

**THE EXPERIENCE OF JOB-DISPLACED MEXICAN-AMERICANS FROM  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, WHO HAVE RECEIVED RETRAINING**

A Dissertation

by

DIANA PATRICIA MENA

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

August 2012

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

The Experience of Job-Displaced Mexican-Americans From San Antonio, Texas, Who  
Have Received Retraining

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**ABSTRACT**

The Experience of Job-Displaced Mexican-Americans From San Antonio, Texas, Who  
Have Received Retraining.

(August 2012)

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What is the meaning of the Mexican-American's job displacement and participation in a training program? To answer this question, this study adopted hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological approach. My intention was to search for deep meaning of job displacement followed by entering an educational program.

Ten Mexican-American individuals who had been displaced from their job due to economic and trade reasons, and who later participated in a retraining program, were interviewed. Tentative themes were drawn from the analysis, and 15 thematic categories were confirmed after follow-up interviews. The themes were: Mexican-American Culture, Machismo, Self-determination, Resilience, Union Membership, Job Security, Have Someone Advocate for Their Rights, Job Displacement, Trade-related Closure, Breach of the Psychological Contract, Emotional Distress, Education and Retraining, Entrepreneurship and Problems with Workforce Benefits.

The themes were expanded based on participants' words and then discussed through a post-analysis literature review. Recommendations were made to government and non-government organizations advocating for a potential change in policies. Recommendations were also provided to healthcare providers and to U.S. American workers. Finally, recommendations were made for future research.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript to my family: Cipriano (Cipi), Martin, Eric, and my wonderful husband, Cipriano (Pano) who has been very supportive and patient with me. Sons, my love for you has no boundaries; you mean the world to me and I am honored to have a special bond with you. Throughout the course of my studies I watched you grow, persist, persevere and accomplish your goals – I am very proud of you! My love for you provided the strongest source of motivation in writing this dissertation. I specially thank you for reminding me that giving up was not an option. I feel truly blessed to have such a loving family that encouraged me to follow my dreams. This dedication is extended to my grandchildren--Cipriano III (Lil Cipi), Deanna (DeDee), Emmanuel (Manny), and Martin Jr. (Lil M.) -- Your love and your inquisitive nature have brightened my world. My love for you transcends everything; know that Nanna will always be there for you. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my mother who at a young age had to work to assist the family and never finished high school. Special dedication to my Abue, who encouraged me to further my education and stood by my side when nobody else did; thanks for guiding me from heaven. Wish you were here to see me graduate. Te quiero mucho Abue.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. McLean; I am blessed to have you as an Advisor. God sent you in a time of massive confusion and at a time when I was considering giving it all up. But your words of “don’t let the fire burn out” inspired me to persevere. Thanks to my committee members, Dr. Jamie Callahan, Dr. Toby Egan, and Dr. James Lindner for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research.

Special thanks to my family for your love and your support. I want to extend my gratitude to my friends and colleagues for keeping me focused; and to my research participants, the displaced workers, for sharing their experience of displacement, making this dissertation possible. Finally, thank You God almighty for allowing my dream to come true!

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is currently a problem in the United States as a result of the economic crisis that began in 2008. The downsizing and job loss that characterize this period are reflected in statistics from the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010c), reporting that there are currently 14.8 million unemployed people. In 2008, 21,137 mass layoff events resulted in 2,130,220 people filing for initial unemployment claims, and, in 2009, there were 28,030 layoff events that resulted in 2,796,456 people filing initial unemployment claims (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b). Mass layoff events mean that 50 or more people were laid off from a single employer, and extended mass layoffs mean 50 or more people from one employer were unemployed for at least 31 days duration (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010d). These figures include workers who lost their jobs and sought benefits for the first time under Unemployment Insurance (UI) or who received benefits under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In the previous year, unemployment rates were equally bleak. In September 2009, Texas was among the states with the highest unemployment rate (Texas Workforce Commission, 2009b; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

The pervasive job loss and unemployment are the result of two primary factors: Trade-related policies and increased uses of technology. Trade-related policies date back

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This dissertation follows the style of *Adult Education Quarterly*.

to 1993 with the intent to equalize the world's economic markets by allowing each country involved in trade agreements to profit globally by reducing tariffs (Colburn, 2004). Trade-related outsourcing became part of a globalized economy, resulting in numerous jobs moving out of the country from different industries with substantial downsizing and job loss (Colburn, 2004; Giroux, 2005; Kletzer, 2005).

Increased use of technology has caused and will continue to shrink organizations as they become more automated, resulting in job loss, as addressed in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook Career Guide to Industries 2010-2011 edition*. (2010e). This handbook forecasts that future jobs will increasingly require that workers be skilled in the use of technology, and therefore, jobs will be eliminated, decreasing the workforce by the year 2018 by 48%.

As a result, workers are being displaced. Displaced workers are employees who lose their jobs "due to plant closures or relocation, insufficient work available, or positions or shifts being eliminated" (Redfield, 2005, p. 67). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010a) defined displaced workers as "persons 20 years and over who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished" (p. 1). Those workers qualify for services under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Displaced workers may be of any age, sex, socioeconomic status, or occupation. In the past, workers most affected by downsizing were blue-collar workers, young and male, in occupations that required "below average levels of education" (Fallick, 1996, p. 7). In the 1980s, however, more than 1.5 million middle-level management jobs were eliminated (Greenglass & Burke,

2001), a trend that has increased with the downsizing that has resulted from trade-related policies (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001; Miller & Robinson, 2004).

### **Statement of the Problem and Research Question**

This research explored the experiences of Mexican-American displaced workers related to their enrollment in a vocational retraining program after having lost their job. By looking at the individual experiences of such displaced workers in retraining programs, we will better understand what such an experience is like.

In order to explore the essence of the lived experience of this population, the following research question was examined: What are the experiences of Mexican-American displaced workers in San Antonio, Texas, as they participate in an educational or training program?

Little research was found that specifically examined displaced Mexican-Americans who have attempted retraining under the WIA program. In particular, this study provided a thick description of the experiences of displaced workers as they gained educational/occupational skills after displacement.

### **A Problem in Texas**

Texas is a state that has been particularly hard hit by downsizing. The unemployment rate in January, 2009, for the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) estimated the state of Texas' unemployment rate at 6.8% with approximate 797,000 unemployed people (Texas Workforce Commission, 2009b). In April, 2009, 13,300 manufacturing jobs were lost in Texas (Texas Workforce Commission, 2009c).

Contributing to its high unemployment rate is the nature of Texas' population, with a large portion of the population whose first language is not English. Studies have repeatedly shown that education and the ability to be fluent in English are important in securing employment in the U.S. (DeAnda, 2005; Kessler, 2004; McAtte & Benshoff, 2006), and people with low English proficiency "are disproportionately represented among the unemployed, the low-income stratum, and the less educated" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 9). Moreover, Texas has approximately 339,795 people who are considered to have limited English proficiency. A survey distributed to Texas residents that asked how well they speak English revealed that 1,428,510 responded not well/not at all (Texas Workforce Commission, 2010).

Some areas of the state have been more severely affected than others. In El Paso, in January, 2008, 280,200 people were employed, compared with 17,900 unemployed. A majority of El Paso's workforce had worked in the apparel industry, which consisted primarily of garment sewing, cutting, and finishing (Kessler, 2004). Between 1993 and 2000, El Paso lost half of those apparel jobs to Mexico, decreasing such jobs from 23,581 to 11,851 (Kessler, 2004).

San Antonio is another Texas city severely affected by a cycle of plant closures. Jobs in the manufacturing of jeans were moved to Costa Rica in 1990, displacing 1,150 workers, most of whom were Mexican-American women with low levels of education and limited English proficiency. Another major downsizing event followed, leaving additional unemployed workers (Dalby, 2005).

Downsizing events such as those that occurred in Texas have the potential to generate a variety of psychological effects among those who are displaced. Workers who experience job displacement or cyclical downsizing events are more likely to experience stress and behavioral and psychological problems (Campbell, Jamison, Worrall, & Cooper, 2001). Miller and Robinson (2004) explained that a psychological contract breaks when a person is terminated. They stated that workers tend to form a bond or psychological contract with their places of employment, in which the workers truly believe that they have job security and long-term employment; emotional problems result when the contract is broken and they are terminated. The processes of reemployment and planning for the future also create emotional stressors as they experience uncertainty and obstacles as they attempt to transition into new jobs (Mantler & Matejicek, 2005).

Displaced workers also experience a grieving process that has three phases. The first phase is the awareness of being displaced or the sense that “it can’t happen to me” (Eberts, 2005, p. 76). The second phase involves the decision whether to relocate or seek employment in the same area where they reside. The last phase is re-settling into a job, a phase that still involves stressors as the uncertainty of finding employment becomes real (Mantler & Matejicek, 2005). In short, grief and anger are emotions displaced workers must resolve before they can go on, and men are particularly vulnerable: “Men’s identities are attached to their jobs; men are most vulnerable to this. Unemployment creates social problems, including marital conflict, depression, domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, and even suicide” (Claypool, 2005, p. 30).



In response to the problems faced by displaced workers, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) implemented programs to assist such workers through the Workforce Investment Act. If organizations meet the criteria for trade-related downsizings, the displaced workers receive assistance from government-sponsored employment and retraining services through the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA). Supportive services are offered through Rapid Response Units that provide information about services available to employers and displaced workers (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2010). The focus of these Units is on job preparedness, training, resume building, and petitioning for certification under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2010). The workers need to be certified as trade affected workers before receiving services under TAA.

Two primary programs are offered by the Rapid Response Units. The TAA program provides workers with employment search services or training opportunities, and financial income while the individuals are searching for employment for up to two years (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2010). This time period generally allows the displaced worker some time to decide whether to participate in a retraining program (Carrol, Alt, Schuster, & Findley, 2000). Trade-related programs are not the only ones that provide assistance to displaced workers. Non-trade affected displaced worker receive unemployment insurance benefits and career assistance for a shorter period of time than the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)-qualified trade affected worker (Texas Workforce Commission,

2009a). Organizations that do not meet such criteria are those with fewer than 50 employees and those that are characterized by non-competition-related displacement. Such organizations often include outplacement programs as part of their human resource departments.

Individual states are responsible for program enrollment into these programs and for developing related services for displaced workers. In Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission (2009a), under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), offers retraining programs to individuals who need basic skills that will enable them to become reemployed. Retraining programs provide benefits of various kinds for their participants. An obvious benefit is that participants often become employed again. The advantages of combining job searching skills and education is noted by Kodrzycki (1997): “Those who received job training tended to make greater progress than those who had only academic training...In general, trainees were more likely than non-trainees to move to better occupations” (p. 51). Kessler (2004) observed that, of the workers who participated in a retraining program, 75% reentered the job market, with half of them earning 80% or more of their previous wages. Eberts (2005) agreed that “gains to displaced workers from training are substantive and may last for years” (p. 79). In contrast, workers who do not take part in a training program do worse in reemployment and wages (Kessler, 2004).

Despite some successes, retraining programs are limited in their capacity to benefit workers. One limitation is that success is mitigated by the education level of the participants. Kessler (2004) noted, for example, the prevalence of a low level of

education among displaced workers. Approximately 4,000 of 6,000 women displaced by trade-related closures in California had low educational levels. Of those 4,000, 25% had less than a high school diploma at the time of the layoff event. Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (2005) pointed out that the benefit of retraining depends on the type of schooling received. Overall, the less educated take longer to find jobs and might never equal their wages prior to job displacement. For educated adults, reentry into the labor market is relatively quick. Skilled workers may take as little as six months to be reemployed, in contrast to unskilled workers who have little or no education (Devine, Reay, Stainton, L., and Collins-Nakai, 1999).

Gender also affected the results of retraining programs. After completing their programs, men tended to find employment faster than women. Women eventually found jobs but at a lower wage than men. Four years later, these women tended to be making less than men (Jacobson et al., 2005). Jacobson et al. (2005) found that, even in a good economy and with comparable skills to men, women on average were unemployed for 20 weeks longer than men. In addition, men were employed full-time earlier than women (Knapp & Harms, 2002).

Age also impacted the outcomes of retraining programs. McAttee and Benschhoff (2006) found that older workers had a difficult time finding comparable employment following job displacement. They noted that workers who were more likely to seek retraining were aged 38-47.

Another problem with retraining programs is that those who lack transferable skills tend to be less successful in the programs. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) noted

that many displaced workers do not have transferable skills and are limited in employable skills. Daniels, Gobeli, and Findley, (2000); Carrol and his colleagues (2000) confirmed these findings. Their studies of log and mill workers who lost their jobs due to NAFTA indicated that few of the displaced workers were retrained, and few had transferable skills. Those who retrained tended to be middle-aged and eventually went back to work in the same industry, returning to what they knew best, accepting few or no benefits and lower wages in order to do so (Carrol et al., 2000; Daniels et al., 2000). Those who participate in retraining tend to move downward in terms of their vocational requirements and prestige of their new jobs (Kodrzycki, 1997).

### **Hermeneutic Phenomenology Methodology Framework**

Hermeneutic phenomenology involves actively setting aside theory and expectations to isolate and identify the participants' experiences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Because I used first-person accounts to obtain rich descriptions of Mexican-American displaced worker perceptions of their experiences in a retraining program in Texas, no predetermined theories were utilized.

### **Significance of the Study**

The increasing job displacement of Mexican-Americans from the workforce, and their entering into the learning environment for education and retraining, creates the need to understand the essence of their lived experience in this context. This may assist in the development of effective teaching and training methods as those involved reflection on the experiences of my participants. The results of this study may have

implications for both theory and practice in the field of adult learning and workforce programs as people reflect on the experiences of these participants in different contexts.

The findings may enhance the methods and techniques in which educators and workforce program administrators provide services to adults under the same or similar circumstances, especially given that there is a lack of literature with this participant group.

### **Limitations**

The study is focused on displaced workers from San Antonio in the State of Texas who were participating or had participated in a vocational retraining program so as to increase their opportunity to become gainfully reemployed. The participants might be reluctant to be completely open with me because of the possibility of the kinds of interactions they might have had with authority figures.

### **My Personal Biography**

According to Darroch and Silvers (1982), in an effort to eliminate bias, the researcher, especially one using hermeneutic phenomenology, needs to be like an open book. As such, I provide my personal memoirs of previous knowledge regarding this phenomenon.

As I reflect on the significant events from my past, the important aspects of my current life, and my future goals, the underlying theme is one of family values and education.

I am a wife, mother of three sons, grandmother of three boys and a girl, and a doctoral student. Certainly, having family of my own has shaped who I am, but my roots

run much deeper. Memories of my early years include living in two diverse environments, early educational experiences, and personal and family-related experiences.

I was born and raised in Ciudad Acuna, Mexico, across from the border town of Del Rio, Texas. I am the product of a failed marriage and never met my father. Because my mother had to work to earn a living, my Abue (grandmother) raised me along with her ten children; my grandfather had abandoned her. I was the youngest in the family. Living in Mexico was fun, and I embraced both cultures, basically experiencing the best of both worlds. What made Mexico fun was the aliveness of people, music playing everywhere, people talking to their neighbors, kids playing freely, and everyone relying on each other. In stark contrast was Del Rio, where people were generally indoors and kept to themselves. We were a very close-knit family and valued our cultural traditions and role expectations. For example, females attended to all the house needs, cleaned, and made sure the men had clean clothes. The men always sat first at the table to eat meals.

I grew up in a middle social class in spite of coming from a family of carpenters and manufacturing workers. Because my grandfather had abandoned the family, the older kids had to quit school and become the family's providers. My uncles were carpenters, and the females worked in a garment plant in Del Rio. My mother also worked at the manufacturing plant, so as to provide for our needs. My aunts and uncles eventually married and left the house. However, everyone visited on weekends, and we played games and problem-solved events together.

**My English Bias**

I was the first one in my family to attend U.S. American schools. The early years of schooling were somewhat difficult. I was awakening very early because I was commuting to school in Del Rio. Learning English was difficult because everyone at home spoke Spanish, and no one was able to help me with my homework. I was technically forced to learn the language because I became the family translator. I remember being in third grade and translating letters or conversations from doctors or lawyers. I often worried about the implications of a wrong translation and wondered, “Why don’t they learn English?” I just couldn’t understand why, if they could work and do things, they couldn’t learn English. Why depend on somebody else to read a letter? I saw that as a sign of weakness, and I didn’t like it.

**Job Loss**

My familiarity with displaced workers who lost their jobs as a consequence of trade-related closures is from personal and academic experiences. The main source of employment in Del Rio was the garment sewing manufacturing plant that employed large numbers of people, including my mother and three aunts--Rosy, Licha, and Elvira. Rosy and I were very close. I vividly remember the day she dropped out of school because she wanted to work at the manufacturing plant and help the family financially. She was only sixteen. Back then, that seemed a normal progression; people would leave school at a certain age and go to work. Over the years, my aunts got married, and two of

their husbands also worked at the manufacturing plant. It was not unusual to see generations of family members work for that employer.

I was different; I chose to enter college instead and not follow that path. After eleventh grade, I tested for the High School diploma, and, instead of the senior year, I went straight to community college. However, my educational background was not exactly at college level. Almost everyone in Del Rio spoke Spanish, so my English was not great. School was frustrating; I soon married and moved away and started my own family. My mother and my aunts and their husbands continued working for the manufacturing plant.

I was in my mid-twenties when it was rumored that the manufacturing plant would close its doors. Eventually, those rumors came true, and the plant closed its doors, relocating its business to South America. Although there was anger, there was also hope. People hoped that management would see the devastation of this move and hoped they would reconsider. That never happened, and thousands of people became unemployed. Everyone in town was confused, angry, and in shock. It was the main topic in town, and many families opted for unemployment services, including my family members.

This was my initial awareness of job displacement due to the influence of NAFTA. Families were devastated, especially dual-income families whose only source of income was generated through that manufacturing plant. This closure affected my family dynamics. One of my aunts and her husband, who also worked for the same plant, relocated to California in quest of better opportunities for their family.



Since Rosy had no high school diploma, and her husband had been educated in Mexico, they found themselves unable to find prompt reemployment. Both were offered the opportunity to enter an English class through a program. I do not remember if it was part of a vocational retraining program, or if it was the only thing that was offered to the displaced workers. I couldn't help thinking, "If they only knew English, things would be different for them." Going to school was received with mixed feelings by my aunts. They seemed to be frustrated, but on several occasions they asked me how to say a word, or ask for meanings. That always brought a smile to my face. At times, conversations around the house revolved around things they were learning in the classroom, and they also spoke of how "everyone made fun of each other" for the lack of proper pronunciation. However, financial problems soon emerged; it was hard to make ends meet.

Finding another job was difficult, for the whole town was in the same situation. Rosy and her husband uprooted their family in quest of employment. They had to provide for their three children and my Abue who lived with them, so there was no other option but to move.

My Aunt Licha joined them, and soon all three were reemployed by the same garment sewing employer, but in a different town. Licha left her high-school aged children and her husband back at home and came home every weekend. This was a strategic move in order to pay the mortgage and make the car payment. Otherwise, that would have never happened under normal circumstances, for family was extremely important, especially ones' children. She could no longer hire nannies, so she had to rely

on the extended family for help while she was gone. Her commuting lasted around one year.

My thoughts regarding my aunts' displacement experience were also of disbelief. I was touched by their situation. I often wondered if things would be different if they knew English; I wondered if making fun of each other in class was a way of coping with job loss, but I never asked them. What I found extremely sad was that my Abue opted not to move because all of her other family members were in the same town. Being the caretaker of her grandkids and seeing them part ways was heart breaking for her. I hated seeing her sadness and her tears. I was always on the sidelines, comforting my Abue. We all knew that relocation was needed in order for them to survive. However, I could not comprehend how they could work for the same company that had displaced them. Granted, it was another location, but I didn't understand their trust in the same employer.

Approximately ten years later, Rosy started seeing suspicious behaviors in her work place. She said, "I knew something was going on; they told us we were doing good work, but they would bring in new equipment, and other people came in to take pictures.... But there was something.... like a hidden tension that I had seen before." Rosy said, "I knew they were gonna close .... I knew it wasn't anything good. The people that had been through the first closure recognized those suspicious behaviors." Sure enough, that manufacturing plant also closed its doors. This time, she described, people were laid off "in rounds," and they too became displaced once more because the company relocated out of the country. Their experience of job displacement is what literature refers to as cyclical downsizing.

The news of the upcoming second displacement was also a surprise to me, but it was somewhat expected. My first impression all along when they relocated was, “How can you trust the same employer not to do the same thing and close its doors? How can you trust them?” Although I felt bad for them, I was more upset because the years had passed, and they still didn’t know enough English! I often wondered why they were so embarrassed about their pronunciation. My pronunciation was not perfect; people made fun of me, yet I tried. I didn’t care what others thought, or at least didn’t show it, but why not try? It was beyond me!

### **My Son’s Deafness**

Around the time my aunts were relocating to another town, after the first displacement, my youngest son was diagnosed as medically deaf. When the doctor said, “He will never talk,” it was like a sword had been embedded in my heart. I was in shock and disbelief. Those words resonated in my head, and my whole being was shaken. It was like being hit in the stomach with a blunt object, and it made my lungs gasp for air. For some reason, I kept thinking, “He will never hear a bird singing up in a tree.... my perfect, beautiful boy had a beautiful smile and innocent look.... how could he be deaf?”

Coincidentally, at that time, I had a dear friend of mine who had a deaf child who spoke using only sign language. Only his parents and sibling communicated with him using sign language. No other family member knew sign language; they gestured and pointed to make themselves understood. I saw the happy, young innocent child grow up and transform into an angry person. He went through life feeling like everyone else, until he got to his teens, and with that came the awareness of his deafness. He became

rebellious and angry. The once happy family was torn apart, and laughter was replaced by tears. I always wondered if these sudden changes came from the lack of communication.

I saw myself in their situation; my son was deaf, too, and I cried many tears and had many days of anguish. I was in denial. This was the beginning of looking for someone to “fix” his ears as I prayed for a miracle. I lost count of how many doctors we saw. At times, I didn’t ask questions because I just didn’t know what to ask. But with every visit, I learned something new. I was full of questions, but no answers, at least not what I wanted to hear. I experienced anxiety attacks; I felt so much pain, I felt powerless, I felt helpless, for I saw my son as so vulnerable. I didn’t want him to go through what my friend’s son was going through. I DID NOT want to be in my friends’ shoes! I wanted him to grow up happy and independent. Because we live in a speaking world, I wanted him to speak with his voice, even if the odds were against him.

In my quest to make him talk, I started working with him, manipulating sound coming out of his mouth; I worked with him several hours a day, every day, for weeks and months. Perhaps it was my denial that kept me going, but when he sounded letters, it told me that he could talk! His first words were “milk” and “mom”; that was music to my ears!

Now I was faced with the decision to use sign language, as the schools suggested, or to find something else. But what? Now, more than ever, I regretted not having completed college. This was the turning point of my life. My quest for answers started with educating myself on educational opportunities for deaf children. We tried

sign language, or what is known as total communication, because that was the only thing that was offered through schools. This method involves talking to the child while signing at the same time. He was not happy and never tried to speak with his voice. Our efforts arduously continued so he would talk with his voice, and, at the first opportunity, we relocated to a larger city where we found a school in which he eventually learned to speak using his voice.

My family members, Abue, aunts, and uncles were very supportive and encouraged me to follow my intuition. The family support was very important in my time of sorrow, even though I was not able to do anything for them when they lost their jobs.

Dealing with my son's deafness shaped me into the person I am today. The only way to help him was through education, and so I returned to school. It was this traumatic event that gave me an inner drive to succeed, to persevere, and to challenge myself in ways I never knew. It was through education that I was able to help my son and my family avoid future distress. When I think of my aunts' job displacement, I can not help wondering if that event was not traumatic enough for them to learn English? While the experiences are completely different, I strongly feel that learning the language would have positioned them and their family in a better situation long term. Their inability to learn English was almost like being deaf to the spoken language. Perhaps because I never actually got to have a good talk with them about their experience in the classroom, my interest in the displaced workers' experience surfaced as I worked toward my doctoral degree.

### **Academic Project**

My academic knowledge about job displacement has been through conducting a review of the literature and through a research study that I led at the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL). The findings of that study revealed that job displacement does create emotional ramifications in people, just as it did for my family members. I also learned of the benefits of retraining after job displacement.

