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An exploratory study of Hispanic officer
recruiting in the Mexican-American
community of South-Central Los Angeles:
implications for the officer corps of the future

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



THESIS

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HISPANIC OFFICER
RECRUITING IN THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN
COMMUNITY OF SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OFFICER CORPS OF THE
FUTURE**

by

Javier Hernandez

June 2003

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MEXICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF SOUTH-CENTRAL LOS ANGELES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OFFICER CORPS OF THE FUTURE**

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B.S., United States Naval Academy, 1995

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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DEVELOPMENT**

from the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines factors relating to youth interest in joining the Navy among the Hispanic population in South-Central Los Angeles, California. The study begins with a comprehensive review of literature on Hispanics of Mexican origin. Information on youth interest in the Navy is gleaned from personal interviews with teachers, counselors, JROTC instructors, military recruiters, and local clergy. The results suggest that Hispanic youths are limited from pursuing higher education because of poor academic preparation, underdeveloped English-language skills, poverty, and crime. The population also faces unique cultural and regional challenges that stem from historical influences and the close proximity of Mexico to the US. Additionally, evidence suggests that high school teachers and administrators are often barriers to youth awareness of military service. It is recommended that the Navy or Department of Defense form partnerships with schools and community organizations in largely Hispanic regions to identify and overcome the various obstacles that limit youth from pursuing higher education, learning about opportunities for military service, and qualifying for the Navy's officer programs.

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I. HISPANICS IN THE OFFICER CORPS

Five percent of the Navy and Marine Corps officer corps is Hispanic. That's better than the other services, but the sea services have a long way to go before matching the civilian Hispanic population in America... Our officer corps needs work... It's vitally important that we give [sailors and Marines] living, breathing role models.

Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig

U.S. Naval Academy

September 14, 2000

A. BACKGROUND

This researcher recalls hearing, as a midshipman in the early 1990s, that the Navy was striving to increase the number of Hispanics in the officer corps to better reflect both the enlisted force and civilian population in the United States. Hearing something very similar almost a decade later motivated me to ask why has so little progress been made?

Certainly, Hispanics belong at the center of any discussion regarding the future of the Navy's officer corps. Demographers predict that the Hispanic population of the United States will double by the year 2020, representing a population of some 50 million people, and that Mexican-Americans will make up 63 percent of the total Hispanic population (Sosa, 1990; Del Pinal, 1993). On a national scale, Hispanics have now displaced blacks as the largest minority (Vigil, 1997b; Davis, 2000; Grieco & Casidy, 2001). Additionally, in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Houston, Hispanics already outnumber both blacks and whites (Davis, 2000). Based on data from 1990 through 1996, growth among the Spanish-surname population in the nation was ten-times faster than that of the Anglo population growth (Davis, 2000).

According to the Bureau of the Census, in *Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995-2050*, whites will become a minority in the U.S. shortly after 2050, with Hispanics becoming the majority (Davis, 2000). Further, if U.S. Hispanics were considered a nation, they would be the fifth-largest Latin-American nation in this hemisphere, and contain the most diverse blend of Spanish-speaking cultures (Vigil, 1997b; Davis, 2000). The largest populations of Hispanics are located in the largest U.S. cities, and each is unique in composition and culture. U.S. Census data from 1990 indicate that the Los Angeles Hispanic population

was comprised of 80 percent Mexicans, 6 percent Salvadorean, 3 percent Guatemalan, and 10 percent other; New York was 46 percent Puerto Rican, 15 percent Dominican, 5 percent Columbian, 4 percent Mexican, four percent Equadorean, and 16 percent other; and Miami was 66 percent Cuban, 11 percent Nicaraguan, 6 percent Puerto Rican, and 17 percent other (Davis, 2000).

Due in part to the unique population mix in a city, it is important to understand regional factors that can influence the culture of a city's population. In Los Angeles, for instance, there is a well-documented phenomenon known as the *mexicanization* of the Hispanic population in the city (Vigil, 1997b; Davis, 2000). This *mexicanization* in Los Angeles refers to the sense of pride and dignity in things ethnic or Mexican, due in a large part to the regenerative effect created by the flow of Mexican immigrants into the city, combined with the proximity to Mexico (Vigil, 1997b; Davis, 2000).

B. PURPOSE OF STUDY

Forward-thinking leaders in the Navy need to recognize the demographic trends of Hispanics, look to the future, and target this group as a rich pool of personnel resources. Further, in developing an effective recruiting strategy, the Navy must conduct studies of Hispanic populations by region, as these groups tend to differ considerably.

With this in mind, the purpose of this research is to examine the Mexican-American subculture that exists in the Los Angeles inner-city and its implications for the recruitment of Navy officers from *latino* youth. The goal is to determine current attitudes of the Los Angeles inner-city Mexican-American community toward the Navy, to assess the relationship of these attitudes with officer recruiting efforts focused on Hispanic youth, and to develop recommendations for effective recruiting strategies.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on three primary research questions: (1) Are Hispanic youth limited in any way from pursuing an interest in the military's officer corps? (2) What are the current attitudes of high school students in South-Central Los Angeles toward the Naval Service? (3) What influence do the community and parents have over inner-city youth in their choice of a career, and what attitudes do they have toward military service?

This study uses qualitative research methods and inductive analysis to identify recurrent themes from interviews conducted with a sample of 14 teachers, counselors, Junior ROTC instructors, recruiters, church pastors, and priests from the South-Central part of the city of Los Angeles, California. The interview protocol uses three questionnaires, consisting of 11-12 questions, to explore issues that may influence young people of Mexican descent in the area from entering military officer programs. The Glaser and Straus (1967) constant comparison method of data analysis is used to develop themes that are supported with quotes from the interview data.

The scope of this research includes: (1) a historical review of the development of the Mexican-American community in Los Angeles, (2) a review of significant cultural distinctions of the Mexican-American population in Los Angeles, and (3) a presentation of the current state of the Mexican-American community from available Census data and interviews. The thesis concludes with an evaluation of the findings regarding the recruitment of Hispanics into the officer community and several recommendations for further research.

This study is limited by the relatively small sample size and the fact that no interview information was obtained directly from students. This researcher had limited funding and time available to travel to Southern California to conduct interviews. Six interviews were cancelled due to schedule changes of interviewees. Additionally, school principals were either hesitant or unwilling to grant direct access to students, despite support and recommendations from school counselors.

D. POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This research may yield insights relevant to meeting the recruiting goals for Hispanics in the Naval Officer community or wider applications among the armed forces in various regions throughout the United States.

E. THESIS ORGANIZATION

Chapter II presents the history of the Hispanic population in Los Angeles and identifies important elements in the development of the *mexicanized* culture that currently exists there. Chapter III reviews the sample population, interview protocol, data collection procedures, and data analysis methodology. Chapter IV presents themes

developed from the data analysis. These themes are supported with specific quotes from the interview data. Finally, Chapter V provides a summary of the study, major conclusions, recommendations, and areas for additional research.

II. HISPANICS OF MEXICAN ORIGIN IN THE U.S.

ANSO's [Association of Naval Services Officers] mission of advancing recruitment, retention and career development for Hispanic and other minority officers is of critical importance to the future of our Navy and Marine Corps Team. The CNO [Chief of Naval Operations], Commandant and I are committed to this mission and will continue to advocate higher investment in the human capital that makes our Navy and Marine Corps the world's finest.

Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England

April 11, 2002

A. OVERVIEW

Military seniors recognize the value of diversity. Thus, exploring issues surrounding recruiting, retention, and advancement of Hispanics officers in the military is relevant and important. Before there can be any serious expectation of setting strategy or making effective policy to improve representation in the military officer corps, one must first understand the Hispanic population. In this chapter, the researcher hopes to improve the understanding of this population, and then specifically the Mexican-American population in urban Los Angeles, California. This chapter explains the term Hispanic, and why a regional focus is more appropriate than a larger-scale study; provides a short history of Mexico, an anthropologic description of the development of the Mexican-American community in Los Angeles; highlights some cultural distinctions of the population; and presents information concerning pursuit of higher education and military service.

B. HISPANIC DEFINED

If someone were to identify herself or himself as a "Hispanic," what exactly would that mean? Does it mean the person is a Spanish speaker? Does it imply a particular race? Does it have something to do with religion? Does it mean one has a Spanish surname? The answer to the first question is, "it depends," and the answer to the subsequent questions is, "not necessarily." This is exactly why examining the "Hispanic" population of the United States poses some very unique challenges. For example, it is

important to have some understanding of exactly what it means to be a Hispanic as compared to a *latino*, or a Mexican-American, or a Puerto Rican.

The term, Hispanic, was once nothing more than a category for describing a portion of the population. Hispanic is not a culture. It is not a race. Hispanic is not an ethnicity. It is not a religious category, nor is it descriptive of a language use. The term, Hispanic, was adopted by the Nixon administration in 1970 and first employed as a U.S. population category in the 1980 Census (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Davis, 2000; Guzman, 2001). For the 1980 and 1990 Censuses, people were asked if they were of “Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent” (Guzman, 2001, p. 1) and then asked to further specify if they identified with certain national identities: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish/Hispanic (Guzman, 2001; Davis, 2000). Mike Davis describes the word “at best a bureaucratic expediency” (Davis, 2000, p. 12). Prior to 1970, Hispanic origin was determined indirectly by publishing lists of people with Spanish surnames or asking people if they considered Spanish as their “mother tongue” (Guzman 2001).

The U.S. Census Bureau takes its definition of the word Hispanic from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001). OMB currently defines Hispanic or Latino as people of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture, or origin, regardless of race (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001). Yet, people of these different nationalities have different histories and different challenges and reasons for entering the United States.

A reason the word itself (Hispanic) deserves attention is that some may be quick to stereotype or make assumptions about a group of people identified by this term and inadvertently make an error in judgment as a result. To attract a group of people to a particular profession, this type of judgment error must be avoided. Another reason this word deserves attention is because there is little consensus on its usage and some consider the term as an insulting label. Entire books have been written on the subject of the use and meaning of this word. The only consensus is that there is no term to describe the millions of people who are a fusion of different origins, including Iberian, African and Indian in North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America (Davis, 2000). Even the definitions applied by the U.S. Census Bureau do not help to

clarify confusion in this sense. For the 2000 Census, white was defined as “people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa”; and American Indian “refers to people having any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment” (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001, p 2). What, then, is the proper way to identify oneself if from mixed descent? If this seems a bit confusing, it is no surprise that, in the 2000 Census, most of the respondents who reported being of “some other race” (versus white, black, American Indian, Asian or Native Hawaiian) were actually considered Hispanic (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001).

The term might be insulting to people, because it is seen as an attack on the identity and particular background of a person. Chicano (Mexican-American) historians dislike the term, Hispanic, because they feel it stresses the European legacy to the complete exclusion of the indigenous roots of the Mexican people (Gonzales, 1999). Again, Hispanic is a word created in the United States that, for expediency, groups together people from various backgrounds originating from Latin American countries. People living in Argentina, for instance, would not identify themselves as Hispanic. More recently, the term *latino* has gained popularity and was adopted by the Census in 2000 (Guzman, 2001). What may be offensive about the word Hispanic is that it is not a self-descriptive word, such as *latino*. In a recent interview, Yasmin Davidds-Garrido, a Latina author and scholar, explains: “Latinos and *latinas* had a problem with that [Hispanic term], because they say to themselves, ‘how dare someone come who is not even our own and give us a name and expect us to follow it.’ So you hear about people having a problem with that term [Hispanic] because it was created for us, not by us... [whereas] *latino* or *latina* means anybody from Latin decent. It could be Ecuadorian or Mexican and so basically people are more comfortable with that” (Brown, Cannady & Cannady, 2002).

Certainly, people of Latin American descent who have settled in the United States for generations have become familiar with the term, Hispanic, and do not necessarily take offense to it. If, however, a recruiter in South-Central Los Angeles refers to a Chicano (Mexican-American) as a Hispanic, that person may well take it as an insult. In Texas

and California, the word *latino* is generally preferred. On the East Coast, the terms Hispanic and *latino* tend to be used interchangeably (Gutierrez, 1995). These differences may be explained by the considerable population of immigrants in the West. Recent immigrants are more prone to identify with their country of origin and label themselves as such. It is not surprising, then, the Latino National Political Survey found that people of Mexican origin in the U.S. tend to prefer being called Mexican (Gonzales, 1999). Even self-identifying as a Mexican or Mexican-American in California can be a challenge, especially if one's last name is Johnson (Johnson, 1999). It is worth pointing out, also, that most native Mexicans never met a Columbian, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, or Cuban until coming to the United States, and vice versa.

C. A REGIONAL FOCUS

A regional focus is absolutely necessary when looking at a population. This is true for the same reason that people of the East Coast are more comfortable than people on the West Coast in referring to themselves as Hispanic: different people have historically settled in different parts of the country and for different reasons. Cubans settled mostly in Florida, fleeing poverty and political oppression in Communist Cuba, and are often offered political asylum. Puerto Ricans are found mainly in the New York area, but they need not enter the United States illegally, as they come from a U.S. territory. Mexicans have flocked to the Southwest for generations to escape poverty or war, and have often done so illegally. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2000 that 80.1 percent of Cubans were concentrated in the South, 63.9 percent of Puerto Ricans lived in the Northeast, and *latinos* of Mexican origin were distributed with 56.8 percent in the West and 32.6 percent in the South (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001).

As mentioned in Chapter I, U.S. Census data from 1990 indicate that the Los Angeles Hispanic population was composed of 80 percent Mexicans, 6 percent Salvadoran, 3 percent Guatemalan, and 10 percent other; New York was 46 percent Puerto Rican, 15 percent Dominican, 5 percent Columbian, 4 percent Mexican, 4 percent Ecuadorian, and 16 percent other; and Miami was 66 percent Cuban, 11 percent Nicaraguan, 6 percent Puerto Rican, and 17 percent other (Davis, 2000). Additionally, in 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 56.5 percent of *latinos* of Mexican descent

lived in a central city, and about 76 percent of *latinos* of Cuban descent lived outside of the central city of a metropolitan area (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). Understanding the population of a city should help paint a picture that Hispanics in one city may be very different from Hispanics in another one, and have different needs, aspirations, and concerns.

The U.S. Census Bureau found that “half of all Hispanics in the U.S. lived in just two states: California and Texas” (Guzman, 2001, p. 3), with California containing the most, a full 31.1 percent of the total Hispanic population (Guzman, 2001). Hispanics of Mexican origin make up 58.5 percent of all the Hispanics in the U.S. and are concentrated mostly in the Southwest (Guzman, 2001). Of the 11 million Hispanics in California, over 4 million were living in Los Angeles County in 2000 (Guzman, 2001). The largest Hispanic population of Mexican descent was found in Los Angeles County, with 3 million people (Guzman, 2001). Due to sheer numbers, general information concerning Hispanics is reflective of the Hispanic population of Mexican descent. It makes sense, therefore, to begin a regional study of Hispanics by examining its largest subgroup in a region, such as Los Angeles, that gives wide access to the population.

D. ASSIMILATION

An issue that seems forever to be a part of Mexican-Hispanic history in the U.S. concerns assimilation, or the lack thereof. Each region in the United States has its own history and uniqueness. This is true of the European populations that have settled in different areas of the United States as well. While it is certainly true that “contemporary U.S. big cities contain the most diverse blendings of Latin American cultures in the entire hemisphere” (Davis, 2000, p. 15), the racial/cultural melting pot description of the U.S. does not hold true. For instance, there are numerous books and articles describing a movement returning to the cultural values and lifestyle of Mexico through the 1980s, 1990s, and today. This is largely due to the massive immigration of native Mexicans from across the border. This has had a regeneration effect on the population and is described as a reemergence of *mexicanidad* or *mexicanization* (Davis, 2000; Vigil, 1997b; Valenzuela, 1999), often in contrast to any notion of assimilation.

In a recent televised conference, titled “Immigration Policy--The American Cause (2002),” Pat Buchanan summarized the fear many share regarding this lack of assimilation:

The United States has 31 million foreign born in this country right now, 1.5 million coming in, illegal and legal each year. There are more foreign-born in California than there are people in New Jersey. There are more foreign-born people in New York than there are in South Carolina. Now what is the problem if we are a nation of immigrants? We have absorbed millions before. ...as I mentioned [before], many of these folks have, unlike other Americans, never fully assimilated into our society or take more time. Obviously, it can be done, but they take more time and we aren't giving ourselves the time. ...many of the Mexican folks coming into this country, unlike our ancestors who got on the boat and did not have a return ticket—they got on the boat and hit the coast and they were here for good. They were coming to a new country: their country. They put their past behind them. This was their future. Many of the Mexican folks are leaving here just as if we had left during the depression to go to Mexico for jobs and incomes. ...Many of the elites in this country, Mexican-American and others, have come to realize the power of multiculturalism, of maintaining ethnic identity, of not being assimilated, of maintaining a voting block. Here's the president of LULAC, President Clinton's Medal of Freedom winner, Mario Obledo: “California is going to be a Mexican state. We are going to control all the institutions. If people don't like it, they should leave.” Here is Ernesto Sadilla, the [ex]President of Mexico, speaking inside the United States to Mexican-Americans: “You are Mexicans. Mexicans who live north of the border.” Here is Jose Pescador Osuna, counsel general of Mexico in California: “Even though I am saying this part serious, part joking, I believe we are practicing La Reconquista in California.” I am tempted to say no way, Jose, however I said that back in 1992 and I got in trouble because of that. The truth is Jose may be right. Fifty-eight percent of Mexicans in a recent survey believe the Southwestern United States, by right, belongs to them. So we have the ethic of assimilation giving way to this ethic of multiculturalism, and we are changing to accommodate them rather than many of them changing to accommodate their new country.

For assimilation to occur, there must be a fairly stable population in a location over a length of time, and it is essential that the minority population adopt the ways of the majority to function in society. People marry and work, and children become educated in local schools, learning the local language and customs. The children, in turn, grow up, marry, work, and raise their own families. In a generation or two, the native tongue of

the family becomes that of the majority population. Eventually, the customs, values, native language, and history of a family are the same as that of the majority of the population. Of course, in Los Angeles County, people of Mexican descent are the majority, not a minority. Of that population, a large percentage is made up of recent immigrants. The population is not stable. The constant influx of recent immigrants drives the local economy. Businesses and social affairs, including worship, can all be conducted in Spanish without a need to learn English. Additionally, one finds a very low proportion of exogamous marriages (Suarez-Orozco, 1998). The combination of these elements makes assimilation difficult and slow for this population.

These facts have not been ignored by large corporations or by politicians. “The latino community represents 632 billion dollars of purchasing power” (Brown et al., 2002), and many businesses are more than willing to adjust business practices to win over the *latino* consumer. As Yasmin Davidds-Garrido points out, “If you want our money...you are going to have to do it our way.” At the same time, Earl Ofari Hutchinson points out that politicians, too, are adjusting to draw the *latino* voters: “As *latinos* become the emergent minority, second in America no longer, what happens is that we are seeing a change in the Republican Party. If you notice George Bush is speaking Spanish now. There are radio broadcasts now courting in particular in California, New York, and Texas. They are heavily courting the *latino* vote” (Brown et al., 2002).

Some families have certainly been in the United States for generations and their children have been assimilated, but that, in itself, creates some strife in their social lives. One cannot ignore the proximity that Mexico has to the United States, and many cannot ignore their families right across the border. In the movie, *Selena* (1997), the character played by Edward James Olmos does a particularly good job in describing some of the social pressure felt by Mexican-Americans:

Being Mexican-American is tough. Anglos jump all over you if you don't speak English perfectly. Mexicans jump all over you if you don't speak Spanish perfectly. We've gotta be twice as perfect as anybody else...I'm serious. Our family has been here for centuries, and yet they treat us as if we just swam across the Rio Grande. I mean, we gotta know about John Wayne and Pedro Infante. We gotta know about Frank Sinatra and Agustin Lara. We gotta know about Oprah and Cristina. Anglo food is too bland, and yet when we go to Mexico we get

the runs. Now that, to me, is embarrassing. Japanese-Americans, Italian-Americans, German-Americans...their homeland is on the other side of the ocean. Ours is right next door. Right over there. And we gotta prove to the Mexicans how Mexican we are. And we gotta prove to the Americans how American we are. We've gotta be more Mexican than the Mexicans, and more American than the Americans both at the same time! It's exhausting. Damn! Nobody knows how tough it is to be a Mexican-American.

The search for social acceptance is magnified in schools and creates strife and division for many students of Mexican ancestry (Valenzuela, 1999; Johnson, 1999). If this kind of strife exists for students of Mexican descent in schools, this researcher has no reason to doubt that similar trends may be seen in colleges, universities, or even the military. In explaining *mexicanidad*, Octavio Paz said that it is “not an essence but a history” (Bean & Tienda, 1987). To truly understand high-school-age students from Los Angeles, a brief look at history is needed to gain insight about their cultural background.

E. BIRTH OF THE MEXICAN PEOPLE

Indian and the Spanish civilizations are equally important in explaining the rise of the Mexican culture (Gonzales, 1999), and thus important for our understanding of the Mexican population in the United States. The appropriate place to begin is the environment in Spain and the New World prior to the meeting of these civilizations.

Spain, the Iberian Peninsula, has a history of conquest, in part due to its particular location in Europe. Its culture is a true amalgam with influences from various groups of people including the Celts, Basques, Phoenicians, Romans, and Moors. Rome introduced Christianity to Hispania (Spain) as the official religion in the fourth century. In the eighth century, Hispania fell to the Moors, who renamed the Iberian Peninsula, al-Andalus. The Moors ruled over the Iberian Peninsula for over 750 years. The society that resulted was initially one of religious tolerance and one that valued the classical heritage of the West, while making contributions in arts, literature, mathematics, and philosophy (Gonzales, 1999).

There were always those who resisted foreign occupation, and their movement gained momentum in 1146 when a fanatical Islamic sect introduced religious intolerance in al-Andalus. This resistance and liberation movement came to be called the

Reconquista. The Christian religion mixed with nationalism for the Spanish, and all campaigns against the Moors became a holy crusade of sorts. The result of this convergence of a liberation movement, religion, and nationalism was a very militant form of Catholicism (Gonzales, 1999). Early in 1492, under the monarchy of the Catholic Kings, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castilla, the Moors and Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula (Gonzales, 1999). The religious zeal that helped Spain reestablish its dominance in its peninsular homeland then projected itself in its expansionism and exploration. In 1492, Columbus set sail from Spain and truly began this age of discovery and exploration when he encountered the New World. It was in 1519 that Cortez and the Spanish would come to encounter the Aztec empire and the other natives of Mexico (Gonzales, 1999).

Mexico's Indian legacy can be traced back to the Mesoamerican civilizations that had started establishing sedentary societies as early as 5000 B.C. The Olmecs first began building urban clusters as early as 1200 B.C. As the most vital aspect of Olmec culture was religion, these first buildings were ceremonial centers. The Mayas were cultural heirs of the Olmecs, and began to build city-states around 300 A.D. The Mayas also made advances in astronomy and mathematics, and developed a writing system. The Mayas are well known for developing the concept of zero, their ability to track stars and planets, and for developing an elaborate calendar. These early tribes were not without problems, and they were constantly engaged in war during the pre-history of Mexico. In the twelfth century, it is believed that the Toltecs rose to power. They influenced other tribes, with perhaps their chief contribution being the god, Quetzalcoatl, now mainly associated with the Aztecs (Gonzales, 1999).

The Aztecs, or Mexica, are believed to have arrived into the central part of the country from the northern deserts sometime in the thirteenth century. The Aztecs were in search of a homeland and were forced to be nomadic by stronger, established tribes. According to religious prophecies, they were to build their city when they came upon an eagle perched on a cactus devouring a serpent. The building of their city, Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) is believed to have begun in 1325. Religion, trade, and warfare became central to the Aztec Empire. By the fifteenth century, they had forged alliances, built

roads, and created a vast empire. They became inheritors of the Olmec, Mayan, and Toltec cultures (Gonzales, 1999). They also subjugated many enemies in their rise to power and ruled over them by force. The Aztecs also claimed human sacrifices from other tribes to offer to their gods. Native Mexico was certainly not united, but rather consisted of various different tribes who, in some cases, were enemies of the Aztecs (Gonzales, 1999).

