Information about a critical component of the educational population is missing from the literature. To my knowledge, this research project is the first to give a voice to female Mexican American teachers with more than 25 years of experience teaching on the border.

The style for this dissertation follows that of *The Journal of Educational Research*.

It is crucial to study Mexican American teachers because of their historical contributions to the field of education since the time before the existence of Texas. Their lived experiences in South Texas schools for over 25 years give them a unique wisdom about teaching and educational experiences of Mexican American children in South Texas. In considering the contributions of Mexican American teachers in South Texas, it is important to understand the history of both the schools and the history of Mexican American teachers of this region.

The first teachers in present-day Texas, New Mexico, and California were from Universities in Queretaro and Zacatecas, Mexico (Chipman, 1992; San Miguel, 1987). The first settlements in South Texas were missions in San Antonio and in Laredo. The schools around Laredo in the 1700's were mostly church schools. The first teachers in present-day Texas were Mexican educators who were missionaries from Jesuit and Franciscan orders in Mexico (San Miguel, 1987).

The roots of educational preparation of many Mexican American educators in South Texas, who have 25 or more years of experience, lie buried in a history of segregated public schools and universities in Texas. This educational history of Mexican American women in Texas (Appendix A) is one that is not told in today's classroom textbooks. It is a history, however, that is alive in the stories of these Mexican American educators. Thus, this history is largely not written history, but rather is in the minds and stories that are told within families and communities. Scholarly research exists that tells the stories of African American teachers (Banks, 1999; Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Scholarly research also exists

on effective multicultural educators (Larke, 1992); however, little research has focused on Hispanics, more specifically, on the stories of Mexican American teachers.

In actuality, the stories of Mexican Texans who became educators in spite of discrimination and segregated schools are largely nonexistent. To date, there is little written about the oppression and devaluation of this marginalized (Chipman, 1992; San Miguel, 1987) population and what government documents once called “The Mexican problem” in Texas (Chipman, 1992; San Miguel, 1987). American histories of discrimination as well as cultural knowledge and personal identities from oppressed groups are ignored in traditional education, and the disempowerment of oppressed groups continues (Grant, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Despite the important historical contributions to the education of children of the Southwest that Mexican American teachers have made, Mexican Americans in the United States (U.S.) are still largely uneducated. As with most historically oppressed groups, Mexican Americans are thought of as a marginalized, disadvantaged, and, therefore, a disempowered population (Chipman, 1992; San Miguel, 1987; Grant, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Only 29% of all teachers in Texas are teachers of color, and currently, Mexican American teachers make up 19% of all teachers in Texas public schools. African American teachers represent slightly over 9% (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2005). The fastest growing groups of teachers are Mexican American and all other teachers of color, which had average annual growth rates of over 5% since 1996 until in 2004 when the annual growth rate was only 3.2%. Students of color constituted 61% of all students in Texas public schools in 2004. There is a 32% (61% student vs. 29%

teacher) difference between the percentage of students of color versus teachers of color in state public schools (Stevens, 2002; TEA, 2005).

Case studies on Mexican American teachers who have more than 25 years of experience teaching in Texas public schools were needed not only to identify possible resiliency traits and protective factors (Clark, 1983; Kagan, 1991; Nelson-Le Gall & Jones, 1991; Rutter, 1979; Taylor, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1989) among this group of educators, but more importantly, it has given voice to a group whose number constitutes the majority of students in Texas schools. It is a story whose time has now come.

Statement of the Problem

This is a study of five individuals – five Mexican American female educators who were academically successful 25-50 years ago when educational opportunities for women of color were almost nonexistent. It is not a study of “successful” individuals in the broad sense; but rather, it is about women who chose education as a vehicle for social and economic mobility or personal fulfillment at a particular time when opportunities and socio-economic conditions were truly not institutionally or systematically available to people of color.

Simply put, they developed resourcefulness to overcome barriers such as segregation and prejudice that were in institutions and systems of the day. The situations that these women were born to were difficult. A review of the literature revealed the need to examine the lives of Mexican American educators who have more than 25 years of experience in South Texas Border schools. To date, and to this

researcher's knowledge, the life stories of Mexican American female educators with their experiences in South Texas border schools have not been told.

Purpose of the Study

The overall research question was twofold: What are the views and perceptions of Mexican American female teachers who have at least 25 years or more of experience about teaching and educating Mexican American students? Were there protective processes in place or were resilient traits developed by the participants in order to become certified to teach and stay in the profession for over 25 years? It is important to gain understanding of the historical context of these women's lives because they reached their academic achievement during a time when there were few educational opportunities for Mexican American females. In addition to these major issues, the following questions were addressed:

1. What were the participants' views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, both formal and informal, within the contexts of community, political climate, family, and religious, and educational institutions?
2. What experiences or persons had the most impact on their teaching career?
3. What role did religion play in the subjects' educational and teaching experience?
4. Were there barriers that they have experienced, and have the barriers remained the same?

5. What was it like to be a Mexican American teacher for over 25 years following the Civil Rights Movement, and how do the subjects view the educational experience of Mexican American students?
6. What has stayed the same, and what has changed in the quality of education of Mexican American students over time?

According to Gay (2003), too many educational leaders are mystified about finding instructional strategies that will improve the academic achievement of underachieving students of color. In their search for the best programs and practices, they are overlooking the obvious: the personal experiences of successful individuals. Some researchers who have demonstrated that the answer lies in teachers telling their own stories are Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) and Nieto (1999). The focus of this study has been to examine the views and perceptions of Mexican American female teachers.

Definition of Terms

Border School(s): Border school(s) is a geographical reference to mean the schools that

exist on the U.S. side of the border between the United States and Mexico.

Borderlands were similarly described and geographically referenced by Fernandez (1977), Martinez (1978, 1996), Pahissa (1985), and Sepulveda (1976).

Deconstruction: It is the exposure of inconsistencies, contradictions, and silent opposing voices that have not been heard (Skrtic, 1995).

Empowerment Theory: Empowerment draws upon students' existing social knowledge and experiences and links that knowledge to the more fundamental and powerful ideas that undergird curriculum (Banks & Banks, 2001).

Escuelitas: Most rancho families had ranch schools or *escuelitas* founded in the second half of the nineteenth century in South Texas. There was Tejano support for the schools, in which the first teachers were from Mexico, followed by American male teachers, and finally women teachers. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Vela family, for example, founded a school at el Rancho Laguna Seca. Also, Margarito Hinojosa of Rancho Santa Monica allotted land for a school to be built on his property, for his children and the surrounding families (Alonzo, 1998). The custom of small community schools continued in the early and mid-twentieth century in the region (South Texas) as neighborhood preschools were established and taught basic pre-primer concepts in Spanish (Reuthinger, 2004).

Financial Press: Wolf (1963) and Dave (1964) described "achievement press" as certain parental behaviors that could combine to create a press for achievement that resulted in high academic performance. In this study, financial press described the parental behaviors that could combine to create a press for students to drop out in order to help provide economically for the family.

Hispanic Teacher(s): This study used the term Hispanic teachers as a generic term meaning teachers who are bilingual and bicultural (culture: American and Mexican language: English and Spanish). As Banks and Banks (2001) have

stated, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chicanos, and Latinos are all presumed to be one ethnic group with little appreciation for the diversity among them. This study used the term Hispanic to mean people of Spanish-speaking South American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Spanish, or Mexican ancestry.

Mexican American: People are confused about what to call people from racial and ethnic groups that are not their own. This confusion is coupled by a lack of understanding of the historic and political context of the name's origin (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). This study used the term Mexican American to mean Americans of Mexican ancestry.

Mexican American Teachers: This study used the term Mexican American teacher to mean teachers who are from Mexican American ancestry.

Protective Processes: Resiliency theory identifies protective processes present in the families, schools, and communities of successful youth that are often missing in the lives of troubled youth. These protective processes that foster resiliency in children are grouped into three categories: (a) caring and supportive relationships, (b) positive and high expectations, and (c) opportunities for meaningful participation (Benard, 1991, 1997; Werner & Smith, 1992).

Qualitative Research: This study is qualitative in nature, and seeks to derive understanding from constructive perceptions of participant accounts of their educational experiences. The aim of qualitative research, process and product, is cultural interpretation. Qualitative research is rooted in ethnography's disciplinary home of anthropology (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Tejanos(as): For the purpose of this study, the term *Tejanos(as)* will be used to describe the people who live in South Texas in the borderlands between what is now the border between Mexico and the United States who have Mexican ancestry and are bilingual/bicultural. The creation of the U.S.-Mexican boundary is best understood as a historical process that started in the sixteenth century when England, Spain, and France competed for control of North America and ended in the mid-nineteenth century when the United States absorbed large portions of the Mexican northern frontier through annexation, warfare, and purchase (Alonzo, 1998; Hinojosa, 1983; Martinez, 1996).

Resiliency: Benard (1991, 1997) and others have identified individual traits of resilient students who succeeded despite their disadvantages and psychosocial pressures. The five major categories identified by Benard (1991, 1997) are problem solving, social competence, autonomy, critical consciousness, and a sense of purpose.

Sink or Swim: It is important to understand the concept of bilingual education. Its intention has been described as one to permit students who speak little or no English to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, and other basic subjects in their primary language while they are acquiring proficiency in English (Lee-Jerome, 2005). Submersion places Non-English Proficient (NEP- also known as Limited English Proficient in California and Texas) children into regular curriculum with English speakers, without special instruction or extra help. All instruction

is in English. For the purpose of this study, “sink or swim” will be defined as a way of teaching a second language by submersion (Lee-Jerome, 2005).

Assumptions

The history of Mexican Texans (Tejanos) is important to provide context for the current educational problems of Texas Mexican Americans. According to McEwan and Egan (1995), narrative is essential to communicating “who we are, what we do, how we feel, and why we ought to follow some course of action rather than another” (1995, p. xiii). A second idea that converges in this study is the power of storytelling and narrative as “a mechanism for improving teaching preparation and practice” (Gay, 2003). This study was qualitative and narrative in nature, and it was designed to reveal the stories, views, and perceptions of female Mexican American teachers who have found ways to succeed in an area of life where the vast majority of Mexican Americans have failed.

Characteristics of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the constructions about educational experiences of the subjects during a specific historical period, i.e., before and after the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The researcher expected to produce rich descriptions of the subjects’ experiences about informal and formal educational experiences. The researcher used an exploratory orientation and used formal and informal interviews to yield qualitative data (Gee, 1996; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiah, & Zilber, 1998; Linde, 1993).

The constructions of these individuals drew upon the knowledge and skills that these teachers used to impact the lives of their students. Because these teachers and their students had cultural and linguistic experiences and backgrounds that are dissimilar to mainstream U.S. culture and society, this researcher does not propose generalizability. However, this study does reveal constructions that have not previously been heard (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher and research were subjective instruments. Their words reflect connections of lessons learned and a “collective experience and struggle” (Gay, 2003).

Design of the Dissertation

Five chapters are presented in this dissertation. Chapter I is an overview of Mexican American teachers and the impact of these teachers on the education of Mexican American students. Also, Chapter I provides a statement of the problem and presents the questions that guided the study. Chapter II is a review of the literature that will provide appropriate historical, social constructions, and the theoretical information that is the framework of the study. Chapter III describes the design and research methodology, the description of participants, and description of analysis method. Chapter IV presents the findings of the research and the themes that emerged from the research study. Chapter V presents conclusions and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

If the curriculum ignores sedimented preceptors, identity formation, and social construction and suppresses individual visions and dreams in the content and context of education, and if individuals are constantly required to conform to someone else's worldview, then either dreams will be repressed, hope will be suppressed, people will incorporate the other's vision of themselves into their own self-understanding, and/or they will lash out in anger against those systems that exclude their voice. (Slattery, 1995, p. 135)

Introduction

In order to gain a contextual, historical understanding of the identity formation and social construction of participants from the southern region of Texas, as well as the development of schools, students, and teachers of this area, the following was included in the literature review: (a) history of Mexican American teachers and schooling in South Texas, (b) history of government policy and treatment of Mexican Americans in South Texas, (c) seven variables of Mexican American academic achievement, and (d) resiliency theory. Achievement behavior of Mexican Americans is a complex phenomenon and located at the "nexus" of the person, the group, and the macro-society. Prior research has focused on families, peers, and schools as distinct entities. We now know that any one of these factors has powerful effects in the lives of students.

The History of Mexican American Teachers and Schooling in South Texas

Mexican American teachers have made a contribution to the lives of their students since the beginning of schools and education in the borderlands between

Mexico and the United States (Appendix A). The roots of Mexican American educators' contributions can be found in the Spanish, White, and Mexican settlement of South Texas. The Spaniards came to Mexico and Texas as conquerors. They were soldiers, priests, and settlers. Other than exploitation of natural and human resources, the Spaniards' goals were to impose religious and social order on the natives and to set up a civilization matching what they had in Europe (Habig, 2003). This attempt at a domesticating education (Freire, 1970) also facilitated the exploitation of Native Americans. For example, from 1540-1836, the Native Americans and Latinos who lived in South Texas received a basic education necessary for adult life in towns, church missions, and presidios (forts). Education actually meant training to conform to the Spanish conquerors' concept of civilization. This section looks at the schools, curriculum, and teachers as they existed during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

Eighteenth Century Church Schools

The schools in South Texas and in the ranchlands surrounding Laredo in the 1700's were largely church schools. The teachers were missionaries who were sent by the Jesuit order. The Franciscans succeeded the Jesuits in Texas missions. For example, there were 2,837 Native Americans living in missions administered by Franciscan missionaries in Nuevo Santander, which is present-day Laredo (Alonzo, 1998). The Franciscans to this day have a presence in South Texas rural communities near Laredo such as Mirando City (C. Gribble, personal communication, July 7, 2003). In 1716, Spain decided to occupy territory as far north as East Texas to stop the advance of the

French who had moved there. Therefore, missions were established as far north as East Texas by Queretaro and Zacatecas Colleges.

The leader of the Queretarans was Father Isidro Felix de Espinoza, along with four other padres, the most prominent of whom was Father Francisco Hidalgo. The college of Zacatecas also sent its president, Father Antonio Margil de Jesus, as well as three additional priests (Chipman, 1992). Father Antonio Margil was one of the missionaries who worked cooperatively with the two colleges (Habig, 2003). Native American children and adults were taught Catholic religious and moral values, Spanish custom and law, and the domestic arts at the first San Antonio mission. Native Americans also were taught the Spanish language, how to play musical instruments, and sing and dress with “decency” (Texas State Historical Association, 2003). The curriculum was centered on Spanish culture and tradition.

The curriculum also taught family living, stock and crop raising, church building, and furniture making. Non-Native American youth were taught sex roles, social values, and economic skills. Although people also learned from textbooks, folklore, oral history, presented plays and traveling puppet shows, the Spanish elite elected not to let their children attend such schools. Much like the present powerful elite, the Spanish elite sent their children to private schools; however, at that time, the Spanish elite would send their children to private schools in Mexico or Spain.

In Laredo, with the help of 1,750 soldiers, Jose Escandon had organized an expedition in hopes of discouraging French and English expansion by the 1700's. The Spaniards tried to convert the indigenous people of the land that is presently

Tamaulipas, Mexico, a piece of Nuevo Leon, Mexico, and Laredo. Laredo was initially named Nuevo Santander. Founded in 1755 when Escandon granted Captain Tomas Sanchez permission to settle land near an Indian Fort on the Rio Grande, Laredo was officially designated a settlement and christened San Agustin de Laredo in 1767 (Hinojosa, 1983; Parrish, 1990).

Nineteenth Century Schools

By 1820, fewer than 2,500 people lived in Texas. According to San Miguel (1987), the population was made up of Mexican Native Americans, Spaniards, and countless persons of mixed ancestry. San Miguel (1987) explains that, at that time, there were four missions located in three settlements: San Antonio, La Bahia, later named Goliad, and the faltering town of Nacogdoches in East Texas. Responsibility for reestablishing a mission in East Texas was divided equally between friars from the missionary colleges of Queretaro and Zacatecas (Acosta & Winegarten, 2003; Chipman, 1992; Habig, 2003). Previously, seven or eight wives accompanied approximately 20 soldiers in 1716 to reestablish the Nacogdoches mission (Chipman, 1992). These women are the first recorded Spanish-Mexican women to enter present day Texas (Acosta & Winegarten, 2003; Chipman, 1992).

All Male Schools

Laredo and most of South Texas education took a back seat to the settlements' struggle to survive the raids of the Comanche and Apache. Laredo gained its independence from Spain. Laredo was the site of the battle between the Union and Confederate soldiers and the election riot between political parties "Las Botas" and

“Los Guaraches” (Acosta & Winegarten, 2003). There is evidence of a Hispanic tradition in formal primary education in some of the old towns in the Borderlands as early as the colonial period. In 1814 and 1822, respectively, Matamoros, Mexico, and Laredo, Texas, both had schools that were opened intermittently; however, few students attended because their parents were required to pay the schoolmaster’s salary.

Initially, individual proprietors, religious orders, and the rancheros themselves founded these first schools. The end of the war in 1821 did not bring immediate peace to Laredo. The town and the frontier, through political strife kept the central government from providing adequate defense against Indians and forceful direction to the economy (San Miguel, 1987). In spite of all these difficulties, a private school was opened in 1822 for male children in Laredo.

Earlier efforts to establish a school had failed. The schoolmaster Francisco Fernandez taught his students reading and writing and did not teach arithmetic, according to academic achievement reports to the city fathers. He did teach logic and civics by reading and explaining a chapter a day from the Spanish Constitution of 1812. According to Hinojosa (1983), as the decade progressed, the school served a smaller proportion of the children of school age. In 1823, the average enrollment represented 50% of males aged 8 to 16 years, and in 1828, it represented only 20% of this population (Hinojosa, 1983).

In most cases, few records have been preserved of these early and private educational endeavors (Alonzo, 1998; Hinojosa, 1983). The crisis for survival deepened at the end of the decade when the War of Independence and Indian raids

engulfed the countryside around Laredo (San Miguel, 1987). Laredoans began to leave in large numbers. In 1823, the town requested state funds to educate the poor (Hinojosa, 1983). In 1883, a handful of Tejano children enrolled in the first public school in El Paso, Texas.

Although there were more than 100 Tejano school-age children in that city at the time, those who did not speak English were discouraged from attending. In an effort to overcome this language barrier, Tejano parents several years later encouraged *Olivas v. Aoy*, an elderly Spaniard to establish a private school for them to teach their children to speak English and prepare for public school. In 1887, the Mexican Preparatory School was established (San Miguel, 1987).

The Establishment of Community Schools

After the state constitutional convention of 1870, new efforts to provide public education for children led to the founding of community schools. In Hidalgo County, new community schools were opened on the delta of the Rio Grande. Late the same year, John McAllen wrote G. D. Kingsbury, “We are about to establish a school system [in this country]. We will be in want of a grate [sic] many teachers. All persons are compelled to send their children at least 4 months.” Upriver at Zapata, old timers recalled that Antonio Barerra, a justice of the peace, and his wife Rosa, conducted school for the town’s children in the late nineteenth century (Alonzo, 1998).

The Twentieth Century

At the start of the twentieth century, public education in South Texas was still not fully mature, but it had improved, especially in urban areas. It would eventually

surpass private education in terms of students, teachers, and resources. Catholics did continue to support parochial schools at the lower levels, and in cities such as Laredo, Brownsville, and San Antonio, Catholic high school education was provided to well-to-do Tejano families. These Catholic schools also offered boarding for students (Alonzo, 1998).

For South Texas, the unique challenge was educating non-English speaking students. There had been a population of Tejanos in South Texas who had long struggled for educational equality. The 1910 Mexican Revolution drove large numbers of Mexicans north to the United States to take refuge. The dramatic increase in the number and distribution of a new influx of Mexican children forced educators to confront the “Mexican Problem” in a series of reports.

By 1925, a multitude of reports published by authorities stated that there were important trends related to the growing Texas-Mexican population and its implication for public education. Studies indicated that the problem of educating these children was by far the most difficult problem confronting elementary education in Texas to date (Davis, 1923; San Miguel, 1987). Further, it was declared a problem for the entire state of Texas. In a 1922 study (Davis & Gray, 1922), it was noted that most of the Texas Mexican population in Central Texas and Karnes County spoke “a foreign language” (p. 9). The study stated that few of them knew enough English to engage in friendly conversation. Mexicans, according to Davis and Gray (1922), could “scarcely purchase their supplies at a grocery store except from a person who speaks the form of Spanish they know” (pp. 9-10).

In 1928, additional detailed information obtained by H. T. Manuel, a professor of psychology and testing at The University of Texas, found that the Tejano school-aged population was found in all but 8 of the 254 counties in Texas. Another finding was that the percentage of these Tejano children was increasing at a much faster rate than the White or Black population. Not surprisingly, a third finding of the study revealed that these children did not speak English and that they came from families of low socioeconomic background (San Miguel, 1987).

The Establishment of South Texas Teachers College – A Solution to the “Mexican Problem” at Present Day Texas A&M University at Kingsville

The South Texas Teachers College was started June 6, 1925, in order to address the “Mexican Problem” (C. A. Hunter, personal communication, July 14, 2003). It was located in Kingsville, Texas, at the Mexicans’ Ward School, which was a segregated public school at the time. The school was for children with Spanish surnames on the east side of Kingsville, Texas. This school was across the railroad tracks, as was the entire Mexican American community. The college was started during the summer interim of 1925. According to Hunter (personal communication, July 14, 2003), Lila Baugh started the teacher college to help with this “Mexican Problem.” South Texas State Teachers College (STTC) “received a special dispensation” in order to do bilingual education (C. A. Hunter, personal communication, July 14, 2003). The president of the University went to New York, which had a large number of immigrants to learn about bilingual education. He sent Lila Baugh to Columbia University to learn “what to do with these people.” One of Lila Baugh’s students, Vila

Hunt, helped to write the curriculum for the teachers' college and helped to direct the school. The curriculum was based on the belief "to make better Americans, you have to teach them English" (C. A. Hunter, personal communication, July 14, 2003).

According to C. A. Hunter (personal communication, July 14, 2003) the bilingual program was an English immersion program.

Historically, STTC, now Texas A&M University at Kingsville (TAMUK), has produced the majority of teachers serving South Texas and the Borderlands. One of the oldest school districts in Texas is Laredo Independent School District (LISD). It was established on the border between the United States and Mexico in 1901 (TEA, 2005). Traditionally, most of the teachers who teach at LISD received their certification at the local teacher college, Texas A&M International or at Texas A&M in Kingsville, Texas. Sixty-six percent of the LISD teachers, who were teaching during the 2002 - 2003 school year, received their teaching certificates from these universities (Ortiz, 2003).

History of Government Policy and Treatment of Mexican Americans in South Texas

Historical context is gained when government policies are reviewed over time. It is important that this research include information about the treatment of Mexican Americans during these time periods because this impacts how students were treated in the schools.

Nineteenth Century Texas – A Part of Mexico

In 1821, Texas had become part of the new Mexican nation. The new government brought few changes to its northern settlements. Spanish-Tejanos became

Mexican-Tejanos (De Leon, 1982). According to De Leon, the structure of local government, culture, and the way of life continued to revolve around familiar social, economic, and political institutions (De Leon, 1982; San Miguel, 1987). The South Texas area between the years of 1836-1845 was disputed territory and technically still belonged to the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. Whites did not penetrate this region until the Mexican American War of 1846 (San Miguel, 1987).

Texas – A Part of the United States

The annexation of Texas to the U.S. and ending of the Mexican American War in 1848 caused great changes in the state. The native population was living in conquered land, now part of the U.S. It was the beginning of a new social reality. Mexican-Texans were now suspected of disloyal sentiments. These Tejanos were systematically deprived of political, social, and economic resources. The effort was to subordinate them in lower social order. This was accomplished within three decades. After annexation, Tejanos lost their lands and the right to determine their economic future (Stambaugh & Stambaugh, 1954).

The process of seizing assets in Nueces County in South Texas had begun, and Whites gained ownership of all the land, except for one grant by 1858. In the lower Valley, individuals such as Charles Stillman used their legal knowledge and their association with friends in high places to deprive Mexicans of most of their lands during the 1850's and 1860's. Whites then relegated Mexican-Texans to the bottom of the economic ladder. Latino landowners were now peon laborers on ranches that were now not their own (San Miguel, 1987).

In parts of the South and West Texas areas, Tejanos maintained their numerical superiority, but they still lost control of political processes and power during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Force was used to suppress potential Mexican political activity. A variety of quasi-legal and legal methods including using the Texas Rangers and United States military were used to suppress Tejano political activity in Texas (San Miguel, 1987, p. 4). Military conquest of the Southwest by the United States brought large-scale dispossession of the real holdings of Mexicans and brought about their displacement and relegation to the lower reaches of class structure. White control of social institutions and of major economic sectors made the subsequent exploitation of Mexican labor possible to satisfy the needs of various developing economic interests (Alonzo, 1998; San Miguel, 1987).