In that research study, a small group of workers had recently lost their job and were participating in General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes as part of the workforce retraining plan. I felt sorry for them, for they exhibited and talked about their stressful situation. They were going through different emotions and felt hopeless. What puzzled me more is that some workers earned their GED in Spanish. My thought was, “What is going to happen when they apply for jobs? “How will they handle the interviews without speaking English?”

### **Summary of My Background**

My life has undoubtedly been touched by my life experiences. I experienced living in a cultural environment where family ties were uninterrupted, and everything was turned into chaos as a reaction to job displacement. Over all, I have revisited painful events like job displacement and my son’s deafness, which justified, at least in my mind, a necessity to learn English and the necessity to learn a skill. Perhaps the reason I never had an in-depth conversation with my aunts is because of my need to have the voices of displaced workers heard in the form of my dissertation. Little is known of the experience

of Mexican-Americans in that situation, and I hope to shine some light on this phenomenon. I attempted to avoid any undue influence, biases, and judgments that would cloud my integrity in conducting this project. Preconceptions were bracketed to the best of my ability.

### **Operational Definitions**

Key words to be used in this dissertation are defined in this section.

*Adversely Affected Worker.* Adversely affected worker are workers who have been adversely affected by foreign trade (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011).

*Displaced Worker.* Displaced workers are “persons 20 years and over who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a, p. 1).

*Learning.* Learning is “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162).

*North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA).* This Act is an agreement referred to as NAFTA that was signed in 1994 between United States, Mexico, and Canada. The goal was to equalize the world’s markets by eliminating import and export tariffs between them (Office of the United States Trade Representative Executive Office of the President, 2012).

*Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).* The Trade Adjustment Assistance “is a federal program that provides a path for employment growth and opportunity through aid

to U.S. workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade” (U.S. Department of Labor Employment Training Administration, 2011b, p.1).

*Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA)*. Trade readjustment allowance is a monetary payment provided weekly to qualified adversely affected workers who participate in a TAA- approved training (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (2011a).

*Unemployment Insurance (UI)*. Unemployment Insurance is an employer-paid program that pays benefits to qualified workers unemployed through no fault of their own. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) pays temporary financial help based on workers' previous earnings, while they are looking for other work (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011).

### **Summary**

This chapter is an introduction to this research on displaced Mexican-American workers who lived in San Antonio, Texas, and who were participating or had participated in educational or retraining programs. The research question was identified out of my concern with their high unemployment and workers turning into learners without much preparation, especially a lack of English language skills. There are a significant number of benefits available to workers who have been adversely affected by trade. For those able to take advantage of the retraining, there are many benefits and some problems associated with their participation. The importance of education and retraining programs is an important element in achieving successful prompt reemployment.



I shared my personal story in order to help me bracket my preconceptions and to help the reader understand what led me to have an interest in this topic. In my personal life, I was fortunate as a Mexican to have the opportunity to study English. I saw the damage done by displacement of Mexican-American workers in my own extended family. Key definitions were provided to allow the reader to understand the words used in the context of this topic.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **PRE-ANALYSIS LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter is a pre-analysis literature review. As previously explained, the topic of this research stemmed from my personal experiences. This chapter addresses information that I had previously encountered before the inception of this research as an additional form of bracketing. A comprehensive literature review will follow after the data have been analyzed, focusing on the themes identified.

#### **Mexican-American Culture**

This study is aimed at understanding the phenomenon of job displacement in Texas, in particular of Mexican-Americans who were participating or have participated in retraining programs as a consequence of losing their job. For the purpose of this study, Mexican-Americans were defined as people who self-identified as Mexican-American. The U.S. Census has created a category for Hispanic data; however, research studies often refer to women of color who are not African American, as Latinas, Mexican, Mexican-Americans, or Hispanics, without making a distinction (Firestone & Harris, 1994). This study will utilize the term Mexican-American to refer to these groups.

Mexican-Americans are the fastest growing minority group in the United States. To understand better the experiences of Mexican-American displaced workers, we need to understand their culture and gender roles. Historically, women from this culture have overcome many barriers imposed by gender roles and norms, such as male domination or machismo, widely accepted and supported by the Mexican culture. The father, or the

patriarch of the family, holds the position of power, and women and children are subservient to them. Women are considered to be the nurturers, and the men are the breadwinners. In spite of the unequal power, Mexican-Americans are characterized as being in close-knit families, and they tend to retain their language and traditions (Firestone & Harris, 1994).

Murgia (1989) pointed out that, as a group, Mexican-Americans have faced many economic and political challenges that prevented participation in many sectors of the workforce. As a group, they advocated for changes and the same rights as their white counterparts. Their efforts led to the creation of advocacy groups, like the Chicano and La Raza movements, in an effort to assert recognition of their own identity, which differed from Anglo-Americans who have always been the predominant group (Murgia, 1989). Over the years, Mexican-Americans have joined all sectors of the workforce. Mexican-American women evolved from homemakers to also contributing to their household by working outside their home (DeAnda, 2005; Firestone & Harris, 1994).

### **Job Displacement Phenomenon and its Effects**

Worker downsizing, as influenced by trade-related organizational changes and global economies, is a phenomenon that affects people regardless of age, gender, or socioeconomic status. The demographic characteristics of downsized workers have also changed over time. In the past, the most affected were blue-collar workers, young adults, and tended to be males (Fallick, 1996). Traditionally, these workers came from occupations with “below average levels of educational” (p. 7) background. However, “in the 1980’s more than 1.5 million middle level management jobs were eliminated”

(Greenglass & Burke, 2001, p. 1). White-collar workers also became affected by downsizing.

Organizations are shrinking and are becoming more automated, increasing the threat of job loss. According to Claire and Dufresne (2004), downsizing is used extensively during economic times, especially since the inception of trade-related policies. Cooper et al. (2001) pointed out that involuntary unemployment and downsizing have increased since the 1980s, just as mergers and acquisitions also create displaced workers (Callahan, 2002). White-collar workers in middle and upper management have also been affected by these trends (Cooper et al., 2001; Miller & Robinson, 2004). As this trend will continue to occur, Hispanic displaced workers will experience job loss, as they often lack the skills to compete in the new global and technological marketplace (Texas Workforce Commission, 2009a; 2010).

### **Trade-Affected and Other Types of Displacement**

The difference between job losses that qualify under the Trade Adjustment Act guidelines and other types of job displacement or layoffs is in the manner by which bureaucratic structures handle and direct the downsized workers for services. If organizations meet the criteria for trade-related downsizing, the displaced workers will receive assistance from government-sponsored employment and retraining services through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA). Career counseling and job search skills and financial stipends are part of the benefits. This and additional information is presented more fully in Chapter 1.

In contrast, a non-trade affected displaced worker receives unemployment insurance benefits and career assistance for a relatively shorter period of time than the trade-related qualified affected worker (Texas Workforce Commission, 2009a). Miller and Robinson (2004), in their review of literature, identified some organizations that do not meet TAA criteria, e.g., organizations often include an outplacement program as part of the Human Resource department. Assistance to non-trade-related displaced workers usually includes qualifying the worker for Workforce Investment Act benefits, which include career building strategies, resume building, job search strategies, and unemployment benefits for a determined length of time. However, they do not receive benefits under TAA or TRA.

Miller and Robinson (2004) found that some displaced workers experience higher adverse emotional reactions when terminated because their self-identity tends to be heavily invested in their careers. Their close identification with the organization creates in their minds a psychological contract based on competence, hard work, and loyalty, which suddenly is broken. Anticipating irrational feelings and emotions, companies hire outplacement personnel (downsizing agents) to provide immediate information for reemployment. The organization's goal is to prevent bad feelings; they mitigate this by offering special job loss packages (Miller & Robinson, 2004).

Furthermore, there is a distinction between the types of assistance an individual may qualify for, or the type of service provided, depending on the number of displaced people. For instance, people experiencing mass layoffs tend to receive broad

instructions on resume building, careers, and reemployment in groups (Miller & Robinson, 2004), contrary to non-trade job loss events.

### **Texas Displacement Phenomenon**

In 1990, the San Antonio, Texas, manufacturing industry started a cycle of plant closures. The Levy industry notified 1,150 employees that their jobs were going to Costa Rica and closed its doors. The majority of employees were Mexican-American females with a low education level, and some had limited English proficiency skills (Dalby, 2005). At the time, TAA provided these individuals with remedial GED and English classes, but it was not enough for the workers to find employment (Paoletti, 2006). Feeling betrayed and hurt, a group of women demanded vocational retraining. Eight women formed an advocacy group called La Fuerza Unida (The United Force). Together, they started advocating for changes in how the retraining programs were handled and provided emotional support to other displaced workers (Dalby, 2005). The last major downsizing event in San Antonio occurred about 2006, continuing to leave hundreds of unemployed people, and this group was there to assist them.

A large majority of El Paso's workforce worked in the apparel industry, which consisted almost entirely of garment sewing, cutting, finishing, and laundering the denim (Kessler, 2004): "Between 1993 and 2000 the city of El Paso lost fully half of its apparel jobs from 23, 581 to 11,851" (Kessler, 2004, p. 314). Eventually, all of these jobs were transferred to Mexico by cyclical downsizing events. Most of the workers were Hispanic or of Mexican descent with limited English proficiency, just like the California workers. Mexican-American women were among the gravely affected

because they were employed in large numbers in this industry (Kessler, 2004; Paoletti, 2006).

It is apparent that displaced workers undergo personal challenges associated with psychological well-being before and after job loss, especially if they lack educational preparedness. The following section will discuss these challenges briefly.

### **Psychological and Emotional Effects**

According to Barbalet (2001), emotions are triggered by an event, such as unemployment, and an individual can experience fear, grief, stress, and uncertainty. Eberts (2005) stated that job loss has deep significance for people and compares grieving with job loss. For instance, he mentioned that people go through different stages of grief and denial. Job loss and going through the process of reemployment or planning for the future also create emotional stressors (Mantler & Matejcek, 2005). Mantler and Matejcek (2005) pointed out that those individuals also experience stress, uncertainty, and obstacles as they attempt to transition into another job.

#### *Anticipated Fear*

Trade-related driven change, organizational change (such as a merger or acquisition), or outsourcing, whose aim is to maintain its competitive status, consequentially creates downsizing and layoffs and a multitude of emotions for victims and survivors of such an event (Callahan, 2002). Survivors are people who retained their jobs, and victims are those who lost their jobs. Displaced workers undergo vast emotions attributed to the loss of employment as a direct consequence of organizational attempts to maintain their competitive status in the economic market. Emotions, by definition,

imply movement, thereby prompting action (Callahan, 2002). Domagalski (1999) stated that emotions “are social” and tend to be “caught (sic.)” by others (p. 834).

Barbalet (2001) explained that fear and unemployment are interrelated. He stated that unemployment is a fearful event that, when anticipated, extends fear to the social group and its shared membership. The social group, in this context, refers to a person’s work environment, including people who work together and share a common bond. Fear of unemployment then becomes a social manifestation of the group. Together, the group with its various emotions and personalities creates an ambiance of climate and social and emotional influences, especially as emotions are social and tend to spread to members of a group (Barbalet, 2001). For example, fear of being laid off threatens a person’s well-being and may bring about “flight and fight behaviors” (p. 153) in individuals. Barbalet contended that those behaviors are inherently associated with fear of losing one’s job, hence, fear of job displacement.

According to Barbalet (2001), people tend to experience emotion through expectation and anticipation of a given event. This emotion is an expectation combined with an individual’s perception of insufficient power is likely to result in fear when change is introduced into their social arena, or, in this case, the individuals’ workplace. An expectation subsequently becomes an anticipation of something that can or may happen in the future. Anticipation then becomes a temporary anticipated emotionally involved event (Barbalet, 2001). He noted that, when workers anticipate an upcoming downsizing event, they often feel fear because of the lack of power. This lack of power



“makes the future both uncertain and uninviting, which is suitable conditions for fear-anxiety” (Barbalet, 2001, p.156).

It is important to understand that fear, as a basic emotion, has a direct connection with social structures (Ekman, 1999) and that “individual actions are influenced by social structures” (Callahan & McCollum, 2002, p. 291). Barbalet (2001) indicated that fear is the “structural conditions of insufficient power...or...the excess of the other’s power” (p. 153) that create fear. He implied that people’s actions are a reaction to fearing inability to accomplish a specified goal. For instance, organizations tend to fear not being able to compete or survive in a new economy. As a result, some move abroad, resulting in worker displacement.

Cooper, Dewe, and O’Driscoll (2001) found two categories of workers that emerged: victims and survivors. Both tend to experience negative emotions and stressors connected to perception of unfair treatment and job related insecurity.

#### *Survivors*

Survivors are those who retain their job and who could be next in line for future downsizing (Cooper, Dewe, and O’Driscoll, 2001). The threat of job loss “not only affects current and future income, it also challenges the person’s general self-esteem, which is closely linked to job status and over-all well-being” (Cooper et al., 2001, p. 45). Cooper et al. (2001), in their review of literature, found that the threat of job loss has been linked to serious health problems, such as “ulcers, colitis, alopecia, and muscular pain” (p. 45) and “somatic complaints” (Mantler & Matejicek, 2005, p. 201).

### *Victims*

Victims are those who are displaced from their job (Cooper et al., 2001). Koebler (2002) investigated three phases through which displaced workers go: first is the awareness of being displaced: “the immediate reaction to the news of a layoff, or termination, is denial–‘It can’t happen to me’” (Eberts, 2005 p. 76). This in essence is the grieving phase. The second phase is decision-making as to whether to relocate or seek employment in the same area where they reside. For many people, this is the transition phase, where agencies through various programs assist workers in ameliorating the financial hardship “in addition to the emotional pain due to their layoff” (Eberts, 2005, p. 75). And the last phase is the job hopping and resettling into a job. Stressors continue into this phase because now uncertainty of finding employment becomes real (Mantler & Matejicek, 2005). “The longer they are unemployed, the tougher it is to overcome obstacles” (Daniels et al., 2000, p. 140). Workers may choose to enter into vocational or retraining programs so as to increase their skills and increase their prospects of reemployment.

Claypool (2005) pointed out that grief and anger are emotions a displaced worker must resolve before he or she can go on. “Men’s identities are attached to their jobs; men are most vulnerable to this. Unemployment creates social problems, including marital conflict, depression, domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, and even suicide” (Claypool, 2005, p. 30).

## **Educational Participation**

When the displaced worker decides to participate in a retraining program, he or she unknowingly changes from worker to learner without much preparation. Eberts (2005) indicated that, upon job termination, the displaced worker ultimately comes to a decision to enter or not to enter a retraining program. The Texas Workforce Commission (2009a), under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), offers retraining programs to individuals who need basic skills requirements that will enable them to become reemployed. Once the displaced worker qualifies for trade-related services/TAA services and chooses to enter a retraining program, basic education program, or to learn English as a second language; the assumption is that retraining programs will increase their skills and, hence, their prospects of reemployment earning competitive wages.

### **From Worker to Learner**

Previous educational background is not the only important factors to finding prompt reemployment. Kessler (2004) pointed out that many displaced workers need to increase their English proficiency and basic skills so as to enable them to secure a job. Similarly, the lack of basic skills (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) and the lack of transferable skills hinder job opportunities (Carrol, Blatner, Alt, Schuster, & Finley, 2000; Daniels, Gobeli, & Finley, 2000). For example, in a longitudinal study of log mill workers who lost their job, many did not have transferable skills; however, not all opted to enter a retraining program (Carrol et al., 2000; Daniels et al., 2000). The majority of those workers returned to work within the same industry for lower pay. The lack of transferable skills has been addressed as a challenge to reemployment (Carrol et al.,

2000; Daniels, Gobeli & Findley, 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Further, in their studies, they found that few men retrained and few had transferable skills. Those who retrained tended to be middle-aged, and eventually the majority went back to work in the same industry. Many reentered the job market in lower paying, or unstable occupations. Those who chose entrepreneurship found that the lack of skills was a struggle; some returned to what they knew best, willing to accept few or no benefits and lower wages (Carrol et al., 2000; et al., 2000). This pattern resembles that of women who lack skills and are willing to work for less money and fewer benefits (Kessler, 2004).

Studies have repeatedly shown that education and the ability to be fluent in English are important in securing employment (DeAnda, 2005; Kessler, 2004; McAtte & Benschhoff, 2006). People with low English proficiency are overrepresented among the underemployed (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Kessler (2004) analyzed archival data from 6,000 people residing in California who had completed reemployment training under trade-related TAA guidelines. She noted that 4,000 of the 6,000 displaced women had low educational levels. Of those, 4,000 or 25% of the women had less than a high school diploma at the time of the layoff event. Government funds were provided to train people for advanced sewing operator positions and NAFTA-related jobs that supported the company. The goal was to generate a small number of individuals “from inner city to create higher skilled workers” (Kessler, 2004, p. 324) who were fluent in English. However, those positions generated interest from monolingual individuals willing to work in an unstable environment.

Eventually, all retraining was stopped citing “anything related to the apparel industry” (Kessler, 2004, p. 324) was to come to an end.

Of the workers who participated in the retraining program, 75% reentered the job market, with half of them earning 80% or more of their previous wage. Kessler (2004) noted that most people were employed in restaurants and the service industry. She also noted that workers who did not take part in the training program “did worst in reemployment and wages” (Kessler, 2004, p. 324).

### **Benefits of Retraining**

Kodrzycki (1997), in her examination of several training programs for displaced workers, examined outcomes of such programs. She found that “displaced workers who change occupation or industry suffer larger wage losses than those who find jobs in their previous occupation and industry” (p. 45). She further stated that, “on average, displaced workers who went through education programs had been employed in occupations that called for less rigorous preparation and were less prestigious than the occupations of those who did not train” (p. 50). However, those who did train tended to move downward in terms of their new job’s general educational requirement and had lower vocational requirements and prestige (Kodrzycki, 1997).

The advantages of combining job searching skills and education is noted by Kodrzycki (1997): “The largest improvement was for those who had undergone job training in combination with education, trainees were more likely than non-trainees to move to better occupations. Those who received job training tended to make greater progress than those who had only academic training” (Kodrzycki, 1997, pp. 50-51).

Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (2005) pointed out that the benefit of retraining depends on the type of schooling received. In their study of 36 males and 37 females, half of their participants had previously had some college education. Upon displacement, they entered and completed a retraining program at a community college. They compared two groups of dislocated workers undergoing retraining: group #1 enrolled in a technical trade curriculum; and group #2 was enrolled in fewer vocational classes and more humanities courses. They found that group #1 tended to be males; and groups #2 were mostly women. After completing their programs, men earned more and found employment faster than women. Follow-up indicated that, four years later, these women were still making less than the men. Jacobson et al. (2005) concluded that the retraining participants enrolled in technical careers fared better than those participating in traditional college courses. Hence, people in technical careers found employment faster.

On the other hand, participation in retraining programs is not always easy for women. McAtee and Benschhoff (2006) in their seminal study of rural dislocated women who were going through a career transition, identified several barriers or issues that can hinder participation in retraining programs. They surveyed 125 women aged 28-57. Her sample consisted of 86 white women and 39 black women with an average age of 42 years. The criteria for their study were that all of the participants had to have a high school diploma or GED and had to be laid off from the manufacturing industry two years prior to the beginning of her study. McAtee and Benschhoff (2006) used a transition model that asked questions that asked questions regarding to situation, self, support, and strategies employed after being displaced.

Based on the results from the transition model, McAtte and Benshoff (2006) found that older ethnic minorities, women, people with low educational level, and people from low economic status had a difficult time finding comparable employment following job displacement. They concluded that women who were more likely to seek retraining opportunities were between 38-47 years old. In addition, McAtte and Benshoff (2006) identified lack of support as another barrier women often face. Not having an adequate support system from friends or family may prevent participation in retraining programs.

The level of an individual's education, just as with language skills, appears to be a predictor for a prompt reentry into the labor market and higher future wages. Jacobson et al. (2005) found that long-term earnings by displaced workers increased 9% for men and 13% for women upon earning a college degree. Eberts (2005) agreed that "gains to displaced workers from training are substantive and may last for years" (p. 79). However, the situation is different for people who are non-graduates and are willing to work for less money.

### **Summary**

Information regarding unemployment in Texas was provided and information regarding the Mexican-American culture was also provided. Mexican-Americans are described as the fastest growing minority group in Texas and have struggled in attaining political recognition. They also have tended to adhere to its cultural traditions and traditionally lack educational skills. The section on job displacement phenomenon and its effects on people who lose their jobs explained that people at different career levels are affected by job loss, especially if they lack educational and transferable skills. The

importance of possessing basic and transferable skills was addressed as an avenue to acquire prompt re-employment. The difference between trade affected job displacement and other types of displacement provided information of how government programs such as TAA/TRA assist those who qualify for trade-related benefits versus benefits that are not available in other types of layoffs. Affective emotions, such as fear, anger, and other reactions were discussed as emotions displaced workers experience during the process of self-identification as a victim or a survivor of job loss. The section of benefits to retraining pointed out prompt reemployment is one of advantages to participation in a retraining program. Finally, this chapter also pointed out that people who lack English proficiency, and people who lack support from family and friends tend not to participate in retraining programs, and also tend to accept lower paying jobs.

This chapter established the foundational concepts that I had prior to conducting this research regarding the experiences of Mexican-Americans workers who, after job displacement, participate in a retraining program with the goal to become reemployed. A detailed literature review will follow after themes emerge from the data analysis.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

In this chapter, I explain the methodology and methods chosen for this research. Because displaced Mexican-American workers who have participated in retraining programs have different backgrounds and contexts, it is important to understand the essence of the job loss experience and to understand their role as adult learners. A qualitative investigation using hermeneutic phenomenology was used in this study.

Also, in this chapter, I describe the selection of participants and present the research design for this study. Specific sources and data analysis that describe the experiences of job displacement as lived by Mexican-American workers and their experiences as they participate in a retraining program are presented. Finally, trustworthiness procedures are described, and the role of the researcher is explained.

#### **Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

A qualitative research methodology was chosen as the principal mode of inquiry because it provides thick descriptions of a person's life, holistic experiences, and relationships with the self and with others (Creswell, 2007). This information comes directly from the participants, and I, as the researcher, report facts, opinions, and occurrences of an event, and the meaning of those events, specifically through the eyes of the participants. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for the study of the whole person and his or her unique lived experiences and reflections (van Manen, 1990). The research objective is to understand the lived experiences and the meaning of those experiences by displaced Mexican-Americans who participated in a retraining program

with the goal of becoming reemployed. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the best way to describe and interpret the meaning of the lived experience of individuals (van Manen, 1990). This approach utilizes the notion of *Verstehen*, which consists of empathic and interpretative data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This research was designed to help make sense and interpret phenomena based people's meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

Phenomenological research embraces the use of several methods for data collection in a natural setting, like observation, field notes, and open-ended interviews that evolve as the study progresses (Creswell, 2007). In addition, Merriam and Cafarella (1999) asserted that qualitative research is unique in obtaining in-depth information that greatly contributes to the field of education. This type of research seeks to understand people's perceptions, feelings, and experiences and to develop a deep analysis of the participants' stories. As "consciousness constructs as much as it perceives the world" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 488), questions like who, what, and where that give support to methods for construction of meaning were utilized, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2000). As the interpretation of constructed meaning is involved, it is logical to use an interpretive data analysis approach suggested by van Manen (1990). His hermeneutic paradigm guided the data analysis.

The focus of this research was to explore the phenomenon of job displacement as experienced and lived by the participants. This approach is best suited for this form of inquiry as it explains and describes how Mexican-Americans describe and make

meaning of their experiences with the phenomenon of job displacement and their participation in a retraining program.

### **Assumptions of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research**

Hermeneutic phenomenology assumes that there is a world of lived experience and that everyone has pre-understandings, presuppositions, and assumptions about life events. Van Manen (1990) assumed that, by bringing to light our personal assumptions and presuppositions, we will increase our ability to bracket our beliefs so as not to bias our interpretation of the lived experience of others. This is why I provided a detailed auto-biography related to the topic of this dissertation in the first chapter.

