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ABSTRACT

The role of family in educational and occupational decisions was examined for 2,118 students from 11 school districts and 3 community colleges in Texas. Sixty-six percent were Mexican American, 20 percent were Caucasian, and 14 percent were of other ethnic backgrounds. In all, 1,406 Mexican American students were surveyed; 55 of the 187 community college students surveyed were Mexican American. In addition, 581 parents responded to a mailed questionnaire, and 100 others responded to a telephone questionnaire. An extensive literature review was conducted. Both the literature review and survey results indicated that parents of Mexican American students have more influence over the educational and occupational decisions made by their children than parents of the other ethnic backgrounds have over their children's decisions. Mexican American parents wanted more education for their children than the children wanted for themselves. Most of the Mexican American students surveyed expected to continue their education beyond high school, and only a very low percentage had ever seriously considered dropping out of school. The female Mexican American respondents generally valued education more highly and felt their parents' influence on their educational decisions to be greater than their male counterparts did. (Contains 7 figures, 24 appended tables, and 82 references.) (MN)

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Hispanics comprise the fastest growing minority group in the United States; with a growth rate of five times the national average (National Council of La Raza, 1992), they are expected to make up the largest ethnic minority in the continental U.S. shortly after the beginning of the twenty-first century (Vega, 1990). The Hispanic population is not homogenous but is comprised of numerous subgroups with family origins in Latin America, Spain, or Portugal. The largest three subgroups are Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans (Velez, 1989). Mexican Americans comprised sixty-three percent of the Hispanic population in the U.S. in 1991 (National Council of La Raza, 1992).

For the purposes of this study, we have used the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of the term *Hispanic*. Like the Census Bureau, we have used the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* interchangeably. Both refer to Americans whose descendants are from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central and South America, or Spain. The term *Mexican American* refers specifically to Americans whose descendants were from Mexico. The literature for the study was reviewed broadly for Hispanics or Latinos because of potential implications for the Mexican-American subgroup. For example, a study done in Texas might refer to the population investigated as "Hispanic" while a study conducted in California might refer to subjects as "Latino." In both states, however, Mexican Americans comprise the largest Hispanic subgroup.

Between 1980 and 1990, the Hispanic population in the U.S. grew by fifty-three percent (National Council of La Raza, 1992), representing a total population of over twenty-two million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). The fastest growing segment of the Hispanic population was Mexican American, with this growth attributable in large part to immigration from Mexico; but it should be noted that the majority of all Hispanics are native born. About half of the population growth of Hispanics is a result of immigration, and the other half results from natural increase (National Council of La Raza, 1992).

Hispanics in each of the subgroups live primarily in urban areas. Over 91% live in cities, while 72.8% of non-Hispanics live in cities. While Hispanics are found in all parts of the U.S., about eighty-five percent are concentrated in California and Texas. They comprise more than a quarter of the population of New Mexico, California, and Texas.

Regionally, 45% of Hispanics live in the West, and 30% live in the South. (This data was extracted from a report entitled *State of Hispanic America 1991: An Overview*, published by the National Council of La Raza, the Hispanic organization whose purpose is "to improve life opportunities for the more than 22 million Americans of Hispanic descent" [1992, inside front cover]).

Hispanics face serious socioeconomic problems (National Council of La Raza, 1992). A major contributing factor is their low educational and occupational attainment (Arbona, 1990). With approximately fifty percent not graduating from high school, the career choices available to Hispanic youth are very limited (National Council of La Raza, 1992). Decisions to drop out, along with other educational decisions made by Hispanic students, concern policymakers and educators alike because these decisions have far-reaching consequences. Dropouts, particularly at the secondary level, typically do not receive the education and training that are required in today's labor market; thus, they suffer lifelong economic disadvantages (Peng, 1985). Arbona (1990) has stated that "it is a well-documented fact that the low educational attainment of Hispanics is a major determinant of their disadvantaged position in the labor market" (p. 309).

The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988) emphasizes the relationship between education and economic success:

> The more years of formal education and training completed, the greater one's employability and annual income. Considered purely as an economic investment, education and training pay off handsomely for both the individual and the society. . . . Education and training thus remain the Forgotten Half's most fundamental and reliable pathways to success. (p. 127)

The literature suggests that Hispanic families have significant influence over decisions made by their children. Vega (1990) states that "familism—defined as either face-to-face interaction or supporting behavior—remains a more typical feature of Hispanic families than of non-Hispanic white families" (p. 1015). Vega emphasizes this orientation saying that "the family is the dominant source of advice and help in all generations" (p. 1019). Familism, or the importance of the family to all its members (including the extended family), is apparent in various ways. Alvirez, Bean, and Williams (1983) state that "the needs of family collectively may supersede individual needs" and that "when one

needs advice or help, the person one will most often go to is another member of the family" (pp. 274-275).

It is likely that family values and attitudes play a significant role in the educational and occupational decisions made by Hispanic students. Arbona (1990) reports that the most influential factors in the educational achievement of professional Mexican-American women were "the emotional support of their families, having attended highly integrated schools, and the strong role models their mothers provided" (p. 311).

According to Otto and Haller (1979) and Buriel and Cardoza (1988), personal aspirations are by far the strongest predictors of students' achievements; and Mexican-American mothers in particular appear to influence significantly the aspirations and achievements of their children (Buriel & Cardoza, 1988). Velez (1989) states that "the higher a student's educational aspirations, the less likely he or she was to dropout" (p. 129).

It is a misconception that Hispanic parents are not concerned about their children's education; Garza-Lubeck and Chavkin (1988) state that "this misconception may be fueled by the knowledge that the Hispanic dropout rate is exceedingly high" (p. 311). In fact, the findings of their study indicate that "Hispanic parents are overwhelmingly concerned about their children's education" and "have a strong desire to be included in the education of their children" (p. 317).

The dramatic demographic changes in Texas are focusing attention on the education and training needs of the state's fastest growing minority, Mexican Americans. Today, over four million Mexican Americans live in Texas. The National Council of La Raza (1992) has identified the following factors which contribute to the under-education of Hispanics:

> Hispanics are heavily concentrated in urban areas and inner-city schools, which tend to have very limited resources. . . . Hispanic students have become increasingly segregated during the past decade. . . . Although they place great value upon education, many Hispanic parents lack the resources to help their children in school. . . . Less than 3% of U.S. elementary and secondary school teachers are Hispanic. . . . Hispanics are likely to be held back in school, and early school failure is the greatest predictor of a child's later dropping out of school. . . . Hispanics tend to be enrolled in educational "tracks" which prepare students for neither college nor stable employment. . . . The proposed policy restrictions on

minority scholarships have serious negative implications for future access to higher education by Hispanics. (pp. 10-11)

The dropout rate of Mexican-American students in Texas is high—over forty percent in some areas. The clear link between educational attainment and economic success, coupled with the high value placed on the concept of family in the Mexican-American culture, make it imperative to examine the role of the family in the educational and occupational decisions made by Mexican-American students. Specifically, the present research addressed the following questions:

- To what extent do Mexican-American families influence students' educational and occupational decisions?
- How do Mexican-American students perceive the influence of their families on their educational and occupational decisions?
- What other factors influence the educational and occupational plans and decisions made by Mexican-American students?
- Are there gender differences among Mexican-American students on selected educational and occupational variables?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to the 1990 Census, African-American and Hispanic students are dropping out of school or falling behind their classmates at a much higher rate than Anglos. Current statistics reveal that thirty-five percent of all students are enrolled below their grade level or have dropped out by high school; however, the rate is much higher for Black and Hispanic youth. For those population groups ages fifteen to seventeen, statistics indicate that fifty percent are below grade level or are out of school. Valdivieso (1986) states, "A shocking proportion of this generation of Hispanic youth are being wasted because their educational needs are neither understood nor met, their aspirations are unrecognized, their promising potential is stunted" (p. 1). In Texas, the dropout rate for Mexican Americans is the highest among all population groups. As the Mexican-American student struggles

under the pressures either to stay in school or to drop out, there are many factors which impact the ultimate decision.

Family appears to be very important within the Mexican-American culture. This study examined the role of parental influence in educational and occupational decisions made by Mexican-American students. Thus, the review of literature is divided into four sections: (1) demographic trends, (2) the Hispanic family, (3) the Hispanic student, and (4) the educational achievement and occupational aspirations of Hispanic students. While this study deals with Mexican-American students and families in Texas, the literature reviewed also includes information on Hispanics in general because of potential implications for the Mexican-American subgroup.

Demographic Trends

By the year 2000, between 8.6% and 9.9% of the population in the United States will be Hispanic (McKay, 1986). Hispanics are a heterogeneous group made up of several subgroups. The U.S Bureau of the Census (1991) reports that the Hispanic group as a whole is composed of Mexican Americans (62.6%), Puerto Ricans (11.1%), South and Central Americans (13.8%), Cubans (4.9%), and others (7.6%). California and Texas are home to more than half of the Hispanics in the United States.

According to the 1990 Census data, people of Hispanic origin in Texas made up 25.5% of the population. Mexican Americans comprised 22.9%; Puerto Ricans were 0.3%; Cubans were 0.1%; and other Hispanics were 2.3%. Data revealed that married-couple families with related children constituted 53.9% of Hispanic households, followed by married-couple families with no related children at 20.3%. Households headed by men (no wives) with children comprised 7.8%, and households headed by women (no husbands) with children comprised 19.1%.

The Hispanic population is younger than the non-Hispanic population according to data in *The Hispanic Population in the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). Thirty percent of Hispanics were under fifteen years of age compared to twenty-two percent for non-Hispanics. Also, of those age 55 or older, only eleven percent were

Hispanic. The median age for Hispanics in 1991 was 26.2 years, slightly higher than in 1983 when it was 24.3. The median age of non-Hispanics is much higher at 33.8 years.

Miranda and Quiroz (1990), using the 1990 Census data, identified seven trends which characterized the Hispanics' economic situation in the 1980s. These trends are described in the following sections.

Trend 1: Stagnating Income Levels and Continued High Poverty

The period between 1979 and 1982 saw Hispanic family incomes fall by fourteen percent with only a slight rise during the 1982-1988 time period. The income recovery amounted to sixty percent of the initial loss of income.

Trend 2: High Proportions of Impoverished Children

Poverty among children was significant during the 1980s. Hispanic children were among the groups hardest hit. Data reveals that in 1982, "the rate of poverty among Hispanic children reached 39.5%, the highest level on record. . . . In 1988, 14% of White children were poor, making Hispanic children about two and a half times as likely to be poor as White children" (p. 4). New census data reveals that this trend is continuing and that over one-third of Hispanic children lived in poverty in 1990.