The social and economic displacement of Mexicans and their repression and reduction to the status of a colonized group proceeded rapidly and in violation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 (Martinez, 1996). The military conquest, presence of U.S. troops, racial violence, governmental and judicial shenanigans all served to establish Whites in positions of power. Whites generally ended up with Mexican holdings, acquired at prices far below their real value (Acuña, 1972). Whites adopted wholesale techniques developed by Mexicans in mining, ranching, and agriculture (McWilliams, 1948).

Texas responded to expansion in the previously Mexican-based cattle and sheep industries and quickly catered to increased world demands. The production of cotton expanded as transportation was facilitated. Mercantile towns developed. Mexicans,

instead of reaping economic benefits of ownership, found themselves contributing only as labor. There was not even one Mexican American woman teacher in Brownsville in 1880 as demonstrated in Table 2.1 (Alonzo, 1998). Mexicans were relegated to the lower ranks of society. By the end of the century, ethnicity merged with social class and made Mexicans a colonized and mobile labor force (Alonzo, 1998).

Table 2.1. Occupational Structure of Mexican and American Females, Brownsville, 1880

Occupation	Number of Workers		Percent of Workforce	
	Mexican	American	Mexican	American
Teachers	--	8	--	17
Merchants	--	7	--	15
Business (other)	1	3	--	7
Dressmaker	38	5	16	11
Domestic	58	5	24	11
Washer	45	6	24	13
Laundress	72	14	30	13
Huckster	21	--	9	--
Sewing Machine				
Operator	5	--	2	--
Other	5	--	2	--
Total	245	46		

Note. From Alonzo (1998).

Mexican resistance to White oppression took many forms, but was not successful. Military resistance of Mexicans in the newly acquired Southwest was never official. Such actions were most often responses to individual or collective White acts

of violence against a Mexican, whether through lynching, rape, murder, or arson. The first person hanged in California was a Mexican woman who was three months pregnant. A drunken White assailant raped her. Her Mexican husband killed the White rapist and was exiled. She was lynched (Estrada, Garcia, Flores-Macias, & Maldonado, 1981). The atrocities of the U.S.-Mexican War continued along the Texas-Mexican border as well. Many Whites saw Mexicans as a natural resource in the region that was to be domesticated and exploited. Fraud, deceit, and manipulation were common (Estrada et al., 1981). Resistance was a struggle to maintain their identity, to retain their language, family, art, and religion that provided a continuation of a connection to Mexico (Barrera, 1979).

The Twentieth Century

During the period of 1900 to 1930, rapid growth in the South was fueled by the source of a readily available and exploitable labor force in the colonized Mexicans who filled the lower ranks of the economic order. Mexicans found that there was no mobility out of the unskilled labor levels as demonstrated in Table 2.2 (San Miguel, 1987). The industrial economy saw this labor pool as “strike insurance” which led to antagonism between working-class Mexicans and working-class Whites. Trade unions that excluded them contributed to their exploitation and enslavement, as well as helped to maintain them as this labor pool, forcing them to organize their own labor unions and associations (Barrera, 1979).

Table 2.2. Gainful Workers in South Texas Grouped According to Industry and by Indigenous or Immigrant Status, 1900

Industry	Indigenous Texans % (N =2,008)	Mexican Immigrants % (N =2,384)	U.S. Immigrants % (N =204)
Agricultural	15.6	18.4	17.6
Professional	3.9	2.4	15.2
Civil/Personnel	15.3	14.3	18.6
Trade/Transportation	10.1	7.9	27.9
Manufacture/Mechanical	8.5	13.7	14.7
Unspecified (unspecialized)	46.6	44.3	6.0

Note. Adapted from De Leon and Stewart, as cited in San Miguel (1987).

In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Immigration Commission that was chaired by Senator Dillingham. The commission issued its 42-volume report that was widely quoted and contained conclusions to restrict immigration in 1911. In 1924, the Immigration Act made Mexicans conspicuous by their continued free access to the United States. The Dillingham Commission's report gave intellectual support for restrictive immigration legislation. The Dillingham Commission said of Mexicans:

Because of their strong attachment to their native land, low intelligence, illiteracy, migratory life, and the possibility of their residence here being discontinued, few become citizens of the United States... In so far as Mexican laborers come into contact with native or with European immigrants, they are looked upon as inferiors... Thus, it is evident that is the case of the Mexican, he is less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer. (Dillingham, 1911, pp. 690-691)

In 1928, Congressional hearings on Western Hemisphere immigration were held. There were strong arguments against Mexican immigration:

Their minds run to nothing higher than animal functions – eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery. In every huddle of Mexican shacks, one meets the same idleness, hordes of hungry dogs, and filthy children with faces plastered with flies, disease, lice, human filth, stench, promiscuous fornication, bastardly lounging, apathetic peons, anti lazy squaws, beans, dried chili, liquor, general squalor, and envy and hatred of the gringo. These people sleep by day and prowl by night like coyotes, stealing anything they can get their hands on, no matter how useless to them it may be. Nothing left outside is safe unless padlocked or chained down. Yet there are Americans clamoring for more of these human swine to be brought over from Mexico. (Garis, 1930, p. 436)

Mexican immigrants were still employed as unskilled laborers as Table 2.2 demonstrates. Most Mexican Americans were also used as ranch laborers. They also worked as farm laborers.

Once discrimination becomes policy, it is solidified within societal and legal structures. It becomes legal to discriminate and treat the oppressed as less than human. This Congressional hearing document states that Mexicans' minds run to nothing higher than animal functions and states that they are "human swine" (Garis, 1930, p. 436).

The massive economic collapse that started in the late 1920's led to the collective social atmosphere of fear and insecurity that ended in allocating blame for the major social and economic traumas of The Great Depression on Mexicans. Mexicans were singled out to bear the guilt for the ills of the period (Estrada et al., 1981). More than 400,000 Mexicans were forced to leave the country under what was called voluntary repatriation. Those who applied for economic relief were referred to the Mexican Bureaus whose sole purpose was to reduce the welfare rolls by deporting the applicants (Mier & Rivera, 1972).

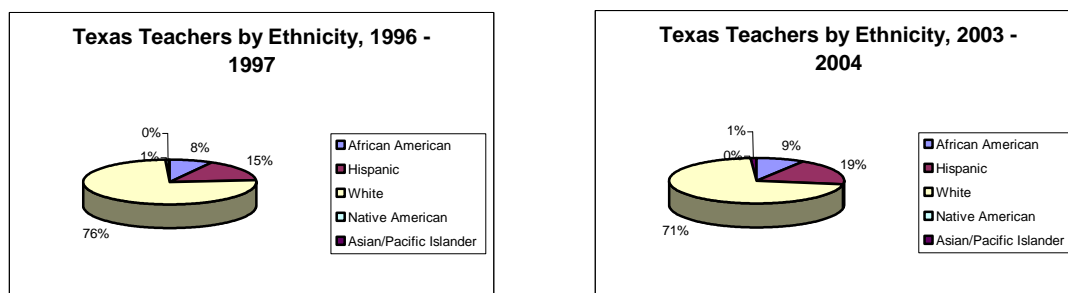
World War II brought a new demand for industrial and agriculture labor. The Bracero Program re-established in 1942 and patterned after a similar program in effect from 1917 to 1920, was a bilateral agreement between Mexico and the U.S. and supplied labor for agriculture. The U.S. underwrote the travel costs for the Mexicans, ensured them a minimum wage, and guaranteed equitable treatment. For Mexico, this provided a temporary solution for high levels of unemployment and provided a flow of capital to Mexico in wages earned and sent home. This program was terminated in 1964. After a regulated labor pool was reestablished for agribusiness in 1954, the Immigration and Naturalization Service vigorously launched “Operation Wetback.” Undocumented workers were now to be removed. “Looking Mexican” was, and in some instances, is sufficient reason for official scrutiny (Daniels & Kitano, 1970).

Historically, Mexican Americans have been relegated to the lowest socioeconomic rungs of the sociopolitical ladder. It has taken the struggle of generations of families to reach for educational and societal equity. Such a travesty has no place in a pluralistic republic. There is a history that has not been told about established Tejano families who endured countless tragedies throughout the history of South Texas. The legacy of these Tejanos has been silenced because, as it is in many “borderlands” in the world, many battles have been fought to possess the land, and the conquerors often suppress the population of conquered people who stay in the occupied land.

To understand the history of the families in South Texas is to understand the struggle of the participants in this study. The history of South Texas and the

development of schools and of teachers in South Texas is important because it is the canvas upon which the life stories of the participants is painted. This history is the fabric that produced the current hegemonic orientations and economic situations as well as historical oppression of Mexican Americans in South Texas. White privilege was established in the consequent relegation of Mexican Americans as conquered people to the bottom of the economic ladder. This was accomplished through disempowerment tactics. The history of Mexican Americans in Texas illustrates and gives a chronological explanation of how the present educational and economic struggle came to be.

Of particular significance to this study is the growth of the teachers of color in the Texas teacher workforce. From 1996-1997, there was a steady improvement in the representation of minorities in the Texas teacher workforce (Figure 2.1). AEIS reports from the Texas Education Agency that are easily available show that from 1996 to 2004, Hispanic teachers in Texas grew from 38,305.7 to 54,326.4 (TEA, 2005). It is interesting to note the use of decimals in these numbers, as these decimals may indicate that some teachers are assigned to other duties other than teaching, or are only in a teaching role a part of the day. Hispanic teachers in Texas went from being only 15% of the teaching population in 1997 to 19% in 2004.



Source: TEA (2005).

Figure 2.1. Texas Teachers by Ethnicity.

A more alarming fact is hidden behind all these figures. A careful analysis of the data shows that even though there is a yearly gain of over 5% (Table 2.3) in the number of Hispanic teachers in the teacher workforce, the 2003-2004 AEIS Report shows that there is only a 3.62% gain. This immediately raises a red flag and adds purpose to this study.

Table 2.3. Hispanic Teachers in Public Schools in Texas, 1996-2004

AEIS Report Year	Number of Hispanic Teachers	Percent of Total Population	Percent Gain
1996 – 1997	38,305.7	15.5	
1997 – 1998	40,225.9	15.8	5.01
1998 – 1999	42,246.8	17.1	5.02
1999 – 2000	44,554.5	16.6	5.46
2000 – 2001	46,969.6	17.1	5.42
2001 – 2002	49,681.1	17.6	5.77
2002 – 2003	52,430.0	18.2	5.53
2003 – 2004	34,326.4	18.8	3.62

Note: From Texas Education Agency (2005).

Another disquieting fact is that while the Texas Hispanic population has grown to 32% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The percentage of Texas Hispanic teacher population has not mirrored a proportionate growth. In fact, it has grown from approximately 15% to about 19%. The growth of the representation of teachers of color (Table 2.4) in the Texas teacher workforce has had a yearly growth of a mere 5% in 8 years whereas the growth in the student population has been from 54.4% to 61.3 %, a growth of 6.9%. This effectively has made Texas a minority majority state in its public schools.

Table 2.4. Teachers of Color in Texas Public School, 1996-2004

AEIS Report Year	Number of Hispanic Teachers	Number of African American Teachers	Total Number of Texas Teachers	Percent of Teachers of Color
1996 – 1997	38,305.7	20,188.5	247,650.6	24.41
1997 – 1998	40,225.9	20,753.8	254,557.7	24.78
1998 – 1999	42,246.8	21,462.6	259,739.2	25.39
1999 – 2000	44,554.5	23,073.7	266,489.8	25.70
2000 – 2001	46,969.6	24,277.7	274,816.7	26.81
2001 – 2002	49,681.1	25,250.6	282,523.2	27.45
2002 – 2003	54,430.0	26,058.7	288,385.9	28.33
2003 – 2004	54,326.4	25,577.5	289,187.8	28.88

Note: From Texas Education Agency (2005).

Every year, the Texas Education Agency produces reports on the different populations in the public schools in Texas. These reports are called the Academic

Excellence Indicator System (AEIS Reports). At the present time, this information is easily available from the Texas Education website from 1996-2004. A review of the information located in these reports leads to a focus on the growth of teachers of color in the Texas teacher workforce. Unfortunately, the data are indicating that this group is not growing fast enough.

Seven Variables Associated With Mexican American Academic Achievement

Education has historically been the path for upward occupational, economic, and social mobility in this country, but Mexican Americans are among the least likely to graduate from high school and the least likely to enroll in and complete a four-year college degree (Chapa, 1991; Gandara, 1994, 1995; Garcia, 2001; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999).

In this section, some important variables associated with Mexican American academic achievement are reviewed. Variables reviewed are identity (Garcia, 2001); family socioeconomic level, (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972), social reproduction of status (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1987; Lareau, 1987, 1989), psychosocial variables (Anderson & Evans, 1976; Atkinson & Feather, 1966; Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; McClelland, 1965; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953), language variables (Cummins, 2001; Garcia, 2001; Nieto, 2002), and variables that have to do with parent-child interactive styles (Erickson, 1987; Larke, Webb-Johnson, Rochon & Anderson, 1999;

Laosa, 1978; Steinberg, Brown, Cider, Karczmarck & Lazzaro, 1988; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992).

Identity Variables

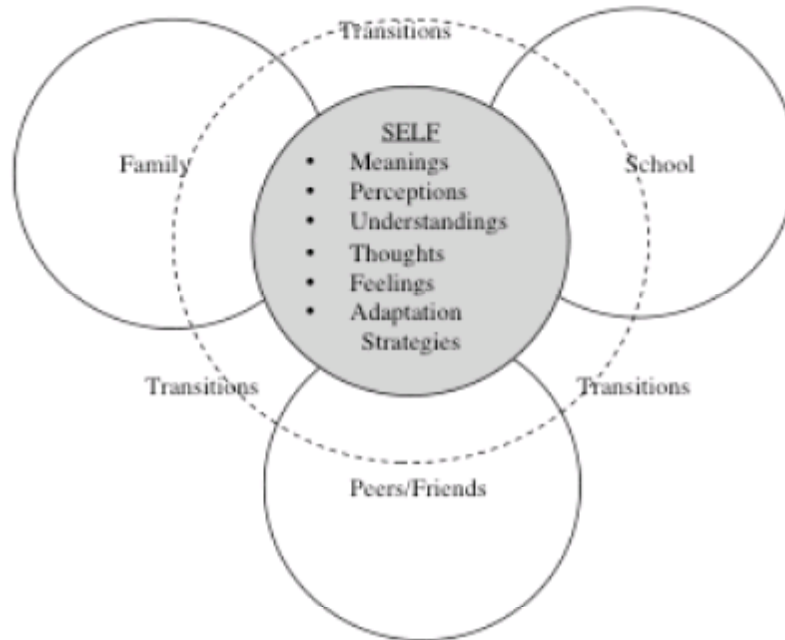
As is the tradition in psychological studies, the origins of achievement behavior have been located in the individual distinct from the group. Individuals, however, do not develop in a vacuum. Although the concepts used here are not new, prior research has focused on families, peers, and schools as distinct entities. We now know that any one of these factors can have powerful effects in the lives of students. One example is caring, dynamic teachers who can affect the direction of a student's life (Garcia, 2001; Gay, 2000, 2003).

We know a great deal about aspects of families, schools, teachers, and peer groups independently affecting education and educational outcomes. We also, however, need to know how these worlds combine in the day-to-day lives of students. We need to know how students transition and negotiate borders and barriers (Figure 2.2) in the cultures with family, school, and peers (Garcia, 2001). The transitioning and crossing borders between such cultures as those found in school, family, and peers are important to consider when we seek to learn about peoples' views and perceptions.

Recent recognition of cultural differences, especially by the educational establishment and combined with theoretical interest, is concerned with extrapolating the cause and effect of such differences in socialization practices (Garcia, 2001). The literature has attempted to relate familiar characteristics to the emergence of particular social organizations that distinguish populations (Tharp, 1989).

LARGER
COMMUNITY

LARGER
COMMUNITY



Source: Adapted from Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (as cited in Garcia, 2001).

Figure 2.2. Individual and Collective Identities.

Family Socioeconomic Level

Marjoribanks (1988, 1990) in his investigation of specific family characteristics, such as parental pressure for educational attainment and home environment variables, concluded that any model is incomplete without taking noninstitutional influences into account. Substantial literature exists that has demonstrated that family background accounts for a large portion of the variance in educational outcomes, more so than any other variable including the school(s) a student attends (Coleman et al., 1966; Garcia, 2001; Jencks et al., 1972).

Researchers have devoted much study to uncover the specific family characteristics that make the greatest contributions for student educational achievement. Across racial and ethnic groups, socioeconomic status (here defined as some combination of occupational and educational attainment) is the most powerful contributor to student educational outcomes (Jencks et al., 1972; Laosa & Henderson, 1991).

Social Reproduction of Status

The social reproduction of status differences between population groups is the direct result and express intent of capitalist economic policy to maintain social class advantages (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In other words, the school system in the United States is ordered in such a way as to channel upper-income students into educational opportunities such as college preparatory coursework that will prepare them for higher-status occupations and to channel lower-income students into the vocational preparation tracks that preclude them from competing for jobs with their upper-income peers. This “meritocratic” system that sorts students according to supposed intellectual ability, operates to convince lower-income students that they “deserve” lower-status jobs because of their own failure to perform adequately on tests devised to highlight the skills and attributes of the middleclass (Gandara, 1995).

Some researchers have also studied and suggested that the effects of family socioeconomic status on educational outcomes are more the inadvertent result of a culture of poverty (Lewis, 1961; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963) versus a culture of plenty. In poverty cultures, maladaptive responses to schooling are transmitted through the

generations by parents who were themselves ill-suited to school, did poorly, and failed to learn the skills necessary to propel themselves or their progeny through the educational system. Conversely, the sons and daughters of the middleclass are raised to believe that schools are supposed to serve their needs. This sense of entitlement sense serves them in shaping the institution of school into their own image.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1977) was instructive in explaining cultural capital. Because schools primarily are a reflection of the knowledge and values of the cultural and economic dominant groups in any society, they reinforce and validate what Bourdieu called the cultural capital that students from such groups bring from their homes. The cultural model held up for all, however, is not within easy reach of all. Only token members of students from less-valued groups can achieve it.

Notions of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1987; Lareau, 1987, 1989) further explain the powerful correlation between the socioeconomic status of the family of origin and achievement behaviors of children. According to these models, middle- and upper-class parents who have been successful in school understand the hidden curriculum of schools and of schooling, and they know how to teach their children to work the system. They, therefore, have the skills to coach their children to appropriately play the system. These parents also have the advantage of extensive community resources and networks within systems that extend their children's educational reach beyond the confines of the school and allow these parents to use and exploit these systems to gain educational advantage for their children. All these

theories have a common thread. It is a common mechanism of power for passing these advantages from one generation to the next in order to keep the advantages of these people in their “class.” This procedure also tends to ensure that certain others cannot enter their elite ranks.

Parental involvement in their children’s education also has been demonstrated to be positively correlated with higher student achievement. Stevenson and Baker (1987) studied a nationally representative sample of elementary and secondary students. The study showed that attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in parent-teacher organizations, and influence over their children’s selection of courses were predictive of academic achievement. Lareau (1987) studied education experiences of working-class and middleclass students and their families, and Lareau concluded that family “cultural capital” as manifested in parental contact with schools and knowledge of how to “work the system” is associated with both the student’s academic achievement and also with the family’s socioeconomic status (Lareau, 1987). Middleclass parents are much more likely to visit the schools and obtain resources for their children than are lower-income parents. Mexican American parents are frequently characterized as having low rates of participation in school activities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

Researchers familiar with Mexican American culture have attributed this low level of participation on the part of Mexican American parents as being due to a “lack of familiarity with the American school system, a fear of not being able to communicate with school personnel, competing family and work demands on their

time, and limited resources to pay for bus fares and for babysitters” (Gandara, 1995). Many educators have interpreted parental absence as evidence of a lack of value for education (Carter, 1970). This misunderstanding, by educators, of Mexican American parents’ intentions becomes a convenient excuse for the poor performance of Mexican American students – their parents do not care about school or support its aims (Gandara, 1995).

Psychosocial Variables

Several psychologists have studied psychosocial factors in achievement motivation and the ways that families help children to acquire motivation to achieve extensively. Some important researchers include Garcia, Gandara, McClelland, Atkinson, and their colleagues (Atkinson & Feather, 1966; Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2001; McClelland, 1965; McClelland et al., 1953), who proposed that motivation in achievement could be engendered in children through early training by setting high standards and providing sufficient independence for the child to develop a sense of task mastery. In 1976, Anderson and Evans employed Mexican American students in a study and demonstrated a positive association between independence training and academic achievement. The unique nature of interdependence of family members in the Mexican American family described by Grebler et al. (1970) calls into question if independence has the same meaning for Mexican Americans as it has for other cultural groups. It is not unusual, for example to find that while independence of the family unit might be valued within this culture, family members are commonly rewarded for pursuing familial rather than personal goals (Gandara, 1995).

Wolf (1963) and Dave (1964) studied this line of research by studying the “achievement press” of the home. Both researchers found that certain parental behaviors could combine to create a press for achievement that resulted in high academic performance. Further, Wolf and Dave contended that among non-Hispanic White school-age subjects, a correlation existed between a cluster of home environmental process variables that included such things as intellectuality of the home (here defined as the availability of books and other educational materials), standards for work habits, and opportunities for language development and academic achievement. Marjoribanks (1972) was able to show the independence of these variables from a socioeconomic status perspective for non-Hispanic White students; Henderson (1966) was unable to establish this independence for Mexican Americans which suggests that, at least for Mexican Americans, academic and intellectual opportunities in the home are a function of the family’s economic resources (Gandara, 1995).

There is a large body of research in the literature that examines the ways in which parents and families affect educational outcomes for their children: These outcomes include high aspirations and standards, encouragement for schooling, opportunities for independence and task mastery, creation of an intellectually stimulating environment, and family/parent involvement in schooling. At times, the research is contradictory. There is almost a dearth of literature pertaining to how ethnic minority parents and Mexican American parents in particular, impact their children’s academic achievement.

Language

Studies of language development and language skills acquisition have increasingly focused on communicative social interactions in early stages of the development of speech. Since there are wide differences and variations (Nelson, 1981) and cultural differences (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) in children' development, researchers have come to view children not as passive beneficiaries of their environments, but as active agents in their own socialization in life (Minami & Ovando, 2004). This view is predicated on the theory that individuals and society construct one another through social interaction (Ochs, 1996).

In the past, Latinos in public schools were segregated not just because of phenotypes, but also because of language. Language was used as the justification for segregation (Nieto, 2004). School officials claimed that because Mexican children could not understand English, they needed to be separated until they could. This resulted in 8.5% of the students who were in school in the late 1930's being in segregated schools; and as it is in the case of African American schools, expenditures and supplies overwhelmingly favored White schools (Donato, 1997; Gonzalez, 1990). For other students, their experience in public schools was "sink or swim," which means that they arrived at the school door with one language, one way to make meaning, and entered a world of "English only."

Even today, the legacy of this brutal history can be seen. Latinos are now more segregated by race/ethnicity and poverty than all other students (Orfield, 2001). We see the legacy of inequality as well in ballot questions to eliminate bilingual education.

These inequality initiatives can be seen in the initiatives to deprive immigrants of their rights, including the right to an education. This legacy of inequity can be seen most clearly in the dropout rates of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. These students have the highest dropout rate among any other group of students in the nation. Dropouts range from 30% to 80% depending on the year, city, and method used to count dropouts (Nieto, 2004).

Parent-Child Interaction Styles and Social Norms

When the home and community socialization patterns match established social norms within schools, instructional practices often lead to predictable and desirable student outcomes for students whose behaviors best match those norms. Teacher lack of knowledge is often coupled with a reactive pedagogy that devalues the integrity of children of color and poor children. The result is that these children perform poorly in school (Larke et al., 1999). Studies have demonstrated that relationships exist between middleclass communication styles and social behaviors learned at home and classroom interaction styles and communication. Results from these studies have suggested that the behaviors that are required for success in school are the same kinds of behaviors that are typically transmitted by parents of White, middleclass homes and that students who are not exposed to this style of acculturation in their home experience can be at risk for school failure (Erickson, 1987).

Laosa (1978), for example, showed that Mexican American mothers employ different behaviors than non-Hispanic White mothers when teaching specific tasks to their children. Aspects of families, schools, teachers, and peer groups independently

affect educational outcomes. We need to know how all of these combine in the lives of students to affect their engagement within school and classroom contexts.

Steinberg et al. (1988) concluded “studies of family processes indicate that students perform better when they are raised in homes characterized by supportive and demanding parents who are involved in schooling and who encourage and expect academic achievement” (p. ii). These studies involved mostly White middleclass families. Steinberg et al. (1992) conducted their own study of ethnic differences in adolescent achievement. They were borrowing on earlier research by Baumrind (1989) that demonstrated authoritative strict, warm, and democratic parenting was associated with higher academic achievement more than either permissive or authoritarian parenting.

