

The Creation of Education by Hispanic Women

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This paper examines the experience of Hispanic females in the public school in relation to how alternative learning, which takes place outside of classroom activities and discussions, generates a distinct method by which to gain an education. Four major frameworks utilized in discussing minority participation in education are presented and a focus on gender differences in education is submitted. This is followed by information obtained through an in-depth interview process. Analysis of the information shows the failure to account for differentiation between male and female Hispanics presents an assimilationist posturing of research. By placing race/ethnicity, class, and gender on equal footing in research, the institution of education may learn to adapt itself to the unique process of becoming educated which has been developed by Hispanics.

Introduction

As a sociologist I feel impelled to present a scientific, empirically sound work. I continually question my ideas and look to support or deny them with existing sources. This process includes the patterns and behaviors I observe as well as those I suspect exist. I follow this academically correct process because the work is important and deserves to be recognized as important. However, in approaching my work in this fashion, I find myself omitting an important component; I fail to tell the story. The story includes part of the reality in which Hispanic women must live every day.¹ It is the story of double exclusion; first from access to education and then by the lack of specific and detailed research concerning this exclusion.

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Current statistics show that the fastest growing population in the United States is the Hispanic population. By the year 2000, Hispanics will be the largest minority population in this country. Statistics also show, according to drop-out rates, that more than any other group the education system fails to educate Hispanics. Although national drop-out rates have gradually decreased over the years, the rate of Hispanics leaving school without a diploma escalated to forty-five percent by 1984. The current drop-out rate specifically for Hispanics is attributed to early marriage and pregnancy. Although this explanation addresses the observable reason for drop-out, it does not look at the underlying problems extant in the education system which send Hispanic females outside or parallel to the system for their education. I argue that because Hispanic females are not offered education within the system, they do not leave their education behind by leaving school, but are simply moving forward to the next step of their lives and therefore the next step of their education.

This paper examines the experiences of Hispanic females in the public school in relation to how alternative learning, which takes place outside of classroom activities and discussions, generates a distinct method by which to gain an education. Few studies directly address the problem female Hispanics experience in the classroom. Studies are generally focused on males or no differentiation is made by gender. Those which do focus on females do not address Hispanics specifically or do so in a quantitative manner which focuses on questions of numbers of success and failure and factors leading to it. Although a good starting point, quantitative work judges a situation according to normative ideas of success and failure. In other words, school completion in a mainstream school indicates being successful. What is missing is the effect of institutional exclusion and the process by which Hispanic females gain their education. This observation determined the organization of this paper.

The first section of the paper deals with research problems and specifies problems encountered by other researchers as well as those I have encountered. The second section of the paper reviews the existing literature. The literature presents and critiques four frameworks; the cultural deficiency model, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, and Ogbu's caste theory. The third section introduces the ideas of Maxine Seller, Joyce A. Ladner, and Carol Gilligan. These theories fill in some, though not all, of the missing pieces of female experience in the public school. They do, however, give us a potential theoretical and methodological springboard by which to discover more about the Hispana experience. The last section is a presentation of information gathered from respondents living in Utah's Salt Lake Valley. This sample was selected from Hispanic females ranging in age from twelve through sixty. The method used to obtain information was an in-depth interview which began by asking each respondent to talk about her public school experience.

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The central purpose in the creation of the education system was assimilation.² For the ethnic minority population, this process alienated them not only from their own culture but from formal education itself. Although the study of the effect of assimilation on minorities has been explored, gender differences in this process have not been explored. By exploring the experiences of Hispanic females qualitatively, differences in the aspects of acquiring an education and learning styles between Hispanos and Hispanas will become visible. Moreover, making gender differences visible would also make conspicuous the assumed hypothesis of identical rates of assimilation for males and females. The ramification of separating minority research by gender is profound in that it takes the process of assimilation and exposes layers of damaging assumption. One such assumption is the salience of race/ethnicity in exploring issues in the acquisition of education. To subsume gender under the umbrella of race/ethnicity plays into the ideology of measuring one group according to the norm set by another group.

