
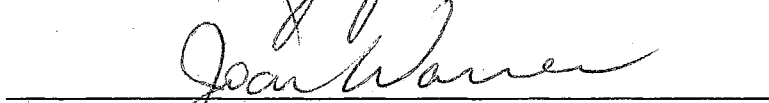


MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN COLLEGE:
FACTORS RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL
GOALS AND OCCUPATIONAL
ASPIRATIONS


Thesis Approved:


Thesis Adviser








Dean of the Graduate College

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By

Debra Ann Gutierrez

May, 2002

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose and Significance of the Research	4
Research Questions	5
Rationale for Qualitative Design	5
Researcher Bias	6
Conceptual Framework	7
Assumptions	8
Definition of Terms	8
Overview of the Study	11
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
Introduction	12
Critical Theory	12
Feminism	14
Multiculturalism	15
Race, Class, and Gender	16
Self-Efficacy	17
Critical Theory and Occupational Education	18
Education and Democracy	18
Education for Work	19
A Critical Perspective	20
Pedagogy	22
Democracy and Community Colleges	23
Community College Outcomes	26
Hispanics in Community Colleges	30
Hispanic Educational Attainment	30
Mexican Americans	32
Occupational and Educational Outcomes	33
Cultural and Individual Factors	35
First Generation Student Status	35
Assimilation and Acculturation Levels	37
Generational Status	37
Familialism and Collectivism	38
View of Authority Figures	39

Chapter	Page
Perception of Gender Roles	39
Economic Factors	40
Past Academic Performance	41
Overview of the Literature	42
Summary	43
 III. METHODOLOGY	 44
Introduction	44
Rationale for Qualitative Design	44
Descriptive Qualitative Case Study	48
Study Setting	50
Site Selection	50
The City	51
Employment Opportunities	55
Educational Attainment	56
The Research Site	58
The Pilot Study	64
Study Participants	67
Data Collection	68
Site Data	68
Demographic Profile	69
Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II	69
Interviews with the Researcher	70
Data Analysis	72
Issues of Rigor	74
Triangulation	75
Member Checks	75
Audit Trail	75
Limitations	76
 IV. FINDINGS AND RESULTS	 77
Introduction	77
Demographic Overview	78
Recruitment and Interview Dynamics	79
Academic Focus and Career Maturity	82
Life Roles	84
Participant Biographical Sketches	85
Roxanne, Age 18	85
Connie, Age 18	88
Anna, Age 19	90
Joan, Age 19	92
Chris, Age 19	92

Chapter	Page
Beth, Age 20	92
Fran, Age 22	94
Lisa, Age 33	95
Dora, Age 36	95
Letticia, Age 36	96
Patty, Age 43	97
Toni, Age 50	98
Gloria, Age 51	99
Sonia, Age 57	100
Question One	102
Why Go To College	102
Why Community College	108
Sea Mist College	110
Question Two	110
Ethnic Identity	110
Acculturation and Generational Status	112
Generational Status, Parental Attainment and Goals	115
Question Three	118
Academic and Technical Degrees	119
Factors in Selecting a Major	120
Role Models	127
Question Four	127
Question Five	137
Barriers	137
Support	154
Success	162
Definition and Indicators	162
Changes for Success	165
Gender and Ethnicity	168
Group I	172
Group II	174
Efficacy	179
Group I	185
Group II	185
Advice to Someone Like Me	186
 V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS	 191
Summary of the Study	191
Summary of the Study Findings	192
Study Demographics	193
Conclusions and Implications	194
Question One	195
Conclusions and Implications	196

Question Two	
Conclusions and Implications	
Question Three	
Conclusions and Implications	
Question Four	
Conclusions and Implications	
Question Five	
Conclusions and Implications	
Advice to Others	
Conclusions and Implications	
Overview of the Findings	
Recommendations	
Secondary Schools	
Community College Students	
Post-secondary Schools	
Suggestions for Further Research	
REFERENCES	216
APPENDIXES	229
APPENDIX A — ORIGINAL TELEPHONE SCRIPT.....	230
APPENDIX B — LETTER OF CONFIRMATION.....	232
APPENDIX C — DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE.....	234
APPENDIX D — ACCULTURATION INSTRUMENT.....	237
APPENDIX E — ORIGINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	241
APPENDIX F — CONSENT FORM.....	244
APPENDIX G — FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	247
APPENDIX H — FINAL TELEPHONE SCRIPT.....	250
APPENDIX I — STUDY NOTICE.....	252
APPENDIX J — MEMBER CHECK COVER LETTER.....	254
APPENDIX K — INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL FORM	256

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Concept Relationships of Study Factors	49
2. Demographic Information	53
3. Texas Educational Statistics - Fall 1998	59
4. Community College Profile	60
5. Demographic Profiles Group I	80
6. Demographic Profiles Group II	81
7. Overview of Participants Concerns & Themes	86
8. Acculturation Scores	114
9. Generational Status, ARSMA Orientation and Parental Education	116
10. Major, Degree Type and Aspirations	121
11. Perceived Barriers	138
12. Number of Perceived Barriers	140
13. Type of Reported Barriers	140
14. Sources of Support	155
15. Success	163
16. Gender, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation as Barriers	169
17. Self-Efficacy	181
18. Self-Efficacy Tally	184

Table	Page
19. Self-Efficacy Rank Order	184
20. ARSMA II Orientation Tally	199
21. ARSMA II Orientation & Mode Tally	199

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background and Statement of the Problem

Juliet Garcia, Commissioner, President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans [PAC]: "Hispanics can become a powerful economic engine for this country but only if we're highly trained and well educated; if not, the educational gap will become an economic gulf" (PAC, 2000, p. 35).

President William J. Clinton in White House Strategy Session on Improving Hispanic Student Achievement, June 15, 2000: "The choices and decisions we make about Hispanic education in the U.S. today are choices we make about the future of the United States itself" (PAC, 2000, p. 6).

In today's environment, educational attainment is the individuals' passageway to social mobility. The American democratic system of education is predicated on making education available to all citizens, thus, ensuring the health of the nation. This sentiment is well captured in the opening statement of the 1983 National Commission on the Excellence [NCEE] A Nation at Risk report:

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own effort, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interest but also the progress of society itself. (p. 2)

The harsh reality is that this democratic ideal remains to be just that, an ideal. Numerous statistical and economic indicators present evidence that the educational attainment of students, and its resulting occupational attainment, is often hampered when a student's race, ethnicity, and/or economic status deviates significantly from that of dominant American culture (National Council of La Raza [NCLR], 1997; Velez, 1989; Vera, 1998). At all levels of education, non-white and non-traditional students often face insurmountable barriers. Barriers include, but are not limited to, poverty; lack of role models; institutional barriers; and competing student, family, and professional roles (Clayton, Garcia, Underwood, McEndree, & Shepherd, 1992; Fisher, 1998; Friedenberg, 1999; Lopez, 1995; Ortiz, 1995). Of all major ethnic groups in the United States, Hispanics suffer from the lowest educational attainment rates (Fisher, 1998; NCLR, 1997; US Census, 1999). The following trends are evident:

- Hispanics are twice as likely than whites to live in poverty (Friedenberg, 1999); Mexican Americans, three times more likely (US Census, 1999).
- In 1998 Hispanics earned only 6.9% of associate degrees, 5.0% of bachelor degrees, 3.6% of master degrees, and 2.2% of doctorates (US Census, 1999).
- From 1980 to 1998 the college enrollment gap between Hispanics and whites expanded from 9% to 19% (Digest for Educational Statistics, as cited by Burnett, 2000).
- In 1994 the high school drop out rate averaged 31% for Hispanics and 73.2% for Mexican Americans (Friedenberg, 1999).

As a result of low educational attainment, occupational distribution is concentrated in low skill, low wage jobs (US Census, 2000). In turn, Hispanic children have limited knowledge and exposure to occupations outside the family's occupational reality (Herr & Cramer, 1996).

When the US Census Bureau began collecting information on Hispanics in 1980, Hispanics composed only five percent of the population (Fisher, 1998). By 1997, approximately one in ten Americans (10.7%) was of Hispanic descent. Projections from the US Census Bureau (2000) estimate that the current population of 33 million will grow to 98 million over the next 50 years, so that by 2050, one in four persons in the US will be Hispanic. The term “Hispanic” is a broad ethnic label, created by the US government for identifying persons of “Spanish-speaking ancestry” (Segura, 1992). The term is typically used to reference persons of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central and South American, and Spanish origin (Herr & Cramer, 1996; US Census, 1999). Each of the cultures has its own unique history and American experience, thus much diversity exists among Hispanic group members (Fuertes & Sedlacek, 1993).

Government and research entities have only recently begun to collect data relevant to subgroup headings, thus data specific to Hispanic “sub-cultures” is challenging to ascertain (Ortiz, 1995). Equally as challenging to ascertain are subgroup findings that view data in terms of culture and gender (Vera, 1998). Yet, as data continues to be examined at this level, differing levels of educational and occupational attainment are evident (NCLR, 1997; National Committee on Pay Equity [NCPE], 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Velez, 1989; Vera, 1998). Of all subgroups included under the “Hispanic” label, Mexican Americans have the lowest attainment rates (Ortiz, 1995; US Census Bureau, 1999) and represent approximately two-thirds of the Hispanic population (US Census, 1999).

Gender roles factor heavily in the educational attainment of Hispanics (Velez, 1989). Being a Hispanic female decreases the chance of gaining higher levels of

occupational and educational attainment (Vera, 1998; Velez, 1989). Attainment outcomes for Mexican American females are the lowest of all female Hispanic subgroups, indeed, of any other ethnic populations in the country. Most Mexican American women must face two facts that serve to limit attainment levels: (a) Location in low socioeconomic communities with few resources or roles models, and (b) membership in a culture that does not support women's work identities, particularly when such identities contradict traditional gender roles (Ortiz, 1995). Mexican American women often cite racism, sexism, economics factors, and family obligations, as well as a lack of support networks, role models, and mentors as barriers to further educational and occupational attainment (Ortiz, 1995; Segura, 1992; Vera 1998).

Purpose and Significance of the Research

The purpose of this study is to describe the cultural, social, and educational factors related to occupational aspirations of Mexican American women attending a south Texas community college as perceived by the study's participants. The issue of educational and occupational attainment for Mexican American women cannot be examined in a vacuum; schooling, work and family are highly interdependent factors, where a discussion of one factor eventually leads to the inclusion of the other two (Ortiz, 1995). This interdependency led to an investigation that explored the lived experiences of the study participants, through the eyes of the participants, in order to shed light on issues that may hinder both aspirations and attainment levels. By gaining an understanding of the lived experiences in schooling, work and the family life of Mexican-American women in college, postsecondary institutions may develop more effective means of

assisting these at-risk students in reaching their educational and occupational goals.

Toward this purpose, this investigation was developed as a descriptive qualitative study.

This study is significant because it presents culturally sensitive findings on a growing, yet understudied, population of college students.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study's development and was used as the basis for subsidiary questions:

What relationship exists between the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational experiences of Mexican American women attending a south Texas Community college and their occupational aspirations?

Subsidiary questions included:

- 1. What factors relate to the decision to attend college?*
- 2. To what extent do generational status, level of assimilation or acculturation factor into occupational goal setting?*
- 3. What factors relate to the choice of academic or technical goals and aspirations in community colleges?*
- 4. What factors relate to the selection of terminal occupational goals?*
- 5. What barriers to educational goals/ occupational aspirations exist? Are barriers related to occupational self-efficacy?*

Rationale for Qualitative Design

The study will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative approaches to describe the experiences of study participants; however, given the contextual nature of the problem statement, the study is characterized as qualitative in nature. While

quantitative research takes a positivistic stance in that it seeks to determine or confirm relationships between variables (Guba & Lincoln, 1998), qualitative research seeks, instead, to describe contextual experiences that may lead to relationship building and testing (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998). The research question raises philosophical and theoretical themes that focus on the race, class, gender, and social issues. Given the nature of the research question, qualitative measures are utilized to preserve the voice of the participants and allow the richness of data in the interviewing process to be brought forth.

Researcher Bias

Merriam (1998) describes the theoretical framework of a study as the “disciplinary orientation” or lens by which the researcher views the world, as well as, defines the problem and purpose of the study. Thus, the research question itself is derived from the researcher’s view of the world (Merriam, 1998; Schultz, 1988).

In the case of this study, the researcher’s view and selection of the problem are most definitely influenced by personal, cultural, and professional socialization. While the selected population is most reflective of previous generations in the researcher’s family, it should be noted that the researcher shares numerous characteristics with the population under investigation, including: (a) socialization as a Mexican American woman in south Texas; (b) status as having been part of the first generation in her family to have participated in higher education; (c) experience in managing goals of high occupational aspirations in the face of limited occupational socialization and impaired social capital;

and (d) experience in managing demanding and often conflicting personal, familial, and professional roles.

Significant professional experiences that heavily impacted the selection of the problem include the researcher's: (a) undergraduate education in a predominately white institution, in a predominately male field of study; (b) participation in professional and leadership experiences where the researcher was the only female, minority member, and/or the youngest participant; (c) experience teaching secondary mathematics to an "at-risk" Hispanic population; and, (d) experiences as a career counselor to youth and adults in educational and community settings. The researcher's experiences in higher education and industry enabled frequent contact with ethnically diverse populations, first generation college students, and first generation graduates. First generation college graduates relate that common barriers encountered in both educational and work environments often center on conflict between professional identities and family roles, as well as, lack of support among home, school, and work environments.

The researcher's bias is to facilitate support in educational environments by shedding light on issues that serve as barriers to these non-traditional students. Perception and self-efficacy are critical aspects of success in both educational and work environments. First generation graduates often relate that success was a direct result of believing that goals could be met despite the existence of overwhelming barriers.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical lens for the study will be that of critical theory with influences from the perspective of multiracial feminism and multiculturalism. More specifically, the

study's framework serves as a tool to view occupational education and its application in the case of Mexican American women in community college settings through the lens of critical theory.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding the study:

1. The culture of Hispanic and Mexican American women differs significantly from that of academia.
2. Given the ethnic distribution of the area, historical data labeling "Hispanic" students enrolled in the research site was viewed as representative of Mexican American students.
3. Similarities between the researcher's background and that of the study participants served to preserve the participants' voice in the research process.
4. All research participants provided honest responses.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are provided to assist the reader in understanding the terms and concepts used in the study.

Acculturation – Level of cultural pluralism, the process of being able to comfortably operate in both home culture and dominant culture (Domino, 1992).

Anglos/ whites – Members of dominant culture in the United States

Assimilation – The process by which the person of one culture is absorbed into dominant culture with a loss of ethnic identity with regards to home culture (Domino, 1992).

At-risk Students – Students who share one or more of the following characteristics: low income status, first generation college attendee, employed while attending college, limited history of academic success, and poor academic preparation for postsecondary education (Gordon, 1999; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Vera, 1998)

First Generation College Student – A student whose parents have not attended college; thus, students represent the first in their family of origin to have attended college.

Generational Status/ Generational Distance – Refers to the time (in number of generations) that a person's family has resided in the United States. For persons of Mexican descent, Cuellar, Arnold, and Maldondo (1995) reference generational status via the following:

- 1st generation status if the individual was born in Mexico;
- 2nd generation, if the individual was born in the US but at least one parent was born in Mexico;
- 3rd generation, if the individual and both parents were born in the US; and,
- 4th generation if the individual, their parents and their grandparents were born in the US.

In general, a positive correlation exists between generational status and educational attainment (Fisher, 1998; Kaufman, Chavez, & Lauen, 1998; Levesque, Lauen, Teitelbaum, Alt, & Librera, 2000; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2000; NCLR, 1997).

Habitus – Bourdieu’s (as cited by Kincheloe, 1999) concept of habitus is inclusive of the “internalized culture that helps the individual make sense of the world” (p. 199) based on their personal and educational experiences.

Hispanic/ Latino – Broad ethnic terms typically used to reference persons of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central and South American, and Spanish origin (Herr & Cramer, 1996; US Census, 1999).

Mexican American/ Chicano – Persons of Mexican descent who were born and reside in the United States.

Non-Traditional Student – A term that includes the following student populations: first generation college students, returning adults, racial/ ethnic minorities, persons who dropped out of high school, and persons with GEDs (Astin, 1985; Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Jalomo, 1995; Terenzini, 1995).

Self-efficacy – The component of a person’s self-concept that entails an evaluation of the effectiveness of attaining certain skills and abilities (Bandura, 1977).

Tejanos – Regional term for Mexican Americans in Texas. This term is often preferred over that of Chicano(a).

Terminal Occupational Goals – Long range career goal at which point the student will no longer pursue postsecondary instruction in order to earn the required educational credential.

Overview of the Study

The study presents findings from in-person interviews between the researcher and study participants. The subjects included 14 Mexican American women attending one south Texas community college. During the interviews, students were asked to reflect on educational, social, and cultural experiences related to their current student status. In addition to participating in the interview, volunteers completed a demographic profile and an acculturation instrument (Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans – II). All questions and instruments related to factors identified in the literature as impacting educational and occupational aspirations for Mexican Americans and Hispanics.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

We depend on scientific objectivity to protect us from unintentional racism. However, in at least some cases, the very research on which we have depended to identify databased truth has contained implicit, unexamined assumptions that have continued this unintentional racism (Pedersen, 1994, p. 58).

In this study the social, cultural and educational factors related to the educational and career aspirations of Mexican American women in community college settings are described. Central themes in the research focus on the race, class, gender, and social issues. The theoretical lens for the study will be that of critical theory with influences from the perspective of multiracial feminism and multiculturalism. More specifically, critical theory is used as a framework to view occupational education and its application in the case of Mexican American women in community college settings. This review presents literature related to the conceptual framework and its application to Mexican American women in community colleges.

Critical Theory

Numerous models of critical theory exist, yet critical theorists can be broadly defined as focused on the critical evaluation of social practices and structures for the

purposes of transformation and social justice. The variety of structures examined include political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender dynamics as interlocking mechanisms of oppression. Kinchloe and McLaren (1998) reference the following assumptions as forming the basis of critical theory:

- A person's thoughts are formed as a result of existing power relationships in society, which in turn, are a result of historical precedence.
- Social conventions and conformity are a result of existing power relationships in society, and are also tied to the historical context.
- Knowledge is contextual in nature, intertwined with existing value systems; thus, even "facts" are not value free.
- Relationships are interactive, evolving, not fixed. All relationships regarding understanding and knowing are impacted by the social climate of capitalism and consumption. Language reaffirms such relationships.
- In society there will always exist groups of individuals who experience privilege and those who experience oppression. Oppression occurs in a variety of forms; conditions and types of oppression are interrelated.
- The privileged in society establish and maintain social mechanisms that reinforce and perpetuate their status; such social reproduction serves to perpetuate the oppressive state of others and "explains" these conditions as the natural order of society.

Guba and Lincoln's (1998) view of critical theory as a paradigm of inquiry classifies it in terms of epistemology, ontology, and methodology. From the critical perspective, the nature of reality is a product of historical relativism, what is "real" has a contextual relationship with sociopolitical values that are crystallized over time. The researcher's quest for knowledge is subjective and transactional, guided by deeply entrenched values. Therefore, methodology is dialogic/ dialectical, where the researcher develops an "informed consciousness" that can lead to transformation. Pedagogical approaches leverage dialogue as a means of encouraging student voice, social change and

social justice, allowing students to view knowledge from a sociopolitical context (Rivera & Poplin, 1995).

Feminism

The feminist tradition is steeped in critical theory, viewing power relationships and social structures primarily from the view of gender. Feminism is composed of a wide variety of models, including a diversity of complex issues, such as: women as invisible; ontological and methodological questions regarding “knowing” women as researchers and researched; and a range of frameworks that include male/ female orientation, white feminist orientation, multiracial feminist orientation, western feminist orientation, able bodied female, sexual orientation, and postmodernism (Bacca Zinn, & Thornton Dill, 1994; Olesen, 1998; Rivera & Poplin, 1995). The focus in this discussion will be the distinction between mainstream white feminism and multiracial feminism.

Mainstream feminism seeks to liberate women from oppression related to gender. Much emphasis is placed on the role of the affective domain and the socialization of women. It promotes an ethic of care (as opposed to an ethic of justice dominant in critical theory) in viewing of the role of personal relations, aesthetics, and emotional support, or lack of, in women’s lives. Mainstream feminism focuses on giving women voice and equality in society (Rivera & Poplin, 1995).

Multiracial feminism is critical of mainstream feminism, charging it as focusing on the gender and power issues for white women while ignoring women of color. Multiracial feminism gives considerable attention to the interplay of race, gender, and class in oppression. This philosophy is based on the premise that individuals are caught in a “matrix of domination” resulting from their race, class, and gender (Bacca Zinn, &

Thornton Dill, 1994). Thus, the nature of oppression experienced is related to one's place in the social power structure (Bacca Zinn, & Thornton Dill, 1994; Rivera & Poplin, 1995).

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism views the construction of meaning as a social and cultural act in which the individual establishes relationships between "self" and those that differ from self. Significant emphasis is placed on expectations drawn as a function of social conditioning and status (Rivera & Poplin, 1995). While the multicultural tradition is steeped in critical theory, multiculturalism addresses topics of racism, institutional racism (especially that established traditional liberal education) and the recognition/respect for cultural pluralism in society. There are five dominant approaches to multiculturalism (Grant & Sleeter, 1989), including: (1) teaching the exceptional and culturally different; (2) human relations; (3) single group studies; (4) American multicultural education; and, (5) education that is multicultural/ social reconstructionism. Each approach views the issue of multiculturalism in a distinct manner, and espouses different pedagogy. It should be noted that while Grant and Sleeter (1989) identified five approaches to multiculturalism, the authors have noted that the most effective methodology involves incorporating element of all five perspectives. The review of this literature pointed to the existence of much debate within multiculturalist thought based on differences in approach.

Race, Class, and Gender

While scholarship of the recent past has focused on race or class or gender as a single point of analysis, theorists from critical, multiracial feminist, and multicultural perspectives insist that all three must be viewed together as interactive components of one another (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1994, 2000; Grant, 1995; Grant & Sleeter, 1986; hooks, 1981; Kincheloe, 1999; Raisiguier, 1994). Grant (1995) and hooks (1981) have typified “whiteness” as a type of social capital that establishes certain expectations and privileges to both white men and white women that are absent for non-whites. Thus, oppressive circumstances faced by white women differ significantly from that of non-white women; in fact, social and cultural factors can place white women in the role of the oppressor (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1994, 2000; hooks, 1981). Likewise, emphasis solely on white patriarchy and capitalism ignores oppression faced by minority women in their home culture as a result of gender and class differences.

It is the interplay of race, gender, and class that establishes the individual’s position in the social order (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1994; Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 2000; Grant, 1995; Grant & Sleeter, 1986; hooks, 1981; Kincheloe, 1999; Raisiguier, 1994; Rivera & Poplin, 1995). Thus, the individual is caught in a “matrix of domination” resulting from their race, class, and gender (Baca Zinn, & Thornton Dill, 2000). Bourdieu referred to this position as the individual’s “habitus,” a concept inclusive of the “internalized culture that helps the individual make sense of the world” (as cited by Kincheloe, 1999 p.199) based on their personal and educational experiences. From the lens of critical theory, occupational education practices that confirm the individual’s habitus perpetuate a limited view of both identity and possibilities. Critical

theorists contend that deficiencies in academic achievement and its resulting low occupation attainment of cultural “others” is not a result of lack of intelligence, but lack of social capital as a consequence of habitus (Kincheloe, 1999).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the component of a person’s self-concept that entails an evaluation of the effectiveness of attaining certain skills and abilities (Bandura, 1977). Efficacy levels determine how individuals will cope with perceived barriers, as well as, which coping skills will be enacted, and the level and the duration of coping efforts (Herr & Cramer, 1996). With regards to occupational outcomes, low self-efficacy leaves persons “unable to translate occupational interests into goals and goals into actions if... insurmountable barriers to career entry or success ” are perceived (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996, p. 404). Thus, efficacy and perceived barriers are related to occupational aspirations and outcomes. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1996) state that a direct relationship exists between learning experiences and self-efficacy; self-efficacy and performance goals; and, self-efficacy and attainment levels. Low efficacy prematurely rules out occupations that are perceived as unattainable. Aspirations depend in part on both past successes and efficacy (Herr & Cramer, 1996; Sorensen et al., 1995). In general, the higher the perceived occupational self-efficacy, the greater number of career options are considered. (Bandura, 1997). Limiting gender and ethnic stereotypes erect social barriers to occupational self-efficacy, and ultimately, to occupational outcomes.

Critical Theory and Occupational Education

Education and Democracy

Education is inherently political. Jefferson, among other national forefathers, held free public education as the cradle bed of democracy since it provided the underclass the opportunity for full participation in the political system, as well as opened the prospect of social mobility (Aronowitz, 1981). In modern society, an occupation characterizes one's position in the U.S. class structure by providing both social and economic power (Lind, as cited by Gray & Herr, 1998), and it is education that ultimately provides entry, credentialing into an occupation (Aronowitz, 1981; Gray & Herr, 1998). The dominant paradigm of the American educational system has been that of the great equalizer, where 'equal' education eventually translates to equal opportunities for all students (Aronowitz, 1981; NCEE, 1983).

Early critical theorists questioned this paradigm by suggesting rather than acting as a tool for equity, American schools are a tool for inequity. Bowles and Gintis, in *Schooling in Capitalist America*, argued that in order to support capitalism, American schools were created as instruments to maintain social inequalities in order to produce (or reproduce) workers at every level of the economy on the basis of social class (Aronowitz, 1981; Raissiguier, 1994; Willis, 1981). Thus, individual educational opportunity was highly dependent on the student's social class, where schooling prepares students for a life in their current social class as dictated by gender roles (Burge & Culver, 1994; Carter, 1994; Gregson, 1997; Lakes, 1994; Raissiguier, 1994; Willis, 1981).

Education for Work

Occupational education in this country has historically been a tool to provide the poor and indigent with skills that would allow them to self-sustain in society, thus, allowing for the prospect of social mobility (Gordon, 1999; Gray & Herr, 1998). If general education is political, occupational education can be considered highly political since it prepares working class youth for working class life (Kinchloe, 1999; Lakes, 1994; Raising, 1994; Willis, 1981). Current programs reflect a paradigm of occupational education conceived by Snedden and Prosser that established a system of occupational education that was distinct and separate from academic education. Snedden and Prosser embraced education based on the theories scientific management and social-efficiency that emphasized industry based production (Gordon, 1999; Gregson, 1994; Kinchloe, 1999)

In the US, gender roles were a strong deterrent to the integration of women into vocational programs. All levels of schooling for women have been distinctly different than those of men (Burge & Culver, 1994; Carter 1994). Early occupational programs which targeted women (e.g., home economics) were used to reinforce established gender roles, not prepare women for paid occupations, as women's roles were not viewed as including the role of financial provider (Gordon, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999). While the development emphasis of the US is firmly grounded on capital accumulation, early women's development via occupational education did not constitute income generation. Not until World War II were women seen as contributors to the productivity of the nation, at least temporarily, while a significant portion of the male work force fought in the war. The legacy of exclusion continues in current times via occupational segregation

where 'women's work', predominately female professions, is worth less pay than that of men (Burge & Culver, 1994; Carter, 1994; Samper & Lakes, 1994). This phenomena is evidenced by the decline of both pay and status in formally male dominated occupations (Carter, 1994). Likewise, the delineation of male and female work encourages girls to place concerns of 'femininity' above occupational identity (Lakes & Borman, 1994).

In the case of immigrant and minority women, early vocational programs were used as an attempt to socialize ethnic groups by encouraging assimilation of the most influential person in the home, the mother figure (Kincheloe, 1999). Assimilation is the process by which a person of a minority culture is absorbed into dominant culture, with a loss of ethnic identity (Domino, 1992). In a culture of assimilation, individuals are expected to change their thoughts, feeling, and behaviors to that of the dominant culture (Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Assimilists claimed such efforts supported bringing the marginalized into the mainstream, as well as supported improving health and hygiene of immigrant families. Much of these efforts proved ineffective since methods ignored the reality of the immigrant socioeconomic status (Gordon, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999). In general, occupational education has ignored the socio-political dimensions faced by members of oppressed groups, blindly assuming that all minority group members buy into the 'American Dream' of social mobility when, in fact, many do not accept mobility as a realistic possibility (Lakes & Borman, 1994; Ogbu 1986).

A Critical Perspective

Snedden and Prosser's dual system accepted the precept of social efficiency such that it targeted children of the lower classes as participants of secondary occupational

education programs on the premise that children of workers did not have the capability of learning academics; thus, emphasis on job placement in students' most probable occupational destiny was central (Gordon, 1999; Gregson, 1994; Kincheloe, 1999). In this way, methods of dealing with demographic "others" not only established the dualism paradigm but also attached a stigma toward participants of occupational programming. Critics charge that schools have historically tracked minority and economically disadvantaged students to the lowest occupational levels, resulting in over representation in low wage jobs and near exclusion from high paying jobs (Aronowitz, 1981; Gregson, 1994; Kincheloe, 1999).

While traditionalists view occupational education merely as training students for jobs, critical theorists view traditional occupational education as a process that reinforces the status of the affluent by systematically and deceptively dismantling the social mobility efforts of the poor (Aronowitz, 1981; Kincheloe, 1999; Kinchloe & McLaren, 1998; Raissiguier, 1994; Willis, 1981). In this manner, schools become institutions that reproduce the existing social conditions directly via institutional barriers that result from deeply embedded in societal values. Willis (1981) went further by suggesting that reproduction is in part due to the oppositional reactions of students' to systematic educational processes that, ironically, leads to the further limitation of educational and occupational outcomes. Raissiguier's (1994) findings differ somewhat in that she found that students are not blindly "reproduced," but instead, actively negotiate institutional and cultural barriers to self produce themselves within their own individual, and often contradictory, parameters.

Snedden and Prosser's model of education for work is criticized as "training" not "education" for closely aligning occupational education to industry interests. In the industrial age, employers sought manufacturing workers who could perform highly structured activities and occupational education filled this need (Gregson, 1995); issues of individual empowerment or mobility for workers was not included as part of trade preparation (Gregson, 1995; Lakes, 1994). In today's post-industrial economy, manufacturing jobs focusing on narrow, "throw away" skills are quickly fading; employers require more cognitive skill sets than traditional occupational education has accommodated (Bettis, 1998; Gregson, 1994; Lakes, 1994; Lakes & Borman, 1994).

Pedagogy

Critical occupational education promotes an approach that utilizes the "teachable moments" contextually embedded in issues of work and working in a manner that promotes social justice. Critical pedagogy stems from the works of John Dewey who promoted "education through occupations" as a way of promoting and preserving democracy (Gordon, 1999; Gregson, 1994, 1995; Kinchloe, 1999). Dewey believed that rather than limiting occupational education to teaching sequential skills of a trade to students, education should utilize naturally occurring problems, conflicts, and opportunities as a method of teaching problem solving skills, integrating academic and vocational curriculum, and promoting civic responsibility/ empowerment (Gordon, 1999; Kinchloe, 1999). Lakes (1994) defined empowerment as two-fold: functional and critical. Functional empowerment refers to the ability to perform in the technical aspects of a job, traditional occupational education equates this view of empowerment with its

goal of employability. Critical empowerment provides students with a “cultural education,” the social capital that allows students to navigate the social context of work in post-industrial America. Gregson (1994, p. 167) outlined the critical pedagogy as:

- Participatory;
- Expanding from the Known to a Larger Context;
- Inclusive of Historical Context;
- Promoting Liberatory Dialogue;
- Adding Relevance to Learning;
- Promoting Active Citizenship;
- Problematizing Topics;
- Promoting Reflective Thinking.

Democracy and Community Colleges

Hispanic and Mexican American students are most likely to enter post-secondary education via community colleges (Burnett, 2000). Advocates herald community colleges as institutions that preserve the democratic ideals of society by opening the doors, and benefits, of post-secondary education to individuals who might otherwise be excluded (Clark, 1960; Dougherty, 1994; Lee & Grant, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Open admissions policies combined with the relative low cost of attendance allows students who are unable to access traditional four-year baccalaureate programs an alternate means of fulfilling educational and occupational aspirations. Community colleges are the most likely postsecondary entry point for economically disadvantaged students, minority students and first generation college attendees (Lee & Grant, 1990;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Striplin, 1999). Nationally, 45% of all first time college freshmen begin their college careers in community colleges (NCES, 1996). In Texas, enrollment data for fall 1998 showed that 78.1% of all classified freshmen attending public post-secondary institutions were enrolled in two-year community or technical colleges (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 1999).

Community colleges serve a diverse student population with diverse needs, including: fulltime and part-time students, older students, returning students, commuter students, high-risk students, transfer and reverse transfer students, career/ technical students, minority students, and other special needs students (El-khawas, 1996; Paradise & Long, 1981). Correspondingly, the mission of community colleges is expansive, covering a large array of outcomes for both students and other community constituents. The mission includes providing comprehensive educational programs that: prepare students for transfer to a four-year university; prepare students for employment; provide opportunities for life long learning; and allow for the expansion of workplace and occupational skills (Gray & Herr, 1998; Willyard, 2000). Elements of the curriculum include: general education, remedial education, academic education, career education, continuing education, specialized employment training, one-year certification programs, and two-year associate degree plans (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Cross, 1981; Gray & Herr, 1998).

Community colleges are often praised for maintaining a student-centered approach both inside and outside the classroom. A primary tenet of service to all students is the commitment to teaching; thus student-teacher ratios are relatively low compared to those in four-year institutions. To promote quality teacher-student interaction, faculty

members are not required to fulfill research and publication commitments, as is often the case in four-year institutions. Additionally, much emphasis is placed on the early and frequent advisement of students, particularly with regard to course selection, campus and community resources, and career counseling services (O'Banion, 1999; Willyard, 2000).

Despite the commitment to meet the needs of all students, considerable tension exists between the two primary components of the mission: the transfer function and the workforce education function (Gray & Herr, 1998). Transfer programs provide students opportunities to complete the first two years of a baccalaureate program via the completion of associate degree plans in arts or science. Certification programs and associate of applied science degrees are less frequently used as transfer mechanisms since such programs are terminal in nature and are typically pursued as means to rapid employment preparation (Willyard, 2000). The original mission of community colleges was access to baccalaureate programs. While the majority of students enrolled state that attainment of a four-year degree is their goal, there appears to be a growing emphasis on the occupational preparation element of the mission (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cross, 1981; Dougherty, 1994; Gray & Herr, 1998).

In Cross' (1981) examination of the Community College Goals Inventory (CCGI) by Educational Testing Service, administrators, trustees, and community members surveyed identified "vocational/ technical preparation" as the goal that should be of highest importance in community colleges. Among students surveyed, "vocational/ technical preparation" ranked second after "counseling and advising." Nationally, approximately half of students in community colleges participate in occupational education programming (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Dougherty, 1994; Grubb, 1995;

Levesque, Lauen, Teitelbaum, Alt, & Librera, 2000). The National Center for Educational Statistics found that for community college students in the academic year 1995-96, reported majors included 22.6% in academic majors, 49.2% in occupational majors, and 28.2% as undeclared (Levesque, et.al. 2000). Grubb (1999) cites that 60% of students are enrolled for “occupational purposes, even if they (students) think these will be realized through academic programs and transfer” (p.2). The continued decreased enrollment of academic majors in favor of occupational majors has raised questions regarding the scope of community colleges, suggesting, perhaps, that its mission should narrow to focus simply on that of occupational preparation (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Cross, 1981; Dougherty, 1994).

Community College Outcomes

Critics charge that the open, equal access to post-secondary education provided by community colleges does not equate to equal educational and occupational outcomes; and that ultimately, community colleges do not serve students’ goals of social mobility, but instead serve as agents to maintain the lower social status of students (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Clark, 1960; Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Dougherty, 1994; Karabel, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rendon, 1995a, 1995b). Clark (1960) and Karabel (1977) maintained that that the ideology of democracy dictates the appearance of opportunity, and that opportunity carries with it both the possibility of success and failure. American culture projects the image of equal opportunity without prejudices related to race, ethnicity, gender, or social status (Clark, 1960; NCEE, 1983); thus, society itself motivates citizens toward high achievement. Part of this American dream is the

attainment of a college education as a means of securing “good” work. Community colleges offer a path to meeting high career aspirations of non-traditional students of lower social standing without providing the achievement of such aspirations (Clark, 1960; Dougherty, 1994; Karabel, 1977); thus, society’s need for the promise of equal opportunity is satisfied. Clark references this process a “soft denial” of students’ aspirations through the “cooling-out” of high aspirations, where students are reoriented toward substitute goals of lesser status or driven out of the educational system. In this manner, community colleges act as a form of tracking that leads minority students, and working- and lower-class students away from four-year degrees (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Clark, 1960; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). And, in creating community colleges, universities were able to maintain their elitist status and openly reject admitting undesirable students (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Completion rates, transfer rates, and baccalaureate attainment rates are often cited to support this claim.

In 1994, the NCES (1996) found the following community college outcomes for first time community college attendees of 1989-90:

- 49% did not earn a degree or certificate and were no longer enrolled.
- 10% did not earn a degree or certificate but were still enrolled in a two-year institution.
- 5% did not earn a degree or certificate but were enrolled in a four-year institution.
- 37% earned a credential at some institution:
 - 13% earned a certificate
 - 18% earned an associate’s degree
 - 6% earned bachelor’s degree.

The overall transfer rate to four-year institutions was 21%, but only 38% of students who transferred completed an associate's degree. Of those who transferred: 26% earned a bachelor's degree, 47% were still pursuing a bachelor's degree, and 27% were no longer enrolled. Additionally, the NCES (1996) found that transfer rates varied with students' socioeconomic status (SES). The higher students' SES, the more likely the student was to transfer to a four-year institution. Transfer rates varied as follows:

- 35% transfer rate for students with high SES.
- 21% transfer rate for students with middle SES.
- 7% transfer rate for students with low SES.

In all, students entering a two-year college as their first institution, 11% to 19% were less likely to achieve a bachelor's degree than students entering a four-year institution even when controlling for factors related to differences in student characteristics (Dougherty, 1987, 1992; Whitaker & Pascarella, 1994; Velez, 1985). Low SES, minority status, and/or first generation student status substantially lowers the possibility of attaining a bachelor's degree.

The economic return of attending community colleges is also debated (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Whitaker & Pascarella, 1994). Critics charge that since educational attainment is tied with economic returns and that most students fail to earn a certificate or degree, attending community college has minimal impact to earnings capability (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Even when a certificate or degree is earned, often it makes little impact on students' earnings (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Rivera-Batiz, 1995); yet proponents point to the importance of context (Grubb, 1995; Monk-Turner, 1998; Rivera-Batiz, 1995). In analyzing the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) results, River-Batiz (1995)

found that individuals attending public institutions experienced either no improvement or marginal improvement in their earnings; but in the case of private employer sponsored education, students experienced immediate gains (also Grubb, 1995). Overall gains to hourly wages for men were 7.8% and for women were 22.8%. By ethnicity, gains included: 29.4% for Hispanic men and 62% for Hispanic females; 11.8% for African American men, 27.8% for African American women; and, 7.5% for white men, 18.3% for white women. It should be noted, however, that the overwhelming majority of community college students did not participate in employer sponsored training programs.