Steinberg et al.’s (1992) study on Asian American, African American, and Hispanic American students found that Hispanic parents were more authoritarian than White parents, presumably resulting in diminished academic orientation. They cautioned that parenting styles do not operate independently of peer influences in predicting academic achievement, particularly for minority adolescents (Gandara, 1995).

Teachers make pedagogical decisions, choices in their instructional interactions that may have negative outcomes for disadvantaged youth. Such practices may create classroom scenarios that increase the likelihood of the continuation of low expectations and dismal educational outcomes for students who are already disproportionately

represented in low-level academic tracks such as special education, suspension or expulsion (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Jones, 1989).

Resiliency Theory

According to Benard (1991, 1997), resilience is a term used to describe a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity. Resiliency theory identifies protective processes present in the families, schools, and communities of successful youth that are often missing in the lives of troubled youth (Krovetz, 1999). When at least some of these protective processes are present, children develop resiliency, the ability to cope with adversity (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 2000). Resilience research validates prior research and theory in human development that has clearly established the biological imperative for growth and development that exists in the human organism and that unfolds naturally in the presence of certain environmental characteristics. We are all born with an innate capacity for resilience with which we can develop. The four major categories of resiliency identified by Benard (1991) are (a) problem solving, (b) social competence, (c) autonomy, and (d) a sense of purpose and future.

Benard (1991) described the first category as having *social competencies* or the quality of exhibiting pro-social behaviors. The social competencies or pro-social behaviors are those traits that increase the children's ability to find and keep healthy relationships with others. These characteristics include flexibility, good communication, sense of humor, empathy and caring, personal responsiveness, and the ability to generate positive responses from others.

Benard (1991) explained that a second category is a trait of having well-developed *problem-solving skills*. Category two should not be confused with high achievement in school. It, instead, refers to abilities to recognize social influences in the environment and make choices about those influences. Problem-solving skills encompass the ability (a) to plan; (b) to be resourceful in seeking help from others; and (c) to think critically, creatively and reflectively.

The development of problem-solving skills requires *a critical consciousness*, a reflective awareness of the structures of oppression (be it from an alcoholic parent, an insensitive school, or a racist society); critical consciousness is related to problem solving. Creating strategies for overcoming structures of oppression has been identified as an important part of resiliency.

The third trait identified by Benard (1991) is *autonomy*. These characteristics include self-discipline, a strong sense of identity and worth, ability to act independently, resistance (refusing to accept negative messages about oneself), and detachment (an ability to separate or engage in creative distancing from dysfunctional environments and situations). These serve as powerful protectors of autonomy. This category is generally referred to as the religious and spiritual commitment trait (Werner, 1990). The religious/spiritual commitment category includes a sense of usefulness or belonging to a community and having a stable belief system.

The fourth category is one that describes a trait of having a *sense of purpose* and future. The characteristics of this trait include goal directedness, achievement motivation, special interest, education aspirations, healthy expectations, and

hopefulness. Persistence and a belief in a compelling future are also included under the fifth category (Benard, 1991).

Research on resilience (Benard, 1991, 1997; Werner, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1989, 1992) identifies protective processes that *foster* resiliency in children. The protective processes are described as the characteristics of environments that appear to alter potential negative outcomes. Benard (1991, 1997) asserts that protective processes can be grouped into three major categories, that is, (a) caring and supportive relationships, (b) positive and high expectations, and (c) opportunities for meaningful participation.

The first category is the presence of at least one caring person, someone who conveys an attitude of compassion and provides support for healthy development and learning. Werner and Smith's (1989, 1992) 40-year study found that among the most frequently encountered positive role models in lives of resilient children, outside of the family, was a favorite teacher who was not just an academic instructor, but also was a positive role model for personal identification. This caring relationship with a child is a way of relating to youth and their families that conveys understanding, compassion, interest, and respect.

The second protective process is an adult's high expectations that structure, support, and guide behavior and can challenge students beyond what they might think that they can do (Delpit, 1996). Teachers can use students' own strengths, interests, goals, and dreams as the beginning point for learning as they tap students' intrinsic motivation for learning (Benard, 1997).

The third protective process identified is providing children with opportunities to participate. This process reflects a strength-based perspective in which teachers let students express opinions and imaginations, make choices, problem solve, and work with and help others. Teachers treat their students as responsible individuals and allow them to participate in all aspects of the school's functioning (Benard, 1997; Kohn, 1993; Rutter, 1984).

Werner and Smith (1992) found that the influence of a caring adult was the single most important way of making a difference for "at-risk" students. Garmezy (1983) identified competence indices that help predict resiliency. Garmezy's (1983) descriptors of resiliency include (a) effectiveness in work, play, and love; (b) healthy expectations and a positive outlook; (c) self-esteem and internal locus of control; (d) self-discipline; and (e) problem-solving/critical-thinking skills and a sense of humor. In considering protective processes, Benard (1997) explains that many social skills programs have been developed to teach these resiliency skills, but the strong message in resilience research is these attitudes and competencies that resilient children possess are outcomes, *not causes* of resilience Benard (1997).

The major implication from resiliency research for practice is that if we hope to create socially competent people who have a sense of their own identity and efficacy, who are able to set goals, make decisions, and believe in their future, then meeting their basic human needs for caring, respect, connectedness, challenge, and meaning must be the focus of any prevention, education, and youth development effort (Benard, 1997). Fostering resiliency involves promoting human development as a process and not as a

program. Rutter (1987) encourages the use of the term protective process that captures the dynamic nature of the resilience rather than the commonly used term, protective factors. The fostering of resilience operates at a deep structural, systemic, human level. Development of resiliency operates at the level of relationships, beliefs, and opportunities for participation and power that are a part of all interaction and intervention, no matter what the focus. As Rutter (1987) explained, development is a question of linkages that happen not only within you as a person, but also in the environment where you live.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study involved a critical examination (C. Clark, personal communication, November 6, 2001; Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Linde, 1993; McLaren, 2003) of female Mexican American teachers' constructions of education during a specific time in history. Information was gained using an interview process (Gee, 1996, Lieblich et al., 1998; Linde, 1993) to collect oral histories of five female Mexican American educators with more than 25 years of experience in teaching Mexican American students in schools on the border between the United States and Mexico. The participants' deconstruction of their lived experiences and critical examination of information gathered yielded information about the cultural, historical, political, and socio-economic context (Gay, 2003; Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1991; Nieto, 2002; Noddings, 1998), views and perceptions of the participants. The qualitative analysis (Gee, 1996; Lieblich et al., 1998; Linde, 1993) was guided by:

- Constructions of life, formal, and informal educational experiences, including contextual variants within the ideology of "constituted subjects" (Noddings, 1998, p. 118).
- Deconstruction of historical, sociopolitical, family, and religious contexts that influence interpretation of life and their educational experiences.
- Historical, political, social, religious, and educational contexts that each woman experienced and the interpretation of what effect these contexts had in her life (Labov, 1997).

- Constructive views and perceptions about previous generations of teachers, their families, their contemporaries, including significant people who impacted their teaching career, family, and the future of education for Mexican Americans.
- The similarities or differences that exist in the constructions and experiences of female Mexican American teachers who lived and taught in the period following the Civil Rights Movement in this country.

Design of the Study

This study was qualitative in design (Gee, 1996; Lieblich et al. 1998; Linde, 1993). The information was primarily gathered by interviews. There were four phases to the study: (a) identification and selection of the participants, (b) interviews and observations of the participants, (c) data collection and data analysis, and (e) subsequent interviews.

Identification of Participants

The participants informing this study were female Mexican American teachers who had more than 25 years of experience in South Texas border schools. The “community nomination” sampling method (Foster, 1997) was used to identify participants for the study.

I held three meetings with a professor at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) who has had more than 25 years of experience training Mexican Americans to become certified teachers to teach in South Texas border schools. This professor is well known in South Texas as a leader in the education community. These meetings

remitted in a list of ten possible participants who appeared to be appropriate nominees to answer the research question (Figure 3.1).

During the summer of 2004, the Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) professor initially gave me a list of five educators. The first five possible participants were called on the phone to establish availability and willingness to participate. Out of these first five possible participants, only one was available and willing to participate. Health factors of the perspective participants and their families played a role in determining the availability of participants. Specifically, four of the first ten possible available participants could not participate because of their own or family health reasons or family responsibilities.

During a second meeting with the primary nominator, five more possible participants were nominated. These five were contacted by phone. None of these five could participate. During the third meeting with the primary source for the sample, he suggested that the second group of participants' names could be obtained from the local women educators' international sorority or from the retired teachers association. The researcher asked for nominations from a secondary nominator, a long-time member of this sorority who provided a list of seven possible participants who met the qualifications to answer the research question. Potential participants were called on the phone to determine if they were available and willing to participate. The first four participants contacted agreed to take part in the study.

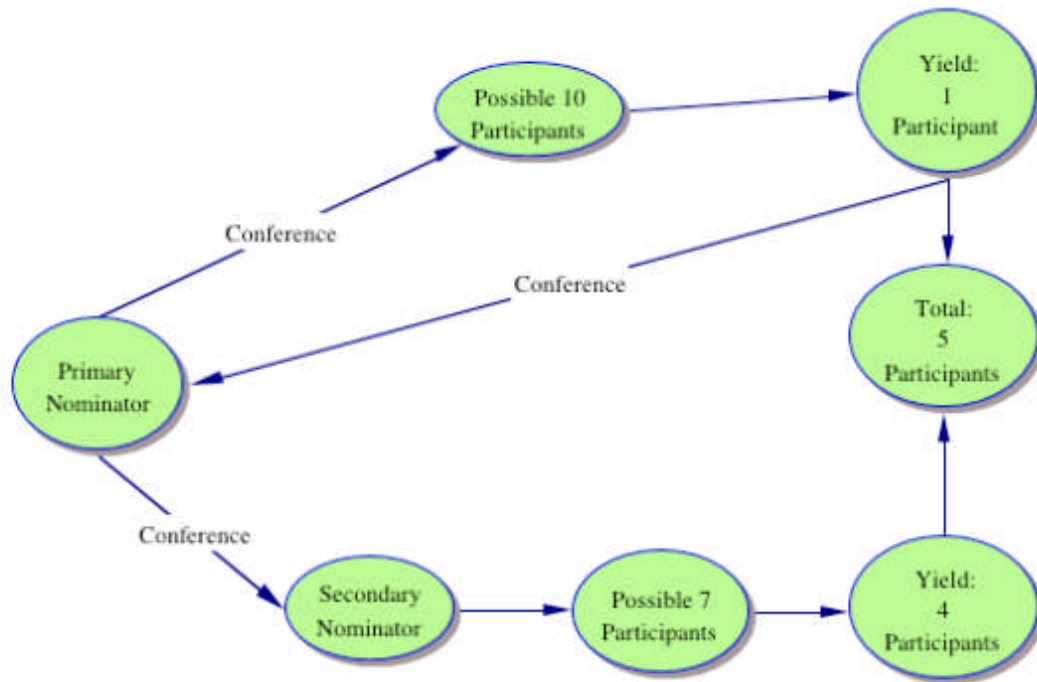


Figure 3.1. Location of the Participants.

The final five educators were chosen not only on the basis of meeting the criteria of the purposive sample, but also on the basis of availability, ability, and willingness to participate. One participant was chosen from the initial primary nominator and four were chosen from the secondary nominator with long standing membership in a local women's educators' sorority.

The participants were chosen, therefore, in a purposeful, nonrandom way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants in this study were Mexican American women teachers who had lived their lives in the classrooms of South Texas educational institutions. Participants were purposefully selected who could provide information by voicing their perceptions and views about education and educating Mexican American

students in South Texas border schools. These women educators collectively represented 173 years of teaching experience. They comprised a group of outstanding teacher-scholars for their time and socio-cultural heritage. The women in this study not only completed high school, but also satisfied state requirements to successfully gain teacher certification and remained committed to the education of their students for over 25 years.

Table 3.1 provides information about the years of service the five participants that informed this study achieved. It specifies the number of years that they taught, where they taught, and where they went to school. At the time of the study, participants resided in Laredo, Texas, a bilingual, bicultural community on the border between the United States and Mexico. All five participants were female Mexican American teachers with more than 25 years of teaching experience. Three participants had 33 years of experience; one had taught for 36 years and another had been a teacher for 38 years. The schools in which these women taught included communities in Fort Bend County, Hidalgo County, Zapata County, and Webb County. The participants were educated in a variety of schools. They were educated in settings as diverse as ranch schools, private schools, public schools, and what was known in the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's in South Texas as "Escuelitas." "escuelitas" were pre-schools that were run by women who taught preschool basics typically in Spanish, and enrollment for these schools usually occurred one or two years before children entered the first grade in public or private school.

Table 3.1. Participants' Profiles

Name of Participant	South Texas Region in Which She Taught	Years of Experience	South Texas Schools Attended
Braids	Laredo	33 (still teaching)	Laredo
Dancer	San Ignacio, Zapata, Laredo	36 (retired) Hebbronville	Falcon, Randado
Nurturer	Laredo	33 (retired)	Laredo
Lady	Laredo	38 (retired)	Laredo
Chiquita	Hidalgo, Laredo, Relampago, Sugarland	33 (retired)	Edinburg, Hebbronville, Laredo

Note: Pseudonyms were used in place of participants' names.

Interviews and Observations of Participants

Initial Interviews and Observations

An initial meeting was scheduled with each participant in order to establish the feasibility of each participant to inform this study. This meeting also served to introduce the potential participant to the research and to the researcher. The possible five participants for the study were screened as to their availability and their ability to answer the research question. The five participants were selected to participate based on their availability, willingness to participate, and their ability to answer the research question.

Prior to the interview of the five participants, each participant's consent was obtained in the form of her signature on the consent form (Appendix B). The

participant's name, address, and telephone number were secured. The purpose of the study was explained to each participant. All the participants were encouraged to select an anonymous name. The researcher explained to each participant that the selection of an anonymous name was a safety precaution to protect her identity.

Additional information given to participants included the following: Review and approval by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas; the phone number of the Institutional Review Board and the phone number of the Office of the Vice President for Research at this university. All of the participants volunteered to participate, and they agreed to have their interviews audio taped and to allow the researcher to take notes on a laptop computer. All participants were given a copy of the consent form. All participants agreed to devote an hour to the initial interview, and 30 minutes to one hour for possible follow-up interviews. It was explained to them that the follow-up interviews would be for clarification purposes and would be conducted on an as-needed basis.

While interviews focused on the targeted participants, the historical piece of this study encouraged reflection on previous generations or other members of participants' families who also taught in South Texas border public schools. In one instance, the husband of a participant was present for the interview of the subject. This individual did not reveal information relevant to this study. The interviews were informal (Gee, 1996; Lieblich et al., 1998; Linde, 1993) in nature and took on the characteristics of an informal conversation. The researcher asked the research questions

and focused on the lived experience and constructions, views, and perceptions of each of the participants.

Subsequent Interviews and Observations

The second and subsequent interviews were specific as the purpose was to clarify ideas (Linde, 1993). These interviews were inquisitive in nature and sought to reveal details and specifics of the information as was appropriate to the purpose of the research.

Member Checks

The transcriptions were discussed with the participants. Each participant received a copy of the transcription. The participants discussed the transcriptions and provided feedback and clarification information to me after having a chance to look over the text.

Data Collection and Analysis

Information Collection Methods

This study used qualitative inquiry (Gee, 1996; Lieblich et al., 1998; Linde, 1993) to answer a research question in order to derive in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of five female Mexican American teachers with more than 25 years of experience of teaching in South Texas border schools. The interviews were conducted by the interviewer and audiotape recorded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). All information flowed through the researcher's lens or filter. Continual engagement with the discourse as it was delivered provided an entrance to the perspective of the speaker (Gee, 1996; Labov, 1997; Linde, 1993). Decisions on what information needed follow-

up interviews and decisions regarding manipulation of data were made using the researcher's lens. The technique of notes made in the margins of field notes (Huberman & Miles, 1998) was reviewed after each interview to reveal emerging units.

Data Organization, Manipulation, and Member Checks

The researcher reviewed documents and artifacts after each interview. A research journal was kept for the purpose of reflection and documentation of these reflections. Follow-up meetings were held with each participant after the interview was transcribed and when determined by the researcher that further clarification of specific points was necessary. For the member checks, participants were asked to discuss the data and to make suggestions regarding the transcript, interview, or any additional information concerning this study. The participants were given a copy of the transcribed texts, and they were provided an opportunity to discuss the text and make corrections, as they deemed was appropriate for clarification and content.

Life and Educational Artifacts and Documents

Artifacts (Hodder, 1998) provided a deeper knowledge into the educational and life experiences of the participants. Participants shared personal documents, family pictures, school pictures, and Spanish and Mexican land grant information. The participants used the pictures to refer to school buildings and school experiences with friends and relatives.

The information gathered was filed and organized. Each line, stanza, and strophe was numbered and organized for emergent themes (Gee, 1996). This organization of data into emergent themes, lines, and stanzas (Gee, 1996) was

completed through the use of a computer's cut and paste functions. As themes emerged, they were also manually placed on a matrix. This provided clarity of themes across narratives. Overarching themes (C. Clark, personal communication, November 6, 2001) were identified. Holistic-content (Lieblich et al., 1998) analysis was also used to identify recurrent themes in the narrative, and holistic form/categorical form was also considered in order to analyze plot structures. Dr. Carolyn Clark's (personal communication, November 6, 2001) model and technique of identification of "self" was utilized, as this provided great insight into the cohesion of the narration and the temporal continuity that shaped the emergent and present self (Linde, 1993) of each participant. Using a postmodern and poststructural perspective, this research sought to understand how subjectivity is constructed within the complexities of social interaction and discourse (C. Clark, personal communication, November 6, 2001; Gee, 1996; Linde, 1993).

Constant Comparative Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing and continual. Constant comparison (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) among observations, themes, concepts, emergent selves, and temporal continuity (C. Clark, personal communication, November 6, 2001; Linde, 1993) was all used to develop an understanding of the participant's constructs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) under investigation. The organization of emergent themes, selves, concepts, temporal continuity, and constructs was accomplished using inductive analysis. The units of data were organized in stanzas, strophes, and lines (Gee, 1996). The constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) yielded an ongoing reconceptualization

and adjustment until all data units were placed into appropriate categories (Collins, 2003; Gee, 1996). As the researcher manipulated the data, constant themes emerged. The focus of the ongoing analysis was to make meaning of the interview and other data to yield structure and meaningful categorical analysis.

Narrative Analysis

Each interview transcript was then analyzed for content. Emergent narrative constructs were found as the researcher employed the methodology of progression, regression, and stability (Lieblich et al., 1998).

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Teacher Stories and Emergent Themes

Although it is true that many of our students are victims of devastating life circumstances such as poverty, lack of health care and even homelessness, we cannot use these as a rationale to expect any less of them. (Nieto, 2002, p. 167)

This study explored, through the participants' narrative, the perceptions of five Mexican American educators with more than 25 years of experience about education and educating Mexican American students in Texas border schools. In the first part of this chapter, I introduce the reader to the participants of this study by providing a brief description of the community in which they live. Next, I introduce the reader to the participants themselves. The descriptions reveal the participants in the context of their community to provide a backdrop and context for understanding the lived experiences of the participants.

In order to answer the first question on teacher views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, participants reflected on their lives as students and later as teachers in schools in the border areas between the United States and Mexico. In parts two and three of this chapter, I discuss how the participants viewed their early development, their education, and their teaching. The latter parts of this chapter contain the participants' deconstructions that answered the research questions that guided the study:

1. What were the participants' views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, both formal and informal, within the contexts of community, political climate, family, religious, and educational institutions?
2. What experiences or persons have most impacted their teaching career?
3. What role did religion play in the subjects' educational and teaching experience?
4. Were there barriers that they have experienced, and have the barriers remained the same?
5. What was it like to be a Mexican American teacher for over 25 years following the Civil Rights Movement, and how do the subjects view the educational experience of Mexican American students?
6. What has stayed the same, and what has changed in the quality of education of Mexican American students over time?

In the last part of this study, the participants contrasted and compared their development and education to that of Mexican Americans who are students at the present time. They discussed barriers that existed before and barriers that still exist. They also reflected on the changes that have come to pass since the years in which they attended the border schools in South Texas. Their reflections also explored the ways that Mexican American students are failing in schools and the factors that they saw in their teaching careers as a detriment to Mexican American students' academic achievement.

The teachers' stories and emergent themes are discussed in the following ways:

(a) history of how their families valued education and of the high expectation their families had for their academic success during early childhood experiences, (b) belief systems including religion and important relationships with adults who helped them to achieve, and (c) lastly, the participants' voices of wisdom in analyzing and comparing their own lives in schools with those of Mexican American students today.

**The Participants' Community: Laredo, Texas – On the Border
Between the United States and Mexico**

Present day Laredo is very different from the historical Laredo, although there is evidence of its very long historical roots in the narrow cobblestone streets surrounding the San Agustin Church and Plaza and other Placitas downtown. The religious and cultural context, as well as parochial nature of the community, is seen in the continuity and static nature of the residents and is evidenced in family names that have been around for centuries. Many families who resided in Laredo during the 1700's have descendants who are still citizens of present day Laredo.

My own family has lived in this community since the 1700's. Growing up listening to stories from my great aunt taught me our legacy as founders of this city. My life growing up in a blue-collar neighborhood seemed a paradox to what my great aunt taught me about my family. She gave me a copy of our family tree. She told me to never forget that our family was one of the "originales" (originals) who founded the city. As a little girl, I wondered how it could be possible that our family had lost so much. My father and mother did not have a high school education. My sisters and I

attended public schools. If what my aunt told me was true, and I thought that there was no reason for my wonderful aunt to lie to me, then how could our family have come to live in a neighborhood where the mean income was below the poverty line?

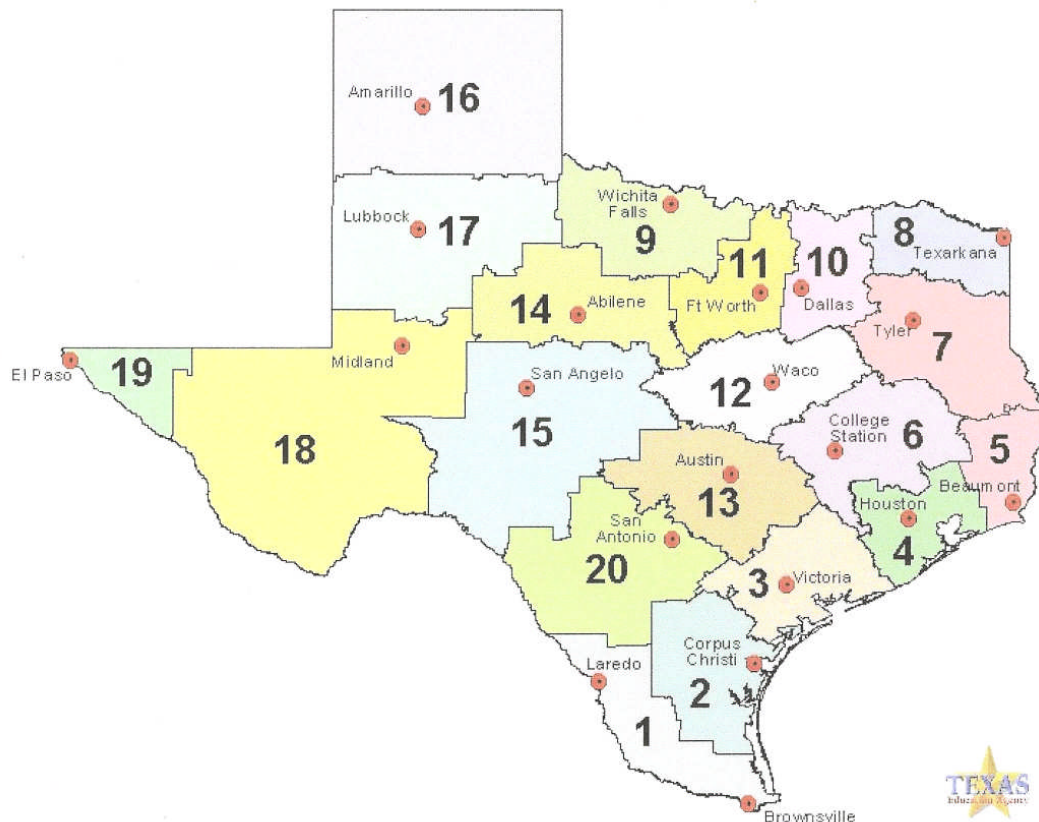
My educational journey has answered many questions that I held since I was a child. This research project is part of this journey that has given me new lenses with which to see my history, my community, my peers, and the participants of this study. This study was a treacherous and a thorny climb for me. I once again recalled and relived experiences as I listened to the participants' personal stories. I faced many of the childhood experiences that were carefully buried inside of me for many years. As I listened to the participants tell their stories of childhood, school, and teaching experiences, my own similar experiences came rushing back to me. However, it is in truth that I seek truth about myself and about the participants in the present study. In many ways, the participants were telling my story as well as their own. Rogler (1999) asked, "How can an outsider interpret the results of a study involving ethnic respondents if individuals who understand the ethnic community are not included in a significant capacity on the research team?" (p. 424). It is critical to include members of the community in research studies if the researcher does not know the community (Padilla, 2004). The unpleasant lived experiences of these educators unearthed feelings that had been buried inside of this researcher for many years. I had regarded these experiences "ancient history" and forgotten. They are undeniably real. They are part of my development, and so, they are a part of my own lived experience.

