THE VOICES OF SIX THIRD GENERATION MEXICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES TEACHING MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN THE SOUTH TEXAS BORDERLAND REGION

A Dissertation

by

MARIA DE LOURDES VILORIA

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Chair of Committee,   Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan
Committee Members,   Rafael Lara-Alecio
                         Mario S. Torres
                         Patricia J. Larke
Head of Department,   Fredrick M. Nafukho

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the author interviewed and observed six third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region to examine their perceptions of the connections that they believed to be making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The author analyzed the participants' narratives using constant comparisons: (a) racialized experiences, (b) social advocacy, (c) language, (d) ethnic pride, (e) social economic challenges and class experiences, (f) age range, and (g) family roles. The seven constant comparisons allowed the researcher to systematically analyze the participants' contextualized stories. The participants' contextualized narratives were further analyzed using the critical race theory lens to document their experiences with class, gender, and race discrimination in the South Texas borderlands region.

In addition, the six participants' stories and practices during their observations were analyzed to determine if they were being "conductors." The researcher also utilized Trueba's (1973) tenets: (a) examine the framework of cultural experiences of the Mexican American, (b) determine whether their experiences were polarized and reflected different philosophies of education, and (c) take into account the expectations of Mexican American educators and see programmatic developments from their point of view to further analyze the research findings. The author found that third generation Mexican American teachers in two South Texas borderlands region school districts were

making culturally relevant connections with their students, and that translates into

academic success.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Amable Antonio Viloria, a quiet, giving, and tolerant soul who makes me a better person. Without his continuous support, encouragement, and personal sacrifice, I could not have achieved this goal.

To my only son, Amable Antonio Viloria, Jr., who was with me every single step of this journey. My classmate in all of my TTVN classes, who instead of playing with his friends, had to attend Ph.D. level classes since he was 12 years old. He is an understanding and gentle soul who had to mature quickly and is now embarking in his own college life journey. He has taught me to "accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative."

To my mother, Bertha R. Lozano, who not only gave me life but she continues to nourish it with all her "consejos" and daily prayers. She has taught me to persevere and never give up on any of my goals.

To my loving brothers and sisters: Bertha Gomez, Clauda L. Cavazos, Juan R. Lozano, Raul A. Lozano, Paulo A. Lozano, Roger Lozano, Daniel Lozano, and Henry Lozano. In their own special ways they have continued to motivate me to finish this journey. They understood all the times that I could not attend our family events.

To the loving memory of my greatest and most important role model, my father, Rogelio Lozano, who would have been proud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It was Tuesday, February 21, 2012, during a monthly administrative meeting. The superintendent of a predominately Mexican American South Texas school district (Border Independent School District) was addressing the principals on an approaching onsite visit by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The exploratory visit by TEA to the school district was triggered by the English language learners' (ELLs') results on the 2010 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), at the 5th grade and the 11th grade levels. This anticipated visit also included an examination of the 11th grade ELL's outcomes in various Career and Technology Education (CATE) programs.

As the principal of one of these South Texas schools, I was awaiting the Superintendent's announcement that would list the schools to be visited. As I heard the name of my school being called, I began to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of our school's academic program and its delivery. I had to prepare my presentation for the faculty and staff. Mentally, I began to prepare the list of the schools' attributes and areas for improvement. I attributed the students' academic growth to teacher efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1993; Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001; DiBella-McCarthy & McDaniel, 1995; LeAnn & Broughton, 2011), sustained change (Scribner & Scribner, 2001; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valverde & Scribner, 2001) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is at the forefront of student achievement, but it has to be combined with sustained change, teacher advocacy for culturally diverse students, and culturally responsive teaching practices (Bae, Holloway, & Bempechat, 2008; Gay, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Teacher self-efficacy is characterized by a teacher's enthusiasm, preparedness, and commitment to student achievement (Eckert, 2013; Putney & Broughton, 2011). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy believe that they can influence students' learning (Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001). Efficacious teachers consistently present academically challenging lessons to their students because they know and understand the content being taught (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2006). The level of teacher efficacy that characterizes the South Texas borderlands school, where I am a principal, is evident by observing the teachers' and students' daily classroom interactions (Rueda & Garcia, 1996; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). The students' enthusiasm is measured with daily walkthroughs (Appendix A) by administration using standardized classroom observation forms (Lopez, 2011). Teacher efficacy is also characterized by the level of teacher preparation including the time a teacher invests in lesson planning (LeAnn & Broughton, 2011). A teacher's self-preparation also includes his/her commitment to seek professional development if they believe that they need to strengthen their professional skills (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011). In sum, a teacher's level of lesson preparation and enthusiasm is what makes the teacher's level of efficacy greater, which will in turn, positively impact student achievement (Coady et al., 2011; Lopez, 2011).

Sustained Change

Sustained change is what has made the South Texas borderlands school, where I am a principal, stronger because over a 12-year period, the school has been able to have the same leadership. For the purpose of this research study, sustained change is defined as uninterrupted change in administrative leadership that leads to high levels of teacher efficacy and student achievement over a period of three or more years (Klar & Brewer, 2013). Through administrative leadership and guidance, teachers at this school have been professionally strengthened and retained at a rate of 98% (Bustos Flores, Riojas Clark, Claeys, & Villarreal, 2007). "A key implication is that good leaders are adept at listening to stakeholders and understanding the nuances of the contexts in which they work" (Klar & Brewer, 2013, p. 34, 2013). One of the common practices at this school is to collaborate with the local university and provide an opportunity for student teachers to do their student teaching blocks at this campus (Bustos Flores, 2001).

Therefore, this enables the teacher mentors to stay current with new practices and ideas that the student teachers bring, as well as being able to recruit the best candidates to teach at the campus. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), poor urban school districts have the additional challenges of recruiting, hiring, as well as retaining the best qualified teachers. This research study advances the argument that by implementing the partnership with the local university, the school has been able to recruit, hire, and retain teachers who are willing to work and mentor the schools' diverse student population (Crosnoe, 2005a; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004a). This practice has proven to be an

effective practice that contributes to sustained change and preventing attrition at this South Texas borderlands region school.

Sustained change is exemplified in the students' academic achievement measured by the high stakes tests as well as classroom teacher observations. For the last five years, this borderlands school has effectuated positive student achievement for the students in the areas of reading and math. As shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3, from 2009 to the present (2013), this South Texas borderlands region PK-5th elementary school has diligently worked at closing the academic gap for its 3rd-5th grade English language learners (ELLs) as measured by the Texas accountability systems of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) from 2009 to 2011 and the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) from 2012 to 2013. The researcher believes that it is unjust to use the Texas Accountability System as the only indicator for student achievement (Valencia, 2000; Valenzuela, 1999).

However, as a public school administrator, there are policies and procedures that are underwritten and need to be observed in order to lead a campus. Figure 1 demonstrates the third grade achievement records based on TAKS for the years 2009 to 2011. Figure 2 highlights the fourth grade students' results based on TAKS, and Figure 3 includes the fifth grade students' TAKS results for the years 2009 to 2011. TAKS tests became part of the academic history of this campus by highlighting only the students who mastered the state assessments, leaving the school administration and teachers feeling unaccomplished because the value added in the students' education was not being rewarded.
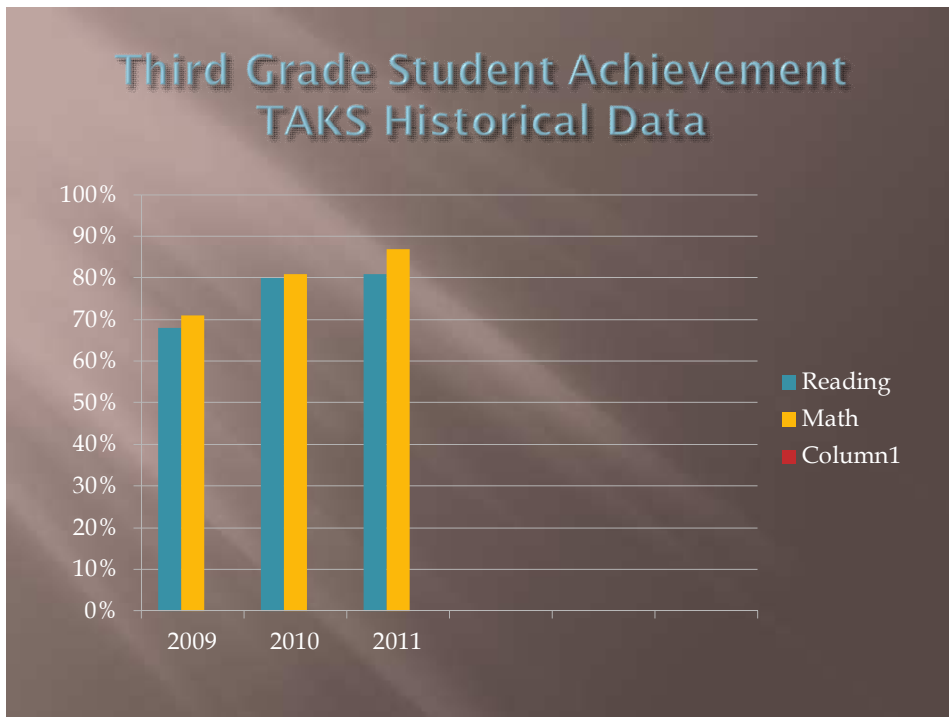
Figure 1. Third Grade Student Achievement, TAKS Historical Data.
Source. TEA (2008-2009; 2009-2010; 2010-2011).

       The new accountability system (STAAR) performance levels and its categories of student achievement and closing the gap measures give this campus an opportunity to highlight the efforts and daily work of its teachers and administration by measuring the school's performance at closing the achievement gap for its students who are predominately English language learners.
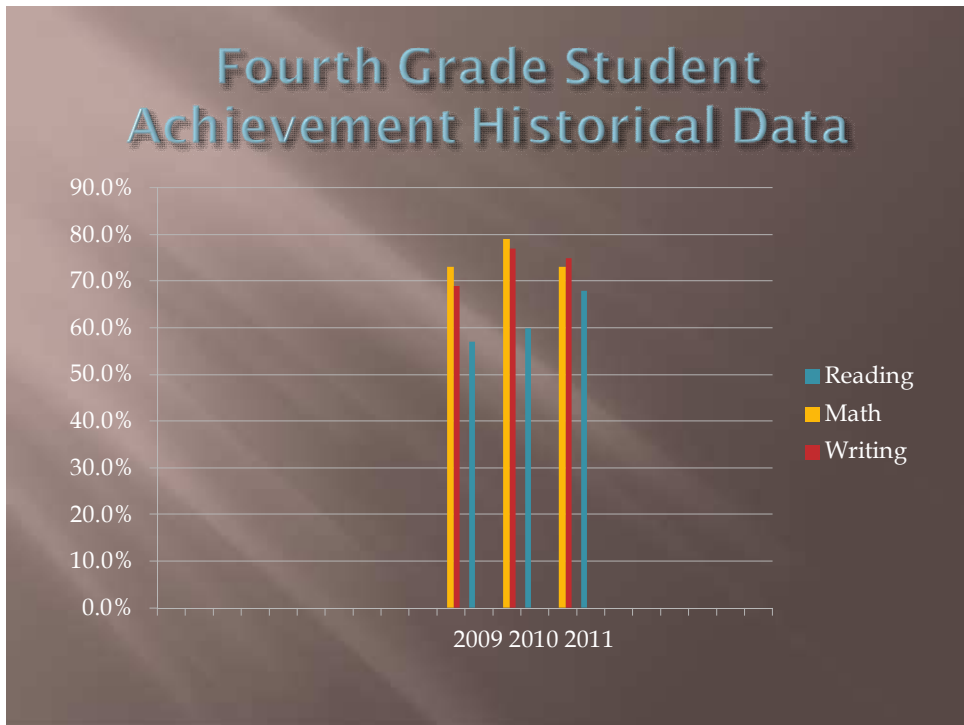
Figure 2. Fourth Grade Student Achievement, TAKS Historical Data.
Source. TEA (2008-2009; 2009-2010; 2010-2011).
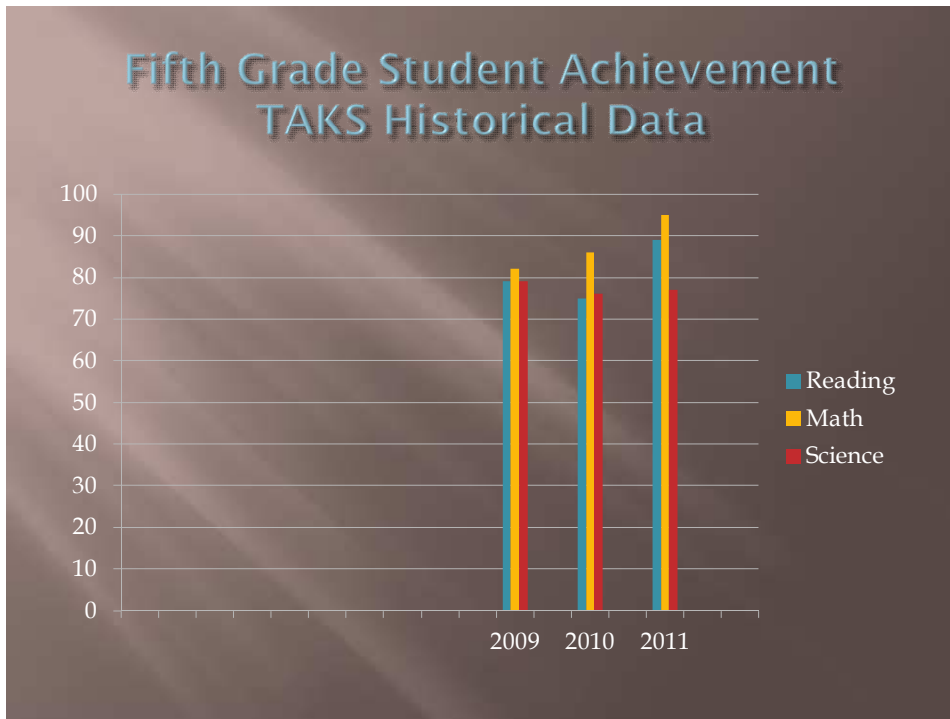
Figure 3. Fifth Grade Student Achievement, TAKS Historical Data.
Source. TEA (2008-2009; 2009-2010; 2010-2011).

For the academic years of 2012 and 2013, the STAAR tests have been in place.

Figure 4 shows the student achievement and closing the academic gap results for this

borderlands region elementary school.

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
2013 Accountability Summary
PEREZ EL (240903111) - UNITED ISD

Accountability Rating

Met Standard

Met Standards on	Did Not Meet Standards on
- Student Achievement	- NONE
- Student Progress	
- Closing Performance Gaps	

Distinction Designation

Academic Achievement in Reading/ELA

Percent of Eligible Measures in Top Quartile
2 out of 4 = 50%

DISTINCTION EARNED

Academic Achievement in Mathematics

Percent of Eligible Measures in Top Quartile
0 out of 3 = 0%

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Top 25 Percent Student Progress

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Performance Index Report

	Index 1 Student Achievement (Target Score=50)	Index 2 Student Progress (Target Score=30)	Index 3 Closing Performance Gaps (Target Score = 55)	Index 4 Postsecondary Readiness (Target Score = 75)
Score	66	35	80	N/A
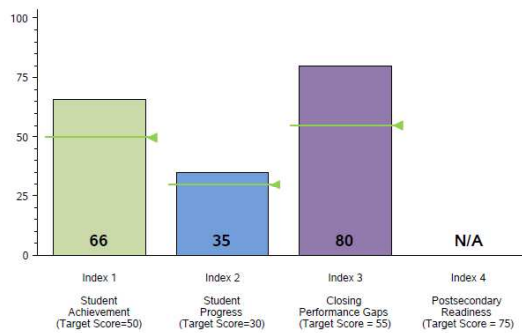
Campus Demographics

Campus Type	Elementary
Campus Size	1,049 Students
Grade Span	PK - 05
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	94.7%
Percent English Language Learners	73.4%
Mobility Rate	17.3%

Performance Index Summary

Index	Points Earned	Maximum Points	Index Score
1 - Student Achievement	625	951	66
2 - Student Progress	276	800	35
3 - Closing Performance Gaps	320	400	80
4 - Postsecondary Readiness	N/A	N/A	N/A

System Safeguards

Number and Percent of Indicators Met

Performance Rates	16 out of 18 = 89%
Participation Rates	10 out of 10 = 100%
Graduation Rates	N/A
Total	**26 out of 28 = 93%**

For further information about this report, please see the Performance Reporting Division web site at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2013/index.html

TEA Division of Performance Reporting   Page 1   August 8, 2013

Figure 4. TEA Accountability Summary for Perez Elementary.

The students' academic growth as interpreted by TEA and the Superintendent of Schools was associated with the students' overall performance on the state assessment. This school had been "TAKS Recognized" for two years, 2008 and 2009. But as the classrooms became more diverse and students entered the classrooms having different and varied academic needs, the teachers' efficacy and culturally responsive strategies employed were being challenged by the increased academic rigor in the STAAR tests.

Could these new challenges be attributed to the students' race, class, and educational conditions? How do borderlands teachers reinforce racial and class inequality in their classrooms? Were the teaching challenges based on the students' English language acquisition (Garcia & Cuellar, 2006)? Garcia and Cuellar (2006) researched the pertinent data for the rapidly changing demographics of the United States that included the students' ethnicity, language, and economic status. The superintendent wanted to know why not all the schools were exiting students from the bilingual program and why they had "ELL lifers" (students as identified and labeled by TEA, who had not exited the bilingual program and had an oral language proficiency test score of 1 or 2, which was the equivalent of not being able to speak or comprehend English). According to TEA, a student is considered to be an "ELL lifer" if he or she has not transitioned to English by second grade. Therefore, if a student enters pre-kindergarten at age four, he or she should have transitioned to English by the age of seven, or in second grade. TEA wanted to know and we needed to find the reasons for this lack of progress, as the superintendent continued to address the principals.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Continuing with my mental preparation of the speech that would be delivered to the schools' teachers, another point of significant importance came to mind and that was culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Failure to understand the importance of instilling cultural pride and affirmation for their students' diverse cultural backgrounds leads to inconsistent teaching practices that espouse deficit thinking models. Gay (2010) proposed that culturally responsive educators need to build bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived social and cultural realities. In addition, culturally responsive teachers must use a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles in combination with acknowledgment and praise of their own and each other's cultural heritages.

According to Lopez (2011), who studied the predictors of Hispanic students' achievement in the upper elementary grades, strong "evidence points toward a need to incorporate culturally responsive behaviors as a characteristic of good teaching" (p. 354).

> Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (Gay, 2010, p. 31)

I did not know the solution to our superintendent's questions, but I did know that our school culture was centered on the premise of understanding and respecting each child's individual story, which was where I focused (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). Duncan-Andrade (2005) calls for educators to abandon old deficit thinking models of teaching and reform the curriculum with critical educational models that accept the students' cultural differences and perceptions of reality. TEA zeroed in on five students who had not been successful on TAKS in 3rd or 4th grade. Well, I began to ponder, "Where did we go wrong?"

These five students were interviewed by our reading intervention teacher, and to our surprise, they did not know that they had failed TAKS in 3rd or 4th grade. I was astonished by the fact that the students did not know that they had failed their TAKS tests. How could this happen? I asked the students myself. Their candid responses worried me because they told me that their TAKS tests were not too important to them since they had passing report card grades. I attributed their lack of understanding of their TAKS failure to the fact that based on their classroom level achievement and grades, the students had passing grades.

So in brainstorming what topics needed to be discussed with the school's teachers, I immediately focused on the scope and sequence. In summary, based on the teachers' recommendations, the scope and sequence needed to be aligned to the STAAR objectives. In addition, the students requested more help in small groups, and they also wanted to be pulled out of their classrooms to get more individualized attention.

However, I still wondered how and why we had failed to articulate the students' TAKS failure to them. I asked the teachers and they responded by stating that as a school culture, we did not focus entirely on TAKS or STAAR scores. Perhaps, we needed to increase our school's emphasis on tracking state assessment scores on an individual basis. I did not think that was a bad practice, but I also reminded the teachers that our focus for the last 12 years had been on adding value to the students' educational attainment and that the students were not defined by a test score (Phillips & Nava, 2011; Scribner & Scribner, 2001). We take pride in knowing our students by first name, knowing their families, and creating strong relationships with them (Delgado Bernal, Aleman, & Garavito, 2009; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Hooks, 1989). Why did we have to change now?

Academic Achievement and Culturally Responsive Practices

So we began our discussions on how to improve the academic achievement of our students by creating a list of the culturally responsive practices that make our school a unique and special place for students from diverse generational backgrounds. For example, 100% of the school's teachers are bilingually certified. The school's attrition rate is less that 3% and has been like that for the past 12 years. Students have positive experiences at this school as measured by the Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies Committee student survey conducted during the school year 2013-2013 (Appendix B). The administration knows each student by name (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009). Students really like the culturally responsive practice of individualized attention, and parents have commented that they enjoy visiting the school where students

are known by their name although the school has more than 1000 students (Yoon, 2008).

So what were the missing factors? Could it be that our teachers were becoming

culturally disconnected from their students? Can a cultural disconnect exist at this South

Texas borderlands region school where 100% of its teachers are Mexican American just

like the students that they teach?

A Cultural Disconnect

As an administrator of Mexican descent, I was beginning to wonder if some of

the Mexican American teachers at this school campus were no longer interested in

making the relevant cultural connections with the students. Were these new generations

of Mexican American teachers failing to make conscious cultural connections with their

Mexican American students (Bartolomé, 2004; Galindo, 1996)?

> The juxtaposing of ideologies should help teachers to better understand if, when, and how their belief systems uncritically reflect those of the dominant society and thus maintain unequal and what should be unacceptable conditions that so many students experience on a daily basis. (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 98)

Were there any differences in the academic results of the Mexican American

students who were being taught by novice Mexican American teachers or experienced

Mexican American teachers (Lee & Oxelson, 2006)? Was their own economic

advancement in terms of the dominant cultural values more important to them? Based on

my mental brainstorming for positive solutions, it occurred to me that the younger the

teachers were, the more culturally disconnected they seemed to be from their Mexican

American students' educational, social, and political needs. I looked for research articles

dealing with the topic of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American

teachers working with diverse student populations. I needed to know if my conjecture

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was possible. I searched for research studies of third generation Mexican American teachers from the South Texas borderlands region, who worked with Mexican American students of first, second, or third generation. I could not find any.

However, I did find research studies that have been conducted through the years that specifically focused on bilingual teachers, and these studies could serve to explain the changing perceptions of the South Texas borderlands region teachers: Acuña (1981); Barrera (1979); Carter (1970); Gonzalez et al. (2005); Holleran (2003a); J. M. Miller (2000); T. Miller (1989); Montejano (1987); Padilla and Gonzalez (2001); Reyes and Valencia (1993); San Miguel (1987); Trueba (1973); Valenzuela (1999) because historically speaking Mexican American teachers have evolved to advocates based on their contextualized narratives.

Third Generation Mexican American Teachers

I narrowed my focus to third generation Mexican American teachers based on my speculation that the younger the Mexican American teachers were, the greater their cultural disconnect appeared to exist between their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and themselves. My assumption led me to speculate that the third generation Mexican American teachers were more assimilated to the American values, specifically to the deficit thinking educational practices (Bustos Flores, 2001; Contreras & Valverde, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999). I did not find any research studies that were conducted in the last 12 years between 1990 and 2013 that specifically focused on the third generation and beyond Mexican American teachers working with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students in

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the South Texas borderlands region. As a result of not finding any research study that specifically focused on third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region, I formulated the research question.

Therefore, I proposed to conduct a formal academic research study in order to contribute to the educational discourse regarding the diverse Mexican American student and teacher populations in the South Texas borderlands region. The importance of conducting this generational study was relevant to the education field because as our Mexican American population becomes older and larger in numbers, we have to also prepare our educational community to academically respond to pressing issues, such as a lack of student academic motivation, thereby increasing high school dropout rates (Gandara, 1986; Oh & Cooc, 2011; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009).

This researcher's interest was third generation Mexican American teachers and the connections that they believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. According to Vasquez (2010), "third generation Mexican Americans living in the borderlands zones are conceptualized as juggling cultures" (p. 45) and having "plural personalities" (Anzaldúa, 1987). The dynamics of the third generation Mexican American people living in the South Texas borderlands social position and their levels of acculturation also informed this research study.

As I stated before, I did not find any generational studies that specifically focused on the third generation Mexican American teachers living in the South Texas

borderlands region that were conducted in the last 12 years. However, I did find some

research studies that have focused on the South Texas borderlands region people history,

culture, education, social, and economic struggles with the institutionalized racism and

internal colonialism: Acuña (1981); Barrera (1979); Carter (1970); Gonzalez et al.

(2005); Holleran (2003a); J. M. Miller (2000); T. Miller (1989); Montejano (1987);

Padilla and Gonzalez (2001); Reyes and Valencia (1993) ; San Miguel (1987); Trueba

(1973); Valenzuela (1999).

Cultural Dynamics of the South Texas Borderlands

The cultural dynamics of the South Texas borderlands region are unique. Miller

(1989) described the two thousand mile long border as having its own laws, language,

customs, food, and traditions. Miller (1989) described a very familiar scene in the

chapter entitled, "Discreets of Laredo." The locals described the daily commerce and

dealings as "you know this is Laredo," we follow our own rules. Yet, historically, in the

South Texas borderlands region, those with the economic capability control the power in

politics, commerce, and culture. According to Barrera (1979), internal colonialism was

defined as a "relationship of domination and subordination along ethnic and/or racial

lines when the relationship is established or maintained to serve the interests of all or

part of the dominant group" (p. 194). It is this researcher's belief that the dominant

group along the South Texas borderlands region continues to be those individuals with

the economic power. Those individuals can be Anglo, Mexican American (first, second,

or third generation and beyond) and the key factor is money. Social class depending on

your historical background can be traced to 1836 (Montejano, 1987).

Montejano (1987) historically described the relationships of Anglos and Mexicans along the South Texas borderlands region from 1836-1986. The historical origins of the cultural subordination of Mexican Americans include (a) the rise of successful Mexican elite due to large scale ranching combined with import-export business and their relationships with Anglo Americans; (b) the destructive effects of the illegal arms trade that devastated populations, the economy, and social structures that forced Mexican ranchers to part with their lands; (c) the 1836 Texas War of Independence; (d) the Mexican War of 1846; and the (e) proliferation of capitalist enterprises resulting in stratified class communities that could not compete with the limited amount of service jobs available.

Systemic Patterns of Discrimination in South Texas

Beginning in 1970, Carter conducted a study of the Mexican Americans, and he presented a historical view of the educational neglect of the second largest minority in the United States. In 1973, Trueba conducted a research study entitled, *Bilingual Bicultural Education for Chicanos in the Southwest.* Trueba (1973) reviewed the Chicano educators' perceptions of bilingual bicultural education in the southwestern region of the United States. Trueba presented the following tenets: (a) In order to understand bilingual bicultural education properly, one has to look at it in the framework of the cultural experiences of the Chicanos; (b) Chicano experiences may be polarized and reflect different philosophies of education; and (c) the evaluation of bilingual bicultural programs should take into account the expectations of Chicano educators and see programmatic developments from their standpoint. It can be deduced that the

Chicano educators' philosophy and perceptions in the 1970's were of personal pride because the bilingual bicultural programs were received as a breakthrough against the ethnocentric and monocultural education practices of the time.

In contrast, it is this researcher's belief that a very different sentiment and perception of the term Chicano existed today. Presently, the term Chicano is considered to be a controversial and highly politicized term (Trueba, 1973). This explanation was important because presently, the term Chicano cannot be used as a synonym for Mexican, Mexican American, Hispano, or the term Hispanic as Trueba suggested in 1973. Perhaps, this is due to the conjectural thoughts that mainstream society associates this term Chicano with radical ways or practices. The radical practices and activism of the past were part of a larger movement that took place in the Southwest and was known as the "Chicano Movement," which began in the 1940's and lasted until the late 1960's (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 46). The Chicano Movement instilled pride and brought about changes in the political, social, and educational systems that were otherwise traditional, monocultural, monolingual, and ethnocentric.

In 1970, Carter studied Mexican American students and the historical and the educational neglect of the second largest minority in the United States. In 1973, Trueba's ethnographic work provided substantial and landmark information for understanding Mexican American bilingual teachers. Padilla and Gonzalez (2001) have studied Mexican American students who have had the opportunity of becoming more acculturated but not more academically successful. Valenzuela (1999) conducted an ethnographic study of an inner-city high school located in Houston, Texas. The focus of

the ethnographic study was the decline of academic achievement of Mexican-descent

students across generations. The contradicting phenomenon presented was that the

Mexican-born students academically outperformed students from families with a longer

history in the United States. Valenzuela (1999) utilized qualitative and quantitative

research methods to study the cultural and historical experiences of Mexican American

students who have different generational backgrounds. The author posted the question,

"What does it mean for faculty and school-based personnel to care about students?"

(Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61). Valenzuela (1999) postulated that the basis for understanding

the reasons why Mexican American students with immigrant roots feel uncared for by

their teachers was by capturing the perspectives of those teachers who believed that by

subtracting the students' cultural resources and identities, they could assimilate and

become productive students at a faster rate.

  According to Valenzuela (1999), the subtractive schooling practice was

particularly compromising to the nonimmigrant students who, unlike their Mexican-born

counterparts, could not draw on previous experiences in Mexico to construct a

perspective that helped them to endure this form of schooling, if not achieve some level

of academic success. Valenzuela (1999) urged educators to espouse a pedagogical caring

perspective and conceptualize students' cultures, communities, and identities in order to

improve the academic achievement of both Mexican-descent students and recently

immigrated students.

  In 1995, Solórzano and Solórzano published an article entitled, *The Chicano*

Educational Experience: A Framework of Effective Schools in Chicano Communities.

Some of their recommendations based on Effective Schools and Accelerated Schools models still hold true today: (a) recommend that teacher training institutions use a pre-service and in-service training model that can use existing demographic data and research to challenge negative stereotypes of minority groups, (b) assist teachers in conducting their own research projects on minority students using different theoretical models, and (c) provide hands-on onsite training experiences with minority students living in low-socioeconomic conditions to help challenge the negative stereotypes regarding the minority groups and the poor.

In addition, they further recommended that the school organization be well aware of the educational goals and instructional curriculum and monitor students' academic progress with instruments and processes that are linguistically and culturally sensitive (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). Their final recommendation was to develop collaborative partnerships between the school organization, the community, and the parents so that together they could develop ways to counter the obstacles that minority students face in contrast to their majority peers.

These impediments that get in the way of instruction and academic achievement for the Mexican American students in the South Texas borderlands region is what this research study documented by capturing the perceptions of the third generation Mexican American teachers. In 2004, McKenzie and Scheurich proposed the idea or existence of what they called "equity traps." Equity traps are "patterns of thinking and behavior that trap the possibilities of creating equitable schools for children of color" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 603). These practices by administrators and teachers according to

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) become "dysconscious" "preventing administrators and teachers from seeing and believing in the possibility that all students of color can achieve and that we can have the ability and will to make it happen" (p. 603). Although, the study was conducted with White teachers, it is important to keep the conclusions of this study in perspective, due to the possibility that some teacher training entities could still be perpetuating the cultural deficit models. Therefore, pre-service teachers and some teachers of color who have been socialized in a society with problems of racial/ethnic, class, and gender discrimination, could also be unconsciously falling into these equity traps.