Grubb (1995) stated that “critics of community colleges and other two-year institutions, who claim that they provide no economic benefits ... are incorrect” (p. 33). In his analysis of surveys from program participants during 1984-1990, he concluded that individuals who earned a credential (certificate or degree) were most likely to see an economic return on their education, especially if the credential related to their current job. While dropouts from four-year institutions experience higher incomes than high school graduates not attending college, dropouts from community college experience the same income levels as high school graduates (Monk-Turner, 1998). In general, the more training and education was invested in the credential, the higher the economic return, depending on the program area (Grubb, 1999; Monk-Turner, 1998; Rivera-Batiz, 1995). Returns are highly interdependent with specific areas of study. Occupational program areas identified as most beneficial varied according to gender, (health and business for women; engineering, technical, and business for men) indicating occupational gender segregation. Grubb (1999) found that outside these gender specific programs areas returns were rarely realized, with the exception women in high-paying non-traditional

programs. In addition, associate degrees in academic majors had the lowest economic return of all credentials examined (Grubb, 1999).

Hispanics in Community Colleges

Hispanics and Mexican Americans are most likely to enter post-secondary education via community colleges (Burnett, 2000). This is due to several factors, including: the lower costs of community colleges, open admissions' policies, availability of remediation programs, and the proximity to family (Clayton et al, 1992). For Hispanic youth attending postsecondary educational institutions, location, financial aid, and familial support can prove to be critical factors, especially for women, since gender and family roles are interdependent with work and school roles (Ortiz, 1995; Segura, 1992). In 1994, 6.8% of the Hispanic adults 18 years of age and older were enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions (Levesque et al, 2000). Nationally, reported majors for Hispanic students in community colleges during the 1995-96 year closely matched those of national averages, they were 21.1% academic, 48.4% vocational, and 30.3% as undecided.

Hispanic Educational Attainment

Data from 1996 indicates that 62.1% of Hispanics were native born citizens, another 6.9% were naturalized citizens, 31.0% were foreign born non-citizens. Additionally, 87% of Hispanic children were native born citizens (Fisher, 1998). Hispanics are more likely to be placed in Limited English Proficiency (LEP) classes and

special education classes; especially if the family of origin experiences low socioeconomic status (Ortiz, 1995).

Hispanics suffer from the lowest educational attainment rates of all major ethnic groups in the US despite absolute increased in postsecondary enrollment (Fisher, 1998; NCLR, 1997; US Census, 1999). The high school drop out rate of Hispanics in 1994 averaged 31%. For Mexican Americans, the drop out rate at this time was significantly higher, 72.3%. Poor language/academic skills, family obligations, and teen pregnancies contribute to drop out rates (Friedenberg, 1999). Additionally cultural gender roles factor negatively in the educational attainment of female Hispanics (Velez, 1989).

Consequently, Hispanics suffer low rates of degree attainment. US Census Bureau (1999) reports that Hispanics earned only 6.9% of associate degrees awarded in 1998, 5.0% of bachelor degrees, 3.6% of master degrees, and 2.2% of doctorates. In 1998 the Digest for Educational Statistics reported that the college enrollment gap between Hispanics and whites is widening (cited Burnett, 2000). In 1980, 16% Hispanics and 25% whites were enrolled in college (9% gap); by, 1998 enrollment numbers for Hispanics had only increased to 22%, compared to the 41% enrollment for whites (19%gap). Clayton et al. (1992) and Arbona (as cited by Herr & Cramer, 1996) have conducted research that disputes the notion that Hispanics' low occupational attainment is a result of low aspirations or low cultural value of education. Rather, their findings indicate that low attainment may result from families' low socioeconomic status, lack of occupational socialization and limited access to higher education.

Mexican Americans

Historically, Mexican Americans were not voluntary immigrants seeking political asylum, but inhabitants of a land that was lost to the United States in war (Arbona, 1995; Gomez-Quinones, 1994; Gonzalez, 1999). In this war, Mexico lost half its land, representing 75% of its natural resources, and overnight Mexicans in what is now the American southwest became conquered immigrants, second-class citizens. Sudden immigrant status brought with it systems of economic, social, legal and ethnic discrimination and segregation, as well as exclusion from political and educational institutions, that were encouraged by whites in power (Gomez-Quinones, 1994; Gonzalez, 1999). Mexicans in Texas (Tejanos) had long standing animosities with whites (Anglos) that dated back since before the establishment of the Texas Republic. Violent racial subjugation against Tejanos was commonplace, particularly in south Texas (Gonzales, 1999).

Today, Mexican Americans represent the fastest growing Hispanic subgroup, as well as the largest regional subgroup (US Census Bureau, 1999). In 1999, 65.2 % of all Hispanics were of Mexican descent. In the state of Texas, the Hispanic population is projected to grow from 27.6% to 36.7 % of the population between 1995 and 2025 (Campbell, 1996). In the academic year 1990-91, high school completion rates for Mexican American students were 47.9% for males and 57.0% for females. Of the females who graduated that year, only 39.8% entered college (Ortiz, 1995). The US Census Bureau (1999) reported that only 49.7% of Mexican American adults 25 years and older had high school diplomas compared to 87.7 % of whites, 63.9% of Puerto Ricans Americans, 70.3% of Cuban Americans, 64% of Central and South Americans

and 71.1% of other Hispanics. Correspondingly, attainment rates for advanced degrees were significantly lower. Only 7.1% of Mexican Americans earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 27.7% for whites, 11.1% of Puerto Ricans Americans, 24.8% of Cuban Americans, 18.0% of Central and South Americans, and 15% of other Hispanics (US Census Bureau, 1999). Ramirez Large (1995) found that only 1% of Mexican American females even enroll in graduate programs. Variances in levels of educational attainment for Hispanic subgroups may be due to several factors, including the interplay of the sociopolitical context/ history of the sub-groups and individual member characteristics such as assimilation/ acculturation, generational distance, economic status, and culture/ gender identities (Arbona, 1995; Gomez-Quinones, 1994).

Occupational and Educational Outcomes

Hispanics are twice as likely than whites to live in poverty (US Census, 1999). Twenty-five percent live below the poverty level, with 40% of children living in poverty (Friedenberg, 1999). In 1998, 24.4% of Mexican American families lived below the poverty level (compared to 6.6% of white families) and 35.4% of Mexican American children lived below the poverty level (compared to 10.6% of white children) (US Census, 1999). Consequently, occupational distribution is concentrated in low skill, low wage jobs (US Census, 2000).

Hispanic women are deeply affected by this environment. Approximately 56% of Hispanic women participate in the labor force (NCPE, 1999c). Nearly two-thirds of Hispanic women work in low skill, low wage jobs, 38.4 % work in the technical, sales, and administrative support jobs, and 25.0% work in the service industry (US-DOL,

1997). The weekly earnings for jobs in these industry sectors range from \$296-\$418 per 40 hour work week (NCPE, 1999a, 1999b). Only 17% of Hispanic women held more lucrative jobs of manager and administrator compared to 35% for white women. In 1996, the top 10 occupations for Hispanic women, were:

1. Cashiers
2. Secretaries
3. Sales, retail, personal services
4. Janitors and cleaners
5. Nursing aids, orderlies, attendants
6. Textile sewing machine operators
7. Cleaners, servants, cooks
8. Managers and administrators
9. Sales supervisors
10. Book keepers, accounting & audit clerks

The US Department of Labor (1997) reported that the 1996 educational statistics for Hispanic women as:

- 46% having less than a high school diploma;
- 27% as high school graduate, without any college;
- 3% as having some college but no degree;
- 9% as having received a college degree; and,
- 5% as having received an associates degree.

While the average white woman earns 76% of the average white male; Hispanic men earn only 66% and Hispanic women earn about 50%. Females with no high school

diploma typically earn less than \$300 per 40-hour work week (Bowler, 1999). This may account in part for the fact that 60% of families headed by women live below the poverty level (Friedenberg, 1999).

Cultural and Individual Factors

Cultural factors impact individuals' socialization process, communicating a shared history and perception of what constitutes appropriate behavior (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1995). Likewise, individual and family characteristics determine expected behaviors, life experiences and accessibility to resources. Factors related to culture, race, class, and gender interactively combine to form an individual's perception of their position in society and a vision of what may be possible (Bacca Zinn & Thorton Dill, 1994, 2000; Grant, 1995; Grant & Sleeter, 1986; hooks, 1981; Kincheloe, 1999; Raisiguer, 1994; Rivera & Poplin, 1995). The following discussion serves to illuminate how difference from dominant culture may influence the retention and persistence of Mexican American females in educational institutions predicated on white American cultural standards. While factors are discussed individually, it should be noted that they work interactively to produce outcomes for students (Arbona, 1995; Herr & Cramer, 1996; Zunker, 1994).

First Generation Student Status

“First generation students” refers to students whose parents have not had college education or training; thus, these students represent the first in their families to have attended college. In analyzing results from the longitudinal National Study of Student

Learning for students in two- and four-year institutions, findings indicated that that first generation students shared the following characteristics relative to their “traditional” counterparts (Terenzini, 1995; and also, Rendon, 1995a, 1995b; Richardson & Skinner, 1992):

- More likely to be female
- More likely to be older students
- More likely to be Hispanic
- More likely to be from low-income families
- More likely to have weaker academic/ cognitive skills
- Lower degree aspirations (in terms of level of degree)
- Less likely to be involved in college experiences
- More likely to be employed
- Had more dependent children
- Less likely to receive emotional support from family and friends
- Less likely to perceive faculty and staff as interested in student development

First generation students differed significantly on 14 factors of 36 pre-college measurements assessed; only one of the 14 measurements relates positively to persistence, the stronger “certainty of major” rating. Yet the strong “certainty of major” rating may be indicative of immediate foreclosure on lower educational goals and/ or limited occupational socialization (Terenzini, 1995).

Assimilation and Acculturation Levels

Much confusion exists between the terms acculturation and assimilation. The literature review indicated that these terms are often used interchangeably. In the context of this study, assimilation will be defined as the process by which a person of another culture is absorbed into a new culture, with some loss of ethnic identity; whereas acculturation is indicative of cultural pluralism, an ability to operate comfortably in both home culture and dominant culture (Domino, 1992). Higher assimilation and acculturation levels may be indicative of students with greater amounts of social capital. In general, the greater the level of either assimilation or acculturation, the more likely that students will successfully meet educational goals (Morales, 1996; Zhou, 1997).

Generational Status

One dynamic of assimilation/ acculturation status is generational status. Generational status refers to the time (in number of generations) that a person's family has resided in the country. In general, a positive correlation exists between generational status and educational attainment; that is, the higher the generational status, the higher the level of educational attainment (Fisher, 1998; Kaufman, Chavez, & Lauen, 1998; Leveque et al., 2000; NCES, 2000; NCLR, 1997). In an NCES study on the educational attainment of 1988 eighth graders, Kaufman et al. (1998) found that 17.9% of Hispanic students were first-generation immigrants, 41.6% second-generation Americans (one or both parents as foreign born), and 40.6% third-generation or higher (parents born in the US). Degree attainment rates for associate's or bachelor's degrees for each group were 9.1%, 8.9%, and 14.1% respectively, and averaged 11.5% for US born students.

Percentage of families at or below the poverty level were 57.6%, 44.0%, and 31.4% respectively, and averaged 37.8% for US born students.

Familialism and Collectivism

Mexican Americans strongly identify with both nuclear and extended family members. Extended family may include individuals not related by blood but to who are viewed as such close family friends that they become honorary family members. Family members take care to maintain the appearance of unity, and are seen as available resources for emotional and material support. Outsiders are often viewed suspiciously (Marin & Marin, 1991). Baca Zinn (as cited by Mendez-Negrete, 2000) regards collectivism as a survival tool rather than a cultural factor, where collectivism acts to protect members from both physical and economic dangers and from other outside forces.

Familial support in life's endeavors is of importance and provides a sense of belonging. With regards to education, parents' educational attainment relates positively to educational and occupational outcomes of children (Clayton et al., 1992; Inoue, 1999). In general, higher educational attainment of parents translates into higher parental aspirations of children, and the greater likelihood that parents will encourage educational goals (Clayton et al., 1992; Richardson & Skinner, 1992). Lack of family support, particularly for Mexican American women, may prove detrimental to educational goals; especially, if furthering education is viewed as separating from the family. Yet invariably the process of education does change the individual and their lifestyle by opening the possibility of social mobility (London, 1992; Rendon, 1995a, 1995b; Richardson & Skinner, 1992). Such factors could lead first-generation college students

into a nebulous cultural standing, where they do not enjoy full membership in either their home culture or dominant culture; thus, the cost of greater attainment is the “loss” of their family (London, 1992; Rendon, 1995a, 1995b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Terenzini, 1995).

View of Authority Figures

Hispanic culture views patriarchy as the preferred power structure (Segura, 1992). Authority status may be contingent on factors related to gender, age, and income. Fathers are expected to provide for, lead, and control their family (Marin & Marin, 1991; Mendez-Negrete, 2000). As a consequence of their gender, boys are given the freedom to explore the world and learn to control it (Mendez-Negrete, 2000). Both genders are encouraged show a silent respect for authority figures. This may make Mexican American students more likely to be viewed as non-assertive, and either unable, or unwilling to partake in active discussions with peers and instructors (Fuentes & Sedlacek, 1992).

Perception of Gender Roles

Machismo’s patriarchy calls for the image of female submission (Marin & Marin, 1991; Mendez-Negrete, 2000) and a limited view of what constitutes a “woman’s place”. Girls are held close to home, and often “castigated for not living up to saintly, passive, devout, loyal, and virginal expectations” (Mendez-Negrete, 2000, p. 43). Traditional gender roles emphasize service to family, where family needs are placed above personal needs; thus, educational and occupational attainment may be restricted (Clayton et al.,

1992). Cultural gender stereotyping may contribute to the occupational segregation experienced by Hispanic women, as well as their perception of limited power to attain occupational goals (Hernandez, 1992; Lopez, 1995; McWhirter, 1997). In Hernandez' study (1992) of female secondary students in Texas, girls lacked self-confidence, often viewing obstacles as beyond individual control. In focus group interviews, 75% of the participants commented that gender was a barrier. Lopez (1995) and McWhirter (1997) found that gender discrimination was a primary concern for women in their studies. Perceptions of gender roles may partially explain findings indicating the importance of maternal support. Women who viewed mothers as supportive of educational goals attained higher educational levels (Lopez, 1995; Ramirez Largo, 1995). Valentine and Mosley (2000) contend that degree of gender-role identification is highly dependent on assimilation / acculturation status and age.

Economic Factors

The higher a student's socioeconomic standing, the more likely the student is to achieve higher levels of educational attainment (NCES, 1996). In a study of 12th grade Mexican American students in south Texas, students identified lack of funds as the number one barrier to continuing their education (Clayton et al., 1992; also, Fisher, 1998; NCLR 1997), with poor academic skills ranking as a distant second. A disproportionate number of Hispanics experience low socioeconomic status, particularly in south Texas (Clayton et al., 1992; US Census Bureau, 2000). Lower socio economic standing predicates the need to work to provide for self, family, dependents, as well as to pay educational costs (Fisher, 1998). On average, Hispanic students have more dependents

than non-Hispanics (Fisher, 1998; Terenzini, 1995) and are less likely to apply for or receive financial aid for associate's degrees (Fisher, 1998); when aid is received, it is most likely to be in the form of loans. In addition to having higher attrition rates (Fisher, 1998), students of low socioeconomic status have much lower transfer rates than their middle and upper income peers (NCES, 1996). When asked how their college education would be financed, the two most common answers supplied by south Texas Mexican American 8th and 12th graders were parents (50%) and work (54%) (Clayton et al., 1992). For Mexican American community college students in south Texas, funding sources identified were grants (66%), work (60%), loans (33%), and parents (percentage not indicated).

Past Academic Performance

Admission requirements used by four-year institutions block enrollment of students who have poor academic histories and/ or low standardized test scores. Thus, the open admissions policy of community colleges is the only avenue to postsecondary education available to these students (Fisher, 1998; Lee & Grant, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Striplin, 1999). Over 40% of all community college freshmen needed remedial education in 1995 (Hoyt, 1999; Roueche & Roueche, 1999). Yet, evidence suggests that poor academic history and poor educational experiences decrease the likelihood of further educational attainment, as well as establish a poor self-image of self as a student. Conditions of limited support from family and peers, and cool clinical views of the college staff contribute further to the problem (Rendon & Jaloma, 1995). Rendon (1995a, 1995b) found that validation and social support from teachers helps to

combat students' doubts regarding academic ability and fear of failure. Validation leads students to feeling of mattering, thus providing emotional support needed to overcome lack of social and cultural capital (Rendon & Jaloma, 1995).

Overview of the Literature

When taken as a whole, factors point to a disturbing conclusion; difference matters in postsecondary educational outcomes. Despite the democratic ideal of equality in education, evidence indicates that the further students deviate from education's "accepted norm" of the white, middle-class student, the lower their level of educational attainment (NCLR, 1997; Velez, 1989). Particularly disturbing are findings of studies indicating that the vast majority of non-traditional students who successfully increase their educational level also have high assimilation levels (Morales, 1996; Ramirez Largo, 1995).

Ramirez Largo (1995) studied a group of female Hispanic graduate students attempting to identify shared characteristics among the women. Characteristics that predicted student success included: high levels of family support, positive parental expectations, especially from mothers; likeness of the educational community to home community; and students' strong commitment to completion. The families' characteristics included middle-income status and American born parents. The women in her study were highly assimilated rather than acculturated. In her conclusion, Ramirez Largo asserts that such levels of assimilation may be evidenced as discrimination if assimilation was a requirement to academic success. Indeed, if assimilation is a requirement, this may in large part explain the low educational outcomes for Hispanics.

Summary

This chapter began by describing the theoretical lens of critical occupational education; issues of race, class, and gender; the individual's perception of the likelihood of personal achievement in society; and implications related to educational outcomes for Hispanics and Mexican Americans. Educational and occupational attainment levels for Hispanic and Mexican American women were described, and a brief summary of cultural and individual factors related to barriers in the educational attainment of Mexican American women was presented. The chapter concludes by highlighting the gap between the American ideal of equal educational opportunities for all regardless of culture, class or gender; and high assimilation levels among Hispanics who experience higher education attainment levels.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Hillary Rodham Clinton, White House Convening on Hispanic Children and Youth, August 2, 1999:

...Because despite the progress made, we know that too many young Hispanics are still dropping out of school and not enough are getting the Head Start they need. And far too many are born into poverty and never have a fighting chance at the future that all children deserve. These are not somebody else's children. They are all our children (PAC, 2000, p. 51).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design utilized in the study.

This study's purpose is to describe the cultural, social, and educational factors related to occupational aspirations of Mexican American women attending a south Texas community college as perceived by the study's participants. Toward this purpose, this investigation was developed as a descriptive qualitative case study.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

Often, the debate as to whether to enact quantitative or qualitative research methods centers on the value of attaining data in the form of fixed numbers, as opposed to contextual data. Research students, in particular, grapple with the relative ease of data collection of quantitative data and the added meanings and richness of qualitative data.

Yet, research cannot be distinguished strictly by data collection methods, but rather by the purpose of the research study. Quantitative studies are motivated by the purpose of determining relationships between variables; qualitative, by describing contextual experiences that may lead to relationship building and testing (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Gay & Airasian, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Toward these purposes the characteristics and methods enacted by quantitative and qualitative researchers differ significantly.

Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggest that research methods selected for a study are contingent on the researcher's paradigm, or belief-system, as the researcher's paradigm informs both the researcher's acceptance of the nature of reality and how that reality may be known (also, Glense, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). Through the lens of quantitative research, the researcher regards "True" knowledge as that which is verifiable by observation (Gay & Airasian, 2000) where emphasis is placed on the measurement of causal relationships between variables (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glense, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 2000). This paradigm of inquiry views important knowledge as that which is observable and assumes that an "objective" reality exists; thus, the perceptions of the subjects are not included in either the data collect or the analysis (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glense, 1999). Research is used as a tool to predict, provide causal explanations, and generalize findings to the identified population (Glense, 1999). Research methods support the deductive construction of knowledge, where the research moves from the known (in the form of hypothesis or theory) to the specific, the research question itself (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glense, 1999). Procedurally, quantitative research involves:

(a) identifying the hypothesis and research procedures prior to the study, (b) controlling contextual factors that could impact data collection, (c) using large samples in order to allow for statistically significant data that may later be generalizable, and (d) statistically analyzing data (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The researcher's role is one of detachment where the objective portrayal of "reality" is paramount (Glense, 1999).

Qualitative research as a paradigm of inquiry views reality not as an objective "Truth" but instead as "a truth" that has been socially constructed by study participants; that is, "reality" is situated in a particular social context where different players within a social context invariably construct different "realities" (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glense, 1999; Merriam, 1998). "Understanding the meaning people have constructed...how they make sense of the world" (p. 6) provides the focus for research (Merriam, 1998); where quantitative research seeks to predict, qualitative research seeks to understand (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glense, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 1998). Variables for understanding are complex, often interwoven with other complex concepts, and prove challenging to measure in a traditional sense (Glense, 1999). As such, data may come in the form of interviews, observations, and/ or document analysis which seeks to capture as many contextual factors as possible, seldom providing data in numerical form (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glense, 1999). In both the data collection process and the data analysis, the researcher acts as the primary instrument in capturing participant perceptions and the existence of multiple realities (Creswell, 1998). A hypothesis and/ or research procedures may not be stated prior to data collection since the researcher's understanding of both the problem and methods evolve with the understanding of context (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

The researcher must construct general approach to the problem rather than provide a detailed plan at the onset of the study (Creswell, 1998; Gay & Airasian, 2000). Merriam (1998) advises researchers to cultivate an “enormous tolerance for ambiguity” (p. 20) in the research process as the research design, guiding literature, and methods will evolve as the research progresses (also Creswell, 1998). Procedurally, the research process includes: (a) defining a problem to be studied, (b) accounting for contextual setting that participants inhabit, and (c) using non-numerical approaches that provide narrative descriptions of both the participants and their contexts (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The researcher is personally involved, portraying the participants’ reality with empathetic understanding (Creswell, 1998; Glense, 1999).

In the case of this study, the research question asked: “What relationship exists between the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational experiences of Mexican American women attending a south Texas community college and their occupational aspirations?” The question speaks directly toward understanding the context of the lived experiences of the participants and its impact to aspirations. In reviewing the literature related to the research question, it soon became evident that an abundance of literature existed in various forms: studies with topics that dealt with one or two elements of the question; study topics related to Hispanic populations, not Mexican American populations; and, other variations of social, educational, cultural, gender, and population mixes. However, no literature existed that was specific to the question as framed by this study. Based on the study’s conceptual framework and its basis in the field of Adult and Occupational Education, elements of the research question related to a multitude of concepts included

in Table 1. Concepts defining the study's variables are complex, interwoven, and interacting factors. These factors relate interactively to one another, as well as to other unidentified factors. A discrete definition or measurement of the study's variables is not possible given the limited understanding of the process and context faced by the population. Likewise, given that this study is informed primarily by a critical theoretical framework, the study's theoretical basis dictates a paradigm of inquiry that utilizes research processes that capture and preserve the voice of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Rivera & Poplin, 1995). For these reasons, qualitative approaches were utilized in addressing the research question. Toward this goal, dialogue (in the form of semi-structured, in-depth interview) was used as the primary data collection method. The paper and pencil instruments (Demographic Questionnaire and ARSMA-II) were used in the study as a secondary data collection method that allowed greater time and flexibility in completing the interviews. As is the case with qualitative methods, the researcher herself was ultimately the primary instrument in both leading the interview process and analyzing the research data.

Descriptive Qualitative Case Study

Given the limited research available specific to the research question, a qualitative study that views this "case" related to Mexican American females in a community college was deemed most appropriate. A case study is defined as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. 28) that: (a) investigates "bounded systems", processes that are bound by time

TABLE 1
CONCEPT RELATIONSHIPS OF STUDY FACTORS

Study Factor	Related Concepts
Cultural Experiences	Assimilation Acculturation Generational Status or Generational Distance Hispanic culture/ values Socioeconomic Status
Social Experiences	Social capital Socialization Habitus Gender roles/ expectations Socioeconomic Status Efficacy
Educational Experiences	Barriers Success Factors First Generation College Student Status Efficacy Non-Traditional Student Status Socioeconomic Status Cooling Out
Educational Goals	Outcomes Attrition Community Colleges Stopping out/ Dropping out Persistence Efficacy Major
Occupational Aspirations	Outcomes Career Occupational Segregation/ Gender Roles Occupation/ Vocation Work / Job Efficacy Major

and/ or space; (b) illustrates the complexities of a situation, issue, concern, or hypothesis; and (c) explains the reasons and background of a situation. For this study, the case is “bounded” by the following participant characteristics: first-generation college student status; gender; ethnicity; and current or recent student status in the same community college.

Merriam (1998) further characterizes case studies as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Particularistic specifies a focus on a particular event, situation, or phenomenon that “concentrates attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation” (Shaw as cited by Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Descriptive refers to an end product that rich description of the phenomenon. Heuristic implies extending the readers knowledge, experience and thinking on the phenomenon studied. These characteristics are satisfied with this study in the following manner: (a) Particularistic characteristics via the examination of a specific instance that illuminates a general problem; (b) Descriptivism via the illustration of the complexities of factors associated with the problem statement; and, (c) Heuristic qualities in explaining reasons for the problems, background information, and voices from group insiders.

Study Setting

Site Selection

Since the study was focused on a single population (first generation, Mexican American females) in one community college, non-random, purposive sampling was used

to identify participants. A purposive or purposeful sample is simply a sample most representative of the phenomena that the researcher wishes to study (Merriam, 1998); given the nature of qualitative research and the fact that generalizability is not its goal, purposive, non-random sampling is the norm (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). In citing Chien, Merriam (1998) likens purposive sampling to the process of seeking out expert consultation where the researcher is not seeking “an average opinion” on the topic but instead calls in participants because of their special experience and knowledge with the topic under study.

Developing selection criteria is the critical first toward locating the purposive sample. The initial criteria for the sample of the study were the following: (a) Mexican American women, (b) born in the United States, (c) whose parents have not been enrolled in college, and (d) entered college for the first time in the academic year 2000-2001 (note, criteria was changed after the pilot study). Four colleges were identified as potential research sites at the onset of the study because of their large Mexican American student populations. The presidents of the two sites most convenient to the researcher were contacted. While both colleges indicated an interest in the study, one college was better able to expediently identify potential population members, and thus, was selected as the research site.

The City

The site is located in a small, south Texas city which will be referred to as “Sea Mist, TX”. (Because the researcher agreed to keep the research site confidential, “Sea

Mist” was used in place of the actual city’s name in both this description and in cited references.) Sea Mist is situated on the Texas Gulf coast, approximately 200 miles from the Texas-Mexico border. The interviews and observations were conducted in June and July of 2001, document collection was conducted from May to August 2001. Sea Mist is the only urban area in its county. General demographics for Sea Mist county as compared to national and state averages are shown in Table 2. According to materials posted on the web site of the Greater Sea Mist Business Alliance [GSBA] (2001), Sea Mist is described via the following:

- Population of 257, 453 where 51.2% are female and 48.8% are male.
- Ethnic distribution as 52% Hispanic, 43% White, 4% Black, and 1% other.
- Of the city’s 129,708 Hispanics: 118,713 are of Mexican origin; 483, Puerto Rican origin; 314, Cuban origin; and 10,198 of other Hispanic origin.
- Median age of city’s population is 31.3 years with a distribution of 9.6% between the ages of 18-24; 17.2%, ages 25-34; 20.2%, ages 35-49; 12.3%, ages 50-64; and, 10% ages 65 and older.

GSBA (2001) literature identifies Sea Mist’s mainstay industries through the mid-1980’s as oil, gas, and agriculture. Evidence of the part of the city’s economy is in northern area of Sea Mist. Driving into the city from the north, visitors are greeted by the site and smell of numerous, large oil refineries situated beside one another, making it difficult to ascertain when one stops and another begins. After the 1980’s oil bust, the city’s economic base diversified to include: tele-services, health service industries, and retail and commercial trade. The city’s most visible industry is tourism, though

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic Factors	USA	Texas	Sea Mist County
Population, 1999 estimate	272,690,813	20,044,141	315,469
Population percent change, 1990-1999 estimate	9.6%	18.0%	8.4%
Land area, 1990 (square miles)	3,536,272	261,914	836
Persons per square mile, 1999	77.1	76.5	377.4
Percentage of Hispanic population, 1999 estimate	11.5%	30.5%	59.6%
Percentage of non-Hispanic population, 1999 estimate	71.9%	55.3%	35.3%
College graduates, 25 yrs or older, 1990	32,310,253	2,094,905	29,631
Median household income, 1997 estimate	\$37,005	\$34,478	\$29,198
Persons below poverty, percent, 1997 estimate	13.3%	16.7%	21.5%
Children below poverty, percent, 1997 estimate	19.9%	23.6%	29.2%

Source: US Census Bureau, Quick Facts
[On-line] Available <http://quickfacts.census.gov>

this is not explicitly stated in the SGBA literature. Sea Mist's location along the Gulf coast, year round warm weather, relative low cost of living, and its proximity to a national seashore, Mexico, and three large urban cities, make it an attractive travel destination. Economic indicators publicized in the local media often times center on dollars brought to the city through tourism, spring breakers and winter Texans (also known as "snow birds").

The city seems to be spreading and growing to the south. One of the two freeways in the city runs through the center of the southern region. This portion of the city is characterized by numerous businesses, in the form of strip malls, lining the freeway on both sides. Numerous national-chain restaurants also appear in this section of the city's freeway, dubbing it "restaurant row." Between the rapid expansion of the area, multiple businesses, and the location of two malls, this portion of the city quite congested. The added growth has forced the city to upgrade water delivery equipment in order to service the city's expanding south side. In general, this section of the city is characterized as middle class, and its population is a mix of both Anglo and Hispanic residences.

The city's "jewel" is the stretch of real estate located by the bay. "Bayview Blvd.", a curvy, four-lane road lined with palm trees, covering 25 miles or so of coastline. The southern most section houses the local university, a regional campus of one of the state's major university systems. Traveling north on Bayview Blvd. from the university are the homes of some of the city's "elite". The homes on southern Bayview could be better described as mansions, opulent two story brick and stone structures placed on huge

lots that allow for magnificent views of the bay. As drivers travel north and approach the downtown area, the homes become smaller and are placed closer together, giving way to apartment buildings and businesses. At this point one can begin to see pockets of poverty in the form of old buildings with peeling paint that seem to protrude from the background to the foreground, for depending on one's location on Bayview, some of the city's poorest, working class neighborhoods are only two to five blocks away.

Some of the city's landmarks from the northern portions of Bayview include: a 12 foot, pewter statue of Christ overlooking the bay; the city's bayfront park, with a cove that's popular to wind surfers; three piers housing a mix of sail boats, small commercial fishing boats and restaurants; two auditoriums; a statue of a slain, young female celebrity, a Tejano singer; large hotels; and a white-washed sea wall where tourists and locals walk, bike, and roller blade. The northern most section of Bayview is a backyard to the downtown district. The downtown area is a mix of tall office building housing oil, bank, and city businesses; small, trendy, touristy shops and restaurants; small hole-in-wall restaurants and bars; and deserted building and shops. The downtown area is surrounded by some of the city's most poverty stricken neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods are primarily Mexican neighborhoods.

Employment Opportunities

According to the Sea Mist Chamber of Commerce (2001), the 1998 labor force was 177,618 and the city had an unemployment rate of 6%. The largest employers in the area are local school districts, hospitals, the military, the city, and government; however,

the largest segment of the work force is employed in the service industry (31.1%) and in the trades (22.9%). The Sea Mist Regional Economic Development Corporation [SREDC] (2001) reports that 40,400 people (equivalent to 23% of the labor force) are available for employment, where 13,200 are unemployed and 27,200 are underemployed. Underemployment is defined in the document as individuals working below their skill level and/ or education level. The SREDC found that the underemployed includes individuals with the following skills: office and data processing (74%); trade and industrial (69%); warehouse/ material handling (44%); telecommunications (38%); and assembly/ fabrication (19%).

Educational Attainment

In March 2001 the city's newspaper ran a series of articles investigating high school dropout rates for the Sea Mist regional area. In the series, articles discussed outcomes relative to the Sea Mist Independent School District. One such discussion point was the Texas Education Agency's [TEA] (Swartz, 2001a) reported dropout rate calculation which is reported as a percentage of the total district population. For the 1998-1999 school year, this drop out rate was calculated as 1.7%. Yet, when viewing longitudinal data from the previous four years, outcomes for the class of 1999 include 2,597 students, 69.1 % who graduated, 5.2% who received a GED, 14.6% who continued in high school, and 11.1% who dropped out.

The GSBA (2001) reports educational attainment rates for adults over 18 years of age as:

- 15.7% less than a 9th grade education
- 17.1% 9th to 12th grade with no diploma
- 25.3% as a high school graduate or GED
- 21.9% some college
- 5.6% an associate degree
- 9.6% bachelors degree
- and 4.7% graduate degree

The reasons for the high drop out rates mirror those stated in literature review: poverty, grade retention, peer pressure, poor academics, low self-esteem and teen pregnancy rates (Swartz, 2001a, 2001b). In a workforce preparedness report for Sea Mist prepared by The Perryman Group, an economic research and consulting organization, low educational attainment levels was stated as the biggest obstacle to attracting the high wage, high tech industries to Sea Mist that are so dominant in other Texas cities (Perryman, 1999).

In spite the low educational attainment levels, the city has two local institutions of higher education, “Sea Mist Community College” on the west side of the city and “Texas University – Sea Mist” to the far south of the city. Approximately 50% of the for-credit students in the community college are Hispanic; in the university, only 34% of students are Hispanic. Additionally two other institutions are located within commuting distance of Sea Mist, “Coastal Community College” is located 30 miles away, and “Texas University – South Texas” is located some 60 miles away.

As noted previously in the literature review, teen pregnancy is recognized as significantly impairing the educational attainment levels of girls in school. It should also be noted that Sea Mist county has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in Texas. Sea Mist county has the 5th highest pregnancy rate of all Texas counties (Texas Department of Health [TDH], 2001), 8.5% of all the live births to teen mothers under the age of 18, compared to the Texas average of 6.4%. Of Sea Mist's 411 teen births in 1999, 346 (84.2%) of the mothers were Hispanic, 53 (12.9%) were Anglo, and 12 (2.9%) were African American. Nationally, Texas has the 5th highest pregnancy rate (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1999), with one in every 13 girls in Texas becoming pregnant each year (TDH, 1995).

The Research Site

Sea Mist Community College [SCC] has two campuses: the east campus is home to the colleges academic, business, and health sciences programs; the west campus houses occupational, trade and industrial programs. The college's total enrollment includes over 24,000 credit and continuing education students each year. During Fall of 2000, the for-credit enrollment was 9,941 which approximates 2.2% of the state's total credit enrollment (THECB, 2000a). The vast majority of the college's enrollment consist of non-credit students; where credit enrollment composes 36.5% of the total enrollment, non-credit, 63.5%. The student body is over 50% Hispanic, and less than 10% of the for-credit student body constitute first-time, full-time students (Table 3 & Table 4). The college's 16% transfer rate of graduated students slightly outpaces the state average of

TABLE 3
TEXAS EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS – FALL 1998

Educational Statistic	Total	Male	Female	White	Hispanic
Total Headcount Enrollment:					
Public Universities	398,258	183,165	215,093	242,589	76,018
Community Colleges	421,408	179,493	241,915	232,710	117,312
Sea Mist College	9,763	3,881	5,882	4,106	5,178
Freshman Headcount Enrollment:					
Public Universities	80,808	38,521	42,287	46,020	17,593
Community Colleges	288,551	125,758	162,793	163,576	77,958
Sea Mist College	5,471	2,248	3,323	2,286	2,932
Community College Transfer Students To Public Universities:					
Enrollment	77,115	34,889	42,226	48,107	17,508
Bachelor's Degree Awarded	16,320	6,669	9,651	11,077	3,105
First-time, Full-time Freshman					
Public Universities	43,145	20,062	23,083	26,227	8,513
Community Colleges	46,940	22,306	24,634	26,050	13,625
Sea Mist College	914	384	530	393	481
Retention of 1997 First-time, Full-time Freshman:					
Public Universities					
Percentage	70.5	68.6	72.1	72.8	65.1
Number	41,909	19,463	22,446	25,233	8,108
Community Colleges					
Percentage	51.5	49.4	53.3	50.9	54.9
Number	43,764	20,849	22,945	24,568	12,624
Sea Mist College					
Percentage	54.3	49.2	59.2	51.4	58.4
Number	959	417	542	424	497

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (1999). Headcount Statistics.

TABLE 4
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROFILE

1998-1999 Data	Texas	Sea Mist College
For Credit Enrollment	435,323	9,688
Majors:		
Academic	56.6%	51.6%
Technical	43.4%	48.4%
Ethnic Distribution:		
White Students	53.9%	42.8%
Hispanic Students	28.4%	52.7%
Programs Available:		
Technical	--	41
AAS Degree	--	50
Certificate	--	86
Degrees Awarded:		
Academic	--	250
Technical	--	400
Certificates	--	312
Transfer Rate:		
Graduates	15.0%	16.0%
Hispanic graduates	14.6%	16.3%
Non-Graduates	9.0%	7.9%
Hispanic Non-Graduates	7.0%	5.9%

Note:

19.4% of university students in Fall 1998 transferred from community colleges.

23.0% of Hispanic university students in Fall 1998 transferred from community colleges.

Sources:

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2000). 2000 college profiles. [Online].

Available: <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2000). 1998-1999 student migration report. [Online]. Available: <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us>

15%; while its transfer rate for non-graduates is 7.9%, slightly lower than the state's average of 9% (THECB, 2000b). It should be noted that only 3.7% of transfer students earn an associate's degrees before transferring despite the fact that 51.6% of credit enrollment is made up of academic majors (THECB, 2000b). In 1998-1999 year, the college awarded 250 academic degrees and 400 technical degrees. Initial analysis of college program profiles (THECB, 2001) points to gender segregation in program enrollment that mirrors the findings of Grubb (1999) where women's enrollment was concentrated in majors related to health, business and service industry; and men's, in engineering, technical, and business majors. Student migration reports (THECB, 2000b) indicate that from Fall 1998 to Fall 1999, 43.2 % of students could not be located, thus students either dropped out or stopped out during the year. According to the Perryman (1999) report on Sea Mist's work preparedness, 72% of SCC's students require remediation in reading, writing or math. This number is significantly higher than the national average for community college remediation, approximately 40% (Roueche & Roueche, 1999).

Since none of the study participants attended the west campus, the remainder of this description focuses solely on the east campus. Sea Mist Community College's east campus is situated in one of the poorer areas of town, three to four blocks from the prestigious Bayview Blvd, in what was probably a central, growing area of the city some 50 or 60 years ago when it was built. By far, the college campus is the most "professional", polished property in its vicinity. To the east and the south, the neighborhoods are composed of small "shot-gun" houses, long and thin wood framed

structures without halls, where left-to-right walls partition the home into small rooms. So many of these homes have peeling paint, bars on the windows, and tiny, over grown and dying lawns. These dilapidated homes sit side by side next to very small, yet well maintained homes. The local housing authority is located just a few blocks away, accessible from the street that runs in front of the campus; ironically, these apartments are the second best maintained buildings in the area. Two blocks from campus are two mostly deserted strip-malls. Since none of the business have lighted signs, drivers can discern which business are viable by the appearance of bars on the shop windows rather than plywood.

The campus provides a welcome contrast to what surrounds it. Despite the extreme heat, its lawns are a vibrant green. While the homes in its back yard are crammed together, the campus buildings are widely spaced so that there was a sense of openness and accessibility about its layout. After three years at a university where parking is a continual issue, the absence of “parking police” and assigned lots was surprising to me. In fact, only a few lots have gated access for the college staff, the vast majority of parking is available to students. Additionally, there are two city bus stops in front of the college and one in the rear. It is quite common to see students bring family members, children or parents, on campus with them. During the weeks in which interviews were conducted, numerous children were abound because of different summer programs that were in progress. In the counseling center, I witnessed one student going into academic advisement with her father while her younger sisters played in the lobby. Parents often brought children with them to the library, in fact, certain areas of the library

allowed for snacks seemingly to accommodate this particular situation. During the summer months, the campus is quite lively in the mornings since most classes are scheduled during the morning hours.