### **Characteristics of Phenomenology**

Phenomenological research has been described as “heuristic research” meaning to “discover” (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 38). Phenomenology, as described by Moustakas (1994), dates back to Hegel and Kant, in early 1765 and credits Husserl’s phenomenology approach to generating new knowledge by focusing on “the things themselves” (p. 26) and focuses on asking “what is the nature of the experience? (van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Moustakas (1994) explained that phenomenon originates from the Greek word, *phaenesthai*, which means “to flare up, to show itself, to appear” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). “Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). The goal of a phenomenological study is to understand and explain a phenomenon (Dukes, 1984).

Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenology model includes terms like essence and bracketing to capture and describe the phenomenon under study. Dukes (1984) defined

essence as “the logic of a particular experience, how it essentially presents itself” and defined bracketing as “the process of temporarily suspending any consideration of the facts, in order to uncover the essential principle of an experience” (p. 199). Creswell (2007) noted the importance of bracketing the researcher’s own view and perceptions of a given phenomenon as necessary for a deeper exploration into a phenomenon. He commented on the importance of conducting multiple or in-depth interviews where statements are horizontalized and themes are created based on those data.

Horizontalization involves “highlighting sentences or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Every statement has equal value and the meaning may come from one sentence or from a combination of sentences (Moustakas, 1994).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) observed that phenomenology has endured through time. However, the concept of bracketing a person’s own existing views of a specific phenomenon is attributed to Schutz in the late 1960’s (Husserl, 1970). In addition, Husserl is also credited with adding the concept of immersion into human consciousness for answers that interpret individuals’ experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

When describing phenomenological research, Colaizzi (1978) added that there is no single method or procedure, but only methods and procedures of description in which researcher objectivity, inasmuch as it is possible, must be used. Similarly, Rudestam and Newton (2001) described phenomenology as a method of inquiry that attempts to describe and elucidate the meanings of human experience. The researcher must carefully listen, observe, and formulate an empathic alliance with the participant. The goal is to

create themes without making an analysis until the complete set of interviews is analyzed. The data then are reduced, reconstructed, and analyzed.

Similarly, Creswell (2007) supported the use of phenomenology when the intention is to understand the experiences of several individuals who share a common phenomenon. This in-depth knowledge will allow for the understanding of the impact that job displacement has on the lives of individuals and their families. Although he suggested that researchers need to include their “own experiences of the context and situations that influenced their experiences” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 61-62), van Manen (1990) and Husserl (1970) supported the notion of bracketing the researcher’s view and perceptions of a given phenomenon as necessary for a deeper exploration of a phenomenon.

## **Methods**

In this section, the research design for this study is presented, along with site selection, participant selection, interview protocol and data collection, Institutional Review Board statement, data analysis, and the role of the researcher.

### **Research Design**

The phenomenological research process is described as a mode of inquiry that requires a critical method of observation that results in new knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) offered guidelines and recommendations for this process to ensure that the essence of the lived experience is consciously identified. Because the emphasis of this study is to explore and capture the essence of the phenomenon of the experiences of displaced Mexican-Americans and their participation in a retraining

program, van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology research method was utilized.

Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutical methodological approach recommends six thematic approaches in conducting research studies. His guideline consists of six steps and is not meant to be sequential. These steps are meant to inspire the researcher's creativity in conducting a study. The six steps are noted as follows:

1. Turn to a phenomenon which seriously interest and commits us to the world (The research question).
2. Investigate experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it (Data collection process; requires the researcher's conscious knowledge of his or her lived experience).
3. Reflecting on the essential themes (Understanding the phenomenon on a deeper level, deeper meaning and its significance).
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting (Narrating and interpreting the themes).
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon (Involves sustaining an interest entirely on the person's lived experience).
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 30-31).

Van Manen's six step guide for conducting hermeneutic phenomenology research was helpful in my study of displaced Mexican-Americans who participated in retraining programs.

### **Site Selection**

The greater San Antonio area was selected for this study due to the high number of Mexican-Americans in the population. Because of several manufacturing plant closures in this area, it is assumed that downsizing and layoffs had affected thousands of Mexican-Americans. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the hardest hit labor sector has been the manufacturing sector (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010e), resulting in many manufacturing companies relocating to Mexico and abroad for cheaper labor. California and Texas are said to be among the states most affected. Such closures have left behind clusters of low-skilled, low-educated, displaced manufacturing workers and many minorities who lack English proficiency skills (Kessler, 2004). Due to several cyclical downsizing events in South Texas (Kessler, 2004, Paoletti, 2006), San Antonio, a large metropolitan area in this geographic location, was selected for this study with the goal to maximize variation in age and gender.

### **Participant Selection**

Eleven participants were selected using the following criteria: 1) the participants identified themselves as Mexican-American; 2) the participants were displaced workers who qualified for retraining services under the Workforce Investment Act, TAA/TRA; 3) the participants resided in the greater San Antonio, Texas, area. Participants were identified through acquaintances; friends were asked if they knew someone who had lost their job. I gave my telephone number so they could pass it around to their friends. Three participants contacted me, and seven requested I call them at a specific day or time. The initial contact with all 11 participants was via telephone. No minimum or maximum age

limitations were established for this study. The 11 people interviewed consisted of eight males and three females.

Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) recommended a small number of participants; they recommended a maximum of ten people. They also recommended doing in-depth or multiple interviews utilizing open-ended questions. Thus, 11 participants were identified, in case one dropped out. However, fewer may be interviewed if saturation is reached earlier. Descriptions of each participant and his or her story are included later in this chapter.

### **Interview Protocol**

To obtain information about participants' perceptions and constructions of their retraining experience, an open-ended question was used during the interviews (What has your experience been dealing with displacement from your job when your workplace was closed and later participate in an educational program?), along with probes. Patton (1980), pointed out that semi-structured interview questions is an approach that "involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins" (p.198). In an effort to earn their trust, before each interview we had a casual conversation; I expressed an interest in understanding the impact and effects of being affected by job loss, and the first interview involved their life history and would be unstructured.

Seidman's (1991) interview method that involves interviewing each participant more than once was followed. This interviewing process requires the researcher is to inquire about the context of the participants' experience; ask the participants to



reconstruct details of their experience, and encourage the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience as a whole. I interviewed the participants twice using the language of their choice, English or Spanish. The duration of each interview ranged from 60 minutes to 1½ hours long, the second and follow-up interviews averaged another hour, making the interview process average 2½ hours long. Clarification interviews were conducted over the telephone four to six weeks after the first interview. The first interview was semi-structured and asked basic demographic and life experience information. The question regarding the experience of the research question under study was open-ended. The second interview allowed the participant to include the meaning of their experience and to respond to emerging themes.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

This research strictly adhered to Texas A&M university's Institutional Review Board guidelines that ensure the protection of human subjects. The IRB ensures that ethical and safe research practices are used. Participation in this study was voluntary; the person could have withdrawn at any time without incurring any consequences for withdrawal. Personal identifiers will remain confidential, and pseudonyms were used. The risks of participation were minimal and were not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

In addition to obtaining consent as per the University's IRB requirements, (see the Information Sheet form in Appendix A), the participants agreed to be interviewed twice and to have follow-up telephone calls. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' approval. The interviews were conducted at a time and location

previously agreed to and where both their confidentiality and anonymity could be maintained.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional business services firm. The firm also translated two Spanish transcripts into English; however, as I noticed some discrepancies, I reviewed and corrected those two Spanish interviews so as to ensure the accuracy of the meaning. I carefully audited all written transcripts by following along with the audiotapes, making corrections to the written transcripts. To ensure data trustworthiness I used a holistic and sentence-by-sentence approach, doing selective highlighting of texts to identify themes as recommended by van Manen (1990). This process allowed me to bracket preconceived knowledge while scanning the data, highlighting sentences or phrases for categories and emerging themes.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As van Manen's (1990) six-step guide requires, this researcher will temporarily suspend or bracket personal lived experiences and preconceived ideas, and will not make judgment when conducting this research study. I applied the process of bracketing my previous preconceptions about job displacement and language issues related to Mexican-Americans in an effort to set aside any possible biases I might have.

### **Identified Themes**

After reading the written text several times, key words were highlighted and themes were developed and color-coded. The themes were verified by cutting out and grouping each sentence or sentences that represented the participants' lived experience.

It was unclear if the theme, Union Membership, was a sub-theme or a stand-alone theme. After clarification with several participants, they assisted in identifying it as a separate theme. The confusion originated from the Spanish to English translation. One had stated: *Tenemos que estar unidos y pelear por nuestros derechos* (We need to be united and fight for our rights); another had said: *Somos Mexicanos, ... somos Hispanos y tenemos que luchar ...* (we are Mexicans, ... we are Hispanic and we have to fight...). I approached the participants by admitting that I didn't know much about unions and was unclear as to what they meant. It was later clarified through conversation that the main reason for wanting to fight for their rights was for job security, and Union Membership should be a separate theme category; however, the word advocate replace fight, as the translation from Spanish to English was later clarified. The following themes emerged after the review of the transcribed texts and telephone conversations.

*Theme One: Mexican American Culture*

1-1. Machismo

1-2. Self-determination

1-3. Resilience

*Theme Two: Union Membership*

2-1. Job Security

2-2. Have Someone Advocate for Their Rights

*Theme Three: Job Displacement*

3-1. Trade-related Closures

3-2. Psychological Breach of Contract

### 3-3. Emotional Distress

#### *Theme Four: Education and Retraining*

#### 4-1. Entrepreneurship

#### 4-2. Problems with Workforce

### **Participant Stories**

Based on the opening part of the interviews, the following stories describe each of the participants in the study.

#### **#1. Melinda**

Melinda is a 32-year-old female, a single parent of two children, aged six and nine years old. She lives with her grandmother and her boyfriend. She describes herself as being an over-achiever, assertive, and loves attention. She describes her personality as being an over-achiever; striving for the best, attention monger, very outspoken, neat, clean, and organized. I observed her as having an energetic, bubbly personality, yet she easily gets anxious and stressed out

She grew up in San Antonio and lived with her grandparents. She graduated from high school and attended three semesters of college but did not graduate. She worked at a grocery store while attending school. She found a second part-time job that materialized into a fulltime cashier position. Over a period of nine years, she went from working as a cashier to Account Manager at a collection agency. In spite of the good pay, she left because she was relocated to an office far from home, and the work schedule included nights and weekends. She found a new job, also doing collections, and was promised better hours and higher income. However, 1½ years later, she was laid off and later chose to retrain in medical billing and coding.

*Second interview.* She has been studying to take the certification exam while going to school on her own time to learn things that “were not taught” while she was in the program.

**#2. Rosendo**

Rosendo is a 58-year-old divorced male who comes from a family of eleven in which he is the oldest. He joined the Marines, then the Army reserve. He did not graduate from high school. He has three grown children and two grandchildren who live with him.

He lost his job after 31 years of employment in a manufacturing plant where he had started as a janitor and worked in different departments. He became a Chief Steward union representative 25 years into the job, which he enjoyed because he solved problems workers had. He received special training which he liked. The plant closure came as a surprise, and he chose to retrain as an electrician at a local community college after completing his GED. He is currently employed at another manufacturing plant and struggles to make friends.

*Second interview.* He has now been made permanent in his job and has a set schedule. He likes the new changes but continues to struggle to make friends. He indicated that Mexican-Americans should not forget where we came from and what we fought for, and we should fight together for our rights to have good employment and benefits.

**#3. Maria**

Maria is a divorced, 50-year-old female and has a 24-year-old son. She emigrated to the U.S. from Mexico at the age of 20 and moved in with relatives. Her initial job search was difficult because of the lack of a green card. The only places she could work were in restaurants. Years later she obtained her green card and was excited because now

she was able to work in better places. A friend helped her get into the manufacturing plant where “thousands” of people worked. She thought it was the most stable employer, and she was proud to be working there. Her employment there lasted 16 years until the plant closed. She became a displaced worker, chose to take GED classes, and retrained in Microsoft Office skills while she also learned to speak and write English. She is currently working with a manufacturing supplier.

*Second interview.* Maria is now 51 years old and is currently going back to school in the evenings to learn how to do flower arrangements and hopes in the future that she can have her own business. She is very proud of her son who recently graduated with his baccalaureate degree. Her job is going great; she is very happy with her employer. As to the emerging themes, she stated that a stable job is important. This is important, not because you are Mexican-American, or Hispanic you need to be in a union. It is more of trying to make sure your job is secure and you get the benefits that you work for.

#### **#4. Rogelio**

Rogelio, a 49 year old is a widower who resides in the greater San Antonio, Texas, area. He recently lost his wife due to a sudden illness. They had been married for 24 years and had 4 children; three sons and 1 daughter and 12 grandchildren. His daughter and three grandchildren, aged 7, 5, and 2, live with him. He left high school after eleventh grade because his father passed away and he had to help his mother financially.

He was employed at a manufacturing company for 27 years before it closed its doors; his last position was as an inspector and was also the president of the Bargaining Union. He enjoyed negotiating work-related situations with the company leadership. His retraining included earning his GED and attending a community college program for welding. He dropped out of the program due to his wife's sudden illness. He is currently employed as a janitor for a healthcare system.

*Second Interview.* He continues to work in the same hospital and does not have any plans to leave. He will not consider going back to manufacturing. I asked him for his opinion about the themes that emerged, specifically my confusion about whether people joined a bargaining union because of their race (Mexican-Americans) or because of job security. He stated it is more about job security, but that sometimes people do not know how to read or do not understand how to negotiate, and that it is good to band together. He also stated that “we are grown men, and we have to make it work, regardless of what we go through.”

#### **#5. Sergio**

Sergio is a 45-year-old male, married, and has four children, 2 sons and 1 daughter, aged 18, 15, 12, one of whom will be starting community college and two are in middle school. He described himself as a perfectionist who loves learning. His parents are Mexican immigrants, and he was raised in and around San Antonio, Texas. They were migrant workers, and the whole family would go to the northern states every year to work. He recalls making low grades in school and lacked half a credit to graduate from high school. He dropped out of high school and started working with his father in

construction. He gained experience managing an auto body shop business, but he returned to the construction business specializing in a special type of houses. He learned the business and created his own company that lasted 15 years but had to close due to economic hardships. The workforce agency approved him for retraining due to the specific nature of his work no longer being available. He accepted the workforce agency's (WIA) offer and entered a retraining program. He got his GED and has currently completed 1½ years of the welding program at a community college. He has been a displaced worker twice but qualified for retraining benefits only once.

*Second interview.* He continues to attend the community college where he is now learning a new skill (automotive repair), in addition to welding and plans to graduate soon. The workforce agency is no longer paying for his schooling. He plans to start a small cosmetic retail business for his wife, and in the near future he will start a welding business for him.

#### **#6. Mario**

Mario is a 50-year-old male, originally from Mexico, who has resided in the outskirts of San Antonio, Texas, for the past 28 years, and his primary language is Spanish. He has been married for 35 years and has three children who are now married. He was displaced from a job that he loved in a manufacturing plant where he worked 19½ years.

He got his GED in Spanish and started a heating, vacuum, and air conditioning program (HVAC) at a community college as part of his retraining program benefits. He had a total of two years in which to learn a skill; but, due to his lack of English and lack



of previous education, he had to attend adult basic education first. This resulted in his school benefits being shortened to one year in college. He has currently completed one year of HVAC courses and is seeking full-time employment.

*Second interview.* He is in communication with the workforce caseworker who helped him throughout the retraining, hoping to get further assistance in completing the second year of the HVAC program. He is now very involved in church and frequently attends church gatherings and continues to search for a permanent job.

#### **#7. Angel**

Angel is 57 years old, has been married for nine years, and has four grown children from a previous marriage who are not living at home. He retired from the U.S. Army ten years ago and later worked eight years at a military installation in San Antonio, Texas, before becoming a displaced worker. After his displacement, he worked in several temporary jobs, including roofing, painting, doing valet parking, and selling tacos during Fiesta week celebrations. He hoped that working in temporary jobs would lead to a full-time job, but it has never materialized. At the time of this interview he was working part-time with the U.S. Census.

He graduated from high school and has 3½ years in college credits in international business; six months shy of getting a bachelor's degree with a minor in Spanish and a minor in Business Management. Due to his educational level and military work experience, the local workforce agency referred him for an on-the-job training (OJT) program and placed him at a veteran's hospital. His training consisted of providing supplies and instruments in the operating rooms at the hospital. This

employment lasted only one year because it was only temporary. He was told by the hospital personnel that they would try to find a position there, but eight months had already passed but he still has his hopes up.

*Second interview.* Both he and his wife are working in a grocery store full-time and are very happy for the extra income. The job at the hospital has not materialized, but he is still hoping to get called someday.

### **#8. Enrique**

Enrique is 64, born and raised in the greater area of San Antonio, Texas. He has been married six years and has two children from a previous marriage aged 40 and 37. He is currently employed at a community college. He worked for a large military installation for 34 years before becoming displaced. His career at the displaced job had started as a machinist apprentice and gradually increased his skills and education until reaching into a supervisory position. He heard of the upcoming job loss and applied for retraining. As he already had 70 college hours, he convinced the program caseworkers to allow him to attend a private university as part of his retraining benefits, where he received credits for work-life experience and soon earned his BA degree in organization development. His main goal was to have a degree, not necessarily start another career. After completing all the undergraduate work, he applied for a Master's of Art degree and applied for student loans. His goal was to earn an advanced degree because several members of his family were degreed, and he was the only one without one. The workforce agency did not pay for the MA degree; he applied for formal retirement and his monthly checks, together with the student loans, were used for his education. After

graduation, he started employment with a company in the same building from which he had retired. He worked eight months but then became displaced for the second time. This time he did not qualify for benefits. He is currently teaching at a community college.

*Second Interview.* He is thinking about retirement and is grooming his successor. He clarified what he meant about machismo, culture, and work ethic.

#### **#9. Joe**

Joe is 54 years old, retired from the Army, has been married for 35 years, and has two children, a daughter and a son; his son attends college. He dropped out of school and got married when he was in eighth grade, and three years later got his GED. He joined the US. Army and retired after 20 years of service and then started working for the manufacturing plant where he was displaced after 16 years of employment. His retraining program required him to enroll in remedial courses before entering a Pharmacy Technician program that he later completed. He chose that program because it was a short career, and he felt good about being with his friends who were also retraining. He was unable to find employment after graduation due to his lack of work experience in that field and is currently employed at a detention facility.

*Second Interview.* He continues to work in the detention center and sometimes regrets not trying harder to find a job as a pharmacy technician.

#### **#10. Robert**

Robert is 45, male, divorced, and has four children who live with him and is employed at an adult detention center. As a young adult, he graduated from high school

and worked at the local grocery store for several years. A friend helped him get a job in the manufacturing plant, where he worked 15 years before it closed its doors. He had a love-hate relationship with his job but took pride in what he did. He was in a retraining program and sought an electrician certificate. He completed the first year and earned a certificate. At that point, he decided to pursue an associate's degree. At that time, he was having marital problems that resulted in a separation from his wife. His last semester was marked with a sudden illness that required hospitalization and surgery. He was in his last semester but because of missing school, he decided to drop out of the program, one semester shy of graduating from the program.

*Second interview.* He continues to work for the detention center and is enjoying his children. I asked him about the order in which the themes that emerged from the interviews, and he suggested having union membership separate from one's culture. For him, it was more about job security and having equity in pay than joining because of one's heritage.

#### **#11. Sylvia**

Sylvia is 48, divorced, female, and has a daughter who recently got married. She got married after graduating from high school and has lived all her life in San Antonio,

Texas. She was a housewife for several years before her husband helped her get a job in the manufacturing plant where he was working. They divorced after 15 years of marriage. She worked in the plant for 13 years before it closed its doors. She accepted retraining as a dental assistant and moved in with her parents. Her daughter had just graduated from high school, and both of them enrolled in the school program at the same time. She is currently employed in a dental office.

*Second interview.* Sylvia suggested having union membership separate from culture because fighting for her rights as a union member was about job security. She has now her own apartment and continues to work at the dental office. Sylvia is the only participant who is working in the field in which she retrained. She is happy with how her life turned out and is planning to marry her boyfriend.

A summary table of participant characteristics is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Participant Characteristics**

Fictitious Names	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Union Membership	Years at work	Goal	Training Program	Where Currently Employed
Melinda	F	32	S	N	1 ½	Own Business	Medical Coding	Not Employed
Rosendo	M	58	D	Y	31.8	Own Business	Electrician	Mftg. Co.
Maria	F	50	D	Y	16	Own Business	GED Office and Work	Mftg. Co.
Rogelio	M	49	W	Y	27	Work in Healthcare	GED Welding	Hospital
Sergio	M	45	M	N	15	Wants BA Degree	GED and Welding	Attending School
Mario	M	50	M	Y	19.5	GED and HVAC	GED and HVAC	Not Employed
Angel	M	57	M	N	8	Work in Medical Field	OJT Medical Supply	Grocery Store
Joe	M	54	M	Y	16	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacy Technician	Detention Center
Robert	M	45	D	Y	15	Electrician	Electrician	Detention Center
Sylvia	F	48	D	Y	13	Dental Assistant	Dental Assistant	Dentist Office
Enrique	M	64	M	N	34	Retire	BA Degree	Education

Note. Years at work are before displacement. GED is General Equivalent Diploma; HVAC is Heating, Vacuum and Air-conditioning; Mftg. Co. is manufacturing company

### **Established Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of this study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestion of peer reviews and member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined peer debriefing "is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling and analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). They defined member checks as "the data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Thus, a friend and colleague, Dr. Mendoza, who speaks both English and Spanish was available to discuss and ascertain my themes reflected the participants' intentions. I primarily asked for her opinion since she's resided in Mexico for many years, and now work here in the U.S., I wanted to see if her opinion was the same as mine.

To have the male's perspective, I asked my husband; again, he is educated in Mexico and has been living and working in Texas for many years. Both conversations helped me have a clearer idea when I communicated back with the participants regarding the issue of union membership and the emerging themes. Member checks were accomplished by providing to the participants face-to-face or via telephone the portion of their transcript and explaining to them what I believed were the themes and categories. All participants agreed with the themes; however, one theme, *Union Membership*, remained unclear. Follow-up telephone interviews clarified the theme. In

addition, van Manen's (1990) suggestion for data trustworthiness was also followed by bracketing preconceived knowledge while scanning and highlighting the written text.

### **Summary**

This chapter describes hermeneutic phenomenology as the best method of inquiry to undertake in this study because it enabled me to have a rich description and interpretation of the experiences of displaced workers, particularly Mexican-American workers who live in Texas and who participate or participated in retraining programs. Van Manen's (1990) six step method of data collection and analysis was used in observing the ontological and epistemological essence of the lived experiences of the participants. The participants were selected from the greater San Antonio area because of the high unemployment in that area and because of several downsizing events that have taken place throughout the years.

Since the goal was to have rich descriptions, the interview goal was to gather in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon under study. Seidman's (1991) interview model that consists of at least two interviews with each participant was used. The interviews were tape-recorded by this researcher and transcribed by both a professional firm and this researcher. Careful attention was given in the translation from Spanish to English so as to maintain accuracy of their stories. To minimize error, every transcript was reviewed by me and bracketed preconceived knowledge while analyzing data to the best of my ability. Text analysis consisted of reading holistically and then line-by-line, highlighting key words and phrases, and making marginal notations to identify emerging categories and themes. Every sentence was cut and placed in themes and color-coded.



This chapter also presents a brief story of the participants, and Table 1 summarizes those stories. Lastly, data trustworthiness was established through peer briefing, member checks and bracketing preconceived knowledge.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEXICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE

The first category that emerged from the analysis was the notion that the Mexican-American culture was a very strong influence in their daily lives and decision-making. Within this category, three sub-themes emerged: Machismo, Self-determination, and Resilience.

The first theme, Machismo, emerged as a reflection on their cultural heritage and values that provided inner strength.

The second theme, Self-determination, emerged as a concern of job displacement and the participants' ability to sustain their decision to participate in a retraining program and moving on from the job loss phase to a future endeavor. Regardless of where they were born, either U.S. born or immigrants, all of the participants thought that their jobs would be there forever, and self-determination influenced their resilience and decision-making to move forward.

The third theme, Resilience, emerged out of the necessity to find employment and the relationships with family and friends who assisted them in their transition from displaced worker to adult learner.