Traditional sociological research directs studies towards a normative factor. Complaint of exclusion of groups or social issues making visible problems in the institution results in the addition of factors, such as race, class, and gender, not addressed previously. Thus, the additive nature of research is born. In this way, race/ethnicity is added to traditional frameworks under the assumption that measurement can be taken according to the degree in which excluded groups have assimilated to a cultural norm. The focus then becomes the individual's ability to conform according to the established authority. In education, this perspective is gathered through the opinions of teachers and administrators. The process of retention, of becoming educated, is missing the vital perspective of the student. One such perspective is how the school experiences of Hispanas are both raced and gendered. Unable to cross barriers into mainstream society through education, I will argue that Hispanic women seek their own kinds of education outside the classroom and outside of the assimilation process society felt necessary for their survival.

Research Problems

One of the difficulties in undertaking a study about Hispanic women in education is the lack of usable data available. Adelaida R. Del Castillo et al., cite four major research problems in dealing with this subject. First, few research undertakings investigate how Hispanic women and men differ in their school experiences. This includes research from a gender perspective. Castillo points out that a volume of information assuming the educational process is identical for male and female Hispanics becomes problematic for researchers interested specifically in Hispanas. There exists as well a gap in the literature which is produced

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because of the concentration of studies at the post secondary levels. Second, most of the information dealing with educational experience is written from a cultural deficiency model. The data gathered from this perspective focuses on the negative attitudes, expectations, and values of both the parents and students, which means structural influences are often ignored all together. Third, studies in general treat all Hispanic females as one "monolithic" group. In other words, findings from one group is generalized to all groups. Fourth, Del Castillo points out that no conceptual model has yet been formalized to aid in the analysis and interpretation of the educational experiences of Hispanic women.³ To this list can be added that a great deal of the research on minority education has been conducted utilizing the Black population, which is then generalized to other minority populations. Those studies which do focus on the Hispanic population are often difficult to obtain.⁴

Review of Existent Literature

Even with these outlined problems, there exist some research efforts which give a specific picture of the experiences of Hispanic females in the schools. The four frameworks used to analyze and interpret are the cultural deficiency model, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, and Ogbu's caste theory.

Del Castillo and Torres trace the history of research and the use of the cultural deficiency model back to Harvard's Five Cultures project. This project investigated problems and sought to understand minority communities by examination of the community's values, beliefs and attitudes, all of which were found to be deficient in their ability to adopt to social norms. Del Castillo and Torres state that the recognition of this historical background has affected the study of Hispanics in two ways: (1) this framework has inclined scientists to make assumptions about norms and behaviors of Hispanics, and (2) this framework continues to be used in educational studies. This model attaches the problems minorities have in education as one that exists in lack of aspiration and values of the culture.⁵ Del Castillo and Torres cite Gecas⁶ work as showing that in actuality Hispanic students and parents have high aspirations but low expectations due to structural barriers.

The field of sociolinguistics, in its early stages, mirrored the cultural deficiency model. Basically, researchers such as Susan Phillips found that differences in speech styles caused "cultural conflicts" which in turn caused minority students, in this case Indian students, to be low achievers. This position changed the focus of student-teacher relations but failed to answer the problems for minorities created by the assumptions of cultural deficiency.⁷

The first challenge to cultural deficiency was in the field of

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ethnomethodology developed by Harold Garfinkel and Aaron Cicourel in the early 1970s. Cicourel argues that educational failure is socially constructed in the daily interactions of school authorities and students.⁸ The ethnographic studies found less attention in the classroom, less counseling, and less leeway to answer standardized tests was given to Black students. This study, however, is not gender sensitive and only deals with a Black population.