When the Spanish first encountered the Aztecs in 1519, they described an empire consisting of more than six-million people. Tenochtitlan, their capital, had a population of some 400,000 people (Gonzales, 1999). Aztec priests had prophesized that the god Quetzalcoatl would return from the East. Quetzalcoatl was bearded and light-skinned. On the precise day of the prophesized return, November 8, Cortez arrived (Rodriguez, 1994). He had had been guided to Tenochtitlan by an Indian slave girl, Malintzin Tenepal, whom he eventually took as a mistress. She later came to be known as La Malinche in popular lore, and has been both cursed as a traitor and praised as the mother of the Mexican *meztizo* (Mini, 2000). She and 19 other Indian slave girls were given to Cortez as a peace offering by a Tabasco Indian tribe (De Mente, 1998).

The emperor, Moctezuma II Xocoyotin, believed Cortez to be his returning god and welcomed him. At first, the Aztecs, who had never seen horses, believed the Spanish on horseback to be a single creature. Moctezuma soon became a prisoner in his own home as the Spanish looked for information about treasures. Moctezuma had been used to control the masses, but when he was fatally injured in a protest, the Spanish realized they needed to flee. They tried to escape Tenochtitlan on July 1, 1520 and sustained heavy losses, with only about four-hundred troops (including Cortez) surviving the ordeal and retreating to Tlaxcala (Gonzales, 1999).

Among the Tlaxcalan people, Cortez found enemies of the Aztecs and, therefore, timely allies. In about a year, Cortez returned to lay siege on Tenochtitlan. This time, on his side he had boats, horses, dogs, steel weapons, armor, technology (cannons, crossbows, harquebuses, etc.), some 200,000 Indian allies, and European diseases. In 1520, a smallpox epidemic began that would eventually reduce the Indian population by 90 percent (Gonzales, 1999). Less than a thousand actual Spanish troops made the final

assault on Tenochtitlan, which fell on August 13, 1521. The warring certainly did not end with the fall of Tenochtitlan, but there was little real opposition to the Spanish in the years to come (Gonzales, 1999).

It would take another 300 years from the fall of Tenochtitlan before the country of Mexcio came into existence, but the culture of the Mexican people began to take root in 1521. Present-day Mexicans are predominantly *mestizos* (Gonzales, 1999; Rodriguez, 1994), the race mixture of Spanish and natives who populated what is now known as Mexico. It is important to understand that they are cultural inheritors of both the Spanish and of different Native American Indian tribes. Not all present-day Mexicans are descendants of the Aztecs. Some of the cultural elements that give current Mexican culture its distinguishing characteristics include indigenous elements such as traditional dances, manner of dress, honoring of the dead, regional foods (based on corn), almost religious reverence to mothers, the centrality of the family unit, and a strong work ethic. Obviously, there is the clear Spanish Catholic element, including the Spanish language, respect for parents, co-parenting, forms of civility, and religion. There is certainly overlap in the importance that elements such as religion, centrality of family, and even warfare contribute to the indigenous and Spanish cultures (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997; Gonzales, 1999).

During the three-hundred years of Spanish rule, the *mestizos* came to be the majority of the population that became Mexico. The *mestizos* were accepted by the Spanish in their caste system as enlightened people, while the Indians were treated as “people without reason” (Gonzales, 1999, p. 50). That is not to say that *mestizos* were not treated as inferiors, but it was more a cultural discrimination than a racial one. Culturally, the pureblooded Spanish stood at the top of the society. Beauty, education, status, and goodness were associated with having pure Spanish blood. The opposite was true of the Native Indians. This led to sort of an “identity crisis” for the *mestizo*. Would they associate with both their Spanish and Indian bloodlines? As it turns out, *mestizos*, generally accepted the Spanish cultural hierarchy and in many respects they continue to do so today (De Mente, 1998).

F. EXPLAINING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GUADALUPE

La Virgen de Guadalupe (Appendix F) is synonymous with Catholicism and culture in Mexico and is well known to people of Mexican descent (Rodriguez, 1994; Carger, 1996; Garcia, 2000). It was behind her image that the Spanish accomplished a feat more amazing than the defeat of the Aztec empire: the near-spontaneous mass conversion of a people from native religions to Catholicism (Mini, 2000; Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997). In fact, in just seven years following the apparition of Mary in 1531, eight million Indians had converted to Catholicism (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997; Rodriguez, 1994). This researcher does not hope to fully explain the significance to Mexicans of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* in a couple of paragraphs when entire books on the subject have had mixed success in trying to do so, but some insight can be gained by briefly touching upon the subject.

The Spanish considered the natives of New Spain to be children of God and capable of obtaining salvation. The Spanish crown encouraged their conversion and salvation. The responsibility of this conversion fell mainly in the hands of priests from the Franciscan order (Gonzales, 1999). This was not an easy task to accomplish because the religious traditions of the natives went back centuries. In fact, conversions had just about come to a stop by 1531 (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997; Rodriguez, 1994). These conversions were often facilitated by the marriage between whites and natives, resulting in the birth of the *mestizo*. Nonetheless, mixing of races alone did not create unification for the Mexican people, for there was a caste system in place and natives still identified with their tribe and region of origin. Interestingly, though, the apparition of Guadalupe in the new capitol of New Spain in 1531 coincided with the coming of age of the first generations of *mestizos*. In fact, one could argue that the apparition represented a *mestizo* Mary. The image of Mary on the *tilma* of Juan Diego, after all, has European features and dark skin. It is really Guadalupe that represents the first true unifying force for the Mexican people (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997).

Three main schools of thought on Guadalupe can be identified: apparitionists, anti-apparitionists, and cultists (Mini, 2000). Apparitionists believe the story of the

apparition as historical fact. Anti-apparitionists argue that Guadalupe and the miraculous apparition are a man-made fabrication, designed to fool the natives and replace their worship of an earth goddess, Coatlique or Tonantzin. Cultists, on the other hand, believe in the apparition, but maintain that it was actually Coatlique, and not the Virgin Mary, who appeared. Part of the reason for this debate is that the location of the apparition was the site of the great temple to the earth goddess and a place where pilgrimages already occurred (Mini, 2000). Much research has tried to settle the questions surrounding Guadalupe, but the debate rages on (Sullivan, 2002).

Very few Mexican people have an unimpassioned opinion about Guadalupe. This passion and worship of Guadalupe is especially visible in the poor population in Mexico. It is this population that makes up the majority of the migration into the U.S. from Mexico. Those who know of Guadalupe's link to Mexican culture, therefore, are not surprised to find the image throughout Mexican-American neighborhoods "as a statue or painting adorning a sacred corner of the home, as a medallion worn around the necks of young and old believers, as an image on T-shirts, on the sides of buildings, and even on business logos" (Rodriguez, 1994, p. xxv). To many, Guadalupe represents hope, love, compassion, a caring mother, a protector, and a symbol of religious and cultural identity (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997; Rodriguez, 1994).

Guadalupe ultimately stands for unification. The Aztec empire and the Spanish conquistadors certainly could not unify the native tribes of Mexico. The clergy itself could not unify the natives under one religion. It was the image of Guadalupe that ultimately became the first unifying force for the native people of the Americas. The image of Guadalupe has been used time and again to unify Mexican people for a variety of causes, including Miguel Hidalgo's cry for independence from Spain in 1810 (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997; Rodriguez, 1994). Whether for reasons of religion, custom, culture, it is not uncommon to see the image of Guadalupe wherever a Mexican population is present. Guadalupe was present at the time of the true birth of the Mexican people and is forever linked to their history, identity, and culture.

G. SETTLING OF CALIFORNIA

The Spanish began to settle the Southwest as early as 1598, but they did not arrive in Alta California until the mid-1700s. Alta California was established as a missionary colony, where another partnership formed between religion and *mestizos*. Although, it was the Jesuits who begged the Spanish crown for funding to colonize and convert the natives in Alta California, it was the Franciscans who received the appointment.

The native population in Alta California varied from sedentary to nomadic tribes, and also varied in their settlement in the area from a few decades to a few centuries prior to the arrival of the Spanish and the clergy (Gonzales, 1999). The majority of the Spanish troops that arrived in Alta California with the clergy were *mestizos*. The clergy and *mestizos* founded twenty-one missions between 1769 and 1823, from as far south as San Diego to present-day Sonoma. When Los Angeles was founded in 1781, only two whites could be found among the original colonists. Los Angeles would remain a *mestizo*, and later Mexican pueblo, until the 1880s (Gonzales, 1999).

As was true in other parts of New Spain, European diseases ravaged the native populations, cutting it almost in half (Gonzales, 1999; Christensen & Christensen, 1998). Also, the Spanish populations in California grew very slowly due to the rough terrain separating settlements, and the threat of hostile Indians. This, combined with the fact that the missions were so far from the central government, allowed some unique characteristics to develop within the population. For instance, the caste system that had dominated New Spain was not something that prevailed in California where there was “no longer a tight correlation between color and class” (Gonzales, 1999, p. 49). Due in part to the harshness of living on the frontier, the quality of life for rich and poor did not differ much. Additionally, “upper and lower classes became related by marriage and *compadrazgo*” (Gonzales, 1999, p. 50). For the *mestizos*, then, an equality of sorts had been achieved with those who were of pure Spanish blood. In fact, many *mestizos* referred to themselves as *espanoles* (Spanish). Indians, however, continued to remain at the bottom of Californian society, and *mestizos* continued to deny their Native Indian roots (Gonzales, 1999).

The extended family and its organization were typical of residents in California and the rest of New Spain. Life in towns centered around religion and the family, where the husband was the patriarch and close relatives lived together or very close to each other.

1. Mexican California

Initially, little changed in California when independence was achieved from Spain in 1821 and Mexico was born. The colonial population in California basically remained the same, at some 3,200 people (Gonzales, 1999; Christensen & Christensen, 1998). Additionally, Californians really took no direct part in the events that led to Mexican Independence. Isolation from the Spanish government and self-reliance had come to be part of life in Spanish California, and this gave rise to a Californian identity. This identity was not weakened under Mexican rule. In fact, the Mexican government changed hands roughly twelve times between 1821 and 1848 as a result of revolts, rebellions, and political differences (Christensen & Christensen, 1998).

Due to early complaints against the Mexican government, Mexico City sent their own colonists to California to take control of local governments. Californians actually revolted and overthrew their governors on two occasions, in 1836 and in 1845. After the latter revolt, Californians moved their capitol from Monterey to Los Angeles and appointed Pio Pico as their new governor (Christensen & Christensen, 1998).

Some in California even called for independence from Mexico and were formulating plans for forming alliances with Great Britain or the U.S. Ironically, as Pico was getting ready to confront other Californians and possibly the Mexican government, U.S. immigrants took General Vallejo, commander of the northern frontier, captive and declared California an independent republic in what came to be known as the Bear Flag Revolt (Christensen & Christensen, 1998). At the same time, President Polk sent U.S. Consul Thomas Larkin to California to encourage the Californians to declare independence from Mexico. The Bear Flag Revolt did not actually gain California its independence from Mexico, but rather encouraged the resistance from the Californians to

being invaded. Due to rumors of war with Mexico and news of the recent revolt, Admiral John Drake Sloat took possession of Monterey on July 7, 1842 for the United States (Christensen & Christensen, 1998).

Governor Pico fled to Los Angeles, hoping to build resistance. This proved unsuccessful, and he was forced to flee into Mexico. Less than a week after California was taken, the first official word of war with Mexico arrived to the U.S. forces (Christensen & Christensen, 1998). The only resistance to the U.S. occupation came in September in the form of the California Lancers Revolt. This was led by Jose Maria Flores and Andres Pico (brother of Pio Pico). By January 10, 1847, Commodore Robert F. Stockton regained control of Southern California and marched back into Los Angeles. The Treaty of Cahuenga was signed, sparing the lives of Californian leaders, guaranteeing all Californians equal rights, and ending Californians' involvement in the Mexican War. California would never return to Mexico.

2. Birth of Mexican-Americans

Following in the footsteps of Cortez, Winfield Scott took Veracruz before moving on and finally taking Mexico City on September 14, 1847. Nicholas Trist was appointed by President Polk to negotiate peace, resulting in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Christensen & Christensen, 1998). As part of the negotiations, the treaty stipulated that the Mexican government “was not selling the land, that California and New Mexico had been taken by conquest, and that the money [\$15 million] was indemnification” (Christensen & Christensen, 1998, p. 217). The treaty was approved by Congress on March 10, 1848, and then by the Mexican Congress on May 10, 1848, officially ending the Mexican War and giving birth to the first Mexican-Americans in California.

Following the end of the Mexican-American War and the signing of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the once-native Mexicans of California soon found themselves outnumbered and in the foreign country known as the United States (Vigil, 1997b; Griswold del Castillo, 1990; Rodriguez, 1994). To them, however, the land and culture remained theirs and was a constant source of conflict (Vigil, 1997b). Ultimately, land rights, language practices, and cultural values of the Californians were not respected (Vigil, 1997b; Monroy, 1990; Montejano, 1987; Daniels, 1990), despite the fact that the

1849 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo “implicitly guaranteed the status of Spanish in the conquered borderlands of Mexico” and the rights of the people (Davis, 2000; Daniels, 1990).

The single biggest reason for the sudden change for the Mexican-Californians was the discovery of gold near Sutter’s Fort on January 24, 1848. Not only did U.S. citizens from all over the country settle in California at a furious pace, but the first of the migrant Mexicans began to arrive as well (Christensen & Christensen, 1998). It is ironic that, under Spanish and Mexican rule, California was largely unsettled, despite efforts from the centralized government to motivate people to colonize. In only four years, the population of California increased from 15,000 to 260,000 (Christensen & Christensen, 1998), making Mexican-Californians a minority. The gold rush also decimated the Native American tribe populations. Wars with the Native-Americans broke out mainly due to clashes with miners, and, as a result, the Native-American population dropped from about 90,000 in 1850 to about 18,000 in 1890 (Christensen & Christensen, 1998). It was these early miners who also created the derogatory term, “greaser,” used to describe Mexican-Americans (Daniels, 1990). Thus, the Mexican-American came to life in a manner similar to that of the *mestizo*: a conquered people. The tan-skinned *Californianos* had gone from making up the upper tiers of society to the bottom rung, along with the Indians from whom they had tried to disassociate for so long. This first generation of Mexican-Americans in California was born into abuse, segregation, and racism from people they once considered foreigners.

H. THE CENTURY OF MIGRATION

1. The Great Migration 1900-1930

The twentieth century was one of migration, which brought millions of Mexican immigrants to the United States for various reasons. Some in the U.S. saw them as ideal laborers, as they tended to work seasonally and return to Mexico (Daniels, 1990). The period from 1900 through 1930 has been called the time of the “great migration” (Gonzales, 1999; Gutierrez, 1995; Daniels, 1990).

Immigration to the U.S. was particularly intense following the Revolution of 1910 in Mexico. Jobs in the U.S. “pulled” those who could work across the border, while poverty, job scarcity, political upheaval, and revolution “pushed” Mexicans to seek a new life elsewhere (Vigil, 1997b). These “push-pull” forces were especially strong during World War I, when the flow of European workers was cut off (Daniels, 1990).

It is estimated that more than 25,000 Mexican immigrants entered the U.S. each year between 1920 and 1929 (Gutierrez, 1995). With the growing numbers and presence of Mexicans in the U.S. also came a backlash of resentment from Anglo- and Mexican-Americans for different reasons. Mexican-Americans saw the influx of immigrants as competition for jobs, while older residents of European origin held views still strongly influenced by racism. In 1924, the Border Patrol was established to regulate migrations into the U.S., and in 1929 Congress made illegal entry into the U.S. a criminal offense (Gonzales, 1999).

2. 1930s

In the 1930s, migration decreased significantly, partly due to the depressed U.S. economy, and also to a growing hostility toward minorities, particularly Mexican immigrants. Part of the hostility from the majority population came in the form of intolerance toward anything foreign. As a result, assimilation was seen as the only acceptable option for immigrants to join American society. Educators felt that there should be an “Americanization” process for immigrants (Vigil, 1997b; Gutierrez, 1995). This “Americanization” basically meant becoming “Anglicized” to fit into the new society, while abandoning one’s native culture (Vigil, 1997b; Pozzeta, 1991).

With the Great Depression came further intolerance for anyone who was not “Anglicized,” and not so much in mindset as in appearance. The clearest example of this hostility and racism can be seen in repatriation. It is estimated that half a million people of Mexican descent were sent from the U.S. to Mexico during the Great Depression (Daniels, 1990; Gutierrez, 1995). By many accounts, almost half of the repatriates are believed to have been forced to leave by authorities (Gonzales, 1999; Gutierrez, 1995; Daniels, 1990). In some cases, people were simply “rounded up” like lost cattle. Gonzales writes that the “legacy of humiliation” is remembered in Mexican communities

even today (Gonzales, 1999). There are different references to this event even in modern films, such as *My Family* (1995). Early in the film, the pregnant heroine in the film is deported from Los Angeles without a chance to even inform her husband and family. After giving birth to her child in Mexico, she journeys back to her home and family in Los Angeles. Although the movie's account is fictional, it reaffirms that repatriations are still remembered.

The repatriations and ideas of assimilation soon led to identity issues for Mexican-Americans (Daniels, 1990; Sanchez, 1993). The clash with Anglo-American culture and continued immigration had a cyclic effect on the ethnic identity of the people living in the Southwest who were of Mexican descent. First, the *mestizo*, then the Mexican-Californian, and later the Mexican-American were caught in the middle of an identity choice. Now, Mexican-Americans had to decide if they associated with the plight of the Mexican illegal immigrant or shared in the disdain for them as Americans. Many sought to separate themselves from Mexicans, but found that to be close to impossible, as they were not always judged by their beliefs, but by their appearance. When Mexican-Americans entered employment lines, they found themselves in the colored lines and not in the white lines that had the first opportunity to job openings (Gutierrez, 1995).

By 1930, Los Angeles had the largest population of Mexicans outside of Mexico City, Mexico (Gonzales, 1999). In these segregated *barrios*, Spanish was the dominant language, social life often revolved around Catholic Church events, and folk customs were maintained by the constant influx of immigrants (Gonzales, 1999). In Los Angeles, the Mexican barrio was centered in the eastern part of the city.

3. 1940s

From the 1930s through the 1950s there was a “pragmatic preference to be recognized as a hyphenated-ethnic minority [Mexican-Americans] along the lines of Polish- or Italian-Americans rather than to become a racialized caste like Blacks or Chinese” (Davis, 2000, p. 17). Davis further suggests that becoming more “white” was used as a coping mechanism to overcome segregation in the 1940s and 1950s. Although anti-immigrant feelings in the U.S. remained strong, labor shortages again created a

“pull” for migrant workers from Mexico. In fact, the Bracero program was established during this time, so that Mexican workers worked mainly in fields with specific working conditions and wages (Daniels, 1990). During World War II, roughly two-hundred thousand braceros were contracted to work in the U.S. The program itself drew great criticism from Mexican-Americans, who felt that Mexican migratory workers were getting preferential treatment over Mexican-American citizens. Mexican-Americans slowly began to organize and gain power.

a. Sleepy Lagoon and the Zoot Suit Riots

A number of young Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles, wanted to express differences from Mexicans, their parents, and Anglo-Americans, and tried to create their own identity by their manner of dress. Two events during this time came to symbolize overt discrimination toward Mexican-Americans: the Sleepy Lagoon incident and the Zoot Suit Riots (Daniels, 1990). Additionally, these incidents signaled the growing resistance of the local Mexican-American community to tolerate abuse and overt racism.

Sleepy Lagoon was the sensationalized name given by the press to a case involving the murder of a young Mexican-American in August of 1942. He was apparently killed during a gang fight, and his body was left in an abandoned gravel pit (Daniels, 1990). As a result of the “Mexican crime wave,” police arrested 24 suspects and indicted 17 of them. All seventeen were convicted, and nine were found guilty of second-degree murder, despite a lack of evidence (Daniels, 1990). The Mexican-American community responded by building up a defense team that appealed the convictions and won (Gonzales, 1999).

The incident known as the Zoot Suit Riots began on the night of June 3, 1943, when eleven sailors on shore leave stated that they were attacked by a group of Mexican *pachucos* (local name for zoot suiters) (Gutierrez, 1995). In general, zoot suiters were Mexican-American youth who dressed in a baggy and extravagant manner, usually also wearing a hat and watch chains almost long enough to touch the ground (Daniels, 1990; De Hart 2000). In Los Angeles, these teenagers were also associated with gangs and delinquency. In response to this attack, a group of over two-hundred

uniformed sailors chartered cabs and charged into the heart of the Mexican-American community in East Los Angeles and the downtown area (Daniels, 1990; De Hart, 2000). Servicemen (mainly newly recruited sailors) beat, shaved, and stripped the clothes of all suspected *pachucos* (Gonzales, 1999; Daniels, 1990). Nine sailors were arrested during these disturbances; not one was charged with any crime by civilian authorities (Daniels, 1990).

On the following nights of June 4th and 5th, the uniformed servicemen again entered East Los Angeles, moving abreast down streets, breaking into bars and theaters, and assaulting not just *pachucos*, but any Mexican-American. Some witnesses stated that many of the people the sailors encountered in theaters and other establishments were parents and not the zoot suiters (Daniels, 1990; De Hart, 2000). The police did not arrest any servicemen, and the local press praised the sailors as heroes for curbing the tide of the "Mexican Crime Wave." Time Magazine later reported, "The police practice was to accompany the caravans of soldiers and sailors in police cars, watch the beatings and jail the victims" (De Hart, 2000).

During the nights of June 6th and 7th, these scenes were again repeated with violence escalating. It is reported that rival zoot suit gangs allied themselves to retaliate against the servicemen and protect their communities (De Hart, 2000). According to numerous accounts of this incident some minors were beaten, stripped of their clothing, and later arrested without access to medical care. Children, as young as twelve, suffered broken bones. Police labeled the arrests of over 600 Chicano youths as "preventive" action. Prompted by a statement made by President Roosevelt, the military authorities declared Los Angeles off limits for all military personnel on June 7th (Gonzales, 1999; Daniels, 1990).

Though the rioter suffered few consequences, there was some public outcry. On June 16th, 1943, Eleanor Roosevelt commented in her column: "The question goes deeper than just suits. It is a racial protest. I have been worried for a long time about the Mexican racial situation. It is a problem with roots going a long way back, and we do not always face these problems as we should" (De Hart, 2000). Governor Earl Warren (later Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court during their landmark desegregation cases)

convened a committee to investigate the riots and recommended punishment for all involved, both servicemen and civilians. Nevertheless, other than the charges filed against the Mexican American victims, no punishment was ever meted out (De Hart, 2000).

4. 1950s

The labor shortages created during the Korean War once again activated the Bracero program, which had as many as 450,000 participants at its peak. However, the Bracero program did not curb illegal migration into the U.S. The braceros only accounted for about a quarter of the total agricultural workers (Daniels, 1990). Again, some members of the Mexican-American community resented the braceros for receiving what they saw as preferential treatment by the U.S. government for rights and jobs, while they were still subjected to discrimination.

Some braceros returned to Mexico after having worked enough in the U.S. to earn a pension and Social Security benefits. At the same time, some braceros chose to stay and settle in the U.S., or later joined the workers who migrated seasonally. It is believed that the *bracero* program itself was partially responsible for the continually increasing migrations from Mexico. Certainly, when the *bracero* program ended, illegal immigration only increased.

In 1954, U.S. authorities again expressed their desire to rid the country of illegal Mexican aliens during “Operation Wetback.” The immigration service conducted huge raids on neighborhoods and businesses, and deported over one million people, including many U.S. citizens of Mexican descent (Gonzales, 1999; Gutierrez, 1995; Lorey, 1999).