Miranda and Quiroz (1990) indicated that poverty rates vary by family type. According to the census data in 1988, "19% of the Hispanic married couples' families with children were poor, compared to 59.2% of Hispanic woman-maintained families with children" (p. 4). The authors further noted that Hispanic children live in poverty in both family types, married couples or woman-maintained. According to the census data, "In 1988, about half of poor Hispanic children lived in married-couple families. . . . In 1987, about three-fifths of poor Mexican Americans lived in married couple families . . ." (p. 4). In 1976, the poverty rate for Hispanic children was the highest ever recorded at 30.2%. Even this figure, however, was 20% lower than the 1988 rate of 37.9%: "Hispanic children were 35% more likely to be poor in 1988 than in 1979 . . ." (p. 4).

Trend 3: No Improvement for Hispanic Woman-Maintained Households

Census data released in 1989 revealed that 49.1% of Hispanic and Black woman-maintained families were poor. Miranda and Quiroz (1990) further noted that "woman-

maintained families with children under age 18 are even more likely to be in poverty" (p. 4). The Hispanic woman-maintained family's median income ($11,321) proved to be only sixty-one percent of that of a White woman-maintained family. Furthermore, Hispanic families are about twice as likely to be woman-maintained as White families. The 1989 Census data indicated that at that time woman-maintained families made up 23.4% of all Hispanic families.

Miranda and Quiroz (1990) noted that the poverty rate of Hispanic women householders who had less than a high school education was sixty percent higher than that of Hispanic women householders who had completed four years of high school" (p. 6). Only 44.4% of Hispanic women householders were high school graduates.

Trend 4: Deepening Hardship Among Married-Couple Families

Miranda and Quiroz (1990) found that Hispanic couples are two and a half times as likely as Whites to be poor. Hispanic married-couple families' economic status declined during the recession. The poverty rate for Hispanic families is much greater than for Whites. When comparing median incomes for couples, the Hispanic couples' income was about seventy percent that of White couples' incomes. McKay (1986) stated that Hispanic couples' median family earnings tended to be higher than for Black families as a result of more family members working. Weekly wages for Hispanics is less than other population groups.

Data reveals that the working Hispanic woman makes a great contribution to the family income; however, they earn low wages. Miranda and Quiroz (1990) noted that with a wife working, the median income of Hispanic married-couple families was $21,864, compared to $19,117 for married-couple families in which only the husband was in the paid labor force.

In 1988, Hispanic married-couples averaged 2.21 children per family. The more children in a family, the more the likelihood of poverty: "In 1988, the poverty rate of Hispanic married-couple families with one child was 10.7%; with two children, 16.5%; with three children, 30.0%; and with four children, 33.3%" (Miranda & Quiroz, 1990, p. 11).

Trend 5: Widening Income Disparity

According to Miranda and Quiroz (1990), over the past decade, society has become increasingly divided into those in the high income bracket and those in the lower income bracket, with Hispanics remaining at the low end. In fact, "By 1988, one in four Hispanic households had incomes of less than $10,000" (p. 11). Data reveals that poor Hispanics are falling deeper into poverty. One in ten Hispanic families had incomes at or below fifty percent of the poverty line. In 1988, the Hispanic family income was only sixty-four percent of White family income, a decrease from 1979 data. McKay (1986) noted that the unemployment rate for Hispanics is about sixty percent higher than for Whites, regardless of economic fluctuations, which helps to explain the income disparity.

Trend 6: Still Significant, Still Unequal Benefits from Education

Miranda and Quiroz (1990) reported that low educational attainment is closely associated with low incomes and high poverty. Those Hispanic householders with fewer than four years of high school had median household incomes of $14,496, forty-three percent less than the $25,282 median household income of Hispanic householders with four years of high school and some college (p. 13). Hispanic high school dropouts were twice as likely to be poor as those Hispanics who completed high school. Hispanic families with householders who completed four years of high school increased by twenty-eight percent between 1978 and 1988. Hispanic earnings decreased by thirteen percent between 1979 and 1988.

Trend 7: Earnings Decreasing

More than any other group, Hispanics are likely to be poor (Miranda & Quiroz, 1990). For those Hispanics who worked full-time year around, there was an 8.8% chance they would be poor. In addition, real earnings of Hispanic males decreased by thirteen percent between 1979 and 1988.

Factors Contributing to Trends

Miranda and Quiroz (1990) identify the following six factors which contributed to the seven trends previously described:

1. Concentration in low-wage, unstable jobs

2. Under-education

3. Demographic characteristics

4. Immigration

5. Cut-backs in federal programs

6. Discrimination

Concentration in Low-Wage, Unstable Jobs

In analyzing the first factor—concentration in low-wage, unstable jobs—Miranda and Quiroz (1990) indicated that one-fourth of Hispanics are employed in jobs identified as low-wage. Hispanics also tend to work in jobs that have declining employment. Additionally, there tends to be more worker displacement among Hispanics than among any other group.

Under-Education

Hispanics are the most under-educated of groups: "In 1988, only half of all Hispanics 25 years old and over were high school graduates. In addition, nearly three-fourths of Hispanic students have been placed in non-academic curriculum tracks—making qualification for higher education virtually impossible" (Miranda & Quiroz, 1990, p. 20). Furthermore, Hispanic students are more than twice as likely to be poor, and federal cut-backs in educational loans have narrowed their chances for receiving financial aid. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1983), education grants to students have failed to keep pace with the rising cost of higher education.

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics are the third factor. Data indicates that more and more Hispanic women who lack adequate education and training will face the challenge of raising a family alone. Miranda and Quiroz (1990) noted that in 1988, the median age for Hispanics was 25.5 years, compared to 32.9 years for non-Hispanics (p. 21). An assumption could be made that with the low median age for Hispanics, a chance would exist for incomes to rise with age over the next few years. Generally, with work experience, incomes do tend to rise; but for Hispanics, that does not necessarily prove to be true as median income levels have been shown to remain low.

Immigration

As Miranda and Quiroz (1990) point out, immigration is a fourth contributing factor to the trends, although there was only a very slight difference in percentage of the overall Mexican-American poverty rate when comparing U.S.-born Mexican Americans to immigrants.

Cut-Backs in Federal Programs

The cutback in funding for federal programs was yet another factor indicated. There is a greater percentage of Hispanics receiving benefits from these programs, and low income Hispanics are adversely affected by such cutbacks. Cash benefits to Hispanics through entitlement programs have decreased tremendously.

Discrimination

Discrimination was the sixth and final factor indicated by Miranda and Quiroz (1990). As they pointed out, "Empirical evidence indicated that Hispanics experienced significant levels of employment discrimination throughout the decade" (p. 22).

The Hispanic Family

According to Fleming (1982), "Current research indicates that parent socioeconomic status, education, and occupation affect children's academic performance, duration of education, labor force experience, and attitudes" (p. 2). Hispanic families are influential "in encouraging youth to continue in school, for family role models and connections can increase a young person's opportunities in the job market" (p. 2).

In researching the relationship between family status and youth aspirations and expectations, Fleming (1982) found that regardless of parent occupations, the majority of youth indicated professional aspirations; and youth whose parents were in farming occupations had lower aspirations than any others. However, Hispanic children whose parents were employed in professional fields had slightly higher aspirations. Fleming concludes that "higher percentages of youth with under-eduated fathers (less than high school) have lower aspirations than other youth, yet the highest percentage in this category still wish to hold professional positions" (p. 4).

Fleming (1982) further observes that the level of parent education reflects more on school expectations than on career aspirations. Youth in the study were asked to respond to what their parents wanted them to do after high school. Youth with professional parents have a higher expectation of graduation from college than those whose parents are in lower status jobs. The percentage is higher for youth whose mothers are in professional jobs. The youth respondents indicated that mothers more than fathers wanted "their children to attend college, although both parents wanted that option above all others (full-time job, trade school, military, etc.). More fathers wanted youths to enter trade school than mothers" (p. 9).

Other studies suggest that family role expectations may also be a contributing factor in keeping Mexican-American women from achieving their full potential because success in family roles is not seen to be related to success in educational achievement. Since the male is seen as the provider in the family, the Mexican-American female is not encouraged to pursue academic success. Coker (1984) stated that "sex roles within the Mexican-American family emphasize family roles for women at the expense of other roles" and that "the educational and occupational attainment of women may be restricted" (p. 6). Furthermore, "women are expected to put the needs of others before their own needs" (p. 7).

It appears that the greatest chance for achieving success among youth is at the family/community level (Fleming, 1982). In a report of the Vice President's Task Force on Youth Employment (cited by Fleming), Robert Taggerts observes,

> Most youth enter teen years with a developing awareness of the world of work. Their families are work-oriented, likely having a male and secondary earner. Friends and relatives talk about their jobs and careers. Reading materials, adult interactions and the like are a source of career education. Values are uncalculated which will make the youth acceptable in the labor market. In sharp contrast, youth from poor families are likely to enter the teens with a limited understanding of career options. He/She hasn't had experience looking for work because odd jobs have not been readily available. There has been limited socialization to the demands of the work-place. The result is that the disadvantaged youth starts off at the labor market threshold with a deficit which results in a higher rate of failure, delay in successful entry, and sometimes lasting alienation and fear. (p. 10)

Fleming summarized the task force report findings by stating, "When parents have little education, and especially when they do not set a high value on preparation, work, and

saving for future rewards, young people may lack family psychological support to stay in school" (p. 10). Fleming concluded that parental aspirations for their children may be high but expectations may be low, but he stressed that parents should be encouraged to raise expectations for their children to seek higher education and professional careers. The importance of the influence of Hispanic parents in their children's educational and career choices should not be underestimated.

A number of studies discuss language fluency as another concern faced by the Mexican-American family. A report by the National Commission on Secondary Schooling for Hispanics (cited by Valdivieso, 1986) states,

> Hispanic parents are staunch supporters of solid English instruction. What they do object to are instructional approaches to learning English that deprive their children of Spanish, which is often the language of communication in their families. Parents fear that they will not be able to guide their youth and pass on their values. In addition, Hispanic parents recognize that wider employment opportunities and better paying jobs are available to individuals who are literate in both Spanish and English. (p. 20)

Caraveo-Ramos and Winer (1982) indicated that the home and social environments are important socializing agents in the decision-making process of Mexican-American students, for these environments stimulate development of educational and vocational objectives. Significantly, family income is directly associated with educational attainments. Within a community, if more upper-income, nonagriculturally employed Mexican Americans are present, then there is higher educational attainment. Mexican-American values and attitudes appear to be affected by the level of acculturation and family style.