The best criticism of all three of the above frameworks comes from Ogbu's caste theory of education. Ogbu's basic objection to these frameworks is the exclusion of an historical context. The caste theory accounts for the difference of some ethnic minorities who are culturally and linguistically different. Chinese, Punjabi, and Central American immigrants, for example, have not had learning problems that other ethnic minorities, such as African American, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans have. Ogbu states that cultural differences only become salient under particular historical circumstances and these historical circumstances create a division between what Ogbu calls "voluntary" and "involuntary" minorities. Ogbu theorizes that oppressed minority groups were historically assimilated in a negative manner. In response to this negative experience, minorities develop an "oppositional culture" in which mainstream ideas are inverted into negative symbols. This suggests minorities cannot be both successful in school and be ethnically different. Recent immigrants, on the other hand, have not experienced systematically constructed racial assumptions, or the negative assimilation experiences as have the involuntary groups and therefore are higher achievers in school.⁹

Douglas E. Foley points out that researchers have not yet been able to explain the differences in minorities better than Ogbu nor can they adequately defend the exclusion of historical differences in minority groups.¹⁰ Instead, many researchers are now including Ogbu's concepts of stratification, power and history. Foley himself expands Ogbu's ideas by including class in the picture. Foley asserts that a new class segment has emerged which now focuses on the success of what he calls the Mexicano youth. He argues that middle class Mexicanos are becoming a new bicultural generation, able to resist assimilation by gaining "cultural capital"¹¹ through ethnic pride. Foley's weakness in this conclusion is that in determining cultural capital as being gathered through sports, classroom interactions, and joining Anglos in high academic tracks and school leadership, he is speaking of male cultural capital. These are activities that Mexicanos may excel in, but not Mexicanas.

Studies show that Hispanic girls receive less attention in the classroom and do not benefit by classroom interaction in the same way that boys do.¹² Wahalb reported findings that in a classroom situation, Hispanic girls receive less time from teachers, are interacted with less frequently and positively, and are denied personal attention more than all

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other students. Girls also do not receive the rewards boys do in sports. Without these two benefits, obtaining school leadership positions is less likely. The one area in which Hispanas do have the possibility of advancing is in achieving high academic tracks. This is found in Patricia Gándara's study which states that one factor high-achieving Hispanas have in common is having always been good or outstanding students.¹³

Although Foley does not account for gender differences, he does present two concepts exhibited in much of the current literature. First is his use of and then expansion of Ogbu's caste theory. Second is his assessment of research efforts being focused on success rather than failure. He is joined in this shift from school failure to school success by Sylvia Alatorre Alva who links success to perceptions of locus of control;¹⁴ Martha E. Bernal et al., who expands though the social identity approach;¹⁵ Patricia Gándara who, as mentioned before, identifies common factors in the experiences of high-achieving women,¹⁶ and Concha Delgado-Gaitan who records examples of success outside of mainstream education.¹⁷ Alva, Bernal, Gándara and Delgado-Gaitan all focus specifically on school success for Hispanics. Gándara, moreover, writes specifically about Hispanic females.

Gándara's study compares factors of success between Chicanas and Anglo males as well as between Chicanas and Chicanos. This study differs from the other studies which were quantitative in nature and reveals a distinct kind of information because it was conducted through interviews. In agreement with Ogbu, the study found that the majority of successful Chicanas were first generation immigrants, whereas this was not true for male Anglos or Chicanos. Gándara found that Chicanas held in common with successful Anglo males a strong work ethic (although working hard for Chicanas was a result of poverty more than philosophy), parents who were non-authoritarian and emphasized independent behavior, and most importantly, mothers who took strong, supportive roles.¹⁸ The role of the mother was also cited as the most important factor in the studies of Delgado-Gaitan and Del Castillo et al.¹⁹ This does not necessarily indicate that Hispanic mothers support assimilation in mainstream education or believe their children have equal opportunities and access. To the contrary, supportive Hispanic mothers often expend tremendous energy challenging unfair practices by school authorities or searching for alternative ways to help their children when satisfactory answers to problems are not found in the public schools. This is in fact what Delgado-Gaitan found in her study of the schools in a small town in Denver.²⁰

In Delgado-Gaitan's study, one mother found both of her children looking for their education outside of high school. Because she was convinced that school did not offer options for students who did not fit in, she advised both a son and a daughter to look for learning elsewhere. The son eventually returned to school after trying to find other options. This