Holleran (2003a) conducted a qualitative study of Mexican American youth living in the South Texas borderlands region and captured their perceptions of ethnicity and acculturation and race. Holleran documented that Mexican American students living in the South Texas borderlands region possessed an array of self-identification methods along race and ethnicity and national origin. First generation students tended to have stronger ties to Mexico and spoke more Spanish. However, outside their home environment, they became immersed in the institutionalized practices in school. Second and third generation and beyond students began to detach themselves with Mexican culture and the Spanish language. Immigrants did not associate with any of the first, second, or third generation counterparts. Her findings were reflective of the community that she studied and could not be held as describing any other community.

Segregation and Substandard Teachers in Texas

In 2000, Richard Valencia, from The University of Texas, presented a framework for understanding two major inequalities in Texas public schools: (a) segregation and (b) substandard teachers. According to Valencia (2000), Texas public schools were segregated from the years 1930 to 1960. It was not until the landmark civil rights case *Brown v. Board of Education, 1954* that school desegregation became a federal mandate. Yet in Texas and in most of the Southwest borderlands region, schools "remained mostly segregated particularly in large cities with bigger metropolitan areas" (Valencia, 2000, p. 447).

The South Texas borderlands region also possessed a record high number of non-certified and or substandard teachers. Valencia's (2000) findings include: (a) as the percentage of economically disadvantaged students increased, the percentage of certified teachers decreased; (b) as the percentage of White students increased, the percentage of certified teachers increased; and (c) suburban compared to urban schools tended to have a greater percentage of certified teachers – a discernible pattern throughout.

The Southwest borderlands region schools had learned to compensate for their perceived and real disadvantages. In 1993, Reyes and Valencia conducted a study of Texas border schools and highlighted four common practices that Texas border successful schools shared: (a) community and family involvement, (b) collaborative school governance system, (c) teachers' commitment to connecting curriculum with students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005), and (d) teacher advocacy toward their accountability to working with Mexican American students. In 2006, Padilla

conducted a research study of the status of first, second, third generation, and beyond students and their characteristics. Padilla presented the idea that later generation Mexican American students began to show a decrease in their cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty so that by the fourth generation, there was little or no "cultural awareness" or "ethnic loyalty." These factors were important to my research because the premise for my research was the intergenerational relationships that exist between Mexican American teachers and their Mexican American students.

Texas Style Bilingual Programs

Texas currently has a total of 837,536 ELL students, which translates into 16.8% of the Texas student population in K-12th grade (TEA, 2013). The Texas Education Code Chapter 89.BB and Commissioner's Rules concerning the State Plan for educating ELL students has four plans available to school districts:

1. "The transitional bilingual/early exit model provides literacy instruction and academic content areas in the student's native language, along with instruction in English oral language. Exiting of a student from Bilingual Education will not occur until the end of first grade, and no earlier than two years or later than five years after the student enrolls in school" (TEA, 2012, p. 5)

2. "The transitional bilingual/late exit is a bilingual program model that serves a student identified as limited English proficient in both English and Spanish, or another language, and transfers the student to English only instruction" (TEA, 2012, p. 5). A student is eligible to exit this program no earlier than six

or later than seven years after the student enrolls in school. The goal of this

program is high academic skills in both English and Spanish.

3. Model 3 is a dual language immersion/two-way biliteracy that integrates

   students proficient in English and students identified as limited English

   proficient (TEA, 2012).

4. Model 4 is a dual language immersion/one-way biliteracy that integrates

   students proficient in English and students identified as limited English

   proficient (TEA, 2012).

These models provided instruction in both English and Spanish, or another

language, and transfers a student identified as limited English proficient to English only

instruction. Instruction is provided to both native English speakers and native speakers

of another language in an instructional setting where language learning is integrated with

content instruction. The primary difference between Models 3 and 4 is that program

instructional delivery depends on the number of the availability of English language

speakers. In Model 3 (two-way dual language), it is preferred to have 50/50 meaning that

half of the student will be English dominant and the other half ELL students so that they

can have study buddies. In the one-way dual language program model, all of the

language instruction is done by the teachers. So where does all this information lead us

to?

At the local level, both Border ISD and Frontera ISD have the option of having

ELL students in the early transition model program or the dual language/immersion two-

way program. ELL students have these options based on the availability of each one of

the programs at the elementary school where they attend based on their residential address. For the purposes of this study, the two teachers from Frontera ISD worked in dual language settings and transitional language settings. Katalina worked as kinder dual language teacher and Melissa tutored students from PK-5th that were ELL students participating in the early transition program. The four teachers from Border ISD had similar teaching experiences. Rosa is a second grade dual language teacher. Alejandro, Gloria, and Esperanza teach in an early transition language setting.

Juggling Cultures or Acculturation

Padilla and Gonzalez (2001) reiterated that according to the acculturation model, Mexican American students should be demonstrating greater academic attainment with each successive generation. However, the contrary was true. Similar research studies results indicated that immigrant students were performing better than the third and later generation students (Nielsen & Fernandez, 1981). The acculturation and assimilation of third generation Mexican American students did not necessarily equate to their academic success. In fact, according to Padilla and Gonzalez (2001), more acculturated third generation students performed below academic expectations in comparison to their recent immigrant counterparts. Mexican Americans living along the borderlands region have learned to juggle two cultures (Anzaldúa, 1987). Depending on their generation in the United States, Mexican Americans are a diverse group of people, especially those who reside along the borderlands region. Phenotype, economic position, and linguistic abilities influence the level of acculturation and assimilation of third generation Mexican Americans (Murgia & Telles, 1996; Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001; Vasquez, 2010). "Third

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generation Mexican Americans have heterogeneous existences, with axes of gender, multiracial/monoracial status, and phenotype dividing how this generation experiences racialization, access to opportunities, and freedom of self-definition" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 49). The concept of juggling two cultures is relevant to this research study because of the heterogeneity that exists in contextualized voices of third generation Mexican American teachers of the South Texas borderlands region who informed this research study.

Immigrant Students' Academic Success

American classrooms are extraordinarily diverse since in "recent decades large numbers of Latinos have arrived from dozens of countries creating an ever more diverse population" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009, p. 3). One of the largest subgroups that composes 64% of the total immigrant population is the Mexican (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). It is believed and has been documented by Súarez-Orozco and Súarez-Orozco (1995, 2001) that immigrant students have utilized their high levels of motivation and family security into academic success. "Of the 12 million undocumented immigrants estimated to be in the United States today, about 13 percent are children under age eighteen who have been raised in and acculturated to American contexts" (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010, p. 62). The question remains if the immigrant students' academic success can be attributed or undermined by the educational system designed to help them.

"Presently, more than seven million people are third-plus generation Mexican Americans, yet the complexities of their borderland identities and experiences are rarely addressed" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 46). The researcher believed that in conducting critical

race research based on race and class, the voices of the people who were most affected by the public policy being promulgated should be informed and heard in such discussions (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). "Schools in this country have historically been charged with preparing an educated citizenry – the present time is no different" (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004, p. 523). "The ethnic and national diversity of contemporary immigrants pales by comparison to the diversity of their class origins. The most educated and the least educated groups in the United States are the immigrants" (Rumbaut, 2008, p. 198).

The current events regarding the growing young Mexican immigrant population is what continues to drive the search for long-term solutions that address the social and educational needs of these first generation, second, or third generation and beyond Mexican American students regardless of their legal status in the United States (Cervantes & Hernandez, 2011; Passel, 2011; Phillips & Nava, 2011). The second generation Mexican American students together with the third generation and beyond were equally affected with the consequences of the continuous immigration.

> The new second generation is rapidly growing diversifying through continued immigration, natural increase and intermarriage, complicating its contours and making it increasingly important, for theoretical as well as programmatic and public policy reasons. (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1161).

Therefore, we have to find new and more effective ways to educate them by absorbing and celebrating their cultural and historical heritage. This research study will contribute to the knowledge base on how to break the "cycle of cumulative disadvantage, young men and women with low levels of education are encountering like becoming prisoners or parents compared to the same-age and same-sex peers with higher

levels of education" (Rumbaut, 2008, p. 199). The urgency is palpable due to the continuous growth and young age of the first and second generation Mexican American students in the United States, especially in the Southwest borderlands region.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach in the South Texas borderlands region and understand their perceptions about the connections that they believe to be making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. This study informs the current and future dialogues that seek to find solutions to increase the academic advancement of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students in the South Texas borderlands region. The researcher believes that this critical research study will positively impact and influence the academic advancement of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students living in the South Texas borderlands region.

The voices of the third generation Mexican American South Texas borderland teachers informed this research study. The study was designed to explore teacher perceptions of the connections they believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. This research study documents the perceptions that six third generation Mexican American teachers, working in the South Texas borderlands, have toward their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, while addressing the possible influences of racism,

economic subordination, and the "institutionalization of inequality within the Texas public school system" (Aleman, 2007, p. 526).

Significance of the Study Based on the Increase in Mexican American Population

The significance of this study was to inform current and future dialogues that seek to find solutions to increase the academic advancement of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. "In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau publication, entitled the *Current Population Survey*, estimated an increase of Hispanics of first generation of some 32 million, a second generation of 29 million, and a third generation of 211 million" and 70% were of Mexican American descent (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1169). Based on a study by Rumbaut and Komaie (2010), 30% of the more than 68% young adults in the United States are foreign born or of foreign parents. According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, "the Hispanic population increased from 35.3 million in 2000, when the group made up 13 percent of the total population" (p. 3) to over 50.5 million, and 16% of the population. The Mexican origin population increased by 54% and had the largest numeric change (11.2 million) in comparison to Asians, Whites, and Latinos from different origins, growing from 20.6 million in 2000 to 31.8 million in 2010. Mexicans accounted for about three-quarters of the 15.2 million growth in the Hispanic population from 2000 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). A total of 66% of the young adults (18 to 34 years of age) living along the Mexican border from El Paso to Laredo, McAllen, and Brownsville, are of foreign birth or parentage (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010). According to Rumbaut and Komaie (2010), foreign means not born in

the United States of America, which could be defined as immigrant or first generation Mexican American in this research study.

Current public school reform and public opinion regarding the dismal academic advancement of Mexican American students in the nation is attempting to impose a holistic approach and one program fits all solutions to the challenges of Mexican American students' minimal academic advancement as measured by the high-stakes testing as part of the No Child Left Behind federal mandates (Mather, 2009; Nieto, 2005; Yoshikawa, 2011). "In the No Child Left Behind high-stakes testing climate, immigrant children are expected to achieve educationally in ways that are contradicted by the realities of academic language learning in American classrooms today" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009, p. 2).

Hence, due to the lack of current research that documented and explored the perceptions of the connections that the third generation Mexican American teachers believed that they were making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, this present research study was important because it captured the third generation Mexican American teachers' perceptions, so that the South Texas borderlands region educators could begin to understand why first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students are having academic challenges.

Statement of the Problem

"In the coming two decades, as the U.S. native-parentage labor force continues to shrink, immigrants and their children are expected to account for most of the nation's labor force, with the fastest-growing occupations requiring college degrees" (Rumbaut &

Komaie, 2010, p. 43). There seems to be a growing interest in understanding the teachers' perspectives, especially as they relate to education of English language learners and how to increase their academic achievement (Bustos Flores et al., 2007; Phillips & Nava, 2011). The solution to the growing academic needs for the children of immigrants, whether they are first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican Americans in the South Texas borderlands region, is in the teachers in those classrooms. "Education is increasingly important to the success of both individuals and nations, and growing evidence demonstrates that among all educational resources, teachers' abilities are especially crucial contributors to the students' learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 300). Their teachers need to understand the impact that their culturally relevant practices will have in the future of the United States of America's economy and politics (Gay, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

A great degree of variance exists in the teachers' perspectives about how to effectively work with English language learners (Bae et al., 2008). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2013) and their publication entitled *The Condition of Education 2013*, the percentage of public school students who were English language learners increased from 9% in 2002-2003 to 10% in 2010-2011. Their evidence also stated that the achievement gaps in the subject of reading that exists between fourth grade students who were ELL and Non- ELL students has also widened. "In 2011, the achievement gaps between ELL and non-ELL students in the NAEP reading assessment were 36 points at the 4th-grade level and 44 points at the 8th-grade level" (NCES, 2013, p. 54).

At the state level, there are currently eight of the western states (Oregon, Hawaii, Alaska, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, and California) that have the highest percentages of ELL students, 10% or more of public school students were ELL. On one end of the spectrum, a teacher with an "additive perspective will see bilingualism and biculturalism as positive resources" (Rueda & Garcia, 1996, p. 313). According to Rueda and Garcia (1996), teachers with a subtractive perspective will see bilingualism and biculturalism as impediments. In their findings, Rueda and Garcia (1996) found the majority of the teachers who were studied could not be clearly defined at either side of the spectrum, rather they were found to reside in a combination of the two. Based on the data collected by Rueda and Garcia (1996), bilingual and those teachers who had obtained a waiver to teach bilingual education based on the shortage of bilingual teachers in California, had a positive view of bilingualism and biliteracy. Special education teachers were noted to be more negative about bilingualism. However, all the 36 teachers in this quantitative study emphasized the need for their students to learn English. "Spanish speaking students are different from English-speaking students because they want to fit into the dominant culture" was the statement collected from one of the special education teachers (Rueda & Garcia, 1996, p. 327).

All the teachers in the study concluded that the Latino students were the dominant culture in that particular school, but they agreed that the Latino students wanted to learn English to fit into the dominant culture. According to Rudea and Garcia (1996), teachers are concerned about the future of ELL students: "four of the teachers who would otherwise have supported native-language instruction were concerned about

limited opportunities that would be available to students who did not become proficient in English" (p. 327). In addition, Rueda and Garcia (1996) stressed the need to place more attention on the daily practical applications of theoretical ideas. Presently, teachers have too many pressing demands and very little time to accomplish them.

Therefore, educational leaders must ensure that teacher preparation programs change with the times and analyze the variance that exists in current teachers' perceptions of theoretical applications and daily classroom practice. The research question was framed so that the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers could be captured to inform the reader of the connections that the teachers believe or think that they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students.

This research study identified the possible reasons why third generation Mexican American teachers think that they have difficulties making academic progress with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. This topic was relevant for the improvement and academic success of the educationally unsuccessful Mexican American students of the South Texas borderlands. Nieto (1994) pointed out that it was too convenient for some educators to fall back on deficit theories and continued to blame the students rather than focus on the institutional policies and practices that promulgated oppression. Nieto (1994) more importantly promulgated that educators need to take a good look at their educational practices and beliefs.

Furthermore, it was also important to understand that some educators were simply following the functions of historical societal and institutional structures. The

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Southwest borderlands region educators needed to understand their students'

backgrounds and daily struggles. The risk factors faced by first or second generation

immigrant children are many. For example, these immigrant children were more likely

to live in poverty, experience neighborhood risks, and lack health insurance (Cervantes

& Hernandez, 2011; Mather, 2009; Passel, 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). According to the

Texas Education Agency 2011-2012 statistics, 60% of the students in Texas live in

poverty (TEA, 2013).

Furthermore, as immigrants continue to come to the United States, their cultural

identities become more diverse. Therefore, cultural development of each generation of

immigrants who continue to hold on to the more complex cognition of self-culture and

their behaviors is known as the cultural identity theory (Ivey, 1995). A multigenerational

study conducted by Rumbaut (2008) in Southern California revealed a sharp within-

group difference in educational attainment among parents of 1.5, second, and third-plus

generations. Over 70% of fathers and mothers in the 1.5 generation adult respondents

had less than a high school education, and scarcely 1% had completed a college degree.

By contrast, 44% of both parents of second generation respondents had less than a high

school education and 2.3% had a college degree. Among the parents of the third-plus

generation, 16% of fathers and mothers were school dropouts and only 5.2% had college

degrees (Rumbaut, 2008).

Therefore, asserting higher completion rates of schooling could be associated

with a lesser amount of acculturation and not necessarily with legal citizenship status.

Based on Rumbaut (2008), second and third generation respondents appear to complete

less education than their first generation counterparts. In order to add to the solutions of

why this is happening and to contribute real solutions, this research study was

conducted. The cognitive dissonance is that logically speaking, more second and third

generation and beyond students and their parents should be academically successful

(Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001; Rumbaut, 2008). "Cultural identity is viewed as a lifespan

process evolving and changing as the individual moves through the various

psychological stages of development" (Cuellar & Gonzalez, 2000, p. 605). Educators

who acknowledge the cultural identities of their students acknowledge their cultural

heritage as legacies that affect the students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to

learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum (Darling-

Hammond, 2006; Yoon, 2008).

That is precisely why this research study is so important. "If English proficiency

is a correlate to upward mobility, other life events disrupt or derail mobility trajectories"

(Rumbaut, 2008, p. 219) of third generation and beyond Mexican American students.

The third generation Mexican American teachers who informed this research study

defied the statistics. Their contextualized stories of personal struggles with racism,

classism, and educational segregation will present solutions to advance the educational

achievement of a diversified multi-generational group of Mexican American students

living in the South Texas borderlands region.

In order to interpret the perceptions of the connections that the third generation

South Texas borderlands teachers believe that they are making with their first, second,

third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, this researcher focused on

these tenets as postulated by Trueba (1973): (a) look at the framework of cultural

experiences of the Chicanos, (b) determine whether their experiences are polarized and

reflect different philosophies of education, and (c) take into account the expectations of

Chicano educators and see programmatic developments from their point of view. These

tenets were postulated in 1973 by Trueba, but I believe they are still relevant and

practical with only one exception and that is that the term Chicano, which was

substituted with Mexican American. The researcher also used these seven constant

comparisons to analyze the data:

1. Racialized Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Experiences based on race

   discrimination)

2. Social Advocacy (Did they use culturally responsive practices? What do they

   value?)

3. Language (Was Spanish a natural occurrence? Were they bilingual? Did they

   code switch)

4. Ethnic Pride (Did they exhibit normalized teaching practices? Or were they

   conscious about their students' cultural needs?)

5. Social Economic Challenges and Classed Experiences (Solórzano, 1998)

   (Their own or their students)

6. Age Range (Important to establish a historical timeline)

7. Family Roles (Importance place on family, family roles and parental

   involvement)

Research Question

The research question guiding this qualitative study was "What perceptions do third generation Mexican American teachers have toward the connections that they make with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and the relationship between themselves and their students?" According to Ladson-Billings (1994), teachers who learn to become "conductors" believe that it is their responsibility to maximize the students' learning by preparing them to be (a) academically strong, (b) culturally competent, and (c) sociopolitically critical as lifelong learners. In addition, Ladson-Billings (1994) also proposed that teachers can also become "referral agents." Referral agents are teachers who practice shifting their responsibility to other teachers. The purpose of this study was to add additional discussion topics for experienced teachers and new teachers so that they understand the need for them to become "conductors" and not "referral agents." At issue is the growing diversity that exists between the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican Americans. In order to better understand this diversity, I proposed the following data results regarding linguistic acculturation, which was another reason why this researcher believes that it was important to capture the perceptions of the third generation and beyond Mexican American teachers working with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, many of whom are English language learners. According to Rumbaut (2008),

> Among Mexicans surveyed in Southern California, between half and two-thirds of the 1.5 and 2.0 cohorts can still speak and read Spanish very well, but those proportions fall to between a quarter and a third in the 2.5 cohort and to single digits in the third generations. (p. 217)

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Public schools are experiencing a tremendous amount of demographic change in the area of student enrollment and teachers' backgrounds and experiential knowledge in the areas of cultural and linguistic differences (Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001). This researcher's inquiry was based on the desire to make a difference and conduct research based on ethical and positive educational, social, and political contributions based on the critical race methodology (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001).

Intent of the Study

The intent of this research study was to document and analyze the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers and the connections that they believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. This researcher's goal was to analyze the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers, working in the South Texas borderlands, as they relate to feelings of self-efficacy, sustained change, and culturally responsive practices in teaching their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students on topics such as possible influences of racism, economic subordination, and societal and institutional structures (Nieto, 1994). The researcher used Buriel and Cardoza's (1993) definition of the major characteristics of a third generation Mexican American. However, it is important to note that based on their lived experiences with racism and classism, the six participants in this research study intentionally decided to either speak and/or learn Spanish and embrace some the cultural traditions to build strong caring relationships with their students.

Bustos Flores (2001) published an article granting practical pedagogical advice for practicing educators. Her profound question was: "Why are some teachers more effective than others?" (Bustos Flores, 2001, p. 1). According to Bustos Flores (2001), some of the existing research regarding bilingual teacher attitudes needs to be examined carefully because this existing research has largely focused on teacher behaviors and not their perceptions. I found a gap in the literature that enabled me to focus specifically on the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers and the connections that they believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. "Presage variables such as teacher beliefs have not been adequately examined in relation to bilingual teacher behavior" (Bustos Flores, 2001, p. 2). In an in-depth analysis of why some classroom teachers are more effective than others, Bustos Flores (2001) examined the origins of the construction of knowledge and arrived at the concept that most individuals' beliefs and ideas are constructed from a sociocultural context.

The point is that "teachers' beliefs that learning is either absolute or relative can be classified as Schommers's (1990) certainty of knowledge" (Bustos Flores, 2001, p. 3). "Certainty of knowledge acquisition" is the teacher's belief of knowledge as either being "dualistic or relative" (Bustos Flores, 2001, p. 3). A dualistic setting is one where a teacher exchanges knowledge with his or her students, more as a facilitator or as a "conductor" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In a relative classroom setting, a teacher expects and anticipates learning or the transfer of knowledge based on his or her general thinking style and understanding of the academic curriculum.

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Bustos Flores (2001) cited nine characteristics that define a highly effective teacher, especially one who works with English language learners. The nine characteristics are: (a) communicates clear definitions; (b) paces lessons; (c) makes jointly determined decisions; (d) provides immediate feedback; (e) monitors student progress; (f) instructs in native language; (g) employs dual language methodology; (h) integrates students' home culture and values; and (i) implements a balanced, coherent curriculum.

Pedagogically speaking, teachers cannot separate themselves from their own beliefs as they are social beings who have different beliefs according to their sociocultural contexts (Monzó & Rueda, 2001). In the best possible classroom scenario Mexican American teachers teaching Mexican American students will use culturally appropriate interactional styles that scaffold and validate students' instruction. Rist (1970) postulated that the social reality created in the classroom often has lifelong outcomes, especially for students. In addition, Ball (2000) suggested that teachers often adapt cultural nuances that are reflective of the majority group experiences. Therefore, precautions have to be taken and no one should assume that because teachers and students share common linguistic and/or cultural experiences, that the bilingual teachers' will assist and recognize the needs of English language learners (Bustos Flores, 2001).

It has been documented by Bustos Flores (2001) that bilingual teachers who had experiences in subtractive language environments as young learners used these prior experiences to propel them into bilingual teachers. Therefore, some bilingual teachers are more successful with intergenerational bonding (Crosnoe et al., 2004a).

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Intergenerational bonding is the level of bonding that students have with their teachers. Students need to perceive their teachers as being caring and fair. According to Crosnoe et al. (2004a), intergenerational bonding and emotionally caring for students is what leads to the academic success of students. The question raised by Crosnoe et al. (2004a) was: "Is the intergenerational bonding relationship more important for the academic success of African and Hispanic students than for other students?" According to that research study, the "affective bonds with teachers have a greater academic impact with students who are economically and socially disadvantaged" (Crosnoe et al., 2004a, p. 62). The stronger the intergenerational bond between young Hispanic girls and their mentors, the higher levels of academic success. Overall, the more positive the students' perceptions of their teacher are across all ethnic groups, the higher their level of academic success (Crosnoe, Lopez-Gonzalez, & Muller, 2004b).

A total of 132 students were serviced by the six third generation Mexican American teachers who participated in this research study. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the 132 students were considered English language learners. Based on the collection of data from the participants during the semi-structured interviews, a total of 20 students were not participating in the bilingual program due to their language surveys. The six participants stated that these 20 students' parents responded to the initial Home Language Survey as a family who spoke only English at home.

Organization of the Study

This research study is organized in the following order: (a) theoretical framework; (b) related literature specifically to bilingual education; (c) teacher

preparation, including teacher professional development including Hispanic (Mexican American) teachers; (d) teachers' perceptions in the South Texas borderlands; and (e) recommendations for continued research studies in this area. In order to capture the perceptions of the third generation Mexican American teachers, this researcher replicated some of the strategies used in Bartolomé's (2004) study that was conducted nationwide with an approximately 40% pre-service education teachers of color (macro-level). Distinctively, this current research study was conducted at a micro level in the South Texas borderlands region with six third generation Mexican American teachers. The methodology of participant observation was utilized to create a research document that may serve as a guide for public school administrators and teachers working with English language learners. As a Mexican American public school administrator and due to my ethnicity and cultural intuition, I anticipated that I could gain the participants' trust. "Cultural intuition is similar to the 'theoretical sensitivity' proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which is based on four major sources: (a) personal experience, (b) the existing literature, (c) one's professional experience, and (d) the analytical process itself" (Delgado Bernal, 1998b, p. 6). My practical experience in public school education drives my desire to contribute to the educational, pedagogical, and social-political conversations about the societal factors influencing public education changes and shortcomings specifically dealing with Mexican American students.

The paradigm for this study was critical theory. The research methodology that I used to analyze and document the lived experiences of the six participants was participant observation. The research methods that were used to gather the data were

semi-structured interviews and observations. I documented the participants' narratives/

testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) about their perceptions of the connections that

third generation Mexican American teachers believe that they were making with the

first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. This research

study focused on semi-structured, journaling, and interviews of third generation Mexican

American teachers to fill the research gap that currently exists in the literature

concerning the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students

and their educational underachievement. Storytelling was also a part of this research

study. This researcher documented the stories that the Southwest borderlands third

generation Mexican American teachers had to share. According to my review of the

literature regarding the Mexican subgroup, researchers have indicated that additional

research should be conducted in order to address the continuing social, educational, and

economic problems associated with the continuous growth of the Mexican American

population in the United States, especially students.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation: A multifaceted process by which minorities become bicultural (Berry,

    Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Acculturation is defined as the social process

    characterized by cultural changes that occur when individuals originating in one

    country, accept the culture of a host country (Sam, 2000).

Bicultural person: Described as "well adjusted, open to others, and a cultural broker

    between peoples of different backgrounds. A completely bicultural person is an

individual who possesses two social persona and identities" (Padilla, 2006, p. 470).

Bridging identity: Describes a "certain type of identity that links past biographical experiences with a current occupational role. It highlights how past biographical identities contribute to the way that Chicana teachers define their professional role in light of their cultural minority background" (Galindo, 1996, p. 85).

Centrality of experiential knowledge: "Critical race methodology in education acknowledges the strength on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, testimonios, chronicles and narratives" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 24).

Challenge of dominant ideology: "Critical race methodology in education challenges White privilege, rejects notions of "neutral" research or "objective" researchers, and exposes deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).

Commitment to social justice: "Critical race methodology in education is committed to social justice by envisioning social justice research that leads toward the following: elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty and the empowering of subordinated minority groups" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).

Community knowledge: May be defined as the "collective experiences and community memory taught to youth through legends, corridos, storytelling, behavior and

most recently through the scholarship field of Chicana and Chicano studies"
(Delgado Bernal, 1998b, p. 7).

Conductor: A teacher who helps students become academically strong, culturally
competent, and sociopolitically critical (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Cultural awareness: Is the cognitive dimension that specifies the knowledge that a
person possesses of his or her culture (Padilla, 2006).

Cultural identity: Viewed as a lifespan process evolving and changing as the individual
moves through the various psychological stages of development (Ivey, 1995).

Cultural intuition: A complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal,
collective, and dynamic (Delgado Bernal, 1998a) utilized to inform research
conducted by CRT researchers.

Culturally relevant teachers: Describes teachers who have specific conceptions about
themselves and others and of the kind of classroom and community social
relations they promote. Culturally relevant teachers help minority students'
academic success by helping them make connections between their community,
ethnic, and national identities (Ladson-Billings, 1991).

Deficit-thinking model: A theory that proposes that a student who is not academically
successful due to his or her internal deficits or deficiencies. The deficiencies are
allegedly manifested in the students' limited intellectual abilities, linguistic
shortcomings, and lack of motivation to learn as well in some immoral behavior
(Valencia, 1997).

First generation: Born in the United States or its territories, are U.S. citizens by birth, and have two foreign-born parents (Buriel & Cardoza, 1993). They have a good knowledge of the Spanish language and very strong ties to Mexico and their cultural traditions, with both grandparents being born in Mexico.

Intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination: "Critical race methodology in education acknowledges the intercentricity of racialized oppression and the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent and sexuality" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25).

Latino: A person of Latin American or Spanish speaking descent. Latino/a is more representative of people from Latin America who have indigenous roots, whereas the term Hispanic, which comes from Spain, excludes such influences.

Marginal man: Describes a person who found himself or herself between and betwixt two cultures (Park, 1928). In addition, marginality is also associated with an individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another and finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither (Stonequist, 1937).

Mexican American: A person born in the United States of Mexican descent or ancestry.

Referral agent: A teacher who prefers to detach himself/herself from his/her students and assumes the referral agent attitude and shifts responsibility to other teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Second generation: Born in the United States or its territories with at least one foreign-born parent. They are U.S. citizens by birth and have some knowledge of the Spanish language and cultural traditions, with at least one grandparent being born in Mexico. They are also children born in another country who immigrate to this country before the age of five (Buriel & Cardoza, 1993).

Spatial assimilation of: As defined by Gordon (as cited in Brown, 2006), relates to the heterogeneity of a neighborhood, as people of different ethnic groups begin to coexist in a suburb**.**

Sustained change: For the purpose of this research study, the author defines it as uninterrupted change in administrative leadership that leads to high levels of teacher efficacy and student achievement.

Teacher efficacy: Measures a teacher's cognitions (perceptions) related to his or her capacity as a teacher. It is the level of teacher preparedness.

Third generation: Born in the United States or its territories with both parents also being U.S. citizens. The third generation individuals can be third generation based on the mother's or father's side. They are not fluent in Spanish and prefer to speak English and have minimal, if any, ties to some of the Mexican traditions. None of their parents or grandparents were born in Mexico (Buriel & Cardoza, 1993).

Transdisciplinary perspective: "Critical race methodology in education challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The intent of this research study was to document and analyze the perceptions of the connections that third generation Mexican American teachers believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. A review of the literature revealed that no studies had been conducted on the topic of third generation Southwest borderlands region Mexican American teachers and their perceptions of the connections they believe to be making with the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The research gathered in this study attempted to inform our understanding of the knowledge and skills future teachers will need in order to positively impact student achievement. This researcher's goal was to understand the perceptions of the connections that the third generation Mexican American teachers, working in the South Texas borderlands, believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, with the goal of ultimately identifying some useful strategies and tools that institutions preparing pre-service teachers can use to assist future educators to be successful in the increasingly diverse classrooms with students of Mexican descent.

This literature review is organized in the following order: (a) theoretical framework; (b) related literature on teacher efficacy, sustained change, and culturally responsive strategies; (c) bilingual education and teacher preparation including teacher professional development including Hispanic (Mexican American) teachers; (d)

teachers' perceptions in the South Texas borderlands; and (e) additional research studies relevant to this study.

Critical Race Theory

The research paradigm for this research study was critical race theory. Bell (1989, 1992, 2004) proposed that the civil rights movement and reforms have benefitted Whites more than Blacks. Bell is considered to be the father of critical race theory and has authored several books on the topic. Bell's major themes are racism, school desegregation, and the 14th amendment that extends constitutional protection to all citizens. More than skin color, Bell suggested that the disenfranchised Black and White need to form a coalition that promotes equality and entitlement based on class as well as racial disadvantage. This critical race theory tenet of class is important to analyze the contextualized stories of the six third generation Mexican American teachers working with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students who informed this research study. Ladson-Billings (1998), who is credited for bringing Bell's critical race theory of five tenets into education, postulated the foundational knowledge for investigating how the critical race theory tenets are applied to public school norms in curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding and desegregation.

Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1998) provided historical, legal, and fundamental support to the argument that the conceptions of race, in the postmodern/or postcolonial world, are more embedded and fixed than before. Presently, social categories like "school achievement," "middle class," "maleness," "beauty," "intelligence," and "science" are associated with normative categories for whiteness. The social categories

for marginalization are those associated with blackness are "gangs," "welfare recipients," "basketball players," and the "underclass." Ladson-Billings (1998) postulated that positionality is relative to the situation. The State of Texas accountability system can very well be defined as normative measure because it only rewards students and school districts based on one test.

CRT scholars subscribed to the following set of interests: understand how a "regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America" and to change the bond that exists between law and racial power (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12). Delgado (1989) argued that the dominant group justifies its power with stories and stock explanations that construct reality in ways that maintain their privilege (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Delgado Bernal (1998b) explained her position and how she believed that Chicana researchers have a commitment to link research to community concerns and social change. Similarly, Delgado Bernal's (1998a) social justice paradigm served to further explain the intent of this research study. Documenting and interpreting the voices of the oppressed will expose their experiences and bring to center stage their generational status and personal experiences. The contextualized stories of the six participants will capture the variance that exists within the lived experiences of these third generation Mexican American teachers living in the South Texas borderlands region.

CRT Tenets

Solórzano (1998) explained how the critical race theory methodology is grounded on the following five tenets:

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1. Foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process;

2. Challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color;

3. Offers liberatory or transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination;

4. Focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color;

5. Offers Interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color. (p. 24)

Solórzano (1998) focused on countering of the majoritarian teacher education programs that do not prepare pre-service educators to incorporate their ethnicity in their daily classroom experiences with students of color. The characteristic experiences in the daily lives of the six third generation Mexican American teachers who participated in this research study will help illustrate how they have confronted discrimination based on race, class, gender and appearance. How do their lived experiences transfer to their perceptions in working with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students?

Educational Needs of Mexican American English Language Learners

Valenzuela (1999) explained the diversity and educational needs of Mexican American students living in the urban areas of Houston, Texas, in her landmark book, *Subtractive Schooling*. Valenzuela (1999) presented an ethnographic study of an inner-city high school located in Houston, Texas. The focus of the book was the decline of the academic achievement of Mexican-descent students across generations. The contradicting phenomena presented in this book is that the Mexican-born students

academically outperform students from families with a longer history in the United States.

Valenzuela (1999) utilized qualitative and quantitative research methods to study the cultural and historical experiences of Mexican American students who have different generational backgrounds. The author posted the question, "What does it mean for faculty and school-based personnel to care about students?" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 60). Valenzuela (1999) constructed the basis for understanding why Mexican-descent students feel uncared for by their teachers who believe that by subtracting the students' cultural resources and identities, they can assimilate and become productive students at a faster rate.

According to Valenzuela (1999), the subtractive schooling practice was particularly compromising to the nonimmigrant students who, unlike their Mexican-born counterparts, could not draw on previous experiences in Mexico to construct a perspective that helped them to endure this form of schooling, if not achieve some level of academic success. "Mexican immigration, coupled with the inability of mainstream society to notice differences between immigrants and natives, complicates the situation of Mexican Americans. In many respects, Mexican immigrants are racialized, so too are Mexican Americans" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 52). Valenzuela (1999) urged educators to espouse a pedagogical caring perspective and conceptualize students' cultures, communities, and identities in order to improve the academic achievement of both Mexican-descent students and recently immigrated students.

In support of this argument, Gonzalez et al. (2005) believed that Mexican American students can succeed if their teachers utilize their home and community resources. They tested their conjecture by using different research approaches that incorporated anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and education. By documenting the information gathered from the Arizona community via interviews and ethnographical observation within the community, the researchers were able to document that the families' knowledge (which the schools did not know about) could be used to teach the different academic skills. The immigrant families had firsthand knowledge about mining, agriculture, economics, household management, science, religion, and medicine. These rich resources could be tapped into by the students' teachers by utilizing social networks and exchange of information.

Additional authors have stressed that the interpersonal relationships, emotional, and motivational climate of the home are important indicators of the academic success of English language learners. Although Delgado-Gaitan (1992) did not focus on the different generations that exist within the Mexican American subgroup, her research concluded that Mexican American parents value education. The contention of this research study was the following: If Mexican Americans value education, why are students not making adequate progress? In addition to the cognitive dissonance of having second and third generation Mexican American students under achieve compared to the immigrant and first generation students, if Mexican American parents value education why are students not making greater academic progress? It is that question that motivates this research study as well. By capturing the voices of the Mexican American

and documenting their perceptions, I can further expand the topic of the importance of education in the Mexican American community.

In order to continue to explore Delgado-Gaitan's (1992) conclusions about the Mexican Americans' value for education, we will now turn to a study by Mena (2011). This is a more current study about the home-based practices of Latino/a parents who promote persistence in education. Mena surveyed a total of 137 Latino/a adolescents in the 9th grade. She utilized the Educational Parental Encouragement Scale-Modified to assess students' perceptions of their parents' educational support and encouragement. The importance of this study was that Mena's results yielded parental involvement activities that are not observable to the school system but that helped the Latino/a students stay focused on their studies. Some of these practices include educational encouragement, monitoring, and support.

Educational opportunity is proportional to who is effectuating the teaching and that is why a research study about the perceived connections that third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region are making with their multi-generational student population was important. Mexican American students of every generation need to have culturally connected teachers who care. Mexican Americans value education and still believe that education leads to success. Delgado-Gaitan's (1992) study was about the importance of education to Mexican American families. The author presented different families within the household setting, and the author interviewed the parents in order to learn more about the family's role in the children's education. Topics like parental socialization, transmission of beliefs, values

and experiences from parent to child and how these different beliefs, values, and experiences are imbedded with the broader cultural systems like the family, church, school, the neighborhood, and parents' workplace were identified and discussed.

But we need to find out more information about the teachers' perceptions. Yoon (2008) examined regular classroom teachers' views of their roles with regard to English language learners and the relationships between their teaching approaches and the students' reactions and positioning of themselves in the classrooms. Yoon (2008) examined regular classroom teachers' views of their roles with regard to English language learners and the relationship between their teaching approaches and the students' reactions and positioning of themselves in the classroom. The study focused on three important behaviors: (a) dynamics of classrooms, (b) how teachers interact with English language learners, and (c) how teachers offer or limit opportunities for English language learners to participate. The study also focused on classroom dynamics, teachers' interactions with ELL's, and the existence of or lack of opportunities for ELL's to participate in classroom discussions that were provided by the teachers.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Storytelling/Testimonios</h3>

There are two basic reasons to tell a personal narrative: (a) one is to use a story as a means of psychic self-preservation, and (b) the other is a means of lessening the subordination (Delgado Bernal, 1998b). Critical race theorists recommended for dominant group members to listen to the oppressed groups' stories as a means to increase their understanding and change the normalized practices that oppress. "Reality is not fixed, not a given (Solórzano, 1998). It is constructed through conversations and

our lives together" (Delgado Bernal, 1998b, p. 12). Delgado (1989) explained the process of counter storytelling as the act of participating in creating what we see is the very act of describing it: "Narrative habits, patterns or seeing, shape what we see and that to which we aspire" (p. 2).

Diverse stories can exist to describe one single event depending on who is describing the event. Some storytellers use tactics as forceful as repeated storytelling that can perpetuate a particular view of reality. In an article by Fernandez (2002), Latino students were surveyed and observed in order to obtain a better sense of how contemporary urban public schooling fails Latino students. The researcher used a critical lens and her methodology was interpreting a story or a testimonio. Fernandez (2002) stated that "most qualitative researchers agree that all research is subjective and that the researcher's subjectivity enters any research endeavor" (p. 49). The research work that Fernandez (2002) published focused on dysconscious and conscious racism of mainstream school teachers and administrators. Furthermore, it linked storytelling to a way that Latino students could cope with their racialized identity and society. In this study about the third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region, teachers were given an opportunity to tell their stories about their home, family, and school environment.

South Texas Borderland Region Identity

The identity and socio-political history of the South Texas borderland region Mexican American teachers and students and its relationship to school performance was analyzed by this current research study. These socio-political histories of the South

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Texas borderlands served as a framework for understanding the current dominant social portrayal and treatment of Mexican immigrants and their descendants in the United States, particularly inside the institutions such as schools. Coming to terms with the responsibility of educating the future generations of English language learners in the South Texas borderlands region requires the personal and intentional, community, and culturally based commitment of each pre-service educator. Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side-by-side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement form object to subject – the liberated voice (Hooks, 1989, p. 9).

Latino Teacher Challenges

According to Phillips and Nava (2011), "the good Latino/a teacher is one who nurtures bicultural identity and voice, actively supports Latino/a families and cultural communities, and works to grow future Latino/a political leaders through the work of advocacy" (p. 75). In order for an individual to become the good Latino/a, he or she must acknowledge his or her own bicultural experience and be able to understand oppression and, therefore, is willing to become a role model within the normalizing conventions of the university or the school district. However, pre-service educators willing to participate in this process of subjecting themselves to the normalizing process can also begin to understand that internalizing the normalizing practices does not mean that they must abandon their own identity, especially due to the fact that English

language learners need teachers who are culturally responsive and embrace their heritage (Lopez, 2011; Phillips & Nava, 2011).

To support the argument that the degree to which individual Latino teachers embrace their culture varies. Gomez, Rodriguez, and Vonzell (2008) interviewed three male Latino teachers and used life history methods to investigate family, school, university, and teacher education experiences of these three male Latino teacher candidates. Gomez et al. offered suggestions on how teachers can be more responsive to prospective male elementary teachers and teacher candidates. An additional suggestion was to have Latino students succeed by mirroring the ethnic, cultural, and language background of their teachers. Some of the additional topics explored were that prospective Latino teacher candidates usually deal with conflicting feelings of cultural negation and/or negotiation as well as values due to family obligations or school/study requirements.

The current research question was organized so that the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers could be captured to inform the researcher what the teachers think are the connections they are making with their students. The research also identified why the teachers think that they have difficulties making progress in their students' academic achievement. The relevance of this topic was associated with "the present shortage of teachers who culturally and linguistically match the increasing United States school-age population of Latino/as" (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011, p. 127). This topic was relevant for the improvement of the educationally unsuccessful Mexican American students of the South Texas borderlands. Nieto (1994) pointed out that it is too

convenient for some educators to fall back on deficit theories and continue to blame the students rather than focus on the institutional policies and practices that promulgate oppression.

Discussions about the difference between overt and covert racism are important to develop within the educational system where Latino students are being educated. Lopez (2003) explained the issue of colorblindness and how some individuals presently believe that racism is personal as opposed to systemic and endemic. Lopez called for action-based educational leadership preparation programs that change with the times. These preparation programs have to enlist demographically proportioned school leaders who are accountable for ensuring that the educational needs of the students of color are met. Lopez (2003) stated that the difference between yesterday's and today's racism is that presently racism is mostly normal and endemic.

The individual Latino students' perspectives were documented by Katz (1999). Katz (1999) captured the Latino students' perceptions of their schooling experiences before they actually dropped out of school. Katz's (1999) study also examined how teachers' attitudes and practices that Latino students perceived as racist were linked to structural conditions within the schools that went beyond the responsibilities of the individual teachers. The term push-out was used instead of dropout. Dropout is defined as a conscious choice on the part of the students because they feel discriminated against and excluded. Push-out is defined as putting the responsibility of keeping students interested and motivated to attend school on the schools and schooling in the United States. This was an excellent research study because Katz explored the relationship from

both the students' and the teachers' perspectives and thus considered the contradictions inherent in those relationships. It was documented in this study that the essentials of a productive teacher are good student relationships and high expectations mixed with caring expectations.

How do other Latino students feel about their schooling expectations, and what are the challenges that Latino teachers at large face? Fergus' (2009) study focused on how Mexican and Puerto Rican students defined their own racial/ethnic identification and how they perceived that others defined them. In addition, the researcher also narrated the personal stories of several Mexican and Puerto Rican students and how these students explained how they perceived the limited academic opportunities that they had based on the social group to which they belonged. In addition to social groups, the researchers also looked at skin color. The three types of skin colors that they studied were white or fair skin tone, reddish brown to olive skin tone, and light brown to dark brown skin tone. The researcher focused on second and third generation immigrant students because of the already established immigrant research that has established the adaptation process of first generation immigrants as distinct from the second and third generations.

The Latino population is multi-dimensional. Skerry's (2000) study contained the definitions for assimilation according to Salins. Salins (as cited in Skerry, 2000) proposed three one-dimensional premises: (a) immigrants need to learn and adopt English, (b) adopt a Protestant work ethic, and (c) take pride in American identity. According to Salins (as cited in Skerry, 2000), Americans need to comprehend that

assimilation is not irreversible and one dimensional. Immigrants who are first, second, or third generation all have different levels of cultural identities and levels of acculturation that reflect that all immigrants are different.

The differences that exist within the Latino population are the challenges that Latino teachers have on a day-to-day basis. Teacher ethnicity alone does not contribute to student achievement (Lopez, 2011). Their behaviors and understanding of the students of color does (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In support of this idea, Valverde and Scribner (2001) provided two types of information regarding English language learners: (a) probable causes that produce the low and underachievement of Latino students and (b) actions that school leaders can take to increase the achievement of Latino students. The authors proposed that some of the possible causes for the achievement gap of Latino students in schools are: (a) less qualified teachers, (b) fewer expandable resources per students, (c) lowered expectations for student achievement, (d) more and harsher discipline (a possible reflection of racial stereotypes), (e) mismatch between school and home culture, (f) high mobility rate of students and teachers, and (g) high SES. Possible solutions are: (a) increase time on task; (b) monitor increased instructional time; (c) increase volunteers and Saturday schooling; (d) increase tutorial assistance; and (e) increase literacy, formal study groups, and organization. This was an important research study because it specifically deals with the loss of connections between the educators and their students.

Mexican American Teacher Challenges

The Mexican American South Texas borderlands region people have been victims of overt and covert racism. According to Súarez-Orozco and Súarez-Orozco (2009), Mexican immigrants are the most segregated ethnic group within the educational system. The strongest factor in these students' lives compared to their non-immigrant classmates is their strong family structure that provides secure foundations together with strong work orientation and fosters a sense of personal and social responsibility (Crosnoe, 2005a).

The cultural challenges that the present day educators are facing today are diverse. For example, Mexican American teachers can be first, second, or third generation and beyond and their students can be first generation immigrants, second generation, or third generation and beyond. However, although the students and their teachers might share the same race and ethnicity, they could possibly be worlds apart due to their social economic status, conscious or unconscious reality, and prejudices, therefore, perpetuating the value conflicts between students and teachers.

Reyes and Valencia (1993) presented a historical progression of the landmark educational policies that have marked our American history, and the authors proposed that the current educational policies are continuing to make the same educational assumptions of previous years and generations. These assumptions do not help policymakers make effective policy changes aimed at changing the prospective for students of color. The years in their research review were 1920-1990, and the general assumptions that Reyes and Valencia (1993) explained are the following: (a) schools are

marketplaces – under this assumption we have the tax rates, property poor districts, and competition; (b) schools need limited change – under this assumption is making things harder for teachers and students, high-stake testing; (c) students are homogeneous in that one program fits all approach; (d) schools are homogeneous; and (e) schools are economically uniform.

This process of racial classifications and historical trajectory of navigating through two different social worlds began in the late 1960's. Ramirez (1968) presented a historical context regarding the attitudes of Mexican American students regarding their education in 1968. The 1968 study conducted by Ramirez is pertinent literature to this research study because through thorough review of the current research as well as the past research regarding the same topic, research studies indicate that although some academic progress has been made and that classroom teachers are still struggling to increase the academic achievement of students of color.

The single most important factor that has contributed to the academic success of Mexican American students is self-motivation and the desire to change their personal future. In a research study conducted by Demos (1962), the findings suggested that Mexican American students had value conflicts toward their Anglo middle-class teachers and administrators. Presently, the Mexican American students' value conflicts continue, although there has been an increase in teachers of color in some communities. The question is why are these value conflicts still so evident in today's classrooms?

In the 1960's Mexican American students were thought to be traitors if they abandoned their Mexican culture and became assimilated; others were considered as less

macho if they did not defend their honor in front of an Anglo teacher. Female students were not understood by their gym teachers when they refused to suit-out for gym class. The issue in the 1960's was that the teachers were predominately White. So the question would be why are the students of color still not making the necessary academic progress, if their teachers share the same ethnicity? The answer is not a simple one because as research findings suggest (Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001; Lopez, 2011), the degree to which a teacher of color embraces his/her ethnicity will impact student achievement.

In order for Mexican American teachers to obtain greater academic success from Mexican American students, Losey (1995) proposed that they conduct a self-analysis and understand their social and political positions. Losey (1995) identified three possible approaches that teachers working with Mexican American students could implement. The approaches are collaborative learning, acceptance of students' cultural difference and language use, and presentation of challenging material related to student interests. Losey (as cited in Vygotsky, 1978) presented the Vygotskian learning process of "zone of proximial" development, otherwise explained as "the distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

The more familiar with school-type activities and behavior a student is, the less likely he/she is sanctioned by a teacher. In addition, the study also explored home-school cultural mismatch and how that affects Mexican American students' poor academic success. Losey (1995) urged future research in the classroom interaction of Mexican Americans' needs to include the following practices: (a) study real interaction in a

variety of social contexts through direct observation, (b) study both the immediate social context and the broader social situation in which the interaction occurs, (c) allow categories for data analysis to emerge naturally from the data, (d) provide complete descriptions of the population studied, and (e) provide comparison groups.

Third Generation Mexican American Students and Teachers

In 1995, Solórzano and Solórzano posted the question: "How do we explain the low educational achievement and attainment of Chicano students at the elementary and secondary level?" (p. 294). In 2005, Gandara, Horn, and Orfield once more discussed the growing urgency to address the increasing number of minority non-White students in the state of California, the "state with world's sixth largest economy where now the majority of the students in the educational pipeline are precisely the students who have historically had the least access to higher education" (p. 256). As the number of Mexican American and other non-White minority students increase, critical decisions that will impact the whole nation need to be made. Gandara et al. (2005) posited that there is "powerful evidence across the world that higher education is critical to the competitiveness and creativity of society, and the historic advantage of the United States is rapidly deteriorating in terms of students completing postsecondary education" (p. 260). Presently, Oh and Cooc (2011) and Rumbaut and Komaie (2010) continued to post the same concern regarding the quality of the education programs and teachers that the immigrant, first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students had in order to prepare them for the competitive society in which they lived.

Murgia and Telles (1996) presented a strong argument regarding the degree of education that Mexican Americans achieve based on of their skin color. "Phenotype, in particular skin color, acts as a sorting mechanism: lighter skinned people are advantaged over darker skinned people in schooling, household income, and occupational prestige" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 48). The data used for this study were obtained from the National Chicano Survey conducted in 1979 by the University of Michigan. A total of 11,000 households were screened in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas and only 1,300 identified themselves as Mexican Americans; therefore, only 931 interviews were conducted. The topics for the interviews were educational differences by phenotype and also included gender, generation (first, second, or third), education, religion, rural or urban background as well as dominant language. Murgia's 1996 study was important because it has been the only research study that this researcher has been able to find that discusses a study conducted about third generation Mexican Americans and their educational attainment.

Another research study that was conducted in 1988 by Jorge Chapa and is entitled, *The Question of Mexican American Assimilation: Socioeconomic Parity or Underclass Formation* further supports the question about the underachievement of third generation Mexican Americans. This was an important discovery because this research question relates to the third generation Mexican American teachers and their perceptions about whether they see themselves as equal to the general population based on economics. Or perhaps as it is this researcher's goal, there are additional pertinent factors that can be revealed by documenting the third generation and beyond South

Texas teachers' perceptions of the connections that they believe to be making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students.

As Parker and Villalpando (2007) explored the central themes of critical race theory centrality of race, the challenge of dominant ideology, a commitment of social justice and praxis, centrality of experiential knowledge, and finally a historical context and interdisciplinary perspective, this current research study examined the central themes of critical race theory to document the voices of the Southwest borderlands region people, specifically that of the third generation and beyond Mexican American teachers and their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students living in the South Texas borderlands region.

Quintana and Vera's (1999) research study was also relevant because it presented generational studies of first, second, and third generation Mexican American students and their developmental socialization and acceptance or denial of their ethnic heritage between the second and sixth grades. A total of 47 students participated: 22 second grade students and 25 sixth grade students; 11 boys and girls in second grade and 13 boys and 12 girls in sixth grade total. Some of the factors identified by the authors were attributed to the Mexican American's students' enculturation were: (a) parental socialization, (b) parental use of Spanish, and (c) parental involvement with Mexican and Mexican American culture. "Ethnic and racial identity is theorized to be a psychosocial buffer on self-protective strategy for coping with prejudice, discrimination, and stigmatization" (Cross, as cited in Quintana & Vera, 1999, p. 389). Included in the research findings was a comparison between second grade children and sixth grade students who demonstrated

a more advanced level of understanding of ethnic prejudice. Overall, older children tended to endorse larger degrees of ethnic differences, and in addition to knowledge of differences, this endorsement may be associated with more advanced understanding of the ethnic prejudice.

Third Generation Mexican American Teachers in the South Texas Borderlands

The voices of the South Texas borderland teachers informed this research study. "Many third-generation Mexican Americans live between Mexican and American social worlds. They display 'flexible ethnicity,' which is the ability to navigate two different social worlds, that is mainstream U.S. culture and a Mexican-oriented community" (Vasquez, 2010, p. 58). In attempt to explain the psyche of those on the border, Anzaldúa (1987) explained that many on the border develop *la facultad*:

> the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant "sensing," a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is behind which feelings reside/hide. (p. 60)

Anzaldúa (1987) presented the border as a "third country" whose history has been told on Anglocentric terms, which she attempts to disrupt through feminist analysis and issues. The author stated that the "Chicanos straddle the borderlands, one side of the Chicanos is constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side they hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that they forget their language" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 62). This "ambiguity is what makes the borderlands peoples' psyche flexible and conflicted," according to Anzaldúa (1987, p. 79). The voices of the borderlands

people are documented by Anzaldúa (1987) who discouraged "Western claims that Indians are incapable of rationale thought and higher consciousness" (p. 59).

Similarly, Galindo (1996) urged researchers to conduct more research of Latina teachers that was biographical in nature. Galindo (1996) defined bridging identity as a linking of past biographical experiences with the current occupational role. In terms of Chicana teachers, Galindo described how three Chicana teachers in the Southwest define their professional role in light of their cultural minority background. Furthermore, Galindo's findings are important to this research study because it presents a case study of Chicana teachers in the Southwest and expands on the topic of teacher preparation programs. Such programs need to develop avenues that provide minority teacher candidates an opportunity to utilize their biographical experiences and to connect their knowledge and experiences with their beginning teacher role identities. Galindo's (1996) study was very useful for this current research study because it connected the research question's premise of how third generation and beyond Mexican American teachers perceive their cultural connections with their Mexican American students.

Padilla and Gonzalez's (2001) research study was important because it helps amplify the data gathered from the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers and why they believe that their first, second, third generation, and beyond students are not academically successful. In this research study, Padilla and Gonzalez examined the relationship between bilingual education/ESL instruction and school performance of both U.S. born and Mexican-born youth. The authors reiterate that

according to the acculturation model, Mexican American students should be demonstrating greater academic attainment with each successive generation.

However, the contrary is true. Similar research studies results indicate that immigrant students are outperforming the third and later generation students (Nielsen & Fernandez, 1981). Therefore, by conducting this research study and gathering the third generation Mexican American teacher perceptions, an academic contribution can be made and educators can begin to understand why third and later generation students are not outperforming their first and second generation counterparts.

Practical Advice for Policymakers and School Administrators

The diversity and educational needs of the Mexican American students living in the South Texas borderlands region needs to be understood in order to increase their academic success. A commonly suggested remedy for the low achievement and high dropout rates of Latino/a students is preparing a greater pool of Latino/a teachers with whom the students can relate (Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003). Together with increasing the pool of Latino/a teachers, Gomez and Rodriguez (2011) advocate for "institutions that prepare teachers to focus on the strengths, knowledge, and skills that Latino/a teacher candidates bring to teacher education and work to improve their experiences on campus and in their coursework" (p. 128).

Policymakers do not understand that each campus is different. Researchers like Nieto (2005), Oh and Cooc (2011), Padilla (2006), and Valenzuela (1999) pointed out that this assumption could not be further from the truth; school facilities are all different as well as the internal structures of the schools. Their findings are important because

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they point out the consequences for Latinos, if policymakers continue to operate and formulate school policies with the same assumptions. Policymakers need to begin looking at the diversity that exists within the Latino population in order to propose policy changes that address the unique needs of the students within the Latino population. The connection that can be made between what previous research studies are suggesting and the current research study is that the perceptions' of third generation Mexican American teachers, working the South Texas borderlands region, need to be captured in order to assist educational leaders and policymakers understand the South Texas borderlands region and its diversity.

Soung, Holloway, Li, and Bempechat (2008) focused on the perceptions of Mexican American students and what it means to be good students and how these perceptions differentiated the low achievers from the high achievers. The researchers studied teacher expectancy effects. Their findings indicated the way teachers perceive their students and how they make instructional decisions, in addition to the judgments about their students' future achievements, which significantly affects students. Teachers need to understand the students' perspectives on teachers' expectations and how schools manage to support or limit students. The overall findings were that Mexican American students' tendency to focus on effort and downplay ability can be closely associated to their ethnic background. In addition, researchers concluded that ample evidence exists to suggest that schooling expectations are socially constructed through implicit and explicit classroom experiences. Their study is important for this research study because it

focuses on how the bilingual teachers' perceptions affect the academic success of Mexican American students.

Nieto (2005) presented a historical overview of both of the most emergent theories regarding the low academic achievement of students of color as well as the researchers who have proposed such theories. Some examples are:

1. In the 1960's, genetic and cultural inferiority, Arthur Jensen; early deficit theory researcher, William Ryan; and at-risk student labeling, Catherine Banks.

2. In the 1970's, cultural incompatibility theory, Baratz and Baratz.

3. In the 1980's, cultural relevant teaching, Katherine Au, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Geneva Gay's definition of culturally responsive teaching.

In addition, Nieto (2005) also explained Ogbu's 1987 theory of voluntary and involuntary immigrants. In summary, the new perspectives on how to be more successful in obtaining the greatest academic results from students of colors suggest the following: (a) desegregation, (b) bilingual education programs that are commensurate to the English language acquisition level of each student, and (c) multicultural education.

Scribner and Scribner (2001) summarized the practices of highly effective schools. The three identified practices of highly effective schools according to Scribner and Scribner (2001) are: (a) highly excited teachers who believe in high expectations, (b) teachers who empower students for their own learning, and (c) teachers who ignore the barriers of deficit thinking. In addition, highly effective schools implement the following practices: (a) address community and family involvement, (b) build a collaborative

school governance, (c) connect curriculum and instructional techniques to students'

funds of knowledge and cultural backgrounds, and (d) use advocacy-oriented assessment

practices that hold educators accountable for their instructional strategies and for the

impact they have on Mexican American learners (Scribner & Scribner, 2001).

Valencia (2000) asserted that the contemporary widespread school failure of

many African American and Mexican American students in Texas public schools is

strongly connected to long standing systematic public school inequalities and the

subsequent limited opportunities to learn. Valencia presented the framework to

understand the historical and contemporary linkages to the academic failure of students

of color. He also discussed two major inequalities: segregation and substandard teachers.

The study concluded that students of color in Texas schooling experiences are plagued

by the following factors that are not prevalent with their White peers: being taught by

noncertified teachers, being retained, failing standardized assessments like TAKS, being

enrolled in campuses with less favorable accountability ratings, and dropping out of

school. This was an important study because educators working with students of color

had to understand that their teaching directly impacts the success of students of color.

Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco's (2009) essay was written with the purpose

of presenting President Obama with the most important challenges facing his

administration related to the educational needs of Latino and other immigrant children in

the United States. The authors called on President Obama's administration to focus on

the importance of the growing Latino population that will be 30% of the nation's

population by the year 2050 according to the U.S. Census Bureau's projection in 2008.

Social factors affecting the Latino population are immigration, poor academic achievement, migration, economic instability, deportation, broken homes due to deportations, and poverty. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco's (2009) essay was important because it presented policy recommendations suggested to the Obama administration, e.g., (a) creating innovative ways of working with the Latino population, (b) understanding its diversity and not treating the diverse student population as one general population (c) finding ways to educate the Latino population without denying their heritage, and finally (d) authorizing the DREAM ACT.

The DREAM Act

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors popularly known as the DREAM Act was re-authorized in June 2012 by President Obama. The children of undocumented immigrants who did not know any other country but the United States were granted the opportunity to legalize their status in the United States by President Barack Obama. President Obama went on to state that these children were American in their heart, in their minds, in every single way but one: on paper (Obama, 2012). The reauthorization of the DREAM Act will benefit approximately 1.7 million young persons who qualify if they entered the United States before their sixteenth birthday, had not reached the age of thirty-one by June 15, 2012, have not committed a felony or a series of misdemeanors, and have received a high school diploma, continue to work toward a high school diploma, or have served in the U.S. military (Passel & Lopez, 2012).

Currently, the debates in Washington, D.C. continue to focus on the Latino immigrant. The images that we see on television suggest that the only immigrants that will benefit from an immigration reform bill and the re-authorization of the DREAM Act are those that jump the Texas-Mexico border gate or swim across the Rio Grande. In reality, the faces of the undocumented immigrants are multi-national. Immigrants can be in the United States illegally from different and many more countries. But once again, the focus is on the Latino people. There is fear of an influx of immigrants if a proposed immigration bill legalizes the undocumented immigrant. Why are policymakers not properly portraying the immigrant whether they are documented or not. Let us begin by showing their multi-national faces. They are not all Latinos.

Lack of academic opportunities according to Gandara's (1986) article was what has contributed to the shortage of Chicano students' participation in higher education. The article reviewed the under-education of California Chicanos between the years 1980-1984. Gandara also raised the idea of having more Chicano faculty members in order to mentor young Mexican American or Chicano students who are entering the universities. Gandara focused the readers' attention to the fact that if the current trends continue, the U.S. failing economy will be unable to sustain the quality of life that Americans have become accustomed to. According to Gandara, the premise for the aforementioned argument was that the Chicano student population continues to increase, and they are currently one out of every four students who attend the nation's public schools. The notion of the current trends remaining the same challenge the "politics of self-interest," which can be clearly aligned to the Critical Race Theory tenet of interest

convergence that purports that the majority group tolerates advances for racial justice only when it suits its interest to do so (Bell, 2004). Gandara believed that only when the redistribution of educational opportunity is seen as a benefit to the business interests of the United States will the policy practices change.

Assimilation is a Process and Does Not Follow a Straight Line

So what happens to immigrants and their children? Padilla (2006) presented the topic of assimilation as it relates to new immigrants. According to Padilla, new immigrants are not assimilating because of social barriers like racism and/or because they simply do not want to do so. The effects that the newcomers' choice to assimilate or not to assimilate has at the macro level of American society are discussed at length. For example, topics such as dominant language, language spoken at home, ethnic identification, generational identification, economic status, and child-rearing practices are explained by Padilla (2006) as being important factors in determining whether an immigrant is successful in America.

The level of ethnic maturity that an immigrant can achieve will determine if an immigrant will become a "marginal person" (Park, 1928) or a "bicultural person" (Aellan & Lambert, 1969). This study was important to this current research study because Padilla (2006) presented the status of first, second, third generation, and beyond students and their characteristics. This article can be viewed as a good starting point for the current research study because the topics of "cultural awareness" or the knowledge that a person possesses of his or her culture (Padilla, 1980) and "ethnic loyalty" or the behavioral component of how a person chooses to speak, express their ethnic heritage,

and leisure activities (Padilla, 1980) are discussed. These topics are found to decrease

between the first and second generation and continue to decrease so that by the fourth

generation, there is little or no "cultural awareness" or "ethnic loyalty." This is similar to

the proposition of segmented assimilation, meaning that "immigrant students residing in

poor inner-cities and attending disadvantaged schools tend to adapt, over time, to the

norms of their native-born peers" (Kalogrides, 2009, p. 160). The "immigrants residing

in poor inner-cities and adopting norms of their native born peers may lead to lower

educational aspirations and other unfavorable outcomes" (Kalogrides, 2009, p. 160).

These factors are important to this research study because the premise for this

research study was to explore the connections or gaps that exist between the South Texas

borderlands region Mexican American teachers and their first, second, third generation,

and beyond Mexican American students in order to positively impact their academic

achievement. One of the remedies to counter segmented assimilation is for immigrant

parents to increase the educational achievement of their children by maintaining close

bonds with their children and strengthening the family ties (Kao & Tienda, 1995).

Even when students face the psychosocial stressors like being undocumented,

social and economic hardships, as well as low parental education, resilient immigrant

students will use their available personal and environmental resources to reach academic

success (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009). Therefore, what these

researchers concluded was that

> the amount of time in which students are influenced by their school environments
> from kindergarten to 12th grade, are the primary reasons for strengthening the
> schools' efforts to increase the immigrant students' resilience by providing
> volunteer activities and extracurricular opportunities. (Perez et al., 2009, p. 174)

Teacher Preparation Programs

For the purpose of identifying the strategies used to prepare pre-service educators, Bustos Flores et al. (2010) proposed the use of a diagnostic instrument that they called ASI SOY, short for Academic Self-Identity: Self-Observation Yearly: "This is who I am." This "diagnostic instrument examines the psychosocial factors that could facilitate higher education academic success and the preparation of Latino teacher candidates and the predisposition of all teacher candidates towards diversity" (Bustos Flores et al., 2010, p. 32). Although this diagnostic instrument is not a foolproof option that guarantees the future success of a pre-service teacher, the authors believe that it could strengthen the capacity of teacher preparation programs (Bustos Flores et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Coady et al. (2011) have established that based on the literature regarding pre-service educators working with English language learners, there are three interrelated dimensions that can inform the process of preparing effective pre-service educators. The three interrelated dimensions are: "(a) teacher preparation, background, and experience; (b) teacher knowledge of teaching and learning processes with ELL's; and (c) teachers' knowledge of their ELL students" (Coady et al., 2011, p. 225). As the knowledge regarding how to better prepare pre-service educators working with ELL students continues to increase, there is still a need to identify specialized content knowledge and professional competencies needed to work with ELL's effectively in diverse classrooms and contexts (Bustos Flores et al., 2010; Coady et al., 2011).

Ideological clarity, social class differences, and language differences are changing commonly held beliefs about minorities. According to Bustos Flores (2001), bilingual educators are reporting different information in surveys instead of actual reality. Bustos Flores (2001) cited lack of Mexican American students' academic success to teachers having certain perceptions and assumptions about how children learn, specifically about language and bilingual education teachers having faulty assumptions about bilingual students' ability to learn. The implications of this research study are that some bilingual teachers report different information from what is the reality in their classrooms. This research study looked at how pre-service educators' programs are directing pre-service teachers to follow pre-established "best practices" without actually taking into consideration their conscious or unconscious perceptions or ideologies of working with English language learners. Bustos Flores concluded that the position of bilingual teachers' education is socially constructed and only when the bilingual teacher has a conscious, shared ethnic identity and recognizes the needs of the bilingual learners are these learners successful. These findings are important to this current research study because the study proposes to capture the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers and how their conscious or subconscious beliefs connect with their (shared ethnic) students or if they recognize their academic needs.

Additional research work has been conducted by Bustos Flores (2001) and Holleran (2003b) in larger metropolitan areas but not specifically in the South Texas borderlands region. As mentioned before, Bustos Flores (2001) captured teacher behavior and attitudes toward bilingualism, cognition, and bilingual education. A total of

176 teachers were surveyed in the San Antonio, Texas, school districts. Although, a variety of responses were captured via the surveys, Bustos Flores concluded that bilingual teachers' beliefs about bilingual education are influenced by their experiences, specifically professional teaching experiences. Bilingual teachers' behavior and attitudes toward bilingualism, cognition, and bilingual education have been studied by researchers like Bartolomé (2004), Black (2005), Bustos Flores (2001), Bustos Flores and Riojas Clark (2001), Crosnoe (2005a), Nieto (1994), Padilla (2006), Reyes and Valencia (1993), Rueda and Garcia (1996), Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2009), and Valencia and Black (2002).

The Bustos Flores (2001) study is relevant to this current research study because Bustos Flores captured the bilingual teachers' perceptions via questionnaires and voluntary participation. The 2001 survey was conducted in San Antonio, Texas, which is also a community with a substantive Mexican American population of varied generational backgrounds and assimilation levels. Therefore, this allows this current researcher to expand on the idea of collecting Mexican American teacher perceptions but especially those who live in the South Texas borderlands region and are third generation and beyond Mexican American teachers.

The bilingual teachers' perceptions were captured by Bustos Flores and Riojas Clark (2001) in their study about how bilingual teachers identify themselves ethnically and what their self-conceptualizations are? The authors researched the possibility of a "within group" difference in how Latino teachers identify themselves. According to the authors, the important question to answer is, "Simply because teachers share the same

ethnicity with their students, will these teachers intuitively know how to deal with their needs?" (Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001, p. 71). The researchers contended the answer is no and, therefore, urge the institutions of higher education to better prepare new teachers to deal with the issues concerning language minority students (Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001). Furthermore, the authors also associated and presented the assumption that there is a correlation between how Latino teachers perceive themselves and how they relate to their Latino students. Although, "the study focused on the relation of a strong ethnic identity to a positive teacher self-concept and found varying ties (but no consistent link) between a strong ethnic identity and thinking positively about oneself as a teacher" (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011, p. 130).

Similarly, Bartolomé (2004) conducted research work with pre-service educators' programs and how these programs are forcing pre-service teachers to follow pre-established "best practices" without actually taking into consideration their conscious or unconscious perceptions or ideologies of working with English language learners. Ideological clarity, social class differences, and language differences are changing commonly held beliefs about minorities. Teachers are espousing a border crosser mentality (someone who will critically consider the positive cultural traits of the other and at same time is able to critique the discriminatory practices his/her culture that may be involved in the creation of the "cultural other") (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 109).

Bartolomé's (2004) study was conducted nationwide with approximately 40% minority pre-service education teachers (macro-level) and was important to this present research study that was conducted at a micro level in the South Texas borderlands.

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Bartolomé mentioned the social class differences between teachers and students can impact the student achievement positively or negatively depending on the level of connections that are made between teachers and students. The study also provided the researcher with ideas for an interview protocol with open-ended questions to elicit explanations, views, discussions, personal histories, and why the teachers became teachers (Appendix C). I believe that there is a lot of potential to work with new incoming teachers in present day teacher preparation programs by using culturally relevant practices.

Bilingual Education Studies

Lee and Oxelson (2006) contributed to the literature on the importance of teacher attitudes in the classroom by surveying a total of 69 teachers of English language learners in the state of California. Their purpose was to determine if teachers understood the importance of bilingualism and students' heritage in the classroom. In what seems to be an overwhelming pattern of results based on the survey responses, "the data suggests that unless teachers believe in the benefits of bilingualism and understand the adverse effects of heritage language loss, it is unlikely that the needs of heritage language learners will enter into the interest span of teachers" (Lee & Oxelson, 2006, p. 466). The implications of this recent study prompted the researchers to ponder about the extent to which teacher training shapes the attitudes of teachers, a question that the present case study plans to explore by capturing the perceptions of the connections that third generation Mexican American teachers working in the South Texas borderlands believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American

students. Another very important result that Lee and Oxelson captured was the pressure with which the teachers are working as a result of the testing mandates included in the No Child Left Behind polices. Teachers stated that they just do not have time to teach any other language but English since all the testing is done in English. Their study conclusively suggested that the teachers who were surveyed did not think it was their responsibility to maintain the students' native language.

Continuing with the need to understand bilingual education, Contreras and Valverde's (1994) research work was important to the present research study because it supported the premise that there is a current lack of ethnic consciousness by some educators who benefitted from the onset and resulting civil rights movement. The study was about the judicial initiatives and strategies that were necessary to bring about equal educational opportunities for students of color. Contreras and Valverde (1994) discussed the following topics in: "(a) improvement of educational experiences for Latinos; (b) desegregation of schools; (c) changing schools and finding financial allocations; (d) changing instructional approaches because of Title I bylaws, mandated magnet schools, and bilingual and multicultural education; and (e) first segregation case in Del Rio, Texas, in 1930" (p. 470).

Other researchers have explored the teachers' beliefs and how their beliefs affect their perceptions of students but specifically third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region. Rueda and Garcia's (1996) findings suggested differences in teachers' beliefs on two of the focus areas of the study: reading/literacy and assessment. The differences in teacher beliefs were in bilingual and

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special education teachers. The typical practitioner does not follow a standardized plan for instruction as was suggested by the surveys conducted by the researchers. A great variety of views exist among teachers regarding instruction and assessment. The researchers suggested more attention needs to be given to the realities of practice and how teachers integrate theoretical ideas with the everyday demands and constraints of teaching.

The daily demands that a teacher faces can curtail teacher and student relationships due to time constraints. However, productive teacher and student relationships were also studied by Karabenick and Clemens-Noda (2004) in their quantitative study in the form of a teacher survey. A total of 729 teachers in a Midwestern suburb were polled. The focus was on research-based professional development for teachers working with English language learners of different ethnic origins. The surveys were conducted to capture the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, practices and professional development needs related to working with English language learners. The results focused on overall trends, differences between teachers with some having positive attitudes versus some with less positive attitudes toward having efficacy in working with ELL's. Researchers found that teachers believe that the use of the native language in the home interferes with the acquisition of the second language, but the same teachers also believed it is possible to be equally proficient in two languages. The researchers interpreted this finding as a need to provide intensive professional development in second language acquisition.

English language learner teachers, who have subtractive teaching modalities were studied by Souto-Manning (2007), whose study further explained what students have to endure. The author narrated how Latino students have to divest their important social and cultural resources, which leaves them progressively vulnerable in the American education system. Souto-Manning (2007) also explained the idea of assimilation by examining the daily life of a Mexican family who is experiencing the process of assimilation and adapting to a new culture, language, and country. Some of the supporting literature for this article is as follows: Lambert (1990) who stated that according to his research of bilingual students, a widespread belief exists that the brains of bilingual students are less efficient because they have to store two languages. Valdés' (1996) research indicated that the children of immigrant parents tend to fail in very high numbers in the American school system. In summary, looking at students of color through a deficit lens means that these students of color are being blamed for not having or as missing the needed academic skills and background knowledge to be academically successful.

In order to assist the South Texas borderlands region, Mexican American teachers become sensitized with their first, second, or third generation and beyond students; they have to know their own perceptions of their Mexican American students well. Soung et al.'s (2008) findings indicated the way teachers perceive their students and make instructional decisions, in addition to the judgments about their students' future achievements that significantly affect the students. Teachers need to understand the students' perspectives on teachers' expectations and how schools manage to support

or limit students. The overall findings were that Mexican American students' tendency to focus on effort and downplay ability can be closely associated to their ethnic background. In addition, researchers concluded that ample evidence exists to suggest that schooling expectations are socially constructed through implicit and explicit classroom experiences. This study was important for this current research study because it focused on how the bilingual teachers' perceptions affect the academic success of Mexican American students.

Tan (2001) explained the theory of culture and cognitive development in terms of multicultural education as part of the bilingual education tenets as proposed by the following theorists: Bronfenbrenner (1989), Luria (1979), Moll (1990), and Vygotsky (1978). Tan argued that multicultural education increases the academic success of Mexican American students, increases school retention, and increases career aspirations. Schema theory indicates that learning is enhanced and facilitated when new concepts are connected to existing schemata in meaningful and personally relevant ways. Mexican American students, in this case study, were observed making meaningful connections, using culturally relevant tools and symbols that resulted in a higher degree of school enjoyment. This case study showed that students who perceive their school as supportive of their culture and personal identity are more likely to stay in school. This is an important case study to be used because it supports the educators' tenet of working with the students' affective domain, which is a component of bilingual education.

In addition to facing classrooms with teachers who do not understand the diverse academic and cultural needs of the students of color, students also face being labeled as

at-risk for failing. Crosnoe (2005a) deconstructed the at-risk labeling of students by presenting a person-centered approach. Crosnoe (2005a) identified four prototypes that can be used to identify Hispanic students. According to the author, these four prototypes are the: "(a) low achieving, (b) weakly oriented students, (c) the high achieving, and (d) strong oriented student prototypes" (p. 561). Students who have well-educated parents, both parents, and economic stability are usually the high achieving and strongly oriented students, according to the author. Crosnoe proposed that since his study was cross-sectional, its results cannot establish causal effects of school characteristics of students. Furthermore, Crosnoe conducted his study in a small private school with low SES levels and some Hispanics in the teaching staff. Therefore, Crosnoe warned that his study could only be considered as a starting point to begin looking at further studies and cannot be representative of schools with high enrollment of Hispanic students, high SES, and different ethnic teacher representation.

Culturally Relevant Practices

Guajardo, Guajardo, and del Carmen Casaperalta (2008) chronicled the life story of a group of people in a South Texas community. Their research methods included storytelling and interviewing to create narratives. The narratives honor the people's dignity and incorporate their voices to strengthen the cultural relevance of the context. The transformation of this community has been the career goal for both of these researchers, and this article clearly maximizes their roles as culturally relevant researchers.

Yoon (2008) also included the importance of culturally relevant teaching by examining two different types of teachers. The first type examined was the teacher as the "conductor," who helps students become academically strong, culturally competent, and sociopolitically critical (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The second type examined was the teacher who assumes the referral agent attitude and shifts responsibility to other teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This research study supports the present research study because Ladson-Billings' findings were aligned to the premise of the importance of the teachers' role in the demographically changing classrooms.

Yoon (2008) examined regular classroom teachers' view of their roles with regard to English language learners and the relationship between their teaching approaches and the students' reactions and positioning of themselves in the classroom. Yoon (2008) focused on three important behaviors: "(a) dynamics of classrooms, (b) how teachers interact with English language learners, and (c) how teachers offer or limit opportunities for English language learners to participate" (p. 196). The study also focused on classroom dynamics, teachers' interactions with ELL's, and the existence of or lack of opportunities for ELL's to participate in classroom discussions that were provided by the teachers. The researcher's guiding question was, "How do the teachers' pedagogical approaches relate to the English language learners' participatory action in the classroom?" Yoon (2008) used the theory of positioning as the conceptual framework for her study. Positioning is defined as the "study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and untestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 1).

Ladson-Billings (1995) also questioned how regular classroom teachers describe their roles with regard to English language learners. The author addressed research findings regarding teachers' views toward English language learners, their teaching approaches, and research about the way English language learners portray and position themselves in regular classes. Ladson-Billings also highlighted three major (previous) research findings: The Miller (2000) and the Norton (2000) study that suggested that learning may change as a function of the interrelationships due to social power dynamics and the Krashen (1982) study indicating affective filtering that explains that the main reason for students' anxiety, silence, and different positioning has to do with being outsiders in a regular classroom setting. Overall, the authors of the abovementioned studies contend that the interrelationships established between a teacher and his/her students is very powerful. In a study that is equally important to mention as it relates to the connections that teachers and their students make, Krahsen (1982) proposed the idea that teachers can intentionally or unintentionally position their students in a positive or in negative ways.

Duncan-Andrade (2005) emphasized the importance of creating a culturally responsive learning environment for students of diverse cultural backgrounds. The purpose of the culturally responsive environment was to empower Chicano students and give them a sense of power and pride. Duncan-Andrade's purpose was to question the U.S. policies and actions toward Mexican immigrants and their descendants. The premise for the suggestions given by Duncan-Andrade (2005) are founded on the contention that the true intentions of the U.S. policies and actions toward Mexican

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immigrants have been established in order to dominate and create a troubling

sociopolitical framework that has marginalized Mexican immigrants and their

descendants. Duncan-Andrade (2005) called for educators to abandon old deficit-

thinking models and reform the curriculum with critical educational models that accept

the students' differences and perceptions of their realities.

Culturally relevant research was relevant to the improvement of the South Texas

borderlands region people. Crosnoe et al.'s (2004a) basic premise and big idea was that

"based on a nationally representative panel data, the stronger the intergenerational

bonding in school between students and teachers, the higher the academic achievement,

especially for Hispanic girls" (p. 60). This research study was important to this current

research study because its research topic was specifically looking at the intergenerational

connections and possibly gaps between the connections that third generation Mexican

American teachers think that they are making with their first, second, third generation,

and beyond Mexican American students.

Some of the other ideas presented in the study (Crosnoe et al., 2004a) include: (a)

socio-emotional adjustment factors like lack of racial-ethnic matching between student

body and teachers, (b) the Hirschi (1969) Social Bond theory, (c) the question of how

race and ethnicity moderate the academic significance of social integration in schools

and (d) whether the protective role of student-teacher relationships for academic

achievement and disciplinary problems is more important for African Americans and

Hispanics American students or for Whites. Crosnoe et al. (2004a) also looked at the

educational institution factors like (school structure, composition, and climate). Crosnoe

et al.'s (2004a) findings indicated that "students made better grades when they had positive views of their teachers, but this was true in the Hispanic American girls and most Whites more than the Hispanic American boys" (p. 68).

Changing Demographics of the Southwest

Crosnoe's (2005b) study was conducted to highlight the overrepresentation of children from Mexican immigrant families in challenging schools. The schools that are faced with high mobility, low academic achievement, and poorly prepared educators are a function of class segregation rather than segregation according to race/ethnicity according to Crosnoe's (2005b) study. Crosnoe conducted a national study of kindergarten students to document the students' school socialization factors like: school climate, community setting, and school safety. Crosnoe (2005b) concluded that the children of immigrant families possess a high degree of resilience and surpass the academic success of their acculturated Mexican American peers and the school's location or context did not affect them. Crosnoe's (2005b) study relates to the current research study because it also included research work with a historic overrepresentation of children from non-English speaking families, and it was very interesting to see if first-generation immigrant students who have third-generation Mexican American teachers were also as successful as the students in Crosnoe's (2005b) study.

Garcia and Cuellar (2006) reviewed pertinent demographic data that delineated the foundation of the rapidly changing demographics for the United States' public schools. This was a quantitative research study that explored the demographic changes that U.S. is experiencing. These are some of the highlights of the study:

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1. Minority enrollment as a proportion of total enrollment in elementary and secondary education rose from 24% in 1976 to 40% in 2000.

2. Total enrollment of Hispanics increased from 6.4% in 1976 to 12% in 1996, and the number of Hispanic students increased from almost 3 million in 1976 to more than 4.5 million in 2000, an increase of 52%.

3. Less than 30% of all children under six years of age were non-White; over 50% of the children in poverty were non-White.

4. Approximately 56% lived in racially isolated neighborhoods in 1966, 72% resided in such neighborhoods in 1998; 61% of these children lived in concentrations of poverty, and 20% are poor. (Garcia & Cuellar, 2006, pp. 2220-2221)

This Garcia and Cuellar (2006) study provided important historical demographic information that will inform the South Texas borderlands region research study. Overall, the minority student enrollment in public schools rose from 24% in 1976 to 40% in 2000 according to Garcia and Cuellar (2006). The researchers also highlighted the relationship between the English language learners' socio-economic status and their academic success. The English language learners in this study, 56% of whom were found to live in racially isolated neighbors in 1966, still resided in racially isolated neighborhoods at a higher percentage in 1988. Garcia and Cuellar reported that in 1988, 61% of English language learner students were found to live below the U.S. poverty line. Their study was important because it is recent, and the data can be used to further explore the relationship between racially isolated neighborhoods and Mexican American teachers traveling to these areas in order to teach these students and exploring the teachers' level of cultural intuition.

Cultural Identity Formation

Parra Cardona, Busby, and Wampler's (2004) purpose in this study was to introduce a comprehensive model of cultural identity formation, which indicates not only sociological but also psychological and relational dimensions of immigration. According to Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gallardo-Cooper (2002), the term Latino/a is more representative of people from Latin America who have indigenous roots, whereas the term Hispanic, which comes from Spain, excludes such influences. In addition, the article also explored the theory of acculturation, which is defined as the social process characterized by cultural changes that occur when individuals originating in one country, accept the culture of a host country (Sam, 2000). This article was important for this research study because Parra Cardona et al. (2004) explained that the cultural identity is understood as a consciousness development, the generation of more complex cognitions and behaviors as one comes to see oneself in context.

This concept can be further explored by documenting the cultural identity of the teachers who were interviewed for this research study. One of the models that was discussed at length was the unidimensionality acculturation (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). The authors presented the question pertaining to the risk of describing the process of acculturation as a process where the native cultural identity of an immigrant is abandoned. In addition, the researcher pointed out that the acculturation model can be associated with Eurocentric bias in research so researchers utilize the cultural identity model instead in their research work. The cultural identity model was

understood as a conscious cultural development of each generation of immigrants who continue to hold on to the more complex cognition of self-culture and their behaviors.

Furthermore, cultural identity was viewed as a lifespan process evolving and changing as the individual moves through the various psychological stages of development (Ivey, 1995). Additional sociological parts of the cultural identity model are experiences of connections where the immigrants have to establish emotional bonds with significant others and the new country's minority and majority groups to have the new experiences of connection. Some immigrants experience the differentiation model, where they choose to identify the elements and values of each culture that they want to retain and the ones that they want to change or modify. Oppressed immigrants experience cultural identity in a very different way because they are forced to shape their behaviors according to the new culture of their new country (Frye, 1996). Resilient immigrants are strong and mature and do not suffer any increase distress about their own cultural identity as it relates to the new country. Cuellar et al. (1995) concluded that resilient immigrants are very well grounded in the host's country's cultural expectations. This article informed this research study because one of the areas that was explored while interviewing South Texas borderlands teachers was the assimilation process and the process related to the second and third generation teachers' cultural identity.

<div align="center">**What I Did Not Find in the ROL**</div>

Over a period of six years when I formally began to research the topic on Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region, and from the point when I formulated the research question, I was not able to find any research study that

specifically focused on third generation Mexican American teachers and their

perceptions about the connections they believe to be making with their first, second,

third generation, and beyond Mexican American students in the South Texas borderlands

region. By capturing the perceptions of the third generation Mexican American teachers

working with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, we

can increase the knowledge base on how to begin to challenge and expose "the

normalized ways of thinking about language, race, gender, and class" (Delgado Bernal et

al., 2009, p. 566) that have been prevalent in the South Texas borderlands region.

According to Foucault (1988),

> The practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group. (p. 11)

Six third generation Mexican American educators who were born and raised in

the South Texas borderlands region were given an opportunity to self-analyze and

theorize about the present normalized educational discourses and practices and their

experiences within those practices and discourses and perhaps begin to question some of

their normalized practices. Their perspectives on how and why they believe that they

were making connections with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican

American students will inform higher education institutions on how to better prepare

third generation and beyond Mexican American pre-service educators to make

meaningful connections that will increase the first, second, third generation, and beyond

Mexican American students' academic achievement.

In keeping with the need to increase the academic achievement of all the English language learners, the six educators in the South Texas borderlands region need to be given an opportunity to understand their own identity and importance in the ever-changing dynamics of being Hispanic and Mexican American. In discussing Stavans' (1995) historical perspective of the infamous question, "What is a Hispanic?" he used his understanding of Mexican American, South American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, African American, and Dominican Republic writers and their work to explain the multifaceted, diverse, and ever-changing dynamics of being Hispanic. This book informed this research study because it attempted to explain that the Hispanic culture (specifically third generation Mexican Americans) is a condition, ever-changing, with many similarities and differences. Stavans used the literary works of Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Latin American writers to explain the stages, phases, and faces of Hispanic writers who have responded, acted, or reacted to the political times of their country of origin or the United States.

In addition, Gay's (2010) book was an engaging tool that facilitated an educator's understanding of the origins of culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students:

- It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.

- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.

- It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.

- It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritages.

- It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools. (Gay, 2010, p. 31)

Through a detailed examination of the existing literature dealing with third generation Mexican American teachers, this researcher was not able to find any specific case study that focused on this topic of third generation Mexican American teachers and their perceptions about the connection they make with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, therefore, concluding that this research study will fill the hole in this inadequately studied topic.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL BASE FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

In this chapter, the community, social, and instructional settings for this qualitative study are described. The research methodology that is described in terms of paradigm, design, and data collection methods and procedures are also presented (Takacs, 2002). The outline for conducting the study is discussed as research focus, purpose, participants, and data sources.

The research question guiding this qualitative study was "What perceptions do third generation Mexican American teachers have of the connections that they make with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and the relationship between themselves and their students?" According to Ladson-Billings (1994), teachers who learn to become "conductors," believe that it is their responsibility to maximize the students learning by preparing them to be (a) academically strong (b) culturally competent, and (c) sociopolitically critical as lifelong learners. In addition, Ladson-Billings (1994) also suggested that teachers can also become "referral agents." Referral agents are teachers who practice shifting their responsibility to other teachers. By augmenting teacher narrative, culturally responsive teaching becomes an expectation for all teachers and not just those individuals who feel empowered by becoming socially and politically responsible for educating students of color. Public schools are experiencing demographic change in the area of student enrollment (Kalogrides, 2009). Teachers' experiential knowledge in the areas of cultural and linguistic differences are

becoming a required teacher tool in order to augment the academic success of English language learners (Bustos Flores & Riojas Clark, 2001). This researcher's inquiry was based on the desire to make a difference and conduct research based on ethical and positive educational, social, and political contributions based on the critical race methodology (Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001).

According to my review of the literature regarding the Mexican subgroup, researchers have indicated that additional research should be conducted in order to address "the problematic history of this population in the U.S. educational system" (Crosnoe, 2005a, p. 584). Researchers like Reyes and Valencia (1993) urged future researchers to consider the persistent schooling problems like poverty, segregation, and limited access to higher education and decreasing school achievement as well as the phenomenal growth of Latino students. Therefore, I believed it was important to describe the demographic information that makes this South Texas borderlands region a unique location to conduct this research study. In order to capture the voices (testimonios) of the six South Texas borderlands region third generation teachers, the reader needs to know the research setting and its identifying characteristics.

A South Texas Borderlands Community

The South Texas borderlands, where this study was conducted is located on the north bank of the Rio Grande. This South Texas borderlands region community is characterized by the following population statistics: a total of 250,304 residents, its ethnicity of 94.5% Hispanic, of who 29.8.% of the residents are living at or under the

poverty line compared to the national poverty rate of 14.7%, 4.5% White, and 0.4% Asian (U.S. Census, 2010). The median income is $38,495 compared to the national median income of $53,762 (U.S. Census, 2010). In 2011, the poverty threshold for a family of four was $22,811 (NCES, 2013). A householder is the person (or one of the people) who owns or rents (maintains) the housing unit. This researcher has decided to conduct this research study in this community to document the voices of the third generation Mexican American teachers living and teaching in this Southwest borderlands region community because their stories are important for the continued conversation regarding Mexican American student academic achievement.

Demographic Data of the South Texas Borderland Community

The demographic data indicate that 96% of the residents live in urban areas and 4% are rural residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). A total 25.2% of the families and 54% of the single female households were living at or under the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Poverty in this South Texas borderlands region is higher than of the state average of 17.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The religious affiliation of the residents in this borderlands region is 92.5% Catholic (Jones et al., 2002). According to the data collected from the 2008 Presidential Election results, President Barak Obama received 71.8% of the vote to Senator's McCain's 28.1%. According to the U.S. Census data (2010), more than 68,305 residents in this community were foreign born. That is exactly 27% of the total population.

Educational Attainment of the South Texas Borderland Community

The percentage of unemployment rate in this South Texas borderlands region is 4.4% compared to the Texas average of 8.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The average household size is 3.8 people and the median household income is $38,295 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the statistics of the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), and based on the Border ISD and Frontera ISD free and reduced lunch percentages of 74% and 97% respectively, and compared to the state of Texas Average of 60.4% (TEA, 2013) free and reduced lunch, these South Texas borderlands region schools where the six participants teach are considered to be below the national poverty line.

Property Taxes in the South Texas Borderland Community

Nevertheless, this is a growing community where between the years of 1939 to 2005 a total of 67,800 homes were built (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Median real estate tax rates for houses with mortgages in 2010 was $2,805 or (2.2%). The real estate tax rate for houses without mortgages was 1.8% or $1,377.00 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The growth acceleration has been negatively affected by the national economic hardships; home sales in this area have decreased from approximately 4,000 homes sold in 2005 to 2,800 homes sold in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Although the real estate tax rates are maintained low, many residents have suffered from foreclosures and have lost their homes due to not being able to keep up with their real estate taxes and/or mortgages. Due to the community's proximity to Mexico, most of the foreign-born residents, approximately 96%, immigrate from Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) and have historically immigrated at a rate of 94% to 96% in

the last 12 years (City of Laredo, 2010). The community has a total of 34% naturalized citizens (City of Laredo, 2010). According to surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), 91.3% of residents in this South Texas borderlands region community speak Spanish at home; a total of 51% speak English very well, 24% speak English well, 14% speak English not well, 11% do not speak English, and only 7.8% only speak English at home. This means that the South Texas borderlands region teachers have a tremendous challenge of teaching English language learners and have to resort to very creative ways to use the students' funds of knowledge to get students to learn English since the schools' performance is based on the high stakes tests, and the normalized measure of success is ultimately based on the students' acquisition of the English language (Moll, 1992; Valencia, 2000; Yoshikawa, 2011).

The South Texas borderlands region community is a growing community with a very young population. The median resident age is 27.9, of which 48.4% are male and 51.8% are female (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Since the median age of this South Texas borderlands region is 27.9 years of age, this South Texas borderlands region has a total of 16,022 college students. Only 64.7% of the residents, who are 25 years, possess a high school degree. Therefore, only 12.7% of the population, who is 25 years or older, hold a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This researcher believes that in order to be prepared for the population's demands in the area of higher education, more of the community's resources, should be directed toward encouraging its young community members to pursue a college education. Research concludes that an educated

community can have a greater influence in the educational advancement of students of color (Gandara, 1986; Rumbaut, 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009).

Border ISD Demographics

Border ISD is one of districts where this research study was conducted and has an annual budget of $353,530,948 and a per pupil allocation of $8,485 (United Independent School District [UISD], 2011) and a total of 41,876 students as of February 2013 (TEA, 2011-2012a). The adopted tax rate for the calendar year 2011-2012 as obtained from the 2011-2012 Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator Report for maintenance and operation was $1.04 and the interest fund was $0.155 for a total tax rate of $1.195 per 1,000 dollars of valuation.

Four participants for this research study were recruited from Border ISD. Participants in the research study were third generation Mexican American teachers from this community who were recruited voluntarily to participate in this research study. A total group of six third generation Mexican American teachers were recruited to participate in this research study.

Table 1 illustrates the ethnic composition of Border ISD school district. As the reader will note, 93.6% of the teachers in this school district are Mexican American. What was not known was the generational status of each teacher represented in this school district. However, this researcher recruited third generation and beyond Mexican American teachers to participate voluntarily in this study by interviewing them and asking them where they were born, where their parents were born as well as where their

maternal and paternal grandparents were born in order to establish that the participants

were indeed third generation Mexican Americans.

Table 1. Border ISD Demographic Information

Teachers by Ethnicity and Sex	Total	Percentage
African American	7.0	0.3
Hispanic	2,344.3	93.6
White	112.7	4.5
Native American	- 2.0	0.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	25.0	1.0
Males	573,1.0	22.9
Females	1,930.9	77.1

Source: TEA (2011-2012a).

Table 2 consists of the district information regarding the total years of academic

preparation that the teachers in Border ISD possess. A total of 83% of the district

teachers hold a bachelor's degree and only 17% have a master's degree. The high

percentage of teachers who possess a bachelor's degree can only be due to the relatively

high number of novice teachers.

Table 2. Border ISD Education

Teachers' Degree Held	Total	Percentage
No Degree	21.0	0.8
Bachelor's	2,030.2	81.1
Master's	446.9	17.8
Doctorate	6.0	0.2

Source: TEA (2011-2012a).

Table 3 describes the number of years of total teaching experience for the

teachers in Border ISD. As suggested by Garcia and Cuellar (2006) and Yoon (2008),

Mexican American students attend schools with a high percentage of novice teachers. In

this South Texas borderlands region school district, 63% of the teachers have less than

10 years of teaching experience.

Table 3. Border ISD Years of Experience

Teachers by Years of Experience	Total	Percentage
Beginning Teachers	36.2	1.4
1-5 Years	603.0	24.1
6-10 Years	809.0	32.3
11-20 Years	724.9	28.9
Over 20 Years	330.9	13.2

Source: TEA (2011-2012a).

The student-to-teacher ratio at Border ISD was ideal for academic success,

averaging 16 students per teacher. In addition, the district boasts a good attrition rate

since 60% of the novice teachers in the school district seem to remain permanently in the

school district (Table 4).

Table 4. Additional Border ISD Information

Teacher-Student Ratio Average Teacher Experience	Number of Students Per Teacher and Years of Experience With District
Number of Students Per Teacher	16.8
Average Years Experience of Teacher	11.2
Average Experience with District	9.3

Source: TEA (2011-2012a).

The teachers in Border ISD are compensated according to Table 5. The average starting teacher salary was above the state average for 2011. This was important to note because by keeping salaries competitive, teachers who are hired remain in the school district. Therefore, the culture of the school district seems to be one of rewarding its employees with competitive salaries.

Table 5. Border ISD Average Salaries

Average Teacher Salary by Years of Experience	District Salary	State Comparison
Beginning Teacher	$43,195	$40,911
1-5 Years	$45,053	$43,669
6-10 Years	$46,756	$46,224
11-20 Years	$49,501	$50,064
Over 20 Years' Experience	$59,830	$58,031

Source: TEA (2011-2012a).

Frontera ISD Demographics

Frontera ISD is the other district where this research study was conducted and has an annual budget of $214,424,862 and a per pupil allocation of $8,688 and a total of 24,761 (TEA, 2011-2012b). The adopted tax rate for the calendar year 2011-2012 was $1.04 as obtained from the Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator Report for maintenance and operation and the interest fund was $0.234 for a total tax rate of $1.274 per 1,000 dollars of valuation (TEA, 2011-2012b).

Two participants for this research study were recruited from Frontera ISD. The same criteria applied to the participants, who were voluntarily recruited, to participate in this research study from Frontera ISD. Table 6 illustrates the ethnic composition of

Frontera ISD school district. As the reader will note, 95.2% of the teachers in this school

district are Mexican American. That is a difference of 3% compared to Border ISD.

Table 6. Frontera ISD Demographic Information

Teachers by Ethnicity and Sex	Total	Percentage
African American	5.0	0.3
Hispanic	1,442.4	95.2
White	45.9	3.1
Native American	18.0	1.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0
Males	411.2	27.5
Females	1083.1	72.5

Source: TEA (2011-2012b).

Table 7 consists of the district information regarding the total years of academic

preparation that the teachers in Frontera ISD have in total. In comparison to Border ISD

teachers, Frontera ISD teachers have a total of 78.8% who hold a bachelor's degree and

only 20% have a master's degree, 3% higher than the teachers in Border ISD.

Table 7. Frontera ISD Education

Teachers' Degree Held	Total	Percentage
No Degree	9.0	0.6
Bachelor's	1,176.8	78.8
Master's	306.5	20.5
Doctorate	2.0	0.1

Source: TEA (2011-2012b).

Table 8 describes the number of years of total teaching experience for the teachers in Frontera ISD. Frontera ISD is very well balanced in the number of years of teaching experience for all of its teachers.

Table 8. Frontera ISD Years of Experience

Teachers by Years of Experience	Total	Percentage
Beginning Teachers	23.3	1.6
1-5 Years	392.1	26.2
6-10 Years	374.2	25.0
11-20 Years	385.8	25.8
Over 20 Years	318.9	21.3

Source: TEA (2011-2012b).

The student-to-teacher ratio at Frontera ISD is a little bit lower than Border ISD, averaging 16.6 students per teacher (Table 9). The turnover rate at Frontera ISD is 10.6%.

Table 9. Additional Frontera ISD Information

Teacher-Student Ratio Average Teacher Experience	Number of Students Per Teacher and Years of Experience With District
Number of Students Per Teacher	16.6
Average Years Experience of Teacher	12.8
Average Experience with District	11.5

Source: TEA (2011-2012b).

The teachers in Frontera ISD are compensated according to Table 10. The average starting teacher salary at Frontera ISD was also above the state for 2011. Over the years, teachers who are hired remain in the school district.

Table 10. Frontera ISD Average Salaries

Average Teacher Salary by Years of Experience	District Salary	State Comparison
Beginning Teacher	$41,466	$40,911
1-5 Years	$44,915	$43,669
6-10 Years	$47,872	$46,224
11-20 Years	$49,872	$50,064
Over 20 Years' Experience	$60,105	$58,031

Source: TEA (2011-2012b).

Research Plan

The research plan for this study was designed to document the individual stories/ (testimonios) (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) of six third generation Mexican American teachers working in the South Texas borderlands region. The researcher's purpose in documenting their individual stories/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) was to analyze their narratives in order to find out if these third generation Mexican American teachers are making any culturally relevant connections with their first, second, third generation, and beond Mexican American students and if they are aware of the importance of making these connections (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lopez, 2011). The purpose of this research study was to amplify the narratives between experienced teachers and novice teachers so that they understand the need for them to become "conductors" and not "referral agents" in order to become culturally responsive educators (Gay, 2010). The qualitative research plan of this study allowed for the investigation of multiple contexts that are reflected in people's beliefs, intentions, and daily lives (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996).

Methodology

The research methodology that was utilized to document and analyze the lived experiences of South Texas borderlands third generation and later Mexican American teachers was narrative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The methodology was rooted on my own way of knowing, learning, and teaching based on my own sensibilities of the borderlands and my own experience as a Chicana first generation college student and now as a principal of a predominately Mexican American elementary school. The purpose for using this research methodology was to gain insight into third generation Mexican American teachers' perspectives of their own teaching practices and understanding of the students teach. The research study was naturalistic in nature. The study focused on (a) data collection through semi-structured interviews, (b) participant observation of the field setting, and (c) analytic reflection on the data gathered from the interviews and observations.

This research study focused on semi-structured interviews and observations of third generation Mexican American teachers to amplify the research or lack thereof that currently exists in the literature concerning the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and their educational underachievement. The contextual contributions that were obtained from conducting the semi-structured interviews of the participants informed this research study. Additional stories and narratives were also documented for the purpose of giving importance to the experiential knowledge of the participants and the researcher (Barnes, 1990).

Semi-structured questions were based on the following topics of race, ethnicity, generational status, education, and language so as to capture the participants' perspectives and tacit knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some of the semi-structured questions allowed for the participants to further expand on their experiential knowledge based on their years of teaching experience and lived experiences based on their age (McCraken, 1988; Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). None of the interviews were tape-recorded based on the participants' requests, but they were all transcribed for accuracy.

In line with the purpose of collecting data via interviews and classroom observations, data collection was planned for no more than one academic year. The first participant's semi-structured interview was conducted in December 21, 2012 and the last interview was conducted in March 1, 2013. The second data collection procedure was classroom observations; a total of six 30-minute classroom observations were conducted between January 9, 2013 through May 7, 2013. During the period of school visits, I had to make initial contact with individuals serving as gatekeepers. These individuals included principals and assistant principals. With their assistance, I was able to conduct the classroom observations. It was relatively easy for me to establish trust within both school districts because I am a school administrator. Nevertheless, I took careful measures so that the classroom observations did not interfere with any previously scheduled school function. Once a mutually agreed date was established by the researcher and the participant, I made a courtesy phone call to the school administrator to inform them of my visit.

Participants' Stories Analysis

I created a web chart (Appendix D) where the central focus was looking at the participants as "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). I was able to arrive at a total of seven constant comparisons that had emerged throughout their semi-structured interviews:

1. Racialized Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Experiences based on race discrimination)

2. Social Advocacy (Did they use culturally responsive practices? What do they value?)

3. Language (Was Spanish a natural occurrence? Were they bilingual? Did they code switch?)

4. Ethnic Pride (Did they exhibit normalized teaching practices? Or were they conscious about their students' cultural needs?)

5. Social Economic Challenges and Classed Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Their own or their students)

6. Age Range (Important to establish a historical timeline)

7. Family Roles (Importance place on family, family roles, and parental involvement)

These seven constant comparisons allowed the researcher to analyze the participants' contextualized stories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). By systematically analyzing the participants' contextualized narratives, the researcher was looking for contextual validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Meaning that based on the age

differences of these six third generation Mexican American teachers, I wanted to analyze their lived experiences with class, gender, and race discrimination, making a point for the need to conduct critical race theory research based on the fact that all six participants mentioned having had an experience with some form of discrimination from the late 1960's until the present and in the South Texas borderlands region. Based on the cultural intuition as a Chicana researcher, the need to give meaning to the data is based on my personal connection with race, ethnicity, and gender (Delgado Bernal, 1998b). The relationships between all the stories are described in Chapter IV so that the readers can make their own interpretations about the individual stories/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b).

The participants told the researcher their personal stories as they responded to the semi-structured questions. Their narratives painted their individual counter-stories in relation to how they have dealt with racial, class, and gender discrimination (Delgado Bernal, 1998b; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Some participants had more elaborate stories to tell than others based on the topic. The participants' narratives were analyzed based on the seven constant comparisons that emerged throughout their semi-structured interviews and observations.

These seven constant comparisons allowed the researcher to analyze the participants' contextualized stories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In addition, the six participants' stories and practices during their observation were put through another analytical tool and that was to determine if they were being "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The researcher wanted to know if the participants were (a) academically

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strong (b) culturally competent, and (c) sociopolitically critical as lifelong learners (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The contrary would mean that they were "referral agents," passing on their culturally responsive responsibilities to other educators who were "conductors" (Ladson, Billings, 1994).

Participants

The participants were six South Texas borderlands third generation Mexican American teachers who worked with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The six Mexican American teachers who were recruited were contacted via face-to-face conversations, contact letters, and e-mails that were send out to teachers from three different schools in Border ISD and two different schools in Frontera ISD. The teachers were recruited based on the criteria that they were third generation Mexican American teachers, currently teach first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and work in an elementary school in the borderlands districts selected for this research study (see Table 11). After the participants were identified, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as well as captured the participants' individual stories and/or narratives, testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b). The semi-structured interviews were scheduled by date and time depending on the participants' schedule and availability. This researcher focused on the following data collection strategies: (a) written reflections, (b) in-depth one-to-one interview to capture the teachers' background, and (c) semi-structured questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Table 11. Participants

Teacher's Pseudo Name	Father's Nationality USA Generation	Mother's Nationality USA Generation	Paternal Grand Parents' Place of birth	Maternal Grandparents' Place of Birth
Esperanza	U.S. Citizen Mission, TX	U.S. Citizen La Joya, TX	Mission, TX	Mission, TX
Katalina	U.S. Citizen Laredo, TX	U.S. Citizen Laredo, TX	Mexico	Laredo, TX
Melissa	U.S. Citizen Laredo, TX	U.S. Citizen Laredo, TX	Laredo, TX	Maternal grandmother – Mexico and Grandfather in Laredo, TX
Rosa	U.S. Citizen Cotulla, TX	U.S. Citizen Laredo, TX	Carrizo Springs, TX, & Cotulla, TX	Both in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon
Gloria	U.S. Presidio, TX	U.S. Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico	Grandmother Presido, TX Grandfather – Delicias, Mexico	Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico
Alejandro	U.S. Nuevo Laredo, Mexico	U.S. Laredo, TX	Grandmother – Nuevo Laredo, Mexico Grandfather – Dilley, TX	Laredo, TX

The researcher observed the six participants during one 30-minute instructional lesson. The intent of the classroom observations was to collect data regarding the participants' classroom interactions with their students. The classroom observations were done to capture the participants' teaching practices and expand on the essence of the participants' actual interactions with their students and the correlation(s) that existed in relation to their individual stories. The research study was conceived as a project to understand the perceptions of the connections that third generation Mexican Americans in the Southwest borderlands region believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and possibly arrive at some ideas as to why they believe that these students have difficulties in obtaining academic achievement, or in some cases, highlight the strengths that these teachers possess.

Participants' anonymity was maintained as a condition to participate freely. Once the participants agreed to participate, the researcher provided each participant with a copy of the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program Consent Form. It was thoroughly explained to them and the required signatures were collected. A copy of the semi-structured interview questions was also provided to ascertain their most informed participation in the study.

A crucial determining factor in securing their participation was to find out if they were truly third generation Mexican Americans. The researcher used Buriel and Cardoza's (1993) definition of the major characteristics of a third generation Mexican American. Therefore, the researchers asked them for their place of birth, their parents' place of birth as well as their maternal and paternal grandparents' place of birth. The goal was to secure the generational lineage and make sure that the participants were indeed third generation Mexican American teachers based on both their parents and grandparents (see Table 11). This was not an easy task because in at least two cases the participants had to intentionally schedule their own interviews with their parents and grandparents since they did not know their ancestors origins or their place of birth. The participants communicated to the researcher that their participation in this research study brought back many emotional bonds that had been established in their childhood years with their parents and grandparents. Participants as a whole thanked the researcher for giving them the opportunity to participate and have their voices and stories documented.

A range of participants' ages was important for this research study. The researcher strived to obtain a participant pool that ranged from their early 20's to the

early 50's. Although their exact birthdates or ages were not directly asked in order to respect their privacy, the researcher did ask for an approximate age. This timeline was important to inform the readers about the diversity that exists among Latinos, and give examples of the additional generational differences that the third generation Mexican Americans within the Latino group have.

Interviews

The interviews that were conducted by the researcher were for the purpose of documenting the teachers' classroom practices that are directly correlated to cultural responsive teaching (Gay, 2010). The interviews were done in a journal and simple note taking was also used. The classroom's power dynamics were studied as per the Miller (2000) and Norton (2000) studies that suggested that learning may change as a function of the interrelationships due to social power dynamics. In addition, this current research study focused on the possible suggested causes for the low educational attainment of Mexican American students as have been documented by Valverde and Scribner (2001); the authors proposed that some of the possible causes for the achievement gap of Latino students in schools are: "(a) less qualified teachers; (b) fewer expandable resources per students; (c) lowered expectations for student achievement; (d) more and harsher discipline (a possible reflection of racial stereotypes); (e) mismatch between school and home culture; (f) high mobility rate of students and teachers; and (g) high SES" (pp. 22-31). Similarly, this current research study focused on capturing and documenting the perceptions of teachers working with English language learners, specifically third

generation Mexican American teachers working with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to inform the current and future dialogues that seek to find solutions to increase the academic advancement of first, second, or third generation and beyond Mexican American students. Mexican Americans continue to increase in population due to natural increase and continued immigration. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), "the Hispanic population increased from 35.3 million in 2000 when the group made up 13 percent of the total population" (p. 3) to now over 50.5 million and 16% of the population. The data obtained from the latest 2010 Census indicated that 75% of the Hispanic population lived in eight states across the United States, mostly urban enclaves due to employment opportunities in the service sector and agriculture (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The eight states that have the highest percentages of Hispanics are California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, and Colorado. Four out of these eight states are southwestern states. The Mexican origin population increased by 54% and had the largest numeric change (11.2 million), growing from 20.6 million in 2000 to 31.8 million in 2010. Mexicans accounted for about three-quarters of the 15.2 million increment in the Hispanic population during a 10-year period beginning in 2000 and ending in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

CHAPTER IV

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS IN THE SOUTH

TEXAS BORDERLANDS

In order to captivate the reader, a good story must begin with an introduction of the setting and its characters. Therefore, in this chapter I describe the participants and their surroundings. A total of six third generation Mexican American teachers from the South Texas borderlands region participated in this research study. The participants are five female teachers and one male teacher. Their teaching experience ranged from 0 years of experience to 11 years teaching in South Texas. Their ages ranged from the early 20's to the late 40's.

Four of the participants work in Border Independent School District (BISD) and two of the participants work with the Frontera Independent School District (FISD). The ethnic distribution of BISD is 98.3% Hispanic and 1% White (TEA, 2011-2012a). Seventy-four percent (74%) of the students in BISD are considered to be economically disadvantaged and 64.8% are considered at risk (TEA, 2011-2012a). Border Independent School District surrounds Frontera Independent School district, which is considered to be landlocked and inner city. Contrary to FISD, which is landlocked, BISD encompasses the South Texas borderlands rural areas of Webb County, and has a total student population of 42,096 (TEA, 2011-2012 a). The ethnic distribution of FISD is 99.5% Hispanic and .3% White (TEA, 2011-2012b). Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the students attending FISD are considered to be economically disadvantaged, and 73.3%

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are considered to be at risk (TEA, 2011-2102b, p. 1). The total student enrollment in Frontera ISD is 24,761.

The voices of six third generation Mexican American teachers from three different geographical locations within the Border Independent School and Fronter ISD were captured for this research study. Third generation Mexican American teachers from the north, central, and south parts of this South Texas borderlands community were recruited for this research study. As I mentioned before, BISD is the district that encompasses the most surface area in this South Texas borderland area. BISD surrounds FISD; these districts only have similar campuses in the southern part of the geographical locations.

In order to equally describe the essence of the perceptions from the third generation Mexican American teachers from the north, central, and southern locations from two school districts, I explored whether the teachers' and their students had any similarities or differences based on the schools' location. Therefore, it was important for this researcher to capture the perceptions from two Frontera ISD teachers and two Border ISD teachers who worked in similar geographic locations. The Frontera Independent School district teachers both worked in the southern most point of the school district. FISD is an inner city school district and is landlocked, and based on those factors, the schools in FISD and BISD do not have similar geographic locations, other than the south schools, which were equally represented for both school districts.

It has been documented by Anzaldua (1987), Padilla (2006), Padilla and Gonzalez (2001), Trueba (1973), Vasquez (2010) that the South Texas borderlands

dynamics are different from the rest of the country. More than seven million people are third-plus generation Mexican Americans, yet the complexities of their borderland identities and experiences are rarely addressed (Vasquez, 2010).

Participants' Introduction

The names of the informants were assigned based on a letter that was associated with their last name or the first letter of an adjective that described them. This system was a good system to help the researcher remember their pseudonym for expediency and validity. For example, Esperanza became Esperanza because her last name begins with an "E" and she is an excellent and hopeful kinder teacher. Katalina was named based on her tremendous amount of motion; she was always moving and doing something, and she happens to have been a kindergarten teacher. Melissa was the youngest one in the group and she was motivated to begin her teaching career based on her family's commitment to education since at least her grandparents and her mother and father were educators. Rosa became Rosa because her last name begins with an "R" and she is a reserved but a very respected teacher. Gloria is a great teacher who had a baby girl, not too long ago. Finally, Alejandro got his pseudonym because he is an amazing teacher who is beginning his career as an administrator. Table 12 describes the participants' profiles in terms of their third generation profiles.

Table 12. Participants' Third Generation Profiles

Teacher's Pseudo Name	Years of Teaching Experience	Age Range	Bilingual	Grade Levels Taught	Marital Status/ Gender	Essence of Third Generation Status
Esperanza	11	45-50	Yes	Kinder,4th 5th, 8th	Married Female	Childhood and adult discrimination inform her personality.
Katalina	7	30-35	Yes	Kinder Dual language	Single Female	Sees the need to give back/ learned Spanish as an adult.
Melissa	0	20-25	Yes	Tutor Pk-5th	Single Female	Possesses an intuitive nature of wanting to make a difference.
Rosa	7	30-35	Yes	Kinder, 1st	Married Female	Emotionally connected to students due to her childhood experiences with classism.
Gloria	11	30-35	Yes	1st, 2nd Dual language	Married Female	Independent of community norms (knows what her students need to survive academically).
Alejandro	6	30-35	Yes	1st, 3rd	Male Single	Seeks social justice for his students via rigorous academic standards.

Participants' Teaching Experience and School Information

The first participant I interviewed was equally nervous as I was. We agreed to have our meeting on the last Friday before the Christmas holidays started, December 7, 2012. This was an exciting day for all the students and a very busy day for administrators and teachers. Nevertheless, that was the day she selected and I could not

tell her no. I traveled to the school, which is located in the north side of this South Texas borderlands community. The school has a total student enrollment of 625 students (TEA, 2011-2012c). According to the TEA (2011-2012c) school report card 77.3% of its students are considered to be economically disadvantaged and 22.7% are not economically disadvantaged. A total of 58% of its students are limited English proficient (TEA, 2011-2012c). The school's at risk student population is 75% and the mobility rate is 12.1% (TEA, 2011-2012c). It is a neighborhood school and most of the students walk to and from school. According to TEA (2011-2102c), the average number of students per teacher is 16.9. The school services two apartment complexes and one residential subdivision that buses the students to the school. One of those apartment complexes is a Section 8 subsidized housing project. The other apartment complex and subdivision could be considered lower middle class.

<div align="center">**The Participants**</div>

Esperanza

Esperanza, a pseudo name, is a kinder teacher who has been teaching for 11 years total. As I traveled to the school, many ideas were racing through my mind. I was eager to greet her, and of course not to make any mistakes, or appear apprehensive or nervous. Full of joy and excitement, I was finally going to see my first participant and capture her voice and record her perceptions. The anticipation engulfing my body was palpable because I used to work at that particular school as an Assistant Principal, and I was glad that Esperanza requested an after-school meeting because I wanted to give her my undivided attention and respect. I did not want to spend time greeting and talking to

any other individual, other than Esperanza. I arrived at the school's parking lot at 4:50 p.m., and she had asked me to be in her classroom at 5:00 p.m., so I had a few minutes to check my notes, my equipment, and my supply of water bottles. I got out of my car and proceeded to walk toward her classroom. Luckily, only one of the custodians was there and no one else. I guess everyone was eager to commence their Christmas vacations.

Esperanza greeted me cordially, and to my surprise, she seemed nervous too. I sat down in one of her little kinder chairs and proceeded to take out my supplies as we chatted about the different events that we had encountered that day, i.e., Christmas parties and Christmas programs. Then the formal paperwork was reviewed with her and she signed her consent, and I was so happy. Esperanza told me that she preferred if I just wrote her responses. Although she did not mind the tape recorder, she admitted that it made her nervous. So, I took out all my pencils, a total of six freshly sharpened pencils, and we began.

Esperanza is a third generation Mexican American teacher whose parents and grandparents were born in Mission, Texas, and La Joya, Texas, respectively. She comes from a family tradition of educators. Her mother worked for the federally funded Head Start program for 20 years as a kinder teacher. She has a sister, who has taught second grade for 27 years, another sister, who has taught fifth grade for 20 years, and a brother, who is a head coach and science teacher at a middle school. All of her family members work in the South Texas Valley area (Mission, Texas, and Edinburg, Texas).

> My mother is my role model and I am very glad that after teaching middle school and fourth and fifth grade, I have now found my true calling in kindergarten. My mother and I have great topics of conversation when I call her to get her advice.

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The interview with Esperanza went very well. After two hours of talking and going through different emotions with her, as a participant observant, I was exhausted and emotionally drained. Enthusiastically, I thanked Esperanza and reminded her that I still would love to observe her in her classroom soon. We agreed on a date and we promised to keep in touch in case her schedule would change.

Katalina

My second interview was scheduled on January 16, 2013. Due to the Christmas holidays, it was difficult to obtain anyone willing to meet with me during the holiday period. Katalina is an instructional specialist with Frontera ISD. She agreed to come to my office for her interview with special permission from her principal. Katalina has nine years' experience as a bilingual and a dual language teacher. She is a proud educator, who has been showcased and awarded several recognitions from her district due to her enthusiasm and contagious energy. She has been the first ever "One Class at a Time" 2008 recipient. This is a local contest held each month and sponsored by one of the local TV stations where teachers get nominated, and the TV station manager in conjunction with the local teachers' credit union award the selected teacher with $500.00 for classroom supplies. She was also selected as her school's teacher of the year and recognized at the regional level. For those reasons, she was selected as an instructional specialist to assist and mentor new teachers in any area of instructional need at Frontera ISD.

Her family has also been in the education field. Her mother taught 33 years and her father taught for 6 years and then became a school administrator. Her father is

presently working as the student assessment director for an alternative certification program at a local charter school. She related how her paternal grandmother had been a teacher in Mexico, and on her maternal side of the family, two of her aunts were also teachers.

Katalina is a third generation Mexican American on her mother's side only. She is a proud graduate from the first graduating class at Border High School. Her maternal grandparents were born in Laredo, Texas. Although she completed all her prerequisites for pre-medical school, she explained to me that she had to change majors because she could not stand the sight of blood. Her place of employment is in one of the southernmost elementary schools located within the Frontera ISD.

The school where Katalina works has a total of 832 students and 100% are considered to be economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2011-2012d). In addition, the student mobility rate is 20.8% and the at risk student population is 76% (TEA, 2011-2012d). A total of 73.9% of the students are limited English proficient and the student-to-teacher ratio is 19.8, the highest number of students per teacher when you compare it with the Border ISD schools, even to the ones located in similar geographic locations (TEA, 2011-2012d).

My reflections about Katalina's interview were filled with excitement because she is a 33-year-old teacher who has less than 10 years' experience, and she has evolved from the most "Americanized Mexican in the border," her self-describing words to a nurturing open-minded Mexican American teacher who learned Spanish and cultural traditions for the sake of helping her students learn.

I consider myself as the most Americanized Mexican in the border, but I have learned Spanish for the sake of helping my students. I am a fast learner, and I want to give back to my community in terms of helping students who are lacking so much like basic necessities, safety, food, and sometime shelter. I work closely with the school counselor to help them.

Our interview was lengthy and it took us two and a half hours to finalize it but at the end she thanked me for the opportunity to include her voice in this research study.

Melissa

On the same day after school, I interviewed Melissa. I interviewed Melissa on January 16, 2013. We started our interview at 5:00 p.m. She is a Block III student teacher. I decided to interview her in order to capture the perceptions and perspectives of a novice teacher, who is still attending classes. Her family lineage is full of educators. When I asked her if anyone in her family was an educator, she responded like this:

My mother, aunts, and father, both grandmothers are, or were teachers during their lifetime. I am a third generation Mexican American teacher on my mother's side because my grandmother on my father's side was born in Mexico. All my family is mostly in education. I have an aunt who is a teacher in Del Rio, Texas. My mother is now an elementary school principal, and she was also a special education teacher. My grandfather on my mother's side was a school principal for more than 50 years. He even has a school building named after him.

Unlike Katalina, Melissa speaks English and Spanish. She is working at her mother's school as an intervention tutor for students who have academic difficulties in math and reading. Melissa has had that responsibility for four years total. She also works at the same school as Katalina. Melissa is also proud of being part of the first graduating class of the Early College Program in Frontera ISD. Melissa has always loved school and since her mother was a teacher when Melissa was in grade school, she attended school where her mother worked.

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The first school where she remembers going had very challenging academic standards. Then she had to move because her mother was moved so she remembers the school being a tough school in a different neighborhood. She particularly remembers one teacher, Mrs. Diaz. Her characteristic traits were that she was sort of mean, but she made her write, and she was pleased with her work.

Rosa

The fourth participant I interviewed and observed works in the Border Independent School District; the school where she works is located in southernmost part of this South Texas borderlands community. Her name is Rosa and I interviewed her on March 1, 2013. The school where she works has 1070 students and 94.5% are considered to be economic disadvantaged (TEA, 2011-2012e). Although this school is located only 15 city blocks away from the Frontera ISD school where Melissa and Katalina work, there is a difference of almost 6% in the amount of economically disadvantaged students as compared to the Frontera ISD school, which has 100% economic disadvantaged students. Rosa's school has 94.5% (TEA, 2011-2012e). In addition, the mobility rate at this Border ISD school is 15.4% compared to the 20.8% of the Frontera ISD school (TEA, 2011-2012e). It is important to highlight these slight differences because the schools are located very close to each other but in different districts. The limited English population at Rosa's school is 70.4% (TEA, 2011-2012e). The at-risk student population is 78% (TEA, 2011-2012e). According to TEA figures, the student-to-teacher ratio at this campus is 17.8, the highest ratio among the three Border ISD schools that are being highlighted for this research study (TEA, 2011-2012e).

Rosa is a third generation Mexican American teacher on her paternal side. Her father was born in Cotulla, Texas, and her paternal grandfather was born in Carrizo Springs, Texas. Her paternal grandmother was born in Cotulla, Texas. Her mother was born in Laredo, Texas, but her maternal grandmother and grandfather were born in Monterrey, Mexico. I interviewed her on January 24, 2013 and observed her March 1, 2013. She has taught in a bilingual classroom setting for seven years in different grade levels. The grade level where she has taught the longest is kinder, a total of five years. None of her immediate family members have been educators.

Rosa was grateful for the opportunity to participate in this research project. She envisions going to graduate school after her sons graduate from high school. She does not want to miss out anymore than she already does. Her goal is to become a college professor to teach students about teaching. She hopes that teachers would become more involved with teaching actual hands-on lessons instead of being so worried about benchmarks. She thinks that this interview has helped her remember some situations that she is very fond of and that have helped her become a better person, educator, and mother.

> I do not think my parents pushed me enough, so I do not remember them telling me you have to get good grades. Maybe they did not know what to tell me. I knew they cared because they took me to school every day. But I want to do better than them by instilling the importance of education in my children.

Her most memorable school experience was when she was in fifth grade and she won first place in science. Her science project was selected to be displayed at the community college and she remembers being very proud because she had worked on the project by herself. A total of three hours was spent with this teacher during her interview. I also

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observed her once for 30 minutes and was pleasantly surprised that she really takes her time with her students.

Gloria

The fifth participant is teacher who works in the central part of town and in a school that is part of Border ISD and her pseudo name is Gloria. I interviewed Gloria on January 23, 2013. Her school is centrally located and it has a total of 844 students (TEA, 2011-2012f). A total of 85.3% were considered to be economically disadvantaged and 14.7% were not (TEA, 2011-2012f). Only 68.8% are considered as limited English proficient and 78% are at risk (TEA, 2011-2012f). The mobility rate for this school is only 11.5 % and the student to teacher ratio is 17.4 (TEA, 2011-2012f).

Gloria is a third generation Mexican American teacher because her father was born in Presidio, Texas, and her paternal grandfather was born in Presidio as well her paternal grandmother. Her mother was born in Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico, as well as her maternal grandparents. Gloria is proficient in English and Spanish. She knows how to speak, read, and write English and Spanish. Her paternal grandfather was a middle school coach, and her father was a bilingual education teacher. She has taught for 11 years in first and second grade. Presently, she teaches a 1st grade dual language class. Gloria received her college education at Sul Ross University in Alpine, Texas. She remembers that she always wanted to become a teacher.

Gloria's father being a teacher had a significant influence in her decision. "I would go to my dad's classroom in the summer when he was decorating his classroom. I would ask him for handouts." In her elementary school years she remembers that their

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lessons were more thematic and that every reading story had an art lesson or home projects. "I really remember when we had to create a robot out of recycled products and presented it to the class." She remembered her most challenging school experience as learning the algebraic concepts. Since her teachers were also coaches, they were out a lot so she did not feel confident about understanding those concepts.

Growing up around educators she understands how presently education has become more of a drill and test environment. As she compares her school years to the present, she feels that all the students do is test. "Learning is supposed to be fun and students should be eager to learn. I think that if we would teach without the drilling our students would do better. We pressure our students at a young age."

Twelve years from now Gloria would love to be back in West Texas. West Texas is a big part of her life for her and her husband and she would love to go back to her roots. The legacy she would like to leave to her students can best be said in her own words.

> The legacy I would like to leave to my students is having dedication and patience. Being dedicated to my job and believing in my students has helped me accomplish a lot in my teaching career. I have gotten the respect of parents which is very important to me. I had parents tell me that when they find out that I am their child's teacher they are not worried because they know that I am going to do my job and their kids are going to succeed in my class.

Alejandro

The sixth participant is a male teacher. I interviewed Alejandro on January 30, 2013. He works in the same campus as Rosa in Border ISD. He was born in this South Texas borderlands community and he is a third generation Mexican American on his mother's side. His maternal grandmother and grandfather were both born in Laredo,

Texas. His father was born in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. He also comes from a family full of educators. His mother and father were teachers, as well as his grandmother, grandfather, and two aunts. He is proficient in English and Spanish but admits that he needs more practice in Spanish due to the fact that he mainly communicates in English. Alejandro has taught for six years and has taught four years in third and two years in first grade. He is a proud graduate of The University of Texas in Austin. He has always loved school and remembers always being a top student. He enjoyed receiving many distinctions and awards.

Although, he could not recall ever being the victim of racial discrimination, he does remember being a victim of social discrimination based on his weight and appearance. He perceives himself as a vigilant person and observing the way things are done in the community so that he can find more efficient ways of getting things done. Currently, Alejandro has finished his master's degree in Educational Administration, and he is hoping to get a job as an assistant principal in any South Texas borderlands region school.

Some of his most memorable experiences in school had to do with his participation in band. He enjoyed going through the ranks whenever they had chair tryouts. He is particularly proud of becoming the eighth grade drum major and becoming the twelfth grade drum major. Those were two stupendous experiences for him. He fondly reminisces as we continued the interview and ties in his high school experience with his college memories.

His most vivid memory that influenced his decision to become an educator was when he went off to college. He had no idea what he was going to study. Alejandro applied to the engineering school because a family friend secured an internship at a local engineering firm. A year and half into his engineering degree he found himself analyzing his career choice and could not see himself as an engineer anymore. So he thought about becoming a teacher and his aunts influenced him the most.

He thinks that what his students would remember the most from his teaching is his teaching style. Alejandro thinks that his students will remember the most from his teaching will be the hands-on projects or mini-projects that they do on a daily basis through collaborative group work. His students will also hopefully remember the way that they did daily journals in all the core subject areas and that they will use this skill in college.

Participants' Stories (Testimonios)

The researcher analyzed the participants' contextualized stories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) using the seven constant comparisons introduced in Chapter III.

1. Racialized Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Experiences based on race discrimination)

2. Social Advocacy (Did they use culturally responsive practices? What do they value?)

3. Language (Was Spanish a natural occurrence? Were they bilingual? Did they code switch?)

4. Ethnic Pride (Did they exhibit normalized teaching practices? Or were they conscious about their students' cultural needs?)

5. Social Economic Challenges and Classed Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Their own or their students)

6. Age Range (Important to establish a historical timeline)

7. Family Roles (Importance place on family, family roles and parental involvement)

These seven constant comparisons allowed the researcher to analyze the participants' contextualized stories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). By systematically analyzing the participants' contextualized narratives, the researcher was looking for contextual validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The relationships between all the stories are described below so that the readers can make their own interpretations about the individual stories/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b).

Racialized Experiences

Their stories that emerged as a result of their own experiences with racism informed their daily work with their Mexican American students. They each understood racism from a personal perspective. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) stated that "experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26) The relevance in analyzing the participants' racialized experiences in this research study was based also on Trueba's (1973) recommendation to validate the experiences of Mexican American teachers' experiences in education.

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Sharing a challenging experience with me was difficult for Esperanza. Esperanza was aware of the importance to respect students' heritage and traditions. Esperanza discovered her ethnicity and culture when she was in elementary school. She related her experience growing up and having an Anglo principal. She went on to tell me how "My sister and I had long braids, and I remember my principal taking us out of class and he took a picture of us with him." She understood now how offensive that was because he added that he wanted to take the picture so that he could show the picture of the Mexican girls with the long braids to his friends. She admonishes, "I have to keep in mind that what I do and say might be offensive to other Hispanics. Everyone is different and I have to respect their differences." She understands discrimination from her childhood experiences.

Her life as a migrant worker was difficult, but she also remembers working after school so that she could save money for her cap and gown and qualifying for a school grant to attend college based on her migrant status. She related with teary eyes, "we ate carrots on the way home, and we did not even know about the pesticides used on the crops." (At this point in the interview, we took a break, and talked about daily school events, in order to help her regain her composure). One of her most memorable school experiences is described below:

> At first it was scary since we had mostly Anglo teachers. Everybody was expected to speak English and ESL was only considered for students who had learning problems. My mother was surprised that we were taken out of class to be placed in another classroom for ESL instruction. Only Mexicans were taken out of class and were placed with an ESL teacher, while all the Anglo students remained in the same classroom. Since we were Mexican, me and my twin sister, I guess the teacher assumed we did not know any English. But since we knew a little, my mother spoke with the principal and he placed my sister and I back in

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the regular class. I think that since most of the Mexican parents were migrant workers, and we were migrants too, the Anglo teachers thought that the parents would not mind. But all they did in those ESL classes was color.

Through her personal teaching style, she has been able to convey the meaning of culture and ethnic pride. Esperanza acknowledges that although her students and her might share the same culture, "with age you see your culture different." I asked Esperanza what she meant by that and she explained that with time she has built resistance and pride in her culture because she will not let anyone mistreat her, and she tries to instill that pride in her students as well. She also added that in her classroom she has students from different generations ranging from immigrants to third generation like her but that her life has been different from her current third generation Mexican American students. She remembered an event that happened to her family in 1978:

> I remember in 1978, racial discrimination existed because my parents related this story to us. As migrant workers in Dimmit, Texas, my parents entered a coffee house at 5 a.m. in the morning. I was 17 years old. My parents entered, and we waited in the truck. My parents sat at the counter waiting to be served, and they were never served. The waitress waited on other patrons, and ignored my parents.

"The students do not know their own culture or traditions." She stated that she had to incorporate conveying the meaning of the lesson with the local culture and experiences and connect her students' appreciation for their traditions and understand their limitations and shortfalls

> I also had a college experience where I felt socially discriminated. I married very young, typical Hispanic couple and we went to the doctor, and the people in that office judged me by my age and did not stop looking at us.

> I also remember how my college professor wrote a letter to me stating, "Dear College of Education student: Quit your job or else you will never graduate if you don't quit your job. You need to be serious about college, or go back to

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being a full-time mom." So, I thought, who is this Anglo professor to tell us what we can do or not do. I proved him wrong.

Katalina has had some experiences where she has felt racially discriminated based on her appearance. "I was in high school, and I was in the drill team. We went to a competition in Dallas, Texas, and we were caught in the elevator with some Caucasian girls. One of them said, "you dance pretty good for a bunch of Mexicans." I was not even sure what that meant. I said, "How are Mexicans supposed to dance?"

> One time I was in New Orleans and it turns out that they are not fond of Mexicans, or at least not at the shop I tried to enter. I cannot completely be sure if it was because I was Mexican or because I was wearing a Dallas Cowboy jersey. Nevertheless, they closed the doors right on our faces and said that they were closed. I told them their sign said open, and then they changed it. As I was walking away, they opened the door for an African American couple. Maybe they were scared that we were going to rob them because it was late?

Katalina related how she had a dance scholarship once, but she lost it because she was a problematic student although she also admits that she was book smart and had gradated number 69th in her class. She remembers encountering challenging times in school like one day when:

> Pachucas (low riders) bullied me a lot. At that time we had Polaroid cameras to take pictures for the school yearbook, and one day this girl Pancy wanted to take my camera but I was not going to let her. I had to defend myself so I hit her but I did not let her take my camera. I would usually let her take my money and stuff but not the camera. I was so scared but she did not do anything to me again.

In reference to teaching Mexican American students, she believes that as a Mexican American educator, she should remember what she went through in her school years so that she can understand and facilitate her English language learners' learning environment better. For the English language learners, Katalina uses bilingual education

strategies that she learned in college. She uses total physical response as I observed

during her lesson, as well as teacher sensitivity with her students.

Rosa did not really share any racialized personal experiences, but she does

acknowledge feeling proud about her ethnicity. She does this by having high

expectations for all her students. Katalina explained that she does not differentiate in

terms of first, second, or third generation, but she does differentiate instruction in terms

of ability. She incorporates many visual tools during her lessons so that the students can

participate by going up to the visual display unit and clicking on the correct answer.

English study buddies are also utilized so that the students can help each other during

and after the lesson. Having heterogeneously grouped classes helps the ELL students

become more integrated and confident on their language skills based on her teaching

experience. She also shared that she deeply cares about her ELL students' academic

advancement and success.

> By this I mean that I care for all my students. I believe that every child deserves the opportunity to start over every day. To understand that children can have good days and bad days, and just because they refused to do work on one day, or made the wrong choice, we should not hold it against them. If time permits, I allow students to share something about them with me because it makes me understand them more, and it helps me have a bond with them. I will even share a story about my sons with them. This has helped me because I want them to have the trust in me to be able to come and ask for help when they do not understand a lesson and not feel intimidated by me. I know that I am a very big part of their lives and an authority figure for them right now so I understand it can be very hard for some students to ask for help especially ELL students. They are often the very quiet ones who are unsure of themselves and their abilities.

Alejandro encountered some challenging experiences during his school years.

Some of the most challenging experiences from his school years were in middle school.

He struggled socially but not academically.

I had to learn to put up with being bullied, being picked on because of my physical aspect to the way I dressed and the clothes I wore. I had to be strong and make myself realize that I had to make something of myself.

I asked Alejandro if any of his bullying experiences were connected to race and he stated that he did not believe they were. Out of the six participants, Alejandro was the only one who had not experienced racial discrimination at any time during his lifetime. Alejandro stated the following:

The only situation I can think about is at the dining area while attending college. Where I was reading the menu and a couple of the workers started to say something about me in Spanish and then they were shocked when I ordered in Spanish. I can so say that it was more difficult to make Hispanic friends than it was to make friends with Whites.

Social Advocacy

Did my informants use culturally responsive practices? What do they value? Such questions guided the development of these testimonios. The interviews revealed their social and educational advocacy for their Mexican American students. Their comments and recollections informed their daily instructional decisions. In transcribing their interviews, I was able to organize their responses into what I perceived as being a commitment to social justice (Solórzano, 1998). The six participants who informed this research study were determined to be advocates for social justice in their own way. Esperanza continued our conversation and interview with some very candid responses and narratives about her experiences as an educator. She believes that present day students come to school with many needs, and it is up to her to grant them the opportunities to excel: "I invest a lot of time in them."

I constantly support students who have ADHD issues, give them opportunities for breaks due to their needs. I also have a child that has a heart problem, so I

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cuddle him, and it so hard not to become motherly to meet their needs. Section 504 students –I have to be firm, and I have to give him eye contact, and proximity. I have to be an educator, and mothering with some, and others have to be firm, and teach manners, keep them strong.

Katalina values education and she is a hard worker, and she claims to have never taken a break from school or any type of educational commitment since high school graduation. Katalina is a professional student of any discipline. She holds certification for bilingual, dual, dance, and theatre arts. Candidly, she told me that she loved to act; she is a self-proclaimed thespian. In high school she was in the one-act play, and she is proud to share that her team won first place.

As we were about to end our interview, Katalina also added her intentions to become an assistant principal or a central office administrator. She wants to be remembered as a person who made a difference in the lives of her Mexican American students. Katalina has a tremendous amount of passion for her career. In her closing comments she added, "I would like to see more passion in people about their jobs. Working with children is one of the most important jobs anyone can have, and it irks me that some people just do not seem to care anymore."

Melissa was a social activist of her own in trying to stand up for herself. Her problem was in relation to being a school principal's daughter. Melissa thought she could get away with advocating for her friends, but she learned that rules are rules. The most memorable experiences she remembers from elementary school are:

> The first time I went to the principal's office because I kicked a boy on the chin, and I was a 4th grade student. Mrs. Martinez, was the school principal. I told her that I was defending my friends. I also got kicked off the bus once when I was going on a fieldtrip to the school play. The bus driver told the instructor Mrs.

Monroe that we were too loud. My mother had to pick me up and take me to the performance. Overall, I just loved to talk, but I handled academics well.

Melissa is a young woman with wonderful ideas and humility. She wants to see some current educational practices changed.

> I think that there are too many people who do not care enough about children. A lot of teachers also do not like to deal with kids who have discipline problems. I understand that they are not there to babysit and cuddle the children, but we have to take every measure to ensure that every kid gets a fair shot at an education. I also feel that we need to raise our standards here in Texas. Standardized testing has made a mess of how people conduct their lessons. I think that if we used a different method to measure academic success, the teachers and administration could focus on really teaching the students in a way that would help them succeed. The year wouldn't be used merely to keep scores up or help them pass the test.

Rosa recounts having graduated from high school and never wanting to become a teacher. Rosa wanted to become a nurse and she started to take nursing classes. During the second semester, she lost interest for those classes and instead she listened to her cousin, who was in the education field. Her cousin was frustrated and impatient with her students at school. Rosa would listen and gave her suggestions. She soon realized how much teaching interested her. That summer she enrolled in early childhood classes and changed her major. She adds, "I never regretted that decision."

Her decision to teach impacts her teaching responsibility.

> I believe that our responsibility as an educator is to motivate students to be successful. We as teachers set the standards, and our students follow. We as teachers have to be very open minded and understand that everyone learns in different ways, and it is our job to look for that and differentiate for students in order for them to comprehend the material.

Gloria believes that the primary responsibility of a teacher is "teach all students like they were theirs."

There are some teachers who do not want to bother with low-performing students and ignore them sometimes. I believe that all students are capable of learning but may learn differently than how we sometimes teach. Patience is an important key factor as a teacher because without patience you can't help students that really need help.

Gloria also believes that as a Mexican American educator, she is responsible for teaching the Mexican American students about their culture, and if Spanish is their native language then teachers should build on that language and teach the second language. "I think that a lot of students are losing their native language, and if you built on both languages they can be better prepared for jobs in the future."

Gloria is a very competitive teacher who tries to be positive about everything she relates to her students by using many visuals. She believes that most of her students are visual learners like her. "My students have individual goals that I set for them. In the Accelerated Reader program, each student has to reach 40 points with 85% accuracy in each test." She also has weekly spelling bees in her classroom as well as fluency probes in order to monitor their reading fluency.

I like for my students to AR test so that they can practice comprehension skills. They work on centers to reinforce or review skills. In small groups I work on fluency and comprehension. I progress monitor their academic progress by testing them with running records, weekly exams, benchmarks, and state exams.

I asked Alejandro about the primary responsibility of Mexican American educators and he stated that although educators should recognize differences in culture,

I do not see differences in responsibilities between culturally different educators. All educators, regardless of their culture or ethnicity should be instilling passion in their students for learning and assist in developing their intellect to be part of a working society.

We spoke at length about his feelings and perceptions of his students and he shared these

thoughts with me.

> I believe that most of my students want to learn, yet some do not realize that they
> are there to expand their knowledge. Some students have yet to develop
> aspirations in becoming something when they grow up. That is why every first
> day of classes I ask my students one question, "What do you want to be when
> you grow up?" I was greatly disappointed when in one of my third grade class I
> had 90% of the students say they didn't know. This goes back to the way parents
> perceive education. Perhaps parents do not emphasize to their children how
> crucial it is for them to have goals in mind.

Alejandro relates to his students who are 99% Mexican American in this manner.

He tells them that he is from the same culture and that he was from the same social

economic level as them. Presently, he believes that the primary responsibility of an

educator is to mold the lives of people so that they can contribute to society in a most

positive and morally safe way. He believes that people should want to continue to learn

and have a passion for what they do or will do.

> I think back as to how I felt then and how I wish my teachers would have done
> certain things. I also recall how my family brought me up so I try to put that into
> my students' lives. I recall how some teachers would make comments or remarks
> about certain things thinking students are just children, but I can remember every
> single action in a vivid manner, so in trying to change behaviors it is good to talk
> to children one-to-one.

What he likes most of his profession is the way that he gets to tap into people's

lives and a little piece of him stays with his students. He says that hopefully they excel

and become something big in tomorrow's world. Twelve years from now, he envisions

himself as advocate for education and hopefully assisting in reforming education

programs to better reach children and develop students to become excellent leaders in

society. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus at his church. Alejandro helps as

much as he can with the ongoing projects that the organization has. He believes in giving

back to his community.

Alejandro wants his students to think of him as a challenging yet fair teacher who

always smiled and cared for everyone's well-being and intellectual growth. One of the

major aspects of education that he would like to change is the grouping of students. He

strongly believes that there must be a thorough analysis of student achievement when

grouping students. Alejandro states:

> There should be Federal law that supports our Gifted and Talented students so
> that the United States can remain a hegemony. Another aspect is to reform
> education programs at the university level for people who want to become
> teachers. Four years of lectures and then being thrown into a classroom does not
> do our students justice. Teaching is learning and it is not for everyone. It is a
> profession that challenges you on a daily basis. One must be willing to adapt to
> the ever-changing world; once you're not willing to learn, then that is when you
> should find a different profession.

Language

Was the Spanish language a natural occurrence? Were my informants bilingual?

Did they code switch? These questions guided my inquiry. The interviews revealed the

different degrees of variance in language that characterized these six participants.

Supported by previous research studies, bilingual educators have a good degree of

variance regarding the bilingual education program and practices (Bae et al., 2008; Lee

& Oxelson, 2006). As Trueba (1973) specified in his research study, it is important to

take into account the expectations of Mexican American educators in order to see

programmatic development from their perspective. The six participants in this research

study varied in their command of Spanish, but all six are bilingual education teachers.

Esperanza, Rosa, Alejandro, and Melissa had experience in the early transition model,

while Gloria, and Katalina are dual language educators. None of the participants use code switching as a way of responding to their questions. I thought that was interesting since code switching is usually practiced when the speaker feels comfortable in his environment (Krashen, 1982). Perhaps, the participants did not feel very comfortable with me since the six knew me as a school principal. They did use Spanish at the beginning of our interviews, but reverted to English once we started with the formal questions.

Esperanza told me that she liked school and that she enjoyed working on projects with her twin sister. She grew up in a "ranchito" (rural community) and walked two miles through the fields since they were migrant workers and lived in the working quarters to get to the closest school. She considers herself proficient in both English and Spanish. She states, "in the valley we were taught mostly English due to the teachers being mostly Anglo." She attended school in Mission, Texas. She feels very confident in her English skills as a writer as well. A school project she was particularly proud of was her family tree project because she was able to interview and spend more time with her grandmother. She remembers getting an "A" in that project, and when she was a freshman in college, her teacher called her asking her if he could use her project in a book that he was going to publish.

As far as Katalina, she is very aware of her culture now, but she was not always like that, as far as culture, and language are concerned. She did not learn about her culture and her heritage until she became a bilingual teacher. "I learned about my culture and my heritage from my students." She considers herself as the most Americanized

Mexican in the border, so she had to go back and learn about being Mexican and learn

Spanish so that she could teach her dual language students. She adds that in the border,

> We are predominately Hispanic. Racial and ethnic factors do not directly impact instruction. Compared to other regions, we are certainly different in the sense that we (meaning ourselves and our students) struggle with academic barriers others may not normally see, such as language and lack of real-life experiences.

Furthermore, she adds that the social economic status more than the native

language of her ELL students does affect their education.

> It opens the door to bullying and other hardships that students may encounter during their childhood. It also affects their hierarchy of needs, meaning that her students' first and foremost concern is food and shelter. For that reason my students lack the enriching real life experiences that will help them make connections to new learning. However, students should feel a sense of value and respect for where they come from and who they are. I'm reminded of a special needs student I had in my classroom. He taught me that every student can learn, at least in respect to their capacity. He was an introvert and socially awkward, yet he left my kinder class reading in both English and Spanish. He ended up being the life of the party at the kindergarten graduation.

For Melissa culture encompasses many issues, and the most important for her is

respect for others and their cultural heritage. Melissa works with special needs English

language learners who are also autistic students. Melissa wanted to add her experiences

with those students and what she does to respect them and their academic needs.

> I work with resource and autistic students so I ensure that they learn ways to socialize with regular students. I also accommodate and modify their instruction. For example, in testing, I eliminate one answer choice, do oral testing, and really just present their lessons, and assessments in a manner that they can understand, and make connections to real life.

Rosa who is currently teaching first grade states that Spanish proficiency is not a

problem for her and she communicates in Spanish with her sons because she wants them

to learn Spanish to communicate with their grandparents. Rosa remembers her

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elementary school years well and she loved school. Until one day when Rosa was in

third grade, she was moved to a different class where everyone spoke English. Rosa felt

very sad because she could not speak with her Spanish-speaking friends any more. "I

was frustrated because I did not like English." That was the most challenging experience

she encountered in school:

> Being placed with a group of students that had always been successful and had parents who had goals and plans for them. Growing up my parents never expected anything more than 70's in my report card. They did not expect for me to go to college but yet the group of students that I was surrounded with all had goals and plans for their future so I started following their motivations as I was growing up. To me it was a challenge because unlike them, I did not have the support from my family. That year I felt very different around my classmates. They would exclude me from their games because I would make mistakes when communicating. I made common ELL mistakes, such as using the wrong tenses, confusing pronouns, and changing sounds in words.

> Gloria has felt racially discriminated in the sense that because she knows two

languages and because she lives in the border, sometimes when she speaks Spanish,

people assume that she is from Mexico.

> I am very proud of my parents because they taught me both languages because it has opened a lot of doors in my career, but I am not from Mexico. I feel strongly about being an American and being born in the United States.

> This school year Gloria is teaching in a dual language setting. Her students are

very competitive, but they are willing to collaborate and work together as buddies. "My

English speakers are not afraid to ask my Spanish speakers for help or vice versa. They

work well together and very good students."

> Alejandro knows English and Spanish, and he feels very comfortable using both

languages. He learned Spanish at home, and he only used English at school as a child.

His interview was conducted in English, and he did not code switch, or revert to Spanish

at all. He is very proud of his heritage, and he understands the need to help his ELL students learn English, and he helps them feel comfortable as they make their language transition. Alejandro wants to become a school administrator, so he strives for professionalism in his classroom, and in his future studies as a school administrator. The week before my dissertation defense, Alejandro became an assistant principal.

Ethnic Pride

Did they exhibit normalized teaching practices? Or were they conscious about their students' cultural needs? Their interviews revealed their teaching practices and their commitment to their ethnic pride. According to Galindo (1996), research reflecting the biographical stories of Mexican American teachers would be helpful in preparing future teachers. In a sense the narrative provided by these six participants will inform the professional development for future educators. Part of the goal for this research study was to look for third generation Mexican teachers being "conductors" (Ladson Billings, 1994). Therefore, it was important to capture their responses in terms of their primary responsibility as a Mexican American educator and how the issue of racial/ethnic culture impacted their daily teaching. These were questions 15 and 23 in the semi-structured interview.

Esperanza believes that her primary role as a Mexican American educator is to teach and help students grow and become good citizens and become something they love to do. In addition, she adds that being able to communicate with students and parents so they can understand the importance of education is also her responsibility. Since she believes that making a difference is essential to education, she envisions that 10 years

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from the present time, students who visit her would probably remember that she made a

difference in their lives.

> The students that I had my first year of teaching have come back and have told me that I have impacted their life. One student told me that I helped him be more confident and outspoken. He got to do the sport pole vault his senior year. Some seniors have come by to speak with me. I remember this particular 8th grader. He was a middle school student and a football player. He had been initiated in a gang. He also told me that gang members did not do homework, so we agreed that he would come in after hours to do his homework. As time passed by, he finally got out of the gang and joined ROTC. I had another student, who was in a gang, also came by to my classroom after hours, and he also left the gang, and joined football instead. I also encouraged them to play music since my son was in a band. I played music that they felt familiar with and made them feel comfortable. Eventually one of the students bought his own guitar, and he played some guitar after school in my classroom and sometimes with my son. He thanked me for listening, and his parents praised me for helping him. He was a GT student stubborn and wanted to do things his own way. Eventually, after repeating this Mexican saying to them daily, he understood that selecting the right path is easier: "Portense bien que nada les cuesta" translated to "Be good it is free."

Katalina's decision to become a teacher was encouraged by her parents'

expectations for her to attend college. She has three other siblings, her sister is a doctor,

one of her brothers dropped out of school, as well as her other brother who decided to

return to school and just finished college. I asked her if her parents had different

expectations for the females and the males in her families, and she said that she did not

think so but that her brothers just had different aspirations and basically just needed

more time to decide. Although, Katalina did not learn Spanish until she was an adult

because she was raised in a monolingual English home environment, she utilizes her

experience to inculcate her students on the need to learn two languages. Katalina

believes that her primary responsibility as an educator is to be an advocate for children.

Her empathy for her students is salient.

I like being an advocate for children, caring in general. I have to know that every child is somebody. They are also somebody's sister, niece, granddaughter, etc. I know that they need to be cared for, and emotional time needs to be invested in them. I am sensitive to their cultural needs, especially in the border due to the current violence in Mexico. I have encountered families who are fleeing for their lives. Children are stressed, they need to learn English, and they are simply not caring for education, but they are worried about safety. Mexican American is something, but Mexican American in the border is different all together. We need to look at the affective domain of the Mexican Americans in the border.

Katalina is sensitive and passionate about helping Mexican American students in the border and that is why she agreed to participate in this research study. She works with different students, who are at-risk due to reading difficulties. Her schedule is based on 30-minute intervals, but her caring attitude drives her will to establish more meaningful relationships with her students. Therefore, she also makes time to see them during their lunch period and recess.

I have established some relationships with them. I view them as being unmotivated. They seem to believe that they are entitled to services and rewards, but they do not want to work hard to earn them. South students curse their teachers, and sometimes we cannot do anything to them, other than put them in time out or suspend them in school. I feel like we are passing out empty promises. We should bring back corporal punishment. Support is not there for teachers due to empty promises. Teachers are scared and feel disrespected. I had a student, who called me "pinche" in kinder, and I told her mother, and she just laughed.

In sharing some of her strategies for success in the classroom, she focused on the new State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment. The regimen that works best for her students involves intense interventions like reflective journals, academic vocabulary foldables, story elements, dancing, singing, personal connections with content using the students' names, and think alouds that assist the students in understanding the logic behind each question.

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According to Melissa's own interpretation of ethnic pride and culture, she

believes that the Mexican American culture should also encompass respect for women,

in particular Mexican American women.

> Culture, I think that Hispanics, and women are not respected as we should be. I
> can tell you that growing up, I would see that although my grandmother was a
> professional, she had to cater to my grandfather. My mother who is also a
> professional had to cater to my father. Basically, we are not respected. I think
> that maybe children act out because of the lack of respect that they feel they are
> getting from some teachers. I believe that because we live in the border, racial or
> ethnic culture, does not impact me as much as it would further north. However, I
> do think that because in our culture, women are expected to be subservient to
> their husbands, or families, it reflects on the children. It might be harder for the
> children to respect their female teachers or peers based on their gender. I believe
> that causes behavior issues sometimes. I also think that sometimes English is
> pushed on students and some of us lose our Spanish. I had to learn Spanish when
> I was in high school because in elementary school, I had to learn English to get
> ahead.

Interestingly though, Rosa states that regardless of the students' ethnic culture,

her teaching styles remain the same. I asked her to elaborate on her response. She

offered this explanation:

> In the border all my students are Mexican American, and if I would have a
> student from another ethnicity in my classroom, I would have the same high
> expectations for all them, regardless of their ethnicity. It is very important to
> respect every child's culture because it is what they know, and we as teachers do
> not want to confuse them. I treat all my students equally.

Knowing her personal teaching style and her own teaching characteristics, Gloria

shared this story with me. The fact that she has a great deal of patience with her students

helped her manage this situation. Last year, at the beginning of the year, she had a

student who arrived from Mexico. The student would cry and didn't know even her

alphabet. Gloria worked with her in small groups and tutorials, but her progress was very

minimal. She would even send her with another teacher because she thought that maybe

she was teaching her a way that she did not understand. However, the student approached her and asked if Gloria had already gotten frustrated because she was sending her with another teacher for help and she said no. Gloria explained to the student that she was sending her with the other teacher because their teaching styles were different, and she wanted to see if maybe she was the one not teaching her the way that she was able to learn. The student told her that she didn't want to go to the other classroom and said to her: "Mrs. Gloria, you have believed in me and have had patience with me. Give me a little bit of time and I will learn to read." Gloria continued to work with her in small groups and for tutorials and started seeing her improvement. Of course her grades were too low to be promoted, but this year that same student is one of the top students in first grade and is even reading and speaking in her second language, which is English. According to Gloria, her immigrant student taught her an important lesson in life and in her teaching profession. Now Gloria understands how important it is to build an affective relationship with her students. Gloria stated: "That student gave me a lesson that has stayed with me, I know that sometimes I have to just give it time and my goals will get accomplished."

Gloria grew up in a border city too. She is familiar with Mexican traditions like Christmas posadas and "Cinco de Mayo" festivals. She believes that in this South Texas borderlands community, the culture is different and her students are familiar with festivals like the George Washington Celebrations in February and the Jalapeño festival, which in her opinion are not traditional Mexican culture festivities. Since she is now teaching in a dual language setting, she is beginning to introduce and explain to her

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students the importance of culture and respecting different cultural traditions including

the traditional Mexican traditions. Her focus is respecting your family. She believes that

if students have family values that will help them be better human beings.

> This year our school is trying to promote more of our dual language program which is great because we are preparing our students to dominate two languages, have higher goals, teach them about culture. Our students' showcase was a success in which parents were amazed with what our students presented. This change for me was a good one because it makes me want to do better.

> Alejandro is proud too of his role as an educator. He hopes that his students are

able to become leaders who will make decisions as to how to run this country.

> It is scary to see how much importance society has given to certain types of shows and given celebrity A list status to some of these reality show cast members. I wish that my students will not be entangled with these types of people, but then again they sure know how to play America to make the big bucks, unlike educators.

Instead Alejandro would like to see his students become disciplined about their lives and

become doctors, lawyers, teachers, or something that they will be passionate about

because of something they did with him or something that he said that inspired them.

> Alejandro shared with me his thoughts about those cultural issues and ethnicity.

Again, this was a very interesting conversation because I told him that I was looking for

his most inner thoughts about being a third generation Mexican American and if he

believed that his third generation status mattered and if it did, how has it influenced the

way he interacts with his students. This is what he had to share:

> I think that 3rd generation Mexican American or older do have a great influence and impact on students. I see 3rd generation or older Mexican Americans in these categories:

Category 1: successful and appreciative of what they have earned; make their offspring earn things in life, show them and let them realize that they are not entitled to things.

Category 2: successful but unable to pass on to good values to offspring. Parents tend to give everything that they can because they did not have certain things when growing up and they do not want their offspring to go through the same ordeals they went through. Offspring seem to think that anything they want can be obtained but simply wanting it.

Category 3: unsuccessful but have learned the way the U.S. government functions and obtain much government assistance.

Alejandro also added the following statement:

I believe that everyone should aim to fall under category 1. We should all try to raise children with high expectations but always recall the hard work that it takes to get to where you are. SES should not correlate with expectations (lots of scaffolding will be needed for low SES students to assist them in reaching high expectations).

He also added that his students are used to simply seeing a non-diverse community, so it is pertinent to teach about the different cultures that exist. He does that by having his students recognize the differences in color and the people in the contexts that they study, perhaps they have different traditions. He helps his students make connections with those different people by pointing out that they are human beings with the same feelings as them. So he reminds his students that they need to keep in mind that even though people are different because of their cultures, in the end everyone is the same because everybody feels the same. He believes that knowing and respecting the students' culture is the gateway to their minds.

Social Economic Challenges Class Experiences

Had the participants encountered social economic challenges in their lives? Are they aware of their students' social economic challenges? In keeping with the national

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need for bilingual educators to teach the increasing number of ELL students, teacher preparation programs need to keep in mind the diversity of the pre-service educators (Bartolomé, 2004). Bartolomé mentioned the social class differences between teachers and students can impact the student achievement positively or negatively depending on the level of connections that are made between teachers and students. Mexican American educators can consciously or subconsciously practice normalizing ways of educating their students using deficit teaching practices (Bustos Flores, 2001; Contreras & Valverde, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999). However, it is important to highlight the positive culturally relevant practices that are being practiced by most of these six third generation Mexican American teachers. Maybe their own experiences with classism or discrimination have formed their teaching praxis and their cultural identity (Galindo, 1996).

Esperanza understands her students' social economic differences because she has experienced challenging economic times as a child and as an adult. In addition, Esperanza is sensitive to the students' diversity because she has worked in Border ISD schools in the north and in the south.

> My students' social economic status, I can tell the difference between the south and north schools. South schools parents, for example, bring in any snack that they can afford, regardless of the nutritional value. North schools, they can take them back and bring whatever we request. Difference in low social economic schools, some examples no prior experiences, low SES students have limited experiences, their goal is to graduate and to work. Higher SES students have vast experiences out of the city. They have technology to help them understand.

Even though her mother is a school principal now, Melissa grew up in the neighborhood and she recounts her experience as understanding what it feels like to be

poor and on welfare. She likes to relate her personal story to her students so that they

will not use poverty as an obstacle.

> I wish that they can go to college and come back and thank me for helping them. I would be proud of them because they would come back to thank me for helping them graduate and maybe go to college.

> Melissa believes that the primary role of an educator is to "inspire people,

impacting people." "You cannot forget that the kids need to eat, have clothing, in order

to learn." As far as being a Mexican American educator, Melissa believes that it is

important to teach the children both languages, English and Spanish proficiently and

correctly.

> Mexican American children who do not live in the border get bullied for being Mexican, but in the border most of our students are Mexican, so they have other issues like not being respected based on their low social economic status.

Melissa goes on to add that she works with fifth grade students who were perceived as

lazy or not caring by other teachers. She has established personal relationships with

them. By integrating children and helping them make friends, they can be accepted.

> Rosa explained that she has felt discrimination based on her social economic

status. The year she was placed in an English instruction third grade classroom, she felt

discriminated. "I was placed in a classroom where more than half of the students were

teachers' daughters or sons as well as the principals." Her parents were not

professionals. Her father was a mechanic and her mother was a housewife. She

remembers that her parents could not afford many things. Her classmates had name

brand clothes.

> Every day was a hard day for me because my classmates would make fun of my clothes or they would just simply make faces. It was obvious that we came from

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different backgrounds, but I stayed with that class. From then on eventually they got to accept me and everything changed.

For Gloria, the social economic status of her students only concerns her if the students have to prepare a project. She knows that some students will not have the money to afford purchasing the materials needed. Therefore, she is careful in assigning these projects. Gloria is very proud of her profession. She is proud because she has the ability to change someone's life by preparing them for the future. She enjoys being able to help or comfort them when they need someone. "I like being a role model for them and helping them feel confident." She thinks that because she was brought up around educators, it has become a goal each year to teach and prepare the students more.

Alejandro is aware of his students' economic challenges and can relate to them as well. He remembers that when he was in middle school, "peers would bully and judge me upon what brand of clothes I would wear." In reference to the low social economic status of his students, Alejandro shared the following thoughts:

> SES of a student impacts my teaching on a daily basis in certain aspects of my teaching. I, as I do with all things in my life, have goals. And in order to reach these goals, I must have them stated so that I can visualize them as well as see where I stand in reaching my goals. SES impacts my teaching by realizing that students' lack of success or exposure can be minimal because of SES, so I must bring into my lessons plenty of visual aids of what I am teaching so that they can make connections of the concepts being taught. As for my expectations for my students of low SES, my standards are not any different from a student that is considered high SES. I know that both of us must work diligently to be successful, but I am and will not lower my standards for them because society does not lower standards for anyone. I know that as a teacher, I am a tough grader but it is only because I expect for students to do better and should be willing to do better; there is always room for improvement. A colleague of mine recently told me, "I think you have your standards too high so when you grade your students they come out either border line or failing." I know that this can bring up self-esteem issues, but I believe I use enough praise and incentives to

maintain an understanding that a bad grade means we must work harder to meet our standards.

To him many students have impacted his teaching career. So he could not speak about just one occasion. He says that it feels great to know that he is able to reach over the students and see that they are learning. Sometimes there can be times when there is an ongoing lesson, and it seems that students are grasping a concept or not making the connections to a previous lesson, but then one student will ask a question that will help the other students make the connection to previous knowledge and that makes him very happy.

Age Range

During the analysis, I highlighted the importance of knowing third generation Mexican American teachers in the borderlands through the different ages and experiences they brought to their classrooms. By giving voice to their individual narratives, I had the opportunity of documenting the diversity that exists within the third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Below you will find the narratives of three teachers, one in her early 50's, one in her early 20's, and another one in her late 30's. These three third generation Mexican American teachers have encountered discrimination at different times during different time periods, a testimony to the continuous presence of discrimination in our country, and specifically in the South Texas borderlands region.

Esperanza is a kinder teacher now and she believes that is her true vocation. She has taught other grade levels. She has taught 8th grade, 4th grade, and 5th grade. Attributing her love for kindergarten to her mother, who taught Head Start for 20 years,

she remembers thinking to herself, "I wonder what my mother does at work. All I see her do is puppets and practices songs." She says that now she can relate to her because she understands why her mother's students claim that she had made a difference in their lives and that is why she wanted to become a teacher too. Based on her recollection of her mothers' students' comments, her mother made learning fun. Esperanza is the oldest participant in this group. She has overcome the most discrimination during her lifetime.

Melissa on the other hand is a novice teacher who feels that she is not respected by her colleagues. Discrimination comes to her in the form of disrespect from teachers with more years of experience.

> They tend to look down on me because I am currently in school and tutoring. They seem to think that the ideas that I have are juvenile or far-fetched. Oftentimes, they simply ignore me because I do not have experience.

Although she encounters disrespect from her colleagues, she feels that she is making a difference in the lives of the students that she helps.

> Everything about my profession makes me proud. I know that there are teachers, who are only in it for the paycheck, but I experience miracles at work every day. I have seen students grow in a very short time. I have seen people work very hard to make a difference in the lives of others, and I think that is what makes me most proud.

Rosa has not been teaching very long and she fondly remembers her first class ever. When I asked her about her previous students, she said,

> Well, my first class would be in high school, but I do hope that they are applying for college and share that with me. I hope that if they come and visit, they remember their kinder year with me and to tell me that I inspired them to be everything they can be. When I read a book to my students, and I read the dedication of the author, I often tell them that when they become authors not to forget to dedicate a book to their kindergarten teacher, or now first grade teacher because I helped them begin to read and write. They often laugh, but I do hope that one day it does happen.

Family Roles

All of the six participants are sisters, brothers, mothers, aunts, and mentors to their families. In addition, they also value parental involvement in their classrooms because they recognize that parental involvement is important, and it improves student achievement. Their collective beliefs are a testament to the deficit thinking argument that Mexican American parents do not value education (Lara-Alecio, Irby, & Ebener, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Esperanza sees her students and their families as integral members of the greater society. In her classroom, she has a variety of parents this year. A few students are very competitive, even in kinder, and like to win at everything. She added that she has two students who were reading already on their own, and they had surprised her because they seemed to have been lacking confidence and were not very extroverted. Some of her students come from a family of educators themselves: one grandmother worked as a teacher, another one manages a daycare. Overall, she believes that the majority of her parents are educated people and contributing community members.

The value placed on family traditions and family involvement was evident during Katalina's interview. Her vision for the future of the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students that she teaches is simple: continue to build relationships with her students and reward their accomplishments. Some of her students have formed a very strong bond with her. For example, she related her experience attending one of her student's Quinceañara Party. Her students love to come back and share pictures of their awards and recognition with her. For those reasons, she believes

that the teacher is the most impacting factor in any classroom. She had these words to

share about working with students in the south side.

> Negative students' attitudes in the south are in need of a change. Their mindset as
> far as not feeling welcome needs to change. I want to break the cycle of poverty
> and not having goals for the future attitude to change.

The most challenging experience that Melissa encountered was based on the fact

that since this Southwest borderlands community is small, and everybody knows

everybody, especially her family, she felt too much pressure. "I had a lot of pressure on

me based on my family's accomplishments. I could not go anywhere or do anything

without somebody knowing me or who I was related to." She decided to become a

teacher because of her mother's experience with a challenging third grade class that she

had. Melissa remembers the impact that her mother made on all of her students because

she nurtured them and kept in touch with them. One of her students graduated as the

salutatorian of his senior class. In his speech, he thanked her mother for changing his

life.

As far as parental involvement, Rosa believes that the low social economic status

of her students directly impacts her students' aspirations. Her students seemed more

preoccupied with graduating and finding a job than going to college. She attributes this

attitude to the fact that most of the students' parents do not have a college degree.

> The student who I will always remember is Tony Estrada. I had him in
> kindergarten and then in first grade. He is an ELL student. When he came to me
> in kindergarten, he only spoke Spanish, but his mother wanted him to stay with
> me and for him to learn the English language. He is a first generation Mexican
> American student. Both of his parents only spoke Spanish, but this student was
> motivated to learn the English language. He was able to learn the language. It
> was hard at first because both of his parents worked at nights, so he would ask
> me for help and extra time. I noticed that at such a young age, he was very

responsible and wanted to succeed to make me happy. He always wanted my approval and wanted to be next to me so he could understand me better, he would say. I saw his development and transition from one language to the next. Every time Tony sees me in school, he always stops and gives me a hug. I know that I made a difference in his life.

The school where Gloria works is very centrally located and that is why I wanted to capture her perceptions about how she views her students as integral members of the greater society. This year she has had a lot of parental support. She knows that her students are getting support at home. Ten (10) to 12 years from now, Gloria still believes that she would be teaching and she would like her students to come back and visit her and remember what she taught them.

> I have seen parents also push their children to set higher goals. As I talked to my students, they see college in their future. I have students that have set higher standards, and I know that they will be great professionals in the future. Since parents are so involved with their children, I think that they are good members of our community.

"Conductors" at Work in the Classroom Observations

The participants were observed in their classrooms once for 30 minutes each. The dates for observations ranged from January 9, 2013 to May 7, 2013. During my observations, I was looking for culturally responsive practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and evidence of the connections that the participants were making with their Mexican American students.

Esperanza, a culturally responsive teacher through content…

The day I observed Esperanza in her classroom was the second day after the Christmas holidays. On January 9, 2013 at 9:50 a.m., I visited her kindergarten classroom of 28 students. The reason why she had 28 students was because one of the

other kinder teachers had been resigned during the holidays and her students were divided among the other remaining teachers. The students were sitting in rows, four rows of seven students, because there was not enough room for a circle. A teacher assistant was present but she did not seem very involved in the lesson. I think she was nervous because I was observing.

Based on Esperanza's interview, I was looking to validate her responses with actual practice. I observed a social studies class and she was presenting the historical contributions of different community figures like Dr. Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez. The students helped Esperanza construct a Venn diagram. Esperanza demonstrated her bilingual teaching abilities during the lesson when one of her English language learners asked her a question about Cesar Chavez. She was responsive and demonstrated sensitivity to the student's need to understand the class discussion. The question was "Ya se murio Cesar Chavez"/(Did Cesar Chavez pass away?). In addition, she shared her experiences as a migrant worker and told her students about her family's struggles. In that sense, she demonstrated a connection with the context via her own personal narrative.

During the lesson, it was evident that Esperanza had a direct connection to the content, and she made sure that the students understood the struggles of the people of color. As a "conductor," she felt responsible for sharing the struggles endured by the people of color. She also incorporated students' ideas and showed flexibility when her students requested clarification during the lesson. Esperanza took caution in allowing her students to interject their personal opinions about MLK and Cesar Chavez. The

questions focused on the figures' cultural differences. One of the students asked, "Porque mataron a el señor?" Esperanza clarified that the times were different; people experienced differences based on the color of their skin. The students identified their similarities as helping people who were in need, helping students go to school where everyone was treated the same, and having good hearts.

Katalina, a teacher who came back to her Mexican American roots to make a difference, and develops relationships…

My classroom observation with Katalina was on January 21, 2013. We agreed that I would come to her classroom after school during her one-to-one tutorial session with one of her third grade students. She was amicable and cordial as I went into her classroom to observe her working with that one student. She has to work with him individually because his is a special education student. The student lacks the fundamental reading skills, and he is embarrassed of his situation, and he tends to misbehave in a large group setting. Katalina provides the instructional support that he needs in the afternoon, and she creatively is able to help his classroom teacher monitor his behavior in class by rewarding him with the one-to-one tutorial session that he needs. It is a win-win situation because she is able to maximize his learning and prevent unnecessary class disruptions during the day. She is advocating for the academic needs of that student and building a relationship with him as well.

I observed Katalina working with a third grade student. The lesson was organized into three parts. First, she read the basal story to him out loud. Then she asked him some comprehension questions so that together they could work on the story elements and

details of the story. Katalina only required the student to focus on the task at hand, and she provided quality caring feedback to increase the teacher and student exchange. Based on my observation, it is evident that Katalina is keenly aware of the important role that she has as a facilitator and "conductor " in the classroom.

Melissa, making personal and familial connections through pride…

Melissa's observation was done during one of her tutorial sessions after school as well. Her observation was on February 12, 2013. I arrived at her school at 3:00 p.m. so that I could observe her working with a second grade student. Since it was January and this student was making his transition to English, she was reviewing his reading fluency in English by providing him with repetitive text and rhyming words. When she finished the reading lesson, she also reviewed science cognates with him. She was very interested in what the student had to share with her as far as his experiences in a new reading group. He added that his parents were proud of him, and Melissa shared with me that he was a first generation Mexican American student. As an advocate, I knew that she was intentionally providing emotional warmth and a positive learning environment for the second grade ELL student. I counted the times that she modeled the words *yellow* (sometimes pronounced jello by ELL students), *bath* (pronounced baf by ELL), *with* (pronounced wif) and so on. She meticulously pronounced each word out loud and waited for the student to repeat the word. By providing the instructional support that the ELL student needed, she advocated for his academic progress as a superb "conductor."

Rosa, one who fosters reciprocal relationships…

When I observed Rosa, on March 7, 2013 in her classroom, she was teaching a language arts lesson. She worked with students who could not blend words together in order to become emergent readers. She used different songs that she created to help the students put sounds together. I asked her about this strategy and she went on to tell me that she always thinks about Howard Gardner's eight multiple intelligence strategies. Rosa added that she also used sports in her classroom in order to learn their sight words in kindergarten. "Sports helps students that might be very active because I give them an opportunity to act out the words and I model for them." During her lesson, she patiently calls on every single student. Each one of them gets up from their desk and participates in the interactive ppt. that Rosa had prepared for them. It was fun to watch because each time the students answer correctly, a clapping sound comes out of the speakers.

On the day I observed Rosa, she was presenting a lesson on adjectives. It was a simple lesson prepared for her English reading group because the first grade team regroups their students based on their native language reading. Rosa receives 11 students from two different teachers everyday for 90 minutes. She strongly believes in the heterogeneous groups for the rest of the subject areas because otherwise, the ELL students would be isolated from their stronger English language peers. Her perspective is that students learn from other students, especially if a teacher purposefully organizes the classroom for cooperative learning opportunities.

As she presented her lesson, the students were eager to begin. The words were simple, but they had to use them in content-based sentences and, if applicable, act the

sentence out. This is the list of words: *black, pretty, soft, hard, wet, hot, cold, funny, sad, happy, red, sunny,* and *bumpy*. This time she had grouped the students into four groups. As she presented the first sentence, the group that had the answer first had to hold up their index cards. The students had so much fun and the language modeling together with the elaboration and expanded vocabulary opportunities provided a productive lesson for the ELL students.

Gloria, a patient and dedicated educator…

I observed Gloria on May 7, 2013, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. Her second grade dual language class was working on a lesson on the parts of the plant. It was a science lesson, and it was presented in Spanish since in Border ISD, the dual language classes have Spanish science classes. Since Gloria was expecting me, there was a very easy flow of energy in the classroom. She had a total of 14 students and I asked her how many dual language classes in second grade and she told me two for a total of 33 students in both classes. She proceeded to draw for the students a *stem* (tallo), *roots* (raices), *seeds* (semillas) and explain to the students the purpose that each part of the plant had.

I observed face-to-face contact with the students so that she could be sure that the students pronounced each word correctly. The students were able to draw all the parts of the plant in their science journals. I asked one student to show me his journal, and I was able to observe the organization that Gloria expected in her classroom because all the students had their journals and kept them in very good condition. Then she proceeded to explain the independent practice activity where the students were going to do a cut and paste type activity. The involvement of the students in the lesson was solicited and

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expected. The students' smiles and the comfortable sharing of ideas prompted me to believe that the positive climate in this classroom provided for effective classroom instruction via a great "conductor."

Alejandro, a perfectionist with a big heart…

Alejandro thinks that many teachers forget that students are human-beings who behave in the same manner as adults. His observation was on February 13, 2013. The only difference between students and adults is that adults should be/are more knowledgeable and have more life experiences. He believes that children need interactions and only have a certain amount of attention span. That is why in his classroom, he follows a collaborative constructivist theory of teaching for the majority of his lessons. I was able to observe this approach in his reading lesson when I observed him. He gives students time to interact and collaborate with one another to discuss and better understand the topic. The topic that students were discussing when I observed him was the cause and effect and storyline of their reading story.

The story title was the *Tortoise and the Hare*, and first Alejandro read the story to the students pausing to ask them comprehension and guided questions. Then the students practiced choral reading of the story from their basal. Since he believes in constructive student experiences, the students were then directed to centers that he had prepared for them. Before he allowed them to go to a center, he explained each center activity thoroughly allowing for student questions. Once everyone knew what to do, the rotations began, and Alejandro called a small group of students to work with them on the leveled readers for fluency and comprehension. The positive climate, together with the

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mutual respect observed in this classroom, were examples of another "conductor" at work.

In order to earn the distinction of being called a "conductor" (Ladson-Billings, 1994), versus a "referral agent" (Ladson-Billings, 1994), a culturally responsive teacher knows how to affectively connect with their students in order to help them become academically competent, culturally connected to their heritage, and socially and politically conscious of their ethnic history (Ladson-Billings, 1994). On the contrary, teachers who are defined as "referral agents" do not believe it is their responsibility to do so. Based on the literature that focused on identifying ways to increase Mexican Americans' and English language learners' academic achievement, the teachers' backgrounds and self-identification with the students' ethnicity and the teachers' culturally responsive teaching can enhance students' academic achievement (Coady et al., 2011; Vierra, 1984). Therefore, the study sought to increase our knowledge base so that more pre-service educators could be prepared to work effectively with English language learners.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to document the perceptions of third generation Mexican American teachers who teach in the South Texas borderlands region. I documented the participants' perceptions about the connections that they make with their students to determine if there were any possible influences of racism, elitism, and institutionalism as teachers of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The intent was for the participants' stories to inform the current and future dialogues that seek to find solutions to increase the academic advancement of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The research question guiding this qualitative study was, What perceptions do third generation Mexican American teachers have toward:

1. the connections that they make with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and,

2. the relationship between themselves and their students.

The paradigm for this study was critical race theory. Critical race theory is grounded on the following five tenets:

1. foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process;

2. challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color;

3. offers liberatory or transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination;

4. focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color;

5. interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color. (Solórzano, 1998, p. 24)

The research methodology that I used to analyze, interpret, and document the lived experiences of the six participants in this research study was storytelling/ testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) and classroom observations. The study researched the perceptions of the connections that the third generation Mexican American teachers, working in the South Texas borderlands, believed that they were making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. Documenting the participants' stories was important because according to Anzaldúa (1987), "individuals who are marginalized by society and are forced to live in the borderland of dominant culture develop a sixth sense for survival, or instant sensing, presented by Anzaldúa as la facultad" (p. 38). There is much to be learned from capturing the reality of who Mexican Americans living in the borderlands are. According to Freire (1970), individuals can develop a sense of consciousness that enables them to become active agents who are able to question oppressive conditions and find possible solutions for change. I value the creation of justice and access for people of color in the areas of education, politics, and simple life necessities, such as employment, housing, and business opportunities. As a researcher, I can contribute to the area of education in a positive manner by capturing the life experiences of people of color.

Researchers like Bustos Flores (2001), Padilla and Gonzalez (2001), Solórzano (1998), and Vasquez (2010) believe that future research needs to be conducted in the areas of developing the ethnic identity of future teachers because cultural knowledge

provides teachers with the skills necessary to enhance the ethnic identity of their students. Furthermore, Murgia and Telles (1996), Kalogrides (2009), and Kao and Tienda (1995) proposed that if we were to adhere to the straight-line assimilation theory, third generation Mexican American students would be predicted to have the greatest academic achievement in comparison to their first and second generation Mexican American counterparts. However, this is not happening (Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001), and on the contrary, third generation and beyond Mexican American students are staying behind academically when compared to first and second generation Mexican American students (Nielsen & Fernandez, 1981; Rumbaut, & Komaie, 2010, Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). Research on academic achievement of first and second generation Mexican American students already exists as explained in Chapter II: (Carter, 1970; Crosnoe, 2005b; Crosnoe et al., 2004a; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Garcia & Cuellar, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Murgia & Telles, 1996; Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001; Parra Cardona et al., 2004; Ramirez, 1968; Skerry, 2000; Souto-Manning, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009; Trueba, 1973; Valencia & Black, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999; Valverde & Scribner, 2001). According to the review of the literature on the topic, currently none of the first, second, or third generation Mexican American students are following a set pattern of academic success (Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001; Kalogrides, 2009).

Since according to Padilla and Gonzalez (2001) and Kalogrides (2009), there is no established pattern of academic success that explains the academic success or failure of Mexican American students from the different generations. Based on the extant

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literature, researchers must continue to do research in this area. As a school administrator, I wanted to explore the reasons why certain schools in the South Texas borderlands region are demonstrating sustained levels of academic success with most but not all Mexican American students. The population (all students) according to the (TEA, 2012-2013) includes Mexican American, Black, White, economically disadvantaged students, ELL, special educations, and Asian, to name a few of the subgroups included in the all students category. Based on the literature reviewed for this research study, one answer to the research question of students' academic success lies with the classroom teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Karabenick & Clemens-Noda, 2004; Yoon, 2008).

In order to analyze the perceptions of the connections that third generation South Texas borderlands teachers believe they are making with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, I focused on the tenets as postulated by Trueba (1973), and the participants' responses and actions were analyzed through the critical race theory lens. I examined Trueba's (1973) tenets: the framework of cultural experiences of the Mexican American teachers, determined whether the Mexican American educators' experiences were polarized and reflected different philosophies of education, and considered the expectations of Mexican American educators and considered programmatic developments from the educators' point of view. These three tenets, postulated in 1973 by Trueba, are relevant to this study with the exception that the term Chicano was substituted for Mexican American. The CRT tenets of Solórzano (1998) and Trueba's (1973) tenets were used because they are tied to this

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research study by the contextualized stories of third generation Mexican American bilingual educators in the South Texas borderlands region.

According to the review of literature in Chapter II regarding the academic challenges being faced by Latino and Mexican American teachers working with Latino and Mexican American students, researchers indicated that additional research should be conducted in order to address "the problematic history of this population in the U.S. educational system" (Crosnoe, 2005a, p. 584). Additionally, researchers have urged future researchers to consider:

> the stubborn schooling problems like (e.g., segregation; limited access to higher education; diminished school achievement) coupled with the phenomenal growth of the Latino students as well as the erosion of economic gains that point to the need for immediate and workable school reform. (Reyes & Valencia, 1993, p. 279)

Critical race research affecting the largest subgroup (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010) within the Latino immigrant population will positively impact and increase the academic advancement of more Latinos by creating a diverse plan that will investigate the various social indicators of the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students in the South Texas borderlands region. These individuals are unique components of the larger Latino group that encompass the immigrant population in the United States. As a critical theory researcher, the goal was to analyze the narratives of third generation Mexican American teachers and their perceptions about the connections they make with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The analysis was conducted by interviewing, observing, and documenting their narratives/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b).

CRT researchers focus on conducting research that will document the individual stories that people of color live, have lived, and dream to live. The CRT tenets guided this researcher to find meaning in the data based on the racism, classism, or sexism that the participants have endured (Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal, 1998b; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The stories of the six third generation Mexican American teachers working as bilingual teachers with first, second, third generation, and beyond narrate multiple truths about life in America as third generation Mexican American teachers living in the South Texas borderlands region. These six participants were all third generation Mexican American teachers, and all six of them experienced some form of discrimination during their life and periods of time ranging from 1970 to 2012. Their contextualized narratives/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) gave voice to the continued existence of discrimination in the United States based on race without regard to generational status in this country (Lopez, 2003). The contextualized narratives/ testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) of these six participants informed this research study. By analyzing the participants' experiences through the lens of CRT (Solórzano, 1998) and Trueba's (1973) tenets, I was able to analyze their narratives to allow the educators' voices to discover plausible solutions to raise the academic success of the Mexican American students.

Cultural Experiences of the Third Generation Mexican American Teachers

The six participants in this study shared their different narratives of the importance of the students' culture along with their own interpretation in their daily instruction. All six participants arrived at the same analysis, which informed their own

cultural framework, Trueba's (1973) first tenet, to find the tools and teaching strategies

that would help them feel successful in teaching their, first, second, third generation, and

beyond Mexican American students. Each of the six participants provided their own

personal account of their Mexican American experiences and stories (Delgado Bernal,

1998b). Based on their responses to the semi-structured interviews, I was able to capture

the participants' ambivalence with two cultures, such as: Anzaldúa (1987) explained the

"Chicanos straddle the borderlands, one side of the Chicanos is constantly exposed to the

Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side they hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so

that they forget their language" (p. 62). This "ambiguity is what makes the borderlands

peoples' psyche flexible and conflicted," according to Anzaldúa (1987, p. 79).

Two of the participants said it best. Katalina stated that "Mexican American is

something, but Mexican American in the border is different all together. We need to

look at the affective domain of the Mexican Americans in the border." In addition,

Melissa stated that,

> Mexican American children who do not live in the border get bullied for being
> Mexican; but in the border most of our students are Mexican, so they have other
> issues like not being respected based on their low social economic status.

The participants understood that racism can also be based on institutional power.

Whether the experience related by Esperanza as a migrant worker or by Alejandro as an

overweight teenager, all six understood that they had the power to overcome institutional

racism and make a difference in the lives of their students and their own. Based on

interpretation of the participants' voices, responses, and observations, I did not observe

any unconscious forms of racism from the participants toward their students (Delgado,

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1989). Contrary to what had first prompted this researcher to pursue this topic, the six

third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region, who

participated in this research study appeared to be culturally connected and are finding

ways to connect with their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American

students.

An example of the cultural connection is that Esperanza believed that her

primary role as a Mexican American educator is to teach and help students grow good

citizens becoming something they love to do. In addition, Esperanza added that being

able to communicate with students and parents so they can understand the importance of

education was also her responsibility. Since Esperanza believes that making a difference

is essential to education, she envisions that 10 years from the present time, students who

visit her would probably remember that she made a difference in their lives.

> The students that I had my first year of teaching have come back and have told
> me that I have impacted their life. One student told me that I helped him be more
> confident and outspoken. He got to do the sport pole vault his senior year. Some
> seniors have come by to speak with me. I remember this particular 8th grader. He
> was a middle school student and a football player. He had been initiated in a
> gang. He also told me that gang members did not do homework, so we agreed
> that he would come in after hours to do his homework. As time passed by, he
> finally got out of the gang and joined ROTC. I had another student, who was in a
> gang, also came by to my classroom after hours, and he also left the gang, and
> joined football instead. I also encouraged them to play music since my son was in
> a band. I played music that they felt familiar with and made them feel
> comfortable. Eventually one of the students bought his own guitar, and he played
> some guitar after school in my classroom, and sometimes with my son. He
> thanked me for listening, and his parents praised me for helping him. He was a
> GT student, stubborn, and wanted to do things his own way. Eventually, after
> repeating this Mexican saying to them daily, he understood that selecting the
> right path is easier: "Portense bien que nada les cuesta" translated to "Be good it
> is free."

Katalina believed that her primary responsibility as an educator was to be an advocate for children. Her empathy for her students is salient.

> I like being an advocate for children, caring in general. I have to know that every child is somebody. They are also somebody's sister, niece, granddaughter, etc. I know that they need to be cared for, and emotional time needs to be invested in them. I am sensitive to their cultural needs, especially in the border due to the current violence in Mexico. I have encountered families who are fleeing for their lives. Children are stressed, they need to learn English, and they are simply not caring for education, but they are worried about safety. Mexican American is something, but Mexican American in the border is different all together. We need to look at the affective domain of the Mexican Americans in the border.

Through careful data analysis and triangulation, the participants' narratives were analyzed based on the following seven constant comparisons that emerged throughout the semi-structured interviews and observations.

1. Racialized Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Experiences based on race discrimination)

2. Social Advocacy (Did they use culturally responsive practices? What do they value?)

3. Language (Was Spanish a natural occurrence? Were they bilingual? Did they code switch?)

4. Ethnic Pride (Did they exhibit normalized teaching practices? Or were they conscious about their students' cultural needs?)

5. Social Economic Challenges and Classed Experiences (Solórzano, 1998) (Their own or their students)

6. Age Range (Important to establish a historical timeline)

7. Family Roles (Importance place on family, family roles and parental

    involvement)

These seven constant comparisons emerged to allow the researcher to analyze the participants' contextualized stories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In addition, the six participants' stories and practices during their observation were put through another analytical tool and that was to determine if they were being "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The researcher wanted to know if the participants were (a) academically strong (b) culturally competent, and (c) sociopolitically critical as lifelong learners (Ladson-Billings, 1994) The contrary would mean that they were "referral agents," passing on their culturally responsive responsibilities to other educators who were "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Class Subordination in the South Texas Borderlands Region

The researcher was able to further research the participants' concerns with regard to social economic status by looking at geographic locations of the four schools represented in this study. As the researcher moved further south in research locations, the third generation Mexican American teachers faced greater academic challenges based on their students experiencing 94% to 100% economically disadvantaged status in their respective schools. This is based on the following accounts by the participants who related their personal stories of their students' economic distress.

Nevertheless, all six of the participants concurred that they believed that their students' economic challenges could be conquered by building relationships with their students and having high expectations for them. Meaning that these six participants'

practices as "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994) impacted their students' academic success based on what researchers like Valenzuela (1999) would call a caring pedagogical perspective that conceptualized the students' cultures, communities, and identities. Furthermore, Gonzalez et al. (2005) would also agree with the educational practices of these six participants because they use their students' funds of knowledge to maximize their academic success. In addition, Phillips and Nava (2011) would define these six participants as good Latino/a teachers based on the fact that all six participants acknowledged their own bicultural experiences and understood oppression and, therefore, were willing to become role models within the normalizing practices of the school district.

Cultural Framework of the Six Participants

In Border ISD, Esperanza understood her students' social economic differences because she had experienced challenging economic times as a child and as an adult. In addition, Esperanza was sensitive to the students' diversity because she had worked in the demographically diverse north and south Border ISD schools.

Esperanza explained:

My students' social economic status, I can tell the difference between the south and north schools. South schools' parents, for example, bring in any snack that they can afford, regardless of the nutritional value. North schools, they can take them back and bring whatever we request. Difference in low social economic schools, some examples no prior experiences, low SES students have limited experiences, their goal is to graduate and to work. Higher SES students have vast experiences out of the city. They have technology to help them understand.

In addition, even though her mother is a school principal now, Melissa grew up in the neighborhood and recounted her experience as understanding what it feels like to

be poor and on welfare. Melissa likes to relate her personal story to her students so that they will not use poverty as an obstacle:

> I wish that they can go to college and come back and thank me for helping them. I would be proud of them because they would come back to thank me for helping them graduate and maybe go to college.

Melissa believes that the primary role of an educator is to "inspire people, impacting people….you cannot forget that the kids need to eat, have clothing, in order to learn." As far as being a Mexican American educator, Melissa believes that it is important to teach the children both languages, English and Spanish, proficiently and correctly.

> Mexican American children who do not live in the border get bullied for being Mexican but in the border most of our students are Mexican, so they have other issues like not being respected based on their low social economic status.

Melissa goes on to add that she worked with fifth grade students who were perceived as lazy or not caring by other teachers. She has established personal relationships with them. By integrating children and helping them make friends, they can be accepted.

Within their cultural framework, the teachers working in the southernmost school located in Border ISD and Frontera ISD used these common strategies to succeed with their students: (a) building caring relationships with students, (b) learning their students' native language, (c) exhibiting patience and nurturing attitudes toward their students, and (d) high expectations. This a close correlation to what Scribner and Scribner (2001) found in his study of what successful schools' practices do.

The participants advocate for their students' academic needs by using their own life experiences with classism and racism to help their students understand that academic

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success does not have to be determined based on their economic status. The six

participants are examples of how far determination and motivation can get you. As

voiced by Galindo (1996): "being a teacher is an occupational identity that links past

with present identities for the Chicana (Mexican American) teachers, especially due to

the similarities between who their students are and who the teachers were as children"

(p. 96).

As an administrator and a researcher of Mexican descent, I began this research

study with an assumption. I have learned much from this study. My initial research

assumption was wrong that the third generation Mexican American teachers were more

assimilated to the American values, specifically to the deficit thinking educational

practices (Bustos Flores, 2001; Contreras & Valverde, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999).

Contrary to what prompted this research study, as an administrator, I made the

assumption that perhaps the ELL students' academic achievement was decreasing

because their teachers seemed to be culturally unresponsive and disconnected. My

assumption was not the findings of the research study. I came in with a deficit and

discovered differently from these six participants.

Based on the six participants' contextualized stories, there is a genuine spirit of

advocacy and cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) for their first, second, third

generation, and beyond Mexican American ELL students. The voices of these six third

generation Mexican American teachers do not indicate that their first, second, third

generation, and beyond Mexican American students have internal deficits or deficiencies

(Valencia, 1997). On the contrary, they understand their students' complex historical,

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personal, and economic struggles (Delgado Bernal, 1998a) because they have themselves defied the extant research findings that post the following question, "Why are second and third generation, and beyond Mexican American students not experiencing the same academic success as their immigrant, and first generation peers?" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Oh & Cooc, 2011; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). These six third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region make meaningful connections with their students.

The nature of the participants and their own experiences are more relevant, more connected because they experienced the discrimination, not because they were third generation. For Gloria, the social economic status of her students only concerns her if the students have to prepare a project. She knows that some students will not have the money to afford purchasing the materials needed. Therefore, she is careful in assigning these projects. Gloria is very proud of her profession. She is proud because she has the ability to change someone's life by preparing them for the future. She enjoys being able to help or comfort them when they need someone. "I like being a role model for them and helping them feel confident." She thinks that because she was brought up around educators, it has become a goal each year to teach and prepare the students more.

Melissa feels that she is making a difference in the lives of the students that she helps.

> Everything about my profession makes me proud. I know that there are teachers, who are only in it for the paycheck, but I experience miracles at work every day. I have seen students grow in a very short time. I have seen people work very hard to make a difference in the lives of others, and I think that is what makes me most proud.

As Ladson-Billings (1994) stated, "conductors" are teachers who prepare their students well. Melissa, is a teacher who is a conductor. Based on all the participants semi-structured interviews and observations all six participants are conductors (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

As far as parental involvement, Rosa believes that the low social economic status of her students directly impacts her students' aspirations. Her students seemed more preoccupied with graduating and finding a job than going to college. Rosa attributes this attitude to the fact that most of the students' parents do not have a college degree, yet, she is confident that she can make a difference in the educational attainment of her students. Rosa related this story as a testament of her involvement and dedication with one of her students:

> The student who I will always remember is Tony Estrada. I had him in kindergarten and then in first grade. He is an ELL student. When he came to me in kindergarten, he only spoke Spanish, but his mother wanted him to stay with me and for him to learn the English language. He is a first generation Mexican American student. Both of his parents only spoke Spanish but this student was motivated to learn the English language. He was able to learn the language. It was hard at first because both of his parents worked at nights, so he would ask me for help and extra time. I noticed that at such a young age, he was very responsible and wanted to succeed to make me happy. He always wanted my approval and wanted to be next to me so he could understand me better, he would say. I saw his development and transition from one language to the next. Every time Tony sees me in school, he always stops and gives me a hug. I know that I made a difference in his life.

In addition, Alejandro demonstrated his facilitator role as a teacher by scaffolding students' instruction and building their prior knowledge during a lesson. This indicates his status as a conductor (Ladson-Billings, 1994). His sociocultural approach to teaching enabled his students to participate and learn in a very positive climate.

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Alejandro does this because he thinks that many teachers forget that students are little human-beings who behave in the same manner as adults. The only difference between students and adults is that adults should be/are more knowledgeable and have more life experiences. Alejandro believes that children need interactions and only have a certain amount of attention span. That is why in his classroom he follows a collaborative constructivist theory of teaching for the majority of his lessons.

I was able to observe this approach in his reading lesson when I observed him. Alejandro gives students time to interact and collaborate with one another to discuss and better understand the topic. The topic that students were discussing when I observed him was the cause and effect and storyline of the *Tortoise and the Hare*, their reading selection. Since Alejandro believes in constructive student experiences, the students were then directed to centers that he had prepared for them. Before he allowed them to go to a center, he explained each center activity thoroughly allowing for student questions. Once everyone knew what to do, the rotations began, and Alejandro called a small group of students to work with them on the leveled readers for fluency and comprehension. The positive climate, in addition to the mutual respect observed in this classroom, were examples of another "conductor" (Ladson-Billings, 1994) at work.

Esperanza in her own personal way believes that she has a firsthand understanding of the differences that exist between the demographically diverse areas of Border ISD students. She has paid her for her students' fieldtrips and assemblies more times that she can remember. The importance of such practice is so that her students, "will not be judged by their peers, and so that they will not be left behind."

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Katalina is proud to highlight the fact that she enjoys motivating her students to learn and come to school. Therefore, she likes to offer rewards to her students. Her favorite rewards are snacks so that the students get to have an additional snack before they go home because she knows that some of her students only have the meals that they eat at school.

Are the Educational Experiences of the Third Generation Mexican American Teachers Polarized or Do They Reflect Different Philosophies of Education?

Educational opportunities are proportional to who is effectuating the teaching. Let us now examine the second tenet proposed by Trueba (1973). The educational experiences that the six participants shared with me were diverse but not polarized or different. By documenting their distinct and personal experiences, I was able to travel through time from 1978 to the present via their unique life experiences. The wealth of knowledge that I was able to record based on their lived experiences in education provided me with an opportunity to extrapolate how these six different educators utilized their educational experiences to enrich their instructional educational philosophies and strengthen their commitment to education and their desire to positively impact their Mexican American students' lives.

For example, Esperanza, who lived the migrant worker experience and was placed in an ESL classroom because she was Mexican, took that experience and has adopted this educational philosophy: "My students' social economic status impacts their learning. I can tell the difference between the south and north schools so I invest more time with them [south school students]." Katalina, whose educational experience is very

different from Esperanza because she considers herself as "the most Americanized

Mexican in the border," she had to go back and learn about being Mexican and learn

Spanish so that she could teach her dual language students. As Anzaldúa (1987) stated,

people who grew up in the border have developed a border identity. Katalina added that

in the border,

> we are predominately Hispanic, racial and ethnic factors do not directly impact
> instruction. Compared to other regions, we are certainly different in the sense
> that we struggle with academic barriers others may not normally see, such as
> language and lack of real-life experiences.

Furthermore, Melissa adds that the socioeconomic status of her students does affect their

education.

> In addition, Melissa added:

> I think that there are too many people who do not care enough about children. A
> lot of teachers also do not like to deal with kids who have discipline problems. I
> understand that they are not there to babysit and cuddle the children, but we have
> to take every measure to ensure that every kid gets a fair shot at an education.

> In reference to teaching Mexican American students, Rosa believes that as a

Mexican American educator, she should remember what she went through in her school

years so that she can understand and facilitate her English language learners' learning

environment better. For the English language learners, Rosa uses bilingual education

strategies that she learned in college. She uses total physical response as I observed in

the language arts lesson. The visuals that she incorporates during her lessons are also

animated so that the students can participate by going up to the visual display unit and

click on the correct answer. English study buddies are also utilized so that the students

can help each other during and after the lesson. Having heterogeneously grouped classes

helps the ELL students become more integrated and confident on their language skills.

Rosa stated the following:

By this I mean that I care for all my students. I believe that every child deserves the opportunity to start over every day. To understand that children can have good days and bad days and just because they refused to do work on one day, or made the wrong choice, we should not hold it against them. If time permits, I allow students to share something about them with me because it makes me understand them more and it helps me have a bond with them. I will even share a story about my sons with them. This has helped me because I want them to have the trust in me to be able to come and ask for help when they do not understand a lesson and not feel intimidated by me. I know that I am a very big part of their lives and an authority figure for them right now so I understand it can be very hard for some students to ask for help especially ELL students. They are often the very quiet ones who are unsure of themselves and their abilities.

Additionally, Gloria believes that the primary responsibility of a teacher is:

teach all students like they were theirs. There are some teachers who do not want to bother with low-performing students and ignore them sometimes. I believe that all students are capable of learning but may learn differently than how we sometimes teach. Patience is an important key as a teacher because without patience you can't help students that really need help.

Finally, Alejandro captured the hypothetical essence of this research study by

providing the different categories of the third generation Mexican American individuals

according to his interpretation:

I think that 3rd generation Mexican Americans or older do have a great influence and impact on students. I see 3rd generation or older Mexican Americans in these categories:

Category 1: successful and appreciative of what they have earned; make their offspring earn things in life, show them and let them realize that they are not entitled to things.

Category 2: successful but unable to pass on good values to offspring. Parents tend to give everything that they can because they did not have certain things when growing up, and they do not want their offspring to go through the same

ordeals they went through. Offspring seem to think that anything they want can be obtained but simply wanting it.

Category 3: unsuccessful but have learned the way the U.S. government functions and obtain much government assistance.

Alejandro also added the following statement,

I believe that everyone should aim to fall under category 1. We should all try to raise children with high expectations but always recall the hard work that it takes to get to where you are. SES should not correlate with expectations (lots of scaffolding will be needed for low SES students to assist them in reaching high expectations).

Based on my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998b), I was able to analyze the six participants' educational philosophies and discovered that they are interconnected with the common themes of social justice, advocacy, and empathy with the educational needs of their, first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. The six participants can relate to their students because they have lived similar lives. The participants understand these struggles firsthand and are willing to invest their personal time in educating their students. Their actions support the study conducted by Scribner and Scribner (2001), which concluded that high-performing schools serving Mexican American students have: (a) highly excited teachers who believe in high expectations, (b) teachers who empower students for their own learning, and (c) teachers who ignore barriers of deficit thinking.

Mexican American Educators' Expectations in Programmatic Developments

From Their Point of View (How did they see themselves in their children?)

Finally, via the analytical research process, I was able to allow their narratives to tell me their third generation Mexican American teachers' points of view regarding the

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programmatic development that will positively impact the academic improvement of

Mexican American students regardless of their generation. This follows Trueba's (1973)

recommendation to capture the Mexican American educators' point of view. The

participants' recommendations are similar to the recommendations made by Scribner

and Scribner (2001). The six participants' recommendations are:

1. Building caring relationships with students,

2. Learning their students' native language,

3. Patience and nurturing attitudes toward their students, and

4. High expectations.

Regardless of the students' economic status, all six participants concluded that

they had high expectations for their students. They took personal pride in acknowledging

that they were working with students' lives. For example, Rosa stated that regardless of

the students' ethnic culture, her teaching styles remain the same. I asked her to elaborate

on her response. She offered this explanation:

> In the border all my students are Mexican American, and if I would have a
> student from another ethnicity in my classroom, I would have the same high
> expectations for all them, regardless of their ethnicity. It is very important to
> respect every child's culture because it is what they know, and we as teachers do
> not want to confuse them. I treat all my students equally.

Katalina shared an experience with me, and she stated that some of her students

have formed a very strong bond with her. For example, she related her experience

attending one of her student's Quinceañara Party. Her students love to come back and

share pictures of their awards and recognition with her. For those reasons, she believes

that the teacher is the most impacting factor in any classroom. She had these words to share about working with students in the south side.

> Negative students' attitudes in the [south] are in need of a change. Their mindset as far as not feeling welcome needs to change. I want to break the cycle of poverty and not having goals for the future attitude to change.

In addition, all six participants concurred that high stakes testing is affecting their teaching.

Growing up around educators, Gloria understands how the present educational environment has become more of a drill and test environment. As she compares her school years to the present, she feels that all the students do is test. "Learning is supposed to be fun and students should be eager to learn. I think that if we would teach without the drilling, our students would do better. We pressure our students at a young age."

Adding to the value placed in the students' funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992), the value placed on family traditions and family involvement was evident during Katalina's interview. Her vision for the future of the first, second, third generation, and beyond students that she services is simple: "continue to build relationships with her students and reward their accomplishments."

There are research studies that indicate that the third generation students are not as motivated (Kalogrides, 2009; Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001). Kao and Tienda (1995) proposed that the first generation immigrants' success in education was attributed to their parents' insistence and optimism toward upward mobility based on educational attainment. Their study compared first and second generation immigrants; they

discovered that second generation immigrants do not share the same amount of optimism and, therefore, are not as successful as their first generation counterparts. Kalogrides (2009) proposed, "this hypothesis maintains that immigrants' attitudes favoring upward mobility are passed along to their children but tend to erode by the third generation" (p. 163).

Other researchers have indicated that people of color who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time become discouraged due to their experience with discrimination. The researcher used Buriel and Cardoza's (1993) definition of the major characteristics of a third generation Mexican American. However, it is important to note that based on their lived experiences with racism and classism, the six participants in this research study intentionally decided to either speak and/or learn Spanish and embrace some the cultural traditions to build strong caring relationships with their students. The six participants in this study indicated some research dissonance of the extant literature pertaining to third generation Mexican Americans. According to Kalogrides (2009), the achievement paths of first, second, and third generation Mexican American students do not depend on the economic level of the schools that the students attend. I believe that the dissonance of the research needs to be documented because the academic success of first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students is still not the same as their non-ethnic peers (Kalogrides, 2009; Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001).

Contributions of the Study

I embarked on this research study with the intention of making an academic contribution to the existing research. Social justice is my passion and I understand that as a Chicana researcher who was born and raised and currently works in the South Texas borderland region, my findings of research could be subjective. However, I celebrated with the findings because I am an administrator who is evaluated based on the academic success of all the students in the testing grades. I want to make sure that teachers are making relevant connections with their students. As a result of the participants' contextualized narratives, I was able to find out that my initial assumption was wrong. Their lived experiences informed them and they were not assimilated to the "normalized" mode of study. They understood their students' differences because they saw themselves in their students.

The contributions of this research study has contributed to my personal life as an educator the knowledge that is needed to celebrate the individual contributions of Mexican American educators, whether they are first, second, or third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. Their contributions toward the academic success of Mexican American students is evident based on the findings of this research study. The six participants I interviewed and observed were all third generation Mexican American teachers who are emotionally and professionally involved in ensuring the social and academic success of their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students. How do they do it? They do it one student at a time. They offered strategies and critical analysis that can be used by educators working with Mexican American

students everywhere. The most salient of these strategies and sometimes the most challenging for some educators is taking time to build relationships with their students.

1. Building caring relationships with students

2. Learning their students' native language

3. Patience and nurturing attitudes toward their students

4. High expectations

These four strategies are directly connected with the seven recurring themes that were enunciated by the "conductors" (participants) as represented in Figure 5. The participants' racialized experiences, social advocacy, language ethnic pride, age ranges, and family roles demonstrated to be interconnected to the strategies that they voiced in their contextualized narratives. The six participants demonstrated to be "conductors" (Ladson-Billings, 1994) because in their daily work with first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican Americans, they consciously incorporated the seven constant comparisons and their suggested strategies.

Conclusion

For the purpose of creating educational polices that address the educational needs of all the Mexican American students, having the knowledge about these Southwest borderlands teachers will guide future policymakers, educators, and administrators to make more meaningful decisions affecting future generations of Mexican American students. Class subordination was the common thread that all six participants identified as a causal factor that impedes Mexican American students in the South Texas region

schools who were part of this study from achieving greater academic success

independent of their generational status.
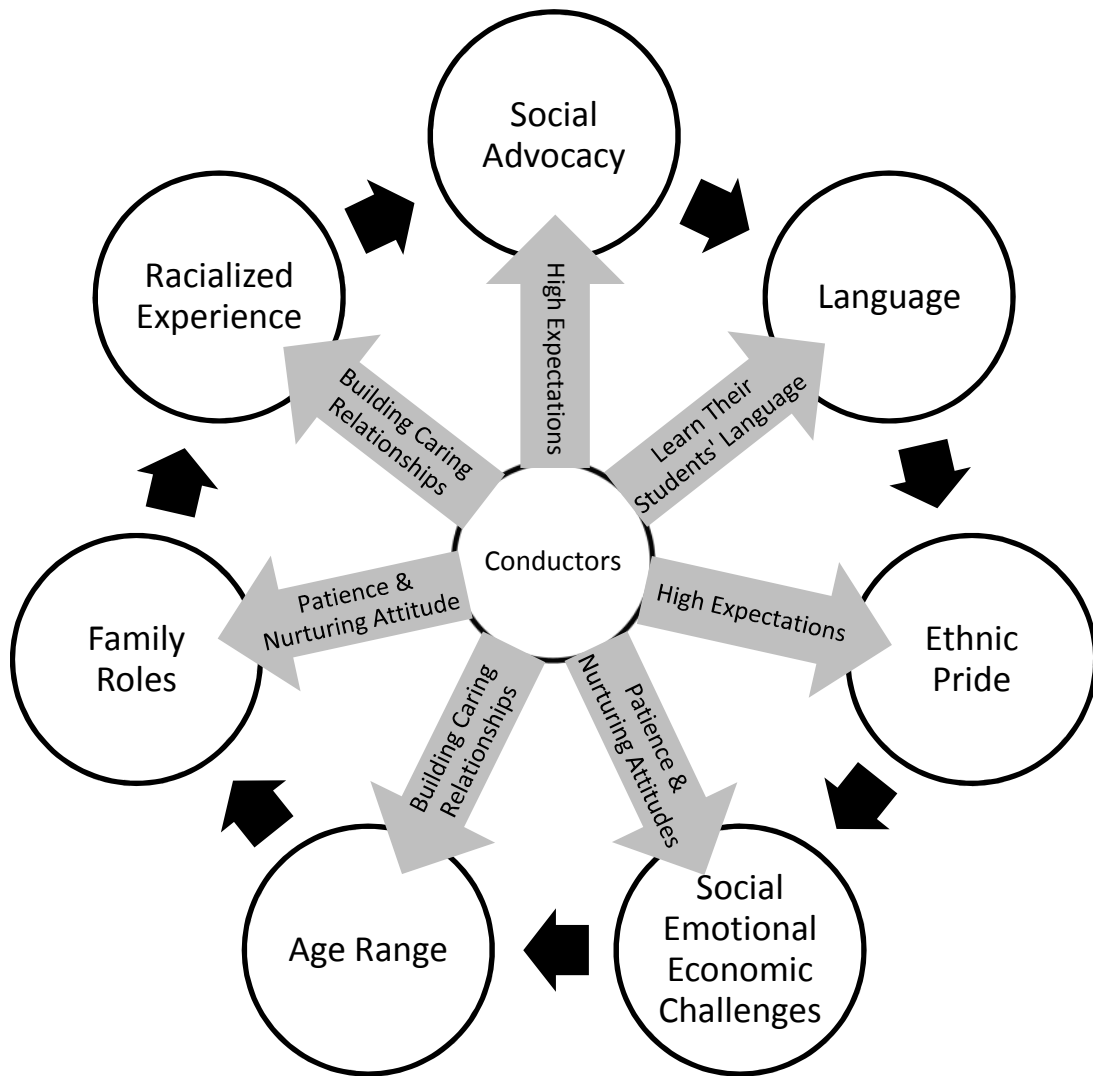
Figure 5. The Seven Constant Comparisons and the Strategies Recommended by the
Participants.

Consequently, I was able to understand that the most commonly recurring theme cited as a causal factor for the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students' failing academic success was their social economic status as opposed to their culture. Based on the six participants' narratives/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b), they concurred that their English language learners' greatest challenge was their economic challenges. For that reason, their respective schools found ways to equalize the students' learning environment. The six participants did not see their students' economic status as a deficit but rather found strategies to level the educational plane by providing caring relationships, school supplies, mentorship through after school activities, and referrals to medical services like dentists. For example, all of the six schools provided school supplies, school uniforms, healthy snacks, medical referrals, and even a free dental program for their students at their respective schools.

Based on this research study that focused on the perceptions of third generation Mexican Americans toward their first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students, the participants in this study did not follow any previous pattern to achieve their teaching degrees either. However, all these six participants living and practicing pedagogy in the South Texas borderlands region are willing and feel directly responsible for making the cultural and emotional connections to help their Mexican American students of multiple generations achieve academic success regardless of their social economic class or varied academic needs.

It is with a glad heart that the results indicate that the third generation Mexican American teachers' success with their first, second, third generation, and beyond

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Mexican American students is cause for celebration. The findings of this research study will ultimately "prepare future generations of teachers to intentionally engage and empower students whose life stories differ from their own" (Oh & Cooc, 2011, p. 404). The greatest contribution to research in this topic was by capturing the life experiences of third generation Mexican American teachers in the South Texas borderlands region.

Third generation Mexican American teachers' perceptions were collected with the purpose of contributing to literature concerning the first, second, third generation, and beyond Mexican American students and their educational underachievement. According to the CRT paradigm, all six participants in this research study shared their lived experiences and how their own personal experiences with racism or classism informed them in certain ways to become social justice advocates and culturally responsive teachers who understand their responsibility to help Mexican American students achieve their academic goals.

Implications for Future Studies

The most important person in the educational setting is the classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Therefore, the need to understand and gain from the knowledge gathered by documenting the narratives/testimonios (Delgado Bernal, 1998b) of these six third generation Mexican American teachers working in the Southwest borderlands region classrooms will benefit and inform the higher education institutions that are preparing pre-service teachers.

There was much to be learned from capturing and documenting the voices and the perceptions of the Mexican Americans living the borderlands and especially the

voices of the third generation Mexican American teachers. According to Freire (1970), individuals can develop a sense of consciousness that enables them to become active agents that are able to question oppressive conditions and find possible solutions for change. Since the research paradigm for this research study was critical race theory, value was given to the creation of justice and access for people of color in the areas of education, politics, and simple life necessities, such as employment, housing and business opportunities. "Pedagogical practices and instructional leadership that draw on the multiplicity of life experiences of all students will create transformative learning communities" (Oh & Cooc, 2011, p. 404). The implication for future research studies is for teacher preparation programs to use the research results in preparing high quality, third generation and beyond culturally responsive English language leaners teachers and follow them to the teaching field to document their teaching practices and the connections they make with their students and find out if they have the same "conductor" (Ladson-Billings, 1994) practices as the six participants in this study. I also recommend that additional third generation Mexican American teachers' research studies are conducted in different geographical locations at the state or national level. Another future recommendation would be to conduct the same type of study with third generation Mexican American teachers who have parents who did not attend college since in this research study five out of the six participants were also educators.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE WALKTHROUGH FORM

Name:
Appraiser:
Campus: PEREZ EL

Date: Sep 27, 2012
Assignment/Grade: 4th
Time: 10:50 AM to 11:00 AM

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM
Walkthrough

Domain 1: Active, Successful Student Participation in the Learning Process

☑ 1. Engaged in learning   ☑ 2. Successful in learning   ☑ 3. Critical thinking/problem solving

☐ 4. Self-directed   ☑ 5. Connects learning

Comments:
All students actively participating in the lesson and the teacher encouraged student sto think of a new vocabulary word (librarian). Connects sniffles with students prior knowledge "moquitos" then you clean your nose etc"

Domain 2: Learner-Centered Instruction

☑ 1. Goals and objectives   ☐ 2. Learner-centered   ☑ 3. Critical thinking and problem solving

☐ 4. Motivational strategies   ☐ 5. Alignment   ☑ 6. Pacing/sequencing

☐ 7. Value and importance   ☐ 8. Appropriate questioning and inquiry   ☑ 9. Use of technology

Comments:
Goals and objectives clearly stated Students had to analyze when it was time to end the first part then the middle part and ending part of a written story.---Need to ask students how they analyze their answers. Leading to use more vocabulary and elevated vocabulary.

Domain 3: Evaluation and Feedback on Student Progress

☐ 1. Monitored and assessed   ☐ 2. Assessment and instruction are aligned   ☐ 3. Appropriate assessment

☑ 4. Learning reinforced   ☑ 5. Constructive feedback   ☐ 6. Relearning and re-evaluation

Comments:
Teacher made constant questions to reinforced learning and gave constructive feedback as students answered. – Suggestion-Could use the diiscusss lesson with their shoulder partner or fron partner to see if they understand your lesson

Domain 4: Management of Student Discipline, Instructional Strategies, Time, and Materials

☑ 1. Discipline procedures   ☐ 2. Self-discipline and self-directed learning   ☐ 3. Equitable teacher-student interaction

☐ 4. Expectations for behavior   ☐ 5. Redirects disruptive behavior   ☐ 6. Reinforces desired behavior

☐ 7. Equitable and varied characteristics   ☑ 8. Manages time and materials

Comments:
Discipline procedures evident no need to remind students on how to behave.

Domain 5: Professional Communication

☑ 1. Written with students   ☑ 2. Verbal/non-verbal with students   ☐ 3. Reluctant students

☐ 4. Written with parents, staff, community members, and other professionals   ☐ 5. Verbal/non-verbal with parents, staff, community members, and other professionals   ☑ 6. Supportive, courteous

Comments:
During this lesson the teacher was very supportive and courteous to the students as they answered all questions.

Domain 6: Professional Development

☐ 1. Campus/district goals   ☐ 2. Student needs   ☐ 3. Prior performance appraisal

☐ 4. Improvement of student performance

Comments:

Domain 7: Compliance With Policies, Operating Procedures, and Requirements

☐ 1. Policies, procedures, and legal requirements   ☐ 2. Verbal/written directives   ☑ 3. Environment

Comments:

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE PBIS STUDENT SURVEY

Partnership for Behavior Success
POSITIVE   DISCIPLINE   ●   SAFE   SCHOOLS
STUDENT   SURVEY

_____
School

PLEASE FILL IN THE **"FEMALE/MALE"** BUBBLE AND THE **"GRADE"**
BUBBLE LOCATED AT THE <u>TOP PART</u> OF THE SCANNABLE FORM.

ALSO, PLACE YOUR ANSWERS (1-24) IN THE BUBBLES
LOCATED AT THE <u>LOWER HALF</u> OF THE SCANNABLE
FORM USING PEN OR PENCIL.   SELECT THE CHOICE
(1 THRU 5) THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR VIEWPOINT.

1.	Do you think students in this school treat other students: ● politely?
2.	● fairly?
3.	● in a friendly way?
4.	● in a helpful way?
5.	● with kindness?
6.	● with respect?
7.	Do you understand school rules?
8.	Do you know how to behave: ● at recess?
9.	● in the classroom?
10.	● in the bus waiting areas at school?
11.	● at lunch?
12.	● in the halls?
13.	Do adults help make this school a friendly place to be?
14.	Do you think adults in this school: ● are helpful to students?
15.	● treat students with kindness and respect?
16.	● treat students fairly?
17.	● are friendly to students?
18.	Do you believe that the adults in this school care about you?

Please continue ……

_____
CREST: ESD 112 $4^{th} - 8^{th}$ grades
REVISED: September 18. 1996

STUDENT SURVEY continued:

19. Do you feel safe: ● in the classroom?	
20. ● in the halls?	
21. ● in the restrooms?	
22. ● at lunch?	
23. ● at recess?	
24. ● in the bus waiting areas at school?	

Thanks for your help!

Four subscales are available with this survey: Support for Staff (items 1-7), Behavior Instruction (items 8-14), Safety (items 15-21), and Respect for Students (items 22-28); three key individual items (29-31) are also included. A Technical Report on the CREST Safe Schools Surveys (McCausland, S. G., & Hales, L. W.) is available from ESD 112, 2500 NE 65th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98661.

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS

Semi-Structured Questions

Instructions: Please read the questions carefully and answer with a brief response. If you have further comments, please feel free to write them. Your responses are strictly anonymous.

1. Where were you born?
2. What is your gender?
3. Are you or have you ever been a bilingual education teacher?
4. How many years have you been teaching?
5. What grade level do you teach? Or have you taught?
6. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
7. Where were your parents born?
8. Where did you attend school?
9. Did you like school?
10. What is your most memorable experience from your school years?
11. What is the worst experience that you can remember from your school years?
12. Do you remember what initially moved you to become an educator?
13. What is the primary responsibility of an educator?
14. What is the primary responsibility of a Mexican American educator?
15. Do you like your students?
16. Can you relate to your students? If so, how and why?
17. Do you believe that your students can be academically successful?
18. Do you view your students as integral members of the great society? If so, why and how?
19. If your students can come back to see you (visit) with you 8-10-12 years from now, could you face them knowing that you provided the strongest academic preparation that you could provide during the time you had that student?
20. Would the students have any reproach toward your teaching style?
21. Do you understand your students' culture?
22. Do you value their culture and try to involve and respect their culture in your lessons?
23. What is your awareness of racial discrimination?
24. What is your awareness of social class discrimination?
25. Do you understand what phenotype discrimination is?
26. In retrospect, do you see yourself as a social agent or a social conformist?
27. Are you proud of your profession?
28. What do you envision yourself doing 5, 10, 12, years from now?
29. Are involved with any community projects? If so, which one and why?

APPENDIX D

WEB FOR SEVEN CONSTANT COMPARISONS