In addition, Davies and Kandel (1981) indicated that "parental influences are crucial intervening links that explain the effects of social class on status attainment . . ." (p. 382). Parental aspirations for adolescents are influenced more by social class than actual academic ability. Parental influence tends to increase during the adolescent years: "These data provide further supporting evidence for the growing realization that far from rejecting their parents, adolescents rely on them for matters involving future life goals and careers" (p. 282). Parents appear to be a much stronger influence than best friends in determining adolescents' educational aspirations.

Finally, Coker (1984) noted that the typical, traditional Mexican family is founded on the supremacy of the father; thus, females are groomed early to become wives and mothers. Achievements in academics or in a profession are not encouraged. Even though society has changed in regard to the view of the woman's role, Mexican-American females continue to have domestic tasks as their major responsibility; male-female sex roles continue to denote a division of labor.

The Hispanic Student

McKay (1986) points out that Hispanics continue to be the least educated major U.S. subgroup: "In 1984, the median number of school years completed by Hispanics 25 and over was 11.3 years—less than high school graduation—compared to 12.2 for Blacks and 12.6 for Whites. . . . More than one-quarter of Hispanics (29.8%) had completed less than eight years of school, compared to 15.7% of Blacks and just 6.7% of Whites" (p. 2). A report titled *The Hispanic Population in the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991) indicated that in 1991, fifty-one percent of Hispanics twenty-five years old or over had completed four years of high school; while in 1983, the figure was forty-six percent. The 1980s saw a modest increase in educational attainment. Only sixteen percent of Hispanics who were age twenty-five and over had completed less than five years of schooling; and in 1991, thirteen percent had done so. A comparison of the percentage of Hispanics and Whites who have less than eight years of schooling exposes the Hispanic population's lack of education. In addition, according to Valdivieso (1986), secondary schooling is not preparing the Hispanic youth for productive, satisfying lives, a fact which will affect communities and cities.

McKay (1986) stressed that dropout rates continue to be the highest among Hispanics. He noted that half of the Mexican-American youth will leave school without diplomas. In general, Hispanics have completed fewer years of schooling than either Black or White segments of the population. This factor contributes to a high rate of Hispanic functional illiteracy. Half of Hispanic adults lack full English literacy skills.

Valdivieso (1986) reported that White and Hispanic sophomores' reasons for dropping out are as follows:

- *school related* – "school was not for me," had poor grades, could not get along with teachers, were expelled or suspended, did not get into desired program;
- *family related* – were married or planned to be, were pregnant, had to support family; or
- *work-related* – offered a job and chose to work.

The most often cited reason among Hispanic males and females for dropping out was poor grades. Twenty-five percent of Hispanic males and females indicated an actual dislike for school.

Fields (1981) discussed factors which impact the career decision-making process of Mexican-American children by concluding that Mexican-American mothers' perceptions of opportunity affect their values and thus the development of aspirations among their children. "Parental influence is of special importance for Hispanics since both Hispanic youth and adults suffer from the problems of under-education, high unemployment and dropout rates, and low occupational status," states Fleming (1982, p. 2).

While a number of serious barriers still exist for the Mexican-American students in school, Coker (1984) states that "problems such as difficulty with the English language, differences in customs, and lack of understanding between students and teachers persist as serious barriers to learning by Mexican Americans" (p. 4). Home situations might also be the root of some school problems. School dislike may be fostered by the idea that new customs will be learned and thus upset the more traditional Mexican-American family life. These parental feelings pose a conflict of loyalty between the responsibilities of nome and of the school for the Mexican-American student.

In interviews with Hispanic women, Crocker (1982) noted economic need, language barriers, family responsibility, and educator attitudes as contributors to the high dropout rate. Crocker cited the following story as told by a young woman: "One of my parents was very ill. I was behind in school, and I was the oldest in my class. I also had some unfavorable experiences related to culture. I got engaged in the perfectly respectable Latino fashion, and when I showed up at school, proudly displaying my engagement ring, the school responded with demerits as punishment" (p. 4).

A second crucial problem is language, according to Crocker (1982). The case was cited of a young girl who left school because "she didn't understand what was going on in her classes and she couldn't stand the peer abuse anymore. So she dropped out" (p. 4). Crocker further noted that "the magnitude of the language problem is illustrated best in the estimates that 3.6 million elementary and secondary school students are not fluent in English. Seventy percent of these students are Hispanic" (p. 4). Crocker indicated family responsibilities as another factor influencing females to leave school. With daycare neither affordable nor culturally acceptable, female students are often expected to assist in caring for siblings while parents work. Minimum-wage jobs also afford females who drop out an opportunity to contribute to the family income.

A strong link exists between the Mexican-American female's attitude towards school and her cultural values. This link will motivate her to either continue toward higher education or discourage her to pursue academic achievements. Coker (1984) stated that "the Mexican American female receives less schooling than her male counterpart in all areas of the educational ladder" (p. 5). The Mexican-American female needs teachers and counselors who are understanding of the culture and can guide the female as she faces decisions regarding the school-home conflict.

MacCorquodale (1984) conducted a research study focused on self-image, science, and math. The research looked at the image of the scientist as a factor keeping girls and minorities from pursuing science and math careers. The researcher noted the low representation of both women and minorities in the science field. When making occupational choices, MacCorquodale stated, "The individual tries to coordinate self-image and the image of the typical occupational incumbent" (p. 4). The most important factor in educational decisions is student perception. Girls and Mexican Americans often do not see themselves as creative or intelligent.

Valdivieso (1986) stated that students considering dropping out may be suffering from a lack of clear goals, may not be academically prepared, or may not be motivated. Students may feel hopeless about ever catching up or even doing better when these facts are considered against the need for earning an income and family-related demands. Dropping out has appeal. The report also noted that the most common reasons for dropping out were not attending classes, pursuing a job, enrolling in GED programs, and getting married.

Insensitivity of those in the educational field might also be a factor in the high dropout rate. Crocker (1982) indicates that "positive attitudes toward Hispanic students are not always present. 'They have taken the attitude that we have a long tradition of school problems that aren't going to be changed overnight. So they have no expectations for our kids. They give worn-out socioeconomic reasons as excuses for why our kids aren't doing well—excuses they use to keep them from doing anything,' asserts one Southwestern Latina" (p. 4). Another school-related factor that contributes to dropping out is delayed schooling for those students who are behind for their age group (Velez, 1989). Velez explained that students may be held back because of "language difficulties, learning disorders or academic failure" (p. 121).

Velez (1989) reported that role expectations, where females complete household chores and take care of younger siblings, may create conflicts in girls between their family and student roles. Velez concluded that the "relevance of background attributes . . . suggest that family structure; socialization practices; and the human, financial, and social capital that are available through the family are important in understanding the behavior of dropouts" (p. 131).

Policymakers are very concerned about the school dropout rate for Hispanics (Valdivieso, 1986) because their low level of educational attainment and training leave them ill prepared for the present labor market (Peng, 1985). Other factors which impact on the success of the Mexican Americans are inequitable school finance, the paucity of Latino teachers and role models, ineffective bilingual education programs, and Latino underrepresentation in successful support programs. Valdivieso (1986) concluded that a good, solid educational background will be needed by everyone in the labor force in the future: "Just a strong back or nimble fingers will no longer do for entry-level work in economies that are moving away from traditional manufacturing to service, technical, and information industries" (p. 6).

Educational Achievement and Occupational Aspirations

According to a report by the National Council of La Raza (1992), Hispanics comprise the most under-educated segment of the population. In 1991, about fifty percent of Hispanics who were twenty-five years of age and older had at least a high school

education, compared to eighty percent of the non-Hispanic population. Of the Mexican-American subgroup who were twenty-five years of age and older, less than forty-four percent had graduated from high school. When compared to non-Hispanics, Hispanic adults are nearly eight times as likely to be illiterate; fewer than ten percent are college graduates.

An improvement in Hispanic educational attainment has been shown in recent years, yet Hispanics are still behind other groups. Between 1980 and 1985, the percent increase in the college graduates in the twenty-five and over population was just 7.9% for Hispanics, compared to a 15.8% increase for Blacks and a 23.8% increase for Whites. Postsecondary enrollment has been increasing in absolute numbers during the past decade. In 1975, 35.4% of Hispanics who earned high school diplomas went on to college, but the rate was only 29.9% in 1980: "Because of the close relationship between education and employment, these educational deficiencies are likely to have serious consequences in future years" (McKay, 1986, p. 3).

Hispanics also encounter employment problems after leaving school. Warren (1984) reports that they face much adversity on the job. Job success is affected by two factors: (1) language skills and (2) lack of education. The National Commission for Employment Policy (cited by Warren, 1984) noted that "difficulties communicating in English directly reduce their prospects for good jobs, impede their educational attainment and operate as a vehicle for labor market discrimination" (p. 1).

Data has shown that Hispanics are underrepresented in both white-collar jobs and technical jobs. Warren (1984) attributes the status of the Hispanic in the workforce to three major factors: (1) lack of English proficiency, (2) low level of education, and (3) the discrimination resulting from these two factors. The most critical of these is English proficiency.

Inadequate language services contribute to low educational attainment among Hispanics (McKay, 1986). English is spoken by only a small percentage of native Spanish speakers, and many adult Hispanics are bilingual. Two-thirds of limited-English proficient Hispanic children receive no special educational services, and adult literacy programs tend to serve only persons who are fluent in English.

Fleming (1982) analyzed *High School and Beyond* data using cross tabulations which listed youth aspiration/expectation variables by "(1) parent status items (occupation, education and income), (2) ethnic groups (Black, White, Hispanic), and (3) Hispanic subgroups (Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, and Other Latin)" (p. 3). When aspiration/expectation variables were compared among racial/ethnic groups, results indicated occupational aspirations of Hispanic youth to be the same as those of Black and White youth. The percentage was almost the same for professional positions among the three groups, although Hispanics had the lowest of the three. Youth from parents in the agricultural sector had the lowest aspirations of all youth.

Valdivieso (1986) expressed concern that Hispanic students' curriculums were not preparing them for future jobs or higher education. Fleming (1982) had youth respond to the question of how much schooling they expected to receive. Fewer Hispanics expect to get more than a high school education when compared with Blacks or Whites. In regard to attending college, Hispanics are doubtful about their ability to graduate. The study indicated that thirty-four percent of the Hispanics expected to graduate from college and fifteen percent expected to attain graduate degrees. Fleming also indicated that mothers have more influence on educational plans than fathers. Among the least influential are teachers, counselors, and military recruiters. Hispanic students indicated that teachers influenced their plans more frequently than the White youth in the group. Friends and relatives of Hispanic youth have a greater tendency to wish the students will go to trade school or to the military than a similar group for White youth. The aspiration/expectation variables of the Hispanic subgroups were cross-tabulated to examine specific differences. Data indicated similar occupational aspirations for all Hispanic youth in terms of type of position desired. Youth indicated the position of "professional" which included careers such as "accountant, artist, engineer, social worker, etc." (p. 4) as being most often selected. However, only twenty-two percent of the Mexican-American youth chose the category "professional." Of the professional careers such as doctor, lawyer, dentist, and professor, only eleven percent of Mexican Americans indicated these categories.