#### **Machismo**

The first sub-theme, machismo, emerged as a form of strength. When referring to his ability to achieve something, Rogelio said, "You know, Por los mios" [because of my... refers to his inner macho strength]. [m49wy] [male, 49, widower, yes union member]

Some male participants believed that having machismo was also having a positive work ethic. For instance, Sergio defended his viewpoint on machismo by saying,

Machismo is good; it propels you to do your best... it motivates you... we are Mexican-American Hispanics and we are strong and we can prosper And the Hispanic, at my age, when we were growing up, a lot of it was machismo, you know. Not so much nowadays, but they lost a lot of it. They lost a lot of the work ethic from that transition. It's not there as much no more, in the younger generation.

Not the machismo itself, but the machismo was a branch. This is how the machismo went. I can drink all night long, but, come Monday morning, I'm going to be there working for you, hard and heavy. Okay, that's machismo. But that was just an avenue of it. The hard and heavy could have been there without all that, you know. It's just that that was what was calculated with it. And because they didn't have an education, that's all they had to base themselves on. Okay, now that particular father, that particular person teaches his son what? In essence, he teaches him machismo without you really wanting to, but because it's in him that's what portrays forward. But yet also the hard work and ethic comes off of it. But that particular son, let's say he's jumping generations and he's going to school now. He sees the machismo, he sees the idiosyncrasies in it, and he doesn't pay much attention to his father anymore. So he's learning a different way. Yes, he still rubbed something off of it, but now he's going a different

avenue. So it's not being conducted from one person to another in same way, you know, it's being scrambled out. But don't disregard the past, you know. You can learn a lot from the past, from the older generation. [m45mn]

### **Self-determination**

After job displacement, and faced with financial difficulties, some of the participants stated that strength and resilience were inherent attributes from their cultural heritage and machismo. Rosendo stated:

I'm a Hispanic, yes, but I am Mexican. I have to move ahead! We cannot let anyone tell us that we can't do anything. [m58dy]

Mario said:

I TRIED to do my job and do the best I can with what we had. I'm from Mexico, I came to work and get paid for what I do. I wasn't like other people who, because the equipment was old and they were told to write, they refused to do it because they wanted something new. I don't know the mentality of these people. I would observe that at work. I come in to work, not to be here slacking off.

When referring to his heritage and his job displacement, Angel said, "I'm a tough Mexican guy (he spoke as he made a gesture with his fist)." [m54mn] Similarly, Maria said,

Yo vine de Mexico para trabajar y prosperar, y si me dan la oportunidad pos yo la tengo que agarrar (I came to the U.S. to work and to prosper, and if they are giving me that opportunity [to better myself] I will take it). [f50dy]

Mario added that having a sense of responsibility and work ethic is also part of who he is and where he came from. He equates a job's responsibility to also being responsible when receiving money for participating in a retraining program. "I came to this country to work. I told myself they can't be paying me to do nothing. If they are willing to pay me to go to school, I need to study. That's what they're paying me to do."

### **Resilience**

The second sub-theme within this theme, resilience, emerged after the participants knew their job had ended. All participants indicated having achieved resilience and noted that their family and friends helped them get motivated toward a better future.

For Melinda, resilience came from having the emotional support her children, grandmother, and boyfriend gave her. Inner motivation came from the feeling of being abandoned by her mother at a young age and the need to feel independent: "I want my kids, my boyfriend, and my grandmother to be proud of me." [f32sn]

For others, resilience came in the form of prior work experience, like Angel and Joe, who had already experienced starting over when they retired from the Army and had to start over. Now, as displaced workers, they knew they could start over. Joe said:

I mean some people took it hard, because that's all they've ever done. And not me; I was in the Army, and then after I got out I went to work there. So I had done a lot of other stuff other than just be there. And I mean for me, I guess you could say it was just like in and out of the Army and starting over again. And I knew I could find work somewhere, anywhere. It wouldn't matter, because, as

long as I was making some money, I would get on with my life. There're jobs here. I mean they don't pay a lot of money, but there're jobs. Even if I have to go to work at McDonald's, I would do that. I'm not going to wait around to get a good paying job just because I was making good money. [m54my]

For Maria, her son was a source of inspiration, and she had to show him that, although things looked bad, she could still survive. Education was the way to do it, she said:

I had to show my son that, if I can go to college, he can also go! And I wanted him to be proud of his mother, so I had to try harder. We came here (from Mexico) because we want to better ourselves, and all we want to do is work.

For other participants, family was their support system, and it encouraged them to better themselves and was a source of motivation. Rosendo said: "My kids and my grandkids are looking; they can't see me fail." Mario stated:

Well, when I first lost my job, they rallied around me and told me not to worry, that I would find another job. All three encouraged me to go back to college. My oldest son told me he could let me borrow the money; my daughter is also willing to help. We'll see.

For Robert, his support system also included friends and neighbors. He said, "My neighbor was like, 'No, Robert, you've got the good head! That shows that you should be able to handle it at college and stuff.'" Sergio believed that resilience came because of prior work experience and preparation. For instance he said,

Machismo is good!... got work experience from people of older generations...those men taught me right.....being an Hispanic macho man and they don't give up mentally.

For some participants, the decision to move forward to something new depended on their financial situation and their ability to change their lifestyle. Mario, Rogelio, Sergio, Melinda, and Angel were able to retrieve money from their savings and 401(k) retirement plans. Sylvia resorted to cutting her expenses by moving in with her mother. Sergio observed,

We have enough money to where I could actually sustain our lifestyle for a couple of years on money saved away. Am I going to do that? No, I'm going to try to pay off the house. The best thing in life for anybody is planning to not have any debt. No debt. I mean, if you don't have debt, you can make money, I don't care how old, what you are doing, I don't care if it's minimal age or whatever, you can make money with no debt. We've never had a car payment. Had we not had our savings, we'd be in bad shape at this point. [m45mn]

Joe added:

I've never had a new car. I had some money saved up but I do have kids. I mean, I had a nest egg, you know, I had like between \$5,000 and \$6,000 in the bank saved for this and that. [m54my]

Mario agreed, "I thought to myself. I have no mortgage, which is most important."

Melinda said:

I have no mortgage, my grandmother provides everything for me, but when I got really sick, I had to take money from my 401(k); when I got sick, ... I had many doctors' bills. [f32sn]

Sylvia had to move in with her mother so she could make it. Angel observed:

They [the army] loaned me some money to pay my bills, to catch up with all my bills, and then they take a small amount every month out of my retirement checks. [m54mn]

Several participants, like Melinda, Maria, Sergio, Miguel, and Enrique, turned to religious faith and prayed for resilience. Mario became very involved with his church, he shared,

I go to church every week and talk to the guys [other displaced workers], and we motivate each other. Predico la palabra de Dios [I preach God's word]. [m50my]

Similarly, Maria said, "I just go to church and ask God for help." [f50dy] And Melinda added, "my grandmother is very religious... and tells me to have faith... so I pray." [f32sn]

### **Summary**

This chapter unfolded and described the first theme category, the Mexican-American culture. When the participants recalled their job loss and the rationale for their decision-making at a time of confusion and of financial concern, all commented on what they reflected upon and was important before moving forward. Regardless of their birth



place, there was an implicit cultural heritage and familial importance to their decision-making.

The first sub-theme was machismo. Participants shared cultural values that helped them in decision-making, achieve resilience, and in dealing with the unknown.

The second sub-theme was self-determination. Participants shared their story of how inner determination or machismo and personal work ethic influenced their decision to seek a better future. Inner strength was achieved by inner determination, which also gave them the resilience necessary to keep moving forward, but this determination also came from the positive view of machismo and the inherent ability to act upon a decision.

The third sub-theme is resilience. Participants' relationships with family, friends, and others helped them recover emotionally after having lost their job and helped make their transitions easier. Although losing their job was a great financial concern, some participants were able to achieve resilience by having their finances under control without debt, by cutting expenses, and by extracting money from savings or retirement plans. Some participants achieved resilience through machismo idealism. Having financial stability and faith in a higher power were also cited as necessary to achieve resilience.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **UNION MEMBERSHIP**

The second theme category, Union Membership, emerged when the participants noted that membership was greatly influenced by a desire to retain their employment long-term. Within this theme category, two sub-themes emerged: Job Security and Have Someone Advocate for Their Rights.

The first sub-theme, Job Security, made reference to the participants joining their local bargaining union in a desire to retain their jobs long-term employment. Some participants elected to be represented by someone knowledgeable in employment/labor relations, while others it was the lack of English proficiency and trust in their union representatives. Special friendships were also formed among the unionized workers, forming strong bonds and beliefs that union membership would help them retain their job.

The second sub-theme, Have Someone Advocate for Their Rights, concerned the participants' struggles to prevent the company from closing their doors. Some participants felt it was necessary to come together in large numbers and voice their dissenting opinions and to have someone that would choose in their best interests.

#### **Job Security**

At work, the participants who encountered a problem at work would address their concerns with their union representative, and he or she would solve the problem. All of the participants that were members of their local bargaining union believed the biggest advantage of joining the union was job security. Rogelio stated,

Well here is one of the best advantages; it's hard for them to fire you. I mean you can mess up, and mess up, and stuff and it's hard for them to get rid of you. And like if one gets a raise then everybody is going to get a raise, even if that other guy doesn't deserve a raise. But it's imposing a cost too, because like I said, when you have a Union meeting you're trying to promote something in, a "win" mindset. You know, so in some ways it's good and some ways it's...but the main thing is it's hard for the company to get rid of a single person. [m49wy]

Joe talked about the advantage of being a union worker when the plant was closing. "The unionized workers were the last ones to be laid off. We were the last ones to go."

Being able to solve problems at work and help people required having knowledge of employment laws. Rosendo stated he was capable of representing others because of his specialized training. He said,

They sent me to take training on human resources, and taught me how to fill out the forms and stuff. And oh yea, we had meetings and stuff so I can learn things related to work so I can help the people. [m58dy]

For the participants who spoke primarily Spanish and their English was limited, the decision to join the union was primarily because of the lack of understanding. The following participant first was not part of the union, but then co-workers influenced her decision to join. Maria said,

Don't know how to explain it but I felt protected ...and I thought they could not fire me unless I did something wrong. The ones from the union knew all the

laws... and they would explain to me in Spanish what was going on. Others studied here in the U.S. and they knew English so I thought they knew what they were talking about, because I didn't even finish school. Everything was going good, until the day we were told the plant would close and then the union could not do anything. The only thing they did was help us stay working longer, those who were not part of the union were let go first, so I stayed until the end. They only let us finish the work we had and asked us if we wanted to move to another department until that was it. Everything finished.

Similarly, Mario shared,

“At first I was not part of the union, but then joined later because others knew the language and the laws and that way I would not be taken advantaged off.”

### **Have Someone Advocate for Their Rights**

Two out of seven participants were bargaining union representatives, Rosendo was a Union Stewart and Rogelio was a Union President, both worked at different locations but had the same goals which were to advocate for their fellow union members.

Rosendo who was also Chief Union Steward, addressed that represented the people was his responsibility, as well as to solve worker complaints. He would approach the company with the concerns/complaints in an attempt to solve the problems. “As a Chief Steward, I solved problems arising at work, took grievance information, filled out forms, spoke with witnesses and spoke with the department manager before going to the main office.” [m58dy]

Rogelio who was the union President at his plant added:

When it became evident that they (the company) would close the plant, all we had to do is advocate for the few rights we had. It was my obligation as president (of the union) to do what the people wanted. But then as time went on, like I said, things started getting a little tougher, and tougher. People knew. You know, people were mad, people were upset, and I know a lot of people were worried. They were scared, you know, that the plant was going to shut down. But it was a choice that they had to make, not us. We laid everything out, the information of what was going on, and what we had discussed in the meeting, and like we told them, "It's up to y'all. You're the people that are going to vote what y'all want, if you do decide on the benefits cut back." And the majority said, "No." They said, "We work too hard." A lot of them were within 2 or 3 years to retire already.

[m49wy]

Similarly, Rosendo added:

I had a job and thought will always be there, and if we organize, we band together we can protect ourselves. We need to band together! I organized campaigns and participated in rallies so the company wouldn't go to another country. But I couldn't do nothing...they were still gonna close...only thing I could do is have the papers ready so we get certified by the government and so people can go to school and get the benefits fast...otherwise it will take longer. So by the time they closed the [certification] papers were ready! [m58dy]

The participants, who were union representatives, stated informing their fellow co-workers and union members of the imminent plant closure was recalled as very frustrating. Rogelio recalled his inability to keep the company open. Rogelio stated,

We negotiated back and forth, but they wanted to...in order for us to keep the plant open they wanted to readjust a lot of like the benefits. Well, it was going to close, because we met with the main CEO's and stuff. If it would stay open, it would stay open for about a year, year and a half. There were no guarantees, they told us. And so in the back of their mind they already knew that it was going to shut down, so they did renegotiate, like I said, back and forth, back and forth, but no, they said just...and of course we had the discussion of the benefits, the discussion of the raise, and everything, the readjustment of everything. In other words, what we were making now, where people had worked hard for all their lives, they wanted us to drop everything and start from the bottom again. Of course, we had meetings with the people in order to let them know what was going on. And of course the main thing was the vote, what the people wanted. It wasn't much about the committee and the president, you know, what we wanted; it was up to the people. [m49wy]

Maria reflected on how the union helped them receive their employment benefits. She said: Es justo, hay manera de pelear por los beneficios, es solo justo. (Well, there is a way to fight for our benefits that we earned... it's only fair). [f50dy]

Similarly, Sylvia said all her friends were part of the union and they helped advocate for their rights. "The union tried ... and negotiated so we could go to school."

## Summary

This chapter unfolded the second theme category, union membership, and two sub-themes emerged: Job security and have someone advocate for their rights. These sub-themes emerged throughout the interview as the participants reflected on the imminent job loss, their benefits, and their struggle to prevent the company from closing.

The first sub-theme in this major theme was job security. Participants shared what they perceived were the benefits of joining their local union. English and non-English speakers trusted their union representatives to negotiate on their behalf. Participants sought union membership as a protective measure against being fired for no cause, and retain long-term employment.

The second sub-theme, have someone advocate for their rights, addressed the attempt from union representatives to thwart job loss and described how they negotiated with the company representatives and how those other union members were notified of their choices. On the other hand, union members' perception was that union representatives would advocate on their behalf for their rightful benefits.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **JOB DISPLACEMENT**

The third theme category, Job Displacement, emerged from the experience all the participants had in common. Within this theme category, three sub-themes emerged: Trade-related closures, Breach of the Psychological Contract, and Emotional Distress.

The first theme, Trade-related closures, concerned the participants' perception of why their place of employment closed its doors, leaving hundreds of displaced workers.

The second theme, Breach of the Psychological Contract, concerned the participants' emotions as they shared their job loss. Participants expressed a deep sense of betrayal and disbelief when the closure notice was officially given to them. It was also described as a breach of contract toward other union-members.

The third theme, Emotional Distress, referred to the participants' emotional feelings after job displacement, and feelings before, during and after participating in a retraining program.

#### **Trade-related Closures**

Participants who knew of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), were more boisterous about losing their job. For instance, Rosendo insisted we had the interview at a community activist center to talk about his job loss experience. He blames the NAFTA agreement as a reason why the company went somewhere else for cheaper labor. He said:

And the bottom line is ...[no es justo!], (its not fair!) and I hope I'm being taped.

The 2011 Congressional Representatives' goal is to promote the goals of multi-



national corporations, denouncing unions, more free trade agreements, like the Columbian Free Trade Agreement, like NAFTA, who are recognized today by working men and women as failed trade agreements, because of the exportation, of cheap labor in Mexico and other third world countries, and the loss of good paying jobs. We must move from the mentality of pushing our jobs to China, third world countries, and revitalizing the industrial base in America, to create more jobs in the industrial base. We have become a service sector country, and we must revitalize American, buy American, and [keep] jobs here. Us the Mexicans are minorities and we have to band together and protect our jobs.

So those trade agreements are not fair! The Free Trade Agreements, need to be fair, they need to have the workers at the table, you know, to really put a stop to losing our good paying jobs in America. Buy American! We must protect the good paying jobs that we have. We lost the industrial base already!

After we lost good paying jobs, people with 50 years seniority and everything, then they send you to the TAA. And they said, "Well, we're going to retrain them." You have a person that worked 50 years of his life, 50 something years! You're going to retrain him in computers or something else? You know, they are doing a dis-service to the working men and women who dedicated their lives.

Rosendo recalled how the closure notice was delivered to him on the eves of a company-wide vacation. He said:

I went in that morning, because I was the only one there. They had a convention in Corpus, and the president, the vice-president, they went to the convention

because everything was...they were going on vacation, we're going...right? The plant is closing down. They called me...I remember clearly, because it was a Friday. Because yeah, it was our last day, yeah, we're going on vacation. They called me into the office about 9:00, and they said, "We're going to call your Representative and the President and Vice-President they're in Corpus. We're waiting for a call back, we're on the speaker phone." I said, "Okay, but what's going on?" And they said, "Well you're going to find out." Right, I said, "What's going on? What's the deal, man? I mean we're already going on vacation." And then the phone rings, "Okay, JR." That's our Representative Eric Nueve. "Okay." That's our President. "Okay, we're here..." Vanessa, the HR Director, and, the Vice-President. He said, "We're here. The Chief Steward, Alonso and the Steward. We're here with him, he's right here. "We're just going to give him the notice that we got. We're going to close down the plant in November. We're going to close..." Later the company gave notice to everybody by overnight mail, "You don't have a job anymore, we're moving the plant to Monterrey." [m58dy]

Joe reasoned the closure was to save money in salaries. "I'm going to have to look for another job. They moved, I guess, because we were getting paid too much, and wherever they went they are getting cheaper labor." [m54my]

Rogelio, Robert, and Joe were aware their company was to relocate to another country and they expressed their sentiment. Rogelio said,

I was there... I worked there 27 years. And there were people that worked there a lot longer than I have, you know. But it was one of those where they decide to

shut down, and China came into play and took over the deal. So they did ...whatever they had to do for a cheaper product, you know, which left a lot of people without work here. They permanently shut down, you know. So they went overseas, in other words, so they wound up shutting the plant down. But we didn't know it was going to happen, so it's just something that happened. And it's hard, you know. [m49wy]

Robert felt bad for his co-workers, he stated:

The Company went to China and Mexico and we can't do nothing! I feel for other people that don't have a job right now. You know, you look at the news every day, and it seems that yes, maybe a little the economy is coming up, but at the same time this comes up here, and another plant shuts down, and there's another 200 some plus jobs, you know, people without jobs again, you know. So it makes me wonder will it ever get back on its feet again totally? I don't know. [m45dy]

Similarly, Joe mentioned:

They moved, I think it was to Mexico, or Japan, or China, or something like that. And we got laid off, and then that's when all this...they said they would help us to go to school to get another job at something. I took advantage of it. I went for Pharmacy Technician. [m54my]

At work, all the participants dismissed rumors that the company would be closing its doors. However, now as they reflected on their work environment, some participants saw signs of the impending closure, but consciously or unconsciously dismissed them,

because it was their perception and belief the company was well established and would always be there. For instance, Rogelio shared:

You don't really see that, because nobody would ever figure out, not even the people from here would realize that plant was ever going to close, you know. I didn't know that either. You know, when I started working there that plant was way there before I was, and some of the people, you know. People didn't think like that. They would say, "Well this plant will never close. It's always going to be here, we're always going to have a job." It didn't happen, you know. I'm blessed with what I got now, but do I wish the plant would have closed? No, I wish it would have stayed open. But that's not a choice that we had to make, because of the overseas, because of the price. They probably ship and sale a cheaper product. [m49wy]

After receiving closure notice, Maria reflected on the missed signs and rumors at their workplace and what seemed to be normal at the time. Maria said,

They took the plant to Mexico because they pay less over there. They told us they were losing money, but we had just been told we were doing great and even got a bonus... and they kept buying new equipment. So when we heard a rumor, we just didn't think it was true. I don't believe they were losing money; they just wanted to move somewhere where they can pay employees less. [f50dy]

Mario talked about the rumors:

There were always rumors that they were going to close. However, it [the company] always produced well and we came out fine. Until the rumors got

stronger and it lasted for about a year before they released everyone. The rumors got started and the conclusion was to close. The company spoke to us informing us that they were going to close within six months. They set a date and it became reality. If I'm not mistaken rumors were that they relocated to Mexico. We used to get a lot of product from Mexico. We would package it, place it in boxes that read "Made in the USA." Then it would be sold at the stores. But I think that they thought about it and decided it would be more economical to have it produced in Mexico versus here in the United States. This gave them a reason to save millions of dollars in the long run.

Mario also reflected on other factors that could have contributed to the closure.

Mario said,

Well uh, in my opinion part of what contributed for the company to relocate was due to poor administration. The personnel there, many of them not all of them, but the majority of them didn't care about the quality of work they produced. They were on drugs...there was a lot of disservice. I feel because of the drug usage on the job the production and quality of work started to go down. So it closed and they moved away. [m50my]

Joe described company practices that resulted in loss of income. Joe's perception is that it was the company's fault for having poor management. He described the company's practices that according to him resulted in loss of income, he said:

They said that they weren't making money, and that it was cheaper with China. It was funny, because we would get stuff from China brought over here to our

plant, and we'd pack it and stuff. But the standards over in China are different from the standards here, because like here, when they inspect a piece and stuff, if it had a little ding, if it had what they called little pieces of iron you could barely see, they would see them here and it would go out in the trash. And the pieces from China, it's like, "Oh my God!" It wouldn't have passed, you know, over here. But it was funny because we'd get stuff from China, we'd get stuff from Mexico, and things like that. We packed it here, and cover our boxes with "Made in the United States" with the label, or "Made in Mexico" or "Made in China", you know, just stuff like that. But I guess it just boiled down to it was cheaper over there in China and that was where they were going.

That just plain sucked! I mean, I don't know, yeah, it might be cheaper over there, but like I said, the quality of the product wasn't going to be good. You get for what you pay. One time...let me see, how can I explain it? They brought in a shipment of lavies, which are sinks. And one of the trucks, I'd say maybe 50 pieces fit on each truck, 25 on each side. There was, let's say, 15 trucks, and each one had 50 pieces. Those came from China. They inspected them here, and I'd say if anything maybe 10 pieces went straight from where they inspected them into the box, like we can pack this. I'd say another maybe three trucks went into another thing we have, you would call it an AX patch, a UV patch, or a re-fire, and that's where those other departments go in and fix that little nick that it had, or whatever, put a little patch there, and send it back to the kiln, and it will get cooked again. And that's not saying that it's going to come back out good. So

that's like 10 pieces that they actually bought, 3 trucks went to the AX, the UV, the re-fire, whatever. So that's 3½ trucks, and that means that 11½ trucks went straight out to the garbage!

Before that, before they did that, they weren't even inspecting the stuff! They would come in and pack in China boxes, and they'd unpack them, and just give them to all of the packers. They'd give them to us, and we'd put them in our boxes. And after a while, we wouldn't even unpack them out of their boxes, our company made our boxes to where we could just get their boxes and throw it straight in without having to open it or anything like that, put it into our box, put our papers in there, and put "Made in China, but packed in the United States." And they weren't even checking anything, you know, if the piece was good or whatever. That went on for, I don't know, maybe three months, maybe longer before they even started inspecting the stuff. Can you imagine? Because you would stamp the boxes, you know. We each had a number, or a cast that has his number and stuff, and that's how they knew who packed it, or this or that. You know, so it's like that was our name going on that piece, and they weren't even inspecting it or nothing like that. So looking back at those 15 trucks that came in and only 3½ were good...and not even saying, because they still had to be inspected and stuff like that, so not even saying that they were even good pieces. But 11½ of those trucks went straight out to the garbage and stuff. Can you imagine everything that went through that didn't even get inspected?

With our company's name on there, or our pack number on the outside. And they say because they lost money... but if they would have...I guess it's everywhere, but management just didn't know what the hell they were doing. Excuse my language. [m54my]

Rogelio expressed another possible reason for the closure. He said:

I saw how things started going down, and down, and a lot of big orders...I think management, had a lot to do with what was not being sold and all that. So it took a big blow, you know, a big setback because of their performance, not getting the sales out. So that would take an effect on the company, and of course that would affect the people too. So that's where you lose a lot of customers, where they would go to other companies, you know. Their sales department was not sending the orders on time. Eventually things went down and down... they had to lower their prices. [m49wy]

Mario observed some items were not being inspected as the layoffs occurred, he recalled:

They first stopped production in the department where the restrooms were produced. All the material stopped for sinks, all of that. So stopping the production there're was no reason to inspect any bathrooms, no reason to paint anymore. It went from department to department and the last department to leave was the shipping department. [m50my]



### **Breach of the Psychological Contract**

Nine of the eleven participants thought their job would be there forever because it was a stable manufacturing company and stable employer.