There was much that the participants said that sounded familiar to me. With one exception, all of the participants were educators who I have known for many years. One of the participants was my elementary school teacher. Another was my high school band director's wife. Another was a colleague with whom I worked; still another is a retired teacher who is my sorority sister. Laredo is a growing town; but in many ways, it is a small town in which many people have known each other for generations. It is still a close-knit town.

As Figure 4.1 shows, Laredo is on the border of the United States and Mexico. The geographical location of Laredo has always made it necessary for Laredoans to be supportive of each other in order to survive. Laredo is 150 miles from major cities in all directions. It is 150 miles southwest of San Antonio, 150 miles from Corpus Christi to the northeast, 150 miles from the Rio Grande Valley cities like Edinburg, Pharr, and McAllen, and 150 miles north of Monterrey, Mexico. Geographic location has also placed Laredo at economic crossroads (Hinojosa, 1983), and in current years, Laredo has become the largest inland port in the United States. It has been identified as being one of the two fastest growing cities in the nation. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has spurred this growth in commerce and trade with Mexico. New families have moved in, and Laredo has become more culturally diverse in recent years than ever before.

Import-export of goods is the main business in Laredo. As you drive as far South as IH 35 can take you, you drive towards the journey's end, toward Laredo. The impression you get is that the closer you get, the more 18-wheelers you see.

Transportation of goods and materials makes railways and trucking/warehousing big business. Warehousing is the first thing you see as you start to drive in the outskirts of town. The billboard that welcomes you into Laredo depicts a group of Mariachis dressed in full costume and singing under a starlit sky.



Note: Red dots indicate major cities and school districts in each region.

Figure 4.1. Texas Map: Twenty Educational Regions.

There are only estimates of the population of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo. The nature of the constant movement from these cities and the nature of immigration policy, as well as the traditional under-reporting of census due to the high number of

illegal immigrants who live and/or work in Laredo, make an exact quantification impossible. The population of Laredo is estimated as being between 220,000 to 240,000 people (Adams, 2004). The population of Nuevo Laredo is conservatively estimated as being at least twice that number. Although the population in Laredo is more diverse than ever before, Webb County is 94% Latino (Adams, 2004). The Rio Grande “divides” Laredo from its Mexican sister city, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico (Figure 4.2). But, in truth, there are centuries of connections between the two sister cities. These cannot be seen with the human eye, but these connections are very real, nonetheless. The ties that bind the two cities are, in many instances, blood relations and friendships that are strengthened by Catholic traditions such as those that bind one family to another. For example, the tradition of choosing a godfather and godmother to baptize a child is one that binds one family to another. Relationships that bind the peoples of two nations can be seen not just in shared traditions and religions, but they can also can be seen in the history that these two sister cities share.

The historical experiences of these two cities are actually quite similar. And in truth, for most of Laredo’s recorded history, the river was not a boundary that divided two nations, but rather it was a river in one community. The language spoken in Laredo and Webb County is a mixture of English and Spanish, for example. But, it is important to understand that if students do not speak English, this does not mean that people do not have language, and that if peoples’ culture is not that of the dominant culture group, it does not mean that people do not have a vibrant and meaningful

culture. In sum, students' differences should not automatically condemn them to school failure (Nieto, 2002, p. 167). Difference is not deficiency (Vasquez, 2002).

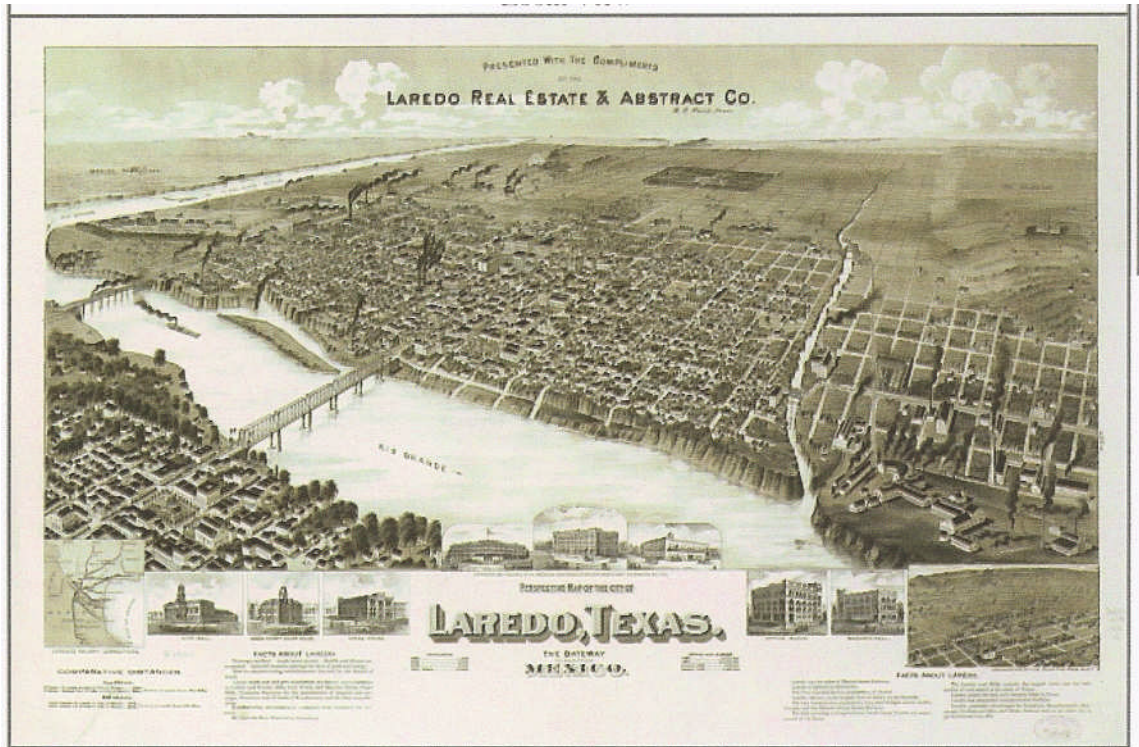


Figure 4.2. Laredo Map, 1892.

There have always been adjustments made by the families of Laredo. The townspeople made adjustment to several sovereignties. The history of this part of Texas reflects the difficult times that these families endured. Revolutionary wars, Civil War, French and Spanish occupations, Mexican occupations, and finally American occupations all left scars in the fabric of the history of these families. My family tree, for example, dates back to the 1700's, as is the case with most of the participants in the study.

This culture is primarily a mix of Mexican and American cultures and uniquely South Texan. Important educational statistics reveal that only half (53%) of the Webb county population has a high school diploma compared to 76% of Texans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Most of the people in Laredo do not have a college education; in fact, only 14.7% presently hold a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Communities of color suffer poverty disproportionately. Laredo is no exception. But even within the community of Laredo, contrasts can be found.

Laredo is a city of many contrasts, not the least of which is the difference in education and income between the south side and the north side. The north side is the affluent side complete with Country Club, malls, expensive real estate, and the preferred school district, United Independent School District. Generally, the south side has less expensive real estate, more crime, less infrastructure, and most of the population in the schools is on reduced or free lunch program. The Laredo Independent School District is mostly an urban district and serves many lower income neighborhoods on the south side of town. All of the participants in this study either went to school in or taught school in Laredo Independent School District.

The Participants

Participant One – “Braids”

“Braids” is a good referent for a steely lady. A single, beautiful waist-long steel- silver and black braid swings to and fro as students watch their science teacher walk around her room. Her tenacious belief in her students is defined in the powerful eye contact she gives each one. She teaches on the poor side of town by choice. Her

day is usually more than 12 hours long. She may wait for students to come in after school in the hallway, calling them by their names, or she might receive them in a computer lab where she seeks to connect her students with the greater world through technology. To watch her interact with her students is to have an emotional experience. She is as determined to foster success in her students as she is committed to the act of teaching itself. Braids is a gifted science teacher who was born in Laredo where she has taught most of her life. Her mother was also an accomplished teacher who became a respected principal in Laredo. Braids has a daughter who is an assistant principal, a son who is an English teacher, and another son who just received his master's in music and is a certified music teacher.

The historical roots of her family lie deeply in the community in which she was born. Her great grandfather was a ranch teacher who met his death while riding horseback from one ranch to another to teach his students in South Texas. "He fell from his horse, and died out there," she explained. "They found him the next day, but he died out there all alone" (B 573-577).

Braids entered kindergarten at age three, completed pre-primer by age four, entered first grade as a five year old, and then, when she was six, completed second and third grade in one year. She stated in a follow-up interview with this researcher that she remembered that it was an unwritten rule that Spanish was not to be spoken at school during the time she attended Laredo schools. A one penny fine was levied on any student who was caught speaking Spanish at school, but she stated that she had never been caught speaking Spanish, and therefore was never charged. She described

learning English as either “sink or swim” (B 427). She described most of her educational experiences as positive because she stated that her family valued education a lot. A warm glow in her face could be seen as she explained that her parents went through the extra expense and sacrifice of giving her a private school education from age 3 to 11. She stated that Catholic school was difficult but “at least we didn’t have as punitive a situation as others had growing up” (B 12-13).

She went to public schools for high school and graduated when she was only 15 years old. She described her high school and local junior college experience as really good because she stated that the teachers were well prepared. She described the education she received at The University of Texas as not as good because most of the classes were taught by T. A’s (teacher assistants) who did not really care as much as the teachers she had known to that time.

She transferred to the university as a junior when she was only 17 years old. She was a pre-med student. She described the restaurants in Austin as avoiding serving Mexican Americans by making them wait until they gave up and walked away. The people at UT “expected Mexicans to be pretty dumb” (B 91, 92), and she stated people would ask her what country she was from. They guessed that she might be from Brazil. It was easier, she said, for them to accept her as a foreign student than to except her as a Mexican American from Texas. Braids has 33 years of teaching experience and is currently the head of the science department at a Laredo high school.

Participant Two – “Chiquita”

“Chiquita pero picosa” is a Spanish saying that describes people of short stature who command a powerful presence. Chiquita is such a lady. At an age over 70 years young, she makes astute observations that reveal a keen sense of logic and analysis. She is extremely energetic and is as proficient in English as she is in Spanish. Although retired at the present time, she is involved in many church, educational, and civic organizations and activities. Her usual style is easy going, her way is always confident, and her smile is definitely contagious. She is, however, a force to contend with, as is evidenced by her ability to “cut to the chase” when any problem or question presents itself. She lives with her maid and warmly welcomes you to her home. As you walk in, you see evidence of a love of art. Several Windburg paintings hang on her walls. A wide collection of objects from all over the world is displayed in her large living room. She laughs as she tells you a story about each one. She is a joyful person who has an unassuming and truly easy way of communicating with people. She is so animated and keenly intelligent.

A serious look came upon her face, and her gaze saddened as she told of her husband’s illness. She said that she missed him being at home, but went to visit him in the rest home two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. She indeed goes to see her husband every morning and every afternoon. She set a big basket of oranges from her own yard on her coffee table and said, “Here, have some. They are delicious!” She described these oriental oranges as she peeled one for herself. She told of the inability to ship them because of the inherently loose skin, “that makes them so

easy to peel.” She explained that several neighbors await the ripening of her oranges every year. She told of her neighbors’ anticipation of the fruit every year. She smiled widely and even laughed as she imitated some of them asking, “Are they ripe yet?” It is easy to see why she had a long and successful career as a teacher. She simply loves people. She simply loves to share.

Chiquita was born in Pharr, Texas, and when she was just a little baby, the family moved to Edinburg, Texas, where she grew up and went to school. She described her family’s financial situation at first as “living a good life” (C 163). She described her family as having several employees; for example, the man who washed the windows, the maid who washed the clothes, and the lady who ironed the clothes. She explained that after her father died, the source of income was gone, and the only source of income was her sister’s income as a schoolteacher. She stated that all of the family pitched in and started working at that time. She said that they would deliver circulars, delivered newspapers, sold Avon products, and she said that, “we even had three cows, so we would sell the milk” (C 170-171). She stated that her father died in 1933 when she was eight years old.

Chiquita described the elementary schools of the 30’s in Edinburg, Texas, by stating that there were two schools there. There was the one across the tracks where the Mexicans went, and the one across the street from where she lived where the Whites went. But, she added, most of the Mexican American children who lived where she lived went to parochial schools. She stated that she was the only one in her class who did not know a word of English and started out with English-only speakers. She said,

“You had to learn very fast. It was sink or swim” (C 27). She described the faculty in the school serving Whites only in Edinburg as not hiring anyone with a Latino last name. She said that they would “import” (C 292) teachers from out-of-town. They had a place called the faculty club where these “imported teachers” (C 287) would live.

She went to high school in Edinburg where there was a mix of Mexican Americans and Whites, but she added most of the Mexican Americans dropped out before they got to high school. She added that at that time, the African American students could not attend high school with the Whites and Latinos. She said that they had “their own school on the other side of the tracks” (C 22-23). She said that this was during the early 1940’s.

Chiquita attended Texas State College for Women (TSCW), which is now Texas Woman’s University. She said that at the time it was a sister school of Texas A&M University at College Station. The girls who had boyfriends there were called “Tessies” (C 202) according to her. She completed her bachelor’s degree by going summers until 1949. She stayed at a dorm in the summers. She said she did not feel any discrimination of any kind there and that she learned to be friendly there because “everyone said hello to you” (C 212-213). She started teaching when she completed two years of college at Edinburg Junior College, because her sister who was the principal at Relampago Elementary School, asked her to go teach with her. She taught at Relampago, right outside of Mercedes, Texas, across the border from Progreso, Mexico. It was 1944, and she stayed there two years. By then, she said both of her parents died, and so she went to live with and to work for her sister.

Chiquita is a retired teacher living in Laredo. She has 33 years of teaching experience. The district that she retired from is the Laredo Independent School District. Chiquita shared pictures of her family going back generations. She shared the family tree that attested to the family's enduring permanence in South Texas. Her connection to South Texas history is in the history of her family. For example, she shared Spanish land grant documents that showed that she is a descendant of Tejanos who owned large ranches in South Texas. She also shared a *Dallas Morning Times* article published on November 28, 2004, that her brother sent to her. The title of the article was "Revolution in Texas – How a Forgotten Rebellion Turned Mexicans into Texans." The newspaper article attested to the bloody massacres of Mexican families in South Texas during the time that they were dispossessed of their lands. Eighty-nine years ago, Texas Rangers singled out Hispanics and thousands died, according to this article. Eighteen miles north of Edinburg, there are graves of two middle-aged ranchers who were hung by Texas Rangers. She conversed with me about the stories we both heard from our elders growing up. The history of our families in South Texas is starting to be legitimized as these stories are written. The newspaper article stated that the bloody massacre took place in the Rio Grande Valley in 1915.

Participant Three – "Dancer"

Dancer has always danced her way into her students' hearts. At age 74, Dancer stands tall in stature and stands tall in her community. She seems to have been everyone's teacher or principal. Truly everyone seems to know Dancer. She is a retired educator who owns a profitable and very active flower shop. Her energy does not seem

to have boundaries. Her welcoming arm around me was reminiscent of third grade when she taught me to love the performing arts. She taught us music and song and a love of art and dance. At age eight, she taught me and 75 other elementary school girls to twirl batons and perform on stage to the tune of “Seventy-Six Trombones” in 1960. She had us performing children’s plays and taught us to square dance two years later. Her entire teaching career, she has made connections with children by introducing them to the fine arts and by finding talent and abilities in each one.

Her fine-tuned eye for design can be seen in the beautiful red brick pillared and black wrought iron fence around her home. The fall leaves wet with rain and blue gray hue of the afternoon did not diminish the design and color spectrum she chose for her front yard. I rang the bell on the pillar by the entrance. Her maid walked out to unlock the gate as I greeted her. A sweet little Shiatsu dog accompanied the maid and seemed to smile at me as she swung the gate widely. “God bless you!” I said without thinking as I reacted to the little dog’s sneeze. The three of us walked up a curving sidewalk to a beautiful tiled open front porch adorned with lovely green ferns and a welcoming wreath at the door.

At the time of the interview, the community had just honored Dancer at the civic center for her lifelong contributions to the children of Laredo. Her picture was on the front page of the Laredo Morning Times, our local newspaper. She lives her life now as she always has, with a smile on her face and a world of ideas for what should be done next. She is still helping the people of the community by offering her support to raise funds for worthy causes, as well as by helping people plan their weddings,

birthdays, charity events, and other programs. She is as creative as she is visionary. She is a successful businesswoman. She is, more than anything else, a very talented and fun-loving teacher who has always had a knack for turning every learning experience into a joy for all.

Dancer was born in Falcon, Texas. Her family moved to Rondado, where her father was a foreman of a ranch. She stated that even though their financial situation was not very good, growing up, her parents never said “if” you go to college. She stated that they would always speak in terms of “when” you go to college (D 23-24). She lived on the ranchito (ranch) and was bused to a three-room elementary school where she stated that she had the best of teaching because, at that time, all teachers would do was teach. She said that they did not spend their time in meetings, filling out forms, and handling all these other things. She stated that they taught! She stated that in the community where she grew up, there were a lot of oil fields and most of the people were Whites.

She said that in the schools, if you were caught speaking Spanish, you would be fined a penny. And she did not have the money, so it forced her to learn English. She said that she is now 74 years old, and that at that time, nobody had a television, for example. “But, nobody knew we were poor because everyone acted the same way. We went to school and did our homework,” (D 43-44) she said. Her father taught her that her two brothers could earn a living in the oil fields, but since she could not, she was going to college. She went to high school in Hebbronville, Texas. There were English and Spanish speakers there, and everyone helped each other all the time. She added that

nobody would even speak of welfare or anything like that at the time. This was in 1944. She graduated from high school in 1948 at the age of 17.

She attended Texas A&I in Kingsville, Texas. She remembers she stayed at a boarding house, “Casa Lupita” where she offered to do the dishes so her living costs would be reduced and that way she had more money for books and whatever else she needed. She took an exam to get her emergency permit after only six weeks of college and started teaching in a little ranch in Zapata County. That community was basically just a county road that had a little house on each side every so often, and the children would walk to the one-room schoolhouse. She taught from first to the eighth grade in a one-room all-level schoolhouse in Zapata County. The parents of her students were very supportive, and she said that the students learned.

Dancer has 36 years of experience in schools and retired from the Laredo Independent School District. She remembers teaching in a little schoolhouse in San Ignacio before coming to Laredo to teach. The school district hired three girls to teach, two from Laredo and herself. She said she has always used the performing arts to motivate students to learn. Dancer shared pictures of students, faculties, and family. These pictures attest to her dedication to students in South Texas. The pictures go back for decades.

Participant Four – “Nurturer”

A cinnamon smell met me at the door when I entered Nurturer’s home. She smiled and greeted me by saying how nice it was to have me come to see her. She seemed younger than the other participants to me. She stated that she was 67 years old.

Nurturer describes herself as a mother who enjoyed staying at home and raising her family. She remembered not really wanting to go to work, but rather preferring to stay at home to raise her children. She wore an apron, and as I walked into her home, she invited me to sit at her dining room table.

Several small dogs could be heard barking in the backyard. She quickly placed a muffin in front of me and said that it was a special recipe for diabetics. Her husband had had a stroke, she said, and she cooked special recipes for him. She then said that she was going to the next room to bring him, so he wouldn't feel left out. How considerate she is, I thought. And what a kindness she has about her. She called out, "Come on, daddy!" She pushed the wheelchair over to the table and introduced her husband to me. We shared a handshake and he smiled and pointed to the muffin while he told me, "They're good!"

This teacher who would later become a principal held first and foremost the good of her family. She stated several times that although she did have a career in education as a teacher aide, a teacher, and later a principal, she never neglected her family. She actually said that to her, the transition from mother to educator was easy. She had children to take care of at home and children to care for at school.

Nurturer was born in Laredo and started going to school at an "escuelita" (little school) where she learned the numbers and the letters of the alphabet in Spanish. She was five or six years old at that time. The "escuelita" was actually just an empty room where the teacher, "Cuquita" taught. Cuquita lived in a house next door to the schoolhouse. She attended Laredo elementary public schools in the 1940's entering

first grade at the age of seven. She attended a public junior high school, then, her mother decided to send her to a church school. She attended Christian Union Institute in Laredo. She remembers that at the time, teachers would charge you a penny every time that they would catch you speaking Spanish. The penalty was a penny, staying after school, or writing lines. She stated she preferred writing lines.

She did not attend college until after she had been married and had two children. She was encouraged to go to college by her husband who is an educator himself. He would ask her what she would do if anything ever happened to him to motivate her to attend college. She started working as a teacher aide in 1958 to see if she would like working in schools. She said she was 23 or 24 years old when she decided to go to college. She continued to work and go to college until she finished her first two years of college at Laredo Junior College. She then rented an apartment at Casa Lupita in Kingsville, Texas, and attended Texas A&I University in Kingsville during the summers. She took her children with her on Sunday afternoons. She would take some of her children and a sitter. She would come back to Laredo on Fridays. In the 1970's, she finished her teaching degree in Laredo when they opened Texas A&I at Laredo, a two-year senior college. She quit working that year and it took her one full-time year to finish her degree. She then continued to work full time for the district as a kindergarten teacher. She retired from the United Independent School District with a total of 33 years experience in public schools. She has nine children of her own who all have a college education. Her youngest son holds a Ph.D. in Oncology and is involved in the human genome project. Nurturer shared family pictures and a newspaper article

recognizing her youngest son for his contributions to medicine. She smiled proudly as she stated that her youngest is working on a project to find the cure for cancer and other diseases.

Participant Five – “Lady”

Long before I got to know Lady as a sorority fellow-member of Gamma Gamma Gamma, I knew her as our band director’s wife. This 76 year young lady was a great supporter of the band programs in Laredo of which her husband was head bandmaster for decades. She was a teacher for 38 years. I remember she would always attend band parents’ meetings and concerts. Lady has always put her best foot forward in the public eye and presented herself as a role model to most young ladies who were lucky enough to call her teacher.

Arriving at her house, I remembered another home where she lived. I remembered decades before; I had been a friend to her niece who lived with her while attending the same high school that I attended. Her husband had been my band director. Lady opened the door as she said, “Hello, pretty lady!” Actually, she is the pretty lady. She has always been such a lady, and she has always been so pretty. I thought that maybe she had seen herself reflected in my eyes. I have so much respect for her. I always have had so much respect for her.

Her home, she said, had just been remodeled, and she showed me to her large beautiful kitchen. The home reflects so much of what Laredo is all about. Hospitality and the open feel of the ranchland all around Laredo. She led me to another very large open room where she invited me to sit by the fireplace. Her family’s history of ranch

ownership and cattle raising was all around. Large, tall bookcases were filled with books towering on either side the fireplace. The warm cozy feel of the fireplace was reflected in the dining room across the large airy room.

Before we started the interview, she shared with me that she didn't know if she had the information I might be looking for, but that she would be happy to participate to help me out. I remembered, throughout the time that I have gotten to know her, she has always had that warmth about her. She has always possessed a wonderful affect. She is a person who always was a lady and always was so glad to help her fellow human being.

Lady was born in Laredo, Texas, and attended public schools at the Laredo Independent School District. She is a Martin High School graduate who started attending Laredo Junior College when it first opened in 1947. She completed two years there and then transferred to TSCW (Texas State College for Women), which is now known as Texas Woman's University. She remembers The University of Texas cost twice as much to attend, so she decided to go to TSCW. She completed her first degree midterm in January of 1951. Her first degree was in English and her minor was in Spanish.

She started teaching at Buenos Aires Elementary School in the Laredo Independent School District as a second grade teacher substituting for a teacher on maternity leave. She has an all-level teaching background, and she taught at the junior high and high school levels. She also served as a homebound teacher for special education. She has 38 years of teaching experience.

Emergent Themes

In answering the primary research question, “What were their views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, both formal and informal, within the contexts of community, sociopolitical climate, family, religious, and educational institutions?” the participants’ narratives yielded recurring themes across their stories. In reviewing the units generated by the participants, three major themes emerged in their stories describing their childhood lived experiences. These were (a) childhood experiences that taught them the value of education, (b) the importance of mentorship and strong faith, and (c) their lived experiences that helped them in developing commitment to teaching their students. The stories, from the beginning, are stories of overcoming barriers. They are stories of commitment and of faith, of hard work and determination to not only get an education for themselves, but also to teach Mexican American students the value of an education. These themes appeared to be constant and were woven into the tapestry of the stories of each of the participants’ lives.