Perceived ability to achieve educational goals was also investigated by Fleming (1982). Fleming's research indicated that the Mexican-American subgroup ranked lowest in terms of confidence in ability to complete college. However, it should be noted that responses such as "yes, probably" and "not sure" reflect an uncertain rather than a definite attitude about their ability to succeed.

McNulty and Borgen (1988) conducted a study which investigated the agreement between occupational fields and the occupational aspirations and expectations of adolescents. The research also investigated the extent of agreement in the field on influencing factors such as grade, gender, or locus of control. Both male and female students in grades eight through twelve participated. Results indicated that the extent of agreement in the field when comparing ideal and real occupational aspirations of students was consistent across grades. Data was then collapsed, and an analysis was conducted using frequencies and percentages. These results indicated that 35.8% chose both ideal and real occupations in the same field. However, 64.2% of the students' ideal and occupational aspirations were not in the same field. Results indicated that "the level of agreement in occupational fields between ideal occupational aspirations and real occupational aspirations was not influenced by grade, gender, or locus of control" (p. 222). Also, students in both the eighth and twelfth grades indicated the same clear prestige hierarchy as an adult: "Students will sacrifice interest in a field of work to maintain sex type and prestige regardless of their grade level" (p. 223). Occupational status orientation becomes increasingly realistic as the adolescent progresses through various stages of occupational selection.

McKay (1986) stated that lower-paid, lower-skilled jobs are held by more Hispanics and especially by Hispanic women than other ethnic groups. Hispanics are only about half as likely as non-Hispanics to hold managerial or professional jobs and instead work as operatives. More Hispanic men and women hold operative jobs compared to non-Hispanic men and women. Statistics cited in *The Hispanic Population in the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991) reveal that Hispanic males tend to work as operators, fabricators, or laborers. Employment of Hispanic males in precision production, craft, and repair industries did not differ greatly from non-Hispanic males. Hispanic women in the labor force increased from forty-seven percent in 1983 to fifty-one percent in 1991 (p. 3). Hispanic women are most often employed in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (p. 2). Sixteen percent of Hispanic women are employed in managerial and professional specialty occupations while more Hispanic women are employed in service occupations than non-Hispanic women. Although occupational status changes are occurring, the low educational attainment of Hispanics will continue to limit them to low-paying, low-skilled jobs.

Coker (1984) stated that the number of Hispanic women in the labor force continues to increase at a rate faster than that of other women. They continue to face sex-related employment and racial handicaps. Hispanic women in 1974 worked full-time year around, but they were more concentrated in unskilled, blue-collar, and service occupations. Coker cited a report released by the *Texas Advisory Committee* which stated that job discrimination against minorities and women in Texas had not improved since 1968. Minorities and women continue to remain in low-paying, low-ranking jobs. Public employment, education, political participation, and the administration of justice are common employment occupations. Furthermore, Coker stated, "Hispanic women have shared a situation complicated by struggle within a society that has failed to honor, understand and to acknowledge their culture or even their right to a culture. Hispanic women have also faced the universal victimhood of sexism" (p. 4).

In discussing the low educational attainment for Mexican Americans in Texas, Coker (1984) stated, "The breakdown between males and females is not available, but generally it has been assumed that educational and occupational achievements were not relevant for women because of the social norm that work was primarily a male domain" (p. 4). Mexican-American females are a product of two cultures, and conflict may exist regarding their role. First, there is the traditional Mexican-American culture, which girls experience at home. Second is the dominant American culture which they experience at school and elsewhere: "Many are struggling for greater equality and a greater range of personal and vocational choices within the dominant society as well as the Mexican American culture" (p. 4).

Coker (1984) cited Thomas Carter saying that schools have failed Mexican Americans by continuing to encourage the very practices that inhibit achievement and attainment: "Carter proposes that the social system is maintained by perpetuating the relative position of minorities in the socioeconomic institution. The result is that students attain an education that qualifies them for entry into jobs currently held by Mexican Americans" (p. 3). Coker concluded that their low educational attainment limits the range of occupations which Mexican Americans are able to enter. Even though the educational and occupational aspirations of young Mexican Americans are high compared to their parents' generation, they remain low when compared to other ethnic groups.

Summary

Mexican Americans lag behind other population groups in educational attainment, which impacts on their socioeconomic status. With projected statistics revealing the rapid growth of the population in states such as Texas, understanding the many challenges facing the Mexican-American subgroup is paramount in addressing educational issues. With the present dropout rate at a high level, the assumption can be made that we are facing generations of under-educated Mexican Americans. Programs targeting the Hispanic population have proven to achieve results (National Council of La Raza, 1992). As Miranda and Quiroz (1990) stated, "Even in the face of growing poverty, reduced real earnings and intense family pressures that have characterized the 1980s, Hispanic Americans continued to contribute to the social and economic strength of the nation. Clearly, Hispanics are a 'good bet' for future public policy investments" (p. 22).

PROCEDURES

This project was conducted over an eight-month period from January through August 1992. It examined the role of the family in educational and occupational decisions made by Mexican-American students in selected areas in Texas. The sites represented urban, rural, and suburban communities. Although more community colleges were invited to participate in the study, only three elected to do so. The resulting sample of community college students therefore was small, so the reader is advised to view the findings for that group with caution. Samples were nonrandom because they were limited to those school districts and institutions that agreed to participate in the study. A list of the participating school districts and community colleges is included in Appendix A, and a map of their locations is presented in Appendix B.

An advisory committee assisted the project staff in identifying survey sites, selecting the sample, and developing and validating the questionnaires used in the study. The committee was comprised of fourteen individuals representing teachers, counselors, and administrators in public schools and in community colleges. Names and addresses of advisory committee members are included in Appendix C.

Most of the items on the questionnaires utilized a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = low, 5 = high). Some items, such as those designed to collect relevant demographic data, asked the respondent to place a check mark next to the appropriate response(s). The questionnaires were administered to over two thousand students and their parents. Eighth graders, twelfth graders, and community college students were included in the study. Teachers at each participating site volunteered to administer the questionnaires in their classes according to a set procedure. A member of the project advisory committee coordinated the administration of the questionnaires at each site. Classes selected for the study were those which were required of all students, such as English or social studies; and students participated in the study on a voluntary basis.

In addition to the questionnaire, students completed a form giving the name, address, and telephone number of their parents. Parents were then sent a questionnaire and a cover letter explaining the study. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included to encourage returns. All parents received questionnaires in both English and Spanish to accommodate any who might have limited English speaking ability. The parents' version of the questionnaire included items designed to determine their perceived influence and the influence of other family members on the educational and occupational decisions made by their children. Additional relevant demographic data was also gathered.

Eight weeks after questionnaires were mailed to parents, one hundred nonrespondents were contacted through a telephone interview. Using the same questions that were on the mailed questionnaire, a bilingual graduate student conducted the interview in the parent's language of preference, either English or Spanish. The student was trained to use a standard procedure for conducting the interview. The resulting data set was analyzed separately from the parents who responded to the mailed questionnaire because there were several distinct differences in the two groups of parents and because a different method of data collection was used.

Data Analysis

Data was coded, verified, and analyzed using the mainframe computer at Texas A&M University and the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS). Descriptive statistics—including frequencies, percents, means, and standard deviations—were obtained

for variables in the different data sets. Data coding and data entry procedures were validated via a two-step process against the original data and the raw data from the computer print-outs. Univariate statistics, t-tests, ANOVAs, and correlation coefficients were used to analyze the data. Comparisons were made between the responses of Mexican-American students and other students and between Mexican-American student and parent responses on selected variables. Although data was analyzed for all respondents, this report focuses on the responses of Mexican-American students and their parents except where otherwise noted. To facilitate readability of this report, tables are presented in Appendix D.

Description of the Samples

A total of 2,118 students from eleven school districts and three community colleges in Texas participated in the study (see Figure 1). Of these students, sixty-six percent were Mexican American, twenty percent were Caucasian, and fourteen percent were other. Eighth and twelfth graders comprised ninety-six percent of the 1,406 Mexican-American students in the study (see Figure 2). Of the 187 community college students, 55 were Mexican American. The students were about equally divided between males and females (see Figure 3). A total of 581 parents responded to the mailed questionnaire, and an additional 100 responded to a telephone questionnaire (see Figure 4).

Figure 1

All Students by Grade (N = 2,118)

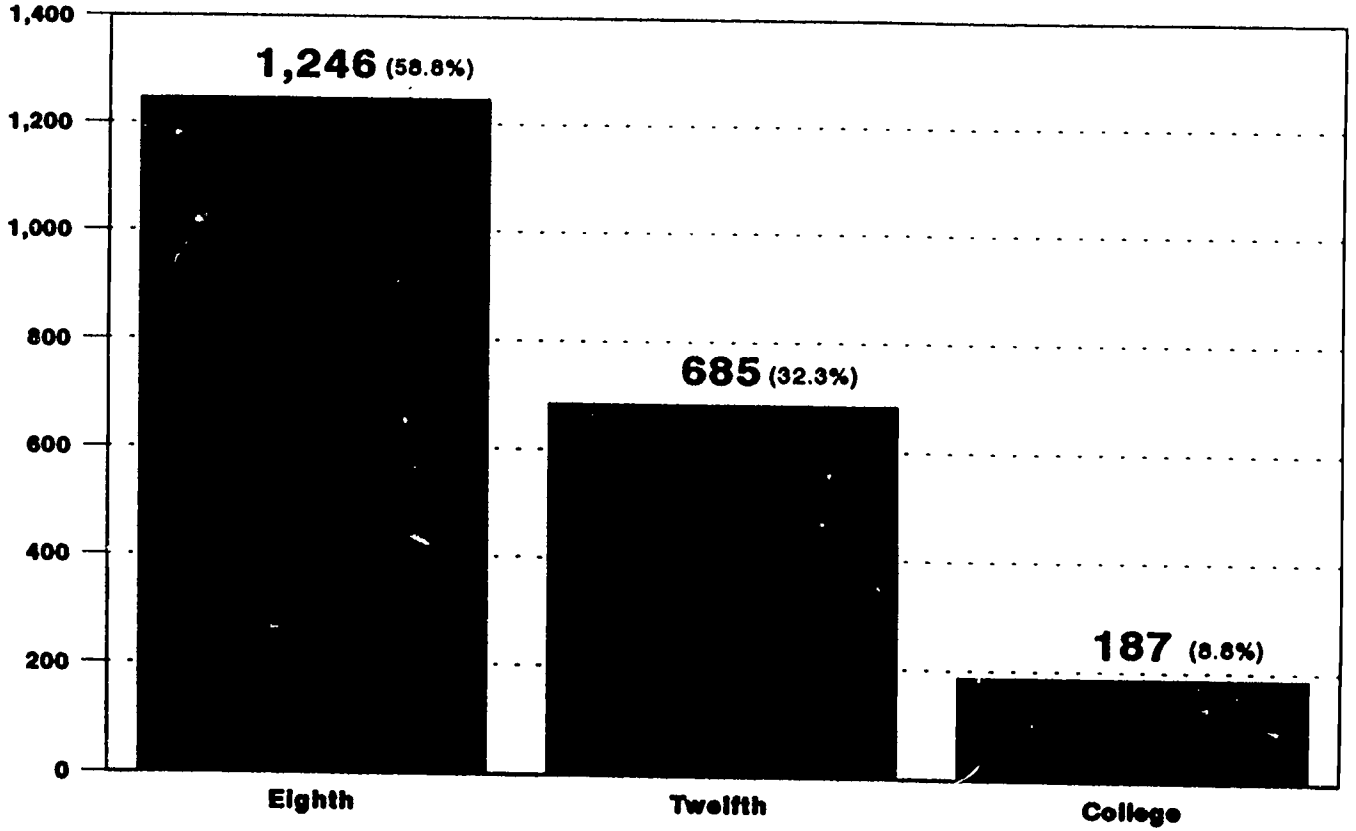


Figure 2

Mexican-American Students by Grade (N = 1,406)