All interviews were completed on campus in public areas, including: the student center, the library sitting area, and private library study rooms. By far, the student center was the most congested, noisy interview location but also the most interesting observation location. Since this was the only on-campus dining location, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. this was the building with the most activity. Most students were dressed casually in shorts, T-shirts and sandals or athletic shoes; typically, only the staff was dressed in office attire. In terms of the ethnic make up the campus, it was predominantly Hispanic. During the lunch hour, it was a sea of brown faces that I saw traveling up and down the main though fare. My overall estimate of the ethnic distribution was 80% Hispanic, 15% Anglo, and 5% African American. The student center has rows of plain black folding tables with black straight back chairs located in front of the food court. Sitting areas with upholstered chairs were also available. The library lobby provided a much quieter back drop to the interviews. These interviews were conducted in a sitting area close to the elevator doors providing an easily identifiable meeting place. The library study rooms were on the fifth floor of the library, and each had three thin, white-washed walls and a glass wall looking out into the lobby area of the elevator doors. Each room had a large, colorful piece of art work that was visible through the glass wall. While these rooms were the most private interview location utilized, noise traveled easily between the four study rooms in our wing.

The Pilot Study

Administrative personnel from the participating college were unable to identify the actual size of this population in the college since student records limit ethnicity identification to “Hispanic” and no record of generational status or US born status was available. The college was able to provide a list of names of 796 female students who had identified themselves as “Hispanic” and who had first time college enrollment in Fall 2000 and Spring 2001. Given the general student demographics, staff members were of the opinion that the majority of the names listed met the population criteria. This list provided a name and telephone number as sorted by social security numbers. (Note: social security numbers were not made available to the researcher.) Of the 796 students listed, 749 had telephone numbers listed; however, attempts to reach students via telephone indicated that a significant portion of these telephone numbers were no longer valid. Also, a portion of the students used the telephone numbers of parents or other relatives who were reluctant to share correct telephone numbers. Since the names were sorted by social security numbers which correspond in part to the student’s date of birth, the first student telephoned was selected randomly from the first page of the list, then every 25th student was telephoned to ask for participation in the study. During the telephone contact, students were asked to confirm that they met the population criteria, given an overview of the study, and asked to volunteer (Appendix A).

The researcher telephoned approximately 125 potential study members, often leaving messages and attempting to telephone during various times of the day to account for various work and school schedules. These efforts yielded eight scheduled interviews

for the pilot. Even though the goal was to complete three or four pilot interviews, eight were scheduled in anticipation of a high no-show rate since the researcher sensed suspicion and reluctance from the women who had been contacted. All eight women were mailed a letter of confirmation (Appendix B), along with a demographic profile (Appendix C) and acculturation instrument (Appendix D) which were to be completed prior to the interview. Only four pilot interviews were completed; one participant telephoned to cancel stating that due to a family emergency she could not keep our appointment and was reluctant to reschedule, three women no-showed and did not respond to messages requesting that the interview be rescheduled.

The four pilot interviews were completed utilizing interview protocol consisting of 11 questions (Appendix E). The taped interviews varied in length; 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 40 minutes and 45 minutes. Prior to each of the interview, the researcher reviewed the study's consent form, had the participant read and fill out the form, then provided the participant with a copy of the form for their records (Appendix F). When taping of the three longer interviews concluded, the interviewee and the researcher had a conversation that allowed the interviewee to ask the researcher questions about the research, my career goals, and advice on various school topics. It was at this time that participants shared more personal, emotional aspects of their history, as well as their fears. Conversations concluding the interview often lasted as long as the interview itself. In this process, I discovered two ambiguities related to my participant criteria. One participant had a strong negative reaction (irritation and offense) to the term "Mexican American" since she regarded the term as indicative of a person from Mexico who later

came to America, not a “real” American, a Hispanic like herself. Also, because of the stopping out phenomena combined with the fact that so many of the local residents participate in non-credit course work, asking for participants whose parents had not attended college could unnecessarily exclude certain members of the population.

In reflecting on the pilot study, I was struck by the following: (a) Much richer data was obtained off-tape. (b) Lack of experience, the newness of the college process left these young women unable to articulate their experiences since they had not truly processed it. In this way the women “didn’t know” their college experiences thus far. (c) Part of my responsibility to the participant was to appropriately disclose my own college experiences, and provide helpful hints about the process, if they so desired this information. (d) Participant criteria needed to be redefined to eliminate any ambiguity regarding the Mexican American and Hispanic ethnic labels. (e) Given the high no-show rate evidenced with telephone recruitment, an alternate method of participant enrollment that attracted volunteers was needed.

As a result of the pilot study, the following changes were made:

- Additional questions were added to the interview protocol to assist less experienced participants in articulating their experiences (Appendix G).
- The study criteria were expanded to include women with current or recent enrollment in the college (rather than first time enrollment in 2000-2001) to include college students with greater levels of college experience. Changes were made to the telephone script, accordingly (Appendix H).
- Paper and pencil instruments were completed in the presence of the researcher, allowing for additional time for rapport building and feed back on the issue of the “Mexican American” ethnic label.
- Planned time at the end of the taped portion of the interview was added to allow participants time to “interview the interviewer”, an opportunity for

open-ended dialogue. These portions of the interviews would then be included as part of the interviewers notes.

- Participant criteria was expanded to include “Mexican American” and “Hispanic” women, as well as participants whose parents had not graduated from college (rather than not attended college).
- Study notices (Appendix I) were posted on school bulletin boards, and special permission was obtained to place a recruitment poster (a poster size enlargement of the study notice) in student center, adjacent to the food court.

Study Participants

In addition to the four pilot interviews, 13 interviews were completed. In all, 14 interviews are included in the analysis, three interviews were not used in the analysis since these participants did not meet the final criteria. Pilot interviews were included in the analysis as additional questions not included in the original interview protocol were asked of the interviewees during member checks. In all, five participants were enrolled in the study as a result of telephone calls, six as a result of the poster, two as result of the flyers, two as a result from referrals from other participants, and one a referral from an instructor. Data was analyzed from 14 interviewees who met the following criteria:

- Status as a woman of Mexican descent.
- Status as a first generation college student.
- US citizenship as a result of having been born in the United States.
- Recent or current enrollment in the same community college

Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were incorporated to describe factors relevant to the educational and occupational aspirations of the participants. While data collected via instruments could have been collected verbally during the interview, doing so would have significantly lengthened the interview process. In general, many students contacted via telephone indicated that finding an hour to be interviewed was problematic given their demanding work, family, and class schedules. In addition, the use of the Demographic Profile provided the researcher with general information regarding the participants' life so that appropriate probes and follow up questions could be incorporated during the interview.

Site Data

Extent data for the participating college was reviewed for the purpose of providing a context in which the study's findings were examined. This data included enrollment data, retention rates, and transfer rates available from published reports from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB, 2000). Also, data regarding college services and programming was examined via the college website, catalogs, and other published materials. Likewise, documents and websites from the local Chamber of Commerce and other state and local agencies were reviewed in order to provide a context of the local community, particularly its employment base. It should be noted that this data in no way contributed to the site selection process.

Demographic Profile

Prior to interviews, participants were asked to complete an anonymous demographic profile that included the following data:

- Age, Race/ethnicity, and Martial Status
- Occupational Status: job title(s) and hours worked per week
- Student Status: part-time or full-time student, hours completed, major, and GPA
- Current Home Life: number of adults and children in the household, identification of life roles, and current socioeconomic status
- Family History: parents' educational attainment, parents' occupations, generational distance, and family of origin socioeconomic status

The instrument provides a brief overview of the participant's history and demographic status. It is organized so that 80% of the questions can be answered by checking the appropriate response, allowing completion in five to ten minutes.

Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican

Americans II (ARSMA-II)

Prior to interviews, participants were asked to complete an anonymous Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II, (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1999). The ARSMA-II was developed to include a multidimensional approach by measuring cultural orientation toward Mexican culture and the Anglo culture independently. The instrument developers define acculturation via the following, "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals

having different cultures come into continuous first-hand conduct, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.” (p. 278). Changes include both the experiences of social groups and individuals. Unlike assimilation where individuals experience a loss of cultural identity, acculturation alludes to a widening of cultural identities in two cultural groups. Participant ARMSA II scores were calculated as a method of describing their cultural orientation.

The instrument includes four factors: language use and preference, ethnic identity and classification, cultural heritage and ethnic behaviors, and ethnic interaction. The instrument uses Likert scales, allowing its 48 items to be completed in less than 15 minutes. The first page of the instrument was omitted since its content on generational status was included as part of the Demographic Profile. The ARMSMA II includes the following scales: Traditional Mexican; Integrated; The Marginal; Separation; Assimilated; and unable to classify. Internal reliability and test-retest reliability data indicate internal consistency for all scales and subscales.

Interviews With Researcher

The most substantive portion of the data was collected via individual, semi-structured one-hour interviews with the researcher. The interview process began with a brief review of the study. The researcher then provided the participant with a consent form, which the participant was asked to sign. The researcher then allowed the participant time to complete the Demographic Profile and ARSMA-II, and ask any questions.

The interview proceeded as outlined in Appendix G. In general, the taped interviews averaged between 30 and 45 minutes and the untaped, open dialogue following the taped interview averaged 20 to 30 minutes. Since the interview was scheduled for an hour, the researcher acted as a timekeeper. If the interview and dialogue exceeded an hour, participants were notified of the time elapsed and asked if they had a desire to exceed the allotted time. Only one participant ended the session after an hour since she needed to pick up her child. In general, participants who were recruited were somewhat reluctant to share their stories, while other study volunteers seemed eager which may in part account for the time variations. All interviews consisted of a taped portion, which was later transcribed, and an open dialogue portion captured in the researcher's notes. The taped, formal portion of the interview consisted of 17 questions with probes. Students will be asked to reflect on the educational, social, and cultural experiences related to their current student status. Questions related to factors identified in the literature as impacting educational and occupational aspirations. The questions were:

1. Why did you decide to attend college? Community college? This school in particular?
2. Are you currently enrolled?
3. What is your major?
4. What factors led you to select your major? (Probe regarding presence of role models, research into this area of work, ...etc.)
5. What are your immediate educational and job goals? Why?
6. What obstacles may interfere with reaching your immediate goals?

7. What job do you see yourself in 5-10 years? Why? (Probes: In this community? More education? Transfer?)
8. What do you image doing on your job?
9. What obstacles stand between you and your long-term job goals?
10. What, if anything, has been the most helpful to you at this college? Name the top 3 items.
11. What, if anything, has been the least helpful to you at this college? Name the top 3 items. (Probe: Are there any programs or services you wish were available to you from the school?)
12. How do you define occupational success? How will you know you are successful?
13. In what ways, if any, do you feel that you will need to change your thoughts or actions in order to be successful in college? In your chosen occupation?
14. To what extent will your ethnicity or gender affect your chances of success?
15. What or who has been supportive to you in this process so far?
16. What are the other sources of support you wish you had?
17. What advice would you give someone like yourself about the process of going to college and getting educated?

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed following the interview. In addition to the transcriptions, the researcher generated two documents immediately after the initial interview: first, an analytic memo describing the interview environment, the participant's physical description, the researchers general impressions regarding the receptivity of the participant and the flow of the interview, and any unforeseen events; and second, a participant profile outlining demographic information, a calculation of the ARSMA-II

acculturation index, and any significant components of the individual's "life story" that were discussed. These significant components were treated as ideas or concepts that were raised in the individual interview. Individual transcriptions were then coded, question by question, to identify responses inclusive of the concepts. Finally, a third document, a matrix summary of concepts and codes per question, was completed. This process was used as the first level of analysis.

The second level of analysis included the constant comparison method. Gay and Ariasian (2000) define this process as "the constant comparison of identified topics and concepts to determine their distinctive characteristic so as to place them in appropriate categories" (p. 243). This constitutes an on-going process of examining commonalities and disjunctions among concepts raised in interviews and the researcher notes.

Commonalities and disjunctions were first uncovered by comparing the matrix summaries generated for each interview. As new concepts are uncovered, the researcher searches for commonalities and differences between the concepts. Commonalities then led to the formation of themes. In this case, a theme represented experiences, perceptions and/ or expectations held by participants. Themes were assigned descriptive labels, in the language of the researcher, that captured the participants' view of their situation. Each transcript was then coded for the group's themes, and as new themes appear with additional interviews, existing transcripts are re-examined for the new theme. Individual stories associated with each theme were synthesized so that a composite depiction of the theme was presented in the findings.

Issues of Rigor

Merriam (1998) stated that “the applied nature of education inquiry thus makes it imperative that researcher and others have confidence in the conduct of the investigation and in the results of any particular study” (p. 199). In order to meet this standard, qualitative researchers must assess components of the research for validity and reliability (Merriam 1998). Yet conventional, positivistic methods do not easily transfer to qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). For example, convention defines internal validity as the extent that the researcher findings provide the true descriptions of a particular reality; external reliability, the extent that findings are generalizable. These conventional definitions of quality standards are deeply entrenched in the positivistic tradition; therefore, qualitative researchers have developed numerous reconceptualizations of conventional definitions, including: trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy (Eisner, 1991); and, triangulation, construct validity, face validity, and catalytic validity (Lather, 1991). No consensus of assessing qualitative research exists. Creswell (1998) suggests that standards and verification should be based specifically to the study’s method of inquiry. For case study research, Creswell proposes incorporating Stake’s (1995) procedural concepts of triangulation and member checking.

Triangulation

Triangulation represents the convergence of sources of data, such as, literature, views of the investigator, views of the participants, theories, and methodologies (Creswell, 1998). Specific to case study research, Stake (1995) emphasizes the triangulation via the use of different “data situations” in the case. Triangulation was satisfied in the study via the use of different “data situations”, the interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Member Checks

Member checking is the process of asking participants if raw data and tentative interpretations of the data are shared. After the interviews, participants were mailed a copy of the interview transcript. The letter accompanying the transcript (Appendix J) asked participants to review the document for accuracy. The letter indicated a time period in which the researcher would contact them for any corrections or additions. Also, the letter provided a local telephone number where the participant could schedule the second telephone interview. Second interviews were done as a member check to verify the accuracy of the transcript, as well as to ask additional questions that could add greater clarity to previous statements given by participants. Also, member checks allowed the researcher to confirm tentative research finds at the conclusion of the first level of analysis. Second interviews were conducted via telephone.

Audit Trail

While generalizability is not a goal consistent with qualitative research, understanding the researcher's choices in both methodology and data analysis are strong indications of consistency and confirmability of the data reported. The audit trail includes a description of how raw data (field notes and transcripts), processed data, and synthesized data (analytic memos, concepts and coding) will be managed and developed.

Limitations

The following limitations were factors in the study:

1. The scope of the study was limited to 14 Mexican American students attending the one south Texas community college.
2. Findings were limited to the extent that participants were able to articulate their experiences. The ability to articulate experiences often related to the age, maturity level, and life experiences of individual participants. Also, the research site represented the only higher education institution attended by most participants; therefore, many participants may have lacked educational experiences that would have further informed their responses.
3. In general, the availability of population members is quite limited due to multiple adult roles; therefore, the most "at-risk" students in the population were unable or unwilling to volunteer for the study.
4. Interviews focused on participants' experiences and perceptions. No attempt was made to verify participant experiences or perceptions with other outside sources.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

*My words are really very easy to understand
And be with, and walk in ...but no one can!
My words have roots, my actions have precedents
But people don't see this, and they don't see me
(Lao Tzu, 500 BC/1993, p. 167).*

This chapter presents the findings that resulted from interviews and instruments completed by the study participants. Interviews were conducted with 14 women who self-identified as either Mexican American or Hispanic and had attended the same south Texas community college, referred to as "Sea Mist College," in the previous year. The research was conducted from a critical framework in response to the following research question:

What relationship exists between the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational experiences of Mexican American women attending a south Texas Community college and their occupational aspirations?

In order to effectively explore the question, five subsidiary questions were developed including:

1. *What factors relate to the decision to attend college?*
2. *To what extent do generational status, level of assimilation or acculturation factor into occupational goal setting?*

3. *What factors relate to the choice of academic or technical goals and aspirations in community colleges?*
4. *What factors relate to the selection of terminal occupational goals?*
5. *What barriers to educational goals/ occupational aspirations exist? Are barriers related to occupational self-efficacy?*

The presentation of the findings will include the following: (a) an overview of the findings from the Demographic Profile; (b) biographical sketches of each of the participants; (c) data related to each of the five questions; and (d) advice that participants would give to a woman like themselves who had college aspirations.

Demographic Overview of Participants

Fourteen interviews were included in the data analysis. Participants ranged in age from 19 years old to 57 years old. Sea Mist College was the only college ever attended by 11 of 14 participants. Since the ability to articulate experiences is often related to the age, maturity level, and life experiences of individual participants, findings from a particular respondent are indicated with both the name and age of the participant.

While the age of the participants was a crucial factor in determining life experiences, the context of college attendance was used as the distinguishing factor of analysis for all five questions. The researcher created two groups representative of this context. Seven of the participants, ages 18 to 22, entered Sea Mist College immediately after graduating from high school (and were placed in Group I); while the other seven, ages 33 to 57, represented returning adults (and were placed in Group II). Participants in Groups I and II differed significantly on several points:

(a) study recruitment method, (b) interview dynamics, (c) academic focus and occupational maturity, and (d) the complexity of competing school, work, and family roles. The following is an overview of results from the Demographic Profile for both groups of participants as well as other distinguishing points between the groups (Tables 5 and 6):

Recruitment and Interview Dynamics

For Group I, five of the seven participants (Roxanne, 18; Connie, 18; Anna, 19; Chris, 19) were recruited via telephone enrollment with two (Beth, 20; Fran, 22) self-enrolling as a result of the poster. In contrast, six members of Group II self-enrolled, with one (Dora, 36) volunteering as a result of a teacher referral. Method of recruitment, as well as life experience, contributed to both the tone and flow of the interview process.

In general, interviews with Group I were characterized with a mix of resistance and suspicion. Establishing rapport was more difficult, often occurring late in the taped interview. During the taping, it was necessary to enact more probes with this group. While my sense was that these young women were trying to accommodate my questions, they seemed to be searching for a “right” or “good” answer when the tape recorder was on. With the exceptions of one member, Joan, 19, I spent at least a half hour with each woman after the taping, listening to her concerns, sharing my own experiences and offering career guidance. Most asked me questions about “what was it like” to get an advanced degree, how I paid for school, and how I handled being away from my family. In reflection, what these women seemed to convey was a sense of “I need help,” “I don’t know what to do,” “tell me what to do.”

TABLE 5
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES GROUP I

Factors	Roxanne,18	Connie,18	Anna, 19	Joan, 19	Chris, 19	Beth, 20	Fran, 22
SES	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class	Working Class	Middle Class	Working Class
Recruitment	Telephone	Telephone	Telephone	Telephone	Telephone	Poster	Poster
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Divorced	Single	Married	Single
Live with Parents	X	X	X	X	X		
Live with a Mate						X	X
Head of household							
Enrollment	FT	FT	N/A	N/A	N/A	FT	FT
GPA	3.1-3.5	3.1-3.5	N/A	2.6-3.0	1.5-2.0	1.5-2.0	2.6-3.0
Credits Earned	24	14	0	24	6	15	133
Employment	N/A	PT	N/A	N/A	FT	FT	PT
Working to:							
Support Self			X	X		X	X
Support My Family			X	X			X
Pay Education		X	X	X		X	
Housekeeping	X	X		X	X	X	
Childcare	X						
Parent				X	X		
Single Parent				X	X		
Aging/ill Parents			X				

TABLE 6
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES GROUP II

Factors	Lisa, 33	Dora, 36	Leticia,36	Patty, 43	Toni, 50	Gloria, 51	Sonia, 57
SES	Working Class	Working Class	Working Class	Working Class	Middle Class	Working Class	Working Class
Recruitment	Poster	Referral	Poster	Poster	Poster	Poster	Poster
Marital Status	Divorced	Single	Married	Single	Married	Married	Married
Live with Parents	X						
Live with a Mate			X		X	X	X
Head of household		X		X			
Enrollment	FT	FT	FT	PT	PT	PT	PT
GPA	3.1-3.5	3.6-4.0	2.6-3.0	2.6-3.0	3.1-3.5	3.6-4.0	2.6-3.0
Credits Earned	45	70+	--	9	60	25	72+
Employment	PT	PT	N/A	N/A	FT	PT	PT
Working to:							
Support Self	X	X		X	X	X	
Support My Family	X	X	X		X	X	
Pay Education	X	X			X	X	X
Housekeeping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Childcare	X	X	X		X	X	
Parent	X	X	X		X	X	X
Single Parent	X	X				X	
Aging/Ill Parents					X		

Rapport building was very easy with Group II. In general, the women were very ready to tell their stories. Small chit-chat was the norm prior to the interviews. During the taped interviews, very few probes were utilized. While I had lengthy conversations with five of the participants (Leticia, 36; Patty, 43; Toni, 50; Gloria, 51; Sonia, 57) after the taped portion of the interview, the conversation was lighter, more focused on the participant. Every woman asked me how I was able to get so far in my education, and usually said something like, "No wonder! You don't have a husband or kids to take care of." Yet, each one of them encouraged my efforts, saying to "go for it for all of us." In contrast to the first group, these women conveyed a sense of "if only I had known I had opportunities when I was younger," that they were discovering their capabilities and finding their voice. I most often left these interviews reflecting on the emotional strength of these women.

Academic Focus and Career Maturity

Women in Group I were searching for answers in both their academic careers and their personal identities, especially as it relates to "what do I want to be when I grow up". Two (Roxanne, 18; Anna, 19) had ideas about what they wanted to do but had not identified actual occupational titles. Three (Joan, 19; Chris, 19; and Fran, 22) had occupations identified but had done little research and conveyed limited understanding of what that occupation may entail. For instance, Chris, 19 is working to become a registered nurse; yet, she does not want to do direct care, preferring instead to deal with medical paperwork. For the most part, occupational identity focused on earnings and

finding “something I like.” Five of the seven classified their socioeconomic status as middle class; two, working class.

In contrast, women in Group II had a clearer vision of what their goal was and why they were enrolled. Three (Leticia, 36; Gloria, 51; Sonia, 57) started attending Sea Mist College to earn their GED’s. Leticia, 36 and Sonia, 57 dropped out of high school to get married because they were pregnant. Gloria, 51 was pulled out of school when she was forced to marry at age 13. And, Lisa, 33 graduated high school as a married mother of one child and with one on the way.

Members of Group II were able to identify obstacles to their goals but conveyed confidence that goals could be achieved, often stating how they planned to overcome obstacles. Career goals focused on contributing to others and pursuing a passion, not just earning a living, despite the fact that six of the seven described themselves as working class.

Women in Group II were rushing to complete their education while three women (Roxanne, 18; Anna, 19; Joan, 19) in Group I expressed that they did not wish to be rushed. Six members of Group II were currently enrolled (3 full-time status; 3 part-time status) and one was to start in the Fall of 2001. In Group I, three (Anna, 19; Joan, 19; Chris, 19) had stopped out while the other four were enrolled full-time. All members of Group II had GPA’s of 2.6 or greater while three members of Group I (Anna, 19; Chris, 19; Beth, 20) had GPA’s of 2.0 or less.

Life Roles

In Group I, five women lived with parents (3-single; 1-single & pregnant; 1-divorced & pregnant); while two lived with a mate but did not have children (1-married; 1-single). In Group II, one woman lived with her mother (divorced, with children); three were married with children at home; one was married with grown children and grandchildren; one was a single parent; and one lived alone. As a result, women in each group faced very different responsibilities related to their life roles.

The Demographic Profile listed eight specific life roles and asked participants to indicate their respective responsibilities. On average, members of Group II had at least twice the number of responsibilities as members of Group I. Responsibilities listed included:

- I am responsible for housekeeping/ cleaning in my home.
- I am responsible for childcare in my home.
- I am a parent.
- I am a single parent.
- I must work a job to support myself.
- I must work a job to help support my family.
- I must work a job to help pay for my education.
- I am responsible for caring for aging/ ill parents.

The distribution for number of responsibilities for members of Group I was: (1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 6) with a mean = 2.71

The distribution for number of responsibilities for members of Group II was: (2, 4, 5, 7, 7, 7, 7) with a mean = 5.57.

Participant Biographical Sketches

The following biographical sketches and interview summaries for each participant are provided to allow the reader some frame of reference in reviewing the findings. A brief summary of the participants' concerns and themes raised in the interviews is given in Table 7.

Roxanne, 18

During the recruitment call, Roxanne's sweet disposition was evident in her shy and soft-spoken voice. In person, she presents as a smart, kind, dutiful young woman --in short, she fits the image of the perfect Hispanic daughter. In the year since she began college she has suffered two huge losses, the unexpected death of a boyfriend and the illness and death of her mother. Despite the losses, she has managed to keep a high GPA because now more than ever she feels the need to achieve so as to "not let her Dad down." She wants to take care of both her father and her younger brother, but her father is encouraging her to pursue her own dreams. Roxanne is majoring in biology, but thinks she wants to pursue a career in forensics. She has no idea how to pursue this goal since forensics is not offered in Sea Mist College.

Connie, Age 18

Connie was thrilled to be asked to participate in the study. She said, "I wish you had called last week when my sister was in town. She really needs to get herself back in school!" In person, she seemed to radiate energy with her big, genuine smile and her

TABLE 7
OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS CONCERNS & THEMES

Participant	Concerns	Themes
<u>Group I</u>		
Roxanne, 18	Not 'letting Dad down' Paying for university	Family Caring for Dad and brother Motivation
Connie, 18	Financial concerns	Family/ Close to parents Independence Proud of paying her own way through college
Anna, 19	Financial concerns Sick father Unemployment Returning to college Fear of 'being held back'	Pleasing others Family obligations Desire for independence
Joan, 19	Pregnancy Single parenthood	Family/ Close to mother – came to interview 'Proving' herself 'Proving' others wrong Competition
Chris, 19	Pregnancy Single parenthood	Close to family Wants to be a nurse but not do direct care
Beth, 20	Financial aid Rushed marriage to qualify for financial aid Balancing school & 3 jobs, finding time to study Focus on survival issues/ Financial concerns	A better life Material comfort
Fran, 22	Financial concerns Focus on survival issues	A better life Pull family out of poverty Teachers as key to class success

TABLE 7 (Continued)

Participant	Concerns	Themes
<u>Group II</u>		
Lisa, 33	Ex-husband mentally ill & abusive Moving children to TWU	College as a way out No doubts about achieving goals
Dora, 36	None	Its up to me
Leticia, 36	Balancing student and family roles Financial concerns Health problems	Family Job stability Education to avoid struggle Tragedies as life shaping
Patty, 43	Disability Unemployment Depression	Family/ Brother Normalcy Education as "therapy"
Toni, 50	Financial concerns Balancing student and family roles	Wishes had known about college opportunities Full-time job as obstacle
Gloria, 51	Working to support children Left abusive spouse Financial concerns	Education for better job opportunities Wants to help empower other Hispanic women
Sonia, 57	Contribution beyond roles as wife and mother	Growing from life "traumas" Family first, now me Desire to help others Empowerment

fast, enthusiastic speech. Connie is also a good daughter; she speaks with love, respect, and gratitude for her parents and all they have given her.

Connie lives with her parents, but works to pay for her own education. Currently she works retail at a local mall, a job she loves. Her earnings pay for school related expenses. She has been saving for college since her sophomore year in high school. Financing her education is a point of pride, it feeds her sense of power and independence. By far, she is the only member of Group I who has done research and has a clear vision of both short term and long term goals. She has been planning to go to college since the 7th grade, when she discovered she was born to be a teacher. Teaching young children is her passion.

Anna, Age 19

During telephone recruitment, Anna expressed mild curiosity about the research and was tentative about her ability to participate, stating that it depended largely on whether or not her father was doing well, "he might not let me leave the house." Yet, she also seemed reluctant to turn down the interview, reluctant to say no. We met in the library lobby during an unusually busy and noisy hour. She dressed causally, in jeans and a black top, with her thick, long, jet-black hair pulled back into a large ponytail, her large silver earrings accenting her dark brown face. Her approach and style are that of a shy little girl. Her voice was soft spoken.

Anna lives at home with her parents and is responsible for paying her own way through college. She attended Sea Mist College full-time the fall semester after her high school graduation but quit in the first semester because of father's illness. She is the

youngest sibling in her family. Her siblings are much older with families of their own so she feels pressure to care for her parents. Anna wanted to go to college in St. Louis but gave up on that idea because of her family responsibilities. Anna's father has been seriously ill and the thought of leaving her mother alone to deal with the problem causes her to feel guilty even though her mother urges her to "do what you need to do, we're not holding you back." She cites peer pressure and the inability to say no, to "not be mean" as problems that keep her distracted from her school-work when she does attend college. She doesn't know what to do and is reluctant to ask for help. Throughout the interview she was careful to not cast blame on anyone, especially her parents. She recently quit her customer service job because her employers "weren't being fair." She now feels somewhat overwhelmed with the prospect of looking for a new job, trying to get back to college, and helping out at home; so overwhelmed that she is not working on any of these goals. At the time of the interview, she had no immediate plans other than to look for work. She is not sure what she wants to study, but is attracted to the medical field.

After the taped portion of the interview, she asked me questions about going away to college and finding scholarships. We also talked about different jobs she might apply for, such as work clerk positions at local hospitals that might provide more exposure to the medical field. She was reluctant to make such applications, stating that she "was afraid" of negative responses. I also suggested that she start talking to teachers about possible career goals and majors, to which she replied, "...but maybe they won't have time."

Joan, Age 19

Since Joan lives with her parents, my first contact was with Joan's mother, who sufficiently screened my telephone recruitment call to ascertain who I was and why I was contacting her daughter. After briefly explaining why I was calling, Joan's mother seemed impressed with the research project. She explained that Joan was babysitting for a family member, gave me the telephone number, and encouraged me to call her in few minutes. When I later spoke to Joan, she seemed distracted and disinterested but accommodated my request seemingly because her mother had sanctioned the appointment.

I was very surprised when both Joan and her mother came to the interview, especially when Joan's mother sat between us. Joan was slim, her physical features were very "Spanish"; she was tall, fair skinned, with long, dark curly hair. She wore denim jumper shorts with a pale pink blouse underneath. Her five-month pregnancy was just beginning to show. Mom was also causally dressed, her features were more "Indian"; she was shorter than her daughter and had a deep skin-tone. Mom indicated that she would be sitting with us for the interview but would not be part of the interview.

Joan's taped interview was a brief 15 minutes long. While there was some lightness and laughter in her answers, every response was short and to the point. She seemed irritated by probes, answering with guarded one or two word responses. When I listened to the recording from the interview, by and large it's my voice that I hear, not hers. My impression was that she was answering so as to meet her mother's expectations and keep up appearances.

One incident that left an impression was when I asked about her marital status because she had left this blank on the demographic questionnaire. Before she could answer, her mother responded that she was separated, while Joan gave her a strange look. That strange look toward her mother happened a few more times during the interview, I later realized that they exchanged that look every time I used the term “Mexican American.” As soon as the tape recorder was turned off, she explained that she did not refer to herself as “Mexican American.” She had been taught by her father, who was very offended by the term, that she was “Hispanic” not “some Mexican,” to never refer to herself that way. Joan was taught that “Mexican Americans” were Mexicans who came to the U.S., not “real” Americans who are “from here”. I was stunned by that revelation considering the fact that Sea Mist is less than 200 miles from Mexico and 91.5% of its Hispanics are of Mexican descent (SGBA, 2001). Then her mother (who looked very Mexican Indian) informed me that I could confirm this “fact” by looking it up in a history book or encyclopedia, Hispanic was the proper term!

Despite the brief responses, certain issues and patterns arose. One pattern was the need for appearances. When asked why she had decided to become a lawyer, Joan’s first response was that “it was always in me....it’s in your blood.” Later her mother raised the issue of competition with an aunt, “to be higher” than the aunt (who is a lawyer), as a key motivator. In addition, “proving” other people wrong is important to Joan. She did not discuss issues related to obstacles or past difficulties, though she did refer to “regrets in the past,” “needing to not be so selfish,” and “I should have listened to my mom” but would not provide specifics. The only obstacle she reluctantly acknowledged was her

child, which was the only thing she could see getting in the way of her reaching her goals.

Chris, Age 19

During the telephone recruitment call, she seemed interested in study. Her voice and personality were very upbeat. She and I met in the student center, during the lunch hour. She was neatly dressed in blue jeans and a red blouse. She had been running late for the interview because she had given a ride to her siblings. She was four months pregnant but not quite showing. The issue of her pregnancy came up early in the interview; excessive absences associated with the pregnancy forced her to dropout during the previous spring semester. Currently she plans to return to college in January 2002, the semester after the baby is born "if there aren't any problems."

During the taped interview, she was very positive in her responses, her answers were often punctuated with nervous laughter. Off tape her tone became more serious. At that time, she expressed concerns about being a single parent, that she felt she had disappointed her parents, that her former boyfriend was incapable of being a good, involved father. Yet, even then she stressed the positives, that her family was very supportive and would help her with childcare responsibilities, and that one day she was "going to be something."

Beth, Age 20

Beth volunteered for the study by emailing me at an address listed on the study flyer. The message was very positive:

Hi! My name is Beth Z. and I noticed your bright yellow flyer on the bulletin board. I do meet all of these requirements and I am interested in supporting my heritage. I think this is a very important topic that needs to be recognized. Please e-mail me back or call me at work. I will be in the office from 3pm-8pm M-Th, and 10am-3pm on Fridays. I really hope you contact me because I feel I will be a good candidate. I really want to help. Thank You!

So I was surprised that when I telephoned her to set the appointment, she was angry, suspicious, and hostile. I now understand that she was probably exhausted. Beth works three part-time jobs (a total of 40 hours) and attends college full-time. Though she labels herself as middle class, her current life and her life with her divorced mother and five siblings seemed better defined as working class. Beth has been supporting herself financially since her mid-teens.

Because of her family situation, Beth knows that the only way to a better life is through education. She began preparing for college in high school by taking advanced placement classes. Her parents discouraged her efforts, encouraging her instead to “find someone rich to marry.” Six months prior to our interview, she did marry. Beth had tried to apply for financial aid but was told that as a single student under 23 with no dependents she could not qualify without income tax information from both parents. Her mother who has since remarried made “too much money,” while her father has not filed his taxes for years. She married her boyfriend in order to receive some aid, “we were thinking of marrying anyway, we just decided to get married now ” so she could go to school. Her husband’s parents are paying for his education in Southport (60 miles away), he should graduate next year with a bachelors degree in natural gas engineering. Their arrangement is that she will pay their household expenses until his graduation, then her husband will help send Beth to college.

As mentioned in chapter III, all transcripts were color-coded. The transcript from Beth's interview was heavily coded in green, the color used to indicate the presence of barriers. Beth's transcript focused on barriers more often than any other transcript in the study.

Fran, Age 22

Fran and I met while I was waiting for an interviewee in the college library. She noticed my flyer, I spoke to her about my study, and asked her if she would like to participate. Fran works on campus as a math tutor. She had attended Sea Mist College prior to transferring a year ago (without an associates degree) to Texas University – Southport, 60 miles away.

Fran presents as mature and serious yet approachable, especially when her serious facial expression breaks into an easy smile. Fran's voice throughout the interview was calm and even, her approach was matter-of-fact; she is responsible for supporting her family (parents, siblings, and a nephew) even though she lives in Southport with her boyfriend. Her experiences at Sea Mist College were mostly positive; transferring has been a difficult transition but she was able to find an advisor who has mentored her through her upper level courses. Her advisor has also offered moral support. She proudly showed me a letter of support he had written so that she might compete for a class ring sponsorship; her university gives one class ring to a low-income graduating senior each year. Fran is one year away from earning her bachelors in mathematics. She hopes to use this degree to one day work for NASA and possibly become an astronaut.

Lisa, Age 33

Lisa contacted me after reading one of the study flyers. She was very interested in participating, but was concerned that she might not meet the study criteria because only one parent, her mother, was Mexican American (her father is white). My response was that if she saw herself as Mexican American or Hispanic then she met the study criteria. She laughed, saying that she was definitely “raised to be a Mexican.”

Lisa was fair-skinned, with light colored hair. She had an easy going smile, with a quick laugh. Her tone changed, becoming serious during the taped interview, as she shared elements of her life story. Her speech became much more formal, almost as if by maintaining a formal stance she would be able to keep the emotions out of telling her truth. She was careful to share the facts but not indulge in the details.

As a child, she lived in the housing authority a few blocks away from the college. She was raised to be subservient to men. Her father abusively ruled the home. As a teen, Lisa married an abusive man who she describes as “very mentally ill.” She graduated high school “with one child and one on the way.” She only recently divorced after 15 years of marriage, but continues to have problems with her ex-husband regarding custody of their four children. With the support of friends she was able to leave her husband and begin college. The Mexican side of her family and her children have not been supportive, criticizing Lisa as “being selfish.”

Dora, Age 36

Dora was the first Group II participant I interviewed after the pilot study. I was immediately struck with the sense that there was nothing shy, vulnerable, apologetic or

“frilly” about her. She did not wear cosmetics. She was heavy set but moved with quick, powerful strides. She had a strong, deep voice. Dora wore denim shorts and a light blue t-shirt, her short black curls accentuated the roundness of her face. Immediately, one senses that she is a go-getter.

Dora is a single mom with a special needs child. After high school graduation she joined the Air Force for four years, then returned to Sea Mist. She had been earning her way by helping her mother clean houses, barely scraping by on \$60 to \$120 per week. But once she decided to attend college, she threw herself into it wholeheartedly. She had been attending full-time (including summers) since Fall 1998, becoming an honors student and involving herself in campus activities related to politics and writing. Dora loves working on-campus as managing editor for the college paper. Through her work on the newspaper, she is widely known to many on campus, including the college president and the regents. She began a mailing list for the college newspaper to local judges, state and national newspapers, and state and national representatives to “make them aware of the local talent.” Dora is on her way to becoming an investigative reporter.

Leticia, Age 36

Leticia exudes a sense of peace and calm. You immediately sense her kindness although her shy approach carries a type of quiet intensity. She is a soft-spoken woman, with a warm gold tone in her skin and a small, sincere smile. She is married and the mother of six, with the oldest child away at college and the youngest only 22 months old. Leticia left school just before graduation to get married and have her first child. As the

interview progressed it was evident that she was a woman working hard to calm her own fears and anxieties.

Leticia came back to school as a way of obtaining job security when she noticed the reoccurrence of job layoffs. She has experienced numerous ups-and-downs in raising her family, and her family has always been her top priority. When her young daughter suffered a rape and her mother died, problems were compounded with a health scare (a stroke) that left her with a temporary, partial paralysis in her hands. All these issues led her to drop out of college two years ago as a business management major. Her work life combined with her personal life and her “tragedies” have impacted heavily on both her process in college and her switch in majors. She is now working to become a registered nurse.

Patty, Age 43

Patty was tall, slim, dressed in slim fit jeans, boots, and a white t-shirt that was neatly tucked in, showing off a western style belt. We met in the student center, where I was sitting by the recruitment poster. Her walk was more like a swagger. I later learned that she moved this way because on the previous evening, at a night-club, a barstool fell on her foot and injured her toe. Her deep voice and masculine look surprised me at first, but her slow, easy-going style immediately put me at ease. She was very interested in the project, but more interested in “helping you (the researcher) out”. She described herself as “a people person, I talk a lot.” It seemed to amaze her that telling about her life could somehow help me. At the end of the interview (off-tape), she asked twice if I was sure I had what I needed for the research and “Did I really help?”.