5. 1960-1970s

In the 1960s and 1970s, persons of Mexican descent were largely concentrated in East Los Angeles. Militant Black Nationalism and barrioization combined to give birth to the Chicano movement (Davis, 2000). “Chicano” replaced “Mexican-American,” as a self-identifier, and separatism became the goal rather than assimilation for many of this mindset. Chicanos could no longer associate directly with either Mexicans or Anglo-Americans, and three groups emerged within the population of Mexican descent: Mexican, Chicanos, and Pochos (Anglo-oriented). Again, this was really a reflection of

the search for an identity for people of Mexican descent who were living in the U.S. The new immigrants had a solid Mexican identity and, what they may have been taught in their schooling, could not identify with the plight of Mexican-Americans. Pochos denied their Mexican heritage and most could not even speak Spanish. Chicanos looked down on the pochos as “sell-outs” and looked down on the Mexicans as *indios* (Indians).

With the search for identity of the Chicanos came a desire to learn history and, as a result, a number of publications emerged from the Mexican-American community. Figures such as Corky Gonzales helped to spread the idea that Mexican-Americans were the true inheritors of the Southwest. Chicanos based this belief on Aztec mythology and believed that the Southwest was the fabled homeland of the Mexica (how the Aztecs referred to themselves), Aztlan (Gonzales, 1999). It is possible that this focus on the Aztec connection to Chicano cultural heritage was partially responsible for minimizing the role of other native Mexican tribes and the belief that, somehow, all Mexicans were descendants of the Aztecs by blood. Certainly, various points can be made regarding a cultural heritage to the dominant empire that reigned over a large portion of the land that came to be Mexico.

A pair of beloved figures in Mexican-American history, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, emerged during this period, fighting for the rights of farm workers. Chavez had served in the Navy during World War II. After the war, he returned to the fields and formed the United Farm Workers Union. The union’s organization centered on family and the Catholic religion, and it often staged strikes with the banner of Guadalupe at the forefront.

During this era, it became acceptable for the Mexican-American community to claim their Mexican heritage. To some extent, the perspective of many also changed regarding their Spanish and Indian ancestry. Suddenly, Mexican-Americans were proud to associate with the warring Aztecs and deny their Spanish lines. Many were quick to blame all that had gone wrong with Mexico on the Spanish, and quickly forgot their contributions as well as the fact that the Spanish could never have defeated the Aztecs without the help of other native tribes. The myth also grew that, somehow, all Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were descendants of the Aztecs (Gonzales, 1999). The pride in

things “Aztec” and the warrior ethos are still on display in many Mexican-American communities in the form of murals and other forms of art (Olmos, Monterrey & Ybarra, 1999).

6. 1980-1990s

The 1980s and 1990s were times of massive immigration due to increasing poverty in Mexico. In Los Angeles, the result of this mass immigration caused an expansion of people of Mexican descent into all areas of the city. This was combined with the exodus of both white and black populations. Census figures show that the total ethnic Mexican population grew from 2.3 million to over 3.7 million by 1990, and that roughly half the population was Mexican-born (Davis, 2000; Gonzales, 1999; Suarez-Orozco, 1998). In fact, from 1940 through the 1990s (and except for the 1970s), Los Angeles has had the largest population increase of any city in the U.S. (Perry & Mackun, 2001). Currently, in the South-Central area of Los Angeles, *latinos* account for as much as 98 percent of school-age children, with some 58 percent of students identified as limited in English proficiency (Suarez-Orozco, 1998). This population of recent immigrants has contributed to the *mexicanization* phenomenon, where a Mexican community, proud of its cultural background, has begun to thrive (Vigil, 1997b). Another effect of the continued migration throughout the twentieth century is a slow pace of assimilation within the Mexican and Mexican-American communities. The immigrant population was not homogenous, and it arrived with folk customs and traditions from various parts of Mexico. These traditions have influenced Mexican communities in the U.S. with a cultural richness that few, if any, cities in Mexico can match (Williams, 1990).

I. PRESENT-DAY MEXICANIZATION

Although Hispanics are a heterogeneous group in the U.S., it is really the Mexican portion that draws the most attention. This occurs because Hispanics of Mexican descent make up a large majority (66.1 percent) of Hispanics in the U.S. (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). One must be careful in assuming that general statements regarding Hispanics are true across the spectrum for all Hispanic populations. In terms of geographic concentration, population age, legal status, household size, educational attainment,

salaries, and employment, current U.S. Census Bureau reports on Hispanics are largely reports on persons of Mexican origin. It is also interesting to note that information reported concerning the foreign-born population and that of *latinos* of Mexican origin are quite similar (Lolluck, 2001; Therrien & Ramirez, 2001; Grieco & Cassidy, 2001). This is not surprising due to the large influence that the foreign-born population of Mexican origin has on the native population of Mexican origin. One could say that even the Hispanic population of the United States continues to become more Mexicanized, that is, resembling the Hispanic population of Mexican origin.

A demographic shift in Los Angeles has resulted in an increase of the Hispanic population. The population of Mexican origin continues to make up the majority of this Hispanic population. This demographic shift has been called a “Latinization/Mexicanization” of Los Angeles. The *mexicanization* of Los Angeles has continued, and, for students, this means a life and upbringing that is strongly linked to the values and culture brought here from Mexico by immigrant families. In Personas Mexicanas, for instance, Vigil does an in-depth anthropological study of various high school students and their families in the Los Angeles area, seeking to capture a glimpse of the culture that has emerged (Vigil, 1997b). He also tries to link the cultural development of students with their academic success. In general, he finds large, strong family support structures, a pride in traditional Mexican celebrations, a strong base in the Roman Catholic religion, and the Spanish language used primarily at home.

Current migration rates into the U.S. from Mexico are unlikely to change in the future. In fact, tighter enforcement of the border almost ensures that immigrants who would normally return to Mexico will stay longer in the U.S. (Suarez-Orozco, 1998) and that Mexicanization will continue. Mexican-American culture in Los Angeles is unique and different from U.S. and Mexican cultures. Varying levels of acculturation and continuous immigration from different parts of Mexico have made for a blending of traditions. Part of what immigrants have added to the cultural environment of Los Angeles is an idealism, optimism, and strong work ethic (Vigil, 1997b). The *mexicanization* of Los Angeles may have less to do with being some sort of anti-

assimilation movement and more to do with fulfilling the “American Dream” of making a better life in the land of opportunity.

1. Population Explosion

From 1990 to 2000, the population of the United States had the largest “census to census” increase in history (Perry & Mackun, 2001). According to the 2000 Census, California not only had the largest population increase through the 1990s, with an increase of 4.1 million people, but was also the most populous state at the end of the decade, with 33.9 million people accounting for 12 percent of the U.S. population (Perry & Mackun, 2001).

Also worth noting is that, during the 1990s, the counties on the Mexican boarder grew at almost twice the rate of the entire country, up 21 percent as compared with 13.2 percent for the rest of the U.S. (Perry & Mackun, 2001). It would not be a stretch to believe that part of the reason for the population increase in these counties is due to continued immigration from Mexico. In 2000, the city of Los Angeles, with 16.4 million people, was second only to New York City in population size (Perry & Mackun, 2001).

People of Mexican descent are more likely to be married (Lollock, 2001), and are likely to have more children than the majority population. In light of this, it is not surprising to find that Mexican households are more likely than any other group to have five or more members (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). This highlights yet another reason why major cities in the Southwest are growing at a more rapid rate than cities that are elsewhere in the country.

2. Poverty

Poverty continues to plague the population of Mexican descent in the U.S. and Mexico. It is this poverty that continues to propel Mexicans to immigrate to the U.S. (Stevenson, 2001). In 1999, only 20.6 percent of the population of Mexican origin in the U.S. earned wages above \$35,000, and 24.1 percent were living below the poverty level, compared with 49.3 percent and 7.7 percent, respectively, for non-Hispanic whites (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). These figures are even more alarming when one considers that, although Hispanic children only make up 16.2 percent of all children in the U.S., they account for 30 percent of all children living in poverty (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001).

Vigil found that most families in his study were living well below the poverty line and crowding into small rented apartments; but he also learned that these families saw themselves as “middle-class” (Vigil, 1997b).

This theme of relative poverty is echoed in numerous news articles as well as in literature regarding immigrant families. Mexican immigrants come from a country where the gap between the wealthiest 10 percent and the 50 percent who live below the poverty line continues to widen (Browne, Simms & Barry, 1994). Mexico is a poor country, and in the early 1990s it became the World Bank’s largest recipient, with more than \$12 billion in outstanding loans (Browne et al., 1994). Some have even suggested that poverty is so common in the country that it can be a cultural descriptor for many Mexican families (Lewis, 1959). Although Oscar Lewis conducted his studies in the 1950s, present-day conditions in some areas of Mexico are still a strong motivator for facing the perils of making the journey to the U.S. These perils are very real, and it is not at all uncommon to find stories in the news about the hundreds of Mexican immigrants found dead in the desert along the borders of the Southwest, trying to enter the country illegally (Lozano, 2001; Karaim, 2001; Weiner, 2001; Thompson, 2001).

Present-day Mexican farmers cannot remain competitive in a global economy and are forced to either face urban underemployment and migratory labor, or face even worse poverty provided in the form of subsistence farming by the government. Mexico’s undersecretary for agriculture predicts that up to thirteen million peasants will be forced to abandon the countryside by the year 2010 (Browne et al., 1994) and some 40 percent of Mexico’s 100 million people will continue to live in poverty (Thompson, 2001). The first generations of immigrants can compare life in the U.S. to the life they left behind and, thus, even the poorest of conditions seem a considerable improvement.

Further proof of this relative poverty lies in the unbroken ties between families of Mexican descent in the U.S. and the remittances they send to their families in Mexico. In fact, in the recent past, annual remittances from the U.S. to Mexico accounted for roughly four-billion dollars and provided support for about ten million Mexican families (Casteneda, 1995). According to some figures, a new record of some \$9.8 billion was expected for the year 2001, making remittances the fourth largest source of foreign

income for Mexico, slightly behind the tourism industry (Mexicans Sending More Money Home, 2001). Mexico's president, Vicente Fox, hails as heroes the Mexicans who go to the U.S. in search of work and who care for their families (Weiner, 2001). He has made discussions of immigration with the U.S. a priority, as well as keeping immigrants safe in their return journey to their hometowns in Mexico (Llamas, 2002).

3. Education

Poverty is clearly linked with academic underachievement. In fact, some 60 percent of high school dropouts come from families with incomes below \$15,000 (Sosa, 1990). Schooling and education are an issue of real concern for the communities in Los Angeles. Latinos of Mexican origin, as a group, have the highest proportion of school-aged children of any group. A full 38.4 percent of people of Mexican descent were 18 years old or less in 2000, compared with 23.5 percent for non-Hispanic whites (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). The real shock is that people of Mexican origin are the least likely among Hispanics to have graduated from high school (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). Specific challenges to the school systems include dealing with issues typical to urban environments: poverty, gangs, drugs, overcrowding, drop outs, lack of teachers, segregation, poor facilities, and lack of role models (Valdes, 1996; Carger, 1996; Vigil, 1997a; Vigil, 1997b; Suarez-Oroszco, 1998; Castaneda, 1995). Additionally, in Los Angeles, educators must also deal with a large population of students who sometimes lack the ability to communicate in English. Little support can be gathered from parents who, in general, lack educational attainment and who are often unfamiliar with the U.S. school system. In many cases, there is a clash between the U.S. culture and the culture reinforced in the community and home for students that is difficult to reconcile (Valdes, 1996; Carger, 1996; Vigil, 1997a; Vigil, 1997b).

The school system is also affected by state laws that target their school population. California's Proposition 227, which ended bilingual education in the state, passed overwhelmingly, despite 60 percent of *latino* voters voting against it (Johnson, 1999; Davis, 2000). California's Proposition 187 also passed, keeping children of illegal aliens from attending public schools (Suarez-Oroszco, 1998). Of course, it is one thing to pass a law, and another to enforce it. School populations have not changed with the

passing of either proposition, so it appears that the language challenges for educators have not gone away, but simply become more complicated.

Norma Williams (1990) concludes in The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change that little can be done to raise academic performance in schools until a better understanding can be achieved regarding the interrelationships of schools, community, and family. Familial and cultural values often conflict with school norms and assumptions. There exists a value system that places priority on family advancement, sometimes even at the expense of individual achievement or further education. In some cases, there is an expectation that children will contribute economically to the family as soon as possible, since survival is a priority (Davis, 2000). Even if there is no such expectation from parents, it seems that children still express these self-sacrificing desires (Carger, 1996; Valdes, 1996; Brown et al., 2002). Another example is that parents will sometimes pull children out of school to attend a family event, such as a funeral in Mexico. To an educator it may well seem that staying in school and remaining to complete examinations should be of greater importance, but that is not so for the family.

Not all cultural values are in conflict, of course, especially when dealing with issues of identity for students. Vigil (1997b) found that a strong cultural development, combined with the family placing importance on education, was the primary means for success of students. His work was in line with various other anthropological studies (Valdes, 1996; Carger, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). Angela Valenzuela labels education that tries to subjugate or deny students their Mexican heritage as “subtractive.” She further identifies this subtractive schooling as a primary source of poor scholastic motivation and educational achievement (Valenzuela, 1999).

A phenomenon explored in some literature (e.g., Vigil, 1997b) indicates that Mexican students who arrived in the U.S. at an early age and with prior schooling experience in Mexico tended to excel academically (Suarez-Orozco, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). Unfortunately, students who do not have a legal residency or citizenship do not qualify for any type of financial aid and often cannot afford to attend college. They may end up working the same jobs as peers without high school diplomas (Meek 2001). As Vigil (1997b) concludes: “Students appear to do well [in school] when they have a stable

ethnic identity, secure family environment, an adequate socioeconomic status, access to successful role models, and active parental involvement and support.”

Success in academics is essential to pursue post-secondary education. Taking rigorous courses in high school and signing up for the SAT are indicative of an interest in pursuing higher education. The College Board reports that Mexican-Americans represented 4 percent of the total test-takers and that they also have the lowest number of year-long courses taken of any group (*Academic and Demographic Features of 1.2 Million SAT Takers*, 1999). The report does not indicate the reason that year-long courses are tracked, but it probably has to do with college entrance requirements and not with actual academic achievement. For the immigrant population, English was not the native language for 23 percent of Mexican-Americans who took the SATs in 1999. In a city where this population accounts for as much as half of the population in a school, this seems rather low.

Some educators are quick to blame immigrant parents for their inability to help their children with school matters (Valdes, 1996; Drummond, 2001; Armas, 2001). Others blame the administration and “subtractive” institutional practices (Flores, 1994; Armas, 2001). The truth, surely, is somewhere in between. Some suggest that immigrant parents may distrust institutions due to their own illegal status or, they may fear appearing uneducated, thus losing respect from their children (Valdes, 1996). Some researchers point out that, very often, Mexican-origin students are unaware of what is needed to get into institutions of higher learning, and may not believe that a Bachelor’s degree is attainable (Flores, 1994).

The challenge of education for students of Mexican origin does not end for those who are accepted to colleges and universities. In fact, Hispanics have the lowest graduation rates from four-year institutions of any group; only 41 percent actually graduate (Flores, 1994). For the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the proportion of people of Mexican origin who had attained a Bachelor’s degree was only 6.9 percent, the lowest level among Hispanics (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). Again, it may be that these students are underserved by their high schools; or it may be that self-sacrificing aspects or their culture steer them away from postsecondary education; or it

may be that parents are unable to provide the needed support. Rather than focusing on any of these arguments, it is more constructive to look at elements that have worked in helping students of Mexican origin succeed.

Many colleges and universities have formed partnerships with minority schools to help them succeed. Programs such as Youth Community Services (YCS) and the Prefreshman Engineering Program (PREP) Club have been sponsored in Los Angeles to help reduce the dropout rate as well as to increase the number of college-eligible students (Sosa, 1990). It may be that the real cable linking one's desire to achieve with academic success rests with partnerships. These partnerships can be in the form of educating and involving the parents in the schooling of their children (Valdes, 1996; Sosa, 1990; Armas, 2001), or in the form of interested institutions of higher learning reaching out to schools in the form of tutoring, scholarships, recruitment, and sponsorships (Flores, 1994; Ripley, 2001).

For outreach programs to be successful, though, there must really be a partnership between high schools and institutions of higher learning. Over 130 high schools in California failed to meet deadlines for implementing a new program with the University of California school system that would guarantee admission to the top 4 percent of all high school seniors. Fortunately, as a result of pressure from the American Civil Liberties Union, local media, and a class action law suit, the deadline was extended (Villafana & Aquino, 2001). These partnerships can be delicate, as they sometimes meet with lack of support from administrators, parents, and even the student population. They often require organizers who recognize the importance and value of cultural distinctions to succeed (Flores, 1994). This is not an original thought, by any means, as the Catholic Church and businesses interested in Hispanics have long recognized the value of encouraging cultural distinction and awareness (Faulconer, 2001; Brown et al., 2002).

It follows, then, that the answer to improving academic success for Mexican-American youth is not necessarily assimilation, as was once believed by older generations. Ideas about not teaching children Spanish did not translate to gaining acceptance, but rather caused identity issues for youth (Johnson, 1999). In fact, under current socioeconomic conditions and immigration trends, notions of widespread

assimilation are considered unrealistic (Williams, 1990). Kevin R. Johnson (1999) reflects on his upbringing and assimilation and shares: “The way I looked, the way I was raised, and my memories were impediments to the assimilation process—if assimilation meant forgetting your family history, accepting racial hatred as a norm, and disregarding what you knew was right and true.” This does not mean, however, that the opposite is entirely true and that a pure shift to Mexican thought is dominating Los Angeles and other urban areas with large populations of Mexican descent.

4. Acculturation

The Mexicanization that is occurring in the population is checked by acculturation. Acculturation is the result of two populations coming together and borrowing aspects of each culture. For instance, salsa is currently America’s leading condiment. In Mexico, the *siesta* and three-hour lunch break are quickly disappearing, as the U.S. “quick bite” approach gains popularity along with foreign fast-food franchises (Browne et al., 1994). In the U.S., latin singers and actors are increasingly dominating popular entertainment. Jennifer Lopez and her personal life make front-page news, as well as President George W. Bush dancing next to Ricky Martin on television. In Mexico, the U.S.-style malls are quickly becoming part of the Mexican cultural life (Browne et al, 1994; McDonald, 2001). Americans, especially near the border, celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* (5th of May), while Mexicans celebrate Thanksgiving. Certainly, even the core family dynamics for Hispanics in the U.S. are undergoing change. One sign of this is an increase of Hispanic women in the labor force, up 4 percent to 55.1 percent between 1990 and 1997 (Heitzman, 1999). Some argue that, to look at Southern California, is to look at the future of Mexico, since returning immigrants are bringing ideas from the U.S. and causing a gradual cultural change in Mexico (Castaneda, 1995). The acculturation process is slow and complex. This process has special significance to youth of Mexican descent who separate into groups depending on their level of acculturation (Menchaca, 1995) and in search of their identity.

5. Challenge of Diversity

It is interesting to note that part of what creates a “pull” for Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. is the very thing that creates resentment within the majority population: a

different culture. An element of the Mexican culture is certainly a strong work ethic, due to a long history of poverty and farming. In fact, reports released in 1997 show that Hispanic families are more likely than any other group to be working poor (Heitzman, 1999). In states in the Midwest, such as Iowa, where young people are migrating out in search of more money and less strenuous labor, some government officials have turned to attracting and actually recruiting Hispanic immigrants to revitalize the economy (Drummond, 2001; Carl, 2001; Schmitt, 2001). This does not imply Hispanics are unique in terms of their work ethic, but studies find that poor Hispanics receive welfare less often than other groups, that workforce participation among Hispanic men is higher than any other group at 80.1 percent (Barone, 2001; Heitzman, 1999), and that Hispanics are apparently performing tasks no one else is willing to do (Roosevelt, 2001). In fact, in the year 2000, it was reported that immigrants are fueling the economic growth in the nation's fastest growing cities (Schmitt, 2001).

Resentment that is created toward Hispanics often manifests itself in different forms of discrimination and denial of opportunities (Vigil, 1997b; Drummond, 2001). Historically, this has created problems of identity for Hispanic children, leading many to shun schools and other social institutions, and to seek acceptance in street gangs (Vigil, 1997a; Vigil, 1997b).

While discrimination certainly continues to exist, some organizations are taking steps to combat it. Unions, local governments, and even the Catholic Church, are now protecting undocumented Hispanics from abuse and deportation (Roosevelt, 2001; Carl, 2001). Indeed, no more than two months after terrorist attacks of September 11th, the mayor of Los Angeles, James Hahn, pressed for gaining legal status for Mexican immigrants (Carl, 2001).

6. Religion and Popular Religiosity

The Catholic Church continues to play a central role for Hispanics in the U.S., and especially in the case of Hispanics of Mexican origin. Religious ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals continue to be a central part of Mexican-American culture in Los Angeles (Johnson, 1999; Suarez-Orozco, 1998). In 1997, a report was released showing that the proportion of Hispanics who are Catholic declined from 78 to

67 percent in 1970 (Tushnet, 2001). One explanation for this phenomenon may be a lack of Spanish services and a lack of intimacy in parish life. In Los Angeles, changes have been made and priests are now required to speak Spanish to better provide for the Spanish-speaking population (Barone, 2001). Although, it can be argued that increasing numbers of Mexican-Americans are turning toward other religions, they remain close to Catholicism because it is part of their history, identity, and personality (Garcia, 2000). Again, however, a blending of cultures has occurred.

In Mexico, selecting godparents for children in baptismal ceremonies is almost unheard of; yet, in the U.S., it is becoming more common to have close friends selected for that role (Williams, 1990). Entertainment for weddings and *quinceaneras* are now often provided by a DJ, rather than by traditional live musical performers. In funerals, the vigils are no longer carried out in private homes, but are instead kept in funeral parlors (Williams, 1990). In Los Angeles, all new clergy are required to learn Spanish (Barone, 2001). In fact, in many churches in Los Angeles, all or most services are conducted in Spanish, and many religious practices are quite distinctly Mexican-Catholic in nature. Distinct traditions involve colorful reenactments of many biblical scenes such as the *pastorelas* (Shepherd's play), the *posadas* (Joseph and Mary's search for shelter), and the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday (Garcia, 2000). Another particular form of popular religiosity is in the form of devotions such as *el dia de los muertos* (the day of the dead), to celebrations of particular saints, and even pilgrimages to holy sites (Garcia, 2000).

It seems that the highest levels of the Catholic Church are paying close attention to Mexicans and giving attention to the importance of their Indian heritage. Pope John Paul II, the first pope to ever visit Mexico, visited again in the year 2002 and, as a special part of his trip, canonized Juan Diego, the Latin American Indian who witnessed the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Rice, 2002; Ruiz, 2002). Juan Diego is the first Latin American Indian to be canonized (Ruiz, 2002). The impact of Hispanics on the U.S. Catholic Church should not be underestimated and continues to make front-page news in Catholic periodicals (Faulconer, 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau reports that, by the year 2050, 86 percent of U.S. Catholics will be Hispanic (Faulconer, 2001).

7. Hispanics in the Media

Church is not the only place where Spanish can be heard in public, of course. In Los Angeles, a true Spanish media explosion has occurred. In 1997, 17 of the 82 radio stations in Los Angeles County were broadcasting exclusively in Spanish, and a Mexican music station has ranked either first or second in the market-share ratings since 1992 (Suarez-Orozco, 1998). The primary Spanish newspaper proved equally impressive with a circulation increase of 155 percent from 1981 to 1991 (Suarez-Orozco, 1998). Advertising and business in Los Angeles can be conducted entirely in Spanish in Mexican neighborhoods. This does not mean that acculturation is not taking place within the Mexican-American community. Adults are the target for most of this media and advertising, and not the youth who have certainly absorbed more cultural elements of the majority population (Barone, 2001).

Although the Spanish media are vigorously attempting to reach the adult Hispanic population (McDonald, 2001), not so much attention is apparently being given to the major English-speaking networks that Hispanic youth tune into (Poniewozik, 2001). The media have a large role to play in how Hispanic youth see themselves and in how they feel about their identity. Due to the *latin* media explosion, many youth now feel that it is “cool to be *latin*” (McDonald, 2001). It may follow from this in the years to come, that even more people choose to self-identify as Hispanic.