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son learned with the help of his mother and a counselor that he must find the resolve to complete school and obtain as many resources as possible on his own. The daughter, after becoming pregnant, decided to complete school at the alternative school even though the high school had a program for pregnant teenagers. It was this girl's belief that the high school teachers did not care if she learned, and she felt she needed more individual attention than she was receiving. Delgado-Gaitan argues that pregnancy provided an excuse to quit school all together, but that the girl wanted to continue her education and opted for a better alternative.²¹

This study also reported that even when asking for help, Chicano students and their parents were told to solve their own problems, often resulting in resolving frustrations by dropping out. If parents did not have the knowledge or persistence to help their children in a school situation, the result was often the students turning elsewhere for their schooling. Delgado-Gaitan continues by saying that the rejection of the system by the students and parents reflected how they were treated.²²

This study raises many interesting but unexplored points. First, it must be noted that the boy in the study found the support of a counselor and was therefore able to complete school because he could find the strength through his own resolve. The girl, on the other hand, chose the alternative school not because of her pregnancy, but because the regular school did not offer her a chance for education. Second, it appears that the boy was allowed to assimilate more than the girl. There existed the opinion that he held the personal will power to succeed and this fact alone made the difference. What is not stated is that he, being male, simply has more power in the classroom and more power to demand attention from counselors and teachers. This power exists because of the higher status males own in the education system, which is attributable to the process of assimilation available to them. Males have found a door to acceptance through class leadership and sports which in turn provides them with more attention. Self resolve is easier to find when others allow you to have it. The third point focuses on the perspective of the mother. What educational experiences taught the mother to look for education outside of the school? It seems apparent by the mother's original advice to her children to leave school that she also had experienced exclusion. Examining her educational experiences would have given us a more complete picture of her children's educational experiences and perspectives and perhaps of the different choices made by her son and daughter.

Gándara's findings also support these differences between Chicanos and Chicanas. Chicanos attribute educational success to inner strength and ability whereas Chicanas attribute educational success to family support. Gándara concludes by stating five factors common to all Chicanas which are different from their male counterparts: (1) Chicanas were always good or outstanding students; (2) they attended highly integrated schools; (3) they all felt family support was important to their

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success, but did not know exactly what their parents aspirations for them were; (4) All felt different from others, (5) even though often better students, all felt they received less encouragement.²³

The progress from explanation because of cultural deficiency to Ogbu's caste theory and Foley's addition of class presents a much more complete picture of the Hispanic experience with education. Gándara's comparative of Anglos, Chicanos, and Chicanas gives us a good description of the factors successful Chicanas have in common. What is painfully apparent is that the only "cultural capital" females seem to possess is being "good students". Both Anglo males and Chicanos need not possess this characteristic in order to succeed. This suggests, of course, stratification because of gender but perhaps more because of specific ethnicity and gender. The variation between assimilation because of ethnicity and the assimilation of gender is that females are placed in the position of having to assimilate in two different ways; as a person of color and also as a female. The assumption that women want to be successful in the identical ways, using identical methods as males, devalues female characteristics as well as female history. The assumption that success in the educational process can be obtained by male means establishes a male framework from which to measure female success or failure. Cornel West calls to question the "framework of social reasoning" which subsumes issues of gender in favor of issues of race, calling this kind of thinking a "pitfall of racial reasoning."²⁴ West, in this comment, is speaking to the assimilationist and patriarchal nature of assuming males and females are identical in their experiences. This argument can be stated again confronting gender similarities. It is a devaluation of characteristics and history to believe Hispanic and Anglo females employ identical ways and methods of acquiring an education. This statement along with West's brings to light the obligation of not only individuals, but researchers who affect the individual to evaluate their own participation in assimilationist thinking.