Patty entered college to retrain for a new career. After graduating from high school, she entered the military and became an electrician, a job she enjoyed and that allowed her to earn a very good living. Unfortunately, she developed degenerative arthritis and has been on disability for three years. Unemployment brought many changes in her living situation, she lost her apartment and her lover. Her family is helping her with her living and financial situation, returning the generosity that she shared with them when she was employed, otherwise she'd be "out in the street." She sees school as "her therapy" that allows a sense of normalcy in her life and helps her fend off depression. Patty enjoys college and spends all day on campus even though she has class only two or three hours a day. She is hoping that her doctor will approve of the part-time job she'd been offered at the campus writing center so that she can begin working again.

Toni, Age 50

Toni works full-time as an administrative assistant on campus. She is a petite, demure soft-spoken woman who looks as if she were in her early forties. Toni is also enrolled as a student, she lacks two or three classes for her associate's degree as an administrative secretary. Since she knows so many people on campus, we met in the student center in an area away from the thoroughfare, to provide some privacy.

Toni has been attending college off and on since she graduated high school and began her college career by earning a secretarial certificate at the college's west campus. As a child, college never seemed like an option but after the positive experiences at the west campus she wanted to continue in her education. She has faced many challenges in

balancing her roles as a wife, mother, and worker with her goals of furthering her education.

Toni had been working on completing her associates degree for some time. She had been unable to graduate because course schedules conflict with work schedules, and her boss was not sympathetic. She has continued to take classes that interest her and accommodate her work schedule. Last semester she took a psychology classes that has her dreaming of pursuing a career as a child psychologist. Since her children are grown, it may be the right time though needing to work in order to maintain her family's financial health is the primary obstacle.

Gloria, Age 51

Gloria telephoned after she saw the recruitment poster. I scrambled for a pencil in an attempt to capture what she was saying as her loud, clear words came rushing out. "I am a survivor of domestic abuse...I got married out of the 6th grade... My husband stabbed me and shot me... I was a single parent working to support my four kids...I volunteer for the women's shelter...I work in a children shelter... I want to be part of this study." She believes that by telling her story she can help others. Given the power and conviction in her voice, it was hard to believe she could have ever been victimized. She seemed like a very powerful woman. In person, she was attractive, causally dressed in jeans and a white blouse. She carried herself with pride, coming directly to me with her hand extended, looking me in the eyes.

Gloria is an extremely busy woman. Besides working full-time, going to school part-time, and attending to children and grandchildren, she also volunteers in her

community with the local women's shelter every weekend, visits an inmate once a week, does parenting and literacy volunteering, sings with a mariachi band and models. Gloria began going to school to have a chance at better jobs she needed to raise her four children alone after she left her abusive marriage. She returned in 1981 to begin pursuing her GED and has been going to college ever since. Gloria became involved in the community as a result of her job in a Head Start Program, when she noticed that mothers just dropped off their children and did nothing but stay home. "I can't stress enough how many Hispanic women out there that I see on an everyday basis, that I can see could BE something." She has faced numerous obstacles. Despite the fact that her children are grown, it does not sound as if she has any intentions of slowing down. Her desire is to help empower other Hispanic women, particularly those living in rural areas with limited resources.

Sonia, Age 57

Sonia and I first met in the student center while I was sitting by the recruitment poster. She wanted to be sure to raid the candy on my table at some point of everyday that I was there. She worked in the area, and I could see from the very beginning that she wanted to know about everything happening around her. Sonia was forward in her approach, in a friendly way, but I was left with the sense that I was being inspected. She stood out because her strong voice, her outgoing personality, and because of the fact that she wore very dark cloths, a visor and dark sunglasses even though she was inside the building for most of the day. I noticed that there always seemed to be young people congregated around her desk. Her teased, brown-red hair, her moderate use of cosmetics,

her self-described “dramatics” gave her an air of confidence bordering on vanity. To my surprise, when we began the interview, her tone and style changed dramatically.

Throughout the week, she had asked about the project, and seemed to reflect her respect for the project by using a serious tone and carefully choosing her words in English only (typically she spoke blended English and Spanish). I found myself somewhat distracted by her sunglasses since when I looked at her face I saw my own reflection, not her eyes. Yet, I fought the urge to ask her to remove them since, at the time, I thought that perhaps they provided her with an additional sense of security.

After 30 years of being a mother and a wife she decided to go back to school “for myself.” Sonia has many dreams but knows that because time is limited (her age) she will have to choose only one goal but is determined that she will make that choice when the time comes. Because Sonia had forgotten her reading glasses that day, I helped her fill out the instruments, which initiated much dialogue outside the context of the taped interview. Between the instruments, interview, and discussion afterward we spent approximately 2.5 hours together.

Throughout the interview she spoke of going to college as doing something for herself after years of caring for others. Outside the taped portions she also spoke extensively of finding her own empowerment and of the need to empower other Hispanic women. Over and over again in the transcript, I heard my own voice say “Powerful” in reaction to different portions of her story. Yet even in this brief encounter, she seemed to be seeking validation from me. In reviewing the transcript I found two instances where she asked “Is that good?” “How did it sound?” After the taped portion of the interview, she asked me again, very earnestly, if her story was “good.” The sincerity of her question

against the backdrop of our dialogue on empowerment moved me to tears. Yes, her story was good.

Question 1

What factors relate to the decision to attend college?

Findings related to question one were ascertained via the interview questions. Specifically, participants were asked why they decided to go to college, why they choose to attend a community college, and why they choose Sea Mist College in particular.

Why Go To College

All participants related college attendance to the availability of jobs, where “jobs” and “work” carried differing means to the women as it related to their own experiences and others close to them. In Group I, Connie, 18 and Joan, 19 indicated that they entered college to pursue a particular profession (teaching and law) while Roxanne indicated interest in a field of study where she would like to be employed (biology and forensics). The other 11 women related college attendance to something more than a job. For Anna, 19, who had seen siblings leave home, marry and work, and felt obligated to care for her parents, saw college as a chance for a job that provides independence.

I don't want to be stuck at home or with my kids or with no job. I don't want to feel like I'm trapped. That's another reason that if I go to school and I get a degree, I get a good education, I won't have to depend on anybody else. I will have myself. That's what I want. There's a lot of things I want. After I graduate, I want my own home. I want to know that I can come home to my own house that this is what I worked for, or my own car. That I don't have to depend on nobody [sic] like borrow money from nobody [sic]. I want to be by myself, but not forever. -Anna, 19 (1:151)

Chris had “always wanted to go to college and do something” in part because of her father’s negative work experiences which she related to the fact that he had little formal education.

My dad didn't graduate from high school, but then its like he worked hard so that he's now an anesthesia tech. When he started working, he started off as a janitor, and now he's an anesthesia tech. It's a BIG difference. He had to take crap and a half from different people to be where he's at now. He doesn't want us to go through stuff like that, he wants us to be the boss. He'll come home with stories from the hospital, “Yeah, they're giving me this, that's why I want you to go to school. That way they won't tell you, you can be the one telling the other person!” -Chris (3:261)

Beth, 20 described herself as “middle class” even though in her current situation and in her life with her family of origin she had experienced many financial hardships. Her past and current living situations seem better defined as “working class.” To her, a college education means a better life, one that a high school education cannot provide.

I wanted a better life. My parents were always middle class, and I wanted better, I wanted the nicer car, I wanted a good life for my kids and my future. That's why I wanted to go to school, because you can't get a good job. I tried going to work right after high school. I had diploma and they started me like minimum wage, I was at McDonalds, frying fries. I was, “This is not me, I cannot work HERE.” People were being rude to me. I need a better job, I need a better life. So the only way was school. That's who they hire, the people with degrees, the people with knowledge, skills, learning. -Beth, 20 (14:5)

Fran, 22 saw a college education as a means of pulling her family out of poverty.

Well I come from a low-income family so basically I figured that I'm gonna need to support my family and help. I have to do it. I have to do it. That's the way it is. At first I decided that I was gonna go to the military and go to school that way, 'cause I was gonna get benefits and be able to help my family. And I got scared a little, and decided “Well, let's not go through that whole thing, just go to college.” I had already started [college] when I was gonna ship off, so I decided “No, not now.” -Fran, 22 (13:11)

Later in the interview, when asked why she felt responsible for supporting the family she responded:

It's like, whoever works in the family pays the bills. Even though I live with my boyfriend, I see myself as the one paying the bills because my sister doesn't work that much. You can't push her if she don't [sic] want to do it. We tell her and tell her but she has her own bills. She doesn't care. It's like she doesn't see for them like I see for them. I see that I don't want them out on the streets so I help out as much as I can. I guess that's the reason I keep on going... because if I don't do it, nobody's gonna do it. -Fran, 22 (13: 187)

In general, the women in Group I valued education and felt entitled to pursue it.

Though the women in Group II valued education, they began furthering their education only after certain life circumstances compelled them to do so. For Lisa, 33 it was leaving her abusive marriage and realizing that she had few jobs skills.

Because I had been in a marriage for 15 years, my marriage was very unhealthy. And I escaped that and so that was the only thing to do, go to college, get an education. That was my only choice, because I have four kids, and my future, my choice was either get me an hourly job knowing that I didn't have many skills, a job where I could just go with just the skills I had, or a college education. It took me less than a month to realize that's what I had to do. -Lisa, 33 (9:3)

Gloria, 51 also left an abusive marriage years ago. She struggled to support her four children alone. In looking for work, she began to realize the important correlation between education and “good” jobs and began pursuing education as a way to get better jobs.

I guess, the fact that I needed to support my kids and all I could find was waitressing and things like that. Because when I married, I was 13, I had a 6th grade education, so just the need to support my kids and the fact that I wasn't getting anywhere. I was a single parent with four kids, I had to get more than \$2.25 an hour plus tips. Any everywhere I would go, EVERYWHERE, they asked "Do you have a high school diploma?" It was on every application I made and it seemed like they never called me. I said, "I need to get out there and get a high school diploma, at least." Then, I got a high school diploma and the next question was "Do you have a college education?" And the answer was no again. So I just said, "I'm not going anywhere without an education."

So I went ahead and started. I had to start at the very bottom, I started in GED classes and then I went on to enroll in what I call pre-remedial classes. Because I left [school] in the 6th grade, I had no knowledge of English, reading or whatever.

So I had to take pre-remedial classes, reading and stuff, then into remedial classes and then into college level courses. It was a long struggle.

-Gloria, 51(12:10)

Harsh working conditions in her jobs encouraged Gloria to continue pursuing her college education. At the time of the interview, Gloria had been in college on a part-time basis for 20 years.

I had a high school diploma, but I didn't have a degree, I was working toward it. Very stressful. It was a manufacturing for men's apparel. I worked there for 15 years. And what we would do is sew all day long, we'd operate a sewing machine. You were allowed two bathroom breaks, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. You were allowed a 10 minute break in the morning to drink coffee or whatever, a 30 minute lunch, and a 10 minute break in the afternoon. There was like 500 women and 24 bathrooms, 12 on each side. So you'd see women standing in line to go to the bathroom. We were by quota, so I had to manufacture 500 pair of pants in one hour, that was my quota. And if I didn't manufacture that then the supervisor would be on me. So you would see women on their periods stain themselves because it wasn't time to go to the bathroom or they were so far behind on their quota that they just couldn't go to the bathroom.

-Gloria, 51 (12:463)

Patty, 43 was forced out of her job for health reasons. She had enjoyed her work as an electrician, but the development of degenerative arthritis left her in pain and unable to work. At the time on the interview she had been on disability for three years and had returned to college to retrain for a new occupation.

...the situation I am in, not being able to work and what have you. So I'm just trying to get my life back together, trying to think positively about my life. The only way that I'm going to do the kind of work that they're allowing me to do [office work], is to come back and get the courses required for it.

-Patty, 43 (6:4)

Prior to attending college, Dora, 36 supported herself and her special-needs daughter by working as a part-time domestic.

I wasn't getting anywhere. I was working with my mom at this lady's house which really didn't pay anything. Not that I worked a very often, I only put in at most six to ten hours a week. I was getting paid \$60 a week. What are you going to do with \$60 a week, you can't live. So I continued doing things like that. The thing

was that I had 2 jobs like that. So I had \$120 a week but you really can't survive with that kind of pay. Then on one job the lady didn't need us anymore so for a while there I only had one job. What helped me out was with the job that I had, she needed a lot of house sitting so that helped me out. Still, I didn't want to be doing that kind of stuff for the rest of my life. And I have a 13 year old daughter and I wanted her to know that education was important, not to just settle for any kind of job. I'd always been interested in the field of crime and stuff like that, so why not go back to Sea Mist College and take a shot at going to college.

-Dora, 36 (5:25)

Letticia, 36 saw a college education as a means to an end to financial struggle.

Well, first of all I believe that education is power, power the way you communicate with people. First, and then financially. I'm always bringing it up to my kids, that you can't get anywhere without an education, It's gonna get them out of poverty... out of struggling.... To me that's power. -Letticia, 36 (11:3)

While Letticia was able to “work her way up” in her jobs without an education, she was always leery of the possibility of job layoffs.

The only good thing about it [advancing at work] without an education was that it did feel good because I DID learn. The only thing is that you build yourself all the way up with all that knowledge and experience but if something was to happen and you have to go somewhere else and they don't see that you have an education, you start all over again.

So I tell my sisters and my kids, education is very important. You're not going to make it these days without it. It takes two salaries nowadays to make it. If you don't have the education you're going to be struggling real hard. In the beginning of our marriage, me and my husband were working full time & part time, and luckily we got the chance to work part time together [in our cleaning business]. I try to explain to my kids and my sisters. I don't want them going through what me and my husband went through. I want them to have stability, to be secure. If they lose their job I want them to be able to get a job somewhere else.

-Letticia, 36 (11: 311)

Letticia first entered the college to gain some job security (she had worked at a hospital with frequent layoffs) and possibly advance in a new position at the Sheriff's department, but family crisis and health complications forced her to drop out. Now she's looking to train for a new career.

In high school, Toni, 50 had a teacher that encouraged her to enter a certificate program at the college's west campus. This positive experience "got me (her) going."

From this experience grew a strong interest in her education.

As I got older and realized that there's more out there, more opportunities to get more education, more opportunities to get promoted. As I saw things in the work environment, I started thinking, "I need to go back to school." -Toni, 50 (8:78)

Toni got her chance to begin an associate's program when she became a displaced employee.

I worked at a job for 12 years. It was a good company, a good paying job, and then they closed down and moved out of state. Ah, I was what they considered, what the government considers, a displaced employee. So there was [sic] opportunities for you to train in a paid program. They pay for you to go to school and they pay your unemployment. And I thought I was in heaven. I said, "Wonderful, this is my opportunity." And I did, I attended, I came back to Sea Mist College and I started my administrative assistant [associate's degree]. And I've been accumulating hours on my own throughout the years. And I attended, say maybe a year and a half. I didn't quite finish it. At that point my timing ran out, my financial aid ran out, and so I had to stop, you know, and go to work. -Toni, 50 (8:290)

Thirty years after dropping out of high school, Sonia's, 57, emphasis was not on a job but on the opportunity to contribute in a way that was very different that her contributions as a wife and a mother. She wanted to see what she could do.

Well, to be honest with you, I had already been a housewife, I had already had my children, I wanted something constructive in my life. And I feel like coming back to school I would better myself educational wise. Ah, I found myself. I found what I wanted to do. I found out what I was capable of doing. I had dropped out of school and one day I just woke up and said, "This is it, I have to do something for myself. This is too routine."

When my kids were growing up... and I've always been out going, I had jobs before. And I saw people that I worked with getting educated. And I have never, I have never, I have never...I'm the type of person who has never been too materialistic. I don't envy people that have cars, I don't envy people that have money, I don't envy people anytime. The only time that I do admire and I wish I had, was an education. Because, I think that material things you can accomplish and accumulate, but something that you learn nobody can take away from you.

And I wanted to be like those people. I wanted to be like the people that I was working with. –Sonia, 57 (10:162)

Why Community College

Location and cost were the top reasons women in both participant groups choose to attend a community college. In Group I, close family ties were key in the decision to attend the community college and remain in the local area. Roxanne, 18 promised her dying mother that she would stay in Sea Mist two years, and Anna, 19 felt she could not leave because her father was ill; both also mentioned having limited funds. Joan, 19 “can’t be far from my (her) mom” and wanted to “stay close to home.” Connie, 19 didn’t want to leave home either, plus community college was “cheaper”, which is key since she pays for her own college expenses. Chris, 19 wanted to stay close to home and felt that a because of her first generation student status that attending a university now might be overwhelming and costly.

It was like I really didn’t know cause none of my family has gone to college, I’m the first one to go. So for me a university was like, ... what if it is too much? How much is it going to be? I have younger brothers and sisters that need stuff too. So it was like, "let me start off slow". And then once I feel I can do it, I’ll just go to a university or something bigger. -Chris, 19 (3:33)

I don't think you should go out of town right after high school because you're not used to it. I think you should wait, do the school thing, get used to it, and then once you decide you're ready, go ahead and leave. If you just leave, you have school to worry about and then you're out of town, it's a burden on you. - Chris (3:165)

Fran, 22 indicated that at the beginning of her college career, this community college was closest to her home in a nearby rural town, and she could get to campus via the bus. Cost and transportation were also reasons for Beth, 20.

A lot of the universities are expensive, there's no way I could afford go over there. Not only that but transportation and staying in a dorm. I saw the prices. That's a lot of money, so my only option was a community college. It would bring up my GPA, you could transfer to another college then you could get a loan or something, a scholarship, a grant, something. So I started here, I thought, "This is my salvation." -Beth, 20 (14:34)

In Group II, participants' life roles and situations were firmly rooted to the local area, so that leaving the community did not appear to be a consideration for them, especially early in their academic careers. In this context, the interview question "Why a community college?" was inferred by many as "Why the local community college instead of the local university?" Lisa, 33 said she didn't have an option.

*Well because I've been out of school for 15 years and I couldn't get in to the university. I did try. It's more difficult. I found it more difficult because I had to have SAT's, ACT's, stuff that I didn't take. So that's why I came here.
- Lisa, 33 (9:16)*

Leticia, 36 said that a community college was all she could afford. Toni, 50 said that community college was more "convenient" and a "better fit for my budget." For Gloria, 51 who lives in a nearby rural community, reasons included cost, location and personal attention.

*The community college because its closest to where I live and because I figure that this would be least expensive. I did do research and looked around. I feel that this particular community college is real good for me because it's close, it gives you more of a personal thing. If I went to a university, I don't think I'd get the personal contact with the teachers. I did attend at one time, when I first got divorced, Costal Bend College, but I was totally discouraged by a one teacher there and I didn't want to go back.
-Gloria, 51 (12:43)*

For Sonia, 57, the prospect of attending the local university was intimidating.

Because I was really scared when I started. See, I didn't graduate, I went to get my GED. I passed my test. The one that I failed was my reading. But I went back and I passed it. And since I already lived here [attended GED classes at this college], and I was kind of scared. Every time I came to school at the end of the day I'd say, "I am leaving, I am not coming back" because it was hard for me

after all those years. But I kept challenging myself. Now I remember back, when I'd say, "I'm not gonna to make it." But I did and I will. –Sonia, 57 (10:231)

Sea Mist College

All participants answered that they attended Sea Mist College because of its location in the city. Additionally, Chris, 19, Connie, 18, Anna, 19, Lisa, 33, and Patty, 43, all mentioned that Sea Mist College had a reputation as a good college.

Question 2

To what extent do generational status, level of assimilation or acculturation factor into occupational goal setting?

In the early stages of the study's development, the researcher had planned to address question two solely with the use of an instrument, the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II (ARSMA II). However, as the interviews proceeded, issues related to participants' ethnic identity emerged and added an additional dimension to the question that had not been previously anticipated. This surprise led the researcher to review the literature from a slightly different lens and ultimately led to the inclusion of data beyond that provided by the ARSMA II. Findings related to question two include: (a) ethnic identity; (b) acculturation and generational status; and, (c) generational status, parental educational attainment, and goals.

Ethnic Identity

The issue of ethnic identity was raised during the pilot study, when Joan, 19 expressed offense to the ethnic label "Mexican American". She identified herself as a

“Hispanic,” which she equated to being a citizen by birth, while she defined “Mexican American” as foreigners who came to the United States. Joan’s input led to further probing during the pilot interviews and ultimately expanded the study criteria to include women who were “Mexican American” or “Hispanic.” After filling out the Demographic Questionnaire (and prior to the taped interview), the women were asked why they selected a particular ethnic label. Sonia, 57 was the only participant who did not express a preference while the other 13 participants expressed varying degrees of preference for one label over the other. Seven of the women selected the “Hispanic” ethnic label (4 in Group I; 3 in Group II); while six selected the “Mexican American” ethnic label (3 in Group I; 3 in Group II). In viewing these results, it should be stressed that Sea Mist is located less than 200 miles from the Mexican border and that the overwhelming majority of its Hispanic population is of Mexican descent (SBGA, 2001).

Both Fran, 22 and Leticia, 36 shared Joan’s definition of “Hispanic” and “Mexican American,” and since they were born in the United States, they matter-of-factly identified themselves as Hispanic. Leticia, 36 mentioned a recent incident in her son’s school where a Hispanic teacher had been reprimanded for calling some the children her “little beaners.” The discussions at the school with other teachers and the principal that resulted from this incident confirmed her definitions of “Mexican American” and “Hispanic.” In addition, Leticia, 36 shared that she had been adopted by a Hispanic family but knew that one of her natural parents was Anglo.

Gloria, 51 said that she was Hispanic because her father was from Spain and her mother was from Texas. Lisa, 33 saw herself as Hispanic because her father was white

though on a phone call where she inquired about the study, she commented that she was “raised to be a Mexican.”

Beth, 20 was not sure if she was of Mexican descent, therefore she marked “Hispanic.” She grew up in central Texas where her parents stressed to her that she was an American and encouraged distancing from her ethnic heritage. Beth’s father had the ethnic label of “Anglo” put on his children’s birth certificates. Beth has a dark skin tone. “You can look at me and see that I’m not white.” Beth also expressed anger that people assume that because she has dark skin that she speaks Spanish.

Roxanne, 18; Anna, 19; Patty, 43; Chris, 19; and Connie, 18 offered no explanation, other than “that’s me.” At this time, Connie, 18 (who works retail) expressed embarrassment that she cannot speak Spanish when Spanish-speaking customers approach her.

Toni, 50 identified herself an “American” first, a “Mexican American” second. And Dora, 36 selected Mexican American though she said it really didn’t matter to her since she had mixed ethnic ancestry and “we keep changing what we call ourselves or what they call us... Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Mexican American... whatever!”

Acculturation and Generational Status

The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II (ASRMA II) by Cuellar, Jasso and Maldonado was used to measure the acculturation levels of all participants. The ASRMA II uses the ethnic terms of “Mexican”, “Mexicano”, “Mexican-American”, and “Anglo”; it does not include the “Hispanic” ethnic label. Participants who identified themselves as Hispanic on the Demographic Questionnaire

were instructed to replace the terms “Mexican” and “Mexican American” with “Hispanic” in considering their responses. The researcher did not probe to ascertain whether this was an effective adjustment that helped “Hispanic” participants in responding to the instrument. Despite the controversy with ethnic labeling, participants’ ethnic identification and ARSMA II Orientation results did not appear to be related (Table 8). In Group I, four women had ‘slightly Anglo’ orientations (2-Hispanic; 2-Mexican American); in Group II, five had ‘slightly Anglo’ orientations (3-Hispanic; 2-Mexican American). The remaining three women in Group I (2-Hispanic; 1-Mexican American) and one in Group II (Mexican American) had ‘strongly Anglo’ orientations. The oldest member of Group II, Sonia, 57 had a ‘Mexican’ orientation yet she was the only participant who expressed no preference in relation to ethnic identification.

Scale 2 of the ARSMA II was an addition to the original instrument that attempts to determine the mode of acculturation by asking participants to report on their comfort levels relative to three cultures: Mexican, Mexican American, and Anglo. The instrument developers define acculturation as a process inclusive of multiple phases and outcomes referred to a ‘Modes of Acculturation’ (Cuellar, Jasso, and Maldonado, 1995). Modes of acculturation include:

- Assimilation, a loss of original cultural identity [Instrument outcome as ‘Assimilated’];
- Integration, a bicultural orientation with either low or high involvement in both cultures [Outcomes as ‘Integrated Bicultural,’ low or high];
- Marginalization, loss of original cultural identity without acceptance into the new culture [Outcomes as ‘Marginal,’ low, high or assimilated]; and
- Separation, a resistance to acculturation via a strong identification to one culture with resistance to a competing culture [Outcomes as ‘Separated,’ Mexican, Mexican American, Anglo or Integrated].

TABLE 8
ACCULTURATION SCORES

Participant	Ethnicity	Score	Orientation	Mode of Acculturation
<u>Group I</u>				
Roxanne, 18	Mexican Am.	1.37	IV Strongly Anglo	Unable to Classify
Connie, 18	Hispanic	1.90	IV Strongly Anglo	5 Assimilated
Anna, 19	Mexican Am.	0.29	III Slightly Anglo	2a Integrated (low) bicultural
Joan, 19	Hispanic	1.07	III Slightly Anglo	2b Integrated (high) bicultural
Chris, 19	Mexican Am.	0.33	III Slightly Anglo	2b Integrated (high) bicultural
Beth, 20	Hispanic	1.41	IV Strongly Anglo	Unable to Classify
Fran, 20	Hispanic	0.12	III Slightly Anglo	2b Integrated (high) bicultural
<u>Group II</u>				
Lisa, 33	Hispanic	1.60	III Slightly Anglo	3b High Marginal bicultural
Dora, 36	Mexican Am.	2.19	IV Strongly Anglo	5 Assimilated
Leticia, 36	Hispanic	0.71	III Slightly Anglo	4c Anglo Separated
Patty, 43	Mexican Am.	0.85	III Slightly Anglo	2b Integrated (high) bicultural
Toni, 50	Mexican Am.	0.48	III Slightly Anglo	2b Integrated (high) bicultural
Gloria, 51	Hispanic	1.09	III Slightly Anglo	3b High marginal bicultural
Sonia, 57	No Preference	-1.09	II Mexican	2a Integrated (low) bicultural

Outcomes for 'Modes of Acculturation' are also listed in Table 8. It is interesting to note that two women in Group I could not be classified (Roxanne, 18; Beth, 20). One woman in each group was classified as 'Assimilated' (Connie, 18; Dora, 36). Seven women were classified as 'Integrated Biculturals' (4-Group I; 3-Group II). In Group II, Letticia, 36 classified as 'Separated' while Lisa, 33 and Gloria, 51 classified as 'High Marginal Biculturals.'

One issue raised by six of the seven participants in Group II (Lisa, 33; Dora, 36; Patty, 43; Toni, 50; and Gloria, 51) related to the omission of gender references in the ARMSA II. Questions 7-12 in Scale 2 of the instrument asked participants to report their comfort level with ideas, attitudes, behaviors, values and practices of "Mexicans." These women responded that they had difficulty with male behaviors but had varying degrees of willingness to equate this dislike with the entire Mexican culture. Also, question 20 in Scale 1 referenced the participants' father, Sonia, 57 expressed difficulty because she did not know her father while Toni, 51 asked if she was to reference her difficult stepfather.

Generational Status, Parental Educational

Attainment and Goals

The literature review indicated that generational status, acculturation/ assimilation levels, and parental educational attainment all correlated positively with the educational attainment of students. Table 9 lists these factors for all participants. No such relationship was evidenced in the study sample. With the exception of Anna, 19 all participants identified career goals that required a bachelors degree or higher, with 10 of 14 indicating that they wished to obtain at least a masters degree (more data to be

TABLE 9
 GENERATIONAL STATUS, ARSMA ORIENTATION AND PARENTAL EDUCATION

Participant	Ethnicity	Generational Status	ARSMA II Orientation	Career Goals	Educational Attainment	
					Mother	Father
<u>Group I</u>						
Roxanne, 18	Mexican Am.	4 th	IV Strongly Anglo	Forensic Scientist	Middle School	High School
Connie, 18	Hispanic	3 rd	IV Strongly Anglo	Elementary Educator & Elem. Principal	Middle School	College
Anna, 19	Mexican Am.	3 rd	III Slightly Anglo	Unsure, healthcare	Middle School	Grade School
Joan, 19	Hispanic	4 th	III Slightly Anglo	Lawyer	Middle School	High School
Chris, 19	Mexican Am.	4 th	III Slightly Anglo	RN	College	High School
Beth, 20	Hispanic	4 th	IV Strongly Anglo	Surgical Tech. Instructor RN or Surgeon	10 th grade	H.S. Graduate
Fran, 22	Hispanic	2 nd	III Slightly Anglo	Mathematician Work for NASA Astronaut	College	Grade School

TABLE 9 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Ethnicity	Generational Status	ARSMA II Orientation	Career Goals	Educational Attainment	
					Mother	Father
<u>Group II</u> Lisa, 33	Hispanic	4 th	III Slightly Anglo	Psychologist & Professor	Middle School	High School
Dora, 36	Mexican Am.	4 th	IV Strongly Anglo	Investigative Reporter & Instructor	Middle School	High School
Leticia, 36	Hispanic	4 th	III Slightly Anglo	RN	High School	Grade School
Patty, 43	Mexican Am.	3 rd	III Slightly Anglo	Counselor	Middle School	Grade School
Toni, 50	Mexican Am.	2 nd	III Slightly Anglo	Psychologist	Grade School	Grade School
Gloria, 51	Hispanic	2 nd	III Slightly Anglo	Counselor	Grade School	None
Sonia, 57	No Preference	3 rd	II Mexican	Unsure, Education or Law	Grade School	Unknown

included with Question 4 results). The most notable difference in Group I and II was the educational attainment levels of parents. Eight of the 14 parents in Group I had a high school education or higher:

- 4 parents had some high school;
- 1 parent was a high school graduate; and
- 2 parents were high school graduates with some college.

The 13 parents in Group II had lower educational levels:

- 1 had no education;
- 6 had grade school educations;
- 3 had middle school educations; and
- 3 had some high school
- None were high school graduates

Also, the two participants who were unsure about their career goals (Anna, 19; Sonia, 57) had parents with lower educational attainment levels.

Question 3

What factors relate to the choice of academic or technical goals and aspirations in community colleges?

The presentation of results related to question three focused on participants' choice of major. "Technical goals" are distinguished as majors earning technical degrees, while "academic goals" are distinguished as majors earning an Associates of Arts or an Associates of Science. The section begins by distinguishing between academic and

technical degrees, moves into a discussion of factors related to participants' choice of major, then concludes with finding related to role models present in participants' lives.

Academic and Technical Degrees

Sea Mist College offers three types of associate degrees: Associates of Arts (A.A.), Associates of Science (A.S.), and Associates of Applied Science (A.A.S.). For the purposes of the study, technical degrees were defined as programs/ majors earning an Associates of Applied Science and academic degrees were defined as programs/ majors earning an Associates of Arts or Science. As discussed in the literature review, academic associate degrees prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions, while technical degrees are typically pursued as a means to rapid employment preparation, not transfer mechanisms.

Seven of the participants indicated that they were pursuing an applied science degree, six indicated that they planned to transfer. Anna, 19 indicated that she wished to earn at least an associates degree in some healthcare field. Chris, 19 and Leticia, 36 were involved in nursing associates degree plans that prepared students for transfer into registered nursing programs. Toni, 50 had recently decided to pursue a new career interest but was hoping to finish her A.A.S. in her old major since she was so close to completion. Patty, 43 and Gloria, 51 did not indicate whether their programs would transfer credit to a university program. Beth, 20 indicated that she wanted to earn her A.A.S. as a way to earn money and continue in her education. She indicated that her program credits would transfer to a university.

I just want to do something in the medical field and then work my way up. It's not something that I want to say at, it's just something that I want to try out. And it's

only two years, so I was “Oh, I can work at that and then afford to go to school the rest of the years.” I want to be a doctor, that’s what I want to be, a surgeon. I don’t know what kind of surgeon but that’s where I want to start out.
 -Beth, 20 (14:101)

And I can work less and go to school more hours. It’s hard, hard studying and going to school. Studying, going to school and working, it’s just hard.
 -Beth, 20 (14:118)

Beth, 20 was the only participant who saw a technical degree as a stepping-stone toward easing the financial burden of working and going to college. Interviews indicated that the selection of majors stemmed from factors such as interests and experience, as well as the presence of role models.

It should also be noted that initial occupational goals indicated by participants showed some sensitivity to age and traditional gender roles. Four of the seven women in Group I indicated goals in traditionally male fields (Forensic Scientist, Lawyer, Surgical Technician, Mathematician); only two of seven in Group II choose traditionally male occupations (Psychologist, Investigative Reporter). Refer to Table 10.

Factors in Selecting a Major

Women in Group I selected majors based on school experiences and exposure to topics on television. Roxanne, 18 stated that she chose her major because she “just liked science.” Forensics came to her from television shows such as ‘HBO Undercover’ which she found fascinating. Roxanne had not done any investigation into the field of forensic science at the time of the interview. Connie, 18 had “always wanted to be a teacher.” She had years of volunteering experience in her church and in local elementary schools. Connie had spoken to many teachers and mentioned wanting to keep her contacts,

TABLE 10
 MAJOR, DEGREE TYPE AND ASPIRATIONS

Participant	Major	Degree Type	Plans to Transfer	Aspiration	
				Career Goal	Terminal Degree Level
<u>Group I</u>					
Roxanne, 18	Biology	A.S.	Yes	Forensic Scientist	Unsure, at least Bachelors
Connie, 18	Reading Emphasis in Education	A.A.	Yes	Elementary Educator Elementary Principal	Masters
Anna, 19	Undeclared	A.A.S.	Unsure	Unsure, healthcare	Unsure, at least Associates
Joan, 19	Liberal Arts	A.A.	Yes	Lawyer	Masters
Chris, 19	Nursing	A.A.S.	Yes	RN	Bachelors
Beth, 20	Surgical Tech.	A.A.S.	Yes	Surgical Tech. College Instructor RN or Surgeon	Masters or MD
Fran, 22	Pre-Engineering Math (B.S.)	A.S. --	Did Transfer	Mathematician Work for NASA Astronaut	Masters or PhD
<u>Group II</u>					
Lisa, 33	Psychology	A.A.	Yes	Psychologist & Professor	Ph. D.
Dora, 36	Journalism & Criminal Justice	A.A.	Yes	Investigative Reporter & College Instructor	Bachelors, Double Major
Letticia, 36	Nursing	A.A.S.	Yes	RN	Bachelors
Patty, 43	Counseling	A.A.S.	Yes	Substance Abuse Counselor	Masters
Toni, 50	Administrative Assistant	A.A.S.	Yes	Child Psychologist	Ph.D.
Gloria, 51	Child Care Administration	A.A.S.	Yes	Counselor, Teens or Battered Women	Masters
Sonia, 57	Liberal Arts	A.A.	Yes	Educator, (Incarcerated/ Special Ed. / Bilingual) or Criminal Justice	Bachelors

especially when she got close to graduating with her bachelors and looking for a job.

When asked if she knew teachers, she responded:

Ohhh yes! I know tons of them! And I make sure I know tons of them because whenever I start teaching I want to make sure I have my foot in doors everywhere. And not only that, but my dad is actually finishing up his teaching degree. So with my dad as well, both of us know a lot of people. I have a little sister who is in elementary. We go and we talk to her principal and we talk to her teachers. We do volunteer work there. I would love to do my student teaching at her school when it comes to that time. I make sure that I keep my contacts.
-Connie, 18 (7:80)

Anna, 19 was undecided about a major but had a strong interest in the medical field because of an emergency medical technician (EMT) class she took in high school, the only problem was that she had too many interests.

I want to go in the medical field. I want to do that. I took an EMT class in high school. We would go and ride along in the ambulances and do our clinicals at the hospital. I don't know, I like that environment, I like being in the hospital, it's fun. There's always something new and it's fast paced, you never get bored. It's busy, busy, busy all the time and I know I can always find a job.
-Anna, 19 (1:103)

Yeah, well, right now the reason that I don't know what I want to be is because I guess like I want to do a lot of stuff and I haven't focused on one particular thing. I know I like medicine, medical field, I like nursing, I would do all of that if I could. But there are a lot of things. Like, I like art. I took an art class and I liked it! I just don't want one thing to hold me back. I want to do a variety of stuff. -Anna, 19 (1:183)

Joan, 19 wanted to be a lawyer because “its in my blood” and to compete with an estranged aunt. For a while she considered medicine, but reconsidered, “I was going to go into medical. But then, I don't think I can handle it so I went back and I choose [sic] law.” A counselor helped her pick liberal arts as a major. She had not researched her occupation and did not indicate what type of law she intended to practice.

Chris, 19 has relatives in the medical profession and became interested in nursing after going to work with her aunt.

Both my parents work in the medical field. So it's like every time my dad was on [duty], he is an anesthesia tech, I would ask "Dad can I go to work with you?" "No you can't cause you are going to faint or something." I have always wanted to be in the medical field. I love watching ER. Well to be a doctor, I don't know about that! My aunt is a registered nurse. She took me to work one time and I thought it was pretty cool. That's something I would want to do. That's why I decided to do that. –Chris, 19 (3:73)

Likewise, Beth, 20 enjoyed a high school nurses aid program, and she mentioned her interest peaking when she saw ‘Emergency Room’ and other surgical shows on the Discovery Channel. These interests led her to focus on a major as a surgical technician.

I wanted to be in the medical field. In my high school years, my senior year, I started with a nursing program. I worked at a veteran's hospital. And I really liked it a lot but I didn't like what I was doing. As an aid, you're at the bottom, you have to do all the dirty work. But I didn't want that, working in a nursing home. Then I worked in a pediatric center, but I don't like kids either so I want a variety of ages.

Yeah, how would it be actually doing the work not just... I want actually be seeing things, you know. I just want to be in there, I can't just be running around. I want to just go back there and focus, "Okay, this is what we're gonna do." I used to watch the ER channel, I was real interested in that. I was "Yeah, that's cool, I want to do that." So I started doing that.
–Beth, 20 (14:78)

Before transferring to a university in Southport, Fran, 22 was majoring in pre-engineering. Since she enjoyed chemistry and wanted to “make good money” she was preparing for transfer into a chemical engineering program. Discomfort in the engineering program led her to change majors. Since she was already working as a math tutor and credits would easily transfer, she switched majors to mathematics under the guidance of her advisor.

For the women in Group II, factors in selecting a major reflected the same reason they decided to go to college. Lisa, 33 who recently left her abusive marriage, pursued a psychology major as a way of healing and understanding her issues.

When I came here, I immediately chose psychology. Immediately, that's just something that's very fascinating. I took general psych, made an 'A', I thought it was great. But when I went into human growth, I had so many issues that when I started writing the papers it was just very sobby situation and I dropped the class. And so I thought, my dad, everybody, my family in my dad's side of my family is business majors, accountants, and I think that I would be very good at that. But, after taking my accounting classes, economics, and it's not for me.

—Lisa, 33(9:76)

I have had many, many issues, since I was a child. And they just now stopped when I got divorced. So, I think what I am trying to do is answer the why. Why do people do what they do? Why does the brain work the way it does? And the big question, how much is your environment, how much is heredity? I want to know all that stuff. It's fascinating. Because the more I understand the more I accept. ...And mainly cause my ex-husband is very mentally ill and I wonder about people like him. That, I wonder where did they go wrong? Or what happened? —Lisa, 33(9:43)

Lisa's research included speaking to others who have Ph.D.s in psychology.