Families’ Emphasis on and Value of Education

Views and Perceptions of Early Experiences

Families’ Hard Work and Sacrifice for Education’s Sake

Listening to each of the participants’ stories and reflecting on their early childhood situations, they each spoke in their own way of the sacrifices that their families had to endure in order for them to obtain an education. These sacrifices sounded familiar to me, because I grew up in a similar situation. They spoke of family lives in which the members of the family had to work hard in order to help provide

them with an education. They spoke of their fathers, for example, working long and difficult hours in order to provide for their families' education. These stories resonated with me because I grew up watching my father hold down several jobs at a time to make ends meet. He would work all day as a carpenter. He would come home, shower, have supper, and then leave to do appliance repair work. On weekends he would drive around neighborhoods, knocking on doors offering his skills as a "fix it" man. My father also worked as a night watchman. It was, in the 1950's, called the Laredo Police Department Special Police Squad.

I even now keep his badge in my jewelry box. My father made many sacrifices because, as he told us, "You and your two sisters have to get an education." He explained that should we marry someone who did not treat our children right, or if our future husbands treated us badly, we could fend for ourselves and for our children armed with a college education. He also used to say to really consider who we were going to marry, "for he will be the father of your children." Every time I see my father's special police badge, I remember his sunburnt face and I can almost hear him stomping out the sawdust from the cuffs of his baggy khaki pants outside the side porch. The summer heat is well over 100 degrees in Laredo. He would come home on hot summer afternoons, stomp out the sawdust on the side porch, lay down on the cold vinyl floor in front of the air cooler, and say, "bring me a tall glass of ice water, mi hijita." I remember seeing the sweat pour off his brow. He would look up at me and say, "Do well in school, so you don't have to work outside like me." So very much of this research project feels autobiographical.

High Expectations

Dancer actually announced, even before I could start asking questions, that she just wanted to start the interview by saying that she was [from] one of many of the families in which the parents did not have formal education or did not have the opportunity to get an education, but made the effort and the sacrifice to do their best to make school not a choice. “But, it was something that was understood: you were supposed to go to elementary, high school, and somehow go to college. [We did not] even know how we were going to pay for it” (D 13-14). She said, that in [her] mind, she never remembered her parents “ever saying if you go to college or if you go to school. It was when you go to college” (D 23-24). Braids shared a similar story with me:

For me it was economics, but my parents were willing to make the sacrifice to get me there. My mother worked very hard. My dad worked across the river, so his money was not a lot, but somehow, we were able to get the money for me to go. (B 269-272)

Although all five participants described their early life experience within their families as one in which economic situations were not the best, they also stated that expectations for their college education were emphasized. Four out of the five participants described a home-life where they had the necessities of life, but the family had to sacrifice. This was largely because their fathers did not have a formal college education. They all used the word “sacrifice” in describing the way that their families emphasized to them the need for them to get an education. Lady, for example, explained her family members helped one another: “My father always told us that he did not have any riches to leave us, but he would always say that he could give us an

education” (L 128). “My mother was a teacher; she would make sure that we did our homework” (L 141-142). Braids remembered that although her father did not have an education, “he valued it a lot and used to sit with us and make sure that we did our homework” (B 72-73).

Lady explained that her family members helped one another. Her older brother was already working, so he would send her some money. When she finished college and started working, she would send her youngest brother, who was at St. Mary’s (a private university) at the time, any money that she could. Lady explained that this is how her family helped one another. Dancer explained her father was a foreman of a ranch and the financial situation was not very good. She explained, “we had everything we needed, the most essential things, but no luxuries” (D 19-20). The participants’ stories contained examples of real economic struggle.

Sacrifice

Chiquita said it best when she explained her father did attend a business college in San Antonio, which was unusual for his generation. As she described the situation at the time, she said that very few Mexican Americans stayed in school to graduate. “They usually dropped out around the 7th, 8th, or 9th grade” (C 298-299). She illustrated the family sacrifice for education by explaining, “My grandparents mortgaged the ranch in order for my father and his brother to go to the San Antonio business school they attended” (C 491-493). She said one of the barriers to Mexican American student achievement at the time “was the lack of money” (C 344). She stated her father was a businessman but that he did other things. “We were a large family and he had to do

several things in order to keep us all afloat” (C 100-101). She shared that the family lived a good life and that they had servants in the house until her father passed away. Then, economically, everything changed. Chiquita was eight years old when her father died. “We started working at anything we could, delivering circulars, delivering newspapers, selling Avon products, selling home grown vegetables door-to-door, and we had three cows, so we would sell the milk” (C 167-171).

Chiquita started teaching after finishing her junior college degree and completed her bachelor’s degree in the summers. She described her sister as being a role model to her. She explained that when her father passed away, she was still very young, and her sister’s pay for teaching school helped the family survive. At the time when she wanted to go to college, she said there was nothing: “At that time, there was nothing. Now, there are so many scholarships and so much aid and so much government help” (C 345-346). She said that she worked at the registrar’s office and at a school cafeteria, as a cashier, to help pay for expenses and that it was “great training for her” (C 353). She said you had to be pretty determined in order to go to college at the time. “If you had to pay for it yourself, you had to get a job that enabled you to attend classes” (C 347-348).

Emphasizing Education

A very good example of an unspoken but clear emphasis of a family’s emphasis on the importance of education was Nurturer’s narrative. She stated she came from a migrant family, and they would travel north to work the fields. She said, “We would go to Michigan and work as soon as school let out” (N 235). In speaking of her parents’

education, she remembered her mother would say she went to a school at the convent with the Ursuline nuns. Her mother went to school until the sixth grade. She remembered her mother reading to her in Spanish from a book called “Onomatopeico.” She did not elaborate further regarding the educational level of her parents; however, she did say that her parents made sure that they were back in Laredo in time for school to start and would not leave until the school year was finished. “You know I don’t remember hearing them talk about education that much, but they must have because they encouraged us to go to this little school so that we would learn and of course, I’m sure that it was always there” (N 229-231). She also said that for secondary school, her mother decided to send her to a private Christian school called Christian Union Institute (N 44-46). Considering the financial need in her migrant family, sending her to private school for part of her education also sent a clear message to her. Education was important in her family.

Value for Education In Spite of Cost

Braids stated most of her early education experiences were positive because her family valued education a lot. She stated, “They (her parents) went through the extra expense of a private school for the first actually six years of my life. I went to school from the age of 3 to 11, and they were willing to spend the extra money for me to get a better education” (B 6-10). Braids explained that her mother was a teacher and her father went to school through the second grade in Mexico. He taught himself to read and write. She said her mother had a master’s degree in education. She added that her

grandparents had *secundaria* (Mexican preparatory school) and that her grandmother on her mother's side was a piano teacher.

Braids said her father's parents had no education at all and were Native Americans who lived in the mountains of Mexico (B 56-57). She added that, as a matter of fact:

My grandmother on my father's side had died when my father was six and all of my father's relatives died by the time he was 14; so, he raised himself in Mexico City. From the time he was 14, he grew up and was made a manager of his company on his own with no family other than the company he worked for. (B 59-66)

Braids explained further that the company was like her father's family. She estimated that he probably started working when he was 8 or 12 and "he worked for them until he came to the United States in 1948" (B 68-70). She added, "So, my father had no education, but he valued it a lot" (B 72). Braids also remembered that her informal learning experiences revolved around family situations a lot.

I remember being five years old and reading the newspaper to my uncle in Spanish. I also remember studying for my catechism classes at church and a lot of it was rote and a lot of it was repetition and it was in Spanish. (B 39-41)

Braids remembered her family took her to special events that she remembers clearly even now. She told stories of going to the theatre, to concerts, and she especially remembered the anthropology museum in Mexico City where she watched movies in Spanish. She said that she remembered the effort that her parents made on her behalf.

Hard Economic Times

It is plain to see that all five participants had families, who through hard economic times, emphasized the value of education. Dancer's father told her that her two brothers could earn a good living in the oilfields as he had, but "girls can't" (D 59) and that she had no choice, she "was going to college" (D 60). Dancer was the first in her family to become an educator. Whether it was making sure this idea was communicated to their daughter, or even if it was an unspoken understood value that governed a migratory routine to Michigan and back, these families emphasized to their daughters that they valued education. In most cases, these ladies lived in homes where they could observe their fathers working hard to make ends meet. Four of five of the participants had family members who were educators. Two participants' mothers were teachers, one had a sister who was a teacher, and nurturer's husband was a teacher. This also was a living example and a constant way of communicating to the participants that education was valued in their families.

School Experiences: Cards Stacked Against Them –

Struggle With Segregation and Prejudice

The second theme that emerged in this study was the existence of prejudice and segregation of Mexican Americans in South Texas. The participants treated this theme as something that did not affect them. Chiquita laughed and said that she was in the squad:

There were just two Hispanics in the girls' squad and I always laughingly say that they put two of us in so we could pal around with each other. Luckily, it was my best friend and so she and I were in the drill squad, which was "*THE*

THING” to belong to in high school. But, it was Anglo dominated. There were just the two of us. (C 240-244)

She laughed out loud as she said, “I don’t know why they let us in” (C 244-245). All five ladies just “brushed it off” when they faced the barrier of bias and kept focused on their goal to become a teacher. They did not allow any of these things to become barriers to them getting an education. They would laugh or smile as they explained that it did not bother them.

Punishment for Speaking Spanish – Sink or Swim

Four out of five participants remembered the days of what they called “sink or swim” bilingual education. Two of the five participants went to private schools for part of their education. They spent the rest of their school years in public schools. The other three participants went to public schools. All five participants described learning to speak English in schools of the day as “sink or swim.” They all spoke of being punished for speaking Spanish in school. Four remembered being charged a penny for speaking Spanish, but it was a penny they did not have.

Nurturer explained there was a lot of prejudice in schools. She said “Back then, it was prohibited for you to speak any Spanish when you were in school. I remember being punished in school because I spoke Spanish” (N 64-66). They would charge a penny for every time that she spoke Spanish and since she did not have any money, “they would either keep you after school or they had you write lines that said I will not speak Spanish in school. They would say you have to write lines 500 times as punishment because the teachers didn’t want to (stay) keep us after school” (N 68-72).

Nurturer explained there was a lot of discrimination going on in schools. There was a lot of “segregation of the Spanish-speaking students” (N 381-382).

Segregation at Restaurants and at the Cafeteria

Three of the participants shared stories of segregation and of prejudice. One of the participants, Braids, stated she did not experience prejudice when she lived in Laredo; however, when she went to Austin and medical school, she did. She stated there was no overt discrimination. “But there was covert discrimination” (B 108-109). She stated she stayed at a Methodist dorm, and she said that all the Black and Brown students lined up together at the cafeteria:

I mean, like we sat at the table and it was mixed Black, White, and Brown, but you knew there was some discrimination. We didn’t care because anyway, we were there studying, and we had a good time. We enjoyed ourselves. (B 109-112)

She stated the thing she noticed in the community was the services. She said that Hispanic students stayed mostly at the university, “But, if you went to the restaurants, you ran a risk” (B 114). “Some of the restaurants would not serve us. We would stand there and they would never come to show us [to] a table” (B 114-118).

Segregation in Schools

Nurturer stated there was a lot of discrimination going on in the schools because of the segregation of Spanish speakers at the time. Lady stated that she knew that some people in the valley (the Rio Grande Valley) and some people in San Antonio and several other places would say:

You don’t know how lucky you are because you don’t know what it is like because in some schools like the valley. They would segregate Spanish-

speaking students from Anglo students. They would have them in different classrooms just because you spoke Spanish. (L 159-162)

She explained that this is what they did, instead of trying to help students integrate. She also informed this researcher that this problem did not exist in Laredo.

When asked what year this happened, she responded that she thought it was in the 1930's and the 1940's. Chiquita went to school in the valley (the Rio Grande Valley). She explained she went to school in Edinburg, Texas. She shared that segregation there was out in the open. There were two schools. There was one school where she lived and one school across the tracks where she said the "quote" Mexicans went. The school across the street from where she lived was where the Whites went.

I started out with English-speaking people completely. I was the only one. I learned it very fast. You had to. It was sink or swim...they wouldn't let people from across the tracks come to Sam Houston School, which I attended. They had to go to Stephen F. Austin, which was the quote Mexican school. (C 25-27)

Chiquita called the practice discrimination and told of the practice in the town in which she attended school as one in which African American students did not attend the same schools as the other children. She said she went to Sam Houston School. She explained that she was considered White.

It is discrimination. People in some of these cities decided that we were an un-definable minority so they would mix Hispanics and Blacks and called that mixing [and] integration. (117-121)

She explained that this really was not integration. She graduated in 1942 from high school in Edinburg and discussed that the African American students would come over only once a year: "We'd all go to the auditorium and they would sing for us, and

that was the only time that we ever had with them. It was the only time we'd ever see them" (C 137).

She further explained about the segregation policy for hiring teachers for the White school. She said that they would not hire anyone "with a last name like Gonzalez to teach at Sam Houston, the Anglo school. They would import teachers in to teach there" (C 290-292).

Segregated Proms

Lady explained that in Laredo, there was not any discrimination, but there was discrimination and segregation of Mexican Americans in other cities surrounding Laredo. She spoke of cities that had separate schools and proms.

I know that in Crystal City, Eagle Pass, and in Del Rio, in the 1950's, they were having problems. [There was] segregation in Del Rio. I know in fact, they would have two high schools, two proms, one for the Spanish-speaking and the other for the Anglos. Yes [that was] in Del Rio and in Eagle Pass. (L 166-178)

Segregated Extracurricular Activities

South Texas schools were places in which there was prejudice against Spanish-speaking children and Mexican American children. There was segregation not only in class assignment, but also in school extracurricular activities. Chiquita spoke of being nominated for National Honor Society, but the teachers would vote.

I was given this paper that said I was eligible, but I didn't make it! The teachers voted, and I didn't make it! I graduated from college with honors as did all my brothers and sisters, but we didn't make National Honor Society because in Edinburg, there was room for only one Hispanic. It is true. Only one Hispanic, they decided, was smart enough to be in the National Honor Society. (C 223-228)

All the other spaces she said, all “the other slots were for the Anglos” (C 229-30). Braids’ story did not have evidence of discrimination or segregation during her elementary years, but she shared that she experienced discrimination when she left home to go to The University of Texas. She spoke of her students by saying that the students who really have stories to tell are the migrant students. One of the participants in this study was a migrant student herself. She did not speak of discrimination, however. Perhaps, she did not want to recall unpleasant experiences from childhood. Perhaps, these memories were too painful to discuss. She did say that she and her family traveled to Michigan to work every year.

The Importance of Mentoring Relationships and Strong Faith –

Growing Towards Attainment of Education Goals

Struggle – Finding Resources

The women educators’ narratives revealed descriptions of their struggle and their perseverance to attain their goal of a teaching certificate despite financial difficulties and “isms” such as classism and racism. The third theme that emerged was one of finding mentors and using faith and strong spiritual beliefs to attain their educational goals. Strong family ties, strong religious beliefs, and strong relationships with mentors were common to each of these Mexican American educators. Lady, for example, spoke of strong family relationships and explained that her family members helped one another:

My father always told us that he did not have any riches to leave us, but he would always say that he could give us an education. My mother was a teacher; she would make sure that we did our homework. I went to TSCW (Texas State College for Women) and worked part time at the Spanish department. My older

brother was already working, so he would send me some money. (L 128-129; 141; 268)

Her family had a tradition, as many Mexican American families do, of helping one another. Lady's older brother would send her money when he was working and she was in college. When she finished her education and started working, she explained: "I would send my youngest brother, who was at St. Mary's at the time, send him any money I could. That is how we helped each other" (L 269-271).

When Nurturer's husband encouraged her to go to college, she would always reply that God would provide and that they did not have to worry about finances. She stated that he continually encouraged her; so, she started her journey by working as a teacher aide to see if she would like working in schools. The teachers with whom she was working were very receptive to her ideas and were very encouraging; so, she decided to go to Laredo Junior College. She identified primarily her husband as an encouragement to her, and she also mentioned fellow teachers, a principal, and her superintendent as also being her great supporters.

Problem-Solving Skills Through Mentorship

Braids explained that she had multiple role models by saying she has always had mentors or teachers or people who were right there, who were very patient with her, and who always treated her with respect. She said she always had mentors, teachers, and people who were "right there" to help her (B 207).

Each of the participants found a way to earn money in order to pay for their college education. Mentors in their lives taught them the importance of developing a sense of self-reliance, and this helped them to develop their own problem-solving

skills. The participants developed independence and resourcefulness by finding ways to pay their own way. From washing dishes to working as a cafeteria cashier, these women all worked their way through school. Chiquita, who lost her father when she was just a small child explained, “There were no scholarships and no aid, no help, no government help. So, we worked our way through college and managed to do it” (C 39-40).

Braids also spoke of mentors who taught her and who were not actually teachers in the conventional sense. She said when she was 15 years old and graduating from high school, she had a job at the Laredo National Bank. “I went to work in the savings department with Linda Gonz, and she took this runt and she taught me how to do the CD’s (certificates of deposit), the savings club, and how to do all the accounts, and everything” (B 200-205).

Braids added that throughout her life, she has had mentors or teachers or people who were right there for her. She smiled fondly as she recalled a teacher named Dr. Wearbee who was her anatomy teacher at the medical school at the University of Texas. A lot of people in school told her that there was something about her, and they could see that she learned differently. She remembered, for example, an anatomy professor who was a Baptist preacher and he would always make sure that the boys did not treat her and the other girls badly. She stated, “There were only four girls in a class of a 100 boys, and they were mean to us” (B 209-214). “There have always been good people along the way” (B 222).

Dancer identified her parents first, and secondly, one of her teachers with whom she also later taught, as supporting and impacting her teaching career. Dancer smiled as she recalled her teacher-mentor encouraging her to learn to play the accordion when she was Dancer's teacher in elementary school. Dancer recalled that when she went to college, her teacher-mentor took some papers to her at college and had her sign an application to take the emergency certificate exam. Dancer stated her teacher is the reason she was able to take and pass her certification exam and start teaching after only six weeks in college. Dancer used the words "she took me under her wing" (D 304).

Each of the participants had to find a way to finish college despite tough financial times. During a time when few women were in the work force and Mexican American women in the college educated workforce were almost nonexistent, these ladies found a way to balance family responsibilities, financial responsibilities, and academic responsibilities in order to go to college. Perhaps, more importantly, they felt a responsibility to either set themselves as role models or find a mentor to follow as a role model to get a college education. Going to college was viewed as something that they were expected to do in their families. As Chiquita stated with a smile on her face, "It was the thing to do in my family" (C 152).

Mentors – Family Members Who Were Teachers

Four out of the five participants had immediate family members who were teachers and who served as important role models. Two of the five participants had mothers who were teachers. Chiquita had an older sister who was a teacher. In listening to Chiquita's story, I could not help but find common ground between her story and

mine. At times, she reminded me of myself, although she lost her father when she was eight years old. My father passed away as I was finishing junior college. My mother and I had no money with which to send me out of town to finish my education. I worked and received scholarships and financial aid in order to attend college in Kingsville, Texas. I remembered how hard it was to make ends meet and going without dental and medical attention when I was in my last two years of undergraduate school. I had no car, and I walked wherever I needed to go. I remembered, too, I had a college loan and a college grant during that time. I can only speculate how she was able to make it through college without a college loan. She and I both have an older sister who is a teacher.

A Sister Who Was a Mentor – Families Who Excelled

Chiquita said it best when she described her sister as her hero who was able to financially take care of her family when their father passed away. She said her sister started teaching when she was 16 years old and, “she went to college, and the rest of us just kind of fell in step and went to college also” (C 150-151).

It was the thing to do in our family was to get an education. Eight people in my family were all college graduates. There are two doctors, one RN, and one who was an assistant superintendent of schools in Houston and Dallas, and four schoolteachers. (C 152; 32-34)

Lady described her siblings by saying that her oldest brother was a principal; her second oldest brother was a lawyer, and that her youngest brother, a Colonel in the U.S. Army, was the principal at Laredo’s oldest high school, Martin High for many years.

Religion – An Ongoing and Strong Part of Their Lives

All of the five participants described important elements of support that helped them prepare for their teaching career. For example, Nurturer explained she was very happy as a homemaker taking care of her children, but her husband would ask her what she would do if anything ever happened to him. Nurturer stated that God would provide. Another very strong and valuable part of the participants' lives was their spirituality and belief system that kept them strong and positive in their attitudes. This system was a strong influence in their lives.

Each participant spoke of religion as being important in his or her lives and as having a continuing and strong influence on their lives. Nurturer described God as her provider and said God would always provide. All five participants spoke of the importance of religion in their lives. They each said that it had been very important in their lives. Nurturer stated that Christianity and morals are a big part of our belief system, and that she remembered when morning prayer was allowed and stated "It was called a morning prayer and a thought for the day" (N 346). Lady said she always made time to talk to her students about postponing "going steady" (L 317) to concentrate on their studies. She said that she taught them to listen to their parents because they had experience and could guide them. Dancer also said that students needed to be taught what is right. Braids also said teaching students what is right and wrong was also her job as a teacher. Braids spoke of her religion by saying:

I am Catholic. It puts a lot of responsibility on you. You have to do what is right. You cannot be lazy. You cannot lie. You must honor your mother and father, and by extension, your teacher. You must do your homework. You must go to school. (B 318-321)

Braids said that she felt that her teaching experience was an extension of this orientation and that her teaching is part of the same thing. She said her religion very definitely guided what she did as a student, and it has been her guide since she was three years old. The theme of religion intersected as she spoke of her religious beliefs. For example, she spoke of hard work as part of her religious convictions along with what she felt was part of her job. She explained further that part of her job, as a teacher is to teach right and wrong.

I work hard, but I expect my students to work hard as well. It is my job to teach the difference between right and wrong. My religion says that there is a difference between right and wrong. I teach that there is a difference between right and wrong. (B 324-329)

Braids also spoke of the structure that her Catholic school provided for her when she was just a small child. She recalled that her religion made her feel secure in the routines that structure provided. She remembered that everyone seemed to believe the same things:

I think that being in Catholic school the first six years of my life was helpful because I had a very structured environment and everybody who was in my classes believed the same thing. I have very strong Christian values. (B 346-353)

Lady, like Braids, also explained “religion was always a big part of my life, and it still is” (L 315). She said she would speak to her students about morals and that the students and their parents appreciated her talking about morals and about graduation and going steady. She said that she would tell them, “You do not have time to go steady! After you graduate, after you finish college, then you can think about things

like that...I would tell them about how they should treat the parents. I would tell them that they should always obey their parents” (L 316-319; 334-337).

Chiquita had a very different perspective to share by stating that her family changed from Catholic to Methodist, which made her more tolerant of her students’ different belief systems. She said the Methodist Church had a very good influence on her.

Ranch Schools – A Part of the History of South Texas

Schools and the Teachers’ Lives

Four out of the five participants spoke about ranch schools. Escuelitas were ranch schools during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Later, in the late 20th century, the term “escuelitas” was a term to refer to neighborhood pre-schools that used to exist in South Texas. These schooling experiences typically took place in someone’s home. I remember attending one myself the summer before first grade.

Ranch Schools in South Texas

Dancer attended and later taught at ranch escuelitas. Nurturer attended an escuelita for preschool. Chiquita, whose mother was born in 1895, explained her mother was taught by a teacher, “a senorita” (C 50) from Mexico who came to teach at the South Texas escuelita at the ranch near Falfurrias, Texas, where her mother grew up. Much later, Chiquita taught at a ranch school with her sister as the principal:

My sister needed a first grade teacher in Relampago (Lightning), and I taught at that school. It was right outside Mercedes, Texas. It was on the border between Mercedes, Texas, and Progreso, Mexico. The children who went there were all from families who lived in the ranchitos (little ranches) along there. (C 261-273)

Home Pre-School Taught in Spanish

Nurturer explained the first memory she has of school was that she attended an *escuelita* before she started first grade in public school. She said the teacher was Cuquita, and that she would teach the students “the numbers and the alphabet, and, of course, this was in Spanish” (N 14-17). As I took notes, I remembered that I went to an *escuelita* before I went to first grade as well. My teacher’s name was Gloria Monte, and I loved her. She taught us the same curriculum as Nurturer recalls.