Some Missing Pieces

Race, class, and gender stratification exist historically in the public school system. Maxine Seller provides a class and ethnicity dimension with her writing on the education of immigrant women. Her study significantly recognized that curriculum was shaped specifically for poor immigrant women in order for them to know and keep their place in the reserved labor force. Tracking immigrant girls into vocational training, such as home economics, assimilated them, not to the American dream, but to the dream America allowed them to have. Seller continues by stating that ethnic women's organizations provided important educational opportunities for women in their communities to learn.²⁵ Although Seller describes the historical background established for public school

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curricula for immigrant women, she is specifically referring to those immigrant groups who established themselves in the eastern United States. She does, however, clearly establish the use of assimilation as the dominating theory behind the creation and maintenance of education that has been bound into the structure of the institution of education and which remains discreetly unchanged to this day. Generations of women have experienced, and girls today continue to experience, alienation from their education because of a failure on the part of the system to recognize assimilation's historical and continuing role in the marginalization of these females. Counted among them are Hispanic women.

The work of Joyce A. Ladner advances a concept of Black females resisting assimilation in education by developing survival skills. Survival skills include responses that are adaptive and creative in dealing with their oppressed circumstances. Ladner implies with this concept that assimilation is twofold; one must assimilate but must also be allowed to assimilate.²⁶ Ladner addresses both gender and race to show the differences race can make even when accounting for gender. Although Ladner's study is specific to the Black experience and does not tell the story of other ethnic females, she provides us with a useful glimpse into how females survive and persist in not only a negative situation, but a situation in which they are required to participate. This dichotomy of required participation deficient in access creates the necessity for roads to be built away from the main path in order for educational needs to be satisfied.

Carol Gilligan cites that females discover the kind of relationship Ladner describes to oppressed circumstances allows them to survive in the public schools. Gilligan theorizes that between the ages of twelve and fifteen, females find themselves moving away from the classroom to find their educational experiences. She concludes that between these ages, the time when dropping out of school becomes common in the inner city, girls seem to move from the public to the private sphere for learning experiences.²⁷ Although Gilligan makes a strong argument for gender differences in public education, she does not include the effect of race and ethnicity with gender. As stated in the last section, studies show that Hispanic females receive less attention and benefit from class interaction less than any group. This does not discount but confirms and even escalates Gilligan's moving away process for Hispanas. An example of this process is seen in the experience of the young Hispana in Delgado-Gaitan's study who decides to seek alternative schooling after becoming pregnant, even when given the opportunity to remain in a mainstream school. As pointed out in the study, this individual had the opportunity to leave her education behind. However, moving away from the place where education was not available is not leaving education behind, but a move forward toward a real and inclusive kind of education. Going back to the mainstream school would not have been a move forward educationally,

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but a move backward. Because her life had changed and moved forward (a different way to view pregnancy), this Hispana also moved her means of obtaining an education forward.

Empirical Evidence

Recent literature more clearly defines the Hispanic experience in the public school. Stepping away from racial assumptions has produced studies presenting structural barriers for Hispanics in obtaining an education. These studies specifically acknowledge the unequal treatment received by Hispanic females and, in turn, show how Hispanas seek alternative support as well as alternative situations in which to become educated. What is not explored is the question of difference in assimilation by gender. If Hispanic men gain access to education through sports, class interaction, and leadership, what are the ways in which Hispanic females are allowed to open the door into the mainstream? Do they want to enter the mainstream or simply accommodate it? Do females seek support from family rather than school not only because they do not receive help there, but also because they are creating networks of their own? If this is so, do Hispanas recognize what actions, reactions, or beliefs are giving them their own "cultural capital"?

It is my belief that Hispanas have created a private brand of survival skills. The absence of the appropriate kind of "cultural capital" pushes the Hispana to develop ways in which to confront the institution's marginalization process and ways in which to educate herself. Listed among these are anger, independence, separation, the recognition of school and parent ambivalence to educational needs and desires, and the conscious search for education outside of the public school. Examples of these skills can be seen in the experiences of three Hispanas—Laura, Sarah, and Patricia—all of whom were interviewed in November of 1992.