My son's godfather has got his doctorate in psychology. The president of this college was actually my psychology teacher. And, I have been able to speak to them one-on-one. Of course I've heard the negatives. I haven't heard too many of the positives, but I have got to assume that there were some positives for them or else they wouldn't be here. —Lisa, 33(9:267)

Dora, 36 started as criminal justice major because it was an interest. When she began her work-study assignment as an office manager for the college newspaper, she began taking journalism classes. She decided to combine both interests by pursuing double major in criminal justice and journalism.

Leticia, 36 was always interested in nursing but selected business management as her first major because it was a better match with her position as a clerk at the sheriff's office and her family responsibilities. Also, job layoffs were a concern.

I knew that I could not go to school for nursing and work. I knew that I would need a lot of time, not just for class but to study. And then with the kids I didn't think that was possible. With the business [management], I figured it's not as hectic. And I did enjoy it, and I did pass it. I knew what was going on. —Leticia, 36 (11:128)

Before I was working in the Sheriff's department, I was working in a hospital. I was a secretary for the floor. I did all kinds of things there, I was a jack of all trades.

I was in the hospital for 10 years. The only reason I switched was that I started seeing all these layoffs. I got lucky, I only got laid off once and they call me back right away but they kept cutting my hours. I knew sooner or later that they'd be laying me off. That's not dependable, that's not stable. –Lettica, 36 (11:92)

Changes in the degree plan after dropping out of college because of family problems combined with a health scare forced her to re-evaluate her choice of major.

And now, I was weighing my knowledge and abilities, and talking to my husband, I have more knowledge of the hospital. Also caring for patients, I assisted with IV's, taking care of the patients. So I figured, "what can I get that they won't lay me off and cutting hours" so I figured RN. They're in demand, I figured that would be security. A stable job. Even if I worked part-time, I know that I would be getting a good salary there...later on. –Letticia, 36 (11:81)

Patty, 43 had always looked up to her older brother. Her brother helped influence her decision to become an electrician by encouraging her mechanical skills.

I worked with my hands. I worked with my hands. I was always mechanically inclined. I worked the vehicles, I did not go pay somebody to do something to my vehicle that I could do. Like with brakes, oil change, tuning, ...minor stuff. Now, over-haul engine, no, I can't do that but anything else. I always like working with my hands. That goes back to when I was younger and my brother was still around. He was always working on his car, "Patty, when you grow up you're not gonna have to need a man. I'm gonna show you how to do this." –Patty, 43 (6:121)

When she had to change careers, she decided to return to college and study substance abuse counseling to follow her late brother's footsteps and to make a difference.

My brother who has been deceased for 25 years now, that was what he was. He was a substance abuse counselor. In his case, he was doing so well at his job that the dealers got rid of him. He was going to the store for my niece – she was just nine months – the cashier, I always hold it against her and I ask God to forgive me, she saw three guys got my brother, put him in another car and took off. They drove his car. They dropped him off the following morning at his mother in-law's house. They called my dad. They had O.D.ed him with pure heroin. –Patty, 43 (6:36)

I'm doing something to better my life, to help the generations, society. By me counseling, I think I'm gonna be making this place, the world a better place. At least here in the city, a better place because I'm gonna be taking the drugs out of the streets. Innocence. –Patty, 43 (6:369)

Her research included having talked with different counselors.

Oh, I've talked to others, I've talked to others. Yeah, cause I was put on probation and we couldn't understand WHY they had me deal with the drugs because it had nothing to do with drugs. I had unpaid citations. I enjoyed it. –Patty, 43 (6:56)

Toni, 50 first attended the college's west campus because a high school teacher encouraged her to earn a secretarial certificate.

Back in high school, this is what pointed me towards secretarial training, in high school in my short hand class of my senior year I was doing real well. The teacher announced to the whole class to encourage us to go to college "even if it was just to get married," she said, "but go to college." And then I asked her a little bit of what should I do if I do go to college. And she kind of steered me towards secretarial cause I liked short hand and she said I would be great for that. That's how I got steered into that. And I've liked it. –Toni, 50 (8:61)

Toni began pursuing an A.A.S. as an administrative assistant after a job layoff, but she had recently begun considering a new career goal as a child psychologist after she completed a psychology class.

I just watched the different [TV] shows, I guess mostly the class itself that I took. It was a tele-class or television I forget what they're called. You don't attend class, but you take videos home, you watch videos and you listen to videos, you read your book and then you go test. It worked out great for me. I just got a whole lot out of that one semester. Something triggered the psychology part. I guess that my thing about liking children, and working with children, and liking psychology has brought me to this point. If I could stop working, I'd go and finish my education and goals. In fact, I would drop my administrative associates and go right into my psychology educational goals. –Toni, 50 (8:86)

Gloria, 51 selected a major in childcare administration because it matched her job at the time with the local Head Start Program.

Sonia, 57 had developed many interests because of different work experience, “Well I’ve been around a lot.” “I talk to people, I’m a people person.” When she began college credit courses she majored in criminal justice because of previous work experiences with lawyers that she found “fascinating.” A series of family tragedies caused her to drop out of college.

I was introduced with the criminal justice degree. But...I started in 1990, but since then... this my second time I am back. The first time I left because I had a lot of trauma in my life. Ah, I lost a granddaughter, I lost my parents, my mother in a car accident, I lost my father, I lost my grandmother. She was the one that raised me, she did her best, and I think she did a good job. Ah, I lost an uncle, he committed suicide. I got a divorce, and ah, but I have been able to grow from these experiences. –Sonia, 57 (10:25)

When she returned in 1995, changes in degree plan led her to change her major to liberal arts, especially since she had many career interests that have resulted from different life experiences, including: being a bilingual teacher (because of work as a substitute teacher), being a special education teacher (a daughter who was a “special child”), working in criminal justice, and teaching the incarcerated (“I understand that the average prisoner has a third grade education. And the only reason we are going to get free of crime is by education.”).

Role Models

When asked about role models, most Group I participants made reference to role models of a personal nature, typically a parent, rather than a professional role model.

Roxanne, 18 saw her parents as her role models because they gave her the opportunity to go to college, an opportunity they did not have.

I guess the only real role models that I have now are my parents. Growing up, they didn't have the options that I have now. Their parents didn't say, "I'll fund you through college." It was basically like, "You go into high school, you graduate, if not you get a job and help yourself out."

And they have done all that they could to put me through college. And I really, really hold them as my role models because they didn't have what I have. And I feel really lucky that I have the opportunity to go to college. There's people out there that don't. I see people everyday in my classes that take it for granted...they fall asleep...they don't care because their parent's didn't have to go do what my parents did. They have different background, I guess. –Roxanne, 18 (4:72)

When asked if this added more pressure to succeed, she responded:

Kind of. I feel like they're expecting me to succeed and stuff, [I'm] like "No, let me do it, if it happens, and it will, but it might take a while." Well see, my mom just passed away in July so that's another factor. I don't want to let my dad down, you know. I don't want him to be like "Oh, she's letting everything go." I want him to be proud. –Roxanne, 18 (4:88)

Connie, 18 learned from her mother's experience of being forced to quit school in the 7th grade.

Like I said, my mom, her father made her drop out at the 7th grade because he just said, "You don't need an education. Whoever you marry, he'll take care of you. You stay at home and help your mom cook and clean and take care of the kids."

That's the way it was back then for a very low class [poor] family that lived in Mexico. That's the way he was raised. It's now that he sees her, he's pushing her to go back. He's the one who pulled her out, but he sees where that got her! She's a home childcare provider. She does very well in her job, but she knows that she could have done so much better if she had gone to school. –Connie, 18 (7:462)

Her father's return to college also serves as an inspiration.

My mom for not having gone and my dad for going back. I especially say my dad because I see him now and I think, "If my dad can do it, I can do it." After 40 years of being out of school, he's going back! And he's almost done. He's hoping to be graduated by this time next year. That's been a really great inspiration for me. –Connie, 18 (7:484)

Anna, 19 wanted a chance at opportunities that her siblings missed.

... my oldest brother and my oldest sister and my middle brother, there's a big age difference between me and my brothers and sisters. My younger brother there is like 13 years age difference. So I never really grew up with them.

I think it was harder on them because there were so many at the time they were growing up. They had to work and go to school. They didn't make it because there was so much going on. There was a lot of pressure, a lot of tension with 6 people living in the house. That was back then, and that's not including me. Like teenagers, like it was just too much.

So maybe they did their own thing to escape their problems. Maybe school wasn't on their mind. And that was the worse thing they could have done. They wanted to get out, to escape somehow from their problems and didn't think school was going to help them. I realize that, so that's why I want to finish school, that's why I want to get my degree. I don't want to turn out like that.

-Anna, 19 (1:329)

Joan, 19 wanted to compete with an aunt that she dislikes which Joan admitted after the issue was raised by her mother.

Yes [Joan uses the competition with her aunt] to keep her going. She [the aunt] did it, like I tell her, she did it without paying for none[sic] of her classes. Just looking for the right scholarships and getting help from the right people. She [Joan] goes, "I ain't [sic] gonna let her beat me! I [sic] got to do better."

-Joan's mother (2:127)

Beth, 20 was the first in her family to graduate from high school. Her sisters' missteps encouraged her to go to college.

I was the only one in my family to graduate [from high school]. My first sister had kids when she was 17. I learned from that, I was "No, I don't want to be like her." My second sister was like "I can make it on my own." So she decided to leave school, she didn't graduate to try to make it on her own working. I saw that it didn't get her anywhere, she's just driving buses now. Still, there's no money in that. I wanted more. I'm not gonna be like them, I'll be the one to graduate.

-Beth, 20 (14:180)

Beth also used her parents' discouragement to fuel her goal of high school graduation.

My mom, she didn't think I was going to graduate. My dad didn't think I was going to graduate. They thought I was gonna drop out but I proved to them. That

was a reason I even wanted to do it more was to prove to them wrong. "Yeah I am smart and I'm not like my sisters." They would just compare us. Even though they were against it, I used it as something positive. I showed them "Look, I can be smart. I'm not stupid." - Beth, 20 (14:407)

Fortunately, Beth has also found a positive role model, her anatomy teacher who is also a surgical technician. Seeing his management of his two professional roles has her considering teaching. She believed that this goal would also allow her time for a professional life and motherhood in the future.

Chris, 19 mentions her parents, who work in the medical field, and her aunt, who is a registered nurse, as her role models.

Fran, 22 saw her father as her primary role model.

My dad was raising the family while my mom was living in Houston. She would come and go when she pleased even though she was sick. And I do admire my dad cause any other dad probably would have walked away and said "Do it how you can. Your mom's over there and I'm leaving too." But not my dad, so I really admire him. - Fran, 22 (13:409)

In Group II, Lisa, 33; Dora, 36; and Sonia, 57 said that they were their own role models. Lisa referenced her personal traumas; Dora, her determination and her mentor; and Sonia, her life experiences and research by talking with others.

Myself, because you ask "why" questions about yourself, the trauma that you experience. You wonder. People say that I am a strong person after knowing what I've experienced. Actually, I just wonder, I wonder a lot. -Lisa, 33(9:60)

I guess it was me pushing myself and Garcia has been there to mentor me, show me which direction to go. He's the one that's always told me, "You have the skills to do this." He tells me, yeah its good to get the associates, but he doesn't see any reason why I couldn't go out now and be working at a newspaper for a living. But I want the associates degree and I want the bachelors too. Maybe somewhere down the line when I've been in the job market awhile, then maybe I'll even go for the masters. - Dora, 36 (5:516)

Letticia, 36 had friends who are RN's. Watching them achieve their degrees has helped her to believe she can do it too. Toni, 50 and Gloria, 51 said she had no role model; later in the interview Gloria shared that she and her children were role models and inspirations to each other.

Question 4

What factors relate to the selection of terminal occupational goals?

All participants were asked "Where do you see yourself in the next 5 to 10 years?" and "What do you imagine doing on your job?" in reference to their terminal occupational goals. Answers varied widely and seemed dependent on factors such as occupational maturity, the clarity of immediate educational goals, research into the profession, and experience in the educational process.

Roxanne, 18, wanted to combine her interests in science, her biology major, and her interest in forensics into a career choice but was unsure of how to proceed since Sea Mist College did not have a program in forensics. Her immediate plans included transferring to Baylor medical school. While she saw herself living somewhere other than Sea Mist because of limited job prospects and because "everything is so low here....Just to get a good doctor you have to basically go to Dallas or Houston." She had no concept of what she might be doing except that she would be working in lab doing interesting things.

I just imagine something different everyday, nothing boring. That's what I'm looking forward to because there's people out there that just do the same thing all the time. I want variety. That's why I want to go into forensics because you do something different all the time, you're dealing with different cases all the time.
-Roxanne, 18 (4:100)

Connie, 18, planned to do many things in the field of education. She saw herself eventually leaving Sea Mist to work in an area where children were in greater need.

Well, I want to start off as an elementary teacher like I said. I eventually want to go on to get my master's degree in education. Actually, I would really love to be a principal at a school. Once I do that, I would also like to teach at a college, maybe a couple of courses. Courses that I really like, like English. I enjoy English here at the college. I think that is something that I would enjoy teaching. Probably just to do a little bit of everything, if I can. –Connie, 18 (7:124)

Anna, 19 was unclear about both immediate and long term goals. In terms of immediate goals, she wanted to go back to college “to get something (a degree) that I’ll always use” to get a “good” job. Yet at the same time, the future she envisioned included furthering her education so that she could change careers in the future. It should be noted that at the time of the interview, she had stopped out in her first semester prior to earning any college credits.

And maybe even after I get out of college and I have a good job, I kind of want to go back. I always wanted to go to school, I don't want to stop because what if I want to change my occupation, my career 10 years down the road and I have been out with the one career? What if I get tired and I want something new? That is why I want to get something else and then I can do something else like another degree. It's possible. –Anna, 19 (1:171)

Joan, 19, defined her goal strictly in terms of ‘becoming a lawyer.’ She did not indicate any contextual details about ‘living as a lawyer’, such as where she wanted to live, the type of law she wished to practice, or which duties she looked forward to doing.

To become a lawyer, to go to school. To keep on going to school, to get into Sam Houston and to go to pre-law. Go to law school over there, that's it. –Joan, 19 (2:54)

Since Chris, 19 did not know how long it would take her to become a registered nurse, she wasn't sure what she'd be doing but hoped that she'd be working as a nurse

and that she would most definitely remain in Sea Mist because “all my family is here and I don’t think I can go far without them.”

I don't know. Hopefully [I'd work] like in a hospital or something, whether it be medical records or something like that. If it takes me that long to become a nurse. You know, working in a hospital or a doctor's office. –Chris, 19 (3:112)

She also stated that she did not wish to do direct patient care.

Some parts of registered nursing you can just do like paper work, the medical records. That's basically what I want to do. Do all the paper work and the charts and stuff like that. That's basically what I have my mind set on. –Chris, 19 (3:124)

Beth, 20 wanted to get her associate’s as quickly as possible so as to ease the financial burden and continue her education.

I'm working towards that [associate's degree], then once I get that I'm gonna start working. I'll start saving my money and then I can take more hours, work less since I'll be earning more, and then I can go to school for what I want to do. Not only that but my husband will be graduating and maybe when he graduates he'll help me out like I'm helping him out right now. And I can work less and go to school more hours. –Beth, 20 (14:112)

Beth had many aspirations but wanted to focus on one goal at a time.

Oh, I want a master's [in 5-10 years]...I want my master's. I don't want to just stop. I like school. I want to keep going and going and going until I get that Ph.D. I want my masters, but then I'm “No I want my Ph.D.”

I don't know. I want to be a surgeon and then I'm no...I'm undecided. It's let's concentrate on what I'm working towards now and then I'll get to the other stuff. Cause I can't really say let's do this, this and this, until I start finishing what I'm doing now. –Beth, 20 (14:215)

Fran, 22 was within a year of earning her bachelor’s in mathematics from a university in Southport.

Basically just to get my degree, try my best and go on to my master's and my doctorate, maybe. That's pretty much my goal, just to finish up now and start my master's in January. After that, finish up some computer classes, hopefully, and one day work for NASA.

I want to take some computer classes. I could use my math degree to work for NASA or any company. There's a security company... security codes, up in Maryland, that I heard about and they use a lot of statistics classes... a lot of that kind of math. I have never taken statistics so I'm gonna try that, that way maybe I could get a job like that. If I teach, I only want to teach once I get my doctorate.
 -Fran, 22 (13:124)

When asked if she knew what mathematicians did for NASA, she replied:

They just work... I guess you just do a lot of math. When we went to visit there, they said that they hire a lot of math people with math degrees. So basically I guess it's just to do little calculations that they need when they go on their missions, things like that. But, basically, my advisor says that they train you for what they want you to do so as long as you have a degree, they wouldn't care. With the knowledge on the computer, you could be some sort of specialist or something like that. But basically, I just want to work for them. Basically 'cause they're located in Houston and someday I want to apply and maybe be an astronaut too. That would be later on in life but that's basically why I would want to get on with them.
 -Fran, 22 (13:148)

Lisa, 33 planned on earning her associates in psychology in December 2001, after which she planned on transferring to Texas Women's University. She painted a vivid, confident image of her future as a professor of psychology.

Well, in five years I see myself still in school. I estimate it's gonna be another seven years give or take. In ten years, I find myself situated at college where I can settle down. That's my goal. It's really to just buy the house, do this, do that and settle down. Stop moving!

I am not coming back to Sea Mist, no. I will not come back to Sea Mist. I picture myself working up north somewhere, at a small university, lots of greenery, snow. That's what I see. [We laugh] Happily ever after. I imagine the place.

What I think is most fascinating, I'm still doing research on what professors are obligated to do. One of the things I found a little challenging and a little scary, but exciting, is that I would have to publish. And the more I think about it the more excited I get, you know. It's something because I always have an opinion especially when it comes to psychology. I mean I can pick up a psychology book and just get my head in there because what you learn is just so interesting.
 -Lisa, 33 (9:125)

Dora, 36 also painted a vivid picture of her future life as an investigative reporter.

I would like to be working for a major metropolitan newspaper. I'd like to be an investigative reporter. Just to show my daughter that with hard work you can achieve what you want.

I can't say where I'd like to work but I've had dreams of going to Colorado, Tennessee, don't ask me why. I think it's got to do with the scenery. I'm tired of Texas. I was away from Texas several years when I was in the Airforce. I like the area of Tennessee, I think it's pretty. I've never been to Colorado, but everything I've seen, I think yeah, I could see myself living there because its not Sea Mist, its not Texas.

[I see myself doing] Investigative reporting. Some people tell me that I've got the brain and I've got the talent and I've got the arguing power to go into law. But I don't know if I can do more college. Mr. Garcia here tells me that he knows I can do the job of reporting, especially investigative reporting, but he says he also sees me as a teacher teaching this stuff too.

Who knows, if I don't get the right job with the right paper, maybe somewhere along the line I'll go into education. I can't say yes, I can't say no because my thing is being an investigative reporter. I've got to give that a chance before I decide to say, "Let me give this teaching thing a chance." –Dora, 36 (5:205)

Leticia, 36 planned to transfer to local university, and saw herself remaining in Sea Mist working as a registered nurse, at least until all her children had left home. She commented on problems with her children when she and her husband had once considered moving.

This is where he [my husband] has his career so I wouldn't want him moving from his career. Not only that, but we've tried moving before, my kids were threatening to run away. And one did. So we figured later on when he retires we will move after all the kids are settled. –Leticia, 36 (11:195)

Patty, 43 saw herself working as counselor with adolescents and continuing her education.

Hopefully...I know I'll be here for two years, I will either be working as a counselor with the adolescents, correct their problem before they have reached adulthood. Cause once you get to that adulthood and you're in that alcoholism or that drug scene it may be hard to get out of it. Been there, done that. So the way to prevent it is to get out of it as soon as they start thinking about it or they start getting pressure from their peers, or what have you, or are teased or whatever.

“Hey, I’m here, come and talk to me.” Hopefully I’ll be working with the adolescents, plus I’ll still be furthering my education. –Patty, 43 (6:93)

Toni, 50 wanted to be working as a child psychologist.

I would love to be a child psychologist. I really would.

[Staying in Sea Mist] depends on my children and my husband. We’ve been wanting to move out, move away from Sea Mist. His parents are deceased and he has nothing holding him back. My parents are elderly and I have that to think about. –Toni, 50 (8:140)

Gloria, 51 was at the “top level” in her current job, she wanted an opportunity to advance.

She saw herself remaining in the general area helping Hispanic women or teens in smaller rural communities

But my immediate goal is just to get past my math and get my associate’s. And hopefully advance. The job title I hold now that’s as far as you can go, you can’t climb higher up the job ladder. I would like to work for the state. I would like to work for child-care protective services or DHS and climb up the ladder there. And [for that] I need a higher degree. –Gloria, 51 (12:81)

In 5 to 10 years, I would at least like to have a bachelor’s. At least, because of my work, there’s no way I could go [to school] full time. At least a bachelor’s working on a master’s. I would like to have done something for the Hispanic women in the community in Texas, period. And I would like to do research. I do a lot of public speaking to battered women. I would like to be known for helping women like myself. I would want to be one of the well known business women in south Texas. –Gloria, 51 (12:140)

Sonia, 57 saw herself as having completed her education and working to help others.

I see myself already finished. I see myself helping people. I see myself either teaching or working. The first thing, I wanted to go teach in a prison. I understand that the average prisoner has a third grade education. And the only reason we are going to get free of crime is by education. But than again, I’m interested also in teaching. And also working with Special Ed. kids. I guess when the time comes I will have to decide, then I will have to. –Sonia, 57 (10:237)

Question 5

What barriers to educational goals/ occupational aspirations exist? Are barriers related to occupational self-efficacy?

In order to address question 5, participants were asked about the existence of barriers to both long-term and short-term goals. In order to provide additional contextual definition to the issue of barriers, the women were also asked about their sources of support, their definitions of success, necessary changes needed to accommodate such success, and how gender and ethnicity might impact success.

Barriers

Although interview questions focused on current and future barriers, analysis of the transcripts revealed much information on barriers from the past that had been overcome, especially in Group II. Barriers from individual transcripts were listed and classified by the researcher as a past barrier, a current barrier, or a future barrier (Table 11). The number of barriers was then tallied for each participant (Table 12). By far, Group II identified the most number of barriers, 75: 56% of which were past barriers; 32%, current barriers; and 12%, future barriers. Group I identified 34 barriers: 29.4% past barriers, 44.1% current barriers, and 26.5% future barriers.

In examining the identified barriers, the majority of barriers were directly related to four consistent themes: barriers related to the participants' role as a caretaker (mother or wife), barriers related to the participants' role as a daughter in the family, barriers related to financial constraints, and barriers related to remediation (Table 13).

TABLE 11
PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Participant	Past Barriers	Current Barriers	Barriers to Future Goals	Least Helpful at the College
<u>Group I</u>				
Roxanne, 18	Mother's illness/ death Boyfriend's death	Motivation Pressure to succeed	Motivation Money	None No internship programs
Connie, 18	--	Money	Money	None
Anna, 19	Working & going to school	Unemployed Parents cannot pay for education Father's illness/ family obligations	Money Feelings of guilt if leave parents alone	SMC is small, peer pressure
Joan, 19	Mistakes in high school (no details)	None	Her baby/ motherhood	None
Chris, 19	--	Illness associated with pregnancy	Perhaps childcare	Not lenient with medical problems
Beth, 20	Ineligible: financial aid Parents unsupportive Financially supported self since mid-teens	Money Husband not working Working 3 jobs Fulltime student Finding study time Transportation	Money Transportation	No mentor, tutor, and/or role model
Fran, 22	Money Working full-time & going to college Poor math skills	Money University teachers Financially supporting family	--	Financial aid better at Southport
<u>Group II</u>				
Lisa, 33	Conditioning, subservience to men Teen mother (married) Abusive Marriage Mentally ill husband Childcare	Money Custody dispute – ability to move to new university Unsupportive family, including children Ex-husband	Money Family situation	Need a child care center
Dora, 36	Money Transportation Logistics in getting daughter to school	Money Transportation Special need child	None	None related to student status

TABLE 11 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Past Barriers	Current Barriers	Barriers to Future Goals	Least Helpful at the College
Leticia, 36	Teen pregnancy High school dropout Remediation/ GED Money Job instability, worked 2 jobs Family tragedies Rebellious teens Health/ temp. paralysis Appeal to financial aid	Money Health Childcare Balancing family & student roles	Money Balancing family & student roles	None No daycare
Patty, 43	Education not seen as valuable for self Money Disability	Money Unemployment Depression Time out of school Lack of confidence Discipline	Medical concerns	None
Toni, 50	Money Didn't know about financial help at 18 Parents believed high school was enough Pressure to get a job from stepfather Raising small children & attending classes Unemployment benefits ran out	Need fulltime salary Job & class schedule Elderly parents	Money Need a fulltime job	Class schedule
Gloria, 51	Money Abusive Marriage Ex-husband disowned children Left school in 6 th grade Remediation GED Supporting 4 children Working at least 2 jobs Financial aid Paying for children's college	Financial aid Math remediation Passing required math course	--	None
Sonia, 57	Teen pregnancy High school dropout Remediation/ GED Lack of confidence Multiple family deaths Divorce	Age, late start	Money Health concerns	None

TABLE 12
NUMBER OF PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Participant	Past Barriers	Current Barriers	Future Barriers
<u>Group I</u>			
Roxanne, 18	2	2	2
Connie, 18	0	1	1
Anna, 19	1	3	2
Joan, 19	1	0	1
Chris, 19	0	1	1
Beth, 20	3	6	2
Fran, 22	3	3	0
Subtotals:	10	15	9
Group I Total: 34			
<u>Group II</u>			
Lisa, 33	5	4	2
Dora, 36	3	3	0
Leticia, 36	9	4	2
Patty, 43	3	6	1
Toni, 50	6	3	2
Gloria, 51	10	3	0
Sonia, 57	6	1	2
Subtotals:	42	24	9
Group II Total: 75			

TABLE 13
TYPE OF REPORTED BARRIERS

Type of Barrier	Past Barriers	Current Barriers	Future Barriers
<u>Group I</u>			
Caretaker Role	--	6.7%	22.2%
Family/ Daughter Role	10.0%	20.0%	--
Financial	40.0%	26.7%	44.4%
Remediation	10.0%	--	--
Subtotals:	60.0%	55.4%	66.6%
<u>Group II</u>			
Caretaker Role	40.5%	29.2%	11.1%
Family/ Daughter Role	4.1%	--	--
Financial	26.2%	25.0%	55.6%
Remediation	7.1%	4.2%	--
Subtotals:	77.9%	58.4%	66.7%

In Group I, financial barriers (35.3%) and family obligations (11.8%) were most frequently mentioned. In Group II, caretaker obligations (33.3%) and financial barriers (29.3%) were most frequently mentioned. With the exception of Joan, 19 and Chris, 19, all participants mentioned financial barriers.

It should also be noted that, in reference to barriers, participants were asked, “What, if anything, has been the least helpful to you at this college? Name the top three items.” With the exception of Chris, 19 and Beth, 20 all other participants answered “none.” With the follow-up probe “Are there any programs or services you wish were available to you from the school?” only six participants responded. Roxanne, 18; Beth, 20; and Fran, 22; made program recommendations (internship programs, rules of financial aid, and amount of financial aid, respectively).

The rules for financial aid. You have to be 23 or have a kid or be married to get financial aid. There would be so many more kids in school if they didn't have those rules. Nobody wants to have a kid and a lot of people aren't ready to get married. And a lot of people don't live with their parents but they need their parent's income tax. They can't do it on their own until they're 23. I felt like "What about me? Make a rule just for me." But it doesn't work that way.
 –Beth, 20 (14:283)

I could only say about financial aid, how they work things here and how they work them there [at my university]. Here they do it on a semester status and over there it's on a yearly status, but I think that's the only difference. And they offer more help over there scholarship-wise and grants-wise. I got more grants over there than I did here. I think that's about the only downside to that.
 –Fran, 22 (13:232)

Anna, 19 commented on the small campus environment, which made her more susceptible to peer pressure. Toni, 50 commented on class scheduling conflicting with work schedules. Chris, 19 wished the college had been more lenient with medical problems associated with pregnancy, which might have prevented her from stopping out.

Because of the medical reasons [related to pregnancy], maybe to be more lenient with the absent time and stuff like that. To be able to take home the work, do work as an independent study. That's what made me have to drop last semester. I had to drop all that semester for maybe a month that I got sick. It's a big fall back. –Chris, 19 (3:276)

Lisa, 36 and Letticia, 36 commented on the need for a childcare facility.

Well, of course, one of the things is that they don't have a child care center here. But I know that if you're in a particular program, I guess a one year certification program or two year certification, then you qualify to have free child care at a facility of your choice through an organization. I got lucky enough, with determination, to get into that organization without the college's help. This was the only thing that wasn't positive. Because I was going for a 2 year associate's degree and because I was going to further my education I was not qualified for SMC to help. That's the way I understood it. So that was the only thing. –Lisa, 33 (9:209)

For Letticia, 36 there was also some frustration in not understanding why she did not qualify for childcare assistance.

Right now I have a 22 month old baby and she's very attached to me. I will be having to take night classes so that she can be watched by her dad and her older siblings. It would have been good if when my husband is at work and the kids are in school, I could be at school here during the day with daycare here. I could come between classes and I could come check on her. I think they do have something here but I don't qualify for that.

I had asked one of the RN's here and she said that they did have something here but you won't qualify for it. That was one thing I didn't like that they didn't try to explain to me or help me more [with childcare]. But I didn't ask anymore, I didn't want to get on their bad side. I was just going to get in the program. –Letticia, 36 (11:276)

Connie, 18 could not identify barriers beyond paying for university class. When asked if she had looked for scholarships, she said no, it had not occurred to her, she had been too busy. Roxanne, 18 was also worried about money despite her father's reassurances.

Just probably motivation [is an obstacle] and probably, eventually, it will be money. My dad always tells me, and it always gets on my nerves, "We'll cross that bridge when we get there." I'm like "You can't JUST cross it, you have to

plan to cross it first.” It gets on my nerves because I don’t want to wait till the last minute. -Roxanne, 18 (4:109)

Anna, 19 wished that her parents could pay for her college like her friends’ parents. She discussed problems in balancing school with work (as well as looking for work) and family obligations.

Ah, ah, like trying to find a job that, like, it takes a lot out of you. You still have to come home and study. I still have to help my parents and my mom doesn’t drive. So that is not a burden at all, but it takes some of my time because I still have to help her cook or I take her to the store or like I take her to wash clothes. Like that hour or two I could be out studying. Or like what if I have to go to work early, that’s another thing like that I was doing a lot. I had to even work in high school. So I couldn’t really do a lot of things that my friends did. I had to grow up really quick, especially after my dad got sick at the end of my junior year. I was involved in a lot of things and then I had a job. ... On top of that, I do have to three older brothers and two older sisters but they are already grown up and married. They have their own children. They have their responsibilities, their problems. I don’t want to get in their way, that’s not right. That’s my problem. – Anna, 19 (1:79)

She stated that distractions have kept her out of college.

It’s not that I quit because I don’t know, it’s boring, or it’s hard, or I can’t handle it. It’s not that. There are other things that distract me. I guess on that part I’m weak. Like I can’t say no, that’s my problem, I can’t be mean. And people take advantage of that sometimes and that’s why I get distracted. –Anna, 19 (1:119)

Joan, 19 acknowledged that the only obstacle she saw to her long-term goals was her baby, but did not elaborate. Chris, 19 mentioned her baby three times during the taped interview, which was also the only obstacle she foresaw.

Beth, 20 and Fran, 22 had the greatest number of barriers in Group I. Beth’s past barriers related to her unsupportive (financial and emotional) parents and ineligibility for financial aid.

I took all advanced classes [in high school], I enrolled myself in advanced classes. My parents, they weren’t into it, they didn’t even care. They didn’t even...like, my mom was always saying “Wash dishes.” And I would say, “I’m

doing my homework right now.” And mom was like “Wash the dishes now.” People are mostly are like “Do your homework first then wash the dishes.” But my family was like...there were 6 of us. I was the middle child so I had to take care of my younger kids. -Beth, 20 (14:163)

I wish my father hadn't told me to work instead of going to school. It's like I have a dream and he's just putting it down. It just made me feel like I'm really on my own here. And my mom was like “get married.” “No. I don't want to get married.” “Marry someone rich.” I was, “NO, that's not the way to do it. I can do it on my own.” So they weren't really much help. -Beth, 20 (14:418)

I heard about financial aid, basically by asking friends, “How do you go to school?” They said, “Well, financial aid will pay for this if your mom and dad don't make enough money.” I got a hold of my mom's income taxes for that year because she lives out of state. She wouldn't send it to me at first. She had remarried and then she made too much so I was ineligible with her, and then my dad didn't file that year, so I had to start paying for school (on my own) after a while. -Beth, 20 (14:20)

Beth eventually qualified for financial aid when she married her boyfriend six months prior to the interview. She had been told that as a single student without dependents, she did not qualify for aid. Beth stated off tape that they were planning on marrying anyway but got married sooner so she could qualify for aid and go to college now. She said she was pleased with her choice of husband, who would be graduating with a degree in natural gas engineering and “was going somewhere.” When asked how she and her new husband managed their relationship, school, work and living apart, she replied:

It is a lot but I'm trying to get financial aid, and if you're married then you qualify for financial aid and before I didn't. I'm not gonna have kids to qualify for financial aid, that would even make things worse. I probably wouldn't even go to school if I had kids. I'm just “Concentrate on school, don't have any kids, and just keep studying and working.” -Beth, 22 (14:132)

Beth's current struggles focus on needing to work to support herself, balancing time to study, and transportation. In her view, teachers hold great potential for easing this stress or contributing to it.

I was going [to school] full-time cause I had my mom's income tax. But it was the basics so it was really easy. Then I started going into harder classes, anatomy, physiology, things you can't just go and do your homework. You really have to study for these classes. And then I had to drop one because I couldn't handle working nights and going to school, you know, cause I didn't have time to study.

Where I work you're not allowed to study or anything. You just do your job, so I couldn't do it. I had to wake up real early, an hour early, just to catch the bus for school. Then get out in time to catch the bus and go to work. It was just like, in the morning wake up, take the bus to school, come home, eat, get dressed, take the bus to work, take the bus from work, go home and sleep. You're so tired. I wish I didn't have to work so much but I didn't have my mom and dad supporting me, having a roof over my head. -Beth, 20 (14:51)

Yeah it is, and it's hard. You have to live, and you have to work to live, to have a place to live. You have to find a way to work, gas, everything. But you also have to have school and many times your work doesn't work around it. You're like, "Pick, your job or school."

In school you have these set classes and a lot of teachers are really mean, they're like "We're not gonna work around you, either you take it when its available at another time or drop it." It depends on what teacher you have. Sometimes teachers are mean and sometimes they're like, "OK if you come to my earlier lab you can leave (early) so you can go to work." Other times it's like "No, you miss one or two times and you're out of here." -Beth, 20 (14:140)

Fran, 22 felt obligated to support her family of origin, feeling that she was the only one who could pull the family out of poverty. This sense of obligation fueled her quest for higher education in search of a "good" job while also working fulltime to support the family now. Other than financial barriers, she also mentions a lack of math skills when she first arrived at Sea Mist College as a pre-engineering major.

Coming out of high school I only had one good math teacher, my sophomore year of high school he wasn't there anymore. I just took somebody else that year and the third year I didn't take any math. So when I went into college I wasn't ready, my math skills were very poor ... I did like math. Math was just, [long pause] ..I had very bad math skills, very bad math skills. -Fran, (13:252)

Fran eventually transferred to Texas University- Southport (60 miles away) before she earned her associate's degree. Academic probation after her grandmother's death and the threat of losing financial aid forced her to look at other options outside of SMC.

I had dropped some classes. My grandma had passed away. I got put on probation. After that I was working 40 hours a week and I had already signed up for [college in] Southport. So I had dropped some classes in the fall, so they told me if I did I was going to be expelled from financial aid. I figured well, I couldn't help it, I need to work and my boss wasn't working with my [class] hours. So when it came time, I wasn't going to be able to go to school. So I tried Southport. I talked with the president about my situation and he went ahead and let me into the school on a temporary probation. So that's what happened. And from that day forward, I've been over there. -Fran, 22 (13:36)

The transfer to the university was a difficult transition for Fran. Because teachers seemed to “not care” in the chemical engineering department, Fran switched her major to mathematics. Unfortunately, Fran's instructor problems were not eliminated when she switched majors. This was a painful story she recalled with tears in her eyes.

If you get somebody (a teacher) that you like then you'll be able to do very well with them. I had this one teacher that was real difficult. She was a math teacher and I took her two semesters in a row. And I did take [earn] a 'D' in both of them. I did lose my hair that first semester from all that stress. This past semester I just didn't worry about it, I didn't stress out, I didn't study for her. I didn't like her attitude but she was the only one and I needed to graduate. She had just a very bad attitude.

She said, she told me “What are you going to do with your degree?” And I told her and I just started tearing out cause she told me, “What makes you think NASA would want people like you?”

I started crying, that hurt my feelings so much. And I was taking her and I couldn't. I struggled, I struggled and I got a 'D'. It was so hard. It was not the material that was hard it was her tests that were hard. She didn't know how to word them. That semester I took her for 2 classes and I had to drop one just to pass one. In the other class I would tell her “I need help” and she would say “Oh, you need to drop it [the course].”

She didn't have to be like that but she had such a bad, negative attitude. She even told me, “You know, I guess that's a problem you have, test anxiety. They have medications for that kind of stuff. You need to go see a doctor.” I told her, “It's

not me it's you." And she didn't like that, she said "No, it's not me. You just don't know how to handle a test. You don't know your material well enough." And I said, "Yes I do." I didn't argue with her anymore but I just refused to take her. –Fran, 22 (13:291)

Lisa, 33 faced numerous obstacles related to financial barriers and her abusive marriage. Her current barriers focus on the physical move related to her transfer to Texas Women's University and custody issues with her ex-husband. She showed no doubt that her goals would be met.

Biggest obstacles, my ex-husband is fighting me right now. And he has just supervised visitation. A very abusive person... a very challenging situation. And so, that is the biggest struggle is to be able to move. And I will move, but learning about all the legal aspects of it, being told that I have to drive back over here if he takes me to court. And the financial situation is a big, big issue. I am going to be leaving my daughter here to finish up her 4 months because she'll be graduating from high school. So that was a big, big decision there. Just changing my children, changing from living here for 2 years and going up there.
–Lisa, 33 (9:112)

Dora, 36 also exuded confidence and determination. Dora mentioned problems with logistics, in terms of getting her daughter and herself to school, but she has since solved this issue by arranging to home school her special needs daughter. Her obstacles were primarily financial constraints, though she believes she will continue to receive aid and this will just translate into continued budgeting. When asked about least helpful services are the college, she replied that the college really did not help her, it was up to her to help herself.

They do have a mentoring program but I never got into it. ...When I first started, I was working another job I wasn't working here at the college. I would go to my classes, do what I had to do, then I'd go do my job. Maybe there'd be sometimes where I had to go back for a class. Then I'd go take care of that class, pick up my daughter and go home and study. There was nothing...honestly, I can't say there wasn't anything here at the college that made it easier. It was all up to me. Nobody ...the thing was that nobody else was going to help me. If I'm not willing to help myself then who's gonna help me. Who's gonna help you if I you're not willing to help yourself. – Dora, 36 (5:485)

Leticia, 36 left high school in the 12th grade when she unexpectedly became pregnant. Low pay and job instability led her to go back to school first to earn a GED then to continue in college level courses. Despite the fact that she had considered herself to be a good student in high school, one immediate barrier was the need for remediation.