The participants who were part of the bargaining union and represented the workers, felt undermined and betrayed by their former employer. The betrayal also created deep emotions of shock and anger. Rosendo who was also the Union's Chief Steward, felt betrayed and undermined because nobody told him of the closure. He had worked for this company 31 1/2 years and felt deceived in the manner of which closure occurred. Rosendo stated:

Every year the company closed in early August and everyone took vacation at the same time. The production had ceased and people were cleaning in preparation for two weeks closure. I remember clearly, because it was a Friday. Because yeah, it was our last day, yeah, we're going on vacation. They called me into the office about 9:00, and they said, "We're going to call your representative and the President and Vice-President they're in Corpus. We're waiting for a call back, we're on the speaker phone." I said, "Okay, but what's going on?" And they said, "Well you're going to find out." Right, I said, "What's going on? What's the deal, man? I mean we're already going on vacation." And then the phone rings, "Okay, JR." That's our Representative Eric Nueve. "Okay." That's our President. "Okay, we're here..." the HR Director, and, the Vice-President. He said, "We're here. The Chief Steward, Federico, and the Steward. We're here with him, he's

right here. We're just going to give him the notice that we got. We're going to close down the plant in November. We're going to..."

They're going to let 150 people go in November, right before the Thanksgiving holidays. And another 150 people in December. Right. He's got it written down. We're talking. And that's it.

It's...naturally you're in shock! Right? Because how are we going to talk about it? There is no talking. That's it! Well wait a minute! I'm in charge of everybody! (union members)

Yes, of everybody. Then I have to...well, okay, how do I explain it? How am I going to tell you that you have a family, you're going on vacation. Even if it's just to Corpus. Save the money. Now it's my job to tell everybody else, because I was there by myself. Hey, this is what they just told us. You know? And since it was a few people, maybe 30, 40 people, 20, something like that, because they're all scattered cleaning up, there's no production. One guy asked me: "Hey, how come you got called to the office, man?" So this is going on, because the first thing I learned is don't lie. No, don't add to the story, don't take from the story. You hear it from the company how it is, that's how you have to say it. That's how I was taught from the people that I grew up, so to speak, right, a figure of speech. I grew up in the union. Sometimes the truth is hard, but you have to say the truth, you can't sugar-coat it, you can't take away or add to it. [m58dy]

Rogelio, who was also the unions' President, experienced feelings of hopelessness, because of his inability to keep the plant from closing. He described his frustration:

I tried; we negotiated back and forth, back and forth. They didn't want to work together. What they wanted is what they wanted only. It was either accept it, or don't accept it, or we'll shut down. So I told him, "Do we have a choice?" He says, "Well, no." I said, "Well, I mean I have been here 20 some years, and I worked my way up from the bottom up to make what I'm making now. And all for one day for y'all to come in and say, "We want you to start from the bottom again and work your way up." I said, "I say no. I say no." I said, "I do want the plant to stay open, we'll do everything possible to negotiate something in between, 50/50, where if we have to at least drop some wages down we'll do it to a certain extent only." I said, "That's if the people decide also." I said, "It's not going to be up to me. I could sit here as a board member of the board, and my committee can say, "We'll do this." I said, "But then the people are going to get mad, because the people are part of this plant right here, so I feel that they have a right to know what's going on."

And then they wanted to readjust our benefits also, and everything, and we said, "No." But it wasn't much that that was the problem why they shut down, it was really cause they...you know how things are, you know, China comes in, they make a product cheaper than what they're selling here in the U.S., and that was the whole idea. They just decided to go overseas, you know, so they shut it down.

And we had a lot of plants open everywhere, and I think as of now maybe only one is open, that I know of. [m49wy]

For Joe, losing his job was an opportunity to return to school. He said:

I worked like for 15 or 16 years with them. And then they moved, I think it was to Mexico, or Japan, or China, or something like that. And we got laid off, and then that's when all this...they said they would help us to go to school to get another job at something. I took advantage of it. [m54my]

Maria expressed her disappointment:

I gave so much of myself! I worked very hard because the more I produced the more I got paid. I was always there on time, always minding my business and although it was very hard on my hands and arms, I was happy. The company had been there for so many years, who would think they'd close? No, not me!

Rogelio thought his job would be there forever. He recalled thinking:

People didn't think like that. They would say, "Well this plant will never close," you know. "It's always going to be here, we're always going to have a job."

[m49wy]

Similarly, Joe said, "I thought...well it had been there forever, that company!

And I said, "I'll probably retire from here." [m54my]

Melinda said: "They fired everyone! They changed everything! They fired everyone and only two people stayed; me and my supervisor. I thought... I thought I was gonna be okay." [f32sn]

Participants agreed that it was normal to have generations of family members working with their respective companies. Joe said,

Let me see...well, yeah, relatives, cousins, and stuff here. Yeah, they were laying-off certain people at certain times, like by seniority. And then if you wanted to leave on your own, you could. And right at the last most of us did that, because they said they were going to help us to go to school and stuff. So we took advantage of it. [m54my]

Hope and denial that the company wouldn't close was a common sentiment.

Robert described:

I mean I was born and raised in in this area and they had been here since, you know, way before me. I mean there was generations where the grandfather worked there, then the son worked there, and then, you know, the grandson worked there. And it was, as long as I knew, always, "It's going to shut down. It's going to shut down." And it never did, you know. And we didn't expect it. You know, even until the last day, we were like, "It's not going to shut down. It's not going to shut down." [m45dy]

Grief and disbelief was felt as the plant closed. Full of emotion, Robert said:

It was tough leaving, physically, mentally, and stuff like that. But you learn to...it was one of those you hated your job but you loved it. You took pride in what you did. And it was...I mean when they finally closed, I mean I was born and raised here, and they had been here since, you know, way before me. I mean there was generations where the grandfather worked there, then the son worked there, and

then, you know, the grandson worked there. And it was, as long as I knew, always, “It’s going to shut down. It’s going to shut down.’ And it never did, you know. And we didn’t expect it. You know, even until the last day, we were like, “It’s not going to shut down. It’s not going to shut down.” But now I guess getting away from my stuff. But no, I went to school, but I got my certificate and I was going in for the second year to get the associates. [m45dy]

Joe, Maria, Sylvia, Rogelio and Mario agreed layoffs occurred in cycles. Rogelio said,

And of course if it got real slow and stuff they started laying off. They would go with the new people, you know, start from there and then they would work their way up, depending on how things were going. Slowly at different times. But I think the last layoff they had was negotiated, and they laid-off I think like 27, 28 people all in one day. [m49wy]

Rogelio shared:

So when there were cutbacks and stuff like that, they would shuffle us around different departments. So I did a little bit of everything there at ...when they started laying off. [m49wy]

### **Emotional Distress**

One participant describes the day everyone at work was notified of the closure.

Maria recounts,

Me acuerdo el día que nos dijieron a todos que fuéramos a un cuarto grande que teníamos allí. Nos dijieron que iban a cerrar y que había gente que nos iban

ayudar a encontrar otro trabajo. Nomas nos dijieron que iban a cerrar y que habia gente que teniamos que ir hablar. Me acuerdo que no me podia concentrar en el trabajo, no podia comprender lo que habian dicho. Y corri al bano y llore, y llore y llore! Todos estabamos en shock. Unos lloraban, otros se enojaron, y pero no entendiamos por que. Era como que no creiamos. Yo pense que si trabajabamos mas alamejor no cerravan, no importa si nuesstros cuerpo dolia, lo que queriamos es que se quedara abierto! (I remember the day we were told to gather in the main room. They just said the company will close and there are people you need to talk to so you can get another job. I remember going back to my work area and I couldn't concentrate, couldn't take in what I heard! I ran into the bathroom and cried, cried and cried! We were all in shock, some were crying, others got mad, angry, but we all were in disbelief. I thought maybe if we work harder they will not close... and many of us worked even harder, didn't matter if our bodies were hurting, we wanted the plant to stay open!) [f50dy]

Mario describes his feelings following job loss.

After job loss, I became very exasperated because I was used to working. My wife would tell me to take at least a week of vacation, but then several weeks passed, I was starting to get used to that. But no, I can't just be there, so I started looking for a job, went to every business knocking on every door and filling applications, but nobody was hiring and the economy was getting bad too, nobody was hiring. My life changed dramatically, I also found out that I needed to have a high school diploma or GED, and I didn't have anything. Now we had

to plan things, like make a list of things from the store and only go one time, instead of several times a week. My son taught me how to use the computer. I started paying bills online using the computer to save money on gas and stamps. ...we also stopped eating out and had to live within our means. Had to reevaluate everything, we bought only the essentials and adjusted the house temperature to save some money. Losing my job was a real eye-opener. [m50my]

Robert: When I got the news, I go “what now”? Of course I got frustrated and had stressed... I knew I would not find another job that would pay good. I was making \$25 an hour! [m45dy]

Joe also reflected on the difficulties other displaced workers were going through; he added,

Of course you get frustrated but I felt really bad for my co-workers who were older and ...and then I found out some were illiterate! Some couldn't read! What are they gonna do? What is gonna happen with them? I felt really bad for them. Other participants experienced deep financial problems and struggled to make ends meet. Rosendo and Angel described their financial hardships.

Rosendo talked about his financial struggles. He said:

My income declined a lot since I lost my job. I've struggled to make ends meet and have to be more creative and careful on what and how I spend my money.

Because my two grandkids and my granddaughter, they are depending on me. “I need clothes.” “Okay, how much? Let's go get them.” That's how I was, right?

And even still now I still do it, but a little bit less because I'm not getting what I



used to get. I have to say “No” at times, and it’s kind of difficult because...especially my two oldest grandkids. I took them in as their father. I took them in, it was like I was their father... I’ll send you, how much money you need? I’ll send it to you. Now I can’t do that as freely as I used to, and it’s kind of like...sad is not the right word. But it’s kind of disheartening for me. [m58dy]

Angel is an Army veteran whom after losing his job had to borrow money from his military retirement, and also found himself asking community organizations for assistance to pay utility bills. He describes his displacement as a life-changing experience. Angel said:

All of a sudden I had no job. My wife got sick all the time, I can’t find a job... the bills kept coming and all of the sudden there’s a financial crisis! We had two cars, but no money for gas. Instead we started using the city buses. I never in my life had been on a bus...but now I had to! We used to eat out two or three times a week, now we barely make beans and rice. We did everything we wanted to... but not anymore, that’s depressing...it’s hard! No dancing, no movies, no buying clothes. I worked in several temporary jobs including roofing, painting, doing valet parking and selling tacos during Fiesta week celebrations. I was hoping that maybe they would hire me full-time, you know. Maybe have a temporary job while waiting for a full-time position, thought something would lead to a fulltime position, but it never happened! It was...it was more frustration than anything else. You know, you can’t find a job, and it’s hard! You don’t know what the future holds. So it is, yeah, you start...you might be getting ready

to explode! After a little while, you know, you just don't have any money. You become crazy! Crazy because you're broke! [m54mn]

For some participants the emotional stress was so great that they experienced serious health problems giving their life a new meaning. These participants took money from their 401k savings to pay medical bills. Although Melinda had stated she was ready for "whatever happened" with her job, she stated,

Two weeks following the job loss, I woke up one day with an intense headache and was taken to an emergency room. The doctors told me that I had suffered a stroke and that it must have been because of the stress. Funny thing is, I didn't know I was under that much stress but do remember feeling intense stress, "had no job, couldn't start school because I was suddenly sick, wondered if I would ever talk again. I was talking like slurring words... but I knew in my mind what I was saying... like the way we're talking, and the way it was coming out was you couldn't understand! I thought I had to apply for disability benefits because I didn't know if I was going to be able to talk. And I had to rely on taking money out from my 401K, which was another \$2,000. So that's what I was living on for that time. But, thank God, within a couple of days my speech started coming back. My headache was going away. They gave me five medications for the pain. They gave me an anxiety pill, thinking maybe that's what was wrong. But they told me, "Maybe the stress of you losing your job. You didn't really know that you were under that stress, mentally it was there." [f32sn]

Although this participant said was not depressed because his job was ending, and was ready for the closure, one day he woke up with double vision. Enrique said:

Extremely heavy work load at the time that I was closing my career at Kelly. Number two, dissolvent of my second marriage, living with my second wife in the same house, but I lived upstairs, and she lived downstairs. And my mother had passed away four months before. So I had three of the five major contributors to emotional turmoil. So I went to sleep on a Friday, and I awoke Saturday with double vision. And the following day is when I finally convinced myself to ask my then wife to take me to the Emergency Room and have me observed. So they did a series of diagnostic tests. Nothing to indicate trauma, no drugs, no alcohol, no stimulants, no depressants, nothing detectable by MRI or CAT scan. Toxicology reports were clear. So that remained with me for 91 days. [m64mn]

For participants who were also union representatives, the stress and frustration was not only because they would no longer be employed, but also because they were unable to perform their duty as union representative when their respective companies would not negotiate the impending closure. Rogelio had difficulty expressing his feelings, always spoke of his co-workers feeling sad, frustrated, stressed, etc. The only time he acknowledged being under a lot of emotional stress was when speaking of his wife's sudden illness which led to her demise. He shared:

But then as time went on, like I said, things started getting a little tougher, and tougher. People knew. You know, people were mad, people were upset, and I

know a lot of people were worried. They were scared, you know, that the plant was going to shut down. But it was a choice that they had to make, not us. We laid everything out, the information of what was going on, and what we had discussed in the meeting, and like we told them, "It's up to y'all. You're the people that are going to vote what ya'll want, if you do decide on the benefits cut back." And the majority said, "No." And of course the main thing was the vote, what the people wanted. It wasn't much about the committee and the president, you know, what we wanted; it was up to the people. They are at the plant.

Really, I got really stressed out when all this ... my wife and what was going on, that's when I got real stressed out. But at that time, really my mind was more being over here with her than all that, you know. The only good thing is that I had COBRA ... my wife all of a sudden became very sick and you know, in the hospital for several weeks... had to take money from the 401K in order to survive and pay bills and stuff but the companies worked with me. So I had to put a hold in order to be with her all that time until this happened. So then I had to restart my deal, you know, had to go back and look for another job, and start my life again. [m49wy]

Rogelio refuses to work again in a manufacturing setting, he said:

But we didn't know it was going to happen, so it's just something that happened. And it's hard, you know. Now there is a company is negotiating to open something up here. So that will bring some jobs... but I will never go back to manufacturing. No, because it's not guaranteed that the plant will stay open. And

if I do decide to go back in that job and it shuts down, well I'm back to step one again, you know, so pretty much where I'm at right now, I'm secure. [m49wy]

Rosendo who was also a union representative openly shared his feelings and reflected on some work conditions at his company. He said:

I was in shock, the company had been there for over 100 years, and felt anxious of how to tell the people he represented. There were rumors of closure but always were dismissed. However, after being notified, deep reflection on their working conditions – it all made sense. “It rained outside as much as inside”. Nothing was fixed and many things were thrown away. “This is the things you fix if you're going to stay. They're not fixing, man, something is wrong. About the middle of September they were, Saturday and Sunday, throwing chairs away, thousands of chairs. Chairs. All kinds of chairs. Chairs. Because if you could sit on your break in your work area, if you could work sitting down you were allowed to. They would make the shelf for the air condition, where the air condition goes, the outside part, it broke down, and they lost it for about 2 or 3 days. It was down, they were losing thousands in money. Taking the chairs out. And we're like, “Humm, why would they throw chairs out?” Supervisors, general managers were working that Saturday or Sunday, and they were throwing many good things. Now it all makes sense!

He felt people had to be ready and always questioned what to do next so nobody lost time going through the system. Rosendo said:

We were unprepared, So how do you go about it? Well you've got to petition the company, and have the government, Washington, petition for them. This is going to happen, and you know...let's have a letter already. Let's have it ready so we don't have to wait, because it's not right, and I'm like, It's not right. But what's happening... I assisted people petition for TAA benefits before the company closed.

Because they depend on you to be honest, to be on time. Because you build camaraderie, you know, you build bonds because we have to be honest, no matter how difficult the truth is. And you build a bridge and a bond, because people depend on you. We didn't get nothing. When they closed up we didn't get no severance pay, we didn't get no "Thank you", we didn't get nothing! You know what I mean? [m58dy]

Rosendo described his internal struggle as he described his duty to others as a union representative, and his inner struggle to stay on the job until the very end. He decided to take care of himself because he could no longer take care of others. Opted to work until the very end. He looked down as he spoke softly:

That day...and it's hard to put yourself aside and try to...because I stayed up until the last. I was one of the last persons to leave the plant. What am I going to do? I've got to pay rent, I've got kids, I've got obligations, I've got people that depend on me. But I have this, [union duties], my job, because I took an oath to do this [union duties to help others]. So I was sort of like torn...

Being a Union representative was about people presentation and honesty. And again, a figure of speech. That's how I took it. This job, you have to be dedicated, you have to be on your toes, you have to be, you know, for the people. You've got to watch out, because the company...you'll be eating, or you'll be out of your work station and they'd come talk to you very nice and "hey I got this for you." They'll slowly reel you in. You have to be careful. You can't be...because you can't serve two masters." [m58dy]

Rosendo, also expressed his inability to make new friends in his new job which happens to be next to his old place of employment. He describes his new situation as now being old and starting all over from the bottom has been difficult, and gets no respect for his work ethic. He said:

Ironically, it's right in back of the plant where I used to work, so I go by there every day. How ironic. I say "No, no, no." Okay, let me put it behind me. Let's go forward. Let's go forward. I've got to go right...I got right past it, right past it and get to the plant. It's disheartening, to say the least. It's disheartening.

Because I'm starting at the very bottom! I used to run the plant here! And this plant (where he used to work), it's about twice as big as that other plant. And I'm working here, and I'm starting at the bottom. And there's like people telling me what to do. You've got to be... So okay, I'm trying to learn and you've got young guys and they treat me as if I didn't know anything! You know, and plus I don't want to be there, but I have to be there. I'm getting paid okay, not at what I was making, but I'm making \$12.80 an hour. [m58dy]

Rogelio and Joe reasoned that staying to work until the company closed its doors was only delaying their new beginning. Joe said,

But I mean most of us were working, just waiting while others had already started a trade. So why wait, and wait, and wait when you can get started, finish, and start working again? [m54my]

### **Summary**

This third theme category Job displacement, contained three sub-themes related to the participants' experience of losing their employment due to the company closing or relocation to another location. In the first sub-theme, trade-related closures, some participants revealed their feelings and reflections on the possible reasons for which the company closed its doors. Most attributed their job loss to the realities of the economy and trade agreements with other countries. The second sub-theme, breach of the psychological contract, the participants described their emotions and feeling as they learned of the impending closure. Feelings of denial, betrayal, helplessness, reflections on missed signals and rumors were expressed. The breach also referred to the bargaining-union representatives' perception of having breached the contract of adequate representation to their fellow union-members. The third sub-theme, emotional distress, emerged as participants described their emotional dissonance as they reflected on the manner notice of closure was given to them, their feeling of powerlessness that was inherent to the job displacement, their inability to find prompt reemployment, and the grieving for their job and co-workers.



## **CHAPTER VII**

### **EDUCATION AND RETRAINING**

The fourth theme category, Education and Retraining, emerged from the experience all the participants had in common and from their desire to gain access to gainful employment and improve their economic status. Within this category, three sub-themes emerged: Education and Retraining, Problems with Workforce, and Entrepreneurship.

The first theme, Education and Retraining, concerned how participants after job displacement handled their options and describe how they came to their decision to retrain. Participants describe their feelings, motivations, and fears associated to being in a learning environment as adults. Challenges in receiving the workforce benefits, plus the benefits of retraining, and future goals are also described.

The second theme, Problems with Workforce, unfolded as the participants expressed their discontent with several factors that prevented them from achieving the retraining benefits. Challenges of time limitations and financial problems explained as they attempted to participate in a training program.

The third theme, Entrepreneurship, emerged as the participants discussed their future goals and talked about the benefits of having re-trained.

#### **Education and Retraining**

Participants examined several factors that helped them make a decision to enter a training program. For most participants it was also the moral support and encouragement from their family and friends that motivated them to seek retraining. All

the participants expressed being motivated and encouraged to enter a re-training program by their family, former-coworkers and friends.

Participants who are single-parent, having family support increased their motivation to learn. Family support and increased their children motivation to learn.

Robert said,

Oh, they were excited. They were at first like, “You’re old!” you know, this and that, but they knew it was for the better, and the majority worked out fine, because the majority of my classes were like when they were in school. There was only like one or two days at the most that it was after their school was out that I had classes. So that was the only problem, but my family was here to watch the kids. But they were all right. I would come home, you know, they would freak out because I’d be at the table with my homework, or this or that, you know, working on my Math or whatever. I would be trying to help them with their math and stuff, because they got their math skills from momma. She hated math. But no, they were excited. At first they would like get scared for me, cause I was kind of scared and stuff, but after a while it was just a natural thing to see me at the table late at night with the books or whatever. [m45dy]

Melinda said, “My grandmother and boyfriend would tell me “go to school”...

Maria was also motivated to be a good role-model for her child, in spite of having difficulty in school. “My son was very proud of me because I was in college. He would encourage me, and helped with house chores. I had to prove to him and everyone

who said I couldn't do it because I was old and didn't know the language. And I did, I learned, and I graduated!"

Similarly, Mario's wife and children encouraged him to follow his dreams.

Angel's extended family also encouraged him, he said, "My wife's family has been supportive and help sometimes with groceries." [m54mn]

For some participants deciding to enter a training program after displacement was a good decision, but deciding what to study was not easy. Melinda came to a decision by reflecting on her current skills, likes and dislikes, plus whether or not the career choice was deemed to be in demand. She said,

But once that had happened I got on the ball with Unemployment, I went to my orientation, and I listened. I take notes, and they talked about WIA, you know. And they talked about, you know, we'll pay for you to go to school. And I thought to myself, "You know what? I'm going to take advantage of that. That's free money to go to school, you know! Then I thought, what can be easy for me to learn...I know how to bill...hum, maybe I should try medical coding and billing...and they pay good. [f32sn]

For another participant, the decision to look for a job instead of going to school for re-training was a difficult decision. Rosendo said,

It's like a double-edge sword, you know. On one side you have a job and on the other side school. But it's been so long that you haven't been in school, you're old, you have a family you have to provide for... it's a double-edge sword! Other displaced workers were looking for jobs too. [m58dy]

Maria rationalized her idea of returning to school because many displaced workers would compete for the same jobs and her lack of education and language deficiency would be her disadvantage. She said:

I was thinking “there are many of us, we are all going to try to get the same job.... maybe going back to school is not a bad thing.” So I made my decision; they said they can teach me English and send me to college, so I said “yes”.

[f50dy]

For Mario financial stability was important, he shared:

I thought to myself I have no mortgage, which is most important. I only had a car payment and it is only my wife and I. MY children are all on their own and working. I wouldn't allow myself to get depressed even if I had lost my job. I would feel distressed at times but I kept telling myself I need to find a job.

Having a job gave me confidence...I need to accept whatever job they offer me.

I need to go to school.

The loss of employment was a blessing in disguise for it was an opportunity to finish school and start a career. As a teenager, he had dropped out of high school due to his father's death; and became the family's provider. He reflected on always wanting to have a career. Rogelio said,

The job loss was a blessing in disguise...but then I guess you could say I went back because how I felt at that time when the plant shut down, I said, “Well here is the opportunity for me to go back and finish my school, do what I want to do, and then pursue my career further up.”

The decision was also because fellow co-workers and friends had decided to go to school and wanted to be part of the group. Robert said,

So it was just a spur of the moment thing, to tell you the truth. I didn't even plan. I was there with 4 of my good buddies, and we were eating breakfast at a café, and like they were going to do it, and stuff like that, and I was like, you know, because they were on the other side of the fence, they were already going in, and I'm like, "Man!" You know, I was on the other side of the fence. I was like, "Nah, it's not for me." But I don't know, they just, I guess, poked my eyes, or whatever you want to call it. So I was like, "Yeah, if y'all are going to do it, I guess." We'd been working together and stuff, I mean we had been working there. Two of them had 20 something years there, and I was partners with one of them. They were brothers and I was partners with one of them for like...I'd say 7 years, I guess. Returning to school after 25 years of not being in that environment was scary... especially cuz I'm older. [m45dy]

Financial & moral support from family and friends made it easier to decide to enroll in a training program. Although all the participants expressed having financial problems after job loss, most participants stated having manageable debt to where they could afford to attend school with the financial assistance provided from workforce.