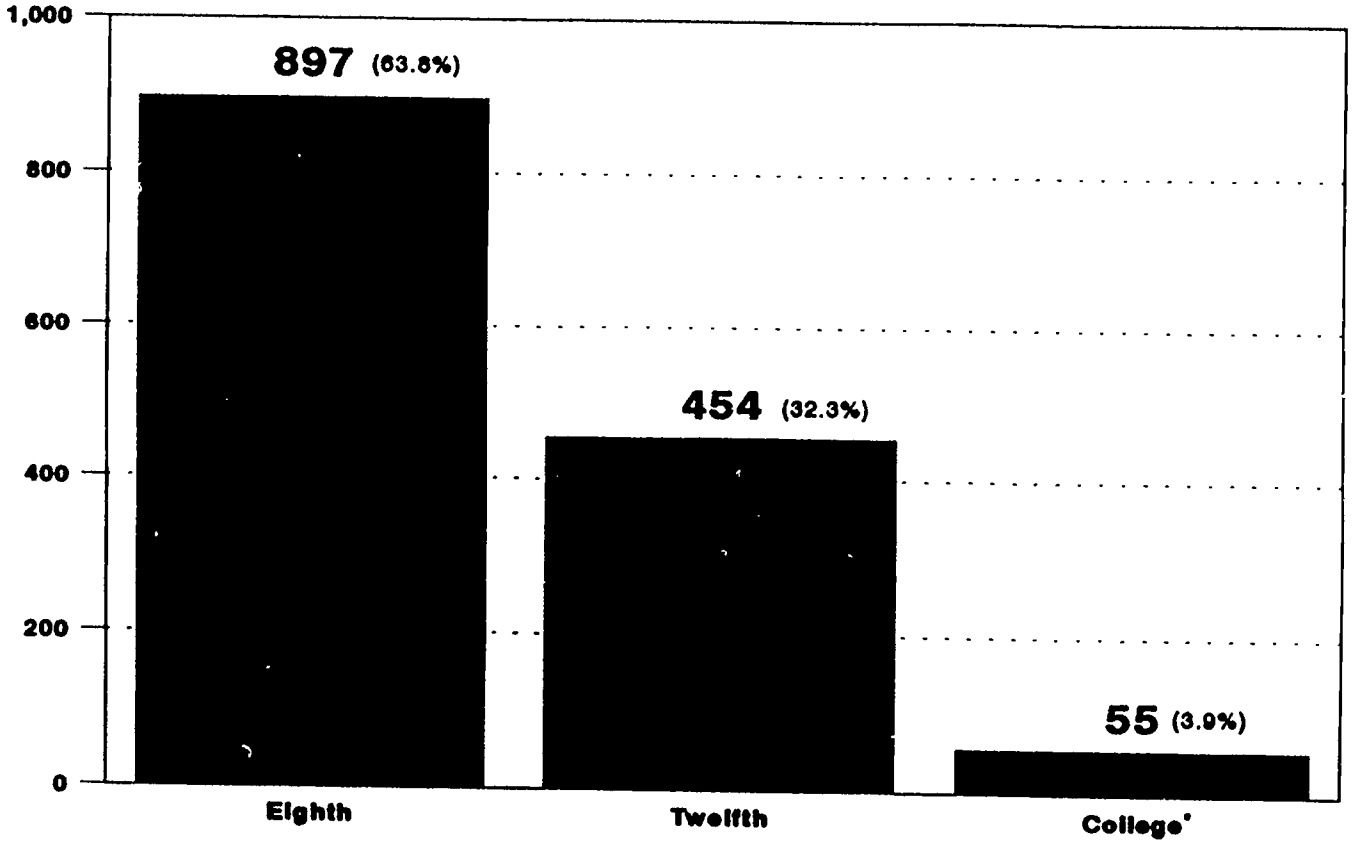


Figure 3

Mexican-American Students by Gender (N = 1,406)

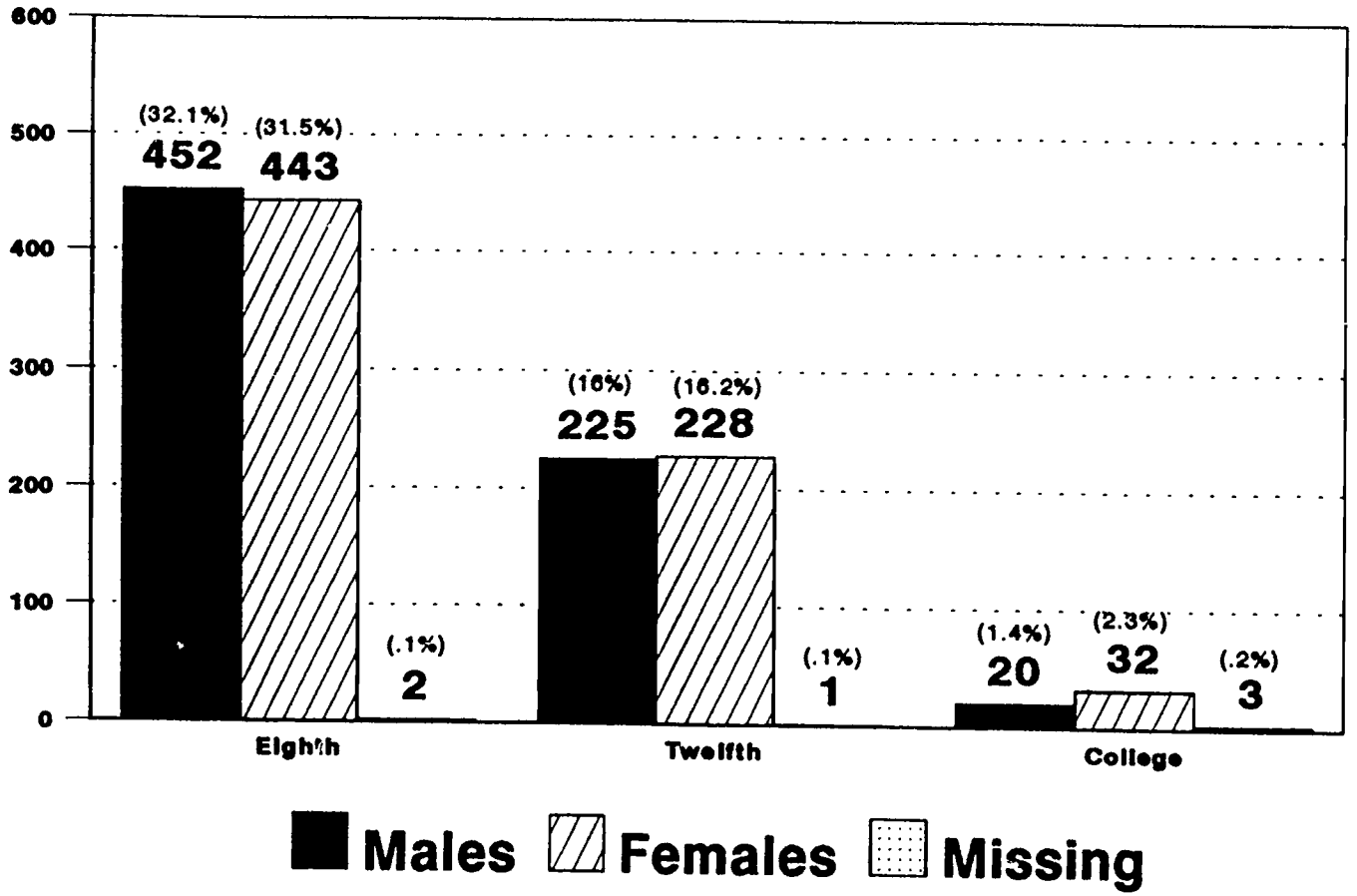
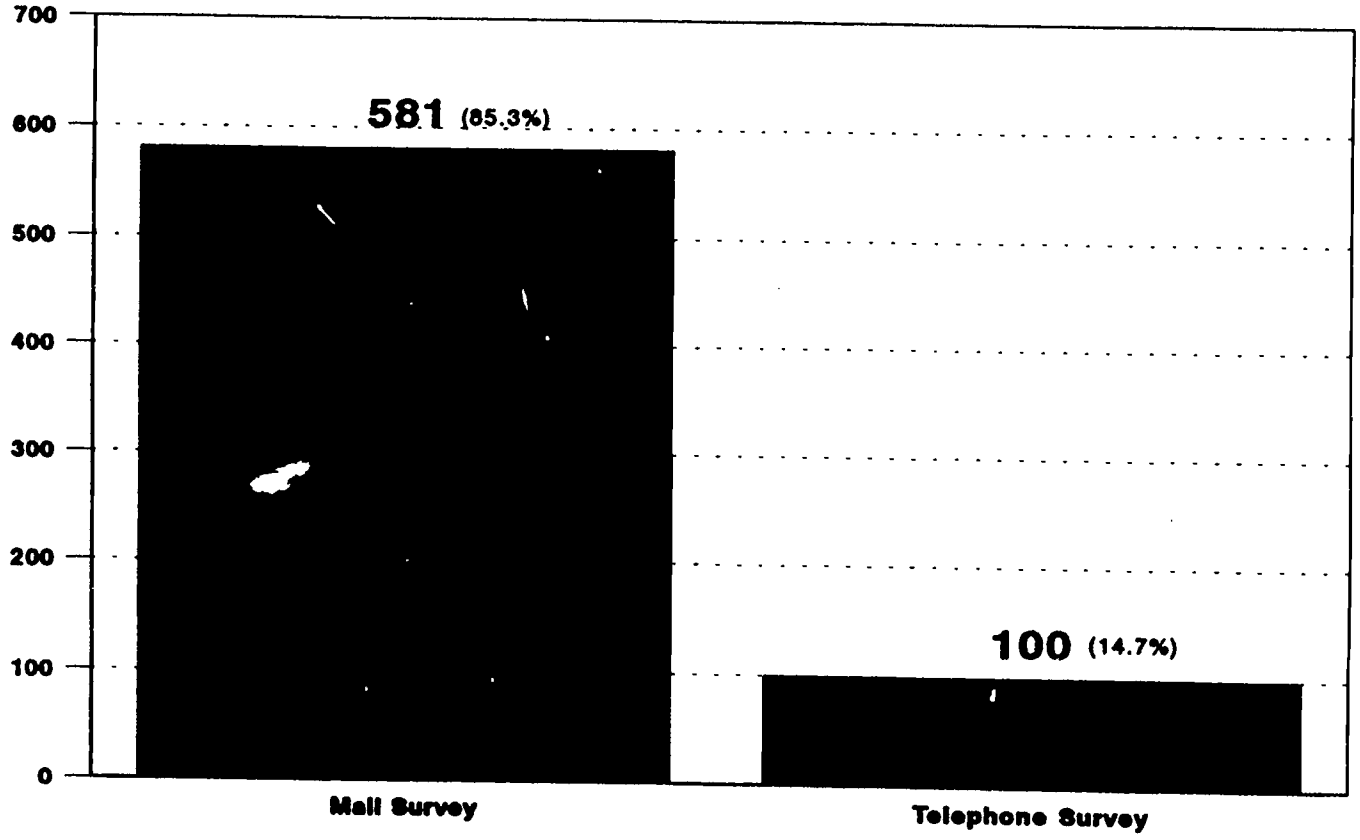