I got to my senior year in high school [but did not graduate]. I was pregnant, so I got my GED. To tell you the truth, when we were in high school I think they just did what they could to just pass us and get us out of there. Not like now where they really concentrate on the kids and getting them to performance standards. Because when I first came to college I would cry because I was struggling in the math, not too much in the reading and writing but in the math. And I used to love math. –Leticia, 36 (11: 230)

Leticia's first career interest was nursing, but in the past she felt that she could not balance the curriculum demands with her responsibilities at home and the need to work.

For years they [my friends] had been trying to push me into the RN. I said well, I like working with patients but I also like communicating and working with people, but deep down I think that's what I really wanted [RN] but was just too ashamed that I didn't have the time to go to school because of my kids. Every time I was going to go for my RN I came up pregnant. And then my husband needed the help work-wise. I knew that I could not go to school for nursing and work. I knew that I would need a lot of time, not just for class but to study. And then with the kids I didn't think that was possible. –Leticia, 36 (11:121)

Leticia worked toward an associate's degree in business management in part because it better matched her work history, it provided a better balance with her home life, and it offered a chance for advancement in her current job.

At the time I was working for the Sheriff's department and they had promoted me to a supervisory position ... I had to do trips, I had to do a lot of communication with people out of other counties. I had to do a lot of memos. I wanted to have the right knowledge and communication to interact with them. I did not have that.

I did feel intimidated, but faith just kept me going. But I knew that I needed to get this [a degree] behind me, 'cause the way it looks was that there would be a chance for advancement later on. And they were going to see that I don't have my college behind me, so they would leave me down here. –Leticia, 36 (11:66)

Family crisis caused her to drop out two years ago before earning her degree. When she returned, she had to appeal for financial aid, providing the college with copies of her mother's death certificate and her daughter's medical records.

They said that it was because of at the time I was getting financial help from them when I withdrew. I think at the time I gave them an explanation, and I received a partial refund. But they said that I needed to bring a copy of my mother's death certificate and my daughter's medical records to them. Yeah, I was surprised that they needed all that.... and they were good about it, understanding. They were respectful about it. They said that it was because some people come to school and they don't put all there dedication in to it. –Letticia, 36 (11:53)

Changes in the degree plan discouraged her from completing this degree, but health concerns had her reconsider her career future.

I told my husband "That's what I get for waiting this long." The business management [degree plan] got bigger. I should have [finished]... oh, well, I know that things happen for a reason. –Letticia, 36 (11:147)

When everything was happening, my daughter had had a breakdown, it had affected me. I had something like a stroke. My fingers and my typing were affected, so I didn't go back. I was supposed to go back in March, I'd taken family leave, I couldn't go back. But thanks to therapy, thanks to the Lord, I'm better. I told my husband that I need to really concentrate on my education because what if my hands had really gone out, what was I going to do? No one is going to hire a senior clerk who can't type. And in nursing, you use your hands but you don't need the dexterity as much. As a matter of fact, I wasn't even thinking of nursing at that time but law. But my heart was not there like in nursing. So, education is my priority. –Letticia, 36 (11:166)

A large challenge for her now is letting go of guilt related to not having as much time for family.

I'm afraid that it's going to cost me a lot of time and I'm going to notice it with my husband and the kids. My husband says, "No, I'll give you the time," the kids say, "We'll give you the time." But when its there, I wonder how because I'm everything, I'm the carpool, I'm the homemaker, I'm the housekeeper. I'm everything, they depend on me for everything. Even my husband is a big kid. –Letticia, 36 (11:209)

Before Patty, 43 returned to college, she valued education, but not for herself.

I really didn't value it [education], cause while I was working I was making good money. I didn't need a higher education. I was fitted into the trade I was in. For myself, like I say, I didn't value it much, but for my nieces and nephews, oh, it was a priority. -Patty, 43 (6:113)

Education only became important to Patty when degenerative arthritis left her unable to continue working as an electrician. Patty said her biggest obstacle was her age and that she'd been out of school for so long that she finds herself lacking in confidence. Yet, she also mentions that school is "her therapy" that provides a structure and normality to her life, fending off her depression.

I have problems with ...right now because of my age and what have you, I haven't been in school in all these years, I have a lack of confidence. I need to have my confidence back and build up my esteem. Discipline. I gotta re-discipline myself to study. -Patty, 43 (6:75)

Patty saw her long-term obstacle as her health. And like Dora, 36, when asked if anything in the college was least helpful, she reiterated that she must help herself.

I don't see anything negatively here. I think the only obstacles that can stop me are me, myself, not because the college didn't offer it. -Patty, 43 (6:198)

At the time of the interview, Toni, 50 had been going to college off and on since she was 18 years old, when she attended the college's west campus for a one year secretarial certificate after a high school teacher encouraged her. Prior to that, college had not seemed possible, since it was "only for smart people." Besides, her family was pushing her to get a job after high school graduation.

Even if I was wanting to go, I couldn't because financially, that was another thing, financially. Nobody said, "Hey, your parents can't afford it, there's help out there." Nobody told me that. I was thinking, "My parents can't afford it, I've got to go to work.. Forget college" and that was it. -Toni, 50 (8:241)

My parents felt that high school was as good as it was gonna to get. They never encouraged me to go to college, I don't think they even knew about it. College was not in their minds so they kept pushing, "Get a job, get a job" when I was trying to get my education first. -Toni, 50 (8:12)

Despite her step-father's discouragement, her certificate program was a positive experience.

In Sea Mist Tech, of course I was single and I was young, and I had a lot of energy. I loved being there. I just loved learning. That's what kept me going even though I had pressure from home to "Get a job, get a job, and help with the budget." That was their big push... Well, actually my mom was supporting me, but my stepfather was rushing to get me to start working. –Toni, 50 (8:18)

Ever since this first experience with college, Toni struggled to keep furthering her education. When she was a mother with young children, balancing responsibilities and schedules were her biggest barriers.

I had little ones and I was still trying to go to night school and work a full-time job starting ...throughout my married life. And for different reasons I would quit. At one point I just felt exhausted cause my kids were little. I had babies and I was working and I'd come home, it would be 10 at night and I felt myself exhausted. At one point I thought, "Okay, I am going to give up school, I can't do this anymore." It was just not working. –Toni, 50 (8:36)

Here I am almost 50 years old and I'm still going to school... At my age, now that my kids are grown up enough to take care of themselves. Now my only setback is my full time job. It's either the kids or the job. –Toni, 50 (8:88)

Current barriers also included caring for her elderly parents. While she would love to become a fulltime psychology student, she cannot give up her job. Given her situation, she was frustrated with her son's disregard for education.

And I have a son that is 19 that I'm trying to talk into taking classes. He just graduated last year. He wants to party. He wants to work and spend money. He doesn't tell me that, he says "I am going to school" but he only takes 3 or 4 classes, he decides he wants to drop 2 or 3 because he's not applying himself. So, he's kind of floundering right now.

It's funny but you think back to where I'm coming from, I was not given the opportunity and I wanted to go to school. He's got it all and he doesn't want to follow my advice. I don't know, something is wrong with this picture. If I could trade places. –Toni, 50 (8:163)

Because she left school in the 6th grade, Gloria, 51 needed much remediation just to earn her GED. And because she has always had to work multiple jobs to support her four children as a single parent, educational progress has been slow but steady.

I started it back in 1981-1982. I've been going part time every semester. I just skipped one semester last year. It took me almost 2 years just to get remedials, and right now I'm still working on my math remedial. Because I've worked, I've always worked at least 2 jobs to support my family, I could only take 1 or 2 classes. That's the reason it's taken me so long. There's times when I feel like giving up, but I just continue. Just to get my GED it took me a year and a half, before I could even get to college. –Gloria, 51 (12:32)

She credited her lack of education as the main reason she stayed in her abusive marriage for so long. Off tape, she gave examples of her ex-husband's physical and psychological abuse: punching, stabbing, and shooting her; instructing her to not look at others because she was "too ugly"; keeping locks on all doors and closets in the home; forbidding her to leave the home without him; making her walk part of the way to the hospital to deliver her youngest child. It was only after he molested their oldest daughter that she left him.

I guess that's the reason that I stayed in it [the marriage] for so long. I thought that they needed their dad. I couldn't work. Their dad was supporting them. Little did I realize, or that the people in that are in the situation I was in realize, that by staying you're actually hurting them, you're not helping them. –Gloria, 51 (12:222)

If I can make a difference in ONE Hispanic female, ONE, I've accomplished something, to help somebody. I so much want to help these women, especially the ones that are being battered and have stayed for some reason. "I don't know how to work. I don't know how to read. I married at 16, I can't do this, I can't go back to college." Things like that. It's real bad among the Hispanic population, the Hispanic women that I have worked with. –Gloria, 51 (12:455)

In one of her first attempts to further her education, she was discouraged by one teacher at a nearby campus, Coastal Bend Community College, 30 miles away. Interestingly enough, off tape Lisa, 33 who was also a domestic abuse survivor told a very similar story about her experience at the same college.

It all depends on the people you're around, on your teachers. It's the encouragement, you need a lot of encouragement because your self-esteem is already real low, and then you're not doing well, and then your teacher says "You know, you're Hispanic, its OK. It's very well known among [about] Hispanic women that they don't succeed right away." That's exactly what she told me. And I was like "OK." I was 32. She was like "Don't feel bad, a lot of Hispanics have failed." I didn't go back to that college. They sent me back to where I was. I was "Well, I'm not going to get an education, I'm failing already. I'm not...I cain't [sic] even get my GED. I'm going back to my husband."
 –Gloria, 51 (12:412)

Her biggest barrier now is passing her math course. The subject of math remediation came up every time she was asked about goals and barriers.

My math. ...When I got out of school it was basic, 2+2. ...To some people it might seem like something small, but to me I feel like I'm never gonna get around that. It's like a mountain to me. Last semester I took 370, it's the lowest math. I STRUGGLED. Going to that class was like torture. At times I would go home in tears but I stuck to it. I made a 67, I needed a 70 to pass that class. I went home and I said, "You know, I'm not going to go back, I'm just going to forget, I'm too old already, just forget it." My kids said, "Mom, you're always telling us not to quit and here you are quitting." "No, you can do it." So here I go again. ...Somebody should look at the curriculum, realize we'll be teaching 2,3, and 4 year old children. Why do they need the college algebra? -Gloria, 51 (12:116)

Thirty years after dropping out of high school, Sonia, 57 decided that wanted to go school to “see what I was capable of doing.” Her first barrier was overcoming the fear of failure “I was really scared when I first started.” Then while working on her criminal justice degree she dropped out because of family “traumas.” Like Letticia, when she returned the criminal justice degree plan had expanded, so she became a liberal arts major. The only potential obstacles she foresees in the future are paying for her university education and her health as she grows older.

Time is not standing still for us. Or at least for me. Cause I'll be 58 in August.
 –Sonia, 57 (10: 178)

The only obstacles I can see is that if I get sick or if I cannot handle it. I believe mentally, I know I can, but I am talking physically. Because you don't know from

one day to another. I suffer from hypertension but I take medication for that, but you don't know what can happen. –Sonia, 57 (10:315)

Support

Participant responses to questions regarding sources of support are summarized in Table 14. In reviewing individual responses, 11 of the 14 participants made direct reference to some element of “comfort”, “personal contact” or “being known” by staff such that they felt that the campus and class environments provided emotional support. Two participants, Joan, 19 and Dora, 36, made indirect references to feeling supported in the environment. Beth, 20 was the only participant who did not make such an indication. Beth’s response to “What has been most helpful to you at this college?” focused strictly on non-human resources at the college, while all other participants mentioned human resources on campus (teachers, advisors, staff, peers).

Teachers were mentioned by 11 of the 14 women as a critical element of what was most helpful at the college. Likewise, advisors/ counselors were mentioned by seven of the women. In terms of sources of support, parents were mentioned by six women in Group I and two in Group II. Other family members were mentioned by two women in Group I and four women in Group II. In Group II, Dora, 36 stated that she was a source of support to herself, while Lisa, 33; Gloria, 51; and Sonia, 57 made indirect references.

Interestingly enough, while 12 or 14 women mentioned financial barriers, only four women made indication of financial resources to the question “What sources of support do you wish you had?” The reason may be twofold: one, most women translated the meaning of “support” to mean emotional support, which may be of more value to them in the process; and two, in the flow of the interview, this question was sometimes

TABLE 14
SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Participant	Most Helpful at College	Greatest Support	Sources of Support	Support I Wish I Had
<u>Group I</u>				
Roxanne, 18	Teachers Computers Counselors	Parents, emotional & financial support.	--	--
Connie, 18	Teachers Counselors Peers	Parents, emotional support.	--	--
Anna, 19	Teachers Resources Counselors	Parents for emotional support.	--	Encouragement from parents
Joan, 19	Teachers Library Peers	Parents	"Proving" self	--
Chris, 19	Teachers Counselors "Personal" feel	Parents & Family, emotional support.	--	--
Beth, 20	Computers Bookstore Work study	Sister for emotional support.	--	Mentor Tutor Parents support
Fran, 22	Teachers Labs "Personal" feel	Father & Advisor, practical & emotional support.	--	More financial support.

Note: Dash marks, --, indicated that no new responses were identified.

TABLE 14 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Most Helpful at College	Greatest Support	Sources of Support	Support I Wish I Had
<u>Group II</u>				
Lisa, 33	Teachers Resources Positive Staff	Two friends, emotional support.	Self, not stated	Family Support
Dora, 36	Mentor Teachers Job: college paper	Self	--	--
Leticia, 36	Financial Aid Counseling Remediation Prg. "Personal" feel	Husband Mother (in past)	Friends	Childcare Cohort
Patty, 43	Encouraging teachers & staff Peers	Family, emotional & financial support.	--	Job
Toni, 50	Friendly Envirn. Cost Flexible Scheduling	Husband	Mother (in past) Friends	Money: not needing FT job
Gloria, 51	Advisors/ Counselors Teachers	Children, emotional support.	Self, not stated Friends Employer	Husband Financial Support
Sonia, 57	Student Jobs Financial aid Advisors Teachers	Remedial teachers, emotional support.	Self, not stated Children	None

Note: Dash marks, --, indicated that no new responses were identified.

asked as a second probe the question “What has been least helpful to you at the college?”.

Six of seven members of Group I responded that teachers were of significant help to them.

...the professors have been really helpful. I had a professor who was willing to help because I had trouble last semester in class because my boyfriend passed away. The first half of the semester I just didn't do anything. And then the rest, it was "Oh, I have to catch up because I don't want to let my dad down." And so he helped me get back on my feet. He talked to me, told me to stop by his office if I had any questions, to e-mail him, and told me what I had to do to pass his class. That was just a big help to me. – Roxanne, 18 (4:126)

...everyone puts it mentally in you that you are an adult. “They (colleges) don't baby you, they don't help you.” In other words, you do it or you don't. It's scary when you go in, it's very scary. That's why I say that when I had those 2 teachers in the first semester, that was very helpful and I saw that they really cared, it put my heart at so much ease and my mind. I could say, “OK not everyone is like that.” You do have the ones that care about you, that care if you're successful in their class. Then of course you have the other. And I've had a couple of those teachers too along the way so far. I realize now that I can't let that push me back. –Connie, 18 (7:365)

Additionally, six of the women in Group I identified parents as their greatest source of support. Connie, 18 credited parenting skills as key to her feeling of independence.

Ever since I was very young for some reason my mom always gave me a lot of responsibility and it made me independent. Actually my independence is what has carried me very far. And now like I said, I want to pay for my education, I don't want my parents to pay for it, I want to do it all on my own. I think that if my parents hadn't done that for me it would have been a lot different. –Connie, 18 (7:499)

My parents. I think that I have been very lucky having the type of parents I have had, and I want to repay them by doing well in school. I don't know any other way to repay them. – Roxanne, 18 (4:212)

During the taped interview, Anna, 19 said her parents were her greatest support but off tape mentioned that she wished they would encourage her more by saying things like “you can do it”, instead “hurry and get back in school.”

Chris, 19 commented on support from a wide circle of relatives.

To where they say "you can do this" or "try harder next time". My cousin's going to Nixon high school, he got into the medical class they've got over there. So my grandmother's like, "Oh, he wants to be a doctor, you want to be a nurse, you could open a hospital together!" (Laughing) They're real supportive, it's like "You can take care of me when I'm older." They have that goal that we're going to take care of them when we get older. It's like "Yeah, you took care of me, I'll take care of you, I'll return the favor!" -Chris, 19 (3:238)

Beth's, 20 greatest source of support was her sisters' encouragement.

I guess my sister. My sisters are like "Yeah, graduate. We didn't and we know what its like. Don't have kids." So they give advice, not school-wise but future-wise. Like "This is your life and you're already on track. Don't get off." So they support me. - Beth, 20 (14:402)

Fran, 22 had two primary sources of support, her father and her advisor.

My advisor and my dad. They've done a lot for me. My advisor, he's been there for me. Even though I started off with real bad math skills, I was able to overcome that. I'm able to now see the mistakes I made [in math] very quickly. I guess it's talking to him and having him help me out.

My dad, anytime I didn't have a ride my dad would take me. I guess it's just those two people in my life that have helped me out the most. They're the ones that always influence. My dad is always pushing me to go to school. I see that since we come from a low-income family that education is a good thing. So basically I just want to get my family out from where we are right now. I think that's the reason why I've been so dedicated to school. -Fran, 22(13:165)

Though she never stated it directly, Lisa, 33 worked to be self-supporting, expressing determination and confidence in the face of barriers by problem solving and surrounding herself with the support that her family denied her. When asked about balancing responsibilities, she talks about organizing her efforts and the support of friends:

I have a calendar that I keep with me at all times, and I go by that as often as I can. I have to give myself, everyday, three hours of study time a day, every single day. Weekends 5 hours, 6 hours and then at the same time I know what I'm obligated to do and what I would like to do with my children, and that's spending quality time.

It may be rushed sometimes and I have to go speak to people who tell me that it's okay that you are not spending every waking moment with them. And so that gets me through it, because I am from a family that's, well the Mexican part of my family thinks I am very, very, very selfish right now. Because it's all family oriented [from the their point of view]. It's all family, "How can you do that to your children? You have to be with your children 24/7 don't you know that?"
 -Lisa, 33 (9:162)

Lisa identified teachers as the most helpful resource at the college.

The most helpful, has been the, ...definitely the instructors. I think that this college, what I've heard is that it's one of the best community colleges around. I truly believe that they've got some great faculty. [They're great in terms of] Their teaching skills, it's not all laid back. I hear horror stories about the local university, that they're just waiting to sign your degree. There's a lot of expectations here. You're going to find maybe 1 or 2 here that might be a little laid back, but really the goal is to teach you something. Definitely. One of the instructors that I had at the very, very beginning, in one of my freshman seminars, is also a counselor. And without him just helping me with all of this here at the college... because he works for the students. He is there for any of the students. And so to have somebody like that, that has the skills that he has, is great.
 -Lisa, 33 (9:178)

Lisa's greatest sources of support were two key friendships.

There's two particular people, they're very supportive in what I am doing. They think that what I'm doing is right. Because it goes back to my family thinking that I'm so selfish. None of them are supportive, including my children. In the beginning anyway, when I thought that I was doing wrong by going to college and feeling that guilt, they were there to pick me up. So from day one when I met this person, and then the other one actually helped me get out of my situation with my ex-husband. So that person for four years has a..., they're just very positive people. One is a doctor and the other you know, he has got his education.. And it's just great to listen to people say that what you're doing is right, and you're doing for these reasons, and just reinforcing what I've told them.
 -Lisa, 33 (9:300)

When asked what support she wished she had, her first response was "I can't think of any" until prompted about family.

My mother is just now, for the first time in 2 years, she finally said that she admired me for doing what I'm doing, to be able to go to college and do all that. So she is slowly getting there and trying to understand why I'm doing what I'm doing and not going the "family route," as she says. I do wish that they [my

family] could say that they're really proud of what I am doing. Brother, sister, everybody. –Lisa, 33 (9:314)

For Dora, 36 her mentor was the most helpful resource at the college.

The one thing that's been most helpful is not a thing, it's a person. Mr. Garcia has been very helpful. He encouraged me to change my major, he saw that I had a talent for it [journalism]. He encouraged me to go with it. That's one. (long pause) Honestly I couldn't say any other things, I've had good, encouraging teachers. There have been many teachers that have helped me in every way, shape or form. There's a few teachers around that aren't very encouraging but you just have to look past them and find the ones that are gonna encourage you, the ones that are really going to help you. But the main thing that really helped me here is Mr. Garcia and working here in the college paper. –Dora, 36 (5:290)

When asked about her greatest source of support, she identified herself.

That's a hard one. I would say just... me being out there wanting to change my life. Me knowing that I'm not gonna to get anywhere being in this kind of position, this kind of a job. And I know that the only one that's gonna improve my lot is me...

I'm the one that's done it to be successful. There was nobody else out there getting the grades that I've been getting, nobody else busting their ass to get Hall of Fame [honor court]. Nobody else but me getting the stories I was trying to get. I was the one studying, doing this, doing that. Nobody else was helping me, I was doing it all on my own, at the same time trying to deal with my daughter, trying to make my money stretch through the whole month. ...I've been the one to do it. –Dora, 36 (5:458)

Leticia, 36 identified financial aid, guidance, remediation, and encouragement, a feeling of “closeness” to people on campus as most helpful.

Financial, first of all. And the guidance. There's a lady here who no matter when I left, she would call me and tell me "What are you going to do?" She followed up with me, I think more because we became friends because they didn't follow up with my sister. She's helping my sister now. Actually, in education, I was glad that I got to go back and take reading and math and all that because I realized I lacked. –Leticia, 36 (11:221)

Leticia wished that she had access to childcare facilities through the college as well as be part of a cohort who could complete the degree plan together.

The childcare. And that group of friends [like in the GED program, doing the same thing together]. It was a good experience. We gave each other a lot of

support. Sharing our hopes and goals. It was like "Hey, I'm going to get there, we're all going to get there." -Leticia, 36 (11:406)

Patty, 43 identified people –instructors, students and staff – as the most helpful resource at the college. She saw her contact with others at the college as her “therapy.”

Patty’s greatest source of support was her family.

The people. I am a people person so I have gotten a lot of encouragement from not only my instructors but from my classmates. I try to use every aspect that the campus has to offer. Even if I don't have no [sic] business there, I am going to go there. I just try to meet people. Like I said earlier, you can learn from people without them even realizing it. They're an encouragement to me, especially with everything that I have been going through in just a short period of time. So this is one way to relieve my depression, get away from it. I'll stay here. I only have one course 12:00 to 1:40. I'm usually here at 8:30, 9 in the morning, I will get home at about 6 cause I'll just stay here. I'll stay here even if it's just on the computer, surfing the net or whatever. –Patty, 43 (6:163)

Patty saw instructors as important to building confidence.

And the confidence because I don't feel like I have the brains no more[sic] even though in school, high school... I had some instructors... I guess it just depended on the instructor, whether I liked the instructor or not. I think it just all depends on the instructor, and then I need to keep up my confidence.

I'm very fortunate that the instructors I've had, I've loved even though this is just my second semester and just my fourth class. I'm enjoying it. I'm a very broad person, I'll tell you how it is, tell you how I feel. I don't hide anything. You ask me a question and I'll give you the answer even though it may not be the answer you want to hear. So, I'm very fortunate. I just need to keep up with the discipline. –Patty, 43 (6:256)

Gloria, 51 was another participant who was self supporting, making conscious choices to support herself emotionally through the process, wanting to make changes for her, not just her family.

I was like “OK I need to get a GED.” And there's so many people [saying] “God, you're too old! You know you're never gonna get there. You already have a job, that's good enough!” I think you've GOT to want to do it for yourself. You know, sure you do it for your family, your children and stuff, but then once you do things for yourself you do them for your children as well. –Gloria, 51 (12:400)

Sometimes I can't believe that I'm here. I'll be walking around campus and stuff and I can't believe it. I mean, 20 years ago I would have never imagined being in a classroom. Sometimes I'll be walking out of class, walking on the campus and it will seem so unreal. Much less a college campus. It's just beyond me. I just sit back and look. Even if no one else is proud of me, I'm proud of me. Look at me, 6th grade education till now. It's taken a lot of years and its taken a lot of time and effort and everything. I'm just so grateful that I've done it. I don't want to be the only one, there's other people out there. –Gloria, 51 (12:559)

Success

Participants were asked four questions related to their concept of success: the definition of success, indicators of success, changes needed to achieve success in college, and changes needed to achieve success in their chosen career (Table 15). Four themes were evident in participants' definition and indicators of success, while three themes dominated their vision of necessary changes.

Definition and Indicators. The four themes that dominated participants' vision of success included: job related skills, education, monetary gain/ financial security, and feeling successful. Seven participants (3-Group I; 4-Group II) related success to a job or job skills.

Working hard, being on time, being on top of everything, doing your job, knowing what you are doing, that's it. Going to work, feeling good, feeling proud. You're doing something, not for yourself but for other people. That's what I think the whole purpose is. –Anna, 19(1:314)

As far as for me, my job as a reporter is to get the truth out there to the people. Other people may see it as money, being able to earn a bunch of money. Yeah, that's fine and dandy cause you need the money to survive, but for me is to get the story out to the public and have the public read it and talking about it. [To have them say] "Hey, this is what the problem is and this is what we can do to fix it." Or, "Hey you know what, that person was really good. I can see why they wrote this really great story about them." That kind of thing. That to me is job success, to get the truth out there to the public. –Dora, 36 (5: 342)

TABLE 15

SUCCESS

Participant	Success Defined	Indications of Success	Needed Changes for Success in School	Needed Changes for Success in Career
<u>Group I</u>				
Roxanne, 18	Meeting your standard/ goal	Degree Sitting in a lab	Study harder	Not give up
Connie, 18	Doing what you love	--	Able to ask for help Avoid neg. people	Be more creative Patience w/ younger children
Anna, 19	Know your job Do something for self & others	--	More independent	Don't know
Joan, 19	Degree	--	Not be selfish	Nothing
Chris, 19	Accomplishment w/o "breaks"	Finish, meet goal Big house	Push myself	Accept illness Have compassion
Beth, 20	Being "well off" No money worries	Accomplish Ph.D. Teaching	Focus on field of study	--
Fran, 22	Achieve goals Overcome poverty	Have steady job Out of schooling	Put my school first	None.
<u>Group II</u>				
Lisa, 33	Individual def. of reaching the top	Feeling satisfied	More self-esteem More out-going	Learn & evolve
Dora, 36	Get truth out	I am successful A good reputation	None	Will not change
Letticia, 36	Education Not struggling	Feeling accomplished	Stop worrying Stop feeling guilty	Separate home & work priorities
Patty, 43	Living comfortably	Normalcy A job, able to work	Discipline Confidence	None
Toni, 50	Job happiness	--	Gained confidence	Don't know yet.
Gloria, 51	Education	Bachelors degree	Gained esteem None	None
Sonia, 57	Be prepared for job Be best you can	--	Developed self-worth Study more	None

Note: Dash marks, --, indicated that no new responses were identified.

Dora, 36 had also commented that she already was successful because people on campus knew her and she had a good reputation. Sonia, 57 also focused her definition on “being the best” on the job.

Well first of all, you have to be prepared for it [your work]. First of all you have to find what you want to do and be the best that you can. And success comes in steps. And it is also what you make out of it. –Sonia, 57 (10:420)

Four participants (3-Group I; 1-Group II) related success to obtaining a degree, while two (in Group II) also reference “education” as success.

Something that I can show for, something that I say I reached my goal, I set it and I reached it. Like the little certificates they give you, those. Just to show people that I could do it, I did it regardless of the situation I'm in. Just to show them that if I can do it, anyone can do it. –Joan, 19 (2:106)

When I've already achieved...at least I have all my academic behind me and I'm able to have a steady job. I have a house for my parents. Basically knowing that I'm able to support them as well as myself. I think that's when I would know I'm successful. –Fran, 22 (13:360)

To me it's education, knowledge. Because how I got to where I got [at work] was experience. It was a struggle. They say “It's ok, you got there,” but no it isn't. I didn't have the knowledge. Like with coding, you have to go to college for coding and medical terminology. But I learned it all by experience, and it was hard. I would see other people going through easier and here I was struggling. I got where I got without education but it was a struggle. I think education is very important for job success, the ability to succeed in your job. And you need to have the knowledge, if not then you struggle. –Leticia, 36 (11:298)

Four participants (3-Group I; 1-Group II) included monetary gain or financial security as a part of their definition.

When you're well off. When you don't have to worry about bills. When you don't have to worry. When you don't have to use your credit cards to buy groceries. I mean that's success right there. When you're completed something and there's nothing more to complete, you're happy at that point. –Beth, 20 (14:313)

Being able to achieve your goals, as well as being able to overcome poverty, like where I came from. Overcoming where I'm coming from. Education ...I mean like for my dad, he had to work when he was young. He's always worked his life. By this, I try to help out, try to do something. Well, he was married before then

got with my mom. My mom quit school and she stayed with my dad. Being able to overcome from where we are now, I think that would be success.
 -Fran, 22 (13:350)

Four participants (2-Group I; 2-Group II) focused definitions of success on feelings of success.

Whatever satisfies you. If I'm happy with being a receptionist and I gave it my all, than that's successful to me. Ah, because I want to go the route that I am going, then that's my success. But, if I took the other route, then success would be giving my all. -Lisa, 33 (9:224)

Success would mean to me that I am happy with my job, I love what I do, I want to give it my all, and feel good about it. Not necessarily earn the big bucks. Just be comfortable with the pay. But, basically be happy with what I'm doing.
 -Toni, 50 (8:207)

Changes for Success. Six participants (3-Group I; 3-Group II) indicated that in order to meet success, they needed to make changes of a cognitive or affective nature.

Connie, 19 wanted to be able to ask for help when she needed it.

I think, to help me get further, I'll have to change maybe... not so much my perseverance but, I am a very quiet person. And I don't ask for help, and I don't speak out, and I think, I know that when I get to the university, I'm going to have to do that. I'm going to have to become more open and let people help me. And when I need it, I am going to ask for it because if I don't it's going to put me at a stand still, at a halt. Because if I can't ask and I can't get help, where am I going to go? And actually, even being here has already helped me because in high school I kept to myself, I did my work, I did what I had to do and I was out. And here when it gets a little more difficult, its difficult for me to be, "Oh, I need help. Let me stay after class and talk with to my teacher." And I think that is something as far as actions that I'm going to have to change. -Connie, 19 (7:290)

When asked why she had trouble asking for help, she told about negative incident in which one of her elementary school teachers belittled her when Connie asked the teacher "What page is the class on?".

All I asked was a simple question. The way she talked at me, it was like, "You're dumb," she didn't even answer my question. She made me turn around and ask somebody else. So ever since then its "Just keep to myself, just stay alert and

don't ask any questions.” And actually that is what I did in elementary, middle and high school. It worked. I was fine. I was successful. And I thought to myself, “Well, I can do this all on my own.” But when I got here to college and things got a little more challenging, things move at a faster pace, I realized that “You’re going to have to ask for help and you’re going to have those teachers that are going to be that way, but you can’t let them get you down.”
 -Connie, 19 (7:341)

Lisa, 33 felt that she needed to develop more self-esteem.

I think [developing] more self-esteem, definitely, more and maybe being a little bit more outgoing. Ah, to be successful in college...Just to have a very confident attitude. Stay focused and stay focused on what my goal is. As long as I go that, I’ll be good. -Lisa, 33 (9:235)

Leticia, 36 wanted to quell her anxieties.

I worry too much. I think I’m too overprotective with my family. Where I’m scared if I’m at work, and not there, something’s going to happen, I feel guilty about it. I’ve got to let go. I’ve got to let it flow just as it comes. That’s what my husband says, he’s tried to explain it to me before, but I never listened, now I’m starting to. I’ve had a lot of worries and a lot of guilt. ...I felt guilty that I wasn’t there enough for my kids. -Leticia, 36 (11:337)

Four participants (1-Group I; 3-Group II) indicated that they had already made changes in order to continue in their education. Fran, 22 had to learn to balance her school goals with the need to earn money to support her family.

I had to change my thinking that I need to do this for myself. To get employed, an employer considers your education and not where you’re the only one going to school and they’re putting you graveyard all the time. I was having to do that and then when I transferred to Southport I said, “No, I have to put school before I put anything else.”

My family has always come first for me. I had to realize that in order for me to get out from where I’m at, I need to put school above. -Fran, 22 (13:370)

Toni, 50 learned to believe that she could be successful in college.

Well, I’ve got the motivation, I’ve gotten over the fact that I can do it. In the beginning, back in high school, I guess counselors, teachers, you know everybody around me, didn’t fill my head with college ideas. ...I always felt like, when I was going through high school like, college, “Oh, only smart people go to college.” I

never put myself in that, you know, in that circle. Once I got older, you learn better, you know. –Toni, 50 (8:219)

Sonia, 57 had to build her self-worth.

Because I do have my self-esteem. I feel like I'm self-worthy. When I started school... Things would bother me, before I started school. Like if people didn't like me. I was trying to please the people. And now, I feel, as I'm going, if I feel people don't like me, they have the problem, I don't. Because I don't look down to anybody. Maybe they don't like the way I look, maybe they don't like the way I dress, maybe they don't like the way I talk, or maybe they don't like the way I carry myself. But I'm happy with myself, and as long as I'm happy with myself, I don't care what anybody says. But I do feel like I have an impact in school with the students. –Sonia, 57 (10: 463)

In terms of changes for success in college three women in Group I (Roxanne, 18; Chris, 19; Beth, 20) and one woman in Group II (Sonia, 57) mentioned improving study habits or focusing more on school work.

One surprising outcome was the fact that six women (Joan, 19 & Fran, 22 in Group I; and, Dora, 36, Patty, 43, Gloria, 51, and Sonia, 57 in Group II) did not feel that they needed to make changes in order to be successful in their career.

I'm not gonna change. To me, if I change then I'm not being true to myself and I'm gonna be true to myself. And myself is to be opinionated and out there and let you know what I feel. And if you don't like it, well, that's too bad for you cause at the same time I don't have to like what you tell me either. I'm not gonna change. Anywhere else I go, I'm not gonna change. I'm not gonna be this little... I'll do what you ask if you're my boss and I'll respect your position as my boss but I'm not gonna show you respect until you show me respect. That's the way I've always been. I don't see myself changing to be this little corporate type person that fits a mold. The day I see myself changing like that then its time to do something else. –Dora, 36 (5:385)

*[I will not have to change] Not if I pursue and accomplish what I want.
–Sonia, 57(10:444)*

Gender and Ethnicity

With relation to gender and ethnic barriers, all participants were asked:

To what extent will your ethnicity or gender affect your chances of success?

Participants' answers, reactions and related life experiences are summarized in Table 16.

It should be noted that all seven women in Group I gave the same answers to issues of gender and ethnicity, (for example: if a participant answered 'no' to the issue of gender barriers, then they also answer 'no' to ethnic barriers; 'yes' to gender barriers, then 'yes' to ethnic barriers). Only three women in Group II (Lisa, 33; Patty, 43; Gloria, 51) gave the same answer to both barriers. Also, the issue of sexual orientation was raised by two women in Group II (Dora, 36; Patty, 43), both women were living openly as lesbians and felt that this barrier exceeded barriers of gender and ethnicity.

Another interesting observation was the answer of 'Not Sure' in response to barriers of gender and ethnicity. Only one member of Group I (Roxanne, 18) wasn't sure since, in her opinion, these were not problems in Sea Mist but was unsure of their existence in other places. Three women (Connie, 18; Joan, 19; Beth, 20) answered that barriers would impact their success, while three (Anna, 19; Chris, 19; Fran, 22) did not. In Group II, all women had a definite opinion as to whether gender barriers would impact their success. Four women believed that it would (Lisa, 33; Dora, 36; Patty, 43; Sonia, 57) and three believed it would not (Letticia, 36; Toni, 50; and Gloria, 51). More uncertainty existed when considering ethnic barriers. Three women answered 'Not Sure' (Dora, 36; Letticia, 36; Sonia, 57), three women answered 'yes' (Lisa, 33; Patty, 43; Toni, 50), and one woman answered 'no' (Gloria, 51).

TABLE 16

GENDER, ETHNICITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS BARRIERS

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Reaction & Related Life Experiences
<u>Group I</u>				
Roxanne, 18	Not sure	Not sure	--	No prejudice here in Sea Mist, maybe elsewhere. Wouldn't know how to handle but wouldn't give up. Mexican American, IV Strongly Anglo
Connie, 18	Yes	Yes	--	Stereotype of Hispanic women, not me Mother forced to leave school, Mexican culture & poverty Hispanic, IV Strongly Anglo
Anna, 19	No	No	--	Anyone can succeed Many family responsibilities as daughter at home "Women can do anything," pressure to succeed, do more Mexican American, III Slightly Anglo
Joan, 19	Yes	Yes	--	Most lawyers are men. Will handle by "proving them wrong" Pregnant, single mother Hispanic, III Slightly Anglo
Chris, 19	No	No	--	As long as you work hard, no one can pull you down. Love yourself enough and you will overcome obstacles. Pregnant, single mother Mexican American, III Slightly Anglo
Beth, 20	Yes	Yes	--	Job interview, felt judged by color of skin Dark skinned Father had Anglo ethnicity put on birth certificate Taught to distance self from ethnic heritage Offended when people assume she speaks Spanish Hispanic, IV Strongly Anglo
Fran, 22	No	No	--	Once people meet me and know what I've overcome, won't be a problem. Hispanic, III Slightly Anglo

Note: Dash marks, --, indicates that barrier was not addressed in the interview.

TABLE 16 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Reaction & Related Life Experiences
<u>Group II</u>				
Lisa, 33	Yes	Yes	--	It will help me, TWU focus on these issues. People will think that I'm stronger, have worked harder Domestic abuse, traditional husband Teen bride and teen mother. Housewife prior to college. "Mexican side" of family & children see her as selfish Mexican family: "kids 24/7" Off tape: "women need to know not to take shit" Hispanic, III Slightly Anglo Reference male gender roles in ARSMA II
Dora, 36	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Depends on where I live, Colorado, Tennessee Gender, good ol' boys network Domestic work & odd jobs prior to college Prejudice against women with children Living openly as lesbian. Sexual orientation: society is not open, especially in city Mexican American, IV Strongly Anglo Reference male gender roles in ARSMA II
Leticia, 36	No	Not sure	--	Ethnicity: Not in Sea Mist, but then remembered that friends who are RN's are white. Secretarial and office clerk jobs prior to college Teen pregnancy, high school drop out Large family, many caretaker responsibilities Guilt over having less time for family Remediation program for women only, supportive Family comes first. Hispanic, III Slightly Anglo
Patty, 43	Yes	Yes	Yes	Brother taught her mechanical skill, "won't need a man" Electrician, like to show males up on skills Living openly as lesbian. Did not to pursue study/ career in childhood development. Don't judge me on a stereotype, story Society not open, not in Sea Mist, not anywhere Masculine looks. Bathroom incident. Mexican American, III Slightly Anglo Reference male gender roles in ARSMA II
Toni, 50	No	Yes	--	Gender: no, secretarial work is typically female Had to prove myself more because of ethnicity. Have handled problems in past, find "ways around it." Mexican American, III Slightly Anglo Reference male gender roles in ARSMA II

Note: Dash marks, --, indicates that barrier was not addressed in the interview.