Laura, age sixteen, relates that although the teacher in her English only classroom knew she did not know English, she did not care enough to help her individually.

In Mexico the teachers took time to help each student. Here there wasn't a special class for non-English speakers - I was just in a regular class. The teachers gave assignments, taught, but didn't really help anyone. So the teacher didn't give me any help and I really didn't know any English. I had a really hard time. I always cried and I never thought I would learn any English. I didn't speak English with the other kids because I only knew words like cat and you can't really have a conversation with that. I just remember one day understanding and knowing English. I remember by the third grade

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my teacher didn't even know I was Hispanic.²⁸

The teacher not being interested in helping anyone was a major change from Laura's experience in Mexico, where she felt the teachers gave everyone individual attention. It is interesting that Laura generalizes her personal experience to all of the children both here and in Mexico. It is not logical to believe that all teachers in Mexico are responsive to all the children's needs and that the opposite is true here. It is more reasonable to conclude that Laura does not yet understand that her school here will not give her the attention other students receive because she is female and Hispanic. Her belief that all students are treated in this manner has caused her to group herself with high achieving minorities who are not Hispanic. She has, in fact, separated herself from other Hispanics in order to be included in the educational process offered by the mainstream and, as Ogbu predicted, her status as first generation immigrant allows her to do so.

Sarah, age forty-nine, also found herself without help when she made the decision to quit school. Although a good student, she quit to care for her mother who was ill. The school, teachers, counselors, and principal offered her no alternatives. Sarah later found her education with the help of the teachers in the Head Start Program.

I always wanted to get ahead and I got the chance when my first child entered Head Start. At first I became a bus aid and then moved on to become a teachers aid. When classes were offered at Head Start to the teachers aids for college credit I did it. Then the funding stopped so the program stopped. Two teachers here at Head Start told me to go to the university and find out what I needed to do to finish. I only had twenty-four hours left to complete and also a Spanish competency test. I finished with other women from the Head Start program - we all finished because of those two teachers.²⁹

Although the program was designed to give children better access to education, Sarah also received help finding educational alternatives. It is interesting to note that Sarah, who earned a degree and teaching certificate, has now taught at Head Start for eighteen years despite the fact she has been offered "better" jobs elsewhere. She remains where she is "to reach others the way I was reached" because she believes it is the best way to help not only the children, but the parents who have had experiences like hers. Sarah discovered a link to learning and continues that link to help those who do not have access by way of the mainstream door.

Patricia, age fifty-five, relates that while attending school in New

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Mexico, she was rewarded for her quick academic abilities. In Salt Lake, however, she did not have the encouragement to achieve her academic potential. Patricia was recognized as capable and intelligent, but was never encouraged or challenged to do more, although she saw Anglos receiving help and attention. Because of being unchallenged, Patricia began tutoring the other Hispanic girls in her school. She believes teaching others helped her find her own learning.

Like Sarah, Patricia found her education outside of the system because the system did not include her. Anger also played an important role for Patricia.

I remember like it was yesterday. There was a counselor at the school who we all knew. Everything that happened at the school everyone knew about. I remember this counselor took a group of Anglos to the university and showed them how to sign up, how to apply for scholarships and counseling. I watched this happen and thought to myself, OK, she'll take another group of good students and then I'll go. This same counselor took another group all right. She gathered the minority kids together and took them to an employment agency and showed us how to fill out applications for low paying jobs.... I don't know why it's making me cry now. I just remember being so angry—how could a counselor do that?³⁰

This experience pushed Patricia further away from being part of mainstream education, but did not keep her from eventually gaining a graduate degree. Her anger has allowed her to continue the fight by helping others like her find different doors to learning.

All three of these Hispanas tell a different story of success in gaining an education. Two are stories of finding doors outside of the public school, one is a story of parallel success. Two are stories of finding doors through associations with others and one is the story of anger being the motivating factor. All three are stories of the desire to become educated regardless of exclusion from access to becoming educated in the public school classroom.