Figure 4
Parents in the Study (N = 681)



Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students

Table 1 (Appendix D) summarizes characteristics of the eighth- and twelfth-grade Mexican-American students. The vast majority of the Mexican-American students lived with at least one parent and considered themselves fluent in English. Almost half were also fluent in Spanish. Eighth graders were an average of 14.2 years of age, and the twelfth graders' averaged 18.0 years. Slightly over fifty percent of the students reported that they had been or were enrolled in a vocational program. Almost seventy-five percent reported having a grade average of B, B-C, or C.

Community College Students

A total of 187 community college students from three community colleges in Texas participated in the study. Of the responding students, 29.4% were Mexican American, 49% were Caucasian, 12% were Asian American, and nine percent were other. Table 2 (Appendix D) provides summary characteristics of the responding Mexican-American community college students.

Of the fifty-five Mexican-American respondents, three-fourths were single and two-thirds were freshmen. The average age of the students was 22.3 years, and a majority were females. Over sixty-three percent of the students lived with at least one parent, and two-thirds received some form of financial assistance. Almost forty-four percent of the respondents had been in a high school vocational program. Slightly over twenty-seven percent of the students had taken honors courses in high school. Almost forty-two percent of the students were fluent in Spanish, and over eighty-three percent rated their progress toward their career goals as satisfactory or better.

Parents

A total of 581 parents of eighth graders, twelfth graders, and community college students responded to a mailed questionnaire. A total of 100 additional parents who did not respond were interviewed over the telephone using the same questions as those on the mailed questionnaire.

Summary characteristics of the 301 Mexican-American parents who responded to the mailed survey are presented in Table 3 (Appendix D). Seventy-seven percent were between thirty-one and fifty years of age, fourteen percent were over fifty-one, and

seventy-two percent of the respondents were mothers of students. Almost thirty-eight percent had completed twelve years of education, and thirty-three percent had additional education beyond high school. Ten percent indicated that they had sixteen or more years of education (see Figure 5). Ninety percent of the parents were fluent in English, and seventy-five percent were fluent in Spanish (see Figure 6). Forty-six percent had an annual family income of less than $20,000; and twenty-two percent reported an annual family income of less than $10,000 (see Figure 7).

Summary characteristics of the one hundred parents who were interviewed over the phone are presented in Table 4 (Appendix D). Ninety percent of these parents were Mexican American. Ninety-eight percent were fluent in Spanish, and only twenty-six percent were fluent in English. Seventy percent were the mothers of the students. Almost sixty-seven percent were between thirty-one and fifty years of age, and eighteen percent were over age fifty-one. Seventy-four percent had completed eight years of education or less, and eighty-seven percent had completed less than twelve years. Ten percent had completed twelve or more years of education. Sixty-three percent had annual family incomes of less than $20,000, and twenty-six percent reported annual family incomes of less than $10,000.

Figure 5

Mexican-American Parents – Years of Education Completed (N = 301)

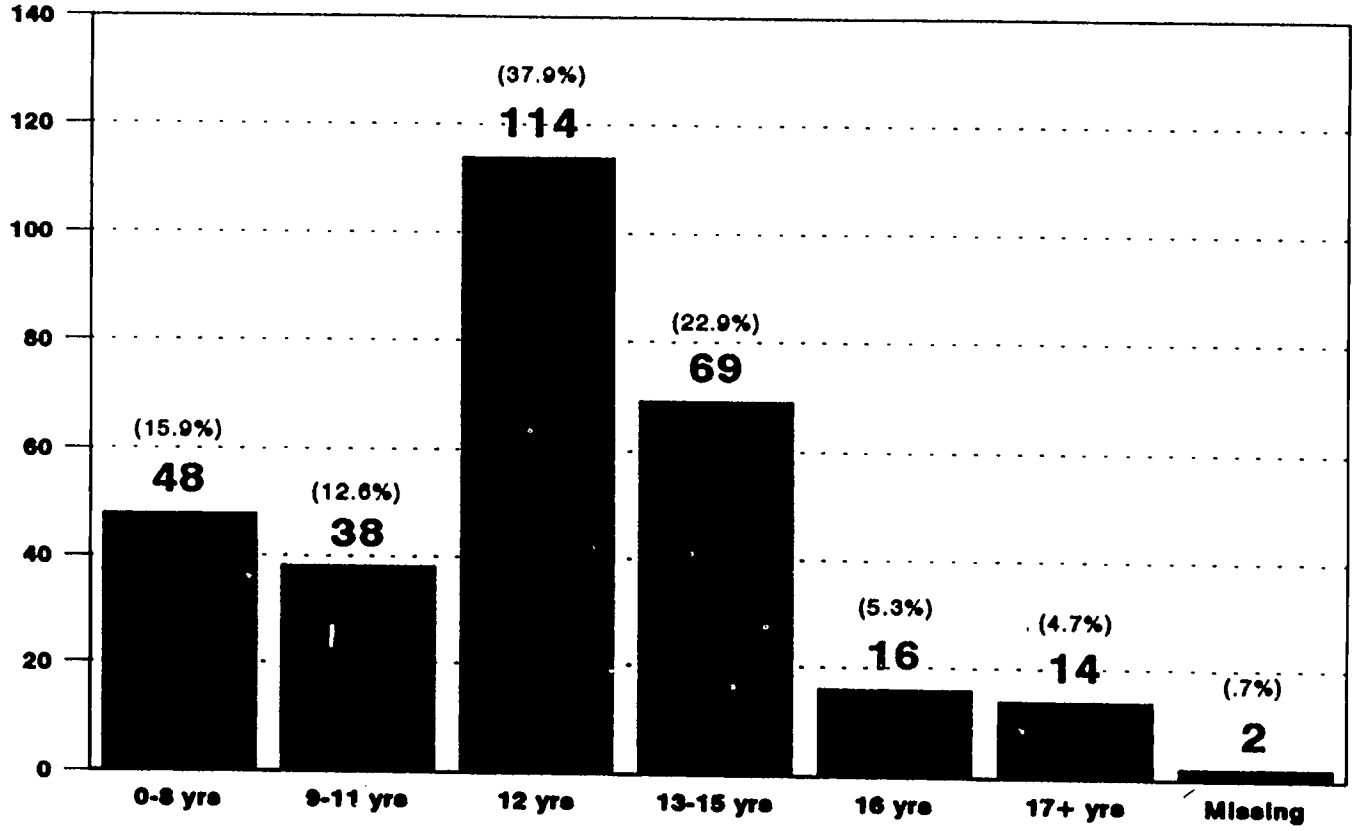


Figure 6

Mexican-American Parents – Language Fluency (N = 301)