8. Voting and Politics

While Mexican-Americans and Mexicans are the majority of the population in Los Angeles, they are severely underrepresented in politics and at the voting booth. The very simple explanation for this lack of representation is that over half of the Hispanic population in Los Angeles is comprised of non-residents and non-citizens who have no right to vote (Castaneda, 1995; Brown et al., 2002). At the same time, in some places, such as California, a series of anti-immigrant propositions may have sparked a negative attitude by Hispanics toward voting. CBS reported in 1998, that the Hispanic population grew to 12 percent of the mid-term electorate (Martin 1998). That same year, Hispanic

votes in California helped elect a number of Democrats and punished Republicans (Martin, 1998; Schmitt, 2001). Time will only make more Hispanics eligible to cast their votes.

Apparently, this knowledge has not been lost on major political figures and parties. Republicans and Democrats alike are “coveting the Catholic vote” and necessarily, the Hispanic vote as well (Walsh, 2001). President Bush and his family on the front page of the Catholic Register beside Pope John Paul II certainly sends a message to Hispanics and Catholics of respect and good relations. Initiatives that support educational voucher programs for inner-city residents sit particularly well with Catholics and Hispanics who historically prefer to have their children in parochial schools (Garcia, 2000). Catholic schools pride themselves in Los Angeles for having fewer dropouts and getting more children into college than public schools, while spending less per student (L.A. Catholic Schools, 2001). Thus, Hispanics in the U.S. are attracting attention from many sources and have become a coveted voting block.

J. STATUS OF HISPANICS AND THE NAVAL SERVICES

The military has also taken notice of Hispanics. While speaking to members of the Association of Naval Officers (ANSO) at the U.S. Naval Academy in September 2000, Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig said that the naval services needed to increase Hispanic representation in the officer corps. He indicated that it was vital for enlisted sailors and Marines to have role models in the officer corps. He also observed that, between the two services, Hispanics accounted for 5 percent of the officer corps, and while that places the sea services ahead of other components of the military, they still had a long way to go “before matching the civilian Hispanic population in America” (Brown, 2000).

The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vern Clark, released his guidance for the year 2003 in January. In his guidance, he addressed the importance of diversity in the composition of the Navy, and ordered an assessment of diversity trends and opportunities conducted by March of 2003. He further established the goal of increasing applications by minorities in officer programs, including the Naval Academy, by 25 percent as of August 2003. This initiative also seeks a 25 percent increase in applications by

minorities for the “Seaman to Admiral” program. The Seaman to Admiral program takes qualified junior enlisted sailors and provides their college tuition so they can earn a Bachelor’s degree and a commission.

The Navy and the Marine Corps led the other services in Hispanic officer recruitment in the early to mid-1990s. From 1990 to 1996, the proportion of Hispanics among newly commissioned officers rose from 4 percent to 5.2 percent, and averaged 4.6 percent throughout the period (Heitzman, 1999). The Marine Corps led all the services, raising its proportion of Hispanics among new officers from 3.8 percent to 6.4 percent during the same period, and averaging 5 percent (Heitzman, 1999). The Army increased its Hispanic Officer accessions during the same period from 2.74 percent to 4.31 percent, while the Air Force increased from 1.14 percent to 1.95 percent (Heitzman, 1999). As of September 2002, Hispanics accounted for the following proportions of commissioned officers on active-duty in the military services: Army, 4.5 percent; Navy, 4.9 percent; Marine Corps, 5.5 percent; and Air Force, 2.8 percent (Distribution of Active Duty Forces, 2002).

Although these proportions are lower than those of Hispanics in the enlisted forces of the military, Hispanics should not necessarily be considered “underrepresented” in the officer corps. In 2002, the proportions of Hispanics in the active-duty enlisted forces of the military were as follows: Army, 10.4 percent; Navy, 10.9 percent; Marine Corps, 14.2 percent; and Air Force, 6 percent (Distribution of Active Duty Forces, 2002). Since a college degree is ordinarily required to be commissioned in the military, many personnel analysts believe that the most appropriate standard for determining “representation” is the proportion of a particular group, such as Hispanics, among college graduates of age to join the military. In the case of Hispanics, between 1990 and 1996, that proportion was less than 5 percent (Distribution of Active Duty Forces, 2002). It should also be noted that the active-duty officer corps includes persons who have been in the military for 20 years or even longer. Indeed, as of 2002, roughly 3 percent of all officers in the military at the pay grade of O-5 (equivalent to Commander in the Navy) were of Hispanic descent. About 5.4 percent were at the entry level of O-1 or O-2 (Ensign or Lieutenant Junior Grade, respectively, in the Navy).

The higher proportions of Hispanics in the lower pay grades of officers and enlisted personnel are a clear indicator that Hispanic “representation” in the force as a whole is rapidly increasing. For example, as of September 2002, Hispanics accounted for 3.1 percent of all Commanders in the Navy; that same year, 6.4 percent of all newly commissioned officers in the Navy were Hispanic. The rising proportions are even more dramatic in the Marine Corps, where 7.4 percent of newly commissioned officers in 2002 were Hispanic, compared with 2.4 percent of all Marines at the rank of lieutenant colonel and 3.7 percent at the rank of major.

The same trend of increasing “representation” can be seen in the enlisted force. In 2002, about 14.5 percent of new recruits in the Navy were Hispanic. In all services combined, slightly over 12 percent of new recruits identified themselves as Hispanic that year, compared with 10 percent of the military’s entire enlisted force.

The Navy’s elite officer producing institution, the U.S. Naval Academy, has done an impressive job in admissions, virtually increasing the percentage of Hispanic accessions every year from a low in 1976 of 2.7 percent to a high in 2002 of 10 percent (USNA Registrar 2002). The Navy, too, is starting to recognize the value of forming partnerships with the Hispanic community for successful recruiting. Encouragement has come from the top of the chain of command with Secretary Danzig encouraging military members to participate in military and civilian community events honoring Hispanic heritage (Black, 2000). In 2002, the new Secretary of the Navy, Gordon R. England, also indicated his support for increased recruitment, retention, and career development of Hispanic officers in a letter to ANSO for their 22nd Annual Conference in San Diego. Military journalists report on the importance of running Spanish advertising to reach all-important family members who strongly influence Hispanic youths in their decision to join the military (Rhem, 2000). Additionally, reports of effective recruiting strategies include respecting Hispanic culture, assigning Spanish-speaking recruiters, providing education services to improve competencies, and forming partnerships with community and national Hispanic organizations (Rhem, 2000). Studies for the Navy indicate that “aggressive” and “creative” special outreach recruiting strategies are a necessity for keeping up with the increasing Hispanic population in the U.S. (Heitzman, 1999).

It is interesting to note that a 1998 study of American youth by the Department of Defense found that Hispanic have the highest propensity of any other ethnic or racial group to join the military (Wilson, Greenlees, Hagerty, Hintze & Lehnus, 2000). Of particular note, the top reasons for Hispanics wanting to join the military include: money for education, job training, duty to country, pay, self-esteem, and travel (Wilson et al., 2000). Hispanic males were the most likely to list family obligations as a reason not to enter the military and the least likely to object to the military lifestyle (Wilson et al., 2000). Hispanic females, on the other hand, indicated that the military lifestyle was their main reason for not wanting to join the military, which was also the case for white and black females. At the same time, Hispanic females were more likely to list family obligations as a reason for not entering the military than white or black females (Wilson et al., 2000).

The Defense Department report does not offer an explanation for the high propensity of Hispanics, except for gathering some preference data, but more links to propensity may be found from a cultural aspect. There are no direct data to support a link between a cultural warrior ethos, inherited from the Spanish Conquistadors or Aztec warriors, yet something may exist. Belonging to a warrior group and establishing a solid identity may be some of the attraction that draws many Hispanic youths into gangs (Vigil, 1997a; De Hart, 2000). The military offers honor, respect, and a group identity, which are also elements that attract many Hispanic youths into gangs (Vigil, 1997a). The Catholic influence on the Mexican-American culture may reinforce conservatism and the self-sacrificing behavior seen in many households, where the family unit takes priority over personal accomplishments. Again, both of these elements would fit well in the military.

K. SUMMARY

This chapter (1) looks at the Hispanic community as a heterogeneous group, (2) explains why a regional focus is most appropriate when looking at the Hispanic population, (3) explains why Los Angeles is the ideal place to look at Mexican-origin Hispanics, (4) summarizes the historical origins of Mexico, (5) reviews anthropologic information concerning the origin of Mexicans, (6) examines anthropologic information

concerning the origin of Mexican-Americans in California, (7) profiles present-day Mexican-Americans in the U.S. and Los Angeles, (8) and summarizes recent trends concerning participation in the military by persons of Hispanic origin. With the relevant literature in mind, this chapter reviews background information about Hispanics of Mexican origin. This information is useful in interpreting the data collected for this study.

This chapter suggests that multiple factors may be limiting Hispanic students from pursuing higher education, thus keeping them out of military officer programs. These factors include: (1) poverty, (2) identity confusion, (3) parental education, (4) perceived familial responsibilities, (5) lack of role models, (6) a foreign culture, (7) underdeveloped language skills, (8) ineffective schooling, and (9) legal status. These limiting factors seem to be accompanied by a higher sense of responsibility for Hispanic children regarding the welfare of their families. In many ways, Hispanic children take on parental responsibilities making pursuit of personal goals secondary to familial welfare.

In the next chapter, the researcher describes the processes used to obtain qualitative data from interviewees in South Central Los Angeles.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the approach used in the study. Specifically, the following are described: (1) data collection methods, (2) interview protocol methods, and (3) data analysis and theme development.

B. DATA COLLECTION

The study draws information from in-depth interviews conducted with a total of 14 teachers, counselors, Junior ROTC instructors, recruiters, and Church pastors and priests from the South-Central part of the city of Los Angeles, California. The interviewees ranged in their time working in the city from about four to thirty-five years. Table 3.1 provides dates and locations of interviews as well as the number of years each interviewee worked in his or her position.

TABLE 3.1 Date and Location of Interviews and Description of Interviewees' Position

DATE	TITLE / POSITION	YEARS	LOCATION
#01 – 02 FEB 01	Ex-CO, NRD L.A.	2yrs	US Naval Academy
#02 – 09 FEB 01	Administrator NRD L.A.	22yrs	NRD LA
#03 – 13 FEB 01	H.S. College Counselor	14yrs	L.A. H.S.
#04 – 15 FEB 01	Administrator NRD L.A.	14yrs	NRD LA
#05 – 17 APR 01	H.S. College Counselor	7yrs	L.A. H.S.
#06 – 17 APR 01	Army JROTC Instructor	7yrs	L.A. H.S.
#07 – 18 APR 01	H.S. Career Counselor	4mths	L.A. H.S.
#08 – 24 APR 01	H.S. Career Counselor	10yrs	L.A. H.S.
#09 – 24 APR 01	H.S. Career Counselor	4yrs	L.A. H.S.
#10 – 25 APR 01	H.S. College Counselor	1yr	L.A. H.S.
#11 – 25 APR 01	Catholic Pastor	35yrs	L.A. Church
#12 – 26 APR 01	Air Force JROTC Instructor	4yrs	L.A. H.S.
#13 – 27 APR 01	Catholic Pastor	12yrs	L.A. Church
#14 – 01 MAY 01	Catholic Priest	15yrs	L.A. Church

NRD L.A. is Naval Recruiting District, Los Angeles

L.A. H.S. is Los Angeles High School

L.A. Church is a Los Angeles Catholic Church

Although some interviewees had only been serving in their current position for a number of months, all had actually been working in the city over a number of years. The interviewees possess a variety of professional backgrounds, experiences, and views. The

interviewees were selected based on the location where they work, South-Central Los Angeles, and the fact that their position grants them wide access to information about youth in the local neighborhoods.

The first five interviews were set up through personal networks. The interviewees were contacted by telephone to explain the background of the study. The interviewees made several interesting points, which were noted by the researcher and later added to the question sets. At this time, a time and location for the interviews were also scheduled. The researcher traveled and conducted the first five interviews at the interviewees' place of employment. These interviews were then transcribed and reviewed by advisors to critique the question content and assist in identifying points for further study. Feedback was given to the researcher to improve the quality of information obtained. The researcher then expanded personal networks and set up the additional interviews. Prior to the additional interviews, the interview protocol and question content were further refined by the researcher. Once again, the advisors reviewed, critiqued the question content, and provided feedback.

All of the interviews were conducted at the interviewees' places of employment. Although numerous interruptions were encountered, especially in the case of the high school counselors, this often prompted additional insights from the interviewees. The interviews with the Catholic priests were conducted without any interruption. The interviews ranged from approximately 25 minutes to 90 minutes.

C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The initial five interviews were conducted using standardized, open-ended questions that afforded the interviewees enough latitude to discuss any matters related to the issue under study. Additional questions were sometimes required to clarify answers. This was not done with the intent to prejudice answers, but rather to acquire further explanation regarding the subject. Subsequently, question sets were developed to address and further explore themes addressed in the initial interviews. The interviews remained open, and the question sets were used as a guide.

To build an effective rapport, the researcher began each interview by engaging in casual conversation, often sharing personal background information, prior to asking any

questions. The researcher informed the interviewee that the conversation would be tape-recorded for accuracy purposes, but that confidentiality was of the utmost importance and that no names mentioned in the interview would be included in the final report. Additionally, the researcher made it clear that, if at any time the interviewee should wish to not have something recorded, the tape recorder would be turned off. A number of interviewees exercised this option. Three slightly different question sets were used, each tailored to the interviewee. This set a tone of trust and openness. Appendix A describes the interview protocol, and Appendixes B, C, and D present the question sets.

Interviewees appeared to be very comfortable sharing their opinions, experiences, and personal stories. The researcher, by virtue of his particular background (Appendix E), believed that he was able to make the interviewees feel at ease and open to convey their opinions honestly. In fact, as the interviewees learned of the researcher's background, they would often visibly appear more at ease. The interviewees seemed very willing to share their thoughts and experiences.

The study called for two trips to Los Angeles. Unfortunately, due to busy schedules on the part of the interviewees and time constraints of the interviewer, a number of interviews were canceled and could not be rescheduled. Although this limited the number of interviews conducted to 14, enough data were collected to allow for effective analysis and theme development. The researcher is confident that further interviews would have echoed existing interviews and offered little beyond the eight themes discussed in Chapter IV.

D. DATA ANALYSIS AND THEME DEVELOPMENT

All of the interviews were recorded on audio microcassettes. Once completed, the information on the microcassettes was transcribed verbatim to facilitate data analysis. The transcripts were then examined to record statistical trends and to identify recurring themes, using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparison method of qualitative analysis. Themes were then identified by assessing recurring issues, topics, or ideas from the interviewees' responses. Each theme is presented in Chapter IV along with supporting justification and quotations.

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IV. DATA ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The data collected through interviews paint a picture of the city of Los Angeles undergoing dramatic change, where a constant influx of immigrants, mainly from Mexico, is altering the demographic landscape of the city. The degree and level of change are not the focus of this study, but it is interesting to note that the change has been dramatic enough to spark continuing indecision and debate on how to deal with the influx of Hispanics. Los Angeles may become a demographic prototype for the future of a number of cities throughout the nation, so it is important to recognize the “Latinization/Mexicanization” phenomenon discussed in literature and identify some of the issues faced by Los Angeles, especially in dealing with youth. This study seeks to share observations from community leaders of high-school-aged youth with particular focus on implications for potential military service in the officer corps.

With this in mind, Chapter IV presents eight themes generated from the data using the Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) Constant Comparison Method. The themes are supported with specific quotes from the counselors, Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) instructors, clergy, and other personnel; interview data reflect the literature presented in chapter 2. It should be emphasized again that the primary intent of this research is to gain insight into the kinds of issues Hispanic inner-city youth in Los Angeles face as they formulate their choices and aspirations for the future.

B. THEME I: “LATINIZATION/MEXICANIZATION” OF LOS ANGELES

1. Theme

A demographic shift in Los Angeles has resulted in an increase of the Hispanic population. The largest Hispanic group is of Mexican descent. This demographic shift has been called a “Latinization/Mexicanization” of Los Angeles. In the interviews conducted for this study, the population is further described as migratory, constantly regenerated by new immigrants. The main reason accounting for migration is closely linked to the economic situation of the family; as the financial situation of the family

improves, it tends to move to a location that provides a better quality of life. The improved quality of life certainly is not limited to financial matters, but also includes a reduced threat from gangs, crime, drugs, and violence. The new families that move into the area face the same situation encountered by the families that came before, and students confront the same issues that students before them had faced. The result is that the area's clergy, instructors, and counselors see many of the same challenges time and again.

2. Justification

During interview sessions, the researcher asked the interviewees to describe the population of the community they serve and further questioned if they have noticed any shifts in demographics. All of the interviewees identified a demographic shift to a larger Hispanic population made up mostly of people of Mexican descent. Examples of this are discussed below:

Interviewee #3, a college counselor with fourteen years of experience working in the Los Angeles Unified School District, speaks about the dynamics of the population of students with whom she works, demographic composition of the current population, the main reason for migration to other areas, and her empathy for the students' situation.

It's become more Hispanic. We're, like, 98 percent a Latino population... looking at our seniors. I think I have one Cuban American and about maybe 20 or 25 Central American and then the rest of the 700 would be Mexican American. Now this is about five years ago that I asked about this, and our attendance counselor at he time said that at that point about one-third of our kids were new every year. So South-Central does have this trend, mainly because of families trying to better themselves.

We do have quite a turnover. They tend to start in South-Central, then move to this area, better themselves, and then move to Downey, to Diamond Bar, you know... So there is an economic issue with the families that are succeeding. They come, they stay a while, then move on to a different neighborhood. I can't say I blame them.

Interviewee #4, an administrator in Naval Recruiting District (NRD) Los Angeles with over fourteen years of experience in the area, comments on the Latinization of the

area and the reduction of the African-American population. He also mentions that the demographic shift seen inside the city can be observed outside as well.

Some schools that we thought of as primarily black, for example Jefferson, in downtown, have become a more and more Hispanic over the years. Manual Arts, I think is more Hispanic now, whereas traditionally it was black. Fremont is another example. The last time I was there, the school is all minority, but fifty percent were black and fifty percent were Hispanic. Black groups are in decline as majorities in most LAUSD [Los Angeles Unified School District] schools. I think there is even a decline down in Compton. I have seen it. It is relatively pervasive. There is even a little bit of that in Orange County/Santa Ana area. Just before you got here I had a call from Century Heights school, which is a brand new school in Santa Ana and is probably 75 percent to 80 percent Hispanic.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor with over seven years experience working in the area, comments on demographic shifts from the early twentieth century to present. She mentions the presence of other *latino* groups, but emphasizes the near homogeneity of the population of Mexican descent. She also mentions the idea that the Los Angeles area is a gateway city into the United States for many immigrants. She describes the area of the school in particular as a first stop for many immigrants, due to the high turnover of students and the fact that many do not speak English at all.

This school was founded in 1916 with a high Jewish population at that time and as far as I know... definitely in the 50s 60s and 70s it was predominately African-American and the transition has now changed that so now we are 92 percent Latino. And that is happening on most of what they call East-side schools, as those demographics are changing. With Huntington Park and Bell, they were pretty well mixed, but now they are totally Latino.

...in this area it is predominately Mexican-American, but we do have and influx of Salvadoran, some Guatemalan. I haven't seen any Nicaraguan, per se.

...probably less stable than Huntington Park. On the profile it shows you. We start off usually with a freshman class of 1,300 students. This year we're maybe going to graduate just under 500; and that's a big class for here.

...finding better jobs, going back to Mexico, go back to their home country, go to another state, just different kinds of things. What we've kind of found is that this is like the entry point. This is one of the schools that is an entry point for a lot of families, because we get a lot of beginning ESL [English as a second language] people. They don't speak

English at all when they come to this school. And then they get somewhat established and then they move on.

Interviewee #6, a high school Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructor with seven years of experience working in the school to which he is assigned, comments specifically on the Latinization of the inner-city and the displacement of the African-American dominance in the areas, and touches on the relationship of the movement with economic status. He also shares insight to the importance of the family network in the Hispanic community. He has been honored a number of times with invitations to *Quinceañeras* [15th birthday “coming-out” parties] and feels he has been accepted as extended family.

...the changes in the Afro-American population have been significant because east of the Harbor Freeway has gone totally from Afro-American to Hispanic. We see the flight of Afro-Americans, which is probably typical of Los Angeles County with the transition to the middle class and upper-middle class and flight to suburbs.

We had some of our parents here yesterday and they identify with JROTC as an extension of their family. The ultimate relationship. They see us as an extended family member. I can't tell you how many invitations I have received to *Quince Años* [15th birthday] celebrations and we spend so much time with the family members as coaches. We interact with the kids so much on weekends because of the camping activities that sometimes, as instructors, we know more about the kids than the parents, and they kind of rely on us to keep them updated with the positive and negative changes, as they become adults in their lives. They see us as an extension of their family structure.

Interviewee #8, a high school career counselor, comments on the variety of *latinos* found in the school, with the majority being of Mexican descent. She also addresses the quality of life issues that may be responsible for migration to and from the area.

We do have some Central Americans, we have some Guatemalans, we have El Salvadorans, we have Hondurans, we have Cubans and we do have some Peruvians and some Brazilians, but I would say that the majority of our kids are Mexican-American. And by majority, I say

maybe 85 percent of all the 98 percent that are Hispanic would be Mexican-American...We used to have a really high transfer rate, but it seems to have settled down. We did have an influx of people...like I said this area was a step up from the barrio. We had people moving into this area when they made it a little bit better. And then if they continue to do well, we have the moving up and out of this area and on to areas that are a little bit more affluent with less crime, less drugs, less gangs, you know. We have some transience rates. I do a lot of checking up on CUMs [cumulative grade-point averages], cumulative records, for students and we do have a stable [student population]. A lot of kids have gone to local elementary schools and local middle schools. So we have both [some stability and an influx of migrating students].

Interviewee #9, a high school career counselor working in the area for over four years, comments on her surprise of the Latinization of an area and school that traditionally was African-American.

I've been very surprised when I came here and found there were as many Latinos living in this area now. Even when I tell people that Watts is probably 80 to 85 percent Hispanic, they don't believe it. They do not believe it. Especially when I tell people, I'm from the Midwest, that Watts is primarily Hispanic, it blows them away. You know? The demographics of this high school are probably about 85 percent Hispanic.

Interviewee #10, a high school college counselor with one year working in her current position and over four years working in L.A. Unified School District as a teacher, comments on the high Hispanic population in the school and the high rate of movement of families from the area. She empathizes with families wanting to move out of the area.

Well, over 90 percent of the kids are *latino*, and they have very close family ties...People that come and go? Oh yes, we have those. The freshman class is over 1,200 and the senior class is less than 600, less than half... People move and it's good, because they want something better, so they move or whatever. They get out of here and then they move on to bigger and better things.

Interviewee #11, a Catholic pastor working in the Los Angeles area for 35 years, comments on his observation of the Latinization of the area he has worked in over the last decade. He provides a rough breakdown of the different Latin American countries

represented in the area with the majority being of Mexican descent. He also describes some of the distinct traditions that the *latino* community brings to the Catholic parish life. A number of important traditions in the Mexican community are linked to parish life, including the fifteenth birthday “coming-out” party for girls, the *Quinceañera*, which apparently was a source of some conflict for the pastor. He also briefly touches on the veneration to the *Virgen de Guadalupe* [Indianized version of the Virgin Mary], who is believed to have appeared in Mexico in 1531 and is credited for the massive conversion of the native Indians to Catholicism. He also makes reference to the rich use of symbolism in Mexican weddings and the use of multiple godparents.

In this particular area this really happened in 1992 with the riots. It used to be predominantly African-American. It has been a noticeable shift. The area we are in right now is the Hyde Park area. Officially now it is a Latino area. There are people from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Basically, most people would be Mexican and then followed by Salvadoran.

...we have *las posadas* [the lodgings]. We have a big celebration for *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. ...one of the conflicts I have with the Latino communities... I am here by myself. I always have two masses on Saturdays. I always have a wedding or a baptism and if I had *Quinceañeras* on top of that I couldn't do it. Actually in our neighboring parish, they have a *Quinceañera* program, so they can go over there. They have the *lasso* [a rope or lasso], the *libro* [small Bible] and the *Rosario* [rosary] and you have, like, ten *padrinos* [godparents]. Personally, I really enjoy the Latino weddings.