Conclusion

This study was born out of the idea that to be different is not to be deviant, and to be disruptive is not to be unworthy of the access to resources that education can impart. It would be inappropriate to state that this idea is bias-free because it is formulated from personal experience in the hope that this discussion will reveal to other females that more choices are available to them than their educational experience may have indicated. This is possible by the recording and study of the personal

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stories of Hispanic women.

Quantitative research has touched on but not deeply probed these aspects of Hispanic education, and little of that research deals specifically with Hispanic females. Quantitative work also looks at the story differently. It asks how many succeed and fail and the factors leading to these events. The part of the story unexplored deals with the process by which Hispanic females survive their unequal status in the education system. This research requires a qualitative answer. It is my belief that although *Hispanas* may not be invited into the mainstream, or perhaps because they are not invited, assimilation is not now or ever has been the road by which Hispanic females choose to be educated. Gándara's study pointed to the fact that successful Hispanic women were always good or outstanding students. This is a means of survival but does not necessarily insure success in obtaining the education women desire. The issue of assimilation and the access allowed or denied to *Hispanas* places an increasing recognition of the necessity of gender differentiation in the study of education of minority students. This paper is the first part of a three-part process of study I plan to undertake. My first step is current research comparing opposite sex sibling pairs and how different realities of education are constructed according to gender. The second step is the addition of a generational aspect to determine if changes in the educational process have occurred in the perceptions of Hispanic females. The third is a longitudinal study covering a five-year period detailing how perceptions change for *Hispanas* between the ages of twelve and seventeen.

The emphasis of this paper is gender, or more specifically, the need for and lack of literature relating gender differences in conjunction with non-dominant group status. In making a case for gender differentiation, my intent is not to make gender salient over other characteristics. Gender simply cannot be ignored nor can it be added by assumptions of similarity. Race/ethnicity cannot become the salient variable any more than studies on one minority group can necessarily generalize to other minority groups. Likewise, class status is not an additive feature but greatly impacts the life experience and construction of reality of the individual. The intent of this conversation is to make clear my obligation and the obligation of other researchers to make visible those methods of study and analysis which are based in the ideology of assimilation.

It is important to recognize that each aspect of social life impacts the acquisition of education because participation in the institution of education sends the non-dominant individual flying into an ideological wall built on the assumption of a norm and the requirement of the individual to assimilate to that norm. In this manner, race/ethnicity, gender, and class will all impact and be a necessary part of the explanation of the failure or success of the institution to educate the population. Race/ethnicity, class, and gender can all be made visible or invisible by

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the researcher. The question is can any of these three characteristics be ignored by the individual as they are viewed by the institution? It is the visibility, the concern of seeking answers, the phenomena of becoming an educated Hispanic female and the mechanisms needed to achieve in spite of the assimilation barrier that has need of further explorations.

NOTES

¹ When noting gender differences, the terms Hispano/a which refers to male/female are used. The terms Hispanic, Chicano/a, Mexican American, and Mexicano/a are used interchangeably throughout the paper because of the use of all of these terms by the sources applied in the study. I personally selected to utilize the term Hispanic in this study for two reasons: (1) Many terms were used to indicate the ethnicity of Americans of Mexican descent in the existing research, and (2) although all of the respondents in my research are of Mexican descent, this was the term with which all of them were most comfortable. This is a problem faced by all researchers and by all people of Mexican decent. I myself prefer Mestiza. My intention is not to label an entire group, but to use the word Hispanic as a tool for explanation.

² Assimilation is defined as Anglo conformity. This includes the rejection of one's own culture in favor of the dominant culture. Teske and Nelson describe assimilation as a required out-group acceptance and a positive orientation toward and identification with the out-group. It is important to note that the focus on assimilation taken in this paper directs the emphasis of the research in two ways. First, emphasis falls on the effect of the institution on the individual's construction of reality. Secondly, the history of how education was constructed for people of color and what purposes that education served was based in assimilationist attitudes. Assimilation as a normative set of values prescribed to by the institution has produced classroom methodology that does not address the underlying intellectual assumptions present at its inception. Implications of socio-political values, such as assimilation, hidden in curriculum is side stepped by education and generates social meanings which shapes students' roles outside the classroom. [P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passerson, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977); H.A. Giroux, "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis," *Harvard Review* 53 (1983): 257-293; A. Raimes, "Tradition and Revolution in ESL Teaching," *TESOL Quarterly* 17 (1983): 538.].