Melinda shared:

I don't have a mortgage, I live with my grandmother, she provides for everything...I just have to manage school and my kids...she buys everything I need. [f32sn]

Similarly, Mario commented:

Tan pronto nos avisaron que iban a cerrar, comenze a pagar todo. No debo mi casa, asi que con lo poquito que me dan y lo poquito que hace mi esposa, la hacemos. Nos tenemos que ajustar, pero pos si la hacemos. (As soon as we got the notice of the closure, we started paying everything, we don't owe our house. We only had a car payment, so with the little that I got (money from workforce) and the little that my wife makes, we make it ok... do have to stretch it, but we are ok, that's why I went to school. Plus I couldn't find a job, nobody was hiring. [m50my]

Rogelio added:

Well, a lot of people panic and that. I feel good because my wife and daughter would always tell me, or my daughter said, "Dad, go back to school now that the plant shut down. Now you have all the time in the world. Go back, finish school." And at first I was saying, "No, no, I just don't want to." And then I decided, I said, "You know what? I'm going to do that." So I did, you know, I went back to school. [m49wy]

Joe and Sylvia made arrangements with their family members, Joe said:

My wife was working, paying bills. I was getting unemployment, so that wasn't bad. It wasn't a lot, but still, with the unemployment and my wife working the bills were getting paid. My wife has a good job and insurance...so for me it's like when I got out of the army and had to start all over. [m54my]

Sylvia's financial strategy was to move to her parents' house until after she was reemployed, "I moved back to my mother's house ... both my daughter and I went to school at the same time."

Frustrated and unable to find employment, prompted Sergio to decide to retrain.

He said,

Everybody wanted a piece of paper of some sort. You do need licenses, you do need certificates, you need all these kinds of things to be able to get to the ordinary jobs. It was bleak because it wasn't like it was in the old days. In other words, it wasn't to where you could actually go and by the following day you would be hired. As you walked out there, and as the weeks went by, it seemed, "Hey, there might be something different." In other words, it promoted me to go to school, to be more employable, have more employable skills out there, because I saw that it wasn't the same anymore. So that is why, and plus the fact that they were going to pay for school, I kind of eased into the decision of going back to school. [m45mn]

Joe added:

I don't know, it just was something I had to do. It's like finding another job, almost. I was hoping once I finished the school. Workforce gave me like a whole page and a half. Why I picked this one, I don't know. You know what? I guess it was the shortest one. And I don't know, I just picked it ... I can't explain it.

[m54my]

Similarly, Robert shared:

I went to school, but I got my certificate and I was going in for the second year to get...Associates degree. I was doing real good, I love math and stuff.

The participants described how they felt to be an adult learner and having added responsibilities while attempting to better themselves in school. Sergio stated:

Nowadays, this is what I tell the instructors; it just means you've got to be stronger at it. So what I tell them is, "A person that has a family, that has a mortgage, that has to pay taxes on his property, on his house, has to feed his kids, cloth them, provide for their graduation party, and all this and that, and then coupled with, in our particular case, we're Jehovah Witnesses so we go to church a lot, coupled with that, we should have study programs in our house, with our families." That alone, right there, in the family sense, took a lot of time. Going to school at this point in time, it was a sacrifice. You had to sacrifice one of those things in there, family, religion. And it's been an uphill battle as far as getting to school, participating in school. Now I tell them at school, as a person that has all those responsibilities, it's really not for them. Now how do I mean that? Because I really don't believe that. It's hard to get to school, but I do believe that you do learn a lot, so much so because the Texas Workforce was paying and because I've been getting Pell Grants. [m45mn]

For some participants being in school also meant getting over a personal stigma.



Sergio shared:

It's very stressful" - Why is it stressful? Because for some reason going to school and having those particular responsibilities doesn't allow you the leisure of learning totally. I want to spend as much time as I can, trying to learn that particular program... but it's also getting over the stigma. The stigma that because you didn't finish high school, you can't go to college. [m45mn]

For others, having school-age children and managing time was difficult. Melinda added,

While at school, it was about school. I tried to stay positive in what I was doing. I saw a lot of people in class where, you know, they're young kids, and it wasn't even about school. And to me, I thought, You know what? I have to manage my school; I have to manage my household." So I try to time-manage, you know. Hey, this is school, I get home, this is for the kids, and then this is for school before they go to bed. I mean before I go to bed I would do my homework and things, so it was a little bit hard because being with a 9-year-old who is in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, he needs help with his homework every night.

Being with a Kindergartener and a nine year old, you know, they're both pulling me in two directions, and then I've got a stack of homework, so it was kind of hard. I would get so distressed sometimes like, I don't want to do this! I hate this! I hate it! I can't believe I got laid off! I should just go back to work because it was easier. I wanted to take an easy way out, you know. [f32sn]

Returning to school after many years away was concerning, but his self-esteem increased as he felt smarter than younger class peers. Jonny said:

It was scary! I mean like I said, Math was my favorite subject in high school. You know, I loved it, and I walked in and I was like, “Oh my God! I didn’t understand one damn thing they were...” you know. But it all came back to me within a couple of days, and I was like getting A’s. But I found it funny, like here is a 40 something year old guy that has been out of school for maybe 25 years. I walk in, there are teenagers, 20-year-olds straight out of high school... and you end up being smarter than them after a couple of days when you refresh your mind and you start catching on again. You are actually the smarter one than the 17-year-old that just got out of high school, straight out. They didn’t know what they were doing, and I’m like, “Oh my God! What’s going on here?” I mean they are just barely out of school, and they don’t know what this is? They’re supposed to know! I mean what are they teaching in the schools?

Joe also took pride in making good grades, he said, “Oh yeah. You know, I’d say we were a class of between 17 to 22 and I was maybe in the top 4, always getting A’s or one point off the A.” [m54my]

Joe and Sergio observed that perhaps his life and work experience were helping him learn more than the younger peers. Sergio said,

Yeah. But you know what? When we were there, we had not been in school for a long time, and you have this young kids fresh out of school, and we are doing better than them! I don’t know if it’s the experience that you’ve had all this time,

and they haven't had any. But yet, they just came out of school. And there's a lot of stuff that they can't do that we can. I found it strange. [m45mn]

Others like Robert described his challenges and struggles with college coursework.

Oh, yes. Oh, English. Oh God! That was one of my worst subjects! We had to do essays on damn computers now, and I am so computer illiterate! I'm like...I type with one finger. And they would make us do like a 400, 500 word essay. I was scared, it built my confidence. I kind of learned more than what I expected to learn in English and stuff, but the only thing that I hated, and I had a B average, I think, close to an A. But the final essay I read the thing wrong and my teacher said, "I think you misread but I'm sorry, I can't give you the grade." [m45dy]

Rosendo had to enroll in remedial courses before allowed in the training program. He shared:

It's been so long that we had to get remedial just to pass the entrance to get into St. Phillips. So okay, we took about 8 months for remedial just to catch up on writing proper sentences, grammar. You know, we never used a comma, period, question marks, you know? All of this. Learn about computers, yeah. That! To learn computers! Plus all this other little stuff. It felt like, "Man! Come on, man!" [m58dy]

This participant examined his situation as an unemployed non-English speaker, and described his strategy to learn.

Mario commented:

When I started working with that company we didn't need to know English but having a job gave me confidence. Everyone was Latin so everyone spoke Spanish. It made it easier for me to keep my Spanish and set English to one side. I looked and applied for a job everywhere... but nothing. Everyone asked for the high school diploma. When I enrolled to get my GED and when I entered college it was more difficult because I had to pay close attention, study more and learn the English expressions. When I was in college I would stay behind because...I would listen to what the professor was saying or showing us in English then I would have to translate it into Spanish so I could understand what he was saying. I would read what he would say in English and speak English the best way I could so I wouldn't stay behind in my classes. I would also take my book to my friend so she could translate my lesson. It resulted in me getting good grades in my studies. [m50my]

One participant expressed having instructors that understood their job loss experience, and who patiently explained the class material to them made them feel better about being in school. Joe explained,

The first, oh. It was me and this other guy going. And I don't know, I didn't feel too bad because we were the oldest ones there anyway, so it just...the kids were...they weren't rude or nothing, they were just like, "Why are you over here back in school, old and all that?" And we just told them, "Oh, we just got laid off

and they gave us a chance to go back to school and we did.’ So they helped us, because we had to take Algebra and all that stuff. [m54my]

Other participants enlisted the help of their children for assistance in things they didn’t understand in school. Rosendo says,

It was semi-difficult. I guess maybe we were just lucky that we had instructors that understood, because there was a bunch of us! And they would say, “We understand. If you need help, let me know if you need extra time. Just let me know, we understand. You people have been in school! Some workers. And not just workers, but old workers, you know.

They had a bunch of people there too. There was, I think, like about maybe 12 or 15 of us going to school there, and they had another bunch of people. The instructors already had a...kind of like an inside track... I mean fresh out of high school! They already know computer, they know this, they know that. You know, all these little things that they take for granted, you know? Because sometimes I would also ask my daughter, “Hey, how do you do it?” “Oh, you just do it like b-r-r-r. There, you see?” “Wait! Wait a minute, man. You got to tell me like I’m a 3-year-old!” They were taking it for granted [meaning the young peers at school took many things for granted]. [m58dy]

Maria recalled what helped her in school the most, she said:

I was happy I could study the GED in Spanish. I would get nervous, because I was in school and had to learn math and write English was hard, but the teacher would explain to us in Spanish. [f50dy]

For another participant, entering an educational setting was not an easy transition. One participant expressed difficulty adjusting without a job and was unable to make friends at school. Rosendo said,

You get to..., “Oh, they’re going to close the plant in two years.” Oh, well then you get to be able to say your goodbyes gradually, and...okay. Because we’ve been together for 30 years. So it’s sort of like a hole. There’s a hole. Something is missing. And I was talking with this guy and this female that’s teaching me. He said, “Well, let’s go, we’ll be friends.” “I don’t want to be friends now. I don’t want to.” “What do you mean you don’t want to be friends?” You go, “I just...I still feel gone to where I was.” [m58dy]

Another participant reflected on the classroom dynamics. Maria said, My co-workers who were also in school, we got together sometimes, sometimes we ate, and sometimes we just talked in the classroom. Some friends were still very depressed. There were others who couldn’t stand each other and being in the same room was ... felt the tension. But I stayed focused, I had to if I wanted to learn. [f50dy]

According to the participants, retraining conveyed also new found hope. Mario shared:

I never imagined that I would get my GED much less go to college. In the beginning I would think to myself, “What am I doing here? I should be working. This is not for me. I am too old for this.” I would prefer having go through this early in my life not now. But I had no choice. I had to confront the situation and

I did. There were times when I felt insecure. However I started seeing the situation in a brighter light. Whatever happened, happened. And the best thing that happened to me is being there and to continue my education. [m50my]

Sylvia: I love my life now! [f48dy]

Melinda was happy to be a good role-model for her children, she said:

I think it was kind of a positive influence on them too, because they saw, “Oh, Mom’s doing her homework. Let’s do our homework too.” You know, they want to be like Mom, they want to be there with Momma. We would all sit at the table and I would pull my homework out and they would pull theirs. I’d say, “If you have questions just ask me.” And we’re working together. In the prior year when I wasn’t really hardly around, there grandma would tell me, “Well they didn’t want to do their homework,” or “They’re fussing that they have to do it.” And I’ve seen a really positive influence on my son, because I had to put him in tutoring for Reading last year. And when I put him in tutoring I can tell that it helped him so much. He got a commencement award for the task in Reading. [f32sn]

Maria shared:

My son was very proud of me because I was in college. He learned from my experience that with education one can do many things. He just graduated from a four year university! [f50dy]

Participants reflected on their job loss and emotional stressors of being in a learning environment as adult learners. Rosendo describes how he grieved the loss of his friends and coworkers made it harder to learn and make new friendships. Rosendo said,

You get to be able to say your goodbyes gradually, and...okay. Because we've been together for 30 years So it's sort of like a hole. There's a hole. Something is missing. And I was talking with this guy and this female that's teaching me. He said, "Well, let's go, we'll be friends." "I don't want to be friends now. I don't want to." "What do you mean you don't want to be friends?" You go, "I just...I still feel gone to where I was." And it's hard for me to say...I eat lunch by myself. I'll take my breaks by myself. I don't want to talk to nobody, because I'm still gone to... [m58dy]

Mario like other participants saw age as a barrier to learning and explains why he challenged himself. He recalled:

Perhaps because in college the majority were young people. There were maybe three of us that were over 40 or 50 like me. So I felt as if...the young generation would catch on quickly and I would not.

Similarly Joe, recalled feeling uncomfortable returning to school due to his age and added felt too old to learn; but later changed his mind. Joe said:

I thought that I was too old to... That I was too old to learn...that I wasn't going to get the courses, I guess, the Math, the English, the writing, the stuff like that. I thought I was too far away from being in school and stuff like that. But like I



said, there were guys there that were 50 years old and going into their 60's. So you know, when I saw that too, well shoot, if they can do it, I can! [m54my]

Being older and in school plus having younger teachers felt weird. I felt a little uncomfortable at first, but you know, later on you just kind of get used to it. I did.

Another participant thought age was not a barrier to his learning. Robert revealed,

It did teach me one thing, you are never too old to learn. You always hear that cliché and stuff, but it's true. There were guys there that were way older than me, and they could manage and stuff, so why couldn't I? [m45dy]

Two participants experienced unexpected family situations that prompted them to drop out of their retraining program. One participant became gravely ill and the other participant's wife suffered an acute illness and later perished. Neither participant had healthcare insurance.

Robert became gravely ill while attending school and became emotional as he reflected on the sudden illness that prompted him to make life-changing decisions and to quit school on his last semester. He said:

At work we had insurance, but afterwards, no. Afterwards, I mean you had buy COBRA insurance, but shoot, that was like \$200 or \$300 that you had to pay. I was like, "Shit! I can't afford that!" So no, I didn't have insurance. Sometimes I got sick. But I'm one of those ones that, I guess it's cliché again, I got to be dying for me to go to the...you know, especially a Mexican guy. You know, he's

not going to go to a damn doctor, you know. When all this happened to me, like I said, that I got sick, I was here at my mom's with 102, 103 fever and stuff, and I wouldn't go to the hospital, and my sister finally said, "Get your ass up, I'm taking you to the hospital!" and this and that. My neck had ...was full of blood and puss...had surgery. That's when they found out I was diabetic. And then after I drained a couple of days like that it got infected, and that's when I started getting the 102, 103 fever ... my grandma died of that. [m45dy]

Rogelio's wife became ill, was hospitalized and expired. He sadly said, "My mind was with her... so I took care of her every day at the hospital...until..." [m49wy]

### **Problems with Workforce**

Entrance into a retraining program varied depending on the date of displacement and depending on the school registration dates. Joe said, "It didn't take me long. We got laid off in May, and in July I started to school... it was a 10 month program." [m54my]

However, Melinda felt that the Workforce agency did not offer a variety of training programs. She said, "But the thing was they only have...they're limited on what you can take classes." [f32sn] There was a process to choosing and entering a training program. Similarly, Maria said:

Yes, at first they were a little slow; they didn't know what to do because we were a lot of us wanting to go to school. It was frustrating for us because they told us to choose a career but then they said you have to do a test first. Then we were told you can only chose from this list. We had to wait until the college started so we wasted time, and a lot of us were waiting for our turn. [f50dy]

Others experienced time limitation problems. Waiting to enter a training program was counted toward the two years of training eligibility. Mario only had enough time to complete one year of actual training benefits. He also describes the process as slow. Mario alleged,

At first they were very disorganized at the Workforce agency. They didn't know how to handle the situation. They were not trained for that ... things started getting difficult because the Workforce here was not prepared. They did not know what to do. They did not know how to handle so many people at one time. The paperwork would get lost. Things like that happened a lot. They had me waiting for almost nine months before they sent me to get my GED. I asked if I could go to another town or somewhere else. What I would do is wait. I just wanted for the process to be faster. Being patient helped. [m50my]

Rosendo also commented that remedial classes took time away from the two years allowed by workforce agency and therefore, did not complete his two year training program. "I only got a one-year certificate, because I didn't have time. We were only...under the TRA you only have two years. From the day you are laid off you have two years. Yeah, it's...a little bit of education is better than none. One year is better than zero." [m58dy]

Similarly, Mario waited several months for a GED program to start. After several months, he earned his GED and enrolled in a vocational training at a community college. However, by then, a year had passed and was only allowed to register for one year. Mario said, "When I applied through Workforce they told me to apply for the two-year

term. However, once I entered, Workforce reduced my benefit to one year. They stopped my benefits. They stopped everything.” [m50my]

Delayed/Unpaid tuition was also a problem for several participants. The participants’ perception was that the Workforce office was not ready for the amount of people needing services. This participant describes his problems in getting his tuition paid. Robert said,

The workforce weren’t ready for the amount of people that lost their job. And it got so stressful, you know, waiting for this, waiting for that, or going to school. They would push us, “Yeah, go to school, go to school!” But when it came down to that we needed this or we needed that, it was hard to get the funding for the books, it took a while for them to pay the tuition and stuff. We were there at school and we didn’t even know where we were going to be. We’d show up and they’d go, “Hey, they still haven’t paid.” So we weren’t able to go to class until the last minute, because in the last hour they paid the tuition. So okay, we got to go to school. But it was they pushed you, and they pushed you, and they pushed you to go to school, and then when you are there to do all the stuff it was just hard to get everything going and stuff. But it got to you, because there supposed to help you. Or they give you papers, saying, “Oh, we’ll help you with gas, with your vehicle, we’ll help you with that.” But when you go ask for help like that, it’s like they don’t want to, like it’s their money. [m45dy]

Robert also stated that the delay of their benefit checks inspired a group of displaced workers to start car-pooling to school as a survival strategy. He shared:

They helped us, but sometimes they would take two or three weeks just to get that one check, and then you were behind, and you were on unemployment so you couldn't really...the only thing that saved some of us, and you weren't really supposed to be doing it, we carpooled and stuff. And so that's what we had to do to pay the gas. So you were saving some of the money that they were giving you for gas and stuff like that, and you use it to buy other stuff as you need it. But you weren't really supposed to be doing that. But I mean there was just no way around it. It would be cool if those guys had the same schedule with you, but there was one guy who didn't have a schedule like us, and he was doing it all by himself until that second or third semester, and then he got classes like us. But then one of us started not having the same classes too, so you were like on your own. [m45dy]

For Melinda searching for employment after completion of the training program was problematic, due to not being taught the necessary skills that would qualify her for an entry position on the retraining career. She said,

TWC is telling me 'You need to make 10 job searches a week,' you know." And I'm thinking all these jobs that I'm hitting with the experience of a biller is for billing specialists for billing. I told them I don't honestly know, I can't honestly say I don't know how to bill because you guys didn't teach me the billing. I go, "I didn't get to learn on my extern site.' They ran out of time! [f32sn]

Another problem some participants had after completing the training program, was that the careers were no longer on demand. Rosendo believed he chose an "in-

demand” occupation but soon was concerned the economy would affect his future employment. He was unable to change to another training program because he had already started the electrician program. Rosendo said:

The decline in the economy and the housing market will result in less demand for electricians. So we don't need electricians no more. They're not building houses, they're not repairing them, they're not... so there is no jobs or we need one or two years' experience, not just schooling. [m58dy]

### **Entrepreneurship**

The most cited benefit of retraining was that now they had new skills and eventually wanted to have their own business. Although most were unable to find employment in the field they retrained; they were now equipped with skills to do small jobs and earn extra income. For some participants the goal was to continue their education in the future and become entrepreneurs, coincidentally, these participants were also home owners. Rosendo said:

It turned out to be a little savior to where I can go...and the good part is that I can say, “Okay, I'm going to do this for \$15, \$10, \$25 cash.” ... just to have spending money and cash money. I can set my price to what I'm going to do, you know. Well, I do electrical stuff here and there, minor electrical stuff. Side jobs, so to speak.

Melinda made future goals, she explained:

Recently, with the whole medical coding, and billing course, and everything, I honestly see myself eventually I want to be my own boss, because I'm so headstrong...you know, once I become certified. [f32sn]

Sergio enjoyed learning that he stayed in school after the workforce benefits had expired. He stated will seek an Associate's degree in welding and to have his own business. He said he enjoys being older and being able to make informed decisions based on his experience. [m45mn]

Maria talked about her future goals: She said:

Voy a tomar clases como abrir una floreria...quiero tener una floreria y voy aprender! (I would like to learn how to have my own a floral shop someday... it can be done! [f50dy]

For Mario his displacement and starting over in another career diverted his retirement plan. However, now his plan includes using skills learned from his retraining to make extra money.

Con lo poco que aprendi ya puedo hacer unos trabajitos aqui y alla. No he podido hallar empleo, asi que mientras arreglo todo para entrar a la escuela... quiero terminar el programa si Dios quiere. Pero ya puedo hacer trabajitos para ayudarme. (I can make odd jobs with the little that I've learned. I want to return to school, God willing. But yes, I can make small jobs and help myself. [m50my]

### **Summary**

The fourth theme category Education and retraining, is related to the participants' experience in deciding to attend school, reflections as an adult learner as they

participated in a training program while grieving their job and do-workers. The second sub-theme, problems with workforce, related to the problems the participants felt was frustrating dealing with delayed or unpaid tuition and unfair time limitations that limited their retraining benefits. Some participants did not complete their training because they ran out of time. The third sub-theme, entrepreneurship, related to the intention to use the new learned skills for personal profit.

This chapter also present factors that were taken into consideration before deciding to retrain were: (not necessarily in the exact order), 1) Their inability to find employment; 2) Their financial situation, whether their debt was manageable, having no mortgage payments, a 401(k) and savings account for emergency; 3) Family income/ spouses income; 4) Family support was important for it motivated them to make decisions and to make goals. Their support system included friends and displaced co-workers.

Things that facilitated learning, the benefits and challenges of returning to school as an adult are espoused. The participants' had problems receiving the workforce benefits are described. Lastly, the participants' future goals and plans for entrepreneurship are described.



## CHAPTER VIII

### POST-ANALYSIS LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a post-analysis literature review and to discuss the emergent themes from the analysis within the context of related literature.

#### **Mexican-American Culture**

Thomas, Au, and Ravlin, (2003) referred to culture as “values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral meanings shared by members of a social group and learned from previous generations” (p. 454).

The Mexican-American Cultural traditions, roles and values were strong influence in their daily lives and decision-making of the participants. Within this theme three sub-themes emerged: Machismo, Self-determination, and Resilience.

#### **Machismo**

The definition of machismo varies, for instance it is defined as “the complex interaction of social, cultural, and behavioral components forming male gender-role identity in the sociopolitical context of the Latino society (De La Cancela, 1986). Torres, (1998), defines machismo as being “manhood” (p. 16).

Stereotypical machismo involves behaviors that belittle women. Torres (1998) recognizes the stereotypical and negative connotations of machismo as an authoritarian, aggressive toward women, and womanizer, however, he acknowledge there are positive views of machismo. These include an emphasis on self-respect, responsible, protector and provider of their family.

Abalos (2005) described sacred family teachings that are inherent in one-self even when we think it does not exist. Individuals normally do not know they learned certain behaviors, until they realize they are actually acting or performing such behavior.

Torres (1998) recognized the negative connotations of machismo as an authoritarian person but acknowledge there are positive views of machismo. These include an emphasis on self-respect, responsible, protector and provider of their family. Machismo in the Latin research articles is often referred to a men's masculinity, usually stereotype men; and, according to Torres (1998), the definition varies from country to country. For instance, for Puerto Ricans, machismo "historically emphasize bravery, strength, male dominance, honor, virility, aggression, and autonomy" (Torres, 1998, p. 18); on the other hand men do not know how to react to women's adopting new cultural roles (white) and leaving their traditions, i.e. working outside their home.

Beattie (2002) pointed out that machismo may also be a sign of status and wealth. He states, social class may influence behaviors such as drinking after work hours, and exhibition of power, toward his spouse, especially if she is a stay-at-home wife.