I attended Miss Monte’s *escuelita* the summer before I started first grade in public school. I remember being taught in the courtyard of her parents two-story hacienda-like white house. The courtyard was in the center of the home that was “u” shaped and curled around the center yard. There was a balcony on the second floor, and the black wrought iron balcony and staircases looked like they came from a Hollywood set of *El Zorro*. Miss Monte taught us under the shade of a huge tree in the center of this courtyard. The courtyard was quite large, and there was a winding walkway that led to a wishing well at the base of one of the staircases. I remember that it looked like it came out of a fairy tale. If we finished all our work, she would reward us with wonderful homemade purple Kool-aid popsicles. I remember that it was very hard to hold on to the square icy treats, because the toothpick in the center always would splinter and break before you could finish eating them. I am so glad to have had the experience in a home-like atmosphere before attending public schools. Miss Monte always made us feel welcomed and important in her home where she lived with her two sisters, four brothers, and parents.

Participant's Mother Attended a Ranch School

Chiquita explained her mother received her education from a “Senorita” that they brought from Mexico to the ranch between Falfurrias and Hebbronville. She added that her mother was born in 1895. She said her mother was taught to read, write, do math but also was taught how to do a little cooking, to sew, and embroider (C 44-45). “They would bring a young lady from Mexico who lived with them as she taught them what they needed to know” (C 50-51). “You had to prepare. If you were going to get married, if you were female, you were going to get married and you needed to know how to do things” (C 59-60). She said that one of her mother’s favorite sayings was, “You have to know how to do everything. If you marry a poor man, you know how to do it. If you marry a rich man, you know how you want it done” (C 60-62).

Remembering Ranch Schools – Economic Struggles

Dancer was taught at a ranch school herself in Rondado. She said she is now 74 years old, and at the time “we didn’t have a television; nobody did. Nobody knew we were poor because everyone acted the same way. So, we just went to school and did our homework” (D 42-44). It is true, I thought. I thought of growing up in a home where supper was usually beans and something. One of my favorites was beans and a concoction that my mother made. It was basically white cheese fried with tomato, onion, and chili. We would make a taco with the chili-cheese using one of mother’s freshly made flour tortillas. It was so good. I think about it now, and the truth is that we seldom ate meat.

I also remember that we also would go to the market across the river, where meat, cheese, and really most things were cheaper. I never felt poor, however. I suppose it is because as Dancer stated, “everyone was the same way, so we went to school and did our homework” (D 42-44). Dancer also said emphatically, “and I don’t ever remember people talking about welfare or things like that” (D 70).

*Attending a Three-Room Elementary School – Growing Up
to Teach at a Ranch School*

Dancer lived on the ranchito (ranch) and was bused to a three-room elementary school where she stated that she had the best of teaching. She started teaching in a little ranch in Zapata County. “That community was basically just a county road that had a little house on each side every so often, and the children would walk to the one-room school house” (D 95-96). She taught from first grade to the eighth grade in Zapata County. It was an all-level classroom. This was the nature of her first teaching experience.

A Great Grandfather Who Was a Ranch Teacher

Braids told a story that has been kept alive in her family. Her great grandfather was a teacher. He used to teach at several ranches in South Texas around the Laredo area. He rode horseback to travel from one ranch to another. His teaching responsibilities required him to ride from ranch-to-ranch. One dark night, she explained, he was riding from one ranch to another, and he fell off his horse and died out in the harsh brush land of South Texas in the service of the children he taught in the ranch schools of the time.

*Voices of Wisdom –Views and Perceptions of the Educational
Experience of Mexican American Students*

Parents Do Not Value Education

All five participants voiced concerns regarding the future educational achievement of Mexican American students today because of situations that currently exist they consider barriers to their achievement. Dancer, Chiquita, Lady, and Nurturer talked about parental and student attitudes and lack of value of education as a barrier to Mexican American academic achievement. Dancer stated that the schools need the support of the parents.

A Mentality – Parents Do Not Think Education is Important

Nurturer, for example, saw the parental attitudes that get in the way of Mexican American student achievement as a sort of mentality. She explained that she had worked for many years in public schools. She worked as a teacher aide, a teacher, and as a principal. She described her concern for Mexican American students by explaining that a mentality exists, and an attitude exists that education is not important:

I think it is a mentality. One of the barriers I feel is that they get to a certain age, they [the students] feel that they are ready to go out into the workforce and contribute to the family income and [they] don't realize that if they have an education today, they will be able to contribute to the family income much more. (N 306-309)

She added that this is the mentality and that the parent also figures into this equation. They have this idea that all you need is a high school education.

Need to Know About Opportunities – Educational Loans

Nurturer explained that there are so many opportunities now that students need to realize. Students and their parents need to understand that now more is needed to succeed than just a high school education:

We are finding out that they need more than a high school education. That is what I don't think the parents seem to understand. It now takes more than a high school education to make it and you have to be much more trained because of technology, for instance. (N 312-315)

Parents Need to Encourage Students – Let Them Know Early On

Nurturer elaborated emphatically that it is so very important for students to know from the start, from the very beginning, that college is a very real possibility for them. She said that this, to her, is so important:

The students need to be made aware early on in their schooling that there is that possibility to go to college and that funds are available for them. They just need to seek someone to guide them, and we have all the school counselors. But, it is like a battle. (N 322-326)

In reflecting further, Nurturer spoke of the important role that parents play in the lives of students. She was quiet for a while, and then she spoke in a soft but stern voice. She said the parents do not seem to want to encourage them. "I think that that is probably where a lot of our problems are. A good portion of the barriers is that we don't seem to put that much emphasis on education (N 327; 332-333).

Greater Opportunities But Lack of Emphasis on Getting an Education

Lady, Dancer, and Chiquita voiced a concern similar to Nurturer. The opportunities are greater than when they went to school, but there seems to be a lack of emphasis on getting a college education. Chiquita, for instance, stated that she is so

sorry that so many Mexican American students are still dropping out of school. So many of them do not take education seriously, and she explained there is the added problem of the language barrier and continued immigration of Mexican Nationals. She stated that they do not realize the value of an education:

I think that everything is being done that can be done to encourage them to go, but for some reason, it is falling on deaf ears. And what else can be done because they are getting a lot of help? It was not available before and [there is] a lot of encouragement for students. (C 431-432; 450-453)

She told of the resources that were not available before and that encouragement is needed for students. She explained that this encouragement is needed for them to understand that they need more than just a high school education.

Home Situations, Financial Problems and Dropouts

Lady agreed with Chiquita and Nurturer that education should be valued, and that maybe it is the situation at home that is a barrier and that does not help. She spoke of the financial hardships within families that factor into Mexican American students' academic failure today. Sometimes students leave school so that they can work to help to financially support their families:

Some of these kids have only one parent. Their father that is in jail or is serving time or something, and they have to be on their own. Sometimes they can't make it, and so they drop out. I believe that is one of the barriers that these kids have. (L 278-281)

Lady believes that if they want to get an education, they can get one because there is so much help out there for these kids. She did add, though, sometimes "it is the family situation" (L 277-278) that is the barrier. The situation at home, she speculated,

is what keeps them from getting the education that they are supposed to get, because sometimes they have to go to work.

Home Situations and Financial Burdens

Reflection on the bleak education outcomes for Mexican Americans was hard for participants to discuss. The participants have spent their lifetimes working with Mexican American students, and they know firsthand of the difficulties that they face. Day-to-day, forming close relationships with students and their families, it is hard to watch students not meet the promise of their young lives. Statistics have faces and have names to these educators. When they reflected on education then and now and spoke of barriers that still exist, it was sometimes very difficult for them to talk about their students. She said softly:

Sometimes the mother leaves. The grandmother raises them. The grandmother cannot afford to get them clothes so a lot of students leave school in order to work. That is the only way they survive. I had some of those [students] that had to drop out because they did not have the means to stay in school. (L 290-294)

Motivation is Needed, Programs Available Now

The participants spoke of a thing called “ganas.” Ganas is a Spanish word that speaks of the will to do something. It is a word that means more than just motivation; it connotes a “wanting” to do something. The participants reflected and discussed the concept. Lady reflected on this theme:

But, if they want to...if they really want to, there is a lot of help. They have so many different programs compared to before. They have a lot of opportunities where they can get scholarships; they can get financial aid; there was nothing like that when we went to school. (L 296-298; 300-304)

I asked Lady if she thought that “ganas” was the reason most often for Mexican American students not doing well in attaining educational goals. She said she thought it was more a measure of financial need and the students’ feeling responsibility to the home. It was the financial situation at home that was more of a barrier to the students, she said: “I would say the barriers would be the situation at home because sometimes these kids cannot (finish school) because they have to go to work” (L 308-309).

In interviewing these ladies, memories of many of my past students came to mind. I remembered the students who had a mother and no father. I remembered how they felt responsible to provide for their mother and siblings. Financial needs of their families weighed heavily and squarely on the shoulders of the eldest son in the families with whom I worked. Although we spoke to our students about Laredo Community College and took busloads of seniors to meet the counselors there and to go see the classrooms, in many cases, college was not to be.

Plant the Seed from the Beginning

Dancer emphasized the importance of parental attitudes by stating that, “you plant that seed from the beginning” (D 265). In speaking of teaching children the importance of a college education, she talked about motivation also:

I think to go to school you can get a loan; you can get all kinds of financial help...and really, if you want to, you can do it. I think that Mexican American students graduating from high school today shouldn’t have barriers because there is financial aid...[they have] more opportunities than they had before. I think the opportunities are there if they want them. (D 397-402)

Dancer was most energetic in her tone when she compared students that do not want to continue their education to recent immigrants who seem to work so hard to try to get ahead. She reflected for a moment and then she explained:

Even illegal kids who come and have a studying visa and are doing great at the college. I have one in my shop who is great...He cannot be hired anywhere because he cannot be paid. So, I try to help him. He has GANAS (motivation/desire). But the thing is that you have to **WANT!** (D 416-422; 427)

Nurturer said students need to be made aware early on in their schooling that there is a possibility for them to go to college. They need to be told that there are funds available for them that they just have to seek: "Of course, we have the school counselors there, but it is like a battle. The kids want to, but the parents don't seem to encourage them to. I think that this is where a lot of our problems are" (N 325-327).

Nurturer thought for a moment, and then she explained further that a good portion of the barriers she asserted reflect the notion that Mexican Americans in general do not seem to put that much emphasis on education.

These comments struck home with me. I have spent most of my career working in urban and low socio-economic status (SES) secondary schools, where I have seen these harsh realities in the lives of children first hand. I was reminded of going to do countless home visits in an effort to convince families to let their son or daughter finish high school. I offered the option of work-study programs in order to facilitate the students' return to school. Some of the students did come back to school and graduate, but some never came back. I know first hand that the ills of the society are evident in the microcosms of our nation's schools. Gang membership, alcoholism, teen pregnancy all were experienced by students with whom I have worked.

Educational Policies That Are Barriers

Dancer speculated that many times it is the educational policies that are the barriers. She mentioned government-mandated state tests as barriers when addressing Mexican American students in school today. She, too, identified lack of parental interest in further education as a barrier to achievement. Dancer said that Mexican Americans going to school right now should not have barriers because there is financial aid:

The barriers they have now are the parents don't even listen to the kids. I think that that is most of our problem right now. It is not because the parents have to work. They both have to work because we all had to work. It is because time spent with the kids is not quality time. They are just saying, well, if you want to go, you go; or find a job, and if not, you can sign up for some kind of handouts. (D 250-257)

Dancer spent her career as a teacher and as a principal. She reflected on the current education policies and thought about the way schools used to be. She explained that too much time is spent on teaching to the test and that there is not enough learning going on:

And it's a pity because the good thing about today's education is that there is money. There are resources for every child to get an education, but the barriers now are the parents who don't even listen to the kids. (D 247-251)

Dancer also had concerns about how teachers spend their time. She voiced concerns about education policies that emphasize test taking:

Teachers spend so much time trying to [get the students] to learn a test when what you learn [is] from the subject matter. This is different than teaching the test just to pass it and say [that] they are the school [that] got high grades. (D 400; 200-204)

Dancer was very concerned about the emphasis on state testing because she said that there is no time to practice [reading] because “they are so worried about those stupid tests” (D 237). Dancer’s voice sounded strong and assured when she exclaimed, “and until we get somebody in Austin that realizes this, we are not going to have good products for college,” then she also added, “the kids get discouraged” (D 238-239).

When asked what she thought was getting in the way of Mexican American student achievement, she explained that the equation is not an easy one. She thought for a while as she reflected on policies that are in effect in schools today. There are multiple sources aggravating the problem:

The fact of the matter is that a lot comes from the home and a lot comes from the political system because they don’t make rules that really profit the child because this testing is for the birds. We have always had tests, but one is to test for what they learned, and another is a test to get recognition for your school. (D 289-292)

Braids agreed that state tests are a barrier to Mexican American students. Lady and Nurturer voiced concerns that schools today are doing too much testing. Lady explained while she was still teaching, she was given manuals that she had to follow, and too much time was spent on teaching to the test. Lady also said testing has had a negative effect on the creativity of teachers and added that it gets in the way of teaching students what they need to know, including knowing what is right and what is wrong. In speaking of barriers to Mexican American students’ academic achievement, it seems to be as Dancer said, “A lot of it comes from the home and a lot of it comes from the political system” (D 274-275).

In consideration of current educational policies, Lady, Braids and Dancer spoke of state exams getting in the way of Mexican American students. Lady, for instance, said the students know if they do not pass the state exam, they do not graduate. This resonated with me as I thought also about the initiation of school policy that mandated state assessment success in order to garner a diploma. I also remember the disappointment in the students' faces and in their mothers' faces when students were told that they would only be receiving a letter of completion instead of a diploma. I also consider this a major barrier to students who have to work late hours in order to help provide financially for their families. These students come to their classrooms groggy and tired. I wonder sometimes if our country has lost its commonsense in writing policy. Some policies, while sounding like they are good for students, actually are, in their effect, leaving certain students behind.

The fact is many students have to work to help the family financially. These three ladies identified motivation and economic needs as barriers. Braids in reflecting to the past and looking to her present students and their future said we still have poor kids with horrible home conditions.

In speaking of lack of motivation on the part of students, Chiquita used a metaphor, "They can't see past the nose on their face: If they sacrifice now, they will have more later" (C 468-469). According to Chiquita, young people want gratification, and cannot look down the road and consider that if they do this (school) now, down the road they will have more. Chiquita commented:

[They] can't see beyond the end of their nose. Don't you think that if they saw more people who have succeeded, maybe that would make an impact? They would think, "Hey, I can do what that person did!" We were lucky. (C 468-472)

In reflecting about the fact that "we" were lucky, she smiled. She paused as she considered that no one achieves a great thing by himself or herself. She once again talked about the mentor that she had at home:

Some of us were lucky to stand on somebody else's shoulders. I realize that it is hard because they don't have someone at home to inspire him or her, a role model, at home. If they did, they could say I can do what my parents or sister did, and more, because we now have more advantages. (C 472-476)

Chiquita's words rang true to me. I had a sister who was already teaching elementary school when I entered public school as a first grader. I had parents who believed in educating their daughters. Not many people in my neighborhood had these "advantages." We were lucky. In my family, our father's sacrifices to provide for our education and welfare were evident to all of us, and I had a role model at home, that is, an older sister who was a teacher.

Language as a Barrier

When the bilingual program started in United Independent School District, a dual language program was used. According to Nurturer, it was very successful, but she explained the current bilingual program is not working. Regarding bilingual education, two of the participants stated that they believe in total immersion to teach Mexican American students to speak English. They stated that the bilingual program that they experienced in recent years does not teach students to speak English. Nurturer and Dancer recalled that when the bilingual program first started, it worked. They stated, recently, it has not helped students acquire a second language. They all said when they

were in school, there was no bilingual program and they had to learn English “fast,” and they did.

Chiquita explained that it seems like it is a neverending cycle with new Mexican immigrants coming in constantly. It is hard to fathom ever teaching all of them to be fluent if there is a seemingly neverending stream of new immigrants:

In my opinion it’s that we keep getting more and more students from Mexico coming and so we can never fully educate all of them before a new batch comes who needs to be educated; and so, therefore, it gets a little difficult and also the place like Laredo where some Spanish is spoken. There is no real incentive to learn English. (C 435-438)

Chiquita was saying that there is no real need or incentive to learn English in a place like Laredo. She was speaking of the culture and languages of the border communities in South Texas. She, as I know, that the language spoken here is really neither English nor is it Spanish. It is something in between.

When I talk to one of the schools here, the children would say something to me and not in Spanish, not in English (laughing)...they just didn’t like to speak English and that is too bad because they need to know both. (C 438-441)

Chiquita explained that every year we get so many students from Mexico and we have to start from square one again. She added that we feel like we are getting somewhere, then: “every time we get a new student who has never been in the United States who doesn’t speak the language, who has met the experiences whose parents don’t speak the language, teachers have to start all over again” (C 456-459).

Chiquita explained, that this is one of the problems. It is a problem that teachers are familiar with on the border between the United States and Mexico. Braids, in considering barriers to Mexican American students’ achievement contrasted by

pointing out that the college-bound Mexican American student is now given more tools than before, yet they lack skills. Braids stated that before, “ we had to sink or swim,” but we made it:

We still have a lot of kids who do not speak well and do not write well. Their verbal skills are poor...but what used to be good about our math skills is not there anymore. The kids used to be much better but they are not. We have gotten more lax and I think that we need now more rigor. (B 428-435)

Braids paused for a moment and then spoke of the school board’s concern for the present competencies of graduates of the local schools. She said that the members of the school board realize that the students are not prepared.

Board (school board) members are saying that we have children graduate from Laredo schools who cannot read or write and that is the fact. The board members are telling you on open record and we know it as teachers they cannot read or write. (B 451-454)

The students go to job interviews, and they cannot read or write. Braids also added with much concern that the students cannot follow simple instructions nor can they do simple tasks. Braids had a very different opinion from the other participants about some educational policies. She thought that the current policy that requires all children to read on grade level by third grade was a good one. She seemed optimistic about this aspect and the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): “I think that for everything that is maligned about the political process, the fact is that we are seeing every single third-grader will learn to read is important. This will help the Hispanic child” (B 457-459).

Summary of Results

Each interview transcript was analyzed for content that could be unitized.

Unitized data led to the emergence of broad themes. The broad themes were identified, and they were analyzed for meaning in the study. The broad themes that emerged were: (a) family values of and expectations for the participants' academic success, (b) the importance of developing resources, overcoming barriers to achieve, finding mentors, and a tenacious belief system and dedication to obtaining a college education, and (c) reflecting and analyzing of their own lives to develop views regarding education, education policies, and the education of Mexican American students in school today.

The first theme, generally designated as high expectations, focused on (a) difficult economic times for the families of participants and (b) the family's high expectations for the participants' academic success. The second theme, finding resourcefulness, focused on (a) mentorship and (b) strong religious beliefs. The third broad theme focused on the participants' reflections regarding education and educating Mexican American students. In this, the third and last part of the ethnographies, the participants compared their own experience to current students' experiences and situations and reflected as they voiced a concern for both parents and students not valuing education and the effects that the current policies and programs are having on Mexican American students in public schools today.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have... Margaret Mead

The purpose of this study was to explore the views and perceptions of five Mexican American teachers with more than 25 years of experience about teaching and educating Mexican American students. To understand the participants' lived experiences as students and as educators in South Texas, this study answered the following questions:

1. What were the Mexican American teachers' views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, both formal and informal, within the contexts of community, political climate, family, religious, and educational institutions?
2. What experiences or persons most impacted their teaching career?
3. What role did religion play in the subjects' educational and teaching experience?
4. Were there barriers that they have experienced, and have the barriers remained the same?
5. What was it like to be a Mexican American teacher for over 25 years following the Civil Rights Movement, and how do the subjects view the educational experience of Mexican American students?
6. What has stayed the same, and what has changed in the quality of education of Mexican American students over time?

Five Mexican American teachers who spent their lives in South Texas participated in the study. They each had more than 25 years of experience teaching Mexican American students in South Texas schools. Their lived experiences in the sociopolitical, spiritual, linguistic, and cultural tapestry that is South Texas qualified them to voice their views and perceptions from a specific and unique point of view that is not heard in social science literature.

Chapter V is divided into three sections. The first section is a construction of the findings of this study as they pertain to each research question (Merriam, 1998). The next section sets out the conclusions based on the analysis of data that was collected for this research study. The final section of Chapter V includes recommendations for further study.

Constructing Meaning

Research Question 1

What were the five Mexican American teachers' views and perceptions regarding their educational experiences, both formal and informal, within the contexts of community, political climate, family, religious, and educational institutions?

Personal knowledge is shaped by one's view of the world. Richardson (1996) reported that there are three forms of experience that influence beliefs and knowledge about teaching: (a) personal experience, (b) experience with schooling and instruction, and (c) experience with formal knowledge. Identifications and reinforcement are psychological processes, but they rest, in turn, upon sociological conditions.

Garcia (2001) explained that the origins of achievement behavior have been located in the individual distinct from the group. Although the concepts used in this study are not new, prior research has focused on families, peers, and schools as distinct entities. We now know that any one of these factors can have powerful effects in the lives of students (Garcia, 2001). One example of the importance of identifications and role models is from Lortie (1975): “Identification cannot occur without appropriate models, and reinforcement cannot occur without environments that support the aspiration to become a teacher” (Lortie, 1975, p. 42).

Lortie (1975) identified five attractors to teaching: (a) protracted contact with children, (b) valuable service to society, (c) continued attachment to the institution of school, (d) material benefits, and (e) teaching schedule. Lortie (1975) suggested that teachers value interpersonal work. Working with people adds dignity and increases the self-esteem of those who value the attribute of teaching. Lortie further explained that some teachers decide early in life to become teachers. He stated that we know that identification with with teachers and with family members who teach contribute to entry; there is also evidence that familial reinforcement contributes to the decision (Lortie, 1975).

Four out of the five participants who informed this study had teachers in their immediate family. The fifth participant had a very close friend in a teacher who became her lifelong mentor. Having a teacher in the immediate family provided the participants with not just with a close identification, but also with cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1987; Lareau, 1987, 1989). The participants had access to

the socialization of school culture through this close association and identification with teachers. This association helped the participants negotiate borders and barriers (Garcia, 2001), that is, that were the different identities and socializations of the home culture and language and the school culture and language.

Dancer was the only participant in this study who did not have a teacher in her family. But, she explained her father always told her that she was going to go to college because her siblings, who were boys, could work in the oilfields and make a living, but she could not because she was female. She smiled widely when she recalled a person who had a great impact on her life. She described a very special teacher who took her under her wing since she was a child and continued to have ongoing communication with her even after she left town to go to college. It was this mentor who took her the papers to sign in order for her to get an emergency teacher certificate. Because of her engaging and ongoing mentorship and tutelage, Dancer was able to receive her emergency certificate after the completion of half a year of a college education. Upon receipt of her certification, she went to the school where her mentor was teaching to teach side-by-side with this special person in her life. Identification with a family member or a close friend and mentor who was a teacher was evident in each of the participants' stories that informed this study.

Caring, dynamic teachers can have powerful effects on the direction of a student's life (Garcia, 2001; Gay, 2000, 2003; Werner & Smith, 1989, 1992). The participants in this research study became teachers despite economic, linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical barriers to their achievement. They became teachers for

multiple reasons, but they found resources with which to succeed. They were resilient in the struggle to become educators. The participants spoke of their important early years while remembering family members.

The five participants voiced their views and perceptions about educating Mexican American students by first sharing their own life stories. They spoke of the importance of their family. They emphasized two major aspects that early-on were important to their achievement. The first aspect emphasized by participants was the high expectations their family held for them. Four out of the five participants spoke of their family having high expectations for them to go to college while they were still children. In stark contrast, one of the participants did not go to college until after she married and had children. She did have a family member, however, who emphasized higher education to her. Her husband was a teacher who, in her words, pushed her to become a teacher.

Psychologists have studied psychosocial factors in achievement motivation, and the ways that families help children to acquire motivation to achieve extensively, and for decades. For example, some important researchers include McClelland, Atkinson, and their colleagues (Atkinson & Feather, 1966; McClelland, 1965; McClelland et al., 1953), who proposed that motivation to achieve could be engendered in children through early training by setting high standards. These researchers also stated that providing sufficient independence for the child to develop a sense of task mastery is important to achievement motivation. More recent researchers include Benard (1991, 1997), Gandara (1995) and Garcia (2001). The women educators in this research

project had families who set high standards for them since they were very young. Opportunities to develop task mastery were varied and existed in the lives of all of these participants.

Other investigators of this genre of research were Wolf (1963) and Dave (1964). They explored the “achievement press” of the home. Both researchers found that certain parental behaviors could combine to create a press for achievement that resulted in high academic performance. Further, they contended that with non-Hispanic White school-age subjects, they found a correlation existed between students’ cluster of home environmental process variables. These variables included such things as intellectuality of the home (here defined as the availability of books and other educational materials), standards for work habits, and opportunities for language development and academic achievement. Four out of the five participants had family members who were teachers, and they were exposed to reading in their homes. All five participants had family members who emphasized their completion of college.

The second aspect emphasized by the participants was that their families, each in their own way, clearly communicated the importance and value of education in their lives. Four of the five participants stated that from an early age, their parents emphasized education, told them they were going to go to college, helped them to do homework, took them on educational trips, and in some way emphasized education.