TABLE 16 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Reaction & Related Life Experiences
Gloria, 51	No	No	--	<p>Not anymore, lots of Hispanics getting educated. Many low pay service jobs, manufacturing. Domestic abuse, traditional husband Ex-husband did not believe in education for women See lack of education as trapping women in domestic abuse situations. Children come first Off tape: "women need to know don't have to take shit" Hispanic, III Slightly Anglo Reference male gender roles in ARSMA II</p>
Sonia, 57	Yes	Not sure	--	<p>More so because female, stepping stones Homemaker for 30 years, many odd jobs Initially husband did not approve of returning to college Mentions: Hispanic customs of raising children Off tape: "women need to know don't have to take shit" No Preferences, II Mexican Reference male gender roles in ARSMA II</p>

Note: Dash marks, --, indicates that barrier was not addressed in the interview.

Group I. Connie strongly believed that gender and ethnic barriers existed, and these barriers had directly impacted her mother's life as well. Connie's mother was pulled out of the 7th grade because it was expected that she would be married and have a husband "take care of her."

I think it's the stereotype that the world puts on Hispanic women to be specific. You know, there is a stereotype that says Hispanic women should stand in the shadows, of not just of the world but of men. Whether it's your father or your husband, whatever it is, that you're just supposed to stay behind. A lot of times I think that when you go to a college a lot of people perceive that right away. "Well, she's Hispanic. She's a Hispanic woman. I won't be surprised if she doesn't make it."

Just because a lot of people think that you should be submissive, you know, and humbly opinionated. And it's not that way. And actually that's the thing that makes me want to do it even more. Like "No that's not me, and I am not going to do that." I am a woman, yes a Hispanic woman, but I'm just like anybody else. I have a strong head on my shoulders and I'm going to use it to the best of my capabilities. –Connie, 18 (7:427)

Joan, 19 appeared to struggle with the question, as if these barriers had not ever occurred to her. She reasoned that because most lawyers are men, it would be a problem.

There shouldn't be, but, there will probably will be. I'm not saying that I won't be expecting it but ...I will expect it. There's some people out there that won't accept it.... [I'll] Just try to do my best to prove them wrong. –Joan, 19 (2:170)

Beth, 20 who has a dark skin-tone, focused her response on the issue of ethnic barriers.

It's like, on the phone, I'll say "My name is Beth." And they think, "Oh her name is Beth." I guess they think I'm white or something. I don't sound as Mexican as most Mexicans, I don't have an accent. And then I went on my job interview and they were just like, "Oh, you're Mexican." I thought that was kind of racist. Hey, that's not fair. I don't like it at all when they look at my color. I mean look at what I know and what I can get done, my skills, don't judge me for my color. And the schools are the same way. – Beth, 20 (14:381)

Chris, 19 did not believe her gender or ethnicity would impact her success.

I don't think it will affect it at all. I think if you work hard for what you do you'll get there, as long as you work hard. I've always been taught that, that no matter what color or how you talk, if you work hard to get where you're at, nobody's

gonna pull you down. You can do anything. There may be some obstacles like that, but if you love yourself enough can overcome them. -Chris, 19

Fran, 22 believed that once others got to know her, gender and ethnicity would not be issues.

I think that when people meet me on a one-to-one basis or they ask me, they're gonna see what difficult a path I went through. I don't think it would affect me at all. When they look at it they can say, "Oh yeah, she tries really hard. Even though it doesn't look like it, not all her grades show it, she's dedicated to doing her work and she's dedicated to learning." I think that I could be very successful as long as I could get in the door and into the interview. So I think that I'll be very successful. -Fran, 22 (13:446)

Anna, 19 also agreed that gender and ethnicity would not impact her success.

...because there is a lot of people out there, like a lot of Mexican American women that are successful. I don't think that just because of your gender or because you're a woman that's going to make a difference. There's a lot of people that have done a lot of good things, they may not be white but like black, Chinese, Hispanic or Mexican American, whatever you want to call it, they are successful. You don't have to be white or a man, that doesn't make a difference. -Anna, 19 (1:365)

Yet earlier in the interview she made direct reference to gender related issues presenting as barriers to success. Anna referred feeling that she was a woman and "could do anything" added more pressure.

Ya, sometimes they expect a lot out of you, they do. And now it's like "Oh, women can do anything." Like we don't need a man or anything. So like we are expected to do more, or like we try to prove more that we can do better than men, or whatever. -Anna, 19 (1:127)

Also, she referenced her gender responsibilities as the only daughter living with her older parents and a desire to avoid confining gender roles, "being trapped", like her sister.

My sister ... she has three kids, she has well, actually she has four. Like her husband is one of them (laughed). She works a full time job, she works at the police department, she enters all the like reports and stuff. And she still has to come home and cook dinner, and do all this, and deal with him, deal with the kids, and like that's hard. And like I see her, I tell myself; I want to be able to be like that but not like that. I see her come home tired but it's because her husband

does not help her any so she has to be both parents. Her job never ends because she's a mom. Like, I want somebody that will help me do everything.
 -Anna, 19 (1:140)

Roxanne, 18 was the only Group I participant who was not sure.

I really don't know because here in Sea Mist they're [people here] really not prejudice but I have heard that they are at other places. They look at the fact that you are a woman, they look at your race, your age, and all that even though we have so many equal rights laws. It's not really enforced. I don't know, I think it might be a factor. I think I might have a problem with that but I'm hoping that I can succeed in school and they can look at that instead. -Roxanne, 18 (4:195)

Group II. Lisa, 33 who was “raised to be Mexican”, believed that gender and ethnicity would impact her success, and that she would ultimately benefit both by working harder and being different.

Well, actually I think that that's going to help me. I do. For one, this is the way I look at it, I'm going to go to a university, it's Texas Woman's University, all I can see when I envision them is success. They don't train women, they teach them to be stronger, I think. By focusing on ethnicity, by focusing on who you are, your gender. So I think that with all that is going on in the workplaces out there in society, that being a woman, and being Hispanic—at least in my case half Hispanic—won't deny me something I deserve. But it's going to help me. I think somebody will think that I would be stronger or have worked harder.
 -Lisa, 33(9:278)

Lisa's ex-husband had a limited view of a woman's position in the family. When asked what finally motivated her to leave the abusive marriage, she referenced confining cultural gender roles.

The desire to make a change. Because I was in the typical, you know, “You are going to stay home, and you are going to cook and you are going to clean, and you are going to serve me, and you are going to raise the children, and you are just going to do all these things that women have to do.” And “These are women's jobs.” And “This is a women's role.” And I just knew that that wasn't right. That was the typical, that's the way this person [my ex-husband] viewed me. -Lisa, 33 (9:355)

Dora, 36 believed that ethnic barriers would largely depend on where she was living. In response to gender barriers, she referenced the “good ol’ boy network” and bias against women with children.

No matter where you go, you’re always gonna have that good ol’ boy network. And they will probably always want to choose a man who’s less experienced over a woman because they feel a man can do the job better. Or you’ve got some that will say, like, I have a child. “She’s got a kid, and that kid’s gonna take priority.” Which, yeah, my kid will probably always take priority. I’m gonna also do my job too. –Dora, 36 (5:433)

She felt the larger barrier would be her sexual orientation.

What probably will be a hindrance more than anything is my sexual preference, that’s what it will probably be more than anything. No matter how open this society is becoming, there’s still many people out there that can’t deal with it, especially here in this city. I’m probably the first openly gay person in the Hall of Fame [student honor court]. But then again, I don’t flaunt it either, I am who I am. That’s the way I’ve always been, either take me as I am or don’t take me at all, I don’t care. You don’t pay my bills anyway. –Dora, 36 (5:446)

She also believed that many women were looking for mates to “take care of them.”

Instead, Dora intended to take responsibility for her own life.

There a lot of females out there, yeah they do what they have to do to get by but they’re also looking for a rich man to marry. Once they get that rich man to marry, “Well I don’t have to work no more [sic].” I’m not looking for that rich woman to marry either. As much as I just enjoy sitting around doing nothing, sitting on the computer, I also get bored very easily. So I know that it’s up to me to move my life forward. –Dora, 36 (5:462)

Leticia, 36 did not believe that gender barriers were an issue for her, but earlier in the interview she referenced a remediation program for women and that she believed that not having males in the class was beneficial.

It made a difference because we communicated, we didn’t feel out of place. If we would have been put in other [mixed] class we would have failed, to the point that we would have wanted to withdraw. This was a special class at the west campus, to help us get our levels up. I really enjoyed because I met other women like me, going through the same struggle. And I learned a lot, I learned more there than I

did in high school because when I didn't understand they would come and explain it to me. –Leticia, 36 (11:240)

At first, Leticia believed that ethnicity would not be an issue in Sea Mist, then she remembered that none of her RN friends were Hispanic.

But...most of my friends that are going here are white, they're Anglos. One Hispanic friend that I have is an LVN. It might make a difference... I guess I didn't see race until now that we're talking about it. When you brought it up, I was just thinking, the friends that I have who are RN's are not Hispanic they're white.

Maybe that I am Hispanic will make a difference, encourage others. "She went to school, she did it and she has six kids." That was my reason, because I've seen other people do it. And if they could do it, I could do it if I put my mind to it. If I could make a difference for others, I could do it, I'm all there.
-Leticia, 36(11:375)

Patty, 43 enjoyed challenging gender stereotypes. As an electrician, she loved challenging narrow minded co-workers.

My dad and my brother, they're the ones [that said] "You're not gonna need a man [to do these things for you]." They had hoped that I would get married and all this stuff, but I went the other way. But I love showing myself off in a man's field! Like in all the jobs I've had, I've been the only female or there'll be, maybe, another one. I love it. "This is a man's world." "Sabes qué hito? [Know what little boy] I can do what you do and I can probably do it better than you do." So I always reached for that and the guys, they knew it. They knew it.
-Patty, 43 (6:138)

However, like Dora, Patty believed that her sexual orientation was a larger barrier.

Concerns discouraged her from pursuing her first academic interest, childhood development.

It will affect because like I said I am very honest, and what have you, and I have been living as a lesbian since the late 70's. That's why, I would have first gone to early childhood development, but people tend to stereo type us, and so that would have prevented me from that. Yeah, because of people... It's open more to society today, but yet you still got a group or a percentage that "Oh, I don't want my daughter", especially a daughter since I'm a female, "I don't want my daughter with that lesbian." Same token with the boys.

In the drug and alcohol counseling I don't see that as a problem. I don't because number one I am going to be helping the person, the child. And it's more accepted. Don't judge me for my lifestyle, judge me for me trying to help your son or daughter. –Patty, 43 (6:282)

Patty wanted people to get to know her before judging her and did not want to be seen as a stereotype. When asked if she believed things might be different if she lived elsewhere, she replied:

It would be the same anywhere. Because if people are going to stereotype you, they are going to stereotype you anywhere. It doesn't matter if you're here or in Hawaii or Illinois. With me, I believe I'm very obvious. Even with my hair like this, I'll go into a women's restroom and they'll say, "Sir!" "Oh, can't you see my breasts!" (We laugh) I actually flashed a person one time. I'm not talking about flashing on top. I unzipped my pants and said, "Do you see anything hanging! No, right. OK." Estoy muy loca hita. [I am too crazy.] –Patty, 43 (6:347)

Toni, 50 did not believe that gender was an issue in her secretarial career, but that ethnicity was an issue.

My ethnicity, yes. Well my gender possibly not, because I have always been in the secretarial field and the pieces of the puzzle fit because that is where society thinks it's right. If you are a woman, you can be a secretary, but if you are a woman you cannot be a manager or a supervisor. This is what I heard growing up. Now the ethnicity, yes I've had a lot of situations where I had to prove myself. There have been times that I know had I been anybody else it would have been just overlooked or you would have automatically been placed, where you didn't have to work so hard, or prove yourself. Yes, those were a few things that I ran into. –Toni, 50 (8:264)

Gloria, 51 believed that gender and ethnicity were not barriers now, at least compared to the past.

Now, no extent. Before, very much so ...but not at this point in time. Way back, when I was first going back to college, if you were Hispanic it was almost like they put you in the back of the room. If you didn't know, they didn't bother to explain to you because you were Hispanic, so to speak. In fact, I had a teacher that kind of told me that. Now I don't think it's that big of an issue. If I want to try, they're there for me. I have to put my effort in as well. I can't just say "I'm Hispanic and they're not gonna help me." Nowadays it's become a little easier for the Hispanic population. –Gloria, 51 (12:253)

Like Lisa, Gloria's ex-husband also had a very limited view of women.

[My ex-husband] is like the old... women stay at home and the men do everything. As a matter of fact, I left him at a good time because he had already planned out our family. He had told me that as soon as the girls turned 15 they were gonna quit school. They didn't need an education. They were women. "They don't need education, men are supposed to support them." He already had it in his mind that when my two girls turned 15 they would quit school, he was gonna sign them out of school. "No, they're not going on to college they don't need it." I know that if I stayed with him he would of never let me go to college.
 –Gloria, (12:548)

Despite these beliefs, Gloria recognized the need of greater educational attainment levels for Hispanics.

Hispanics, instead of picking ourselves up, they're like when you put lots of crabs into a bucket. They try to climb up. As soon as one's up, someone pulls it down. That's the example I used with the Mexican women. You've got to do better and you've got to support one another. The Hispanic population is going down because we're bringing ourselves down. You've got to help whoever it is, whether it be a mechanic, or whatever, to just bring him up. He's trying to get up. Don't pull him down like the crabs in the bucket. Help him up instead of pulling him down. –Gloria, 51 (12:445)

Bottom line, you're not going anywhere without an education I don't care if you're white, Black, or Hispanic, or what, you need an education. In our population, unfortunately, the Hispanic culture it's just... I mean it used to be where the Blacks were lower, and now we're falling behind.
 –Gloria, 51 (12:528)

Sonia, 57 believed that gender barriers were present, but was not sure about ethnic barriers.

I don't think that there's too many. I really don't know. I mean...you would have some, ah, ah, stepping stones as you go along. And maybe more because you are a female. But hopefully that would change. And probably the quality of what you do and the quality of education that you have. –Sonia, 57 (10:449)

However, in her interview she did reference the Hispanic cultural values related to raising children. At one point in the interview, she referenced not putting her education “on hold” for her family any longer. When probed about this response she replied:

I don't think that I really put it on hold but, I think that like the customs that we have, the Hispanics, like, we want to raise our kids. That's the way I felt at the time, I am 57 years old now, and I feel like I had to raise my kids first. But I feel like I should have started school when my son started the first grade and I didn't do it. So I cain't [sic] change that, but I can fulfill my goal. –Sonia, 57 (10:84)

She also mentioned her husband's initial negative reaction to her wanting to go to college.

He is a custodian. He's been with the school district 32 years, as long as we have been married. At first he was like a typical Mexicano. You know, they get insecure and all that, but then when I brain washed him [She laughed], no, when I told him, "I am doing this for me and you." Well, I was going to do it anyway. I wasn't going to let him stop me. Because, I had already made up my mind, I was already a wife, I had already given him 2 children, there was nothing else for me to do but to get educated. –Sonia, 57 (10:200)

Self-Efficacy

As stated in the literature review, self-efficacy is the component of a person's self-concept that entails an evaluation of the effectiveness of attaining certain skills and abilities (Bandura, 1977). Efficacy levels determine how individuals will cope with perceived barriers, as well as, which coping skills will be enacted, and the level and the duration of coping efforts (Herr & Cramer, 1996). Question 5 references occupational efficacy, which is defined as the participants' perceived effectiveness of at attaining certain occupational skills (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy and occupational efficacy are related to aspirations; the greater the perceived efficacy to fulfill educational and career requirements, the wider array of career possibilities are considered (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1995; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996).

Unfortunately, participants were not asked directly about their perception of attaining their occupational goals. Further complicating matters was the fact that many

participants had limited occupational experiences or training. Therefore, this portion of question could not be addressed directly. Instead, “evidence” of self-efficacy in the interview transcripts was inferred by the researcher, whether or not it related directly to “occupational self-efficacy”. Table 17 summarizes self-efficacy findings in relation to participants’ perception of barriers and coping mechanisms. The table’s right hand column is labeled “Potential Indicators of Efficacy.” Indicators of high efficacy were listed under the column “Positive Examples”; indicators of low efficacy were listed under the column “Negative Examples.” The label “Potential” was used in reference to the fact that no objective or direct judgment of indicators was available, therefore the researcher used discretion that in determining the indicators classification as positive or negative, which was subjective. For example, accepting responsibility for one’s children could be viewed as a ‘positive’ example, while placing family expectations above all other factors could be viewed as a ‘negative’ example. Therefore, classifications of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ were taken in the context of the individual interviews.

Table 18 includes a tally of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ indicators for each participant, as well as the net difference for each individual. Note ‘+’ in the “Net” column indicate more positive than negative indicators; ‘-’, more negative than positive indicators. As a whole, Group II had over twice as many ‘positive’ indicators as Group I, 56 and 26, respectively. Also, Group I had over twice as many ‘negative’ indicators as Group II, 28 and 11 respectively. All women in Group II had more positive indicators than negative; while, only three women in Group I (Roxanne, 18; Connie, 18; Chris, 19) had more positives indicators. Rank order of net scores is show in Table 19.

TABLE 17
SELF-EFFICIACY

Participant	Potential Indicators of Efficacy	
	Positive Examples	Negative Examples
<u>Group I</u>		
Roxanne, 18	Overcame losses, mother & boyfriend School important, "make dad proud" Wanted to build more motivation Proactive, paying for university education Forensics as very high interest "Won't give up" if barriers exist	No research on seeking forensics Tension, guilt between goals and caring for dad and brother "Depressed" if ethnic/gender barriers exist
Connie, 18	Focused on teaching, passion Research: volunteer, speaks with teachers, father Defined success: doing what you love Describes self as independent Proud to pay for college "I'm gonna make <u>something</u> of myself" High energy Clear short term and long term goals	
Anna, 19		Reluctant to ask for help, direction Reluctant to say no People pleasing, peer pressure Sense of overwhelm, stuck Mother says she should return to school. Returning to school # 1 goal, yet no activity College away to leave family obligations No vision of career goal, except health care "Nothing is holding me back", need to make time for job search and school applications
Joan, 19		Career interest in competition with aunt Will not ask aunt for advice "Proving" as a motivator for her Interested in medicine, but didn't think she "could handle it" Brought mother to interview Answers geared toward mother's approval
Chris, 19	Gender & ethnicity barriers: "Love yourself enough" to overcome obstacles Want to "be something" Research in medical field	"Can't go far" without her family Wants to be RN, paperwork not direct care
Beth, 20	Some career research Strong interest in medicine & surgery Advice: don't give up Wanted: more guidance, mentor or tutor	Interview had much focus on barriers Few systems of support Proving to parents that she can do Motivated, seeking material comfort, "being well off" Distanced from heritage

TABLE 17 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Potential Indicators of Efficacy	
	Positive Examples	Negative Examples
Fran, 22	Emotionally strong but struggling Financially responsible for family of origin Had to change thinking to "put school first" Focus on what needs to be done	Tears, upset with university professor story Little focus on barriers, many exist Selected chemical engineering, wanted to make good money Motivation: move family out of poverty
<u>Group II</u>		
Lisa, 33	Overcame abuse marriage High level terminal goals Psychology area of passion for her Doing research on what professors do Defined success as feeling of satisfaction Did not believe she needed to change for career, just learn & evolve Determined she will succeed, "Oh <u>I will</u> " Saw gender & ethnicity as asset Proactive to problem solving; calendar, perseverance in getting childcare Complimented teachers because they are rigorous Advice: you make yourself happy	
Dora, 36	High level terminal educational goals Campus job: already doing investigative reporting Ambition: double majors Feels successful now, good reputation Living openly as a lesbian "I'm not gonna change", be myself Proactive problem solving: home schooling daughter & scheduling Self responsibility for success: "it's on me" Doesn't see obstacles: "I won't let anything get in my way." (5:285) Said she was her own strongest support. It's (education) is for me.	
Leticia, 36	"Worked her way up" in jobs Working to quell anxiety Strong work ethic "Heart is in nursing" (11:175) Remediation program for women, supportive peer group Advice: Believe in yourself	Intimated on job due to lack of education Family first, guilt about time away from family "Did not want to get on bad side" of college staff when asking about childcare

TABLE 17 (CONTINUED)

Participant	Potential Indicators of Efficacy	
	Positive Examples	Negative Examples
Patty, 43	<p>Some research on field</p> <p>Positive attitude</p> <p>Battling depression; seeks sense of normalcy</p> <p>Brother taught mechanical skill so she "wouldn't need a man"</p> <p>Enjoyed showing up men in the field</p> <p>Self responsibility: "the only obstacles that can stop me" is self</p> <p>"Broad person" tell you how I feel, I don't hide anything</p> <p>Living openly as a lesbian</p> <p>Won't need to change in career</p>	<p>States she has lack of confidence & discipline in college</p> <p>Confidence depends somewhat on teacher (high school story)</p> <p>Avoided childhood development as major, sexual preference prejudice</p> <p>Won't need to change in career, barring medical issues</p>
Toni, 50	<p>Enjoyed college – valued education for self</p> <p>Developed confidence that she could "do it", "we can't give up"</p> <p>Defined success as happiness in job</p> <p>Acknowledged gender and ethnic barriers, expressed that she could manage it</p> <p>Expressed determination and patience in earning administrative assistant degree</p>	<p>No research yet into new goal of child psychologist</p>
Gloria, 51	<p>Overcame abusive marriage</p> <p>Much volunteer activities and community involvement</p> <p>"Worked her way up" in jobs</p> <p>Her education is for "me"</p> <p>Proactive: calendar, make goals visual</p> <p>High confidence, determined, empowered; wants to encourage in other women</p> <p>Advice: you have to want to do it and work hard</p>	<p>Children come first</p>
Sonia, 57	<p>Education is for her, only thing left to do after 30 year of taking care of family</p> <p>When husband did not support her college attendance, didn't matter to her</p> <p>Education helped to "find" herself</p> <p>Overcame initial fears on returning to school; build self-worth</p> <p>Describes self as outspoken</p> <p>Sees education as her empowerment, wants to encourage in other women</p> <p>Not need to change in career if "pursue and accomplish what I want"</p>	<p>Asked for feedback, validation from researcher 3 times during interview</p> <p>Undecided on career goal</p>

TABLE 18
SELF-EFFICIACY TALLY

Participant	Potential Indicators of Efficacy		
	Positive	Negative	Net
<u>Group I</u>			
Roxanne, 18	6	3	+3
Connie, 18	8	0	+8
Anna, 19	0	9	-9
Joan, 19	0	6	-6
Chris, 19	3	2	+1
Beth, 20	4	5	-1
Fran, 22	4	4	0
	<hr/> 26	<hr/> 29	<hr/> -3
<u>Group II</u>			
Lisa, 33	11	0	+11
Dora, 36	11	0	+11
Letticia, 36	6	3	+3
Patty, 43	9	4	+5
Toni, 50	5	1	+4
Gloria, 51	7	1	+6
Sonia, 57	7	2	+5
	<hr/> 56	<hr/> 11	<hr/> +45

TABLE 19
SELF-EFFICIACY RANK ORDER

Participant	Rank Order of Net Scores
Lisa, 33	+11
Dora, 36	+11
Connie, 18	+8
Gloria, 51	+6
Patty, 43	+5
Sonia, 57	+5
Toni, 50	+4
Roxanne, 18	+3
Letticia, 18	+3
Chris, 19	+1
Fran, 22	0
Beth, 20	-1
Joan, 19	-6
Anna, 19	-9

It should be noted that the number of 'positive' and 'negative' indicators are not as significant to self-efficacy as the meaning that participants attached to their statements. Therefore, the tally and rankings of Tables 18 and 19 must be viewed strictly as potential indicators of participants' efficacy beliefs.

Group I. Connie, 18 had the highest number of positive indicators (8) and no negative indicators. In this except, she spoke of her independence its impact to her goals.

... through high school, that independence really came in its way, it was like, "I'm gonna to make something of myself. I'm gonna be good! I'm gonna be up there." When I come back in 10 years, I'm gonna say, "look this is where I'm at because I went to school and I did it all!" -Connie, 18 (7:536)

Anna, 19 had the greatest number of negative indicators, with no positive indicators. In the interview she made reference to people pleasing, feeling susceptible to peer pressure, and feeling overwhelmed.

*Really I don't have anything that will hold me back. It's just I haven't taken the time to like get up and look for, either a job or like to go and enroll in school, fill out applications for other schools. I myself have not done that.
-Anna, 19 (1:209)*

*It's not that I quit because I don't know, its boring, or it's hard, or I can't handle it. It's not that. There are other things that distract me. I guess on that part I'm weak. Like I can't say no, that's my problem, I can't be mean. And people take advantage of that sometimes and that's why I get distracted.
-Anna, 19 (1:119)*

Group II. Lisa, 33 and Dora, 36 had the greatest number of positive indicators (11), and no negative indicators. Here Dora commented on how going to college was really for her.

*I say a lot about how I want to show my daughter that a good education is important but at the same time its for me to show that, yeah, I graduated out of high school, I went into the Airforce, and after 10 years I spent just taking care of my daughter and working and then I decided to come back. Now it's for me.
-Dora, 36 (5:562)*

Sonia, 57 had a net score of (+5); however, three times in the interview, she sought approval/ validation from the researcher, asking if her answer was “good.” Below is an excerpt from Sonia’s transcript that may explain why she sought feedback.

Debra: You can see how far you’ve come?

Sonia: Yes. I can see how far I’ve come. Can you see that?

Debra: Oh, yes! But, what I see it doesn’t matter, what matters is that you see it.

Sonia: Well, sometimes people, ah, ...cause you’re up there already. See I’m not there, and I’m not going to be. I’m just right here. See, that’s why I am asking.

Advice To Someone Like Me

The last question posed to nine of the 14 participants was:

What advice would you give someone like yourself about the process of going to college and getting educated?

Although this question appeared on the interview protocol, in the flow of the actual interview (and in follow-ups) the researcher simply overlooked posing this question to Roxanne, 18; Connie, 18; Anna, 19; Chris, 19 and Joan, 19. In reflecting on my interview notes, I realized that Roxanne, Connie, Anna and Chris were the women I had given the most career guidance to while Joan was the most resistive to the interview process. Given this scenario, the fact that these women had the least experience with the educational process, and my own sense that these women were, for the most part, trying to find their way, I elected to proceed without their input on this question.

Reponses from the other nine participants are given below. Most speak to giving encouragement. The recurring themes arising from their words are “You can do it”, “If I can do it, anybody can.”

Beth, 20 stresses perseverance by remembering the long-term rewards.

Don't give up. Don't stop going to school. Even if it's just for one semester and you have to pay off loans, get right back at it. That's what I had to do. Once you stop, you start working, you get addicted to those paychecks and they're nothing. You're working for nothing. You're working just to live - for your rent, for your food, when you could be in school. I mean, the money that's left over from financial aid, that helps you too. They don't think about all that, they just think "Oh, my job. I'm making a lot now." But going to school pays off in the long run when I'm going to get a job. I can fill in those blanks that say "How many years of college?" And not everybody can. They leave them all blank. I remember when I first filled out one I thought, "Oh, my God, this is all blank." Now I can at least say I attend school, I'm currently working towards this. I have a major. Before it was, "Oh a diploma." That doesn't mean anything now. It means McDonalds. - Beth, 20 (14:428)

Fran, 22 struggled with balancing the need for full-time work to support her family with going to college. She advises others like herself to go slow.

I would give them the advice of starting off part-time until you're able to get to a steady place and then just increase your hours slowly. Sooner or later you'll get to where you need to go. You'll get a degree. So you're not in a rush. Even though you keep on working that could help you a little if you dedicate yourself more to wanting to go to school and finishing your school quicker. I think that would be the best advice I could give. -Fran, 22 (13:474)

Lisa, 33 ended an abusive marriage. She advises focusing on your individual meaning of success and making the appropriate changes.

If you do not have the feeling of success then you need to go to college...I would say that if you're not happy in the situation you're in I would recommend going to college because there is so many women that are in my situation (domestic abuse). I stayed in it 15 years not knowing what college was about, not knowing about the help that I could get. If I had known that the government would help people, I mean, I would have left 15 years ago.

So, the advice just is that if you are not happy, you need to make yourself happy, and get yourself into a situation that you want to be in. And if it is the college route, there are ways to going to college. I mean I heard it so many times, "I can't afford it, I can't afford it." There's just so many organizations out there to help. One of the things is "I don't have child care." They're not motivated. I think that that's one thing, they need to push themselves to get there, because I pushed myself, I know cause I was one of those people. -Lisa, 33 (9:332)

Dora, 36 just encourages others to live their dreams no matter what.

No matter how much you think the world is just beating you up, just don't give up. If you have that dream of having that diploma like I do and even if you're just trying to get a high school diploma, don't give up. Just keep on going for it and push yourself. Push yourself to the limit that you feel you're ready to drop, then push yourself a little bit more because you will actually find it in you to do it. There may be people out there that are trying to put you down and keep you from accomplishing your dream, maybe your own family members, a husband, someone that tries to keep you from getting it. Don't let anybody stop you from getting your dream.

If your dream is to go to college and get a degree, then don't let anybody stop you, just do it. In the long run, it's for you. It's not for your family. It's for you...to show...like for me its to show that I've done something... My advice to anybody would just be to not let go of your dreams, to live your dreams. Make yourself happy, because if you don't make yourself happy you're not gonna make anybody in this world happy. –Dora, 36 (5:549)

Letticia, 36 echoes the same sentiment, and reminds others to remember the payoff.

It's going to be a lot of hard work. But when you finish it's going to be a big accomplishment, it's going to feel so good. It's like going up a mountain, struggling, but once you get there, coming down that hill is smooth. To believe in yourself, to have faith.

There's struggles but to just keep on going. We're all going to go through some struggles, with our kids, financial, it's always going to be there even if you don't go to school. But the big difference is when you're in school you're climbing up to get somewhere. –Letticia, 36 (11:414)

Patty, 43 advises others to investigate their dreams by doing something, then follow up on those dreams and seeing them through.

If they are trying to figure out what they want, give it a semester, give it a shot. See if that's the route they want to take. Do you want to go to college or do you want to take a correspondence course? But do something, don't wait like me. Cause by the time I know it, I'm already gonna be half a century.

I would tell them, "Hey, go give it a shot." And once you start, don't give up. Like me, when I first started, the first three days of summer session, it was "Oh No! Forget this!" And to be honest with you, I probably would have if I had paid for the course but since I was going to be under the Pell Grant, oh well... I got to stick it out.

I would tell them, don't give up and once you start, see it through. Don't give up. Look at it like a relationship that you want to make work out. Like you want that relationship to work out with your boyfriend, make this a relationship that you want to work out. –Patty, 43(6:361)

Toni, 50 encouraged other women to look for and ask for help.

There's a lot of help out there that I didn't know about. And working here has opened my eyes. A lot of financial help.

Find financial help, find outside supporters, family, friends.

If you have children, you know, you'll find people that'll help you if you have to attend night classes. They'll help you take care of your children, if they're little ones. If they are older, children need to understand by communicating to them that, "Okay, it's my turn to go to school." And this is what I need to hear from you, homework, activities, just plan this out. Of course it has to be two parents. If it's a single parent it's going to be tougher but you can find friends to help you. I just say "Go for it." Do whatever you need to get it done. –Toni, 50 (8:322)

Gloria, 51 tells others that only they can do it for themselves by making up their minds, doing the work, and seeking support.

You've got to want to do and nobody can do it for you. It's a drive. It's a WANT to do it. It's like, it's like...you've got to want to do it. Period. You can go forever, "Woe is me, I'm not gonna do it, I can't do it, I'm not smart enough." I had a 6th grade education, I went to a big ol' classroom and it was a "Whoa!" But you're got to want to do it. It's got to be within you to do it. And you're got to find support out there, someone who will encourage you. You can't do it yourself. You've got to set a goal...and don't make your goals so big. Make it small. Accomplish that goal, make it a small goal then accomplish THAT goal, and so forth. Like when I had a 6th grade education I wanted a masters degree, which is not even possible. You need to start at the bare...I mean hey I wanted that but I needed to start with my GED. And right now it's my associates. I can't get my master's if I don't get this one. You've got to want to do it. It takes dedication and it takes hard, hard work. It takes a lot of time, time.

And then, look at it this way, you're not going anywhere. The time is there. –Gloria, 51 (12:348)

Sonia, 57 who returned 30 years after dropping out of high school, advises other returning students to not be afraid.

Not to be afraid. To not to let nobody stand in between them. And not to feel like they can't do it, inferior. Not to be intimidated because statistically the students that make better grades are the older students. That to go for it.
—Sonia, 57 (10:482)

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

President William J. Clinton in White House Strategy Session on Improving Hispanic Student Achievement, June 15, 2000:

We know that the achievement levels can be raised. The question is whether we have the will to do what we know works. If we're going to set high expectations of students, we must have high expectations of ourselves to do what it takes to make sure all of our students can make the grade (PAC, 2000, p. 34).

The purpose of this study was to describe the cultural, socioeconomic, and educational factors related to occupational aspirations of Mexican American and Hispanic women attending a south Texas community college. Toward this purpose, this investigation was developed as a descriptive qualitative study. By gaining an understanding of participants' lived experiences, postsecondary institutions may develop more effective means of assisting these at-risk students in reaching their educational and occupational goals.

Female Mexican American and Hispanic students represent a growing, yet significantly understudied student population (Vera, 1998). Gender roles factor heavily in the education attainment of Hispanics (Velez, 1989). Cultural and societal values place issues of schooling for this population as highly interdependent with work and

family roles (Ortiz, 1995); which may in turn, impact aspirations (Clayton et. al, 1992). Most Mexican American women must face two facts that serve to limit attainment levels: (a) location in low socioeconomic communities with few resources or roles models, and (b) membership in a culture that does not support women's work identities, particularly when such identities contradict traditional gender roles (Ortiz, 1995; Segura, 1992; Vera, 1998). Being a Hispanic female decreases the chances of attaining higher levels of educational and occupational attainment (Velez, 1989; Vera, 1998). This investigation was conducted in order to shed light on issues that may hinder both aspirations and attainment levels for this student population.

The literature indicated that the vast majority of Hispanics seeking higher education enter via the community college (Burnett, 2000; Fisher, 1998; NCLR, 1997), particularly in Texas (Clayton et. al., 1992; THECB, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). Study volunteers included 14 women who had attended the same community college and had self-identified as Mexican American or Hispanic. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in order capture participants' recollections of past events and factors impacting their goals and aspirations.

Summary of Study Findings

The following research question guided the study's development and was used as the basis for five subsidiary questions:

What relationship exists among the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational experiences of Mexican American women attending a south Texas community college and their occupational aspirations?

The five subsidiary questions addressed components of the primary question. While all five questions are related to one another and the primary question, it should be noted that each question can be viewed individually. As a result, much information was obtained in the course of the investigation. In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the findings, this section is structured in much the same manner as Chapter 4. Findings are summarized relative to each of the subsidiary questions, as are conclusions and implications. In addition, findings relative to participants' demographic characteristics and the advice offered by participants are also summarized. The section concludes with an overview of the findings as related to the primary question.

Study Demographics

With regard to the question, "*Who participated in the study?*" a summary of the findings includes the following:

- *The study included seven women who had entered college for an associate's degree plan shortly (two years or less) after high school graduation. This group was identified as "Group I" or "recent high school graduates."*
- *The study included seven women who had entered college for an associate's degree plan several years after having left high school (with or without a diploma). This group was identified as "Group II" or "returning students."*
- *All participants had attended Sea Mist College within a year of the interviews, which took place during the summer of 2001.*
- *Sea Mist College was the only college ever attended by 11 of the 14 participants.*
- *All participants volunteered, thus the study utilized a convenient sample. The extent of the generalizability of the study findings to the actual population is not known.*

Group I and II differed significantly on several points: (a) study recruitment method, (b) interview dynamics, (c) academic focus and occupational maturity, and (d) the complexity of competing school, work, and family roles. Group I participants enrolled as a result of telephone recruitment; Group II, as a result of the recruitment poster. In general, Group I interviews were characterized as resistive while Group II interviews were receptive. Members of Group II had many competing family responsibilities while Group I members had significantly less. Because of the generational differences between the groups, Group II participants had more life experience on which to reflect upon. This additional experience enabled Group II participants to have more realistic expectations about future careers and tended to result in greater focus on their areas of study.

Conclusions and Implications. When reviewing the study's conclusions, the reader must consider the characteristics of the study sample. The fact that these women participated in the study may make them atypical of the population. Recall that the researcher encountered much resistance from members of the population during telephone recruitment efforts. Conclusions drawn from this sample may be most representative of Mexican American and Hispanic women who view themselves as successfully navigating the educational process, or see such success as imminent.

While generalizability is not a measure inclusive of qualitative inquiry, the researcher's "educated hunch" is that issues raised in the course of the investigation are also representative of issues for the larger population, though perhaps not in the same proportions. For example, transportation was an issue for only two of the study participants; however, given the financial constraints faced by most members of the

population, it is reasonable to conclude that transportation may be an issue for a more significant portion of the population. Likewise, the issues of familial support, teen pregnancy, domestic abuse, and remediation may have a different level of significance for the population than was captured in this study's findings.

Question One

With regard to the first question, "*What factors relate to the decision to attend college?*" a summary of the findings includes the following:

- *Participants attended college to advance job opportunities; such opportunities were equated to increased personal choices and improved lifestyles.*
- *Recent high school graduates attended college, in part, because they felt that college represented the "next step" in their lives; while returning adults were compelled by life circumstances to attend college.*
- *Participants attended community college because it was less expensive than a university and in the most convenient location, close to their homes.*
- *Participants attended community college because it was more accessible via open enrollment and less intimidating than a university.*

Participants viewed college attendance as occupational preparation that would eventually translate into social mobility. Monetary gain, movement out of poverty, and material comforts were often mentioned as predicted outcomes once a degree was obtained. Indeed, 12 of the participants related that their job histories were in low-pay, traditionally female positions in the service industry. Group I participants related that they had planned to attend college prior to high school graduation, most often because of parental encouragement. Group II participants decided to attend college in order to address some life circumstance (divorce, job instability, disability) so as to provide for economic survival.

Lower cost of attendance was the first consideration in selecting the community college rather than the local university. Family ties and a desire or necessity to remain in the local area was the second most frequent consideration for selecting to attend a community college. Open enrollment, the absence of entrance requirements (SAT/ ACT scores), and remediation needs made community college more accessible. In addition, several participants mentioned their belief that the university was “intimidating” and would not provide the comfort and personal attention that they currently received from SMC.

Conclusions and Implications. Study findings related to reasons for college attendance and the selection of a community college as an institution of higher learning supported the literature findings (Clayton, et. al., 1992; Cross, 1981; Fisher, 1998; NCLR, 1997). In discussing college, many participants implied that community college was not a consideration, but the only consideration if a degree was to be obtained; thus, findings supported literature relating that community colleges were the only venue to higher education for certain student groups (Clark, 1960; Dougherty, 1994; Lee & Grant, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Findings imply that community colleges play a crucial role to the successful educational attainment for Mexican American and Hispanic women.

Participants equated the attainment of a college degree with the prospect of attaining “good jobs.” Most participants made reference to their belief that not attaining a degree would keep them in “bad jobs.” While participants were not asked directly about their conceptions of “good” and “bad” jobs, their responses implied that a “good job” was one in which the participant could: earn a livable wage that allowed for the

support of the family, avoid job instability, attain social mobility, and develop a sense of personal satisfaction or “happiness.” In addition, “good” jobs were referenced as jobs that participants enjoyed, implying that “bad” jobs consisted of work that was not enjoyed. Participants’ distinction between “good” and “bad” jobs appears to parallel Kinchloe’s (1999) distinction between “good work” and “bad work”. Likewise, findings imply that “good jobs” were equated to attaining a career, where a career was distinguished as enjoyable work that provides a specific, life-long focus (Adams, 2000).