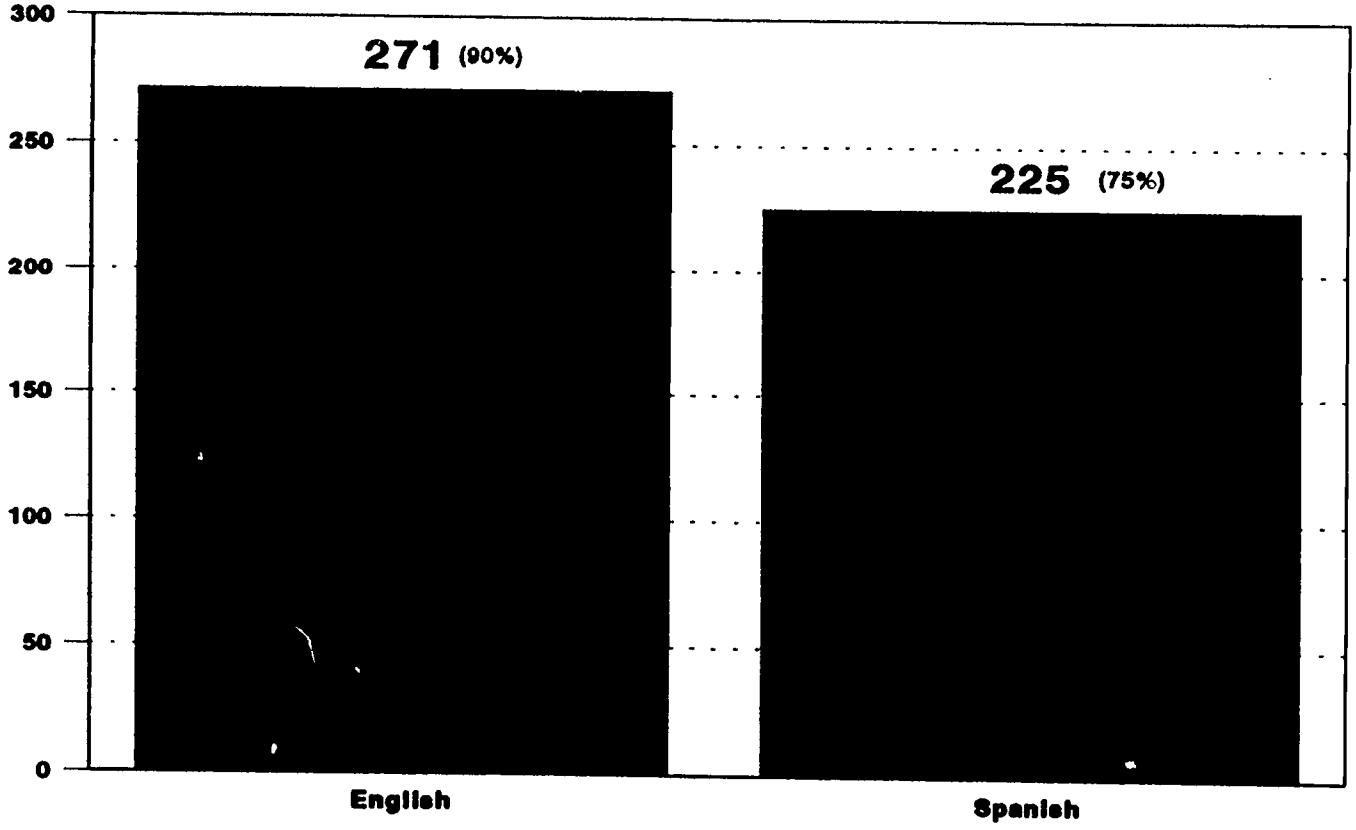
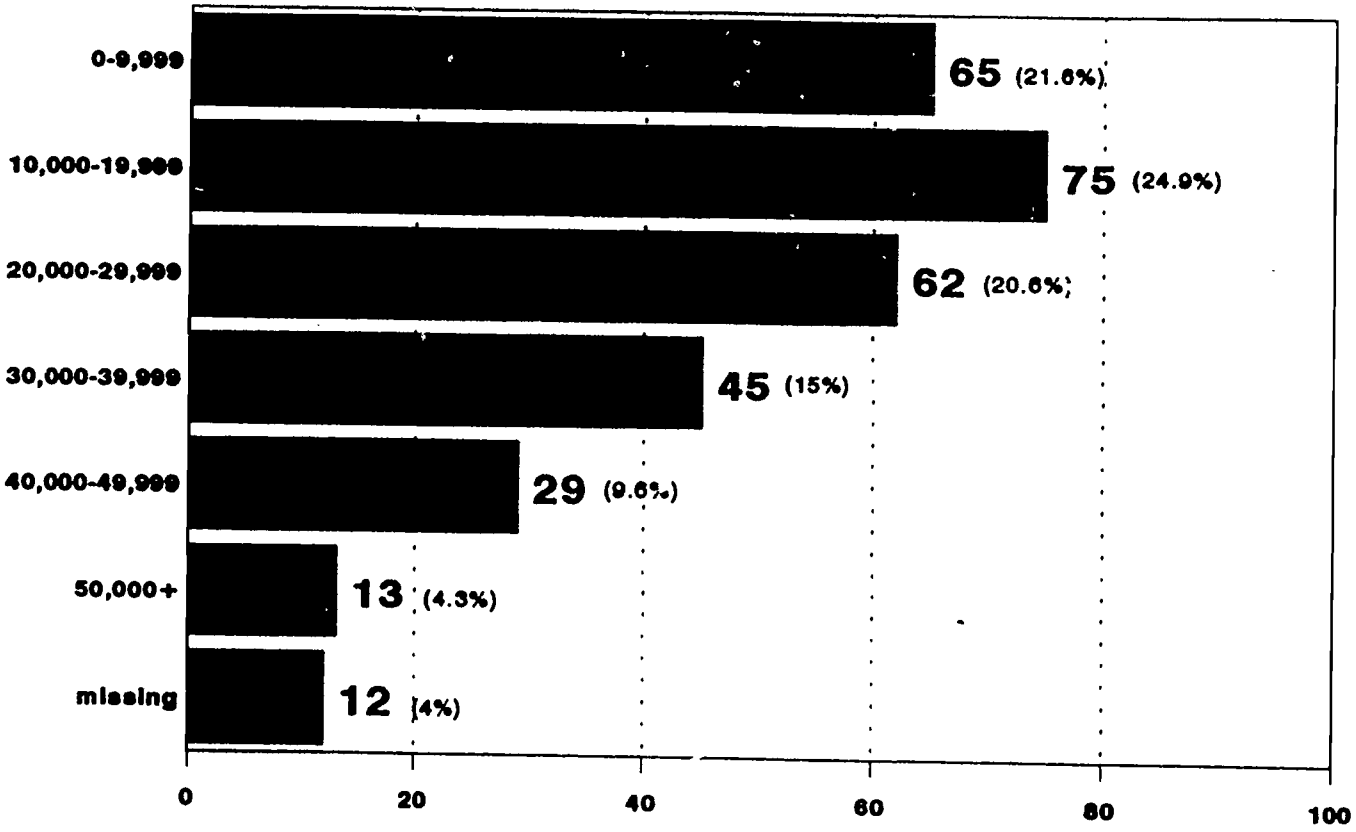


Figure 7

Mexican-American Parents – Annual Family Income (N = 301)



FINDINGS

The following discussion represents the major findings of the study. Because samples were not randomly selected, the findings should be viewed with some caution. Additionally, because the sample size of community college students is small, the findings should not be generalized. In this study, the term "all other students" includes Caucasians, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and others who responded to the survey.

Occupational Plans

Table 5 (Appendix D) includes the responses of Mexican-American eighth and twelfth graders regarding their educational and occupational plans after high school. Few of the responding students indicated that they planned to work full-time after graduating from high school, but over forty percent said they planned to work part-time. Slightly less than half of the respondents indicated that they were planning to attend college on a full-time basis after high school, and over one-third said that they would attend on a part-time basis. Very few of these students planned to enter the military or become full-time homemakers.

Eighty-seven percent reported their progress toward their career goals as satisfactory or better (see Table 1, Appendix D); however, when compared to all other eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents, Mexican-American students were statistically less satisfied with their progress (see Table 6, Appendix D). In addition, these Mexican-American students perceived their parents to have significantly greater influence on their choice of career than other eighth and twelfth graders who were surveyed. Mexican-American eighth graders perceived that their parents wanted them to work after high school significantly more than other eighth-grade respondents, but this finding was not observed among the twelfth graders (see Table 7, Appendix D).

Responses of Mexican-American community college students were similar to those of the eighth and twelfth graders. Seventy-three percent planned to attend a four-year college either part-time or full-time after graduating from community college. Sixty percent indicated that they planned to work either full-time or part-time following community

college. None of the community college students planned to enter the military or become a full-time homemaker (see Table 8, Appendix D).

Slightly over eighty-three percent of the Mexican-American community college students rated their progress toward their career goals as satisfactory or better (see Table 2, Appendix D). When compared using the t-test, they did not differ significantly from all other community college students in this regard. They did differ, however, in terms of perceptions of their parents' influence on their choice of career. Like the eighth and twelfth graders, Mexican-American community college students perceived their parents as having greater influence on this variable than all other students (see Table 9, Appendix D).

Educational Aspirations

When asked if they had ever seriously considered dropping out of school, ten percent of the Mexican-American eighth and twelfth graders said "yes." Eight percent of the eighth-grade and fifteen percent of the twelfth-grade Mexican-American students responded that they had seriously considered dropping out of school (see Table 1, Appendix D). However, over eighty-two percent of the Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents had aspirations of completing thirteen or more years of education, and seventy-four percent expected that they would actually do so. Only six percent thought that they would actually complete less than twelve years of education (see Table 10, Appendix D). Almost forty-three percent of the Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents indicated that they were planning to go to college full-time after graduating from high school, and thirty-eight percent indicated that they planned to go part-time (see Table 5, Appendix D).

When the educational aspirations and expectations of Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade students were compared to those of other students in the study, they tended to be significantly lower (see Table 6, Appendix D). Mexican-American students indicated that they would like to complete 15.3 years of education compared to 15.8 years for all other eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents, and they actually expected to complete 14.7 years compared to 15.4 years for all other students.

In general, Mexican-American eighth and twelfth graders perceived their parents as having significantly greater influence on some of their educational decisions than was reported by all other eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents (see Table 6, Appendix D). These Mexican-American students perceived that their parents have a greater influence on the decision to continue their education, their choice of major, and their choice of college than other students. They also perceived their fathers' value for education significantly higher than other eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents.

Mexican-American community college students rated their educational experiences significantly higher than did all other community college respondents, but the two groups did not differ significantly in terms of their educational aspirations. An analysis of the data regarding the educational aspirations of the Mexican-American community college students revealed that eighty-one percent of the respondents would like to complete sixteen or more years of education, and just over sixty-seven percent believed that they would actually do so. Almost fifty-five percent indicated they would like to complete seventeen or more years of education, while forty-two percent felt that they would actually do so (see Table 11, Appendix D). The mean number of years Mexican-American students thought they would actually complete was 15.9 (see Table 12, Appendix D).

Almost fifteen percent of the Mexican-American community college students answered "yes" to the question of whether they had ever seriously considered dropping out of school (see Table 2, Appendix D). Like the eighth and twelfth graders, Mexican-American community college students perceived that their parents had more influence on the students' decision to continue their education and on their choice of major than was perceived by other community college respondents (see Table 9, Appendix D).

Findings suggest that the parents of Mexican-American eighth graders, twelfth graders, and community college students in this study wanted more education for their children than their children want for themselves. These parents also placed a higher value on education than their children perceive (see Table 13, Appendix D). Parents wanted an average of sixteen years of education for their children, while children indicated that they would like to complete 15.5 years. Parents actually expected their children to complete 15.2 years, while children expected to complete 14.9 years. These parents also felt that they have more influence on their children's course of study and occupational plans than their children perceived them to have.

Factors Preventing Continuation of Education

By far the most frequently cited factor that Mexican-American students indicated might prevent them from continuing their education was a lack of funds. Fifty percent of the eighth and twelfth graders and fifty-five percent of the community college students gave this response (see Tables 14 and 15, Appendix D). Low grades were cited as the second factor by all groups, but it was a distant second. About one-third of the eighth and twelfth graders and one-fifth of the community college students gave this response. The third most frequently cited factor for the eighth and twelfth graders was marriage plans, given by about one-fifth of the students. For the community college students, location of college was the third factor, and it was cited by eighteen percent of the respondents. Very few of the community college students indicated that marriage plans might prevent them from continuing their education.