Nurturer, who attended college at a later age, stated that her migrant family left their home every year to work in the fields. She also mentioned that although she did not remember them actually saying school was important, she did say the family

would never leave to Michigan before school was over and would always come back home before school started. She said the family sacrificed to send her to private school for part of her school career. In this way, she said, they emphasized the importance of education. Each of the participants spoke of the family sacrifices endured in order for them to complete their education and become teachers.

This emphasis on the importance and value of education was discussed in research by Garcia (2001) who shared this variable in his own upbringing. He mentioned that the *raices (roots)* of his success began in a family that valued the importance of education. He said his father, a poor and humble man, taught himself to read by using the Spanish Bible. He explained that his father said to all of his family that no one could take away what you have learned. He explained that having experienced this in his own life, it is difficult for him to accept arguments that blame Hispanic school failure on family circumstances that place children at risk.

What was important about this upbringing was not the specific education preparation, but rather the broader understanding that education was important, that hard work was important, and the respect for adults who could show you the way, particularly the respect for our own elders and school teachers who we could look to for future learning. (Garcia, 2001, pp. 124-125)

Research Question 2

What experiences or persons have most impacted their teaching career?

The participants in this study valued the mentorship that they received from mentor teachers. Although some of their teachers were in school, they found teachers outside the school setting as well. Four out of the five participants had a teacher in their family. Research by Lortie (1975) revealed that identifications with teachers and with

family members who teach contribute to entry into the teaching profession. All five of the participants spoke of a caring and nurturing relationship with adults by using metaphors. Two participants described their mentors as someone who took them “under their wing” or “took this little runt.” In describing the special relationship, one of the participants said it best when she said her mentor treated her with respect and developed her special abilities and talents. This influence of a caring adult is documented in the literature. Werner and Smith (1989, 1992) indicated that the influence of a caring adult was the single most important way of making a difference for “at risk” students. Having healthy relationships with others is evidence of social competence. The participants exhibited pro-social behaviors that enabled them to find and keep healthy relationships with others. These are traits of resilient children (Benard, 1991).

Most of the participants spoke of family members and teachers, but some of these special mentors were not teachers in the formal sense. For example, one of the participants spoke of a summer job that she had at a bank. She spoke of a special person at the bank who “took this little runt” and taught her to do certificates of deposit and many other things. She taught the participant and trusted her with responsibilities that were beyond her age. The participant met the mentor’s expectations. Benard (1991) claims that these types of behaviors are typical of resilient children because they have a sense of purpose and future. The characteristics of this trait include goal directedness, achievement motivation, special interests, education aspirations, healthy

expectations, and hopefulness. Persistence and a belief in a compelling future are also included as characteristics (Benard, 1991).

The participants had mentors that encouraged independence and modeled the benefits of hard work. All of the participants spoke of the sacrifices the family made in order for them to get an education. They each explained economic times were hard then. For example, Chiquita explained that when her father was alive:

We lived a good life because we had the maid, and the man who came to wash the windows, and the women who came to wash the clothes, and the lady who came to iron the clothes, and several others. But, when my father died, and the source of income went down, the only thing we had was my sister's salary as a schoolteacher, and so we all just started working. (C 163-168)

Chiquita smiled as she uttered the words, and she exhibited a positive resiliency as she told her story. Resourcefulness, a positive outlook, and hard work were evident in Chiquita's story of her family's reaction to her father's death and the subsequent economic struggle that followed. Benard (1991) identified autonomy as a trait of resiliency. The characteristics that he used to describe this trait were a strong sense of identity and worth, ability to act independently, resistance; and an ability to separate or engage in distancing (creative distancing) from dysfunctional environments and situations. Chiquita's narrative revealed all of these traits:

We started working at anything we could: delivering circulars, delivering newspapers, selling Avon products...A neighbor of ours had vegetables; we would tie those vegetables and sell them door-to door. We had three cows, so we would sell the milk. (C 167-171)

Garmezy (1983) identified competence indices that help predict resiliency. Chiquita's story is one of struggle to survive. It is a story that could have ended in defeat, but Chiquita and her family did not succumb to failure. Garmezy's descriptors

of resiliency include (a) effectiveness in work, play, and love; (b) healthy expectations and a positive outlook; (c) self-esteem and internal locus of control; (d) self-discipline; and (e) problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. The participants who informed this study exhibited Garmezy's descriptors.

Chiquita, for example, employed exactly these skills in order to survive the death of her father and the economic disaster that followed while she was a very small child. Her family life, once headed by a loving and hard-working father changed drastically and forever. With her father gone, economic stability was gone, as was the staff her family once employed to care for them and to run the house. Each member of the family found a way to earn money to help the family survive. They were workers.

The participants who informed this study were no strangers to hard work. All of them spoke of working their way through college. These individuals developed a work ethic and independence early. Nurturer, for example, worked in the fields as a small child. She explained that her family was a migrant family. She said sternly, "We were poor but well dressed and clean. My mother would make our clothes out of the 25 pound angel flour sacks" (N 232-233).

Early childhood training that the participants received developed the trait of independent behavior, and responsibility that was a natural outgrowth of watching and experiencing their parents' and families' extraordinary capacity for hard work. When the participants spoke of their early experiences, they also described their parents as very hardworking. This growing up exposed to hard work served as a model for behavior that would later translate into persistence in schoolwork, as well as a means

for instilling a sense of independence and autonomy. The sense of autonomy and their sense of positive attitude about their own future are resiliency traits (Benard, 1991).

More middleclass parents might structure learning opportunities for their children that emphasize independent behavior (Gandara, 1995), but it can be seen in these examples that the participants' parents encouraged independent behavior and the importance of participants' educational achievement in a more direct way. School was a place where participants acted out the hard work ethic of their parents. Besides verbal encouragement, most of the participants mentioned schoolwork specifically and parents helping them with math, homework, or reading. Braids reflected on her early childhood when she stated, "I remember reading to my uncle in Spanish as a five-year old" (B. 39-40).

Research Question 3

What role did religion play in the subjects' educational and teaching experience?

Overwhelmingly, each of the participants voiced the strong role that their religion played not only in their educational and teaching experiences, but also in all of their lives. They all exhibited the third category trait for resiliency (Benard, 1991). The characteristics for the third category are generally referred to as the autonomy and spiritual/religious commitment trait. Benard posits that this, the autonomy/religious commitment trait category, includes a sense of usefulness or belonging to a community and also having a stable belief system. The responses to this question consistently evoked a serious tone from each of the participants as they explained the far-reaching

influence that religion played in their lives. Two participants explained that their religious beliefs influenced their teaching, and this influenced how they taught. Braids explained it best when she stated that being a Catholic puts a lot of responsibility on you to do what is right:

You cannot be lazy; you cannot lie; you must honor your father and your mother, and by extension, your teacher. You must do your homework; you must go to school. So, my religion very definitely guides what I do as a student and what I have done since I was three years old and up to now that I am still in school. (B 318-323)

This far-reaching belief permeated every area of her life. She reflected for a moment and then explained that when she considers her teaching, it is the same thing:

My teaching experiences are the same thing. I work hard, but I expect my students to work hard as well. I think it's my job to teach them the difference between right and wrong. (B 323-326)

Lady spoke of her spiritual convictions by saying that religion was always a big part of her life. She, too, in reflecting on the far reaching influence that her religious convictions have, spoke of the effect religion had on her students through the years:

Religion was always a big part of my life and still is. I would speak to my students all the time about morals and especially to the girls and boys about going steady and things like that. (L 315-317)

Lady said she emphasized education and the importance of getting an education to her students. Lady commented that parents would later tell her that they appreciated her taking time to talk to their children during the time she was teaching:

In those situations I emphasized education by saying, "Look, anybody can get married, you don't even have to have an education. But, is that all you want?" (L 328 -329)

Dancer stated it simply when she said that religion has always been important in her life, and it still is. Nurturer stated that religion played what she described as a very, very important role in her life. She said religion plays a big part in her life, and it influenced her teaching because she “would remind your students that certain behavior was not appropriate to God” (N 355-356).

Each participant acknowledged the importance of their religious convictions and spirituality in their lives and in their teaching. Chiquita had a very unusual way of expressing her lived experiences and religious convictions and the effect they had on her teaching by explaining that religion had a strong influence on her because she attended Catholic Church until age five. Then, her father became a Mason and the Catholic Church did not accept Masons. He started taking Chiquita to the Methodist church. She laughed as she explained that it was a real eye opener, as it was actually fun to go to the Methodist Church. She added they read Bible stories, colored, and played. She said in reflection that she thinks the experience of changing from one religion to the other made her “more accepting because she had been a Catholic and then a Methodist” (C 401-402). This autonomy and flexibility is a trait of resiliency (Benard, 1991).

Research Question 4

Were there barriers that they have experienced, and have the barriers remained the same?

Four of the participants recounted their early or later school experiences by mentioning the barrier of segregation. The issue of growing up with one language and

culture that was not valued in school and of negotiating the borders of a different culture and language in the schools was one that all of the participants discussed. Another recurring theme in these women educators' narratives was the theme of economically difficult times. Their families' high expectations contrasted brightly against this stark economic and surreal backdrop in the memories of these educators.

One participant in particular, Chiquita, discussed in rich details the public school experiences that revealed the racism and classism in the public schools she attended in South Texas. How, I wonder, did these little girls survive the stinging pain of their first experiences in school being one that so blatantly and firmly rejected their ways of knowing and learning? Four out of the five participants remembered they were charged a penny every time they were "caught" speaking in the language of their beloved parents and their beloved family. How could these little girls still hold on to the belief in themselves and in their parents' dreams of academic achievement? How, indeed, could they hold on to their *Raices y Alas*, that is, their *Roots and Wings* (Escalante & Dirmann, 1990; Garcia, 2001)? How could they tenaciously hold onto their ethnic self-concepts and seeds of their cultural, economic, ethnic, and linguistic individual and collective identity amidst a school context of disapproval and rejection? Marginalization, invisibility, and isolation of students of color have a long history in the public schools of the South. The participants in this study developed resiliency in facing the struggle that their lives held.

Chiquita described the elementary schools of the 1930's in Edinburg, Texas, by stating simply that there were two schools there. There was the one across the tracks

“where the Mexicans went, and the one across the street from where she lived where the Anglos went” (C 107; 116). But, she added, most of the Mexican American children who lived where she lived went to parochial schools. She stated she was the only one in her class who did not know a word of English and started out with English-only speakers. She said, “You had to learn very fast...it was sink or swim” (C 27). She went to high school in Edinburg and since there was only one high school, there was a mix of Mexican Americans and Anglos. She added, however, most of the Mexican Americans dropped out before they got to high school. “They usually dropped out around the seventh, eighth, or ninth grade” (C 298).

When asked why, Chiquita replied that it was for a variety of reasons. She speculated that maybe they did not feel that it was necessary to have an education, or some of them got married young. She explained matter-of-factly that some of them had to work and earn a living. “Maybe they got discouraged. They didn’t know enough to keep up with the curriculum” (C 302-304).

Chiquita stated clearly that at that time, African American students could not attend high school with the Whites and Latinos. She said they had their own school on the other side of the tracks. Chiquita explained the sociopolitical climate by saying that “this is the way that it was at that time. When asked when this occurred, she said that this was during the early 1940’s” (C 130-134).

Lady spoke of her elementary school years in Laredo. She remembered that at her elementary school, there were no Spanish-speaking teachers. She attended the oldest elementary school in Laredo Independent School District still standing:

They were all Anglos; so they used to tell us that we would be fined if we spoke Spanish; and they usually would fine us a penny. We were not allowed to speak Spanish. We learned English pretty quickly. It was either sink or swim. It was total immersion. (L 91-97)

Lady explained that she did not really feel discriminated against in Laredo, but she remembered hearing of discrimination in the surrounding towns of the time. She said that in Laredo it was different because most of the population spoke two languages and shared the same culture. Lady further elaborated: “Here in Laredo because most of us, the majority of us were Hispanics, we never felt discriminated against” (L 154-156). She explained that some people in the valley (Rio Grande Valley) and some people in San Antonio and several other places, would tell us, “you just don’t know just how lucky you are because you don’t know what it is like” (L 157-160). Lady explained in other communities, there was segregation:

In the valley, they would segregate the Spanish-speaking students from the Anglo students. They would have them in different classrooms just because they spoke Spanish instead of trying to help them to integrate. We didn’t have that problem here, and so, we never knew how hard it was because we were not discriminated against. (L 160-164)

When I asked Lady what year it was when they used to segregate these students, she replied by giving an estimated time. She estimated the timeframe to be in the 1930’s and 1940’s. She thought for a moment and then made eye contact with the researcher as she shared segregation stories:

I know, for example, in Crystal City and Eagle Pass, in Del Rio, in the 1950’s, they were having problems. They had two high schools, one for the Spanish-speaking and one for the Anglos. In Del Rio they would have two proms: One for the Spanish speaking and the other for the Anglos... Yes, in Del Rio and in Eagle Pass...in the early 50’s. (L 167-180)

Resiliency traits such as problem-solving abilities, strong sense of self, spirituality, and critical consciousness, as well as autonomy and the independent spirit of these women educators while they were still little girls, are evident in their narratives recalling their childhood. These traits and characteristics of resiliency described by researchers (Benard, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1992) are seen plainly in the survival stories of these women who recall their childhood struggles in their negotiations between borders of culture, identity, and language (Cummins, 2001; Garcia, 2001; Nieto, 2002).

Important studies of language development and language skills acquisition have increasingly focused on communicative social interactions in early stages of the development of speech. Since there are wide differences and variations (Nelson, 1981) and cultural differences (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) in children's development, researchers have come to view children not as passive beneficiaries of their environments but as active agents in their own socialization in life (Minami & Ovando, 2004). This view is predicated on the theory that individuals and society construct one another through social interaction (Ochs, 1996). The participants in this study, while they were young girls, found ways of negotiating linguistic and cultural realities in such a way as to resist segregation and marginalization in the public schools of the time.

Braids shared a story in which she had to negotiate cultural and linguistic realities as she recalled the time she spent in Austin at The University of Texas as a pre-med student. She said that, like four of the five participants in this study, she stayed

off campus in a boarding house. She recalled that Hispanic students did not have a lot of activities off-campus and that a lot of time was spent at the university.

But, if you went to the restaurants, you did run the risk...of some restaurants where...[they] would not serve us. We would stand there, and they would never come to show us to the table. (B 114-118)

Braids said there was covert discrimination. She told of her experiences by saying that at the Methodist dorm where she stayed, there was some discrimination, but “we didn’t care. Because, anyway, we were there studying, and we in the end, had a good time” (B 104-112). Braids also stated that students now have better opportunities and better preparation to seek a university degree, including those opportunities that technology opens up to you.

In the past, Latinos in public schools were segregated not just because of phenotypes, but also because of language. Language was used as the justification for segregation (Nieto, 2004). School officials claimed that because Mexican children could not understand English, they needed to be separated until they could. This resulted in 8.5% of the students who were in school in the late 1930’s to be in segregated schools, and as it is in the case of African American schools, expenditures and supplies overwhelmingly favored White schools (Donato, 1997; Gonzalez, 1990).

Even today, the legacy of this brutal history can be seen. Latinos are now more segregated by race/ethnicity and poverty than all other students (Orfield, 2001). We see the legacy of inequality as well in ballot questions to eliminate bilingual education. These inequality initiatives can be seen in the initiatives to deprive immigrants of their rights, including the right to an education. This legacy of inequity can be seen most

clearly in the dropout rates of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. These students have the highest dropout rate among any other group of students in the nation. It ranges from 30% to 80% depending on the year, city, and method used to count dropouts (Nieto, 2004).

At different times and in different places where language-minority groups have been perceived as too numerous and not rapid enough to assimilate into the American mainstream, prohibitions against the instruction and the use of a language other than English have been instituted in public schools to the extent that parents have been instructed against using the primary language of the home (Carter, 1970; Cummins, 1981). We know now that literacy, broadly defined as exposure to the printed word and to the value of words, discussion, verbal exchange, and information, is the key to academic engagement in any language (Gandara, 1995, p. 118). Research exploring the most effective programs for language minority students points to the benefits of native language development (Nieto, 2002). The participants recalled punishment for speaking their native language. How could policy encourage a family to not use their primary language with their children, if it is the parents' and children's' primary language? What does this say to the family about the worth of their culture and language? These ladies found a way to use their sense of humor and strong sense of self and resilience to not let these punishments affect them.

Although gains to assure language rights were made in the post-civil rights climate, ironically, these rights have seen deterioration in the face of research that attests to the benefits of bilingual education. In the anti-bilingual climate of 1998

California, for example, surprising results were found: achievement assessment scores from San Jose and San Francisco found that students who completed bilingual education generally performed better than native English-speaking children in reading, math, language, and spelling (Asimov, 1998). Many of the achievement gains were impressive. This research was reported just one month after the passage of Proposition 227, which virtually outlawed the use of bilingual education in the state of California (Nieto, 2002). Language rights for second language learners are still not a reality for many Mexican American children. These inequity initiatives function as barriers to achievement.

In answering the second part of this research question, reflecting on barriers to Mexican American students today, all of the participants' views and perceptions included the discussion of educational policy and programs. They mentioned that there are many more programs and economic help for those who want to go to college or seek a university degree. One way that the participants exhibited their sense of critical thinking was in their discussion of current educational policy.

The crucial part testing plays was mentioned by two participants who voiced concern about current educational assessment policy and the effect this has on Mexican American students. Braids simply stated that testing is a "big issue for Hispanics" (B 266). Lady identified testing as a barrier because, "if students do not pass the test, then they get very discouraged. They drop out because they know that if they don't pass the test, they don't graduate" (L 404-406). Testing is a crucial component to consider since

assessment was identified as a current barrier to Mexican American students today, after the civil rights movement.

State assessment, otherwise known as the accountability systems in public schools today, I believe, is a throwback to pre-civil rights times and is being used to keep students of color out of higher track educational opportunities. In truth, the sell of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was an untruth that in actuality set up additional barriers for some in our society in the guise of opportunities for higher achievement for all. Texas state colleges are now raising entrance criteria by requiring higher scores in order to attend. This, too, is a barrier to higher education opportunities.

Nurturer, Lady, Chiquita, and Dancer emphasized that financial problems in the family are a barrier because:

A lot of times, the students need to drop out and work because they do not have their parents. A grandmother or an aunt is raising them, and they know that they cannot give them what they need to stay in school; so they get out and work. A lot of our students, this is what happens to them. (L 407-413)

Braids mentioned that barriers such as poverty still exist. She stated that some children do not have electricity at home. One-room homes and everyone sleeping in the same room is still a reality and a barrier for her students. Braids, reflecting on her economic limitations when she went to college, said that for her, it was economics, but her parents were willing to sacrifice to get her there:

My mother worked very hard, and my dad worked across the river, and so his money was not a lot. But, somehow we were able to have the money for me to go here the first year in Laredo, which was cheap. (B 269-173)

Braids told her story by also explaining that The University of Texas (UT) was a little bit more expensive. She stayed at a boarding house that she could afford, and that made it less expensive. Braids explained that she and her family looked for places that were not as expensive. In medical school, she worked in the summer to put some money together, and her mother would pay the rest.

Braids speculated that opportunities are better for Mexican Americans now, and that for a lot of people at present time, there “is a lot of money out there” (B 298). But, these educators’ stories demonstrated dreams deferred and negotiations being made throughout their lives. They were flexible enough to negotiate their dreams down to a doable reality. For example, Lady recalled that she, too, wanted to go to UT, but she could not afford it. She went to Texas State College for Women (TSCW), instead. Still, Lady felt she was very lucky because she stated that she did not have anything that obstructed her getting an education. She added that she worked part time at the Spanish Department grading papers and was paid \$18.00 a month to help pay for her education at TSCW. This ability to be flexible and remain positive is a trait that made this population resilient. They all had stories to tell of “making do with” and “finding a way to” achieve their educational goals.

Research Question 5

What was it like to be a Mexican American teacher for over 25 years following the Civil Rights Movement, and how do the subjects view the educational experience of Mexican American students?

There was a consensus in the responses of the participants. For the most part, the participants stated that in Laredo, there was an exemption of the Civil Rights Movement (B. 361). Chiquita, for example reflected a while, and then stated:

You know, it's funny; I never really thought that I was any different from other people teaching school, but I taught for 33 years. The Civil Rights Movement didn't really have that much influence on me, I think. (C 414-416)

Two other participants spoke of the changes that they saw in the public schools of South Texas. One participant described the exciting changes after the Civil Rights Movement as "difficult, exciting and scary" (N 365).

All of these programs were very beneficial. Special education students came out of the closet, and the bilingual education program helped the bilingual migrant student. It provided a head start for disadvantaged students to sort of give them an even start. (N 369-370)

Before these programs in schools, Nurturer explained, "students were grouped by language" (N 384-387). Lady stated that she thought "a lot of the discrimination ended after the Civil Rights Movement came to be" (L 345-348). She was one out of the two participants who mentioned the initiation of the special education program by saying that before the civil rights movement:

Special education students were kept at home and they never got an education, and they would try to hide them. It was not until the special education program that these students started to be recognized and given an opportunity to get an education. (L 354-361)

This inclusion of students with special needs, Lady said, was wonderful because a lot of these kids were just at home. She explained about the opportunities that these children are now coming to school, and they participate in different

programs. Lady said that programs helped because they gave students the opportunity to do a lot more and be a lot more, which was beautiful.

The discussion for this line of questioning was scarce, and responses were limited even after additional questioning. The volume and detail of responses was not what was expected. That is, when I first considered the research questions, I had looked forward to the possible stories of the participants' experience during the Civil Rights Movement. I anticipated this question might provide long commentaries and stories of socio-political unrest in our nation and the sociopolitical advocacy during that time. I was surprised when the participants did not have much to elaborate on this specific question.

Research Question 6

What has stayed the same, and what has changed in the quality of education of Mexican American students over time?

All of the participants voiced serious concerns about the future education and preparation, or rather the lack of preparation of Mexican American students. The consensus of the participants was that parents today do not emphasize education; moreover, the students do not take education as seriously as they should, nor do they value educational preparation.

Dancer, for instance, stated that students today lack *ganas* (desire and motivation) to learn and work hard at school. She added there are so many more opportunities now than when she went to school over 50 years ago, and yet, she said

that she did not see Mexican American students taking advantage of these opportunities. Most of the participants agreed with this line of thinking.

Chiquita, for instance, said a lot of students are dropping out in spite of all the encouragement and all the things that have been done to try to get them to stay in school. “They’re not getting the feeling that education is worth it and that the more education you have the better off you’ll be.” (C 452-455). Nurturer explained that the desire to go to school comes from the home. She explained that it is important for education to be emphasized in the home, since she did not believe that students were getting enough encouragement at home to seek further education:

There is an availability of funds everywhere, but they just don’t seem to have the encouragement. Parents have very low expectation because they feel that they can’t afford to pay for their education. They are not aware of the funding. (N 300-305)

Schools primarily are a reflection of the knowledge and values of the cultural and economically dominant groups in any society. Schools reinforce and validate what Bourdieu (1977) called the cultural capital that students from such groups bring from their homes. The cultural model held up for all, however, is not within easy reach of all. Only token members of students from less valued groups can achieve it. The participants had the advantage of having a person with a college education within their grasp. Four had family members who were teachers, and Dancer had a lifelong mentor and friend who was a teacher. They had cultural capital that many Mexican American students do not have. Schools in the United States are places of serious cultural conflict (Boykin, 2000; Gay, 2000) for many students of color and for low-income students.

When the home and community socialization patterns match established social norms within schools, instructional practices often lead to predictable and desirable student outcomes for students whose behaviors best match these norms (Larke et al., 1999). The participants in this study had a mentor who facilitated these socialization patterns. Few Mexican American students in schools have this advantage. Nurturer discussed a “mentality” in the homes of Mexican American students in schools at present time:

I think it is a mentality parents reflect to their children. Young children get to a certain age, and they feel they are ready to go out into the workforce and contribute to the family income not realizing that if they have an education today, they will be able to contribute to the family income much more than if they work without an education. (N 306-320)

Nurturer explained a sort of mentality about work versus college. She was describing a *financial press* that this research shows is very different than what the literature documents as a family’s *academic press* (Dave, 1964; Wolf, 1963).

Nurturer emphatically stated that parents need to be more involved in their children’s education and encourage them to seek higher education. Some researchers have studied socioeconomic level as a contributing variable to academic achievement and suggested that the effect of family socioeconomic status on educational outcomes is more the inadvertent result of a culture of poverty (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Lewis, 1961).