Question Two

With regard to the second question, “*To what extent do generational status, level of assimilation or acculturation factor into occupational goal setting?*” a summary of the findings includes the following:

- *Generational status was not a factor in occupational goal setting.*
- *Parental educational attainment was significantly higher for recent high school graduates than for returning students; cultural and generational differences may be key. Differences did not impact occupational goal setting.*
- *Despite the controversy over ethnic labels, self-identification with Mexican American or Hispanic ethnic labels did not impact occupational goal setting.*
- *Level of assimilation or acculturation as a factor in occupational goal setting could not be determined. As a whole, the study sample had a high Anglo orientation.*
- *Participants with bicultural modes of acculturation were more likely to self-identify as Mexican American. Non-biculturals were most likely to self-identify as Hispanic.*

Educational goals related to career goals were relatively equal for all participants, where 12 participants had aspirations of obtaining at least a masters degree. Participants include second-generation (3), third-generation (4) and fourth-generation (7) Americans.

All Group I parents had at least some high school education, where only three Group II parents reached this level. Parental educational attainment rates are most likely due to generational differences between the two groups.

Because the entire sample group was highly Anglicized, level of assimilation/acculturation as a factor in goal setting could not be determined. Age and ARSMA II orientations appeared to be related. As a whole, Group I members had orientations that were more Anglicized than Group II members (Table 20).

Nine participants had 'Slightly Anglo' orientations; four, had 'Strongly Anglo' orientations. A 'Slightly Anglo' orientation most often correlated with a bicultural mode of acculturation (Table 21). However, non-biculturals had higher Anglicized modes of acculturation and were more likely to self-identify as 'Hispanic.'

Conclusions and Implications. The discovery of such high Anglo orientations points to some disturbing implications. Ramirez Largo's (1995) findings implied that assimilation may be a requirement for successfully attaining graduate degrees. However, an implication of this study could be that high Anglo orientations are a prerequisite to even considering any level of post-secondary educational attainment. A second implication could be that the educational process itself tends to Anglicize non-Anglo students. Also, since participants had relatively high aspirations, a third implication might the "cooling out" phenomenon may be mostly related to cultural differences rather than low socioeconomic status. However, since half the participants had earned 25 credit hours or less (Table 5 & 6), the "cooling out" phenomenon may not have had sufficient time to manifest for participants who were still very early in their degree plans.

TABLE 20
ARSMA II ORIENTATION TALLY

Orientation Totals	Group I	Group II
II Mexican	0	1
III Slightly Anglo	4	5
IV Strongly Anglo	3	1

TABLE 21
ARSMA II ORIENTATION & MODE TALLY

Orientation & Mode	Total # of Participants	# Identified as Mexican American	# Identified as Hispanic
II Mexican & Bicultural	1	No Preference	No Preference
III Slightly Anglo & Bicultural	6	4	2
III Slightly Anglo & Marginalized	2	0	2
III Slightly Anglo & Separated	1	0	1
IV Strongly Anglo & Assimilated	2	1	1
IV Strongly Anglo & Unable to Classify	2	0	2

Most participants who self-identified as ‘Hispanic’ attached a meaning to the label that translated into being either more ‘American’ than Mexican Americans, or not being marginalized like Mexican Americans. In describing the basic assumptions of critical theory, Kinchloe and McLaren (1998) reference social mechanisms that perpetuate the status of the affluent in society by creating a ‘natural order’ supporting reasons for social inequities. The ‘Hispanic’ participants seemed to have internalized a natural order that implies why Mexican Americans are marginalized, and in labeling themselves as Hispanic they prevent being associated the less desirable ‘social others.’

Yet, given the social and cultural history of the region, most of the participants did have Mexican ancestry. It is the researcher’s hunch that ‘Hispanic’ participants were not only more assimilated than ‘Mexican American’ participants, but that they experienced more tension with regards to their ethnic identities, as well as gender roles associated with cultural socialization. Such tensions may have led to personal ambiguity in evaluating their own susceptibility to both gender and ethnic barriers (question five).

Question Three

With regard to the third question, “*What factors relate to the choice of academic or technical goals and aspirations in community colleges?*” a summary of the findings includes:

- *Students were equally as likely to select goals and aspirations in technical majors as in academic majors.*
- *For Group II, reasons stated for selecting majors mirrored participants’ reasons for attending college.*
- *Regardless of whether the selected major was technical or academic, students intended to transfer to a university.*

- *Students relied on personal role models rather than professional role models.*
- *The popular media provided input on career considerations.*
- *Occupational goals showed some sensitivity with regard to age and traditional gender roles.*
- *High school occupational programming influenced students' choice of college major.*
- *The stopping out/ dropping out combined with expanding degree plans can contribute to changing majors.*

The selection of an academic or technical major depended on the requirements of participants' career goal, bias for or against any particular type of associates degree was not indicated. Thirteen of the participants intended to transfer to the university regardless of what type of associate degree was being sought. Selection of majors was most dependent on the intersection of interests and experiences, where experiences included: secondary occupational programming, previous academic classes, hearing about relatives' job experiences, their own job experiences, and exposure to television shows. Members of Group I relied more heavily on interests in determining their majors and career goals, while members of Group II relied most heavily on work experiences. Seldom did students have or seek professional role models but instead depended on family members for more personal aspects of operating in the world of work.

Selected majors and career goals showed sensitivity to age, where recent high school graduates were twice as likely to select goals in male dominated fields than the returning students. Participants selecting traditionally female occupational goals selected majors in the health science, business, and liberal arts.

Two of the three women that indicated a change in major did so because changes in their degree plans after an extended period out of college resulted in lost credits.

Conclusions and Implications. Findings imply that occupational gender segregation was a factor for 8 of the 14 women in the study. Findings support Grubb's (1995) description of gender segregated majors. Participants' job histories matched descriptions of the typical female Hispanic jobs (NCPE, 1999a, 1999b; US DOL, 1997), where 13 had worked (or were working) in clerical or service industry jobs.

While three of the seven women working to earn an associate's of applied science (AAS) indicated that they had asked if credits would transfer, the other four women implied that they thought credits would transfer. This finding implies that students earning AAS degrees do not understand the terminal nature of such degrees, which may in turn limit further educational attainment. Also, given the fact that the group had relatively equal acculturation/ assimilation levels and generational status, findings imply that age may be a more critical factor in the issue of job segregation than acculturation/ assimilation levels.

Findings indicated that the participants had not actively researched their career aspirations, where most had passively come to identify their current career interests. For Group I, classroom experiences and exposure to television shows led them to select their career interests; for Group II, previous work experiences gave them exposure to potential career interests. Even in those rare instances where a family member worked in a career field of interest, participants rarely indicated that they had discussed issues related to work or obtaining career credentials. This finding implies that members of the population may have limited access to professional role models and need coaching on how to ascertain career information from professional role models.

Question Four

With regard to the fourth question, “*What factors relate to the selection of terminal occupational goals?*” a summary of the findings includes:

- *Terminal goals were directly related to immediate goals, seen as the natural continuation of current work.*
- *Terminal goals were defined in terms of lifestyle.*
- *Recent high school graduates were more likely to see themselves leaving the local area than returning adults.*
- *Greater occupational maturity, clarity of immediate goals, research in the profession, and experience in the educational process resulted in clearer visions of terminal goals.*

Participants conceived a linear progression in their careers and did not seem to be open to future possibilities of career change. Terminal goals were often defined by obtaining an advanced degree. When asked what they imagined doing, participants described life situations (relocation, homes, cars) as well as career related activities. Recent graduates were 2.5 times more likely to see themselves as leaving the general area. Returning students better articulated terminal goals and lifestyles than the recent high school graduates.

Conclusions and Implications. Few of the participants had actively researched their potential career areas. As a result, most relied on the presence of personal role models and their own life experiences. In this context returning students were better able to articulate terminal goals because they had more experiences on which to reflect. This finding implies that: one, students need to be more actively engaged in researching career areas; two, students need access to professional role models, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic, to gain more realistic views of work; and three, colleges need to provide career

counseling that addresses the terminal nature of AAS degrees, the potential of future career changes, and, related careers that may also be considered now or in the future.

Question Five

The regards to the fifth question, “*What barriers to educational goals/ occupational aspirations exist? Are barriers related to occupational self-efficacy?*” was approached in the interview via questions about barriers, support systems, success, and gender/ ethnic barriers. A summary of the findings regarding barriers included:

- *Financial constraints were the barriers most consistently mentioned by students.*
- *Family roles factor heavily in the presence of constraints.*
- *For returning students, having overcome past barriers instilled confidence that current and future barriers could be managed.*
- *Stopping out and dropping is most likely due to life situations and family responsibilities, not academic deficiency.*

A summary of the findings regarding support included:

- *When asked about “support”, students most often referenced emotional support rather than monetary or practical support.*
- *Family members were cited as the greatest source of support of students.*
- *Supportive teachers were the most critical support the school offered.*
- *Students had a limited view of what support the college as an institution might be able to offer.*

A summary of the findings regarding success included:

- *Success was defined and indicated by gaining job related skills, higher education credentials, monetary gain/ security and feeling successful.*

- *The presence or lack of confidence was a strong indicator of success, where higher confidence led to feelings that success could be achieved without making personal changes.*

A summary of the findings regarding gender and ethnic barriers included:

- *Recent graduates did not distinguish between gender barriers and ethnic barriers.*
- *Recent graduates had definite views on issues of gender and ethnic barriers; returning student had definite views on issues of gender but not ethnic barriers.*
- *Barriers related to sexual orientation were perceived as being of greater significance than barriers related to gender and ethnicity.*
- *Participants who believed (or were unsure) that gender and ethnic barriers would not impact their success separated personal histories from their anticipated work lives.*

Regarding occupational self-efficacy:

- *The relationship between occupational self-efficacy and barriers could not be determined.*

Financial constraints and family roles were causes for the majority of barriers encountered by participants. For the students in the study who stopped out or dropped out, reasons for doing so never involved academic deficiencies. Having had a history of overcoming barriers instilled greater confidence that current and future obstacles would be successfully navigated.

Emotional support was of great importance to participants, and in most cases, such support came from family members. Participants viewed the college's most important resource was its teachers, who were most often credited for offering emotional

support. But beyond “good” teachers and financial assistance, participants had no expectations from the college as an institution.

Participants described the affective element of success as feeling confident. Most participants related that they needed to overcome a lack of confidence to meet their goals, or that they had already overcome a lack of confidence such that they believed goals were more achievable.

Though the issue of barriers as related to traditional female roles in the family was a consistent theme in interviews, only half the participants felt gender barriers might impact their success. Participants that did not feel that gender was an issue seemed to separate their personal experiences from the world of work. Group I members indicated that they had no experience in dealing with gender barriers; while Group II members indicated that gender was not an issue because they worked in ‘female’ professions. Also, Group II members indicated that they already had experience in managing gender barriers such that barriers were no longer an issue.

Participants were split on the issue of ethnic barriers impacting success, six believed it would (3-Group I; 3-Group II), four believed it would not (3-Group I; 1-Group II), and four were unsure (1-Group I; 3-GroupII). Group I members indicated that they had limited experience in dealing with ethnic barriers; while Group II members were reluctant to recognize ethnic barriers.

Occupation self-efficacy could not be determined because participants were not asked about their perceptions of attaining occupational skills. Instead, “evidence” of self-efficacy in the interview transcripts was inferred by the researcher. In general, Group II

members viewed their ability to manage current situations more positively than Group I members.

Conclusions and Implications. Students viewed financial constraints as the biggest barrier to achieving a degree. Family roles were a major factor as well, however, many of the women did not recognize their roles as daughters and mothers as a “barrier.” Findings imply that familism as it relates to gender roles is indeed a strong factor in determining educational outcomes (Clayton, et. al, 1992; Marin & Marin, 1991; Mendez-Negrete, 2000; Rendon, 1995a, 1995b). While providing financial support to their families is a primary consideration, when asked about support, women reference emotional support, particularly from family members.

Participants displayed much ambiguity when directly considering gender and ethnic barriers. Despite evidence of ethnic and gender barriers in their personal lives, recent high school graduates related that they had little experience with these issues. As a group they seemed to view ethnic and gender barriers collectively, while returning adults considered them separately. One limitation of the study was that participants were only asked about barriers impacting their success, not the existence of such barriers. In Group II, women were very willing to recognize the existence of gender barriers but seemed reluctant to recognize ethnic barriers. Participant responses of “not sure” imply that they did recognize that barriers existed but were not sure about the impact to their own success. The researcher’s inclination is that the ambiguity conveyed by participants may be related to ambiguity with regards to ethnic identity, such that tensions related to ethnic identity/ labeling (‘Hispanic’ or ‘Mexican American’) led to personal ambiguity in evaluating their own susceptibility to both gender and ethnic barriers.

Students had very limited expectations from institutions of higher learning. It appeared that in assuming full responsibility for their educational outcomes, participants absolved colleges of any further responsibility beyond providing good instructors and access to financial aid. Findings imply that participants do not have knowledge or expectations from college services. Students did value teachers, often crediting them for providing critical emotional support and instilling confidence. Findings imply that when teachers are not supportive, students struggle both academically and emotionally. In such circumstances, students often lack coping mechanisms that might allow them to succeed despite the “bad” teacher.

Advice to Others

With regards to the question, “*What advice did participants offer to other students like themselves?*” a summary of the findings included:

- *Advice focused on attaining an education despite the difficulty, encouraging others to remain persistent.*
- *Advice stressed developing confidence and seeking assistance, particularly emotional support.*
- *Participants often reference confidence in their ability to reach goals because they had witnessed others in similar circumstances achieve goals. Participants often invited others to use them as a similar example.*
- *Advice most often focused on affective matters (pursuing a dream, feeling happy, satisfaction and pride) rather than practical advice (attaining resources, managing multiple adult responsibilities).*

Conclusions and Implications. The heavy emphasis on the affective domain has several implications: one, that emotional support is highly valued and viewed as an important prerequisite for success; two, self-efficacy is viewed as critical to achieving

goals; and, three, witnessing peers' succeed instills confidence that goals can be met. It is interesting to note that none of the advice dealt with identifying or researching career interests even though this oversight was raised in the interview.

Overview of Findings

In considering the primary research question,

What relationship exists among the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational experiences of Mexican American women attending a south Texas Community college and their occupational aspirations?

it becomes evident that multiple factors relate to both the formation of occupational aspirations and educational outcomes. Given the small sample size dictated by qualitative inquiry, the women who volunteered for the study represent a very small percentage of the actual population at the college. Yet, themes and issues that present for the sample group could be implied to be themes and issues that present to the larger population, though at different levels of significance.

As a whole, the sample had very high occupational and educational aspirations. In reviewing the study findings, it occurs to the researcher that aspirations are only a small part of the 'outcomes' equation. The popular media and society as a whole, offers glamorous and unrealistic visions of certain professions, often confirming society's vision of 'women's work.' The biggest gaps between aspirations and outcomes for the group related to understanding how to reach goals, social capital. Because of their location in low-socioeconomic communities, few role models and resources were available. Sadly, the one prominent resource available to all students, the college itself, was not being maximized for several reasons: low/ no expectations from the college as

an institution, time constraints as a result of managing multiple adult roles, ignorance of college services that do exist, and a reluctance to ask for such assistance.

Gender roles combined with cultural and familial expectations appeared to relate to aspirations and outcomes via: the decision to attend college, college selections, career interests and goals, and priorities assigned to family and student roles. In general, the participants recognized the existence of gender barriers in their personal lives but had varying degrees of willingness to recognize the existence of such barriers in their anticipated careers. This implies that students had limited understanding of the integrated nature of work and personal lives. In particular, younger participants appeared to view a career as a better paying “good job,” and seemed unaware of the lifestyle implications beyond what material comforts might be available as a result of earning a degree. Likewise, all participants failed to recognize the behavioral patterns and expectations (socialization) in one’s personal life often translate to one’s professional life, and vice versa. None recognized that such socialization might impede social mobility efforts, or that social mobility as a first generation graduate in the family could negatively impact their acceptance and membership in their home cultures (London, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rendon, 1995a, 1995b; Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini, 1995).

Recent high school graduates seemed most interested in selecting aspirations that involved an interest and would provide a “good” income. Returning students also focused on the ability to earn a living but because of their additional life experiences, tended to focus on aspirations that were a ‘passion’ and allowed them to make a contribution. Because older students had more adult roles and responsibilities, the anticipated time for attain goals was much longer than that of younger students. Given

this context, findings imply that community colleges must consider the needs of both groups of students, while a portion of those needs overlap, students with more adult responsibilities are in need of more distinct services especially since such students have a limited presence in the college outside of the classroom.

From the researcher's viewpoint, the most disturbing facet of the study's findings related to the implied relationship between assimilation, ethnic identity, and the ambiguity in recognizing the existence of gender and ethnic barriers (results from question two and question five). While institutions of higher education have historical roots in the classical philosophy of education (Elias & Merriam, 1995), shifts in student demographics have encouraged the use of more student-centered approaches in education. Community colleges are lauded for both their accessibility to non-traditional students and their student centered approach (O'Bannion, 1999; Willyard, 2000). Indeed, 13 participants made direct reference to a sense of comfort in the college. Yet, even in this most open and receptive environment, it appeared that students had been socialized away from their home cultures at some point in their educational lives, and that this was seen as part of adopting a professional persona. This raises disturbing questions related to higher education, American business, and society as a whole. Does this country truly value cultural and ethnic diversity? Is education still being used as a tool to culturally mainstream demographic 'others' via assimilation, where punishment includes being banished to low wage jobs if strong ethnic identification is maintained? Has the practical meaning of 'diversity' and 'multiculturalism' crumbled to a standard of 'white' on the inside and 'brown', 'black', 'red', or 'yellow' on the outside (Koa, 1997)? I hope not. Educators and institutions of higher learning must truly adopt and integrate multicultural

learning environments. By leveraging critical, multicultural, and feminist pedagogies, educators must provide students with the critical empowerment necessary to successfully navigate the complexities of professional life (Bettis, 1998; Gregson, 1994; Lakes, 1994; Lakes & Borman, 1994). Society as a whole, and higher education in particular, could only benefit.

Recommendations

Secondary Schools

Expose a greater circle of students beyond “at-risk” student populations to occupational programming. Occupational programming positively influences the decision to go to college and may be critical in the choice of major. Expose all students, particularly those with limited occupational socialization, to a wide variety of occupational areas by:

1. Integrating academic curriculum with occupational themes and programming.
Leverage student interest in an academic subject by exploring potential careers related to that field of study.
2. Integrating critical pedagogy that promotes real life scenarios and current events.
Guide students to consider their own definitions of “good” and “bad” work.
3. Encouraging students to research potential careers by teaching them methods of doing so.

Community College Students

Take an active role in maximizing your college experience so that it includes more than just your classroom experiences. Consider the following:

1. Talk to teachers. Teachers have experience in your field of study and can provide you with all kinds of information related to a field of interest. Most teachers want to

be helpful in this regard; however, if you encounter a teacher who is not helpful then keep approaching instructors until you receive the information you are seeking. Also, seek multiple opinions and views about your career interests and how to attain your goals.

2. Research your profession. Surf the net, go to the library, talk to career counselors, volunteer, and talk to people who are currently working in jobs most reflective of your career goals. When you understand how other people achieved their goals, you can form a better picture of attaining your own goals.
3. Seek professional models. Ask colleges and teachers to provide guest speakers, ask for references from college staff as to who you could speak to regarding a particular career interest. Ask your fellow classmates if they know people in the profession you might be able to interview. When you find these people, don't just listen, ask them questions, too.
4. If stopped out, return to college as soon as possible. The longer you remain out of college, the greater the chance that your degree plan will change so that you lose credits earned toward your intended degree.
5. Seek and ask for assistance outside of your family, particularly if your family is not offering emotional support. Talk to peers and ask college staff about community resources for services such as daycare, social services and transportation.
6. Remember to search for financial aid on your own. Don't depend solely on your college to provide financial aid. Numerous, free financial aid search engines are available on the internet. Apply to as many programs as you are qualified for since

nothing is guaranteed. The more programs you apply for the more likely you are to receive additional aid from some source.

7. Be sure that your community college credits will transfer to your most likely transfer universities, particularly if you are earning an applied science degree.

Post-Secondary Schools

1. Maintain a student-centered approach to teaching.
2. Integrate critical pedagogy.
3. Teachers act as role models, invite students to ask for help on career issues and tie curriculum to realistic career scenarios. Include guest speakers. Highlight other school and community resources on issues related to your field of instruction.
4. Guide students on methods of researching a profession.
5. Guide students in managing life roles in conjunction with student roles. Address the integrated nature of personal life and work life.
6. Provide easy access to daycare services.
7. Facilitate finding professional role models, both Hispanic and Non-Hispanic.
8. Facilitate peer mentoring, particularly matching less experienced students with more experienced students.
9. Facilitate the development of cohorts.
10. Promote multicultural learning environments and discuss how multiculturalism impacts the workplace.
11. Promote available services and build an expectation, so that students experience college beyond the classroom.

12. Differentiate services to meet the need of both recent high school graduates and returning students.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Further studies into the issues of barriers to educational and occupational attainment of Mexican American and Hispanic females.
2. Studies investigating the impact of critical pedagogy with Mexican American and Hispanic females.
3. Studies identifying key characteristics of Mexican American and Hispanic women who have successfully navigated the educational process.
4. Studies investigating the state and characteristics of Mexican American and Hispanic females as students, teachers, and administrators in higher education.
5. Studies that investigate the issue of assimilation/ acculturation as a prerequisite to higher educational attainment. Of particular interest are longitudinal studies that investigate changes in assimilation/ acculturation that results as participants attain higher educational levels.
6. Studies investigating the issue of ethnic labeling and ethnic identity, and whether or not these issue impact occupational aspirations or attainment.
7. Measurement and definition of acculturation levels that is inclusive of cultural gender roles and their impact on occupational outcomes.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Researcher: “Hello, my name is Debra Gutierrez. I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. I am trying to contact (name). Are you (name)?”

(If the answer is Yes – proceed with the script.

If the answer is No – thank them for their time and terminate the call.)

Researcher: “I am contacting you because I am conducting a research study about Mexican American women in college. Your name and number were provided by your school as a person who may be able to help with this study. I would like to visit with you for a few minutes to explain the study and ask you to participate if that’s possible.”

(If yes, proceed) “I am interested in promoting the educational attainment of Mexican American women from south Texas. The purpose of my study is to describe the college and life experiences of Mexican American women and their educational goals so that colleges may help them meet their goals.”

“I would like to meet with you for a face-to-face interview. Before the interview, you will be asked to fill out two documents: a demographic questionnaire asking about your work, school, and family information; and an acculturation scale for Mexican Americans that looks at your Mexican and Anglo orientations and preferences.”

“During the interview I will ask you questions such as:

‘What led you to choose your educational goals?’

‘What are some barriers you face in reaching your educational goals?’”

“All your answers and your identity will be kept confidential. If you are willing to participate, we will need approximately one hour for the interview. Do you have any questions?”

“Would you be willing to participate in my study?” (If so, set a time, date and location for the interview. If not, thank them for their time and terminate call.)

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

Debra A. Gutierrez
Oklahoma State University
224 Willard Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Date

Recipient Address

Dear (Name):

Thank you for taking time to grant me an interview. Your willingness to share your experiences will help colleges understand how to assist other Mexican American women in college in reaching their educational goals and occupational aspirations. As I indicated in our telephone conversation, I am a graduate student who is conducting this study as way to promote the educational attainment of Mexican American women.

The interview we have scheduled should take approximately an hour to complete. You will be asked about your educational and occupational goals, the factors that led you to choose these goals, and challenges/barriers you face in reaching your goals. All answers will be confidential, but with your permission, I will tape the interview. When the interview is written up, I will use a fictitious name to label you. Some time after the interview, I will mail you a transcript of the interview and you will have an opportunity to clarify any of your statements if you wish.

Per our phone conversation, we will meet on (date) at (time) in (location). If you need to reschedule our appointment, please feel free to contact me at home (405-XXX-XXXX), at work (405-744-7396), or via email (gutierd@okstate.edu). Also, feel free to contact me if you have any questions concerning my research project.

Enclosed with this letter are two documents: a demographic questionnaire asking about your work, school, and family information; and an acculturation scale for Mexican Americans that looks at your Mexican and Anglo orientations. Both are organized so that you can quickly answer with checkmarks or circling. Both can be completed in 15-20 minutes. **Please fill out these documents and bring them with you to the interview.**

Thanks again. I look forward to meeting with you on (date).

Sincerely,

Debra Gutierrez
Graduate Student
Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age: _____

2. Race/ ethnicity: Mexican-American _____
Hispanic (not Mexican-American) _____

3. Marital Status: Single, never married _____
Married _____
Divorced _____

4. Occupational Status: How many hours per week do you work? _____
List your current job title(s): _____

5. Student Status:
Part-time enrollment _____ or Full-time enrollment _____

Number of hours completed: _____

What is your major: _____

Current Grade Point Average: 1.5-2.0 _____
2.1-2.5 _____
2.6-3.0 _____
3.1-3.5 _____
3.6 -4.0 _____

6. Current home life:
Give the number of people currently living in your home, including yourself:
of Children _____ # of Adults: _____

Life roles: Place an "X" by each role listed below that describes aspects of your
life at this time. (Mark all that apply.)
 I am responsible for housekeeping/ cleaning in my home.
 I am responsible for childcare in my home.
 I live with my mate.
 I am a parent.
 I am a single parent.
 I live in my parent's home.
 I must work a job to support myself.
 I must work a job to help support my family.
 I must work a job to help pay for my education.
 I am responsible for caring for aging/ ill parents.

What do you consider to be your current socioeconomic status:

Working Class Middle Class Upper Class

7. Family History:

Mother's highest educational attainment was:

Grade school (1-6)
 Middle school (7-9)
 High School (10-12)
 1-2 Years of College
 Earned College Degree
 Earned Graduate Degree

Mother's occupation(s): _____

Father's highest educational attainment was:

Grade school (1-6)
 Middle school (7-9)
 High School (10-12)
 1-2 Years of College
 Earned College Degree
 Earned Graduate Degree

Father's occupation(s): _____

Place an "X" if any of the following persons in your family were born in the US.

Self
 Mother
 Grandmother – mother's family
 Grandfather – mother's family
 Father
 Grandmother – father's family
 Grandfather – father's family

How would you classify your family's socioeconomic status for the majority of your childhood years?

Working Class Middle Class Upper Class

APPENDIX D

ACCULTURATION INSTRUMENT

ACCULTURATION RATING SCALE FOR MEXICAN AMERICANS – II
--

Circle a number between 1-5 next to each item that best applies:

Scale 1

		Not at all	Not very often	Moder- ately	Very often	Almost always
1.	I speak Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I speak English	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I enjoy speaking Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I associate with Anglos	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I associate with Mexicans and/ or Mexican Americans	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I enjoy listening to Spanish language music	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I enjoy listening to English language music	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I enjoy listening to Spanish language TV	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I enjoy listening to English language TV	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I enjoy listening to English language movies	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I enjoy listening to Spanish language movies	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I enjoy reading (e.g., books in Spanish)	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I enjoy reading (e.g., books in English)	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I write (e.g., letters in Spanish)	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I write (e.g., letters in English)	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My thinking is done in the Spanish language	1	2	3	4	5
17.	My thinking is done in the English language	1	2	3	4	5
18.	My contact with Mexico has been	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all	Not very often	Moder- ately	Very often	Almost always
19. My contact with the USA has been	1	2	3	4	5
20. My father identifies himself as 'Mexicano'	1	2	3	4	5
21. My mother identifies herself as 'Mexicano'	1	2	3	4	5
22. My friends, while I was growing up, were of Mexican origin	1	2	3	4	5
23. My friends, while I was growing up, were of Anglo origin	1	2	3	4	5
24. My family cooks Mexican food	1	2	3	4	5
25. My friends are now of Anglo origin	1	2	3	4	5
26. My friends are now of Mexican origin	1	2	3	4	5
27. I like to identify myself as an Anglo American	1	2	3	4	5
28. I like to identify myself as Mexican American	1	2	3	4	5
29. I like to identify myself as Mexican	1	2	3	4	5
30. I like to identify myself as an American	1	2	3	4	5

Scale 2

1. I have difficulty accepting some ideas held by Anglos	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have difficulty accepting certain attitudes held by Anglos	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have difficulty accepting some behaviors exhibited by Anglos	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have difficulty accepting some values held by Anglos	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have difficulty accepting certain practices and customs commonly found in some Anglos	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have, or think I would have, difficulty accepting Anglos as close personal friends	1	2	3	4	5

		Not at all	Not very often	Moder- ately	Very often	Almost always
7.	I have difficulty accepting some ideas held by Mexicans	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have difficulty accepting certain attitudes held by Mexicans	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I have difficulty accepting some behaviors exhibited by Mexicans	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I have difficulty accepting some values held by Mexicans	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I have difficulty accepting certain practices and customs commonly found in some Mexicans	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I have, or think I would have, difficulty accepting Mexicans as close personal friends	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I have difficulty accepting some ideas held by Mexican Americans	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I have difficulty accepting certain attitudes held by Mexican Americans	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I have difficulty accepting some behaviors exhibited by Mexican Americans	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I have difficulty accepting some values held by Mexican Americans	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I have difficulty accepting certain practices and customs commonly found in some Mexican Americans	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I have, or think I would have, difficulty accepting Mexican Americans as close personal friends	1	2	3	4	5

End of Scale 2

APPENDIX E

ORIGINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. The purpose of this study is to describe social, cultural and educational factors related to educational and career goals for Mexican American women. By gaining a better understanding of the lives of Mexican American women in college, it is my hope that colleges will be better able to help Mexican American women meet their educational and career goals.”

“As we go through this process, please feel free at any time to interrupt, ask for clarification or even comment on the questions being asked.”

“First, I’d like to give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have regarding the demographic questionnaire and the acculturation scale. You were asked to fill out these items in order to get a general description of factors in your life. All information will be kept confidential, and your name will in no way be connected to the information that you provide. Do you have any questions regarding the demographic questionnaire and the acculturation scale?”

“If you don’t have any more questions, we will begin the taped interview which should take approximately an hour. ”

“Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?”

Interview Questions

Note: During the interview, all responses will be followed with probes regarding social/family, educational, and cultural factors related to questions asked.

1. Why did you decide to attend community college in general, and this school in particular?
2. What is your major? What factors led you to select your major?
3. What are your immediate educational and job goals?
4. What obstacles may interfere with reaching your immediate goals?
5. What job do you see yourself in 5 years from now? Why?
6. What obstacles stand between you and your long-term job goals?
7. What, if anything, has been the most helpful to you at this college? Name the top 3 items.
8. What, if anything, has been the least helpful to you at this college? Name the top 3 items.
9. How do you define occupational success?

10. In what ways, if any, do you feel that you will need to change your thoughts or actions in order to be successful in college? In your chosen occupation?
11. To what extent will your ethnicity or gender affect your chances of success?

Conclusion

“Thank you so much for your time, we have reached the end of the interview. I’ve enjoyed talking with you today. What you have contributed today can help colleges understand factors related to Mexican American women’s goals. When I finish review and transcribing this tape, I will contact you to review the transcription to be sure that it accurately reflects your comments to me. Thank you again, goodbye.”

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Debra A. Gutierrez, a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

The study includes the following elements:

1. Procedure: The researcher will meet the participant at a location and time that is mutually conducive. Participants will first be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and an acculturation rating scale instrument. After these items are completed, a semi-structured interview will be held. A second interview will be done to allow for member checks and any follow-up questions. All interviews will be recorded on an audio tape recorder then transcribed. Personal interview will be done when possible with telephone interview used as needed. No part of the procedure is experimental in nature.
2. Duration of the respondent's participation: The duration of the participation will be approximately one hour in length for the first interview with the second interview expected to last approximately 30 minutes.
3. Confidentiality of records: All records will be kept confidential with the use of pseudonyms for respondents. All tapes and field notes collected by the research will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home for a minimum period of five years. After this period, all transcripts will be shredded and all tapes and computer disks will be destroyed.
4. Possible discomfort or risks: The researcher will be asking participants to share information related to the selection of their educational goals and occupational aspirations. These cultural, social and educational factors may be personal in nature. The researcher will reiterate her commitment to maintain anonymity of the respondents and their responses.
5. Possible benefits of the study:
 - Documentation of factors related to the educational and career goals of female Mexican American college students,
 - Improved understanding of the lived experiences of Mexican American college students and how these experiences impact educational/ career goals,
 - Improved retention of female Mexican American college students,
 - Wiser expenditures of resources designed to retain female Mexican American college students, and
 - Identification of implications for future research in this area.

This is done as part of an investigation entitled "Mexican American Women in College: Cultural, Social, and Educational Factors Related to Educational Goals and Occupational Aspirations."

The purpose of this study is to describe social, cultural and educational factors related to educational and career goals for Mexican American women. By gaining a better understanding of the lives of Mexican American women in college, colleges may be better able to help Mexican American women meet their educational and career goals.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify the project director.

I may contact:

Debra Gutierrez
Oklahoma State University
Occupational Education
Phone: (405) 744-7396

Dr. James Gregson
Oklahoma State University
Occupational Education
Phone: (405) 744-9200

I may also contact:

Sharon Bacher
IRB Executive Secretary
Oklahoma State University
203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____ (AM/PM)

Signed: _____
Signature of Subject

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed: _____
Debra A. Gutierrez, Researcher

APPENDIX G

FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. The purpose of this study is to describe social, cultural and educational factors related to educational and career goals for Mexican American women. By gaining a better understanding of the lives of Mexican American women in college, it is my hope that colleges will be better able to help Mexican American women meet their educational and career goals.”

“As we go through this process, please feel free at any time to interrupt, ask for clarification or even comment on the questions being asked.”

“First, I’d like to give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have regarding the demographic questionnaire and the acculturation scale. You were asked to fill out these items in order to get a general description of factors in your life. All information will be kept confidential, and your name will in no way be connected to the information that you provide. Do you have any questions regarding the demographic questionnaire and the acculturation scale?”

“If you don’t have any more questions, we will begin the taped interview which should take approximately an hour. ”

“Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?”

Interview Questions

Note: During the interview, all responses will be followed with probes regarding social/family, educational, and cultural factors related to questions asked.

1. Why did you decide to attend college? Community college? This school in particular?
2. Are you currently enrolled?
3. What is your major?
4. What factors led you to select your major? (Probe regarding presence of role models, research into this area of work,...etc.)
5. What are your immediate educational and job goals? Why?
6. What obstacles may interfere with reaching your immediate goals?
7. What job do you see yourself in 5-10 years? Why? (Probes: In this community? More education? Transfer?)
8. What do you image doing on your job?
9. What obstacles stand between you and your long-term job goals?

10. What, if anything, has been the most helpful to you at this college? Name the top 3 items.
11. What, if anything, has been the least helpful to you at this college? Name the top 3 items. (Probe: Are there any programs or services you wish were available to you from the school?)
12. How do you define occupational success? How will you know you are successful?
13. In what ways, if any, do you feel that you will need to change your thoughts or actions in order to be successful in college? In your chosen occupation?
14. To what extent will your ethnicity or gender affect your chances of success?
15. What or who has been supportive to you in this process so far?
16. What are the other sources of support you wish you had?
17. What advice would you give someone like yourself about the process of going to college and getting educated?

Conclusion

“Thank you so much for your time, we have reached the end of the interview. I’ve enjoyed talking with you today. What you have contributed today can help colleges understand factors related to Mexican American women’s goals. When I finish review and transcribing this tape, I will contact you to review the transcription to be sure that it accurately reflects your comments to me. Thank you again, goodbye.”

APPENDIX H

FINAL TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Researcher: “Hello, my name is Debra Gutierrez. I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. I am trying to contact (name). Are you (name)?”

(If the answer is Yes – proceed with the script.

If the answer is No – thank them for their time and terminate the call.)

Researcher: “I am contacting you because I am conducting a research study about Hispanic and Mexican American women in college. Your name and number were provided by your school as a person who may be able to help with this study. I would like to visit with you for a few minutes to explain the study and ask you to participate if that’s possible.”

(If yes, proceed) “I am interested in promoting the educational attainment of Hispanic women from south Texas. The purpose of my study is to describe the college and life experiences of Hispanic women and their educational goals so that colleges may help them meet their goals. I am conducting this study as a requirement toward earning a doctorate in education.”

“This project investigates the goals of Hispanic women in college.

I am looking for volunteers who:

- Are of Mexican American descent
- Were born in the US
- Whose parents HAVE NOT graduated from college

“Does this describe your situation?”

(If yes, proceed) “I would like to meet with you for a face-to-face interview. Before the interview, you will be asked to fill out two documents: a demographic questionnaire asking about your work, school, and family information; and an acculturation scale for Mexican Americans that looks at your Mexican and Anglo orientations and preferences.”

“During the interview I will ask you questions such as:

‘What led you to choose your educational goals?’

‘What are some barriers you face in reaching your educational goals?’”

“All your answers and your identity will be kept confidential. If you are willing to participate, we will need approximately one hour for the interview.”

“Would you be willing to participate in my study?” (If so, set a time, date and location for the interview and allow them to ask questions. If not, thank them for their time and terminate call.)

APPENDIX I

STUDY NOTICE

Mexican American & Hispanic Women

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Your input is needed for a study that examines the educational and career goals of Mexican American women in colleges.

With your help, I hope to collect information that would help colleges better serve Chicanas in school. I am looking for women who:

- Attend Sea Mist College
- Were born in the US
- Whose parents ARE NOT college graduates

Volunteers will be asked to participate in a one-hour taped interview. Interviews would be scheduled per your convenience, sometime in June and early July.

You will be asked questions about your career and educational goals. All information will be strictly confidential.

I am a south Texas native who has a strong interest in supporting Mexican American women in pursuing their education. This project is being completed as a requirement toward earning my Doctorate in Education. If you are interested in volunteering, please call the number below & leave a message with your name, phone number and best time to reach you.

Debra Gutierrez
Oklahoma State University
Email: gutierd@okstate.edu
Oklahoma Phone #: 405/ 744-7396

CALL XXX-XXXX to schedule an interview

APPENDIX J

MEMBER CHECK COVER LETTER

Date

Name

Address

Sea Mist, TX XXXXX

Dear XX,

I hope things at home and at school are going well. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to participate in my research study. Enclosed is the transcript from our interview on June XX, 2001. Please review it for accuracy.

The fictitious name that will be used to anonymously represent you and your statements is "X". "X" will be profiled in my research report, no mention of your actual name and contact information will be revealed in any way to others.

If you wish to make any changes, leave a message at my Sea Mist number (XXX-XXXX) or my Oklahoma number (405/744-7396). In your message, leave your name, telephone number, and the best time of day to contact you. If I have not heard from you by (15 days after mailed) I will assume the notes accurately reflect the interview. Also, I may contact you during this period to clarify my understanding of your responses.

At the conclusion of the research, I will mail you a summary of my findings.

Thanks again for participating in the study! Your willingness to share your experiences and your honest responses are very appreciated.

Sincerely,

Debra Gutierrez
Oklahoma State University
224 Willard Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-7396
gutierd@okstate.edu
In Sea Mist: XXX-XXXX

APPENDIX K

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 5/3/02

Date: Friday, May 04, 2001

IRB Application No ED01118

Proposal Title: MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN COLLEGE: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND
EDUCATIONAL FACTORS RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND
OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Principal
Investigator(s):

Debra Gutierrez
224 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

James Gregson
204 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Debra A. Gutierrez

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN COLLEGE: FACTORS RELATED TO
EDUCATIONAL GOAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Corpus Christi, Texas on February 10, 1967, the daughter of Mayolo L. Gutierrez and Yolanda O. Gutierrez.

Education: Graduated from King High School, Corpus Christi, TX in May 1985; received Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Texas A&M University, College Station, TX in December 1991; completed Master of Science in Counseling and Guidance from Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, TX in May 1998. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, May 2002.

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