Interviewee #12, an Air Force JROTC high school instructor with four years working in the school, comments on the so-called Mexicanization of the school and the area.

There are some teachers who have been here, like Mrs. [deleted], and Mr. [deleted] who has been here since the early seventies or late sixties, when this was a predominately Caucasian community. They had a Firestone tire plant here and I guess in the eighties the tide started to change, because it is now about 99 percent Hispanic. My kids, I have 198 kids in the program. I've got three white kids, one black kid, and the rest are Hispanic...The overwhelming majority is of Mexican descent. We don't have any Latin American group that is in any sizable majority after Mexicans. The percentage of Mexican descent is about 98 percent.

Interviewee #13, a Catholic pastor who has held his current position for twelve years, comments on demographics, migration, Latinization and Mexicanization of the area. It is interesting to point out that the Mexican community is sizable enough that there is noticeable representation of groups by their region of origin in Mexico. The pastor also goes into detail explaining that some parishioners continue to participate in religious services despite having moved out of the area. He describes some cultural aspects of the Mexican culture seen in the community that differentiates it from popular American culture, including the idea of *compadrazgo* [co-parenting] and family size.

The parish itself is 98 percent Hispanic or 99 percent Hispanic. The non-Hispanic Catholics that live here are at the maximum 40 families or households. They are dying out or moving away...That's a definite trend. Before I came here this was considered to be an African-American parish and not a Hispanic parish, although there were Hispanics living here. Perhaps the reverse was true with 80 percent black and 20 percent Hispanic... We're talking Mexican-American, Central Americans from El Salvador, from Nicaragua, from Guatemala...and that's about it... I don't think there are any Panamanians anymore... I would say that the major population is Mexican immigrant. And the 2nd largest is Salvadoran. And then again, if you study the Mexican population, you see cores of people from different areas: from Zacatecas, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco...

Some of the oldest Mexican families we have here have been here since the '30s, the *Christiada* [Catholic persecution]. Many of the younger married families are migrant and will move out once they get to a higher socioeconomic level. They move away but many of them keep coming back to the parish because it is kind of an anchor here for them here. I get people in the parish that live in Downey, we have people who live in Compton, we have people who live in many other areas around the city but are not geographically within the parish. You can see that by the telephone numbers... I can think of one family in particular. The husband is a truck driver and I suspect he makes a fairly decent wage, but the wife didn't want to move away and the children didn't want to move away because this is where they felt at home... It provides a village. It provides a place where their friendships have formed and solidified. And the *compadrazgo* has happened. There are many who have *compadres* [co-parents] here in the parish and they don't want to move away from these friendships, from these associates, from these people they know. They are used to the rhythm of life. They are used to the organization of the parish... That aspect is very cultural for the Hispanic. Many Anglos who have baptismal sponsor or other sponsors, don't form the bonds of

compadrazgo that Hispanics form... they've fallen to some of the weaknesses of the consumer society, but still their religious values are still more important than the values that are going on around them... the value of family, the value of marriage, the value of their own children. The median family here is of about five or six children, whereas in a normal Anglo family it may be one or two.

Interviewee #14, a Catholic priest who has worked in Los Angeles for fifteen years, goes into detail concerning the Mexicanization of the parish community, the migratory nature of the population, and the continued participation of some families in parish life despite living out of the neighborhood. In terms of religion, it is important to note the veneration of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, the image of which has long been a symbol for the Mexican community.

Well, in this area we have a lot of people from Jalisco and from Michuacan and very few from Guanajuato and Zacatecas. The majority come from Michuacan. They basically come from Mexico. We do have a couple from El Salvador... Fifteen years ago, the majority of the people that lived in this surrounding area were African-Americans and now the majority are *latinos*. The area has changed... Yes, this is a frequent phenomenon. Just lately, probably in the last couple of years, some people have been establishing themselves in this area, but prior to that you would see new people, basically, every month. They would come and rent a house and when they found a better deal or area, they would move. That seems to be a very recurrent phenomenon. This is a very mobile community. Some of them will come back to the area for certain things, but they will live in areas like Downey, Lynwood, South Gate and even Inglewood.

...second to Easter, the celebration of the *Virgin de Guadalupe* brings the most people to church. We do have *Quinceañeras* and celebrate many weddings in the traditions of Mexico, but generally not too much comes in the way of popular religiosity. People seem more to come to the Church and become part of the community.

C. THEME II: LANGUAGE BARRIERS

1. Theme

Language is brought up a number of times as being an issue that is the source of continued controversy. In fact, during an initial phone conversation, an interviewee shared his opinion that one should not be able to detect any accent whatsoever in

Hispanics as they should make it a priority to master English. Specifically, the predominant language spoken by the *latino* population is Spanish, not English. Obvious language barriers exist between non-Spanish speaking instructors, counselors and clergy, and limited-English/non-English speaking youths. The barrier itself is really one of communication and trust. When there is a willingness to address students, and especially student's family members, in their native language, stronger relationships are built and communication channels are more likely to be opened. Complexity with the language barriers increases when one further investigates the way the family and social dynamic are affected. Specifically, sometimes the parents must become dependent on the student for communication, due to English proficiency. In a sense, this inverts the power in the normal family dynamic. Further, while students practice English in school, there is little need for it outside. In fact, some students can get along entirely in their communities without speaking any English. Hispanic students suffer in the academic arena in terms of language development and dominance, in part due to their bilingualism. Most youths are bilingual, yet it is primarily a spoken bilingualism and not an academic one. The Spanish they learn comes primarily from their interaction with family members who often had very little education themselves in their country of origin.

The issue for the interviewees is not so much language issues with students as it is communicating with parents and extended family members. The primary language spoken in the home is Spanish, regardless of what opinions people may have about English being the official language of the United States. Little can be achieved with *latino* youths without support of the family, thus cultural issues become a factor: outsiders earning trust and acceptance from family. If a group wants to gain acceptance and influence, then finding a way to communicate directly with parents and family members and gaining trust would be a huge first step. The other challenge is to address the motivation of students to increase English proficiency in a Spanish-dominated local environment. The school system seems to be struggling to find an effective way to address English proficiency as it transitions from the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program to different English immersion programs.

2. Justification

Interviewees are in positions where they often require some interaction with Hispanic youth, and also with their families. In addition to being in a position where they can make first-hand observations about language issues, some interviewees also have access to databanks where such information is collected. During the interview sessions, the researcher asked the interviewees about their knowledge of language spoken by the population in their area and to share any issues they have encountered. Examples are listed below:

Interviewee #1, a prior commanding officer at NRD Los Angeles for two years, comments about the benefit of speaking Spanish due to the frequency with which it was spoken in the home. This touches on the importance of communicating not just with potential recruits, but with the family as well.

The biggest thing is that it was a real advantage in both places to have recruiters that spoke Spanish, because so often it was the language spoken in the home. It was just a huge, huge advantage and that was true in both places. Anytime you have a population like that. But it's not just Hispanics.

Interviewee #2, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles with over twenty years of experience working in recruiting, comments on the lack of Spanish-speaking personnel and an example of the type of barrier that may be present when contacting potential recruits.

Language is a problem when I call on the phone and a grandmother answers the phone or maybe a mom answers the phone and trying to get Johnny to come to the phone and talk to a recruiter. If I try to recruit you over the phone, chances are I'm not going to get through to you because of mom. And most of our recruiters do not speak Spanish.

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, comments on the high frequency of Spanish spoken in the home and the negative effect it seems to have on various scholastic areas of students.

A lot of the native language is Spanish at home. I'm sure that affects academics, also as far as doing well on the SATs. The reading

level of our kids is definitely...most read below grade level. I'm sure their grades are affected.

Interviewee #4, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, relates an example that illustrates how Spanish can often be the dominate language for some students not just in the home, but in all interactions, and the negative effect that this can have on the development of spoken English. He also refers to the popularity of all Spanish media. It is important to note that the interviewee touches on the important point that, in some communities, it is entirely possible to function without having to speak English.

If you're going to do well on a test you have to function well in English. I interviewed a young lady in Century, in Santa Ana, a couple of years ago who spoke broken English. I was on a panel and one of the board members asked her, "well, where were you born?" She was born in Santa Ana! All her friends spoke nothing but Spanish, listened to Spanish radio, watched Spanish T.V. (of which there are three channels, I think) and her English had never developed even though she was native born. So I think that is the other thing that has to happen. And that's unfortunate, because on one hand, you want to develop ethnic consciousness, but on the other I think we've gotten away from joining the larger community, and the language is one of those other activities.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, comments on Spanish being spoken in the home and the high percentage of designated "limited English speakers" in the school. She points out that getting students to be proficient in English is a challenge.

They speak Spanish...The last demographics report showed that something like 40 percent of our students are limited English speakers. And after the proposition that eliminated bilingual education, there is a big push to get them redesignated, which is working, into being proficient in English...And for most of them, Spanish is spoken in the home.

Interviewee #7, a high school career counselor with four months working at her school, comments on an apparent difference from one inner-city school to another in the proficiency of students' English skills. She also feels that progress is being made in English proficiency with students as a whole, but points out that Spanish is probably the primary language spoken at home.

I think primarily kids speak their native language, which is Spanish, at home. I don't see that here as much as I saw in Fremont. In

Fremont I saw more of that. At least here at school, I think most of them speak English. I think it's changing. A few years back, if you saw a group of Latino kids, they were all speaking Spanish to each other. I think it's changing.

Interviewee #8, a high school career counselor, comments on the bilingualism of students negatively affecting their performance on college entrance tests and SAT verbal exams. She also touches on the importance of maintaining the Spanish language as a cultural point. One can certainly infer that some students must also deal with feeling academically inferior as a result of poor performance on English proficiency exams and require the type of encouragement and understanding shown in the interviewee's comments.

At a lot of the homes, it is Spanish. This is an obstacle...It's a plus and it's a minus. It's a plus because of the richness of the language and the culture. It is very important not to lose culture. It's a minus because on SAT tests, on writing skills, on communication skills, especially at the college level, and in the later high school levels, they are competing against kids from Michigan and Minnesota and Virginia and Missouri and Colorado and kids all over the country who speak English 100 percent of the time. And they go home and they speak Spanish all the time they are home. So they are not practicing their English. So, when they take a SAT test, our verbal scores are traditionally low. And I explain to them: "It is not because you are stupid. It is not because your English is not what it should be at your level, but you are successful in two languages, whereas some people are putting all their time, practice, and studies into English. So you have to make up for that." And that is a definite obstacle. The kids that get accepted into the UC [University of California] system very rarely pass that English test they have to take, and it is the same for the Cal State's [California State]; they rarely pass that English test.

Interviewee #9, a high school career counselor, comments on language barriers. She also touches on the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, which is being phased out of schools. Schools have been trying to find the right approach to taking on language barrier issues, but this, too, continues to be a subject of debate.

It has been my experience that Hispanic kids that are newer, of course, speak their native language. But once they gravitate up to like eleventh or twelfth grade... well, we have a unique situation here, because we are one of the only schools that still incorporates ESL... So, one of the barriers we have that contributes to the lack of success among

many Hispanics is the language barrier. That's a major barrier. Some kids are in ESL so long that by the time they catch up they can do some of the work on grade level, but reading comprehension remains a problem.

Interviewee #10, a high school college counselor, comments on primary language spoken at home and the responsibility of students to serve as translators during parent-teacher meetings.

Mostly they speak Spanish at home... Actually, I speak Spanish. I think kids are really great at translating. I have kids that come in and translate during parent night and stuff like that. That's not a huge barrier, because the kids for the most part can translate.

Interviewee #11, a Catholic pastor, comments on the establishment of a Spanish mass and the cultural value it serves for his Spanish-speaking community. He also addresses the language development issues faced by youths who live with bilingualism. He explains that his initial assumption that the parish youth could be prepared for First Communion in a Spanish-learning environment was wrong. At the time, he made what he believed to be a logical decision based on the fact that the youth attended religious services in Spanish. When trying to teach the parish youth in Spanish proved a failure, he realized that although the youths speak Spanish at home and attend Spanish mass, their formalized education is in English. The Spanish dominance of students was not developed enough to deal with a full Spanish academic environment.

Some of our Latino parishioners have been here for years. I said, you know, "It is about time we started a Spanish mass," so we started a Spanish mass. It has been interesting. It really has been a wonderful experience. It's like starting a new parish, because the assimilation factor in the parish has been negligible. We started a Spanish mass and it was a completely separate entity, a separate group... We have one Spanish mass, but it is the biggest mass. People are there because they want to hear the Spanish mass. I think it is mostly for the cultural experience...I would guess that over half of the people that come go to the Spanish mass. A couple of years ago, we had this whole group of kids that were going to do their First Communion and they all came to the Spanish mass, so we had a program for them in Spanish, but they couldn't do the program in Spanish, because they go to school in English. And there is a lot of that. At home they speak Spanish to their parents, but at school they speak English, and it is more developed. I can understand them, because my biggest problem is the bilingual masses. It is very difficult to go back and forth. In either language is fine once you get started, but both...

Interviewee #12, an Air Force JROTC high school instructor, comments on the communication challenge due to Spanish being the predominate or only language spoken by parents of students. This frequent challenge is sometimes addressed by having high school faculty that can speak Spanish, but often it becomes a responsibility for other students to translate information to parents. There is also a reference to students speaking Spanish even at school. It is interesting to note that, however bad these students' English skills may be, they are usually considerably more developed than those of their parents.

Thank God for Sergeant Garcia! I don't speak Spanish and neither does Sergeant [deleted], and I'm thinking about taking a course this summer. About half of my parents don't speak any English...We go through it all the time here in the classroom [with the students speaking Spanish], especially when they get mad at me. But I would say that the majority of the parents have less than a high school education...I don't allow that [student serve as translators for their parents regardless of parents' lack of English and my lack of Spanish]. That is why I have Sergeant Garcia or I'll bring another student in. I won't let the same student translate. I won't let that happen. In fact we had a situation happen the other day and Sergeant Watkins was in here and a parent came in. Her son was going to translate for his mom, and Sergeant Watkins said "no." He brought in another girl to translate. And this wasn't even anything bad. We were having an awards banquet. And she just wanted to know the time and date for it.

Interviewee #13, a Catholic pastor, comments on the underdevelopment of language skills for his Hispanic youths and explains the difference between that and "Spanglish." He gives insight to language being psychologically linked closely to identity and culture. In other words, Spanish is the language of the family, the language one prays in and, depending on the subject, the language one thinks in. The pastor adds that it is very difficult to manage fluency between to languages that are used often, especially when your peers have the same issue. Short cuts are taken when speaking and rather than speak in one language, words are borrowed from the other language. He feels that this has a direct effect on language proficiency of either language and admits he too falls victim to shifting between languages.

"Language spoken" is another question we ask on the registration form. What language do you speak at home and what language do you prefer for church? I would say 98 percent of the Hispanics we are talking

about are speaking Spanish at home and come to mass in Spanish. That is not to say that many of their children are not...How should I say this? When they converse among themselves, they speak both languages intermittently and that's something I am always trying to get them not to do. Speak either one or the other, but learn both correctly. Just tonight before mass there was some girl saying something about... I don't even remember what it was... but she was talking in Spanish and throwing in English words...I wouldn't call it "Spanglish." This is two languages. Spanglish is inventing...when you say instead of *jardin* [correct Spanish term for yard], *la yarda* [Spanglish term for yard] or instead of *recibos* [correct Spanish terms for bills], *los billes* [Spanglish term for bills]. That's Spanglish, but very often the children are fully versed in both languages and can converse in both languages, but much of their terminology is underdeveloped. What a perfect example is Confession. Confession is such an intimate part of a person's life, and many of the children will come to Confession and start out in Spanish, but then when they start describing what is going on in their interior life, they start speaking English. And then, when they are all finished with their Confession I say, "Now pray your Act of Contrition," they go back to Spanish. Very interesting. Even tonight, I did it myself. I was talking to the children in the Sacristy in English, and I went out to the mass and started in English, because my mind was somewhere else and the closest language in my consciousness was English, so I spoke in English. I caught myself right away...So I think, linguistically and psychologically, a language is very much a part of our inner-self and it depends... I'm sure it happens to you, too. What language am I talking to myself today or right now? Because we find ourselves talking to ourselves in some given language, and it is always verbal, I think that is some of the problem with some of the children.

Interviewee #14, a Catholic priest, details how language used by youth is often linked to the situation they are in. He also explains that there are words in both languages that, although similar, carry different meanings and are often a source of confusion. This priest observes that this is not just an issue for youth, but with adults as well. He humorously states: "I used to be monolingual. Later, I learned English and became bilingual. And after that, I learned French and was trilingual. Now, I'm just no-lingual." Primary language is in Spanish and they work in Spanish and go to church in Spanish. Some of them understand English, but they basically do everything in Spanish. You can say that 98 percent are Spanish-speaking...it has been my experience that children somehow identify their family life and family religion with the mother tongue also. So,

even though they don't speak Spanish very well, because they deal more in English, they know certain terminology in Spanish and get along very well at home. But, in terms of technical words, they know those better in English, and they try to do it in Spanish. It is very interesting that people want to say one thing and they say another, because in Spanish they have different meanings. One day, I had somebody say he was molesting his sister and I didn't think it was the case by the way he was expressing that, so I asked: "What do you mean?" He told me. I explained then that he was not using the proper word; that the word does not mean the same thing in Spanish as it does in English.

D. THEME III: CITIZENSHIP CHALLENGE

1. Theme

The question of citizenship originally came from a brief discussion with a potential interviewee. He observed that citizenship status kept a clearly over-achieving student, who had a strong desire to enter a military officer program, from applying to the military. As it turns out, academic over-achievement among students who are undocumented or illegal aliens happens frequently enough for numerous interviewees to bring it up. It is interesting to note that citizenship was almost a taboo subject for interviewees who often operated under a policy of "we don't ask 'that' question." As it turns out, citizenship status is not only a potential disqualifier for military officer programs, but also becomes a major financial issue for students pursuing higher education.

2. Justification

The researcher asked about the interviewee's knowledge of students' citizenship status. Although the interviewees did not generally discuss citizenship or legal resident status with students, many interviewees were aware of students' status due to their position of authority in schools, churches, and elsewhere. Some examples are listed below:

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, comments on the high number of students who are not U.S. citizens. She also observes that a large number of recent immigrant students perform better than native students in school despite initial language barriers. She attributes the success of more recent immigrants to a cultural work ethic.

There are a lot of undocumented kids...the weird thing is that a large percentage of our students that are academically at the highest level came through ESL. They're hard-working. They have that hard work ethic, while a lot of the native born kids are "like whatever." And I've talked to a lot of the other high schools and they've seen the same thing. Quite frequently, whether it was in elementary or middle school or even here, usually before they get here, but they were in ESL. And now, they're just performing exceptionally.

Interviewee #4, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, comments on the issues surrounding residential or citizenship status. Interestingly, he also finds that a noticeable number of undocumented students do better in testing than do U.S.-born Hispanic students in the communities. He mentions that, at one high school, a counselor preferred to avoid discussing the military as an option since it would introduce the subject of legal status. Apparently, the issue is even avoided when it comes to testing using the high school Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Career Exploration Program, until a student actually chooses to take the operational ASVAB for potential enlistment.

I just had a recruiter talking about Roosevelt, and he said, "We have a terrible time at Roosevelt," and I said, "Why is that?" He said, every time we find someone who can pass the test, they don't have a green card, and if they have a green card, they can't pass the test. We used to test pretty well at Bell, and the counselor pretty much told me: "We don't ask about their citizenship. We don't talk too much about the military, simply because we really don't want to know that they are undocumented."

I don't ask. And, actually on the sheet that they fill out on the first page of the ASVAB, there is no question about citizenship. There's grade, there's school, etc., and they ask for social security number, but for the student ASVAB, you don't have to have a social security number...no citizenship, no officer [or] security type positions in the enlisted community. But you see that question is asked when they take the ASVAB here, because they are taking it specifically to join. High school ASVAB is one step removed, so we don't ask the question.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, makes impassioned comments regarding the frustration of dealing with the large number of bright, undocumented Hispanic students and their educational pursuits. She tries to explain that the *latino* undocumented students often try harder than native-born students, because education is

recognized as a valuable opportunity that will most likely not be a possibility beyond high school. She mentions that financial challenges sometimes prove disheartening. The interviewee also mentions that parents' lack of education often may be a primary reason for the undocumented status of their children.

About a third. I judge it from our last years' top ten students. I had three who were undocumented. One who had no papers whatsoever. He was ranked number nine, and two who were in process, so they were able to continue [their education], but that is a big problem here, and that is what I am trying to get printed out...what happens is that they push themselves because they know that they have to do well. It's in them to do well and to be the best at what they can do. And they generally pursue that, but there are some of them. One of my brighter students, but he gave up, he's been here since he was like four months old, and his dad never started any kind of paperwork. And the whole time he kept saying, "we're going to go back, we're going to go back" and they didn't go back. He's almost eighteen and is a very sharp guy, but lost heart last year and stopped trying. And that's really the first time I have that, where they just go, "well what am I supposed to do now? What am I supposed to do after I graduate? Can't get a job. Can't get financial assistance. It costs me \$800 a semester to go to a community college." And that's what happened to my kid last year. My number nine guy. He found out that they were going to charge him out of state tuition and he couldn't afford it. He didn't have the papers. And the only thing I can do is recommend... I have agencies that I can recommend him to, to get him at least some assistance.

We try to get a lot of our unprocessed, undocumented students into community college. The L.A. system is being very difficult. If they are not in process [of obtaining legal residency] they will pay out-of-state tuition.

One of the instructor's favorites, I think he was class of '95... He was the Commander of the Battalion here at the school. He wanted to go to an Academy so bad, and it was not a possibility whatsoever.

I think that because of the residency issues they never even tried. He was like in the top ten in the class. He was a really sharp guy. I don't know what he did after that.

This particular issue is something that I will fight for. It is not because I am a liberal, because I am not... it's because I am a "people person," and I look at that as an injustice in the way immigration is set up. My valedictorian from the class of '98 had it. He was from El Salvador. Had an April '96 appointment date, his last appointment for his residency. He didn't get it until October 2000, and in the mean time he was struggling trying to find... had no driver's license... His parents don't read or write in English or Spanish, but they were residents and he was

not. So it's just one of those things where I helped support him and we got him in Cal State L.A. under his parent's residency. When he got his residency he transferred over to USC with financial aid and the whole shot, so he is doing fine...but that is a criminal act in itself, because extremely bright students, extremely dedicated students, are just being turned away because their parents made a mistake and I don't know how to fix it.

Interviewee #6, a high school JROTC instructor, shares that there is a very high percentage of the student who are non-citizens (not necessarily in an illegal residential status). He also relates a personal story of a student who seemed to have the makings for a fine officer candidate, but who was a non-citizen and thus never fulfilled his aspirations to attend a service academy. He mentions that this student had already drawn attention from the Spanish media in Los Angeles.

We are nearly 60 percent undocumented. I'm just going by the English as a Second Language statistics, because we draw from all parts of Central and South America and I would like to see a change... and I'm putting my name on the record... some provisions where students by GPA [grade point average] qualifications and military aptitude testing, that high scores be used to identify scholarship opportunities to show that our most recent immigrants do contribute to the wealth of this country and should have the same educational opportunities.