³ Adelaida R. Del Castillo, Jeanie Frederickson, Teresa McKenna, and Flora Ida Ortiz, "An Assessment of the Status of the Education of Hispanic Women," *The Broken Web: The Educational Experience of*

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Hispanic American Women (Berkeley: Floricanto Press, 1988), 3-24.

⁴ Difficulty in obtaining studies concerning the Hispanic population are due in part to budget cutbacks such as the University of Utah library is experiencing which demand the cancellation or neglect of Hispanic social science journals. Moreover, many significant ideas cited in existing research come from as yet unpublished papers. The difficulty in publishing is not due to a lack of interest in the subject area by teachers and researchers. The demand on recognized experts in the field of the Hispana experience as speakers and contributors to seminars attests to the shortage of published information. Material which would contribute to this area of study remain unpublished because sociology and related fields still suffer from tokenism on the part of academic authorities.

⁵ Concha Delgado-Gaitan, "The Value of Conformity: Learning to Stay in School," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (December 1988): 354-381.

⁶ Delgado-Gaitan, 48.

⁷ Douglas E. Foley, "Reconsidering Anthropological Explanations of Ethnic School Failure," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (March 1991): 60-86.

⁸ A.V. Cicourel, H.M. Jennings, K.H. Jennings, K.W.C. Leiter, R. MacKay, H. Mehan, and D.R. Roth, *Language Use and School Performance* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

⁹ J. Ogbu, "Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation," *Anthropology Quarterly* 18,4 (1987): 312-334.

¹⁰ Foley, 67-76.

¹¹ Cultural Capital is a phrase used by Pierre Bourdieu which refers to the educational system's adoption of "the attitudes and aptitudes" which appear to be natural in children of dominant-group families. Bourdieu goes on to state that working-class and minority children possess cultural capital as well but that it is dissimilar from the expectations of the institution. An expectation that all children possess the same kind of cultural capital implies that the institution requires students to acquire appropriate cultural capital before entering the institution. Thus, as socialization takes place in the educational process, no link exists between what the non-dominant student possesses and what the school expects. By valuing the cultural capital of dominant-family children, the

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education system reinforces inequality. [(P. Bourdieu, "The School as a Conservative Force: Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities," *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).]

12 H.A. Giroux, "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis," *Harvard Review* 53 (1983): 257-93.

13 Joyce A. Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1972): Introduction.

14 Sylvia Alatorre Alva, "Academic Invulnerability Among Mexican-American Students: The Importance of Protective Resources and Appraisals," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* (February 1991): 18-34.

15 Martha E. Bernal, Delia S. Saenz, and George P. Knight, "Ethnic Identity and Adaptation of Mexican American Youths in School Settings," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* (May 1991):135-154.

16 Denise A. Segura, "Slipping Through the Cracks: Dilemmas in Chicana Education," in *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, eds. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz M. Pesquera (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

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18 Patricia Gándara, "Passing Through the Eye of the Needle: High Achieving Chicanas," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 4,2 (1982): 167-179.

19 Del Castillo et al., 3-24.

20 Delgado-Gaitan, 365-369.

21 Delgado-Gaitan, 368-371.

22 Delgado-Gaitan, 376-379.

23 Gándara, 167-179.

24 Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Beacon Press, 1993), 35-38.

25 Seller, 185.

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²⁶ Ladner, 10-11.

²⁷ Carol Gilligan, Nona Lyons, and Trudy Hanmer, *Making Connection: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Willard School* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

²⁸ Laura, personal interview, November 5, 1992.

²⁹ Sarah, personal interview, November 2, 1992.

³⁰ Patricia, personal interview, October 30, 1992.