The concepts of respeto (respect) and dignidad (dignity) to the self and family are highly valued and is associated with shared or mutual relationships. When referring to men, Beattie (2002) stated that they like to be respected, and dignity refers to the strong self-worth. "Latino males carry out their functions within the family, the community, and the culture at large" (p. 18). Machista is an exaggerated behavioral sense of machismo where the behavior is aggressive, dominant, lack of respect for others,

especially females and children; it is also characterized as the male who drinks and does as he wishes without having consequences at home. This culture is characterized for values such as: dignity, integrity, honor, pride, deep sense of family relations (Beattie, 2002), loyalty, power, and domination (Abalos, 2005), paternalism, familism, and respect toward elders (Torres, Solberg & Carlstrom, 2002).

Abalos (2005) stated culture shapes people who seek competition for power and self-attainment, and is imbedded in our being through deep rooted sacred teachings of family and patriarchy values whose behavior may include aggressive, protective and care-giver machismo behaviors.

Torres, Solberg, and Carlstrom (2002) investigated whether machismo can be conceived as a multidimensional construct if various measures of machismo, masculinity, and gender role identity are compared. They also evaluate whether Latino adult males subscribe to different types of machismo, masculinity, and gender role identity. They surveyed 123 men that were active in several social, educational facilities. Their participants consisted in most part Puerto Ricans (30%) and Mexican-Americans (39%), a total of 66 men had immigrated from Mexico or Puerto Rico (50.7% and 25.4%). Sixty two percent reported having lived in the U.S. for more than 20 years.

In their study, Torres, Solberg, and Carlstrom, (2002) used the instrument to identify the masculinity and gender role identity among Latino men, and used an acculturation scale, plus included questions of demographic information. The different scales measured machismo, masculinity, and gender role identity. Their research findings did not find a relationship between demographic variables, ethnicity, patterns of

machismo, masculinity, and gender identity. They did find differences between the Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans, these being regarding the length of time residing in the U.S. They found that Mexican-Americans reported having resided longer length of time in the U.S. and longer educational achievement than Puerto Ricans, whom was also shorter (Torres, Solberg & Carlstrom, 2002).

They found no differences between acculturation level and different types of machismo. Their findings suggest there are different types of masculinities, including machismo. They also found evidence of different positive and negative elements of machismo among their groups. However, they did not find a significant relationship between acculturation and gender role identity (machismo). When describing characteristics of Latin females, Torres et al., (2002), describe marianismo as the counterpoint of machismo, where women are submissive, modest, self-sacrificing, morally superior to men.

The participants of this study disagree with the notion that machismo is negative or that it involve aggressive behaviors (Torres, 1998). This study concurs with aspects of Beattie (2002), in that the concepts of respect and dignity are considered important characteristics. Thus, this study also concurs with Torres et al. (2002), for it recognizes machismo can consist of positive responsible behaviors. Their cultural traditions and values such as the view of the machismo provided inner determination and strength that allowed them to achieve resilience. Hence, machismo was redefined to mean: An individual who has a work ethic with many years of experience, is willing to work on

menial jobs, and is willing to better himself by attending school so as to continue their role as a provider, and paternalistic responsibilities.

### **Self-determination**

There is a dearth of literature that address Mexican-Americans and self-determination, therefore related literature on similar concepts was sought to provide support for this theme. Self-determination is defined as “having the free choice of one’s own acts (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2004). Agency is defined by Bandura (2001) as the act of doing something intentionally, where the individual has locus of control. Therefore, free choice and agency are characteristics of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy beliefs regulate how people feel, think, behave, and inspire themselves (Bandura, 1994). Social cognitive theory can explain why people may or may not be motivated to perform a given action and to achieve self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). The core features of agency, consists of intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Agency, or doing something, requires intentionality. Planning the action is forethought; self-reactiveness involves the self-monitoring, and guiding one’s behavior while carrying out the task, and self-reflectiveness involves reflecting upon one’s behavior. “Through reflective self-consciousness, people evaluate their motivation, values, and the meaning of their life pursuits” (Bandura, 2001, p. 10). He explains, that individuals usually have the intention, the forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness to carry-out a given plan. Agency enables people in their efforts to self-development and self-renewal.

Self-development may be accomplished through three forms of human agency. The proxy agency is where favors of others are warranted. Collective agency, collective efficacy is accomplished by several people acting on a shared belief, inspiring and motivating each other, it is a member-oriented where the group becomes efficacious.

In this theme category, self-determination, the participants of this study revealed that they were determined to accomplish their goals. After the displacement, the workers continued to meet with co-workers and some attended school together. The expressed behavior concurs with Bandura's collective agency of becoming self-efficacious.

### **Resilience**

Lever and Valdez (2010) noted that people who overcome adversity are said to possess certain abilities that assist in becoming resilient. Castro, Nichols, and Kater (2007) noted that resilience is "personal attitudes and skills that afford a capacity to recover from adversity despite exposure to serious threats to adaptation or development" (p. 268).

Resilience is defined as having: "1) personal control, 2) optimism, 3) goal orientation, 4) life purpose, 5) persistence, 6) a positive self-esteem, and self-concept. Resilience may also be associated with 7) high spirituality, and 8) strong cultural involvement" (Castro, Nichols, & Kater, 2007, p. 268).

Castro et al. (2007) suggested that traditionalism idealisms related to social norms such as familism, and behaviors that promote self-directed behavior that helps with resilience, the same exists in the prevention of drug addiction relapse. Familism is referred to as "having close family relations and expectations that exist within the family

(shared expectations), traditionalism, is characterized as conservative cultural expectations, values, and attitudes, that may influence the family's system responsiveness" (Castro et al., 2007, p. 262).

Mirande (1988) explicated that machismo and adherence to one's culture as a form of resilience. He interviewed 40 Latino/ Chicano men who resided in California and were parents. Latinos living in the United States, whom also retained close ties with their culture. Their main inquiry was to know if they continued to follow traditional conceptions of machismo. He used two models, the compensatory view: the machismo origins traced to the Spanish conquest of Mexico, where people felt powerless, felt inadequate, inferior and exhibited aggression. The negative side of machismo was equated with irresponsibility, inferiority, and ineptness. In this model the men controlled and subjugated women and is "fixated on phallic symbolism...often walks around holding his genitalia and exclaiming – tengo muchos huevos ("I've got a lot of balls") (p. 66). The second model, the positive ethical view, emphasize honor, respect, and courage, thus, emphasizing machismo as qualities consisting of strength, virility, commitment, loyalty, personal integrity and strength of character (Mirande, 1988). In this model, the real macho earns the respect of his family and of others. Women are treated with respect and not abused. The people he interviewed were given questions regarding their views on machismo and answers were divided among positive (machismo is positive, identifies with it, machismo means responsibility), negative view, (machismo is viewed as a negative trait, i.e., male dominance), or neutral view (person is indifferent/ambivalent on machismo views). Their findings revealed that the machismo

traits were also genderless. Only one third (14 men or 35%) of the sample viewed machismo traits as positive. Those participants who chose to interview in English viewed machismo as positive, whereas those who interviewed in Spanish viewed machismo negatively, 5 out of 40 (12.5% were neutral) (Mirande, 1988). 52.5% classified machismo negative. The majority of his respondents replied that machismo meant responsibility.

Mirande (1988) noted that traditional cultural norms may strengthen a person's resiliency when experiencing adverse situations. Similarly, Castro et al. (2007) agreed that having a strong cultural identity is important for it helps develop ethnic pride and bicultural competence that in turn assists in achieving resilience.

The participants in this study agreed with Mirande (1988), in that machismo was thought of as a positive cultural trait, and as a source responsibility. In addition, all eleven participants indicated feeling pride in their heritage, thus also concurring with Castro et al. (2007), which state that cultural identity results in achieving resilience.

### **Union Membership**

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) state Unions are about respect, training, community, and collaboration and about having a voice at work. The AFL-CIO believed that by banding together, people are able to negotiate safe working conditions and fair wages and benefits (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, 2012). It is believed that Union members earn higher wages than none-union members.



Employee representation was formally recognized in the United States with the passing of The Wagner Act of 1935. According to Civics Online (n.d.) this Act specifies that:

Section 7. Employees shall have the right of self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

Section 8. It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer:

(1) To interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in section 7.

(2) To dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labor organization or contribute financial or other support to it: Provided, That... an employer shall not be prohibited from permitting employees to confer with him during working hours without loss of time or pay.

(3) By discrimination in regard to hire or tenure of employment or any term or condition of employment to encourage or discourage membership in any labor organization: Provided, That nothing in this Act or in any other statute of the United States, shall preclude an employer from making an agreement with a labor organization (not established, maintained, or assisted by any action defined in this Act as an unfair labor practice) to require as a condition of employment membership therein, if such labor organization is the representative of the

employees in the appropriate collective bargaining unit covered by such agreement when made.

(4) To discharge or otherwise discriminate against an employee because he has filed charges or given testimony under this Act.

(5) To refuse to bargain collectively with the representatives of his employees.

Employees shall have the right of self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

This act also specifies several unfair labor practice (ULP) if employers:

1. Interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in section 7.
2. To dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labor organization or contribute financial or other support to it: provided, that .... An employer shall not be prohibited from permitting employees to confer with him during working hours without loss of time or pay.
3. By discrimination in regard to hire or tenure of employment or any term or condition of employment to encourage or discourage membership in any labor organization: Provided, that nothing in this Act or in any other statute of the United States, shall preclude an employer from making an agreement with a labor organization (not established, maintained, or assisted by any action defined in this Act as an unfair labor practice) to require as a condition of employment

membership therein, if such labor organization is the representative of the employees in the appropriate collective bargaining unit covered by such agreement when made.

4. To discharge or otherwise discriminate against an employee because he has filed charges or given testimony under this Act.

5. To refuse to bargain collectively with the representatives of his employees.

Advantages include a reduction of unemployment from plant closures, increased training and reduction of accidents. Unions are more known to benefit workers by increasing wages and by reducing work-related disputes (Singh, 2001; Belman & Voos, 2004).

The process of unionization involves holding elections and this process may promote differences between employer/management and people wanting union representation. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) was implemented to oversee certification process and oversee grievance procedures through negotiation, grievance arbitration, and the re-negotiation of new agreements (Singh, 2001).

In the current study, all union participants indicated the reason for joining the union was to protect themselves from being discharged unfairly, and as a form to negotiate fair wages. This study concurs with Singh (2001) in that joining a union gave the workers extra protections and leverage to negotiate benefits.

### **Job Security**

People tend to join union or bargaining unions during company mergers, downsizing, and recessions seeking to protect their salaries and benefits (Rose, 2007).

The state of the economy and stricter employment laws protection has resulted in unions merging together thereby extending their cover employees from both private and public employment sectors. However, unions have seen a decline in membership as the manufacturing industry also decline. Phillips, Curtis and Lundskow (2010), found females tend to be more involved with their union than males. In addition, union representatives were found to be more satisfied than other workers who did not held a union position. This study is similar to Phillips, Curtis and Lundskow (2010) in that the two union representatives stated being very happy with their role as representative of others.

### **Have Someone Advocate for Their Rights**

Some employers view Unions as a win-win strategy for both employers and employees. For example, employers and Union representatives enter into an agreement that will prevent strikes and generally assures the continuance of production even if the employee dissatisfaction. The employee, on the other hand, usually join unions that will help them increase their wages and will bargain for them for good working conditions, vacation, fringe benefits, discrimination and protection from other labor laws (Singh, 2001; Belman & Voos, 2004). Union members generally earn more than non-union members (Belman & Voos, 2004).

However, not all employers welcome labor unions at their companies and usually attempt to dissuade employees from forming a union or from bringing an outside Union to represent them (Singh, 2001). By controlling employee behavior, the companies avoid becoming unionized and exercise full control over employee management, but at times

employees are involved with decisions so as to increase their productivity, through their involvement. Hence, employee groups at times give employees the opportunity to participate in work related activities that aided in the company maintaining their competitive edge, but did not negotiate terms and conditions of employment (Singh, 2001).

The impact of globalization and competition affected relations between employers and union members (Singh, 2001; Belman & Voos, 2004). Changes with global competition led to management changing strategies and saving money led to reducing wages and re-allocating workers. There was a perceived threat of company closures and these changes prompted confrontational bargaining with unions. As companies started relocating to other countries and Unions started negotiating lower wages for employees, this strategy gave management leverage for negotiations (Belman & Voos, 2004). Nonetheless, from the early 1980s and early 1990s, U.S. workers experienced increased competition in global labor markets and experienced “reduced employment security, declining real hourly wages, longer hours of work, and less available/less generous fringe benefits” (Belman & Voos, 2004, p. 491).

In essence nine participants stated wanting to “have someone advocate for their rights” implies having negotiations between employees and employers where agreements and disagreements occurred. The majority of the participants of this research were unhappy because the Union was unable to negotiate the plant closure and their severance package before losing their job. Thus, wanting someone to represent them to negotiate their benefits concur with Singh (2001) and Belman & Voos (2004).

## **Job Displacement**

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program (U.S. Department of Labor Employment Training Administration, 2011b), assist the workers who lost their job as a result of foreign trade. The following theme emerged as the participants expressed discontent with the North America Free Trade Act (NAFTA).

### **Trade-related Closures**

International trade among nations has existed millions of years and it originates from European countries. The concept of free trade between countries has been credited to the 1800's and to theorist Adam Smith for his belief in eliminating anything that restricted trade and that restricted market growth. He argued that "every prudent master of a family, never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy" (Williams, 1993, p.1). The great depression of the 1930's affected all nations in their exports of goods. In an attempt to sell their own goods, countries increased tariffs of incoming goods (imports). This policy change gave rise to eventually lowering tariffs and creating bilateral agreements with other countries.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund created the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) in 1946 in an effort to control tariff concessions for multi-national and international trade. This multilateral agreement ensured that "if the tariff on imports from one country is decreased, the tariff on all imports of the same goods from other GATT members must be reduced" (Williams, 1993, p. 1). The United States joined GATT in 1947. This agreement is also known as an Executive Treatise. In spite of the GATT agreement, the U.S. was at a disadvantaged economic trade loss to

Japan and European countries. As a remedy, the U.S. passed the Trade Act of 1974 which prevented unfair foreign practices that would adversely affect the U.S. trade competition. Williams (1993) notes that during this time, Latin American countries were indebted to the U.S. and an attempt to restructure their own economic problems joined GATT. This meant that tariffs would be reduced and they could participate in open global markets. GATT was replaced in 1995 by the World Trade Organization. In 1988 U.S. entered into a free trade agreement with Canada and included Mexico in 1992, giving rise to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Since then, more countries have been added into trade agreements with the United States.

These Neoliberal policies gave rise to international trade agreements, specifically the North American Trade Act and have resulted in millions losing their jobs and becoming displaced workers here in the United States. The concept of free trade between countries has been credited to Adam Smith and to his belief in eliminating anything that restricted trade and that restricted market growth. His approach to remove tariffs is similar to the current policies implemented with the North American Free Trade Agreement, (NAFTA), globalizing trade, while reducing or eliminating tariffs. The North American Free Trade Agreement has opened the door for global competition for import and exports of products. Policies such as NAFTA have resulted in millions of companies to relocate to other countries where they can produce a product with cheaper labor.

The findings of this study support the notion that the companies relocated to another country for cheaper labor.

### **Breach of the Psychological Contract**

Edwards, Rust, McKinley, and Moon (2003) performed four studies, one in experimental design and three using survey design in three different countries. Their objective was to analyze perceptions about whether downsizing constitutes a psychological breach of contract. They looked on employee ideology of self-reliance on perceived breach of contract during downsizing. The emphasis of their study is that ideologies influence how a person thinks and acts. Ideology is defined as a “relatively coherent set of beliefs that bind some people together and that explain their worlds in terms of cause-and-effect relations” (Edwards et al, 2003, p. 24).

Psychological contract is defined as “a psychological contract in an employment setting as an employee’s belief about the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the employee and the employer” (Edwards et al, 2003, p. 3). This contract is not a written and not enforceable. This contract consists of perceived obligations and expectations and beliefs that they are entitled to receive from their job and organization. A breach of contract occurs when the organization fails to fulfill certain obligations the employees feel entitled to (Rust, McKinley, and Edwards, 2005). Edwards, Rust, McKinley, and Moon (2003), distinguished between transactional and relational contracts, with the former being of short-term economic exchanges and the latter (relational contracts) emphasize long-term exchange and tend to be of emotional nature.

If a person has a high degree of self-reliance, he or she reduces the degree in which they perceive layoffs as a breach to the psychological contract (Edwards, et al,



2003). Furthermore, people who have a strong degree of self-reliance will tend to believe that job security does not exist anymore. Layoffs and organizational downsizing are discussed as potential triggers of the perception of a breach of contract.

In the phenomenon of job displacement, if employees have a strong belief on the ideology of self-reliance, they will not view job loss as a breach of contract, contrary to if they believed their job would always be there (Edwards et al, 2003).

In a study by Rust et al. (2005), two questionnaires were developed; one was randomly mailed to students who had graduated between 1990 and 2000. The first questionnaire asked if they had experienced being laid off. A second interview was mailed to the respondents that stated had been laid off. The objective of their study was to measure the perception of a person's own layoff regarding breach of contract, whether they were more likely to view one's layoff the same as another person's layoff event as a psychological breach of contract. The first questionnaire included a scenario vignette of a well-known company going through layoffs and asked if they thought that the company fulfilled its obligations regarding employee promotion and advancement, job security and career development in addition they asked the respondents if they perceived the laid-off employees experienced a breach of their psychological contract. They found that the respondents perceived their own layoff as a breach of their psychological contract, but did not see it as a breach when someone else had been laid off.

Culture has also been identified as a possible influence in a person's perception of breach of culture. However, "Individual cultural profiles serve as the conduit of influence of that part of the mental programming of individuals that is shared in a

society” (p. 455). Therefore, the person’s culture influences a persons’ cognition and own motives determine the impact of the employment expectation and ultimately the notion of psychological breach. Thomas et al. (2003) suggested that individualism and collectivism characteristics also influence an employees’ perception and therefore influence their cognitive abilities and behavior toward an organization; hence, influencing expectations and give meaning of what is expected in return. Differences may occur when organizations’ culture is not congruent to the cultural expectations of the employee, thus resulting in behavioral reactions to perceived violations of the psychological contract. The majority of the participants viewed the organizations’ closure as a violation because they expected to work and retire from there.

Nine of the eleven participants expressed the thought that the company and their job would be there forever. Nine participants said they felt deceived and or betrayed by their employers, feeling what is referred to as the breach of the psychological contract and concur with Edwards et al. (2003).

### **Emotional Distress**

In a related topic of drug addiction, a study is suggests Mexican-Americans undergo major depression as a consequence to job loss. Catalano, Aldrete, Vega, Kolody, and Aguilar-Gaxiola (2000) state Mexican-Americans have a culture that provides effective strategies for coping with acute stressors such as job loss as addressed in Catalano et al. (2000). Unemployment was said to be an acute stressor. This research study agrees with previous studies that assert people undergo emotional distress when their employment is terminated and are addressed in chapter one of this manuscript. The

second concurring finding is that there appears to be something inherent to the Mexican-American cultural that helped the participants become resilient. However, there is a lack of literature with this population more studies are needed.

### **Education and Retraining**

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) offers retraining programs to individuals who need a skill so as to become promptly reemployed. In this theme the participants reflected on their journey as a learner.

### **Education and Retraining**

All ten participants stated going through the phases of denial as Eberts (2005) describe. In addition, the participants carefully reflected and considered their level of support system, employment search, debt analysis, analyzed personal skills, and analyzed if the training in consideration was an in-demand occupation, before deciding to participate in a training program. Nine participants were reluctant at first about participating in a retraining program. Educational level, age and financial concerns were deterrents; nonetheless, once the decision was made to retrain, they were committed to that decision. This finding also agree with Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (2005) and Kessler (2004) in that workers benefited from retraining; and with McAttee and Benschhoff (2006) in that older workers had took longer to be reemployed, and if the displaced worker had a support system, he/she was more likely to enter a retraining program. This information is in the pre-literature review chapter.

## **Entrepreneurship**

Five participants had unexpected expenses when they or their spouse incurred hospital bills. They withdrew money from their retirement accounts so as to make ends meet and pay the new medical expenditures so they could participate in a training program. This finding is similar to Akresh (2011), in his study of U.S. immigrants; he notes that that assimilation into U.S. culture might have a role with wealth accumulation. Wealth was a combination of liquid and assets that can be converted into liquid in case of an emergency. He points out that occupational prestige and earnings tend to increase depending on the length of time in the U.S. In his study, eight participants owned their home, and their retirement money was liquid cash that enabled them to increase human capital through increased educational and wealth accumulation.

On a study done on Mexican immigrants and entrepreneurial intentions, Rajjman (2001) examined several determinants that facilitated or hindered self-employment among this group. A sample of immigrants from a Chicago community was administered a questionnaire. The survey consisted of questions regarding their intentions of business ownership/self-employment. The results were statistically analyzed dividing the people into two group: latent entrepreneurs and not entrepreneurially disposed. Latent entrepreneurs are people who would like to have a business in the future, whereas the other group does not. Findings revealed that 60% would like to have a business in retail, food stores and restaurants. Construction, personal and repair services. Respondents also wanted to utilize their current job-related skills for a future business, cooks wanted to own a restaurant, and gardeners a landscape company. Having personality risk taking

attributes, exposure to a business and having knowledge of the involvement, and having the economic resources were found to be determinants of business ownership (Raijman, 2001). The older in age, the more skills, experience, knowledge on how to run a business and financial stability a person is likely to be. However, the lack of English proficiency was a barrier with new immigrants. In Raijman's (2001) study, education, training, knowledge of business organization and customer demand (products), having the start-up capital and experience were necessary components of entrepreneurship. Financial stability was discussed in terms of having equity from property and liquid assets. Resources and business operations can be combined. The family support was also found as a network for entrepreneurship primarily for the resources gained such as free labor and pooling of resources among family members especially when starting the business. Raijman (2001) also find that married people and people who have assimilated into the dominant culture and possess the aforementioned traits, have the more propensities for self-employment. Furthermore, entrepreneurial intentions increase if exposed through parents or through family-like business (Laspita, Breugst, Heblich, and Patzelt, 2012). In essence, having role-models was helpful, as it is helpful to have family support and their free labor.

### **Problems with Workforce**

This study concurs with other studies that state displaced workers at times have problems with the funding providers paying tuition and is included in the pre-literature chapter. No other information was found directly on Mexican-American population; therefore, related articles were explored.

All of my participants underwent a wealth of emotions and periods of desperation due to the job loss, and most of them indicated not knowing where the services originated from, other than “the employment office, or WIA.” Several of my participants had their paperwork lost, lacked information, waited on information and waited for financial benefits, including waiting for the schools to be paid the tuition. These findings are similar to what Hironimus-Wendt (2008) found in his study.

Hironimus-Wendt (2008) did a case study analysis, of 1250 displaced workers and followed them for one year after they had lost their job. His goal was to study 1) explore the personal, familial, and community costs associated with significant job loss; 2) study the workers’ actual experiences with unemployment services; and 3) create an opportunity for workers who have through the displacement process to offer advice to others on how to survive displacement (p. 43).

In his study, 1/3 of the employees had been reemployed by the time of the plant closure, those workers new wages were 48% lower than previous job. Those people who were reemployed immediately did not qualify for the educational training offered through the TAA. When the respondents were asked about the quality of services provided by their state’s unemployment office, half indicated the two main state agencies were impersonal and workers lacked compassion. 57% stated the information on Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) was not fully explained to them, in addition half of the respondents rated the agency as “fair” or poor” “they know some things but could not answer specific questions, or they hardly know anything about the field and could not help at all (Hironimus-Wendt, 2008, p. 46). Many felt the eligibility requirements were

not fully explained to them. Direct and indirect services were rated poorly; in addition, the job search via computer system was rated poorly. Training programs were also rated poorly, poor services, and poorly monitored by workforce. Over-all the respondents consisted from people who participated in all three different options offered by the state workforce consisting of 1) job search 2) private sector training (HVAC, truck driving, etc), college degree programs such as entry level nursing.

According to Hironimus-Wendt (2008) in spite of all the problems his participants experienced, many of his respondents recommended displaced workers go through the process of applying for the TAA benefits and to choose to participate in retraining because it can improve future wages. Similarly, this current study supports his finding.