Well in the class of 1999, just over a year ago, this particular student, [name deleted], was definitely a "super-achiever." He had a 4.0 grade point average. [He] is now a businessman running his own company, who as a senior in JROTC was our number-two cadet with the rank of Cadet Lieutenant Colonel. He could put together a PowerPoint media presentation! He was bilingual and could brief the supply operations and tell you we had uniforms for every student in a two hundred plus Battalion. He could tell you what types of uniforms and what new issues we had and reasons why students won't wear the uniforms. He could tell you the history of the United States, the role of the military in all the wars and major conflicts. He could tell you the Presidents of the United States, the foreign policies of the administrations. He was the student that you would want to see at an Academy, because he already had a world of education. He was from Pico, Equador. He had a catholic education. He was very strong in math and science and was bilingual. He didn't even have an accent by the time he was in high school, even though he was born in Equador. By the time he entered high school, he didn't have a noticeable accent. And because of his fair skin, people thought he was a Caucasian. He was very fluent in Spanish. He was just an acceptable student and well-loved by his math and science

teachers. And we lost an opportunity to have him attend any of the service academies. He could have gotten in just on his GPA and his SAT scores, which were even high. Knowing [him], he may become the next President of Equador...he wanted to go to West Point. I have to show you pictures. He met the Secretary of the Army. Jefferson High School had participated in the former Secretary of the Army's, [name deleted], recruiting drive at the hotel Bonaventure in Los Angeles. Jefferson high school students were recruited by a Hispanic public relations company to be there, and to also have dinner with Staff Sergeant [named deleted]. And of course they were well-dressed, they were interviewed by the local media, UniVision, channel 34, Telemundo, channel 52, and did a very good job of being young ambassadors for Jefferson High School and being young ambassadors for the JROTC program. Their photograph with the Secretary of the Army still sits in the wall of our classroom. So [name deleted] was one of those kids on the staff I feel is a tragedy that we did not have his attendance at one of the service academies. It was a tragedy for the school, the community, and I think for the military.

Interviewee #8, a high school career counselor, comments on her observation that the Hispanic youth she has seen applying for educational institutions over a number of years are by and large children of immigrants. This certainly does not go to comment on whether these students have legal residential or citizenship status, but it does draw attention to just how common it is for first-generation American Hispanics to attempt to pursue higher education.

I would say that we have a large number of immigrant families, because I write a lot of EOP [Educational Opportunity Program] applications for the Cal States and letters of recommendation and that type of thing. And in almost all of them, that I've written in the last four or five years, I can say that... I can't even think of one that didn't say that the parents were raised in another culture.

Interviewee #9, a high school counselor, points out that education is valued by immigrant parents and first-generation students, so much so that some people make a business of taking advantage of their lack of knowledge concerning admissions and financial aid and possible fears of disclosing legal status. The following comments came after an interruption to the interview, by a student who had questions regarding college, financial aid, and about money his parents had paid an organization outside of school promising to facilitate his higher education. This counselor also hints that there may be some good candidates for officer programs, but that citizenship status may be

something that keeps them from applying. She also mentions that legal status also poses financial problems for students seeking higher education.

He only overpaid \$200 and something. Somebody else came in here the other day and told me they paid \$687. Some of those scholarships say that if you pay them a thousand, they promise to get you a scholarship for a thousand plus. It's a rip-off...To get you in and/or get you a scholarship. Which is so stupid, because these kids would qualify anyway, you know, for a Cal Grant. They are going to qualify for other financial aid. You heard it yourself. That is another issue. Education is extremely important to Hispanic youth and first-generation people. And I think that is an important distinguishing fact, because they will almost do whatever they can to get their kids a better education than they had, because they realize education is so important. And many times, in wanting that, they succumb to fraudulent claims. The parents don't know any better. And they do not align with high schools, the parents do not. And some of it may be that they feel that there is too much knowledge in the high school and into the college and that it may filter to the federal government...Sometimes they fear because of their legal status. Another concern in relating to the military... some of the people that may be top-notch and qualify to be officers may not have their papers...It is an issue, especially in terms of dealing with colleges. It is not an issue until you are talking about getting federal money to go into colleges, then it may pose a problem at some colleges, but not all.

Interviewee #10, a high school college counselor, gives some specific numbers (about 20 percent) on undocumented status of students in the senior class of her school.

...there are 118 students who are undocumented out of the 570 [students in] the senior class. It is a big undocumented population.

Interviewee #11, a Catholic pastor, observes that certain agencies visit the parish annually to educate people on citizenship, but that he does not have any first-hand knowledge of how many people that entails.

I really don't know. There are a couple of citizen programs, and they do get some people, but I'm not sure. I have a sense that there are a lot of people that could be eligible to get their papers, but it takes time, and some of them don't know how to. There are a lot of agencies now that help with that. And they come here once a year and do a whole weekend thing.

Interviewee #12, an Air Force JROTC high school instructor, relates a story to describe a situation that arose forcing him to deal with the citizenship and legal residency questions that would otherwise be avoided.

Oh, technically speaking, in order to be in this program, you must be an American citizen. I got a waiver from headquarters for that. So, I don't even have to go there with a recruit. I don't ask. They don't have to tell me, and I don't ask...if you make it a requirement to be a U.S. citizen, the program is going to suffer. So when I got here the policy was, "We don't ask that question." ...Interesting, though, last year was our first year going down to Coronado. Before we had been going out to Point Magu, up north, which was no big deal. But going down to San Diego, you've got to come through the checkpoint. We never even considered it. We have three instructors here. Two black guys and one Hispanic guy. And we never even considered it. And one of my kid's father said, "He can't go." And he wanted to go. He's a good recruit. He's a freshman. He cried. And when I had Sergeant [name deleted] call him, he said, "Because I don't have his papers." And we have to go through that checkpoint. And then it was like, "Oh, shit!" We never even thought of that. After that, I ended up turning away seven or eight kids, because that is the last thing I need, that is, to get stopped. And so all the kids that went had to bring a copy of their birth certificate and a copy of their social security card.

Interviewee #13, a Catholic pastor, comments on the legal status of his parishioners and makes it clear that legal status is not something the pastor tries to explore.

I have no idea. I never ask. I joke about it a lot. I think many of the people are not what the United States would consider to be legally immigrated.

Interviewee #14, a Catholic priest, comments on his feeling that the majority of families in the parish area are recent immigrants and that very few speak English, yet it is clear that inquiring about legal status is not something that is part of his concern.

I think the majority are recent immigrants. Just very few families have been here long. Very few families feel comfortable speaking English.

E. THEME IV: POVERTY

1. Theme

Hispanic students in the Los Angeles inner-city environment cope with a number of issues, and one that stands out in particular is the issue of poverty. Poverty affects students on many levels. In some cases, students feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the family over any other would-be priorities such as education or future career aspirations. Poverty can be defined differently for parents, as families that have come primarily from Mexico often originated from a more disadvantaged area.

2. Justification

Interviewees were asked about their knowledge of the financial situation of families in the community. Interviewees are in positions that allow them access to financial data of large numbers of students and families in their areas they can give often know about family financial situations. Additionally, some have access to data explaining why students may seek work at a young age. Examples are listed below:

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, gives an estimate of the financial situation of the students in the school, based on their participation in the school lunch program.

About 80 to 85 percent of them qualify for the free lunch program, which means very low economic situations.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, shares data concerning the financial information compiled on the advanced placement students in the school from a prior year. She points out that families can be very large and survive on very low wages. This information is limited to the students who participate in college preparatory classes and may not be representative of the whole student population.

The average income, I haven't compiled it yet, but when I process advanced placement stuff, I always get their income level, and last year it was about 17,000 as an average, and we have families from two people to thirteen. And that's generally it... they are living on less than nothing.

Interviewee #7, a high school career counselor, believes that a larger priority for students than their education may be their need to contribute to the welfare of the family.

I think that survival is one of the major issues that people deal with in this area. I don't think they see education as key to that because it is immediate survival not long term. I tend to want to believe that education is important to them. They want their children to graduate and go on. I don't know if higher education is as important to them as graduating. But they want them to graduate and go to work and help the family.

Interviewee #8, a high school career counselor, explains in detail why she knows that the families in the area live in poverty and comments on the desire of students to work and help the family unit.

...about 95 percent of our kids qualify for Title 1 funds from the federal government. We are a Title 1 school. They used to qualify through the school lunch program last year. But family economic level qualifies them for the school lunch program, which means that they are under the Federal Poverty Level. Some of them get part subsidized lunches and some of them get full... I have all the work experience classes, that's all the kids that have jobs that leave school early. I have notes on every kid that I have right now. I have about eighty. They are all juniors and seniors. But I asked kids and gave them a little survey. And one of the questions was, "Why do you work and where does your money go?" And for two-thirds, at least, of them, some of their money goes to help pay the family bills. It's a family... for family survival, everybody is contributing. And it's not just them, but the older brother and the older sister and the younger kids. And you know, "I help my mom." They won't say it like, like, "I help pay the bills." "Sometimes when my mom is short and she can't pay the phone bill, I help pay the phone bill," or "My mom needed twenty dollars. She was short this week, so I helped her out." You know, they don't say, "I help pay the bills." And the families do things like buy condos or buy a house, and everybody is helping to pay that house. And if that kid can't contribute that fifty bucks or whatever it is for that payment, they're not going to make it. So it is definitely a group effort.

Interviewee #9, a high school career counselor, simply states that it is common knowledge that the families in the area are poor, based on the Title 1 status of the school. She then goes on to explain what she sees as the main issue with poverty in Hispanic families and the effect it has on education.

Our school is a Title 1. That means that most of our parents are below the poverty level...I also work as the work experience coordinator

and get them work permits... Too many of these kids are working when they are fourteen years old... Well, because mom and dad want them to work. And in many cases it is the parent that gets jobs for them. They work someplace and they come in asking for a work permit so that their child can work where they work. Invariably many times, I can't legally say no unless their attendance is bad and their grades are bad. And eventually their grades are going to drop, and this kid will drop out of school, trying to chase behind \$6.25 or whatever, because some parents do not see the need for their kids to pursue academic excellence. And they feel you need to contribute to the household.

Interviewee #10, a high school college counselor, expressed visible empathy for the financial situation of the students' families. She had recently been working on collecting financial data for the students who were potentially college-bound.

I was doing the financial aid stuff... Really, really impoverished and really low-income parents... They are really disadvantaged, I'd call it.

Interviewee #11, a Catholic pastor, shares his impression that families in his parish are struggling financially, but that the situation is a relative one where the families, although not wealthy by any means, have at least gained some comfort.

My impression is that everyone here is struggling and they work, both husband and wife. They have probably achieved a certain level of economic comfort that they did not have before. It is not a wealthy area.

Interviewee #14, a Catholic priest, explains that, despite poverty, people function as a family and contribute to goals such as purchasing a home. Apparently these financial responsibilities are sometimes shared by youth in the family and as well as by the mother.

I think that in this particular area, that the people are low income... people are starting to buy. These are even people that are very poor. They somehow find a way of being creative and buying a house... the primary worker is the father. There are a very few cases where the older son is helping out... I should say that some percentage, like 30 percent of the mothers work. That has been my experience.

F. THEME V: PARENTAL/ROLE MODELS

1. Theme

Hispanic students lack role models in higher education and in a number of career fields. If Hispanic youth in the Los Angeles inner city are to find role models for education or careers, they must frequently look outside of their immediate family and neighborhood. Unfortunately, their parents may not be able to offer much guidance in either venue, as they seldom have higher than a primary school education in a foreign country and work mostly as laborers. In recognition of this, some counselors address this bit of reality with students upon arrival in high school and let them know that they need to exercise personal initiative in this regard and not turn to their parents for guidance. Other educators become involved in a partnership with parents and are even accepted as extensions of the families because of their importance as mentors for the children. Many youths see their hard-working parents struggle and still fall short financially and are compelled to contribute to the family by working. In some cases, parents encourage their children to contribute and even assist them in getting jobs. Sometimes, work and survival of the family unit become more of a priority than education. Education does not seem to be a value, across-the-board, for all Hispanic parents. Nevertheless, the struggle, hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit of parents are a motivator for some students.

2. Justification

Interviewees were asked about students' aspirations and their academic and career goals. Most interviewees brought up the subject of role models or a lack thereof. Interviewees hold positions that allow them to observe or have access to the family background information of students. Some hold positions where they often decide to issue work permits, question their need for such permits, and monitor the progress of those individuals. Others serve in counseling roles for parents and students alike when faced with questions concerning academic and career pursuits. All interviewees had strong opinions about the question of role models and the influence of parental figures. Some examples are listed below:

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, points out the predominance of first generation pursuits in higher education and the lack of role models in the community

and family. She feels strongly that, psychologically, the lack of role models affects the self-confidence and aspirations of students.

First-generation college student situation predominates. Very few kids have parents that went to college...I think that there is a lack of role models. You ask a student quite specifically what career do you see yourself in. A lot of them will mention police work, because they know or see policemen. They'll mention social work. A lot of them have seen social workers work with their family. Family and friends may be in that job. The ones that want to be doctors and lawyers, know what they do. So there is a lack of knowing what is out there for them. Also a lack of self-confidence. That's a really big thing. They don't really think they can do that. Yeah, that person can be an officer or that person can go to UCLA, but no one in my family has done that. I don't think I can do it. And, whether they say it directly or not, I think it is internalized. They don't see themselves in that role.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, indicates that it is difficult for parents to act as educational role models, especially when have only a primary school education in a foreign country. She explains that she has to counsel students when they first arrive in the high school to not look to their parents for assistance in academics or pursuing higher educational goals.

It's hard, I think, for the families...we have an average of about sixth grade [education] with the parents and I explain that to the kids when they first come in as ninth graders...on the same token, tell them: "Your parents don't have the knowledge to be able to assist you in getting through high school, let alone getting into college."

Interviewee #6, a high school Army JROTC educator, explains that parents of Hispanic youth consider him an extension of the family and honor him with invitations to family events. This is an example of the *compadrazgo* mentioned previously (chapter 2).

We had some of our parents here yesterday and they identify with JROTC as an extension of their family. The ultimate relationship. They see us as an extended family member. I can't tell you how many invitations I have received to *Quince Años* [15th birthday] celebrations, and we spend so much time with the family members as coaches.

Interviewee #7, a high school career counselor, describes some of the jobs that parents of students have, but does not believe that Hispanic youth are all deterred by the humble beginnings and struggles of their family; rather they are often inspired to seek

something better. She relates a personal experience with her husband's family where the younger children were able to achieve. She also touches on the closeness of extended family and youth often looking outside of the immediate family for role models. Nonetheless, she does acknowledge the importance of, and lack of, role models for youth.

Well, the Latino population, I think most of them are laborers, low income. A lot of the parents of students who come here work in the sewing industry and in the hotel industry, laborers, and maids, and stuff like that...The more hungry, the more successful you will probably become. My husband is a second generation. His mom was from Mexico, and they were born here, but they were dirt poor, and education wasn't a big issue with his parents. It became a big issue for the three younger boys. There were four older sisters and three younger boys. Education became an issue for them, because they saw their older brothers and sisters struggling and always having to help their parents and then their families, working hard and all that. All three of them went to college and got PhDs, and he believed all this happened because he was hungry and didn't have any shoes. So it forced him to be that way. And, for the cousins, it was the same thing. They saw how hard it was for their parents to provide for them and give them the stuff they were able to have. And if that's not taught to you from the time you are growing up, where do you get it from? Some students are able to attach themselves to other families, their friends, parents, teachers, counselors, but not all of them.

Interviewee #8, a high school career counselor, points out that parents serve as role models for their children in work ethic, optimism, and entrepreneurial goals. She also acknowledges that parents cannot give too much advice otherwise for the specific situations that their children are in, as they have little to no experience in dealing with those issues.

The students can't go to the parents and ask for a lot of advice about what to do in their situation because the parents didn't go through it. So there are a lot of first generation, and it makes it doubly hard... We are a very entrepreneurial area. There are a lot of people that are spinning off their own businesses, successful or not. And when I talk to kids about what they want to do for their life plans, a lot of them say, "I want to run my own business." They see that from their parents. We have the fruit cart and people hanging out their shingles for this or that...You can get certified whether you speak English or not. If you have the skill, you can do it. And you can open your own business and be independent. And we have a lot of that spirit in this community... People that want to work for themselves... Mom and pop stores... Aspirations are pretty high in a lot of

our kids and their parents. They want to be successful. For a lot of our kids, both parents are working hard. A lot of the mothers we have are employed in the garment industry. Whether they work at home or go some place. I mean some do piecework at home. We have people in the neighborhood that make tamales and sell them. At Christmas time, people that know people order tamales from the lady down the street here and she is making like twenty-dozen tamales. People from here, from the school, order. So aspirations are high. People want to succeed. They want to be “somebody.” The kids reflect that, too.

Interviewee #9, a high school career counselor, talks about some of the negative role models available in the immediate area and on their way to school. She also points out that the immediate area surrounding the school is very impoverished and, unfortunately, the site for illegal business dealings.

If we are surrounded by three different projects... this is a key issue... what those students see coming and going to school is an indicator as to what they set their minds to in the future. And sometimes the role models they see going to and from school are not... they are officers all right, just in the wrong type of business... So, many times, the kids do not see positive role models...

Interviewee #10, a high school college counselor, describes the despairing perspective with which Hispanic youth must often live. She describes this as being the norm and not the exception.

Well, the backgrounds are very similar here. You know, the parents didn't go to high school, dropped out of elementary school, or even had no formal schooling, so the kids do not have any role models that way. So, they come into high school, and they don't realize they can go to college. They don't feel like there is enough money, and they don't really feel like there are any options.

Interviewee #13, a Catholic pastor, feels that parents can be good or bad role models in terms of education, depending on which stance they take, especially considering that half of the Hispanic parents in the parish never obtained higher than a primary education. The pastor points out that the majority of the immigrants who come to the U.S. from Latin America are not highly educated.

I think some have that educational value, especially for their children. But it is also something you have to work against, because the

population coming here is not the educated population from Mexico. That's one of the questions we ask when people register in the parish: "What's the level of education?" I think you can go through the whole parish list and find more than 50 percent of the parents never went any higher than 6th grade, primary school, or *secundaria*, secondary school. There would be very few who went to *preparatoria* [high school], college or university level.

Interviewee #14, a Catholic priest, notes that some families value education and simply exercise their authority, raising their kids in a healthy manner. He also notes some examples of the types of jobs held by the people in his parish. He also points out that some negative role models are adopted by youth due to a need for acceptance via joining gangs.

It shows up over and over again with children I knew, and some of them are already carrying their children to church. They go to church with their own babies, but they are full of tattoos and earrings. And some of them, somehow despite being out of the gang, they feel like they have some kind of loyalty. So I see that as an obstacle, and it seems to be a very frequent occurrence...Some of the positive things that I find in some of the people that go on with their studies and college or universities... Some of these people, the strengths that I see, are in their own parents. Somehow, their parents influenced them to continue. They are very strict with the kids...the children think that the parents are very strict. They ask them to do their homework. They ask them to do certain things at home, pick up their room and the garbage and everything. Some of them somehow rebel against their parents and say that when they reach the age of eighteen, they will move out, but the parents seem to be very firm and say, "Well, while you are still here you keep up with your studies." And the results show, because the kids usually get through the grades and move up...The majority of people work as drivers or in factories, in the garment industry, and a few in gardening.

G. THEME VI: FAMILY TOGETHERNESS/FAMILY AS A UNIT

1. Theme

In the Hispanic families of Los Angeles, the family is the important unit and not the individual. Hispanic youths learn this early in life and feel a strong responsibility to contribute to the livelihood of the family. Beyond just financial reasons, though, there is also a responsibility to promote family togetherness. Some examples are given where family responsibility and influence can have a detrimental effect on Hispanic youth

pursuing educational and career opportunities. At the same time, numerous stories are provided by interviewees that link success to strong family ties.

2. Justification

Interviewees were asked about a variety of specific subjects and the topic of family was raised time and again by interviewees. The theme of family is interwoven in other themes, but it is important to point out that family, *la familia*, in the Hispanic community, is vital in decision-making and deserves special attention. Now, family can often be extended family as well as immediate family. Rather than be repetitive and present quotes from interviewees already discussed under other themes, only a small number of examples are presented below.

Interviewee #2, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, recognizes the need to address the family unit in the decision-making process for Hispanic youth. He comments on efforts made to connect with potential recruits' parents by sending translations of informational material. He notes that, in his experience, such translations do not factor in the frequent low educational level of the parents and are thus not as effective as they could be. He also talks about how vital and strong the support of the family is in the decision-making and commitment of Hispanic youth.

...we have done some tinkering around the edges with some recruiting materials...materials, handbooks, we have booklets we pass out to the families in Spanish, but keep in mind that those are written at a level where you are making an assumption that the education level of the parents is deep enough that they can comprehend it, deal with it, and make a rational recommendation to the son. We automatically assume that, by putting the English version into Spanish or another language, the educational level of the person at home is able to comprehend that. We don't make the connection that they may not be at the same educational level.

Once a kid is committed, parental support from the Hispanic community is the best support that you are going to find for anyone in the Delayed Entry Program. Once that kid has decided that he or she wants to join the military, as far as them being constantly prepared and being ready to go on their boot camp ship day, that community has the strongest support of that decision once it has been made. And they make sure that he doesn't do anything wrong like, do any drugs, stays within weight limits, stays in school. That is the strongest support once the decision is made...Prior to that, it is the complete opposite. It's like, "now that a you have decided to go, we're going to support you, but we wish you wouldn't

go. We don't want you to go; we want you to stay home." Once the decision is made and the family is convinced that it is the right decision, there is a total reversal of their opinion about the decision.

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, discusses how strong an influence family pressure can have over a student who wishes to leave the area in pursuit of higher education, even when possibly faced with an opportunity to accept an appointment to a service academy.

...family comes first and you can't really fight that...Which also leads to going away to an academy. Kids and the family are much more comfortable with the student staying in the Los Angeles area. That may play a role in the decision for a kid who is eligible to go to UCLA instead of a service academy.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, comments on some conversations with students that lead her to believe that living with extended family does occur. Admittedly her interaction with the extended family is limited at best. She also notes that family size is usually large.

A lot of them have a lot of children in the family. But one of my kids yesterday told me there were six people in his family and only two kids. An I went, "Oh, okay." So there are different extended families. Another one was my Valedictorian last year. She had an aunt and an uncle and I think a grandparent living in the same household.

Interviewee #6, a high school Army JROTC instructor, talks about the need to have a partnership with family to help affect students in a positive way. He related the story of a prior student of his who went on to join the military, but continues to take care and contribute to his family.

[Name deleted] is sending money back to his mom and his family. He learned to appreciate the work-ethic value. He learned the importance of being early in life. These are just some of the values they learn after being in a program like ROTC. The school, of course, enjoys the fruits of all those efforts. It's really a three-part effort: from the family support, to the school, teachers as role model and then the student...We had some of our parents here yesterday and they identify with JROTC as an extension of their family.

Interviewee #7, a high school career counselor, talks about the strength of having a close family with parents making their children a priority and the positive power it can have.

This was a family whose parents were hard workers. Both parents worked, and they worked in a sewing factory. And, eventually, they started doing piecework at home, independent. So, both were working, but at home; so, they were able to watch their kids, and they went to Hollenback Middle School, then they all went to Roosevelt High School. All three boys ended up being class valedictorians. One went to Harvard; one, I want to say, to Stanford; and the youngest one went to UCLA. The first year he became a daddy, finished school, went for his Master's, and is now working on his Doctorate. He is about twenty-six or seven. All of them came back to teach at Roosevelt and I think one of them now is entering law school. And the two cousins, it was the same story. I think they were successful, because the parents were there. I think they were a very intelligent family, but they also had the two parents and the idea that they were not going to be raised by someone else, but by the parents. I think without that, I mean, kids can't be successful.

Interviewee #14, a Catholic pastor, relates a personal story of the strength of family commitment and the positive power it can wield in the success of Hispanic youth. The Hispanic-American dream for parents is described as the proper religious upbringing, togetherness, education, and financial success of their children.

Their father died, and the mother has had to raise them. To me, that is a success story of the solidity of family life, because the father and mother were very active in the parish. Mr. [name deleted] put up all the doors in the Church, he was in the nocturnal adoration, he built the stand to the Pastoral Candle...many things and he was always active in the Parish. And those children are always at mass with their mother. And they were always encouraged in education, and that is why they are going to college. And they said to me, not so much as a month ago, when I gave a talk to the parents and they came out. The three of them said Father, thank you because nobody has ever said this in public, almost. And that is what our father always said to us. "I'm not gonna leave you a lot of money, but I'm at least gonna have given you the best education I can afford and that you can go ahead in life with that." I think that is a success story and I think that is the success story of the immigrant parents. The two of them, [names deleted], they wanted this for their children and they got it and now the father is dead, but the story is still going on.