Interestingly, Lady stated there are no barriers now, except home situations. She said there are no barriers if the kids really want to learn, but “we have some that, I

am afraid, do not want to learn [it may be the] situation at home.” She spoke of the inadvertent outcomes of this culture of poverty:

I think that [the situation at home] doesn't help. Some of these kids have only one parent. Their father is in jail or serving time or something, and they have to be on their own, and sometimes they can't make it, and so they drop out. I believe that it is one of the barriers that these kids have. (L 279-281)

But, Lady stated that she believed that if students wanted to get an education, they could because there is so much help out there for them. Sometimes it is the family situation. Sometimes, she said, as her voice softened and her tone mellowed, the mother leaves and they are raised by the grandmother. She made eye contact with me as she explained that the grandmother could not afford to get them clothes or anything like that. So, a lot of students leave school in order to work. She explained that it is a way for a family to survive. Lady then added that it is the only way that they can survive.

Lareau (1987) studied the education experiences of working class and middleclass students and their families and concluded that family cultural capital as manifested in parental contact with schools and knowledge of how to work the system is associated with both the student's academic achievement and also with the family's academic status. Mexican American parents are frequently characterized as having low rates of participation in school activities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

The participants who informed this study voiced concerns about parents not being interested in their children's academic achievement. They stated that Mexican American students' parents do not emphasize the importance of getting an education.

Researchers familiar with Mexican American culture have attributed this low level of participation on the part of Mexican American parents as being due to a lack of familiarity with the American school system, a fear of not being able to communicate with school personnel, competing family and work demands on their time, and limited resources to pay for bus fares and for babysitters (Gandara, 1995).

Substantial literature exists that has demonstrated that family background accounts for a large portion of the variance in educational outcomes, much more so than any other variable, including the school(s) a student attends (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972). Social reproduction of status differences between population groups is the direct result and expresses intent of capitalist economic policy to maintain social class advantage (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The students who are described by these voices of wisdom may be locked into lower economic levels because of these social reproductions of status and because they lack mentors to help them navigate borders of culture, language, and collective and individual identity.

The school system in the United States is ordered in such a way as to channel lower-income students into vocational preparation tracks that preclude them from competing for jobs with their upper income peers. This meritocratic system in which students are sorted according to supposed intellectual ability operates to convince lower-income students that they deserve lower status jobs because of their own failure to perform adequately on tests devised to highlight the skills and attributes of the middleclass (Gandara, 1995).

Braids voiced an extremely different view. She was optimistic, and she pointed out that now the college-bound student is getting more tools than what we had before. She specifically identified the use of computers as helping to improve the quality of learning by explaining that it facilitates the process of education (B 514-515). She did, however, reflect:

The thing that has stayed the same is kids are still poor. They are still LEP (limited English proficient). They still may only have the mother to support them, and they still have poor study skills. (B 522-527)

Conclusions

Researchers such as Benard (1991, 1997), Rutter (1979), and Werner and Smith (1989) have written about the importance of “protective processes” in shielding children from the negative influences of poverty and of disadvantage. This research yielded a consensus. The participants in this study exhibited resiliency traits and had three protective processes in their lives. These included (a) a positive relationship with at least one caring adult (mentorship), (b) the communication of high expectations for them, and (c) opportunities to participate meaningfully in group or family endeavors (Benard, 1991, 1997). Every one of the participants enjoyed at least two of these factors in their lives. Most of the participants enjoyed all three protective factors. Any one of these could be sufficient enough to overcome the risk of poor developmental backgrounds and, consequentially, less than favorable educational outcomes (Gandara, 1995).

In spite of serious economic struggles and psychosocial stresses in their lives, almost all of the participants’ parents did the kinds of things that the literature reports is

important for instilling achievement motivation in children. The participants' parents, for the most part, were very supportive of educational goals, set high performance standards, and encouraged new learning opportunities. They also helped with homework and encouraged literacy any way they could and in any language that they could use.

Recurrent themes in the narrative of these women educators that revealed resiliency traits and protective processes were as follows: The first theme, generally designated as high expectations, focused on difficult economic times for (and the hardworking nature of) families of participants and the family's high expectations for the participants' academic success. The second theme, finding resourcefulness, focused on valuable mentorship and strong religious beliefs. The third broad theme focused on the participants' reflections, the views, and perceptions regarding the education of Mexican American students. In this, the third and last part of the ethnographies, the participants compared their own experience to current students' experience and situation. They voiced a concern for both parents and students not valuing education and the effects that the current policies and programs are having on Mexican American students in public schools today.

All five participants emphasized the importance of letting children know early on that college is a possibility for them. Four out of the five participants stated that their families let them know from an early age that they were going to college. Nurturer, the fifth participant, however, had a different and more traditional wife-mother role and explained that her husband pushed her to get a college education. The

achievement press described in the literature by Wolf (1963) and Dave (1964) was present in all five participants' families. For Nurturer, it was a lesson learned, and a lesson applied. She explained all nine of her own children graduated from college and added that it is important to start early to let children know that they are going to college. She stated it is important to plant that seed early.

The participants emphasized the crucial role mentors played in their lives. Schools must take these educators' voices to heart and create a foundation for engagement of Mexican American students. Bodies of research demonstrate the need to do so: First, the literature on caring is a precondition for students to feel trust and belonging within the school environment to facilitate school based and beneficial relationships (Benard, 1991, 1997; Gay, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1989, 1992); secondly, the literature on cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1987; Lareau, 1987, 1989) illustrates key adults at school are capable and can provide the "at risk" populations with access to necessary institutional supports; and thirdly, school structures and personnel can either impede or facilitate students of color with an ability to withstand assimilation pressures in school and to handle the difficult transitions between their home world and their school worlds (Boykin, 2000; Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2001; Gay, 2000; Gibson & Bejinez, 2002).

Recommendations

Protective Factors

Educators **should not** subscribe to a deficit model in identification of students. Identifying students early as "at risk" in actuality serves to set low expectations for

children. Labels such as “at risk” serve to blame the victim and “pathologize” the poor, second language learners, and students of color (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 26). Children need to be viewed from a strength perspective (Boykin, 2000). A paradigm shift is needed in our nation’s schools. We must see the promise and value in each student. Currently, “at risk” children’s monumental risk, in reality, is the risk that ethnically diverse children face when they are placed in the care of educators and others who do not honor their human dignity or fully develop their intellectual potential. In a pluralistic society, the educational systems and proceedings must be democratic and must provide social justice for ethnically diverse children and for children of poverty.

The participants in this study were born to situations that could have had less than favorable outcomes. However, their stories revealed that they were resilient and had protective factors in their lives. Their narratives revealed barriers overcome and resiliency in spite of serious difficulties. Their stories are evidence that high expectations, encouragement, an opportunity to participate and contribute in meaningful ways in family, school, or community activities and most importantly, a caring relationship with even one adult can be pivotal in the life of a child. In fact, research attests that, most often, the caring adult who makes a difference in the life of a child is a teacher (Werner & Smith, 1989, 1992).

The present research project was completed to provide a stage upon which the voices of teachers, the voices of wisdom could be heard. To my knowledge, the women educators in this study were the first Mexican American teachers who participated in a

research project completed for the purpose of discovering their lived experiences, their ways of knowing, and their perceptions and views about education and about educating Mexican American students in South Texas. It should not be the last. There are many more stories to be told, many more voices to be heard, and there are histories to be discovered.

Continuing Research

Research on the Mexican American population and specifically on the topic of resiliency and protective factors is in its infancy. The growth of the Hispanic population in Texas classrooms is indicative of similar future population growth of Hispanics in other parts of the country. Research projects on this topic are crucial for preparing our nation's Hispanic students for a competitive position in a global economy. The following paragraphs include recommendations for further research efforts based on the findings of this study.

Replication of the Study

Because this study does not purport generalizability, the replication of this study in other regions of the country is recommended. The information gleaned from studies such as these would reveal possible similarities and differences in other geographic locations.

Women in Other Careers

Exploring the lived experiences of Mexican American women in other careers is needed. Analysis of the narratives of Mexican American women who have chosen other career paths could reveal similar factors and variables that could improve the

academic achievement of Mexican American students. This is necessary to produce information regarding the commonalities and disparities of Mexican American women's lives, views, and perceptions. Are there similar factors/variables in the lives of Mexican American women who chose other career paths?

Mexican American Administrators

Research focused specifically on Mexican American administrators is recommended. The stories of Mexican American administrators could reveal their views and perceptions regarding education and teaching Mexican American students from a perspective that is uniquely different than that of Mexican American teachers. Research on Mexican American administrators in predominantly White communities should also be considered in similar studies.

Quantitative Research

It is recommended that the results of this study be used to develop a questionnaire. The questionnaire should be used in a quantitative research project to survey a larger number of Mexican American women to explore the commonalities and differences in their life experiences. Findings of such research could usher a new era of student support and mentorship that could nurture students through protective factors and processes.

Implications of Results to Practice

Incorporation of the recommendations of the participants in this study in practice is recommended. The voices of Mexican American teachers with more than 25 years of experience in border schools could assist schools and parents in improving the

education for Mexican American students. The recommendations should be monitored and evaluated through action study projects that are cite specific.

Cultural Sensitivity of Educators

Exploring the lives of successful Mexican American teachers is important because we need to study the experiences and struggles of marginalized people of color in order to see the promise and potential rather than the risk or deficiency in students. A paradigm shift of this kind, sensitive to the different cultural elements in our society, honors and builds on the experiences and cultural resources pupils bring to school and that exist in communities. This new orientation, one of high expectations and opportunities, can be used by educators as a tool for promoting greater equity in schooling and for improving the academic achievement of Mexican American students, an ever-increasing population in all parts of the country. There is no doubt that the historical pattern of the education of Hispanics in the United States is a continuous story of underachievement. It need not be that way in the future (Garcia, 2001).

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APPENDIX A
TIMELINE OF TEJANAS

TIMELINE OF TEJANAS

Adapted from: *Las Tejanas – 300 Years of History*
(Acosta & Winegarten, 2003, pp. 321-332)

1716	Spanish-Mexican women enter present-day Texas as part of an expedition to establish permanent settlements in East Texas.
1749	Jose de Escandon begins establishing settlements along the Rio Grande between present day Laredo and Brownsville.
1782	Antonia Rosalia de Armas sues Pedro Granados for a division of the family estate.
1783	San Antonio passes an ordinance outlining punishments for husbands who assent to prostitution of their wives. Manuel Padron is fined for beating his wife.
1783	San Antonio passes an ordinance requiring both honorable men and honorable women to remain at home at night.
1783	A census of population centers of Spanish power includes 1, 577 Spaniards, 677 Indians, 125 Mestizos, 404 Mulatoes, and 36 slaves.
1787	Maria Josefa Granados owns the largest general store in San Antonio.
1788	The Laredo lieutenant chief of justice issues an ordinance against the mingling of the sexes at the Rio Grande (river was used for bathing by both sexes).
1791	The Spanish census of Texas records 186 Mulatas and Negro women as “free citizens.”
1805-1835	A number of women request military pensions and military allotments for their husbands’ military service.
1810	Mexico declares independence from Spain.
1812	Maria Antonia Ibarvo petitions for rent due on buildings occupied by troops.
1813	Maria Antonia Rodriguez petitions to assume responsibility for the education of her nieces.
1814	Maria Perez Cassiano, wife of the governor of Texas, runs affairs of state in his absence, including the review of troops in front of Spanish Governor’s Palace in San Antonio.
1816	The alcalde (mayor) of Laredo denounces common-law unions as a menace to the community’s well-being.
1821	The Spanish government grants Moses Austin permission to settle 300 families in Texas. After his death, Stephen F. Austin renegotiates the contract with the newly independent Mexico. Anglo Americans begin moving into Texas, bringing their slaves and some free people of color with them. Mexico wins independence from Spain and promises citizenship and equal rights to all Mexicans.
1823	The Colonization Law of 1823 promises single men an additional one-quarter league of land if they marry a Tejana.
1824	Dona Patricia de la Garza de Leon stakes her inheritance to co-found the town of Victoria with Martin de Leon, her husband.
1827	The Constitution of Coahuila and Texas requires a uniform system of public instruction. The new constitution states that slaves can be brought in for six months after adoption of the state’s fundamental law.
1829	After Mexico abolishes slavery, slave owners bring slaves in as lifetime indentured servants.
1830’s	Almost sixty land grants are awarded to Mexican women.
1831	Ursula de Veramendi marries James Bowie.
1832	Dona Gertrudis Perez donates 100 pesos to San Antonio schools.
1835-1836	Anglos and some Tejanos begin the war for independence from Mexico.

1840's	The home of Maria Josefa Menchaca and her husband serves as a church, school, and community center in Bexar County.
1845	The U.S. annexes Texas, which becomes a state.
1845-1848	The U.S.-Mexican War ends with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Rio Grande becomes U.S. Mexico boundary.
1850	Girls attend school in Laredo in the same proportion as boys.
1851	The Ursuline Academy is founded in San Antonio.
1860	Salome Balli Young, the widow of John Young, is one of Texas' wealthiest citizens owning a \$100,000 in real property and \$25,000 in personal property.
1860	Paula Losoya Taylor and her sister found Del Rio.
1861-1865	Texas secedes from the Union and joins the Confederacy. Tejanos serve in both the Confederacy and the Union armies during the Civil War.
1863	President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.
1865	On June 19, Texas slaves learn they are free under Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. The date becomes known as Juneteenth. The Thirteenth Amendment to U.S. Constitution abolishes slavery.
1867-1889	Tejanos register cattle brands in Nueces County.
1868	The Fourteenth Amendment to U.S. Constitution is ratified, extending citizenship to Blacks.
1875	The U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1875 provides for equal access to public accommodations without regard to race.
1876	The present Texas constitution is adopted, mandating a system of free but segregated public schools.
1878	The Holding Institute is founded in Laredo by Methodists to educate Mexican boys and girls.
1881	Adina Emilia De Zavala earns a degree in education from the Sam Houston Normal Institute at Huntsville.
1883	Classes begin for White students at The University of Texas in Austin.
1883	Mexicanos protest the decision of the lessee of San Pedro Park in San Antonio to deny them access to the dance platform.
1887	Mrs. Fernandez is acting as inspectress at the ferry on the Rio Grande.
1888	Antonia Pineda de Hernandez takes over the management of the Carlos Villalagin Dramatic Company; her daughter Concepcion becomes the most prominent female member of the Mexican American stage.
1888	The El Paso School Board opens a school to teach English to Mexican children.
1893	The Texas Equal Rights Association of Anglo women and men is founded in Dallas to work for women's suffrage.
1896	The U.S. Supreme Court rules in Plessey v. Ferguson that "separate but equal" public facilities are constitutional.
1901	Juana Gutierrez de Mendoza begins publishing the newspaper, <i>Vesper: Justicia y Libertad</i> .
1902	State law requires the payment of a poll tax to vote.
1907	Maria Elena Zamora O'Shea becomes a school principal in Alice. Petronila Maria Pereida Goodman becomes the first female employee at Hertzberg's, a jewelry company in San Antonio. She becomes the owner of the business in the 1940's.
1910	Andrea and Teresa Villarreal found the feminist newspaper, <i>La Mujer Moderna</i> .
1910	The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, results in one of the largest waves of Mexican immigration to the United States.
1911	Jovita Idar is elected president of the Liga Femenil Mexicanista in Laredo, organized at El Primer Congreso Mexicanista, the first statewide Mexican American civil rights meeting. The Liga supports the education of women.

1913	Leonor Villegas de Magnon recruits Jovita Idar to form La Cruz Blanca for the purpose of nursing soldiers wounded in the Mexican Revolution.
1914	Journalist Jovita Idar bars the doors to the Texas Rangers, who attempt to close down <i>El Progreso</i> , a newspaper for which she writes.
1917	The Immigration Act of 1917 closes U.S. doors on European laborers and bars immigrants deemed as undesirable.
1917-1918	The name of Tejana student Lucita Escajeda of San Elizario, Texas, appears in the directory of The University of Texas at Austin.
1918	Olga Beatriz Torres publishes <i>Memorias de mi Viaje</i> , a memoir about her experiences as an immigrant.
1918	Texas women win the right to vote in Democratic Party primaries.
1920's	The Klu Klux Klan is active in Texas.
1920	Tejanas establish Cruz Azul Mexicana in San Antonio for the poor.
1920	The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution grants women the right to vote.
1922	Ynes Mexia de Reygadas, a naturalist and botanist makes her first expedition as part of a group. By the 1930's, she collects approximately 145,000 specimens in Mexico, Alaska, and South America.
1923	Rachel Garza earns a master's degree at The University of Texas, possibly the first Tejana to do so.
1927	Consuelo Herrera Mendez is hired to teach in Austin school, one of the first Tejanas to teach in a major school system in the state. Later, a local school is named for her.
1928	Josefina Maria Niggli publishes her first book, <i>Mexican Silhouettes</i> .
1929	The New York stock market crashes and the Great Depression begins.
1929	Mexican Americans establish the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Corpus Christi. LULAC becomes the longest active civil rights organization for Mexican descent citizens in the United States. Tejanas later organize LULAC women's auxiliaries.
1929	<i>Salvatierra v. Del Rio ISD</i> - school segregation of Mexican descent students in public schools.
1930	Alicia de Lozano founds Sociedad de la Beneficencia Mexicana in San Antonio, which establishes a medical clinic for Tejanos.
1930	Thousands of Mexicanos are repatriated without due process.
1930	Manuela Gonzales obtains a job as a library aide in Cotulla under the National Youth Administration, a New Deal program.
1931	Jovita Gonzalez becomes the first Mexican American woman to serve as president of the Texas Folklore Society.
1932	A Women's Bureau survey notes that in San Antonio, Tejanas earn far less than Anglo working women. Tejana pecan shellers earn \$2.65 a week, compared with Anglo women's wages of \$4.15 per week.
1935	Maria Elena Zamora O'Shea publishes <i>El Mesquite</i> , a fictionalized history of Mexicans in South Texas.
1937	Alice Dickerson Montemayor of Laredo becomes the first woman elected to the office of second vice president general of LULAC.
1938	The Order of the Catechist Missionary Sisters of Saint John Bosco is established in Roma to serve Mexican public school children.
1940's	Consuelo Herrera Mendez and her husband found the Zapata PTA in Austin. She translates the state PTA newsletter into Spanish and writes articles for it.
1941	Fermina Guerra earns a master's degree from The University of Texas in Austin. Her thesis is about Mexican and Spanish folklore in Southwest Texas.
1942	The Bracero program begins bringing an estimated 4.5 million Mexican workers to the United States (at the King Ranch, Kingsville, TX) between 1942 and 1964 to harvest crops in U.S.

1943	Gloria Guajardo starts her teaching school in Hidalgo, Texas.
1944	The U.S. Supreme Court outlaws the state's White Primaries in <i>Smith v. Allright</i> .
1945	Cesar Salinas and six other Laredoans attended Texas A&I (now TAMUK) University in Kingsville, Texas with the GI Bill after the war. They were charter members of the Laredo Club there. Salinas was the first Mexican American to run for the student council. This core of students became educational leaders in the Laredo Independent School District. The group included Mr. Vidal M. Trevino who became the superintendent of Laredo ISD.
1946	Eve Garcia Currie is an instructor in Spanish and speech at The University of Texas in Austin.
1948	Minnie Ramirez starts teaching school in a little ranch in Zapata County.
1950	The Supreme Court rules in <i>Sweat v. Painter</i> that segregation in higher education is unconstitutional; the court orders racial integration of the School of Law at The University of Texas in Austin.
1951	Consuelo Lopez starts to teach school at Buenos Aires Elementary School in Laredo, Texas.
1954	Clotilde Garcia of Corpus Christi becomes a medical doctor. In <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> , the U.S. Supreme Court rules that "separate but equal" public schools are unconstitutional.
1959	Norma Zuniga Benavides wins a seat on the Laredo Independent School District School Board.
1960	Women are active in the Viva Kennedy Clubs in the presidential election. The clubs lead to the formation of the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO).
1961	Adelfa Callejo receives a law degree from Southern Methodist University, likely making her the first Tejana Attorney in Dallas.
1963	Yolanda Garza Boozer is personal secretary to President Lyndon B. Johnson, the first Mexican American woman to hold such a post.
1964	Virginia Muzquiz of Crystal City becomes the first Tejana to run for state representative but loses. In 1972, however, she is elected as the Zavala County Clerk on the Raza Unida Party ticket.
1965	Margarita Huantes is the director of the San Antonio Literacy Council and publishes <i>First Lessons in English</i> .
1966	Farm workers march from the Rio Grande Valley to Austin to protest working conditions and to demand increased salaries. The march is a catalyst for the Chicano movement in Texas. The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the ban on the poll tax as a requirement for voting.
1969	Severita Lara is a major leader of the Crystal City High School students' walkout to protest discrimination against Mexican Americans in the city's schools.
1970	Women help establish the Raza Unida Party, as well as a women's caucus (Mujeres Por La Raza) within the party.
1970	Esther Buckley starts teaching at the Laredo Independent School District.
1971	Olga Herrera starts teaching for the United Independent School District.

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Texas A&M University
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture
College Station, Texas

Consent by Subject for Participation in a Research Project

Title: Examining the Views and Perceptions of Five Female Mexican American Teachers With More Than 25 Years of Experience About Teaching And Educating Mexican American Students in Border Schools in South Texas.

Principal Investigator: GeorgeAnne R. Reuthinger

I am being asked to participate in a research study about the views of Mexican American teachers. I was selected to be a possible participant because of my cultural and educational knowledge and experience. A total of five people have been asked to participate in the study. The purpose of the study is to examine the views and perceptions of five female Mexican American Teachers with more than 25 years of experience about teaching in general and also about educating Mexican American students in border schools in South Texas.

I understand that I will be asked about my experiences including barriers that were overcome while I was still in school and during my teaching career. Information regarding educational experiences including what school was like for me when I started as both student and as teacher will also be gathered. I understand that possible instances of prejudice and difficulties overcome will be studied. I was told that the expectations of others including traditional Mexican American family views regarding education and gender roles will be studied as well.

If I agree to be in this study, I will be asked to voice my views in responding to questions asked to me as part of an interview process. The principal investigator will use a laptop to take notes and will audio tape the interviews. If I do not want to be audio taped, I will not be included in the study, as the tapes will be necessary for the investigator to transcribe the answers to the questions in this study.

The entire study will take approximately eight weeks. The interviewer will interview two to three times during a period of time that I identify as a convenient time for me. The initial interview will be approximately one hour long. The second and possibly subsequent interviews will take place for clarification purposes only and will take approximately one hour. These clarification interviews will be done on an "as needed" basis. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary. No risks to me are associated with this study. I may decide not to participate, and my decision will involve no penalty. If I

decide to participate, there are no benefits to me. I will receive no payment or reimbursement. I am being asked to read the consent form carefully and will be given a copy of it to keep, if I decide to participate.

I further understand that all information gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential. No identifiers linking me to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Dr. Patricia Larke, the principal investigator's chair and the committee members, Dr. Juan Lira, Dr. Norvella Carter, and Dr. Hector Ochoa will have access to the records. The notes and audiotapes of the study will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years after the completion of the study at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas at the department of Curriculum and Instruction. After three years, the notes and audiotapes will be destroyed.

My decision whether or not to participate will not affect my current or future relations with Texas A&M University. If I decide to participate, I am free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make me uncomfortable. I can withdraw at any time without my relations with the university, job, benefits, etc., being affected. The investigator has offered to answer all my questions. If I have additional questions during the course of the study, I may contact the principal investigator, GeorgeAnne R. Reuthinger at (956) 727-3297 (georgeanner@hotmail.com) or Dr. Patricia Larke at (979)-845-2171 (plarke@tamu.edu) professor at Texas A&M University in College Station who is supervising this study. This study is being conducted by the principal investigator for partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree from Texas A&M University.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board--Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Ms. Angela M. Raines, Director of Research Compliance, and Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067 (araines@vprmail.tamu.edu).

I have read and understand the above information. I have asked questions and received answers to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent document for my records. By signing this document, I consent to participate in the study.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

VITA

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction, 2005
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PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, & EDITORSHIP

Buckley, E. G., Debenedictis, D., Henderson, J. G., Hyun, E., Krasny, K.,
Reuthinger, G. R. et al. (2004). The mission of the *Journal of Curriculum and
Pedagogy*. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 1, 5-8.

Larke, P. J., Reuthinger, G., Sullivan, E., Standish, H., Meloncon, B., Saah, L. et al.
(2003, November). *Increasing the number of multicultural education teacher
educators: A response from seven doctoral students*. Paper presented at the annual
meeting of the National Association for Multicultural Education, Seattle.

Reuthinger, G., Buckley, E., & Coston, W. (2002, November). Implications for
students of color placed in special education programs. Paper presented at the
annual meeting of the National Association for Multicultural Education,
Washington, DC.

Assistant Editor, *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2003-Present

MAJOR WORK HISTORY

2003-Present	Educational Diagnostician United Independent School District, Laredo, Texas
1998	Supervisor-Diagnostician Laredo Independent School District, Laredo, Texas
1997	Consultant in Special Education United & Laredo Independent School Districts, Laredo, Texas
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