Factors Influencing Choice of College

Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade students most frequently indicated parents and location as factors which would influence their choice of a college. Each of these factors was cited by around forty percent of the respondents. Cost of tuition was cited as a factor by approximately one-third of the students who responded to the survey (see Table 16, Appendix D).

Almost two-thirds of the Mexican-American community college students cited availability of financial aid and location as factors which would influence their choice of college (see Table 17, Appendix D). Additional factors reported by forty-three percent of community college students were cost of tuition and availability of part-time work. Parents were indicated as an influencing factor by thirty-eight percent of the community college students.

Sources To Be Used for Paying for College

Among the Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents, parents were cited most frequently as a source of funds for paying for college. Over fifty percent of the students gave this response (see Table 18, Appendix D). Mexican-American community

college students indicated most frequently that grants would be a source of funds for college. Almost two-thirds gave this response (see Table 19, Appendix D). In all three student groups, work was the second most frequently cited source of funds for college. Almost fifty-four percent of the eighth and twelfth graders and sixty percent of the community college students gave this response.

Scholarships was the third source indicated by eighth and twelfth graders, and loans were a fourth source. Of the Mexican-American community college students, loans were the third most frequently cited source, and parents were fourth. Very few Mexican-American students at any of the levels surveyed indicated they would seek financial help from other relatives.

Parental Influences on Educational and Occupational Decisions

Mexican-American eighth graders, twelfth graders, and community college students perceived greater parental influence than other students on their decisions to continue their education, on their chosen career, on the major they choose to pursue in college, and on the college chosen (see Tables 6 and 9, Appendix D). Parents of the Mexican-American students in this study had high aspirations for their children (see Tables 20 and 21, Appendix D). They also perceived that they have a great deal of influence on the educational and occupational decisions made by their children (see Tables 22 and 23, Appendix D).

Responding parents, who were primarily mothers, tended to feel that they have a greater influence on their child's educational and occupational decisions than their spouse, which could possibly represent a bias on the part of the responding spouse. Neither students nor their parents saw other family members as having as much influence over students' educational and occupational decisions as parents.

Table 13 (Appendix D) contains the results of several t-tests comparing the responses of Mexican-American parents to the responses of their children on five independent variables. Only students whose parents had responded to the questionnaire were included in this part of the data analysis. The N varies because of missing data. The five independent variables examined were (1) years of education parents would like for their

child to complete compared to years of education child would like to complete, (2) years of education parents think their child will actually complete compared to years of education the child actually expects to complete, (3) parents' value of education in general compared to the child's perception of his or her parents' value of education, (4) parents' perception of their influence on their child's course of study compared to their child's perception of their influence, and (5) parents' perception of their influence on their child's occupational plans compared to their child's perception of their influence.

Analysis of the data yielded four statistically significant variables. When compared to their children, Mexican-American parents had significantly higher means in four areas: (1) years of education they would like for their child to complete, (2) years of education they think the child will actually complete, (3) their value of education in general, and (4) their perceived influence on their child's occupational plans. There was no statistically significant difference between Mexican-American parents and their children on the perceived influence of the parent on the child's course of study in school. The mean for both groups was high, indicating that parents and students alike perceived parents to be very influential.

In general, Mexican-American parents in this study had higher educational aspirations for their children than their children had for themselves. Findings also suggest that these parents valued education more than their children realized. In addition, parents also felt that they have significantly greater influence on the occupational plans of their children than their children perceived them to have. As a group, Mexican-American students in this study perceived their parents to have more influence on their educational and occupational decisions than other students in the study.

Gender Differences

Table 24 (Appendix D) provides the results of t-tests used to compare Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade students by gender. Among the respondents, gender differences were found for several of the educational and occupational decision variables. Comparisons of Mexican-American male and female community college students yielded no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the variables. The

small number of Mexican-American community college students (N=55) may account for this finding.

Eighth- and twelfth-grade males reported significantly higher grade averages than females, but female students placed significantly higher value than males on education in general as well as on their educational experiences to date. They also gave a significantly higher rating than males to their parents' desire for them to continue their education, their parents' influence on the decision to continue their education, and their parents' influence on their choice of college.

Twelfth-grade Mexican-American females tended to have significantly higher means than their male counterparts on the following four variables: (1) perceived value of educational experiences to date, (2) perceptions of their parents' desire for them to continue education after high school, (3) perceptions of their parents' influence on the decision to continue their education, and (4) perceptions of their parents' influence on their choice of college.

Relationships Among Selected Variables for Mexican-American Students and Parents

Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students

Correlation coefficients were computed between the predictor variables of "age," "sex," and "overall grade average" and ten criterion variables relating to the educational and occupational decisions of Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade respondents. Although a number of correlations achieved significance, all correlations between the predictor and criterion variables were low and have little practical significance. The large number in the sample of eighth- and twelfth-grade students helps to explain the numerous correlations.

Community College Students

Correlation coefficients were also computed between the predictor variables of "age," "sex," "overall grade point average," and selected criterion variables for the responding Mexican-American community college students. Correlations obtained ranged from none to moderate and have little practical significance.

Parents

Correlation coefficients were computed between the predictor variables "respondent's years of education completed," "spouse's years of education completed," "annual family income," and eight criterion variables. Correlation coefficients again were low and have little practical significance.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The literature indicates that Hispanic families have a major influence on decisions made by their children (Alvirez et al., 1983; Arbona, 1990; Buriel & Cardoza, 1988). Findings from our study lead us to conclude that *the parents of the Mexican-American students surveyed have a great deal of influence on the educational and occupational decisions made by their children. Mexican-American parents and students alike hold this perception.* Furthermore, we found that *their influence is greater than that of the parents of other students surveyed.*

As noted by Garza-Lubeck and Chavkin (1988), it is a misconception that Hispanic parents are not concerned about their children's education. We found that *Mexican-American parents want more education for their children than their children want for themselves.* The fact that Mexican-American parents have these educational aspirations for their children is very important because of the great influence they have on their children's decision to stay in school and to continue their education beyond high school. Fleming (1982) has stated that "parental influence is of special importance for Hispanics, since both Hispanic youth and adults suffer from the problems of under-education, high unemployment and dropout rates, and low occupational status" (p. 2).

Several studies suggest why Mexican-American parents want more education for their children than they themselves have. Caraveo-Ramos and Winer (1982) have stated that family income is directly associated with educational attainment, and Miranda and Quiroz (1990) also report that low educational attainment is closely associated with low incomes and high poverty. Family incomes in this study were relatively low, and parents averaged less than a high school education. It is not unusual for parents to want a better life for their children than they themselves have had.

Velez (1989) has noted that "the higher a student's educational aspirations, the less likely he or she was to drop out" (p. 129). According to Otto and Haller (1979) and Buriel and Cardoza (1988), personal aspirations are by far the strongest predictors of students' achievements. Findings in our study were similar to those of Fleming (1982) who found that fewer Hispanics expect to get more than a high school education when compared to Blacks and Whites. *However, we found that although Mexican-American eighth- and twelfth-grade students thought they would complete fewer years of education than other students in the study, the majority expected to continue their education beyond high school.*

The 1990 Census data reveals that the dropout rate for Mexican Americans is the highest among all population groups. With such a high dropout rate, it is somewhat surprising that the aspirations of the students in this study are as high as they are. *We found that a very low percentage of the Mexican-American students in our study had ever seriously considered dropping out of school.*

McKay (1986) also reported a slight improvement in Hispanic educational attainment in the years between 1980 and 1985, although they still lagged behind other groups. Likewise, the National Council of La Raza (1992) reported that in absolute terms, educational attainment levels of Hispanics has increased over the last two decades, but the gap between Hispanics and other groups has widened. According to a June 1992 report by the Texas Education Agency (1992), the number of dropouts in grades seven through twelve in Texas has declined by sixteen percent per year since 1987-1988. The overall Hispanic dropout rate in the state has declined from 42.9% in 1987-1988 to 29.08% in 1990-1991.

The preceding reports, coupled with the findings of our study, give rise to the hope that Mexican-American students will continue to raise their educational aspirations and that these aspirations in turn will lead to yet higher educational attainment. We are compelled to speculate that there is a growing awareness of the value of education in terms of economic security and employment opportunities on the part of both Mexican-American parents and students. Time will tell if this decline in the dropout rate of Mexican-American students in Texas is truly a trend.

A number of factors play a part in a student's decision to continue his or her education, and paying for college appears to be a major issue for Mexican-American

students. *The Mexican-American students in our study most frequently reported that a lack of funds might prevent them from continuing their education.* Low grades was the second most frequently cited factor, but it was a distant second. The National Council of La Raza (1992) notes that major factors inhibiting Hispanic enrollment in higher education are "the cost of education coupled with the relatively low incomes of Hispanic families" (p. 11).

In terms of meeting the costs of college, we found that *Mexican-American eighth and twelfth graders most frequently saw their parents as a source of funds for paying for college; and work was the second most frequently cited source.* To be meaningful, these findings must be viewed in the context of family income. Almost two-thirds of the Mexican-American parents who responded to the telephone questionnaire and almost half of those who responded to the mailed questionnaire reported annual family incomes of less than $20,000. This figure is not unlike the income figures reported in the literature (Miranda & Quiroz, 1990). It is difficult, then, to imagine how these families could provide much financial support for their children to continue education beyond high school. It is apparent that many eighth- and twelfth-grade students were either unaware of the possibility of financial aid or that they did not see it as a viable alternative. Their awareness of the reality of the situation was evidenced in their identification of work as a means of paying for college costs.

Unlike the younger students, *community college students reported that grants would be a primary source of funds for college expenses.* They also gave work as the second most frequently cited source of funds for college. Related to the decision to continue their education, *Mexican-American community college students in this study were most frequently concerned about availability of financial aid when choosing a four-year college.* Other factors they cited were also cost-related: location, cost of tuition, and availability of part-time work. Eighth and twelfth graders differed a bit from the community college students in that their *choice of college was influenced most frequently by parents and the location of the college.* Cost of tuition was a third factor. The National Council of La Raza (1992) confirms that Hispanics are heavily dependent on federal financial aid; but when compared to other groups, they rely less on grants and more on loans which have to be repaid to finance their education.

Findings for the younger Mexican-American students again underscore the strong influence of parents. The fact that both the eighth and twelfth graders and the community

college students mentioned location gives rise to the question of whether location was identified because proximity affects cost or because of the desire to be near family members.

Since students frequently listed other factors that were cost-related, we might surmise that they would tend to choose a college that was nearby to keep costs to a minimum. With the younger students, perhaps they perceived that parents would encourage them to choose a college that was nearby so as to remain in close touch with the family. These thoughts are only speculation, however, since no data was collected to determine specifically how location played a part in the selection of a four-year