H. THEME VII: QUALITY EDUCATION

1. Theme

The public education system in inner-city Los Angeles is struggling to find a way to effectively educate students in the community. More and more inner-city schools are becoming segregated by a population that is not very proficient in the English language and has very little need for proficiency in the local area. Students advance and graduate from high school, yet can neither pass basic military entrance exams nor college English exams. Low average SATs indicate that even students interested in higher education are not very competitive.

2. Justification

Interviewees were asked to share their thoughts and experiences concerning the public education system. Interviewees often expressed frustration with the quality of education provided by the public schools. Specifically, they listed: (1) low SATs; (2) inability of students to pass basic military entrance exams; (3) low academic competitiveness; (4) advancement of students despite an obvious lack of proficiency; (5) high drop-out rates; (6) the small number of students attending institutions of higher learning; (7) high interest from families in alternatives to the public education system; and (8) the lack of a safe environment in public schools.

Interviewee #2, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, finds the education system in Los Angeles lacking. One of his indicators of school quality is the large amount of students who cannot pass the ASVAB. He also believes that the reason military is so successful recruiting, by advertising education and training, is because the public education system has not done its job. He further adds that, in parts of the city that are primarily populated by minorities, little improvement has been made in the schools.

Things that do work here in Los Angeles are education and an opportunity for training. And the reason being that, in my opinion, the high school diploma in Los Angeles is not perceived by the average employer as being a very good diploma, based on what a kid should have learned...Education is a value, but the reality is that we have two different standards of educating our kids in Los Angeles County. If you happen to live in a poor or minority area, the quality of your schools, in my opinion, has not improved in the last ten years. In fact, I think that, in the last ten

years, they have dropped, and I don't see that changing. So, the reality of where we recruit from is that some of these kids are looking for an escape out of the environment they've lived in and that has not properly prepared them for the work force that they are now entering. I guess that is a long answer to say that the school system has not kept pace. The quality of the education received by some of these kids does not allow them to compete, whether they want to join the Navy or not. We have a lot of kids that want to join that can't pass their ASVAB. You need to be able to pass the ASVAB upon exiting a high school program, but they can't.

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, in discussing the low SAT averages and grade-point averages of students, states that the pool of students even eligible for competitive officer programs, such as service academies, is very small. Additionally, the small pool of students who are excelling academically in high school are being competitively recruited by institutions of higher learning.

So there is an issue there. I would have 70, 75 kids at the most, so that's a very small pool, and then they're being pulled by other options.

Interviewee #4, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, explains that the high school ASVAB can be used for identifying occupational areas that students can pursue as a career based on their ability and interest. He finds that, as a whole, this is very difficult to do in the Hispanic areas because, while there certainly seems to be interest in good careers, the educational background and ability of students are lacking.

The problem we run into is, in the highly Hispanic areas, we don't always get very good jobs that we can recommend. Because there is a tie-in between interest and ability level. And when your ability level is very low... "I want to be a lawyer but my academic ability is in the fifteenth percentile." So this is the kind of thing that happens...If we could catch hold on education, there's the overall interest in doing better.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, says that she has a quarter of her senior classes attending four-year institutions, but that these vary in selectivity. She points out that over half of her students continue their educational pursuits in community colleges.

On a competitive level, now, I consistently have 25 percent of my students going to four-year universities. The level of the universities varies greatly from Brown to Cal State L.A. and community college; there's about 57 percent going to community college

Interviewee # 10, a high school college counselor, indicates that the dropout rate is high in the school. She says that about 25 percent of those who do graduate pursue higher education at a four-year institution, while another 25 percent do so at a community college. She feels that the pool in pursuit of higher education could be higher, but that resident/citizenship status prevents another 25 percent from attending institutions of higher learning. The interviewee believes that this is a significant achievement, since a large majority of the students are the first in their families to even graduate from high school.

The scores here are very low, their SAT scores are low, 700 [combined math and verbal] is probably the norm. So it's very low... actually we only had 440 kids graduate. A lot of kids don't graduate. Out of the kids who do graduate, about half of those go to college. A fourth of those go to four-year colleges, and about a fourth of them go to junior colleges, and the another fourth are undocumented, so they only have the choice to go to junior colleges...Everybody is a first-generation college student. Most all of them are first-generation high school graduates.

Interviewee #13, a Catholic pastor, feels that the public education system is lacking and continues to advance students that haven't achieved the level of learning they should have. He cites an example of a student who was admitted to the parish school and was ill-prepared based on his grade level. He went on to point out that the intelligence of the child was not the issue, and that they were able to more effectively teach him. The pastor does not feel this is an isolated case, but is very common with students who aren't overachievers.

I think, the environment, especially in the schools in our immediate vicinity is an inferior environment for learning for many of our children. Not so much the children that are capable, but the children who are median to lower-level skilled. They pass them on; they are socially

advanced in school. We have a child in the 8th grade who came to us because of difficulties. The child is extremely intelligent...

Interviewee #14, a Catholic priest, indicates that parochial schools are in great demand for a variety of reasons. He feels that a particular concern is the safety of students in the public schools. Parents recognize that the educational environment and safety of students is as important as any instruction that is offered. Education appears to be valued enough that fairly poor people will sacrifice considerably to obtain a better education for their children through private schools.

I think that the parents of a lot of the children do not feel their children are safe in the schools and they try and enroll them in parochial school, some of them even making greater sacrifices than the ones they are already making to enroll them in parochial schools. Many times, they are unable to do so, because the grades are already full.

I. THEME VIII: ANIMOSITY CHALLENGE

1. Theme

Although the military is generally regarded highly, there are still those in the civilian population who express varying levels of mistrust and animosity toward the armed forces. Not surprisingly, school faculty are similar in this regard. Some public school faculty openly expressed varying levels of negative attitudes toward military recruiting in schools during the interviews, or they related accounts of such views held by other faculty. Some of this animosity is rooted in personal bias, while some comes from bad experiences with overly aggressive or seemingly dishonest military recruiters. Yet, some animosity is based on the idea that students should focus exclusively on higher education. Of course, this also indicates that some school faculty have little knowledge of the many educational opportunities available through the military. The faculty that have been exposed to the military and the opportunities for higher education through the military seem very positive about the prospect of military service for their students. Opinions within individual schools vary widely concerning the military and can be a frequent source of debate and conflict from teacher to teacher and counselor to counselor.

2. Justification

Interviewees are in positions that sometimes require them to come into contact with military recruiters or to counsel students regarding possible interest in the military. Additionally, interviewees are frequently in positions that allow them to control access by recruiters to students. The researcher asked the interviewees to share their experiences and opinions about the military, recruiting, and student interest in military service following high school. All of the interviewees had strong opinions about the military, recruiter and student interactions, recruiter and school faculty interactions, and what was best for the students.

Interviewee #1, a prior commanding officer of NRD Los Angeles, expresses some discontent with schools not allowing military recruiters on campuses.

It has always been amazing to me. I mean, these are public schools, and the L.A. Unified School District would not allow us in some of their campuses to actively recruit. And, I mean, they don't want any recruiters. It wasn't just the Navy.

Interviewee #2, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, feels that some school officials have strong personal opinions about the military and do not see service as advantageous for students. They prefer to push higher education rather than allow the military to enter “student’s minds” as a feasible option. Apparently, for some, the scholarship benefits and educational opportunities through the military are unknown or not valued.

I would say that in each school there is a little small group of ones and twos that have a very strong negative attitude toward the military, and sometimes they are in a very influential position—i.e., counselors, principals, assistant principals or vice-principals—and they sort of control the access. They're doorkeepers, if you will. They really, sort of, control whether or not you can reach that group of kids who may be thinking about the military, that are college material, and that counselor is focused on that kid going to college because they don't perceive the military as being good for the kids.

Interviewee #3, a high school college counselor, shares her discontent with a recruiter who was allegedly misrepresenting the financial choices available to a student in

terms of higher education. This alleged misbehavior on the part of the recruiter resulted in minimizing his access to students for some length of time. It seems clear that active recruiting of “valedictorian-caliber” students is not welcome.

My big issue—this hasn’t happened in several years, probably since you were here—so of the recruiters were leading some of the students to believe that the only way they would ever have enough money to go to college was to join, so that turned me off right when I was a new college counselor. So, I was difficult for them to work with for a while because I said “Wait a minute, that’s not true.” I mean, one of them even came in when I was... I had like the Valedictorian in the office, filling out whatever and they tried to work on that kid. I was, like, wait a minute! You’re trying to poach this kid that could go to Berkeley. You know? Come on! And he doesn’t want a military career, so leave him alone. So, that causes difficulty just in my office, and I think the administration picked up on that.

Interviewee #4, an administrator in NRD Los Angeles, indicates in some places, the high school ASVAB is seen as a potential military recruiting tool and not as a career exploration tool available to the student body (as it is advertised by the Armed Forces). The interviewee also related a story that, in a high school, recruiters were not allowed access to students by the Vice Principal because she felt that the military exploited minorities. And, now that she was in a position to prevent it from happening, she would.

We don’t test Huntington Park High School and have not almost in my 14-year memory. The last time I was there it was very much the belief that the program, even though we talk very much about career exploration, it’s just a, in quotes, “military test.” “We don’t think the military treat our people fairly.” ...There is a real belief from some educators, both ethnic and non-ethnic, that the military exploits all minority personnel, whether they are women, Hispanics, anything.

Interviewee #5, a high school college counselor, observe that, early in her career, she shared the attitude that all students should be groomed to go on to higher education and not consider the military as an option. She says that what changed her attitude about the military was the positive interactions she witnessed between recruiters and students. Additionally, once she was exposed to service academies and the opportunities available in higher education and officer careers, she then became excited about students taking an

interest. She personally shared with the researcher that she is now a “big advocate” for service academies.

When I first became a college counselor, it was, “Everyone is going to college, forget the military, we are not doing that.” But I had some really good recruiters that I admired because they weren’t the “gung-ho” type saying this is the best decision you’ll ever make... “You have to do this and we’ll give you all kinds of money” and that kind of stuff. I’m leery of these guys, because that is what they are selling, and I haven’t been where I hear what their “shpeal” is. But these guys participated. They were part of the school. They would go to baseball games and football games and dances and would be present in uniform there. And setting an example rather than coercion, which I appreciated very much. So, my tune changed a little bit and I understood that some people needed to be away...It changed in that light with the recruiters that I had met, and becoming familiar with my first educator tour, which was to the Naval Academy, and becoming familiar with that and looking at the difference. I became very excited about Academies and, consequently, I fought to get to go to the Air Force Academy and then the last one, it took me two and a half years to go to West Point.

Interviewee #7, a high school career counselor, says that military recruiter activity in her school has been “low,” admittedly because of the personal opinions of school officials who control the access of recruiters to students. She points out the existence of an attitude and fallacy that all students should, and will, go on to pursue higher education.

I have been here since January, and I haven’t seen a recruiter for about two months. And I think about two weeks ago the Navy came around, but I don’t think they had been around here, because the literature they put out looked real drab. At other schools, they are there once a week recruiting. They are constantly walking around during lunch and nutrition. I don’t know if that is because the administration frowns on it, or if they just don’t want to cooperate. And I think that is the problem. I think prior people working in this office were not accepting of the military. And I think that is why recruiters were not accepted there. I think it depends on the career advisor and the college advisor at the school. There are college and career advisors that feel that the military should not be an option for our kids...there has been, for a long time, in the last ten years, a thinking that all our kids can go to college, and when you get that type of thinking that’s when you get those schools that are not cooperating with the military. And that’s not going to happen. I mean, we would love to see that, but with the students that are coming out of here, that’s not going to happen.

Interviewee #8, a high school career counselor, relates a personal story where a college counselor was influencing a student to go on to college rather than pursue his interest in the military. Fortunately, she had a good working relationship with the military recruiter who trusted her enough to ask for her intercession. She believes that this story exemplifies the pressure or push for “smart” students to go on to college.

You know, two years ago we had a young man who wanted to be a Marine. He had talked to his recruiter and was excited about joining the Corps. He was in the top 10 percent of his class, and the college counselor started pressuring him to go to college, and he was feeling confused. The Marine recruiter came in my office and asked me if I could do something about it. I told him that I could talk to him, but that it was his decision to make. So, I brought him into my office and asked him to close his eyes and visualize himself ten years from now. Then I asked him what he was wearing. And he looked at me and said, a Marine uniform. I believe that there is a push from college counselors for smart kids to go to college... The kids that I work with... I am preparing them for the work world and I tell them, “I don’t care if you’re going to college or going to the military or whatever, everybody has to work. So, you’re all going to be competing for the same job. So, do you be number one or number one hundred and two?” That’s my job, to help them become one, two, or three.

Interviewee #9, a high school career counselor, believes that students with college potential are identified early by the school, are groomed toward higher education as their option, and steered away from considering the military as an option. She would like to see the high school ASVAB become mandatory for entire grades and sees value for students in its career interest inventory.

I think that the military has to, and I mention this to all my military recruiters... they want to come in and talk to the twelfth-graders who can score a particular score on the ASVAB, and it’s too late. They are way too late. Because, while they get around to doing that, the college people have been getting these kids a lot younger. And believe it or not, they are told that they do not want to do the “military thing.” Kids that can score high enough to be officers on the ASVAB are being told by counselors that they can go to UC this and the other and that they don’t need to go into the military. That, too, is a major problem. Sometimes, I cannot even let the military in to talk to some classes, because the teachers do not want them there...I schedule the classes for the military people to talk to. Some teachers...they can’t stop us, but their attitude is that these kids are all going to college, and why do we need to focus them on the military... We do the ASVAB testing. We did it last week, and we are probably going to

do it again before the end of the year... I would like to see the ASVAB mandatory for grades eleven and twelve in 2002. I'm almost sure we are going to work toward that end. This administration is very positive.

Interviewee #10, a high school college counselor, believes that the military recruiters are less than honest with students and limit their options by getting them involved with contracts early on. She cites a specific example where a student changed her mind about entering the military after having entered into a contract. According to the interviewee, the student was not permitted to get out of the contract despite the efforts of the school principal. The interviewee admits that she does not have very much interaction with the recruiters who visit the school.

Some of them choose to, because they feel limited, they choose to go into the military. They sign on really early. I noticed that the military, some branches, are really active trying to recruit people.... It's funny, because I take stuff out of there, put it somewhere else and they always come back and put it in the top shelf. I'm like, "How do they come in here?"...I think what happens is that the senior's teachers allow them to come in and talk to their classrooms and make presentations. And so kids sign on really early, before they even apply to college and things like that... I was talking to one of the teachers here yesterday, because he allows these programs, proprietary schools like DeVry, and they come in and sound really good. They promise them the world. They make them sign a contract early on in their senior year, before they have really explored their options, and I guess that is also how I see the military a little bit. They come in early on, and once they sign, they limit their options. Colleges don't do that... I'd like to get more information. In fact, there was this one guy who came in and told me he would come out, but he hasn't. My perception of how this works is that the military offers them a lot. And they have them sign a contract, and then they can't get out, and then realize that they could have done the same or better going to college in terms of money. I know last year, this one girl signed up. I didn't know all the details, but the Assistant Principal is very upset because they had kind of misled her. So they were trying to get her out of the contract, but they were not able to.

Interviewee #12, a high school Air Force JROTC instructor, feels he has the backing of the school principal and that the JROTC program is thriving, limited only by facilities. He does acknowledge that a few instructors hold negative attitudes toward the military, but that the situation is not worth getting too upset about.

And we are busting at the seams. We have 4,500 kids in the school here. I've been told that this school was designed to hold about 3,500... We are at a point where I actually backed down on recruitment. I can't accommodate more kids... The principal supports this program...He supports it wholeheartedly. And guess what? If he supports it, everybody on campus supports it. We have some teachers that say stupid things, but Mr. [name deleted] supports us. And if there is any type of function over here, he'll ask for a bunch of teams. I have an armed drill team, and unarmed drill team, color guard, and a saber team... There are some people that are very liberal that have a problem with the military. All these kids aren't going to college, and some of these community colleges aren't worth the time that they spend going, so this is a viable alternative for them. I have kids come and tell me, "Mr. Smith told me that the last thing I want to do is join the military." And I say, "Well, Mr. Smith has to come talk to me, so we can square him away about the military."

J. SUMMARY

The interviews reveal various challenges faced by Hispanic youths in inner-city Los Angeles that possibly inhibit their desire or ability to pursue higher education, limit their career choices and aspirations, and, in some cases, dissuade them from considering service in the military. These challenges include: poverty, language barriers, cultural barriers, poor public education, lack of role models, and legal status. In addition, the interviews suggest that high school faculty can be either a strongly positive or strongly negative influence when it comes to students taking an interest in the military. The interview data also suggest that a relatively high percentage of high-achieving students in the Los Angeles school district do not have legal residential status, ultimately limiting their opportunities to pursue higher education or military service. Finally, the interview data support the idea that South-Central Los Angeles is a gateway into the United States. The issues faced by people serving the community in clergy and in the school system a decade ago are not unlike the issues of today. In a sense, the issues are regenerative. As a result, it is likely that many issues and challenges will continue to manifest themselves with little variance in years to come. The themes that emerged from the study are summarized in the final chapter along with recommendations for further research.

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V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A. OVERVIEW

An organization that refuses to change is doomed to fail. This is not really a matter for discussion in current American society. Current discussions of change in this country typically focus on matters of implementation rather than on need. The Navy, despite its valued traditions dating back centuries, is certainly no exception. Leaders change and implement change. Rules and regulations change. The ethnic composition of the naval service has changed. Blacks were not part of the officer corps, nor were women at some point in time. The Navy has changed for the better through inclusion and integration.

While the Navy has successfully changed and established a diverse body of sailors and marines, much of the change has been of a reactionary nature. Reacting to mandates can prove very costly, as was the case when women were allowed to be stationed on combatant warships. Ships were not built with separate accommodations and facilities for women, and they had to be altered. New classes of ships are now being built to accommodate female crews (LHD-1, 2003). Reacting to implemented change is not the ideal mode of operation for an institution known to produce leaders, especially when change can be anticipated. True leaders look to the future and shape it rather than become victims of destiny. Former Secretary of the Navy, Richard Danzig, showed initiative and vision when he asserted that recruiting Hispanics into the officer corps belongs at the center of any discussion regarding the future of the Navy. A good first step, then, is to gather and analyze information available about Hispanics in the United States.

B. SUMMARY

This study provides historical background and current information on the Hispanic population of the United States by addressing Mexican-origin subgroups. Analysis of Mexican-Americans was regional and exploratory with the hope of gaining insight as to why larger numbers of this population are not found in the Navy's officer

corps. Toward this end, the following research questions were posed: (1) Are there any factors that are limiting Hispanic youth from pursuing an interest in the military officer corps? (2) What are current attitudes of high school students in South-Central Los Angeles toward the Naval Service? (3) What influence do the community and parents have over inner-city youth in their choice of career and what attitudes do they have toward military service?

In response to the research questions, the literature and reports reviewed in Chapter II suggest that multiple factors are limiting students who may be interested in higher education or the military's officer corps. These limiting factors are accompanied by a higher sense of responsibility for Hispanic children concerning the welfare of their families. In many ways, Hispanic children take on parental responsibilities, making pursuit of personal goals secondary to familial welfare.

The interview data presented in Chapter IV reinforced findings from the literature review and identify several other limiting factors: (1) a cultural value placed on the family unit rather than on individual achievement; (2) an importance placed on work and contributing to family survival; and (3) negative attitudes toward the military conveyed to students through some counselors and educators. Almost anyone who has served in the armed forces realizes that, ideally, the military becomes a familial unit for service members. Hard work and selflessness are valued by the military. Another reality, however, is that families are often separated by the demands of military service. Contributing to family survival may have a broad meaning, including something as simple as translating English to Spanish for parents (Elsner, 2002). All of these factors combined, place the military in direct conflict with family responsibilities, since serving in the military makes it harder to secure one's family.

Recent research on propensity to join the military suggests that Hispanic high school students have a relatively favorable opinion of the armed forces. Further, various studies reviewed in Chapter II suggest that certain historical and anthropologic considerations may encourage this view of the military: (1) descent from military empires (2) conservatism, (3) group belongingness, (4) respect, (5) honor, and (6) self-sacrifice. Interview data further suggest that the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps units may

be a useful partnership between the military and Hispanic communities. Literature and interview data both indicate that authority figures, such as school counselors, teachers, clergy, parents, and extended family members, exercise a strong influence over Hispanic teenagers in Los Angeles, especially regarding career choice. Some data suggest that parents and other family members are concerned about youth entering the military. There is also information indicating that some high school teachers view the military in larger negative terms due to: (1) personal bias, (2) ignorance regarding the educational benefits available through the military, and (3) due to overly aggressive recruiting efforts.

While conducting this research, it became clear that qualified prospects must first be identified if recruitment is to be effective of Hispanic high school students into military officer programs. At a minimum, students need to have some aspiration for higher education that translates into academic achievement. Interest in the military does not appear to be an issue of attracting Hispanics into the officer corps so much as the widespread lack of academic achievement in inner-city Los Angeles. If the Navy wishes to have a larger pool of Hispanic applicants for the military officer corps, it must take an active role in influencing high academic achievement as well as in attracting young Hispanics who are already high achievers. With this in mind, recommendations from this thesis focus on how the Navy may be able to influence Hispanic students to perform well in school. Additionally, other conclusions and recommendations address the key factors that seem to strongly influence decision-making for Hispanic students.

C. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Poverty

a. Conclusion

Poverty within the Mexican-American population in South-Central Los Angeles does not necessarily prevent youth from pursuing higher education. However, when poverty is combined with other factors, such as low parental education or a lack of role models, as is often the case, it can deter Hispanic youth from seeking education beyond high school. The interview data support this, but further suggest that the combination of poverty with certain positive factors, such as parental/community support and an appreciation of education, can actually be a strong motivator for success in school.

Poor immigrant parents often have a highly optimistic attitude toward opportunity and education in the United States that is transferred to their children, who strive to improve their situation through academic achievement. The military needs students who are optimistic and motivated about academic excellence if it is to have a pool of highly qualified, promising officer candidates.

b. Recommendation

The Navy should continue to stress education and career opportunities. An effort should be made to better publicize “success stories” and the various opportunities for upward mobility through the military. It is particularly important to highlight the positive impact that a member of the military can have on his or her entire family.

2. Work Ethic

a. Conclusion

A strong work ethic is highly valued within the Mexican-American community. By itself, this is a very positive trait; however, when it is combined with poverty, less value may be placed on education, possibly due to the perceived need to assist the family unit economically. Theory and interview data support this, but further suggest that, in some cases, a strong work ethic translates into high academic achievement, especially when education is reinforced by the family.

b. Recommendation

The Navy should advertise advancement opportunities and job security associated with diligent work and effort, as well as advertise the educational requirements for specific positions. The importance of this is to keep the focus on meeting educational requirements to enter the military (especially the officer corps) and getting youth to look at the longer term benefits of education and military service over immediate employment. Navy advertising should seek to make academic achievement synonymous with a valued work ethic.

3. Family

a. Conclusion

The family unit is a central cultural value for Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles. Further, familial support is essential for academic success and pursuit of career paths for youth. Literature and interview data support this conclusion and further suggest that loyalty to family can manifest itself in a self-sacrificing role for students, where needs of the family are placed above all else. Outsiders can be accepted in the parenting role for youth through the *compadrazgo* (co-parenting) system discussed in Chapter II and IV. In some cases, JROTC instructors have been invited to family events, gaining the trust and support of the family to have influence and guide their children. This, in turn, can have a very positive effect on attitudes toward the military and military service.

b. Recommendation

The Navy needs to understand and foster the *compadrazgo* relationship within the Mexican-American if it wants to positively influence the family of Mexican-American youth. The strong support of family can be the most important encouragement for Mexican-American youth to join the military. A wealth of information may be available through JROTC instructors, who have been very successful in this respect.