### **Summary**

This post-analysis literature review explored the literature to determine whether there is literature that concurs or resonates, disagree with the research findings. There was also the possibility of not finding literature that directly involved my participants' ethnicity. As it was the case, there is a dearth of literature addressing displaced Mexican-Americans participating in retraining programs. Therefore, the research findings were expanded through related literature that addressed the topics in general.

It appeared that every theme that emerged in this study found support from the literature, to varying degrees. When I isolated the themes, one by one, out of the holistic meaning of Mexican-Americans experience with the topic at hand, in broad general topic, some literature supporting the theme was found. There was a dearth of literature

regarding each theme in the context of the displaced Mexican-Americans who participate in retraining program. Nevertheless, the post-analysis review provided a breadth and depth to my understanding of the research question.



## **CHAPTER IX**

### **SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, the research study that I conducted on the experiences of displaced Mexican-American workers who participated in an educational or retraining program in the greater San Antonio, Texas, area is reviewed.

I briefly summarize the study, including the themes that emerged from this study. Further, I offer recommendations to the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, Texas Workforce Commission, Counselors, educational institutions, and U.S. Workers. Then, I reflect on my observations about the study and its findings. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for further studies related to the experiences of displaced workers.

#### **Research Summary**

The research question stemmed from my personal interest due to having family members who experienced being displaced workers and through my interest in adult learning and human development. It is very common to hear on the news or speak to friends and learn of the many companies that announce layoffs, and, consequently, many people have to seek new employment. The phenomenon of job displacement has affected numerous working adults nationwide, including in Texas.

Many Mexican-American workers have been affected by job loss; however, there is an obvious gap in the literature that does not identify job displacement and retraining for Mexican-American workers. With this study, I wanted to capture the deeper meaning of job displacement of the 11 Mexican-American participants and account for their lived

experience and personal perspectives. The federal government has recognized globalization and job loss as a problem in the United States, by implementing the Trade Act of 1974 and recently the Trade & Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act of 2009. These acts help workers who have been displaced from the manufacturing industry, information technology, call centers and accountants, because their job was abolished or relocated to another country. The Texas Workforce Commission coordinates the assistance that workers receive through the Workforce Investment Act, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA). In addition, Rapid Response Centers directly assist workers when a closure is announced.

This research will benefit the U.S. Government in correcting disparities within the TAA/TRA/ WIA's programs. Government-sponsored programs will be informed of the deficiencies that currently exist and will be able to provide appropriate resources to comply more fully with the intended TAA benefits. In addition, this study can benefit human resource development professionals in corporations, career counselors, mental health counselors, adult basic education/higher education programs, and other non-government organizations that provide services and resources to people who are undergoing job displacement.

My personal biography was included in Chapter 1 in order to share my personal story, which led me to this research question: What are the experiences Mexican-American displaced workers in San Antonio, Texas, as they participate in an educational or retraining program? This study adopted hermeneutic phenomenology, a qualitative methodology; and I, as the researcher, was an instrument throughout the research

process. Thus, it was important for readers to understand how I came to form an interest in Mexican-American displaced workers' lived experiences as they participated in retraining.

### **Pre-analysis Literature Review**

The pre-analysis literature review was not comprehensive; rather, it served as a foundation by providing information previously learned before embarking on the research process. The pre-analysis literature review was necessary as it brought to light personal assumptions and presuppositions. This was necessary to bracket my personal beliefs and biases.

Next, I reviewed how Mexican-Americans' job displacement and retraining were viewed in a cultural context. Their cultural values influence their decision to retrain after their job loss. Mexican-Americans self-identify as Mexican-Americans. The U.S. government uses Hispanic and research studies often use the term Latinos to identify members of this group. All of the terms were taken into account; however, Mexican-American was used throughout this study.

Mexican-Americans value traditions, family values, and family cohesiveness. Immigrants and U.S. citizens alike are like any other ethnic group who want to better themselves. Unfortunately, as a group, Mexican-Americans tend to have lower educational backgrounds, to be non-high school completers, and to work in blue-collar jobs. It used to be a tradition that married women stayed home, and men were the breadwinners. Nonetheless, it is common for married couples to participate in the work force and for single parents to care for children as they, too, maintain employment. One

custom is that men adopt a paternalistic figure that assumes responsibility for the household expenses as the head of the household. However, all traditional wisdom and convention change when job loss becomes a reality.

### **Methodology and Methods**

To understand the lived experiences of job loss and retraining, I undertook a qualitative investigation using hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for the study of the whole person and his or her unique lived experiences and reflections (van Manen, 1990). The research objective was to understand the lived experiences and the meaning of the experiences of the 11 participating displaced Mexican-Americans who participated in retraining programs with the goal of becoming reemployed. Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology aided me in describing the persons' job loss experience. This is the best way to describe and interpret the meaning of their lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). In addition, van Manen's (1990) six-step methodological guide was followed, with the understanding that it could be modified to optimize the research procedures that would assist in the interpretation of the lived experiences. In addition, preconceived understanding was bracketed to the best of my ability. Those steps are meant to inspire the researcher's creativity in conducting a study. The six steps are as follows:

1. Turn to a phenomenon which seriously interest and commits us to the world (The research question).

2. Investigate experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it (Data collection process; requires the researcher's conscious knowledge of his or her lived experience).
3. Reflecting on the essential themes (Understanding the phenomenon on a deeper level, deeper meaning and its significance).
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting (Narrating and interpreting the themes).
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon (Involves sustaining an interest entirely on the person's lived experience).
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (van Manen, 1990, p. 30-31)

Eleven Mexican-Americans (8 men and 3 women) were selected through personal contacts and acquaintances. All were willing to share their experience of job loss and their retraining experience. The interviews were electronically recorded and notes were taken of personal observations and special comments that were emphasized by the participant. The research question was unstructured, followed by several probing questions. The analysis was of the participants' recorded interviews by listening to them several times, and analyzing the written text multiple times. Nine recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by a secretarial transcription firm in San Antonio, Texas, and I transcribed two because they were conducted primarily in Spanish. Notes were taken during the interview, which included noting observed behavior at the time of the interview, noting the surroundings, eye contact, and the person's demeanor and mood.

Careful attention was given to the recordings and transcriptions, by listening and re-reading the transcripts numerous times. Each written line was considered and separated into tentative themes. After several tentative themes were identified and categories emerged, follow-up interviews were conducted between four to six months from the initial interview for clarification. At times, the clarification interview yielded new data. Clarification telephone interviews were also held during that time. All of the participants were informed of the themes under consideration and their input was requested and noted. Those conversations yielded changes under the category, Union Membership.

### **Review of Themes**

The first theme category, Mexican-American Culture, had two themes: Machismo, Self-determination, and Resilience. There is an obvious dearth of literature with this population. The participants reflected on their work experience, the experience of job displacement, and the process toward retraining and later the retraining experience in the classroom context.

The first theme, Machismo, emerged as personal strength acquired by values and cultural beliefs that also influenced self-determination and resilience. Such beliefs assisted the worker to persevere in achieving their goals.

The second theme, Self-determination, emerged as a concern of job displacement and the participants' ability to sustain their decision to participate in a retraining program and the moving on from the job loss phase to a future endeavor. These research findings were that cultural values influenced self-determination to plan ahead and pursue goals.

The third theme, Resilience, emerged out of the necessity to find employment and how that process affected their relationships with family and friends who assisted them in their transition from displaced worker to adult learner. Their cultural traditions and values, in particular, their understanding of machismo provided inner determination and strength that allowed them to achieve resilience.

This finding concurs with Catalano et al. (2000) in that Mexican-Americans underwent major depression as a consequence of job loss. However, they also stated that Mexican Americans have a culture that provides effective strategies for coping with acute stressors such as job loss.

The second theme category, Union membership, emerged when the participants noted that union membership was greatly influenced by a desire to retain their employment long-term. The realization of limitations of low educational achievement and low English proficiency that has led to cultural disparities had been confronted because people had the courage to organize into groups, such as the Cesar Chavez movement that created social change; therefore, they sought unionization in an effort to effect positive change at work. Within this theme category, two sub-themes emerged: Job security, and Have someone advocate for their rights. There is a gap in literature regarding this issue with Mexican-Americans.

The theme Job security, emerged as several participants pointed out, that they joined a labor union for representation because they lacked the knowledge or the language ability to protect themselves from an unfair discharge. Participants who had

limited English proficiency and did not have high education worried about their job security.

The second theme in this category was, Have someone advocate for their rights, emerged from the necessity to have an English speaker or someone knowledgeable in labor law to help them obtain stable employment, good wages, and good benefits and working conditions. For others, unionization meant protection against discrimination and as a result increased the ability to make informed decisions. There is an obvious gap in the literature addressing this issue within a Mexican-American population.

The third theme category, Job displacement, emerged from the experience all of the participants had in common. Within this theme category, three sub-themes emerged: Trade-related closures, Breach of the psychological contract, and Emotional distress.

The first theme, Trade-related closures, concerned the participants' perception of why their place of employment closed its doors, leaving hundreds of displaced workers. Their perception was that the company had relocated to another country for cheaper labor. This theme concurs with as Eberts (2005) in that individuals undergo several transitional phases before deciding to either participate in training or return to work.

The second theme, Breach of the psychological contract, concerned the participants' emotions as they shared their job loss. Participants expressed a deep sense of betrayal and disbelief when the closure notice was officially given to them.

I found that all of the participants were emotionally affected by the closure; however, the union representatives appeared to be deeply affected not only by the loss of their jobs, but also because they were unable to stop the closure and were unable to help



their co-workers. In hindsight, they felt that the company breached its psychological contract with them; and they breached their psychological contract with their fellow co-workers.

This theme concurs in part with literature that addresses displaced workers' emotions of betrayal and concurs with Miller and Robinson (2004) as they explained that a psychological contract breaks when a person is terminated causing emotional distress.

The third theme, Emotional distress, referred to the participants' emotional feelings after job displacement and feelings before, during, and after participating in a retraining program. This study concurs with similar studies that job loss is an emotional event that can cause several health issues, including depression, grief, uncertainty, and loss of identity (Campbell-Jamison, Worrall, & Cooper, 2001, Claypool, 2005; Kessler, 2004; Eberts, 2005; Mantler & Matejicek, 2005).

The fourth theme category, Education and retraining, emerged from the experience that all of the participants had in common from their desire to gain access to gainful employment and improve their economic status. This category yielded two sub-themes: Entrepreneurship and Problems with workforce.

The first theme, Education and retraining, concerned how participants after job displacement handled their options and described how they came to their decision to retrain. Participants described their feelings, motivations, and fears associated with being in a learning environment as adults. Challenges in receiving the workforce benefits, plus the benefits of retraining and future goals are also described.

This study concurs with Jacobson et al. (2005) in that displaced workers participated in retraining programs hoping to increase future wages, forgo and sacrifice immediate earnings by focusing on the future.

This study also concurs with McAtte and Benshoff (2006) who found that, if immediate family members assisted in the transition from dislocation to returning to school, the displaced worker was likely to continue their education. Age also impacts the outcomes of retraining programs.

The second theme category Entrepreneurship originated as the participants increased their skills. The newfound skills gave rise to setting goals to continue their education in the future and become entrepreneurs.

The third theme category Problems with workforce, concerned how the participants began having problems receiving information or problems due to the delays and inconsistencies of the entitled benefits. Perceived services received through the Workforce One Stop Centers were deficient.

This study concurs with existing literature that states that displaced workers tend to experience problems receiving the services they are entitled to under TAA/TRA (Daniels, S. E., Gobeli, & Findley, 2000).

### **Personal Reflections**

In this chapter, I reflect on my own experience, the experiences of my family and friends, and the life experiences of the 11 participants in this study. Several themes were completely unexpected, especially, the mention of Machismo and Union Membership, Trade-related Closure and certain occurrences under the theme Education and Retraining

prompted me to reflect on some similarities between my Aunt's job loss experience and that of my research participants.

I was totally appalled to hear Sergio say that machismo was good. I knew machismo as the stereotypical--men do as they want with total disregard to women. I grew up in an environment where men had male privilege and women could not do certain things. Men ate first at the dinner table, and women cleaned after them. So when I heard machismo was good, I asked Sergio to explain his view. It was evident that he had a positive view of machismo that involved acting upon, or being able to make decisions and to adhere to them because of the machismo principles of men's virility and masculinity. For men, machismo values are a sign of gender strength and male privilege. For women, it is a sign of acquired strength from their ethnic roots. Indeed, it was surprising to hear people refer to machismo as something positive, and more surprising that such view favored the family, not only the individual participant.

Similar to machismo, the interviews took an unexpected turn when my participants commented on their union membership. I acknowledged my lack of understanding and asked the participants to explain what they meant when they stated that the union is there for them. Those conversations resulted in the emerging of the union membership theme and subthemes.

The language used, i.e., the banding together and advocating for their rights, was not accurately translated well initially, but it did give me an opportunity to ponder upon an area that was foreign to me. The two union representatives, Rosendo, and Robert, and other participants used language like "band together" and "we need to be united." That

language at first did not translate well into English and was the source of deep reflection. Rosendo commented that Mexican-Americans are historically underrepresented, and that the Cesar Chavez movement was able to achieve political and social changes to farm workers. Rosendo and Sylvia mentioned that they had previously participated in demonstrations in an effort to achieve social change and prevent the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) from taking their jobs abroad. Both social movements and bargaining unions use peer involvement and use strength by numbers as a form of having power so as to influence decisions. I also ponder upon the words “banding together and fighting for our rights,” is it common union language? Those words could also mean using the power of group involvement advocate for their rights. Regardless of the translation, it was evident from all participants’ conversations that joining the union was about job security and increased wages and benefits. The union representatives used stronger language, whereas their peers simply wanted to be represented because they lacked the language skills and knowledge on employment law. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that my research participants lacked formal educational background and perhaps individuals with higher education would verbalize their reasoning for union membership differently.

The trade-related theme had similarities with my family members who perceived the North American Free Trade Agreement as a cause of their job loss. Del Rio, Texas, was gravely affected by the closure of a manufacturing company that was a main source of employment in the area. Years have passed since the passage of the trade agreement; however, people still speak of NAFTA as the reason for losing their job. My participants

mentioned NAFTA, so did my Aunts when they recalled their displacement. Perhaps because NAFTA was the first trade agreement that resulted in plant relocations; when my research participants learned that their company relocated to China, Mexico, or Costa Rica, they attributed such a move to NAFTA. Needless to say, the fact that the participants were assisted through the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Trade Readjustment Allowance program confirmed in their mind, that their job loss was due to NAFTA. Perhaps it is easier for people to make the connection when they become directly affected by trade agreements versus those who are looking from the outside in.

The Education and Retraining theme emerged from the common experience of retraining. However, Mario and Maria spoke primarily Spanish during their first interview, but spoke English during our other conversations. It was apparent that they were trying very hard to speak English. I was impressed to notice an improvement on their pronunciation and grammar. I could not help but think of my Aunts who had gone through displacement yet retained Spanish as their primary mode of communication. I reflected on how it is to live in the border town with Mexico and wondered if people who live in the border, and who keep a close relationship with other non-English speakers are more prone to delay speaking English. My participants who learned English live in San Antonio, away from the border towns. My Aunt Licha still lives in Del Rio and her English is limited. Rosy lives in West Texas and visits Del Rio frequently. Perhaps living in the border makes it easier to retain several aspects of the Mexican culture. After my research analysis was completed, I met with both my Aunts, and I noticed that Rosy can now hold a conversation in English with her grandchildren. I

wonder how much the environment has helped her learn the language, or if her need to communicate with her grandchildren, whose first language is English, was deemed important enough to learn it. Irrespective of her reason, I am delighted that she no longer is deaf to the English language. In addition, my Aunts did something my participants said they would not do; relocate to other cities in quest of reemployment, in spite of the emotional ramification of leaving a home and family members behind.

Upon reviewing themes and personal reflections, the following recommendations are provided to the following stakeholders.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Policy and Practice**

In this section, several recommendations for policy and practice are proposed for the United States government, corporations, non-government organizations (NGO's), community organizations, and American workers based on the findings of this study. However, it is essential, again, to emphasize that this study presents the experience of only 11 displaced Mexican-American workers. No attempt to generalize is possible nor intended. However, these 11 experiences may shed light on policies and practices that might help such workers in the future. In each case, more research will be necessary before such recommendations can be considered appropriate on a wide-scale basis.

*Government.* The Workforce Commission and WIA, in conjunction with the educational service providers, might consider providing mental/emotional counseling, as well as academic tutoring/mentoring, to last throughout the duration of their benefit period.

These workers lost their job because of no fault of their own. Literature points out that

job loss is an emotional event similar to grieving a death; therefore, mental health counselors should be available to put the pieces together and help a person become whole again. It is imperative that mental health providers be knowledgeable on the Mexican-American culture values, norms, and traditions so as to provide the self-assurance, confidence, and resilience they might need.

Current WIA, TRA/TAA legislation might allow the displaced workers more time for remedial services or extend the benefit time period when remediation is needed or when the GED/ABD classes are not in session. For instance, some participants waited for the following semester to start, in the process, losing up to six months of their benefit period. Other participants required college remediation classes and waited for the summer to end and the fall semester to start, losing months while waiting for the semester to start.

Monitoring of schools, programs, and WIA caseworkers may be important to assure continuity and accuracy of services. Some participants were fearful of speaking up because, they feared retaliation or that their benefits will stop. Confidential reporting mechanisms might help these workers feel empowered and able to communicate their concerns.

*Non-government Organizations (i.e., Schools, private and public).* Training can be imparted at proprietary schools and community colleges. All the participants of this study participated in a training program paid for by WIA and it included adult basic education through community programs, proprietary schools, and community colleges. All participants, while happy and motivated to receive training, also were scared of the

unknown and of finding themselves in a classroom with younger learners than themselves. But, with time, they adjusted to the environment. These findings concur with Schwitzer, Duggan, Laughlin and Walker (2011) regarding college adjustment among dislocated workers. In their study, participants were also recipients of NAFTA TRA/TAA retraining benefits. They found that dislocated workers had better academic adjustment and performance than other students (Schwitzer et al., 2011). Therefore, training providers would benefit by providing supportive services at the beginning of the program so as to help the worker adjust faster to the learning environment.

### **Corporations**

It is logical for corporations to maintain their competitive edge by increasing up-to-date technology. However, human capital is critical for the functioning of organizations; as such, it is important to provide employees with training and development to upgrade their skills, aiming to have well-rounded and highly skilled employees. With higher productivity, it may not be necessary for corporations to move off-shore for competitive advantage.

### **Community Organizations**

Community agencies, schools, and government agencies should recognize that the displacement date and the academic calendar may be different and might be able to find ways to accommodate people who are intending to register under TAA entitlement. They might either extend the benefit period so as to accommodate to the schools calendar, or contract with year-round schools or schools that have rolling admission.



## **American Workers**

The following suggestions emerged as new understandings on the resources availability for displaced workers emerged, and from information the workers commented upon.

### *WIA Benefits*

- Be informed on the requirements for benefits, either TAA or WIA, ask questions
  - Medical assistance?
  - Transportation?
  - Emergency funds that cover vehicle repair or child care?
- Read the fine print
- Ask for the documents
  - Spanish speakers, ask for documents in Spanish
  - Ask for translators to assist on every step needed
- Be aware of important dates!
- Explore your options
- Attend meetings on time
- Ask questions, know your rights

### *Career/ Training Opportunities*

- Explore your options by personally going to each school that you might be interested on before deciding on a program
  - Talk to teachers
  - Administrators

- Other students in the program
- Ask about prerequisites
- Mentoring/Tutoring?
  - Bilingual tutors?

*Remedial, GED/ English Classes*

- Seek community organizations for assistance
- WIA - Inquire about any study at home program such as Rosetta Stone
- Inquire about extending the benefit period if classes are not available
- If limited English proficient, ask about extended TAA/TRA benefits

**Future Research**

This study followed a naturalistic framework and cannot be generalized to the general populations. Thus, I recommend that more empirical studies be made of Mexican-American workers and their displacement experiences. I also recommend longitudinal studies that follow them for at least five years after having participated in retraining.

A similar study to this one, plus empirical research, might be conducted on other minority groups to identify their experiences from displacement and retraining, with a goal to improve the overall retraining program for all minority groups.

Similarly, it is important to note that displaced workers enter into a career or training program in quest of a better future. A ten-year follow-up study on their earnings might be undertaken to study the direct benefits of retraining, both financially and emotionally.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMATION SHEET

Title: The Effects of Job Displacement on Mexican-American Workers from San Antonio, Texas

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research study that asks 1) the experiences of displaced Mexican-American workers who participate or participated in an educational or retraining program. You were selected to be a possible participant because you have experienced being a displaced worker undergoing retraining.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer questions in two open ended interviews that will each last about 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. Follow-up interviews will be only if needed for clarification purpose. The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the findings of this study may help improve teaching methods and techniques that benefit displaced Mexican American workers.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University and Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning being affected. This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Diana P. Mena and a professional transcription service will have access to the recordings. If you have questions about this study you may contact Diana Mena at 979 661-1207, [dianna@tamu.edu](mailto:dianna@tamu.edu).

If you choose to participate in this study, you may consent to be audio recorded or that notes are taken. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Diana P. Mena will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for one year, after the completion of the study and then will be erased.

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

## APPENDIX B

### FORMA DE INFORMACION

Titulo: El Efecto de Desplaciamento de trabajadores Mexico-Americanos de San Antonio, Texas. (The Effect of Job Displacement on Mexican-American Workers from San Antonio, Texas)

Se le ha preguntado que si puede participar en esta investigacion de las experiencias y el efecto de desplazamiento de trabajadores Mexico-Americanos de San Antonio, Texas. El proposito de este estudio es investigar las experiencias de personas que han sido desplazadas de su trabajo y que participaron en un programa escolar. 1) Cuales son las experiencias de Mexico-Americanos que han sido desplazados de su trabajo y que participaron en un programa educacional o de entrenamiento. Usted fue seleccionado para participar porque usted es o fue un trabajador(a) desplazada y esta o estuvo en un programa de entrenamiento; o usted es proveedor/o facilita el programa de entrenamiento.

Si da el consentimiento de participar en este estudio, le hare dos entrevistas que duraran de 60 minutos cada una, y si usted acepta, sera grabada. Los riesgos asociados con este estudio son minimos y sin mayor riesgo que encontramos en nuestra vida diaria. No recibira beneficio directo de este estudio, pero los resultados podrian beneficiar a personas Mexico Americanas que han sido desplazadas de su empleo.

Su participacion es voluntaria. Puede decidir cancelar la entrevista en cualquier momento sin que sean afectadas sus relaciones con Texas A&M University y Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning. Este estudio/investigacion es confidencial y los documentos seran confidenciales. Sus datos personales no van a ser identificados en ninguna publicacion. Nomas Diana P. Mena tendra acceso a la informacion. Si tiene algunas preguntas puede contactar a Diana Mena al 979 661-1207.

Si acepta participar en este estudio, la entrevista sera grabada o escrita. La unica persona que tendra esta grabacion sera Diana Mena y seran guardadas por un termino que indique la ley, despues se borrarán. Este estudio y investigacion ha sido revisada por la oficina de la proteccion humana y la barra de revision de Texas A&M University (Human Subject's Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. Para problemas directos de investigacion o preguntas acerca de sus derechos como participante, puede llamar a 979 458-4067 o [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).



## VITA

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Education: Ph.D., Educational Human Resource Development, Texas A&M University, 2012  
M.S., Healthcare Human Resources, Texas State University, 2003  
B.A., Sociology, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 1994  
A.A.S. Legal Assistant, Howard College, 1990

### EXPERIENCE

2000 – Current SELF-EMPLOYED  
Real-Estate Project Manager, La Grange, Texas

- Bookkeeping
- Contractor
- Project Managing

Jan 2011 – May 2011 TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, College Station, Texas  
Graduate Assistant Teaching  
Courses:

- Organizational Development Educational Human Resource Development
- Leadership in Human Resource Development

### FELLOWSHIPS/INTERNSHIPS

2008 – 2009 TEXAS CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LITERACY AND LEARNING, College Station, Texas  
Fellow – Led a research pilot study involving Mexican-American Displaced Workers.

PRESENTATIONS: International and National conference presenter