4. Language

a. Conclusion

A large percentage of Mexican-Americans have underdeveloped skills in English due in part to parental education, underdevelopment of their primary language, identity issues, and underutilization of English in the social, home, and even school environments. Literature and interview data supports this conclusion and further suggest that ineffective schooling and changing policies have failed to overcome this challenge. For example, while the English as a Second Language Program has been largely removed from schools, no district-wide program has replaced it, and unprepared teachers are often asked to bridge the communication gap with students who have difficulty understanding English. If the military is to influence Hispanic families and youth alike through advertising, it must do so in a manner that is familiar to them and one that can be easily

understood. Additionally, the Navy must prepare for the reality that some otherwise capable, Mexican-American recruits may have limited English-language skills.

b. Recommendation

The Navy should continue to advertise in Spanish. This is not so much to influence youth, but rather to educate and influence their parents and extended family. For youth interested in service, the Navy should consider providing additional classes in English language skills to better prepare them for entrance examinations, such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

5. Culture

a. Conclusion

The culture in Los Angeles resembles that of Mexico, and is reinvigorated by the constant influx of recent immigrants who readily practice Mexican traditions. In fact, literature and interviews suggest that Los Angeles is a “gateway” city for many people of Mexican origin and that migration rates will most likely continue to be high. Additionally, Hispanics of Mexican descent are Catholic. Often, the most visible cultural distinctions and practices are the expressions of popular religiosity that play a part in their daily existence. An example of this discussed in literature is the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The military needs to recognize the importance of providing religious ministry and support for Hispanics.

b. Recommendation

In recognition of the importance of religion in the Mexican-American community, it would make sense for the Navy to highlight worship opportunities in the military. Imagery of the celebration of religious feasts caught on camera and displayed in recruiting information would likely elicit a positive reaction from the parents and family of Mexican-American youth considering military service. The Navy should also encourage service members to wear their uniforms to religious services when at home or on leave.

6. Citizenship

a. Conclusion

A large percentage of students in Los Angeles are undocumented, and this deters them from pursuing higher education. Literature and interview data further suggest that this lack of legal status does not directly manifest itself in poor academic achievement. In many cases, the opposite is true, and non-citizen Mexican youth outperform citizens in academics. However, non-citizens are not eligible for military service in the officer corps. In many cases, Mexican-American youth may actually be eligible for citizenship, but are unaware of the requirements.

b. Recommendation

The Navy should advertise service opportunities for non-citizens within the military. Web sites should contain links to information about legal residency and citizenship opportunities. In fact, all recruiters should have a basic understanding of residency and citizenship opportunities and, more importantly, have resources at their disposal.

7. Identity Development

a. Conclusion

Mexican-American youth often struggle with identity, and this struggle can lead to poor academic achievement. Theory and interview data support this conclusion and further suggest that students who have a clear identity, Mexican or Mexican-American or otherwise, do far better in school.

b. Recommendation

Through advertising, the Navy should continue to promote diversity and support for multiculturalism through education. For Mexican-American youth, learning about their Spanish and Meso-American warrior ethos may be a source of pride. The Marine Corps has been very successful in appealing to young audiences with imagery of knights fighting dragons. A similar approach using Aztec warriors might also work to specifically attract the attention of Hispanics of Mexican descent.

8. Role Models

a. Conclusion

Role models are influential in determining the career path of Hispanic youths. Literature and interview data further suggest that a lack of successful role models, and sometimes a plethora of poor role models, contribute to poor academic achievement.

b. Recommendation

Innovative strategies should be developed by the Navy to ensure that no opportunity is missed in highlighting the careers and achievements of successful minority officers. For example, the Navy could showcase Academy students or officers on shore duty in minority communities to promote recruitment.

D. PERSONAL REFLECTION: SACRIFICE HAS ITS RECOMPENCE

There are no easy solutions to improving participation of Hispanics in the Navy officer corps, but I felt that this was a topic worth addressing. The motivation to research this topic was very personal. I became aware of the U.S. Naval Academy almost entirely by chance and, as a result, have begun a successful career of service. Reflecting on the events that led me to military service seems important in that it may help to understand how others with similar background can be encouraged to consider a career in the Navy.

I was unable to find literature that discussed patriotism, but it is something that should be addressed. There may be a link between patriotism and the immigrant spirit shared by many who come to the United States in search of opportunity. My parents, especially my mother, instilled a strong patriotic sense of duty in me. My parents truly saw the U.S. as a land of opportunity. While my maternal grandfather worked in the U.S. and eventually retired and returned to live in Mexico, my parents did not. My mother stressed that, while life was sometime difficult in the U.S., she had no intention of returning to the poverty, poor wages, corrupt government, corrupt law enforcement, and instability that had been her experience in Mexico. She said that when she first arrived, she was especially thankful of having hot, running water. She also believed that, in the U.S., her children would have an opportunity through education to do anything.

Despite the many challenges of living in inner-city Los Angeles, I eventually came to believe strongly in the value of education, which was constantly reinforced by my family (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and godparents). Educational achievement was the one thing that earned praise in childhood. Although I know that education would eventually get me somewhere, I did not know exactly where. And I was not particularly interested in following in the footsteps of anyone in my immediate family as a laborer. I dealt with self-doubt about the future, because no one in my family had really attained a different career path or much educational. Regardless, my big dreams included becoming a gymnast, learning martial arts, traveling across the sea, and maybe even becoming an astronaut.

I was in junior high school when chance first touched me. Although I do not recall precisely what grade I was in, why I was in a waiting area, or who I was waiting for, I recall seeing an image of young men in impressive uniforms, and carrying flags. As it turns out, I was looking at a publication about the U.S. Naval Academy. The opportunities for young people attending this military academy were fascinating. What was particularly captivating was that midshipmen were actually required to learn gymnastics, boxing, judo, swimming, and wrestling. Just as impressive was learning that distinguished alumni that included a president and astronauts. At that moment, I experienced an epiphany of sorts and realized that my dreams were not necessarily uncommon and that they were packaged in an information booklet. Reading about the Academy's entry requirements and the importance placed on academic achievement validated those things my parents, family and even religion had stressed about education: sacrifice has its recompense.

This publication was not my sole source of inspiration, by any stretch of the imagination, but it certainly influenced me in an important way. High school brought the typical challenges that it brings to all, but I saw high school as a possible last opportunity to obtain an education. While some believed otherwise, the reality was that it would be difficult for me to afford higher education, and there was no visible example that a reward awaited those who went on to college. My parents and family could offer little help with school or advice on academic matters since none of them had actually

experienced schooling at the U.S. high school level. Fortunately, I could always count on a coach, teachers, and college counselor. Encouraged by school staff, I looked into colleges and tuition assistance.

To ease the economic burden on my family, I felt that I should become financially independent as quickly as possible following high school graduation. In fact, I was giving serious thought to enlisting in the Navy. The military interested me because of a sincere patriotism and a sense of duty and gratitude to the U.S. that was instilled in me by my parents. Additionally, enlistment was certainly a way to become financially independent, find adventure, experience travel, and pursue something that had never been done before in my family. While looking for colleges, I again came across an information brochure about the U.S. Naval Academy. I could not resist the temptation to send away the pre-candidate questionnaire. To get accepted to the U.S. Naval Academy would be a validation of the opportunities offered by education, dedication, hard work, and sacrifice.

In a sense, I had sabotaged my own opportunity to get accepted to the U.S. Naval Academy, as I never applied for Congressional nomination. In part, I probably felt that I would not actually be accepted, or I did not find out how to get the nomination from, or I felt it would be easier to accept rejection for not having a complete application rather than believing I was not good enough. As expected, acceptance letters to various colleges eventually arrived along with a rejection letter from the Academy. Unexpectedly, however, I also received an offer to attend the U.S. Naval Academy Preparatory School. The decision to accept the offer did not require too much thought, and I soon found myself taking the Oath of Office.

The Navy has been a validation of what my parents, immigrants of Mexican descent, believed and entrusted to me, the power of the immigrant spirit. I am thankful that chance brought information to me about the Naval Academy, yet resentful that I needed to rely on chance.

The true motivation behind this research, then, has been twofold: (1) a self-discovery and reflection on my personal experiences as the son of immigrants; and (2) an

opportunity to contribute information that may help others to likewise fulfill their aspirations and dreams through a military career, further validating the sacrifices of those who have come before.

E. TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis was conducted to provide insight regarding Hispanics of Mexican descent in the Los Angeles inner-city and factors relating to their propensity to join the military. Since this study was exploratory, it revealed a number of issues that deserve further study.

JROTC units in inner-city Los Angeles are very popular and offer a wealth of information regarding students and families in the area. A study should be conducted of these JROTC units. A question to be asked is, why are no Navy/Marine Corps JROTC units in the inner-city, especially considering the popularity of the Marine Corps with Hispanic youth? Additionally, JROTC instructors seemed very willing to give access of their corps of cadets for interviews, which might prove a valuable resource for anyone looking for more direct information.

Interview data and personal conversations suggest that there is little to no cooperation between recruiting and the admissions department at the Naval Academy. Additionally, recruiters suggested that officer recruiting is almost a self-selecting process at the high school level. In other words, students had to express an interest in an officer program and then be set up to meet with an officer. Officers did not routinely visit schools in their district. More research is certainly warranted to see if there would be any benefit in the added exposure of officers on campuses. When this researcher visited high schools in his service dress blue uniform a number, of students stopped to ask questions about the Navy. Maybe someone who looked like the students themselves attracted particular attention.

Certain historical and anthropologic elements may help to explain the relatively high propensity of Hispanic youth toward the military. These include: (1) descent from military empires (2) conservatism, (3) group belongingness, (4) respect, (5) honor and (6) self-sacrifice. Clearly, more research is needed in these areas.

The proportion of Hispanics in the naval officer corps is considerably lower than the proportion of Hispanics in the enlisted force and the general population of the United States. Hispanics may not currently be “underrepresented” in the naval officer corps, however, if the standard for comparison is the proportion of Hispanics in the work force with at least a Bachelor’s degree. Future research should focus more on the college-educated segment of Hispanic population, as well as on those who aspire to attend college but lack the necessary financial resources. It is important to keep in mind that all projections of the Hispanic population in the U.S. show impressive growth in the decades to come, and that necessarily managing growing numbers of Hispanics in the military will be a reality.

Finally, interview data suggest that some high school teachers, counselors, and administrators view the military in largely negative forms. A study to further explore how prevalent these views are and reasons for them, would be worthwhile.

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. As you may recall from our previous conversation, this interview is designed to help me obtain information useful in completing my thesis for the Naval Postgraduate School. The topic of my thesis relates specifically to exploring the reasons for the apparent rift between Hispanics in the enlisted and officer corps of the U.S. naval forces (Navy and Marine Corps). You may be aware that, historically, the services have been “proactive” in implementation of integration and equal opportunity objectives. Recruiting has made a considerable effort to reach out to minorities to ensure continued representation in the services. Reflective of these efforts is the fact that today the enlisted population of the Navy and Marine Corps is reasonably representative of the general population. Unfortunately, the officer component of the naval services has not fared as well. Only five percent of the Navy and Marine Corps officer corps is Hispanic. It may be very important for morale, retention, quality of life, force effectiveness and readiness issues, among other things, to address this possible rift in an expeditious manner. Census data and various literature indicate that people of Mexican decent make up the majority of Hispanics in the country, and that Los Angeles is the second largest city in the country and has the greatest number of people of Mexican decent residing in it. Aside from the fact that I grew up here, then, coming to Los Angeles to explore this problem was a logical choice.

I would like to hear stories about your experiences with youth of Mexican decent (or Hispanic youth in general) regarding their attitudes toward family, work, education, the military, life goals, career goals, religion, and language. I am very interested in hearing about “success stories” you may have. Certainly, I am also very interested in hearing about any youth who may have been accepted into an officer program or any that were unsuccessful in getting into officer programs.

About 15 to 20 people from Los Angeles will be interviewed from the city that work with youth. It is important for you to understand that nothing you say will be identified with you personally. I will be using a variety of information that you provide to compare with others to see if possible trends or themes exist. I do not intend to use

any of this information to make specific recommendations for admissions policies or recruiting efforts, but rather want to present information that may lead to more specific studies.

I would like to have your permission to tape record what you say so that I don't miss anything important. Remember that no statements will ever be attributed to you. All names, places, and other identifiers will be deleted. If you would like me to stop taping for any reason, please let me know. Otherwise, do you have any questions before we get started?

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONS FOR CLERGY

1. Have you seen latinization/mexicanization demographic trend in the area? Approximately what percent of the population would you say is of Mexican decent?
2. Do you have an immigrant population? Approximately what percent of this immigrant population is of Mexican decent? Approximately what percent do you think is undocumented?
3. Is the local population stable or migratory? Approximately what percent of the population do you think is migratory?
4. In general, can you describe the local Hispanic population in terms of socio-economic status, education level, primary language spoken, age level, religion, and job type?
5. Does the community affect the religious practices in the parish in terms of language used for mass and culture specific practices? What are some examples of these practices?
6. Can you identify what you see as the top three values for the Hispanic community? Can you identify the three biggest obstacles?
7. Are the values identified for the general population true for the youth? If not, can you identify the top three values for the youth of the community? What are the three biggest obstacles for youth?
8. Have you had what you would consider a youth success story? Can you tell me about it?
9. What is the influence of parents and/or role models on youth in terms of career choice or educational achievement?
10. What do you think of the public education system? Of the private education system? What percent of students are ready for a four-year college? A highly selective college? A Junior College?
11. Have you had anyone in the parish join the military? Why do you think they joined? Have you had anyone attend a Service Academy or an Officer program?

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APPENDIX C. QUESTIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS, ADMINISTRATORS, OR TEACHERS

1. Have you seen latinization/mexicanization demographic trend in the area? Approximately what percent of the student population would you say is of Mexican decent?
2. Do you have an immigrant student population? Approximately what percent of this immigrant population is of Mexican decent? Approximately what percent do you think is undocumented?
3. Is the student population stable or migratory? Approximately what percent of the population do you think is migratory?
4. In general, can you describe the Hispanic student population in terms of family socio-economic status, parent's education level, primary language spoken, and religion?
5. Can you identify what you see as the top three values for the Hispanic students? What are the three biggest obstacles for youth?
6. Have you had what you would consider a youth success story? Can you tell me about it?
7. What is the influence of parents and/or role models on youth in terms of career choice or educational achievement?
8. What percent of students are ready for a four-year college? A highly selective college? A Junior College?
9. What is the drop out rate for Hispanic students? What do you think is the biggest reason students drop out?
10. Do you have school officials, counselors, or teachers with prior military experience? Approximately what percentage has prior military experience? How is the military viewed? Do you have a JROTC group?
11. Is military service presented as an option or encouraged? Have you had any students join the military? Why do you think they join or choose not to join? Have you had any students attend a Service Academy or an Officer program?

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APPENDIX D. QUESTIONS FOR MILITARY RECRUITERS

1. Have you seen latinization/mexicanization demographic trend in the area? Approximately what percent of the population would you say is of Mexican decent?
2. Do you have an immigrant population? Approximately what percent of this immigrant population is of Mexican decent? Approximately what percent do you think is undocumented?
3. In general, can you describe the Hispanic recruits in terms of socio-economic status, education level, primary language spoken, and religion?
4. Can you identify what you see as the top three values for the Hispanic community? What are the three biggest obstacles for youth?
5. Have you had what you would consider a youth success story? Can you tell me about it?
6. What is the influence of parents and/or role models on youth in terms of career choice or educational achievement?
7. What do you think of the public/private school system in Los Angeles? Is there any animosity between schools and the military? Why do you think that is? What do schools think of JROTC programs?
8. What are the primary reasons people join or choose not to join the military? What is the appeal of the Marine Corps?
9. Why do you think there is a gap between Hispanic officer and enlisted populations in the military?
10. What is more of a priority officer or enlisted recruiting at the local level?
11. Where do we concentrate our officer recruiting efforts? Why?
12. Hispanic youth have the highest propensity to join the military, yet they have the lowest representation (percentage wise) of officers of any ethnic group. Why do you think that is?

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APPENDIX E. RESEARCHER BIOGRAPHY

The researcher was born in Los Angeles, California in the early 1970s. He is the son of two immigrants from a central region in Mexico and has eight siblings. He was raised as a Roman Catholic.

His parents had a very limited education and entered the United States illegally to make a better life for themselves. His father arrived in the U.S. as a skilled mechanic, specializing in forklifts, and with training in electricity. His mother arrived in the U.S. as a seamstress. Both parents worked very hard and valued an education. Most of the time, his mother worked at home and was often aided with work and household tasks by the children. The children qualified for the school lunch program through senior high school.

In search of better housing and neighborhoods, the family moved often. The researcher attended six different elementary schools, including one in Mexico for a year. The family lived with extended family members at times, including grandparents and uncles. His father's place of employment was stable during this time, but his mother often sought employment locally. Education was valued by extended family members who praised the children for their educational achievements.

During his year in Mexico, the researcher attended a private Catholic school where only Spanish was spoken. He learned that his maternal grandfather had worked in the U.S. as part of the *bracero* program and now received a pension.

The entire family did not live together. The researcher had three siblings who lived in Mexico. His two oldest siblings lived intermittently with the family. Of his siblings, four were actually born in the U.S.

The greatest period of stability for the researcher came when the family lived together with his uncle's family. He attended junior and senior high school in South-Central Los Angeles.

While in junior high school, the researcher was offered scholarships to attend private schools in Massachusetts, but his family did not want him to be separated from the family at so young an age. Widespread gang-related violence occurred in and around the school. The researcher had close ties with friends who were active in gangs. The

researcher worked at various jobs during the school vacation periods (two months at a time) to earn money to pay for personal attire and even worked for his mother's employer in downtown Los Angeles at one time.

In high school, the researcher took various advanced placement (AP) courses. He continued to work during vacation periods and took voluntary summer school courses. Because of his limited income, he qualified for several various grants that covered most college entrance examinations and college application fees.

He was also a varsity gymnast in high school. He went on to be ranked fifth-best in the city of Los Angeles on the still-rings, and his team became the Los Angeles City Champions his senior year. His team was also ranked number one in the state of California. He participated as well in various school clubs and organizations.

He was an active participant in his church's youth group and became the coordinator of the group while he was in high school. He was also on a church-sponsored youth volleyball team that competed locally with other church youth groups.

He was accepted to a number of colleges, including UCLA and UC Davis. He applied to the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), but initially was not accepted. Instead, he was offered an opportunity to attend the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS). He chose to attend NAPS, and was sworn in to active duty at Naval Recruiting District (NRD) Los Angeles the same month of his high school graduation. He was told that, if he were to go on to USNA, he would be the first student to receive an appointment from the area in 75 years.

The researcher's first trip in the U.S. outside of California was to Newport, Rhode Island to attend NAPS. He successfully completed the NAPS program in 1991 and received an appointment to USNA. He graduated from USNA in 1995 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in English and a minor in Spanish. He was commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy and went on to serve as a Surface Warfare Officer.

He served two sea tours stationed out of San Diego, California onboard USS TARAWA (LHA 1) and USS RENTZ (FFG 46), respectively. He is currently stationed at the U.S. Naval Academy where he serves as a Company Officer for the 15th Company.

APPENDIX F. LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE

As the dawn was breaking the morning of the 9th of December of 1531, Juan Diego, a middle-aged Christian Indian was on his way to mass via the hill at Tepeyac when he heard music so beautiful that he thought he might be dreaming. He stopped and heard a woman's voice calling to him by name from the top of the hill. He went to the voice. When he arrived, he saw a beautiful woman radiating brilliant light. She identified herself as the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. She told him that she wanted a temple built for her on that very spot. She asked Juan Diego to be her messenger and to go to the Bishop, Fray Juan de Zumàrraga, and relate her will as well as all he had seen, but to speak to nobody else.

Juan Diego went straight to the palace of the Bishop. He was not admitted directly to see the Bishop and was questioned about his business. Juan Diego said nothing and was made to wait for a long period of time. Finally he was able to see the Bishop and related his message. The Bishop was not convinced. The Bishop asked Juan Diego to return some other time to continue their discussion, so he could consider the matter.

Juan Diego was humbled and felt he had failed his mission. He returned immediately to the top of the hill at Tepeyac. When he arrived to the top of the hill, he encountered the lady again, and throwing himself at her feet, he related the details of his audience with the Bishop. He explained that the Bishop did not seem convinced and that it was most likely a failure on the part of the messenger. He asked her to please pick someone of importance and nobility to be her messenger as the Bishop would surely listen to him rather than someone as humble as himself. She replied that she had many who could carry her message, but that it was important and significant that he be the one to deliver the message and teach the Bishop what her will was. She asked Juan Diego to tell the Bishop that she was indeed Mary the Mother of God. Juan Diego said that, although it would be difficult for him and that he may not be believed, he would return to see the Bishop in the morning and return to see her with his response.

The following morning, Juan Diego was up before the sunrise and went to mass. Following mass, he went to seek audience with the Bishop once again. After a long wait,

he was able to speak to the Bishop. He recounted his meeting with the lady, and once again related her message. The Bishop asked Juan Diego many details about his encounter with the lady, but still seemed unconvinced. He told Juan Diego that he could not have a temple built without proof other than his word. He asked Juan Diego to ask the lady for a sign to prove that she was really the Mother of God who sent him. Juan Diego agreed to relate his request to the lady, and then left.

The Bishop decided to send some of his servants to follow Juan Diego and report back about what they saw. The servants followed Juan Diego, but lost him when he crossed the bridge to Tepeyac. They searched but could not find him. Angered, they told the Bishop that Juan Diego was surely lying or dreaming and that he should be punished if he returned.

Meanwhile, Juan Diego returned to the top of the hill at Tepeyac and, finding the lady, he related the details of his audience with the Bishop and his request for a sign. She asked Juan Diego to return the next morning and that she would be waiting for him with the sign for the Bishop.

When Juan Diego returned home that evening he found that his uncle, Juan Bernardino, was very ill. He brought a doctor to see him, but there was nothing the doctor could do for him; Juan Bernardino was dying. Juan Diego was asked by his uncle to go and find him a priest in the morning to hear his confession and give him last rites.

Early on the morning of the 12th of December, Juan Diego set out to find a priest for his uncle. He sought to avoid meeting the lady and thus took a different path around the other side of the hill at Tepeyac. However, much to his surprise and embarrassment the lady came down from where she was and met Juan Diego. He fell at her feet and asked for patience and forgiveness and explained that he needed to get a priest for his dying uncle, but that he would return the next morning to meet her and carry out her mission. She comforted him and reminded him that she was his mother, and she assured him that his uncle would not die. Juan Bernardino was healed at that very moment.

The lady asked Juan Diego to go to the top of the hill and gather the flowers he would find growing there. When he arrived at the top of the hill, he was amazed to find numerous exquisite roses all bursting in full bloom and giving off a beautiful aroma.

Now, it was strange to find such flowers because it was still a very cold part of winter and the only thing known to grow in that part of the arid land were wild shrubs, Nopal cactus, and mesquite. He gathered as many flowers as he could carry in his *tilma* and returned to the lady.

She took the flowers in her hands and rearranged them in his *tilma* and told him that the variety of the roses was the proof and sign the Bishop needed. She told him to relate to the Bishop that Juan Diego was her ambassador and worthy of trust and that, in her name, he should recognize her will and fulfill it. She commanded that he unfold his *tilma* only in the presence of the Bishop. Juan Diego left immediately for the palace of the Bishop.

Upon arrival to the palace, Juan Diego was met by the Bishop's servants. They ignored him and made him wait for a long time. He was closely guarding the contents of his *tilma*, as the servants were curious and wanted to see what he was hiding. On three occasions, they tried to force him to reveal the contents, but he refused. Soon, the fragrance of the roses was filling the area and they could catch glimpses of fresh flowers that were entirely out of season. Finally, they went to the Bishop.

The Bishop was excited to hear the rumblings of the servants as he realized that Juan Diego must be bringing the sign for which he had asked. Juan Diego was taken to the Bishop and, after making reverence, he related in detail all that had transpired. Juan Diego let his *tilma* open and, as the roses fell to the ground, the image of the always holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, appeared on the *tilma* in the presence of the Bishop and his household. As She appeared on the *tilma*, all were amazed and fell to their knees.

The Bishop had the temple at Tepeyac, which has become renowned as Guadalupe, built, and the *tilma* with Our Lady's image is still housed there, just as beautiful today as it was on December 12th of 1531, defying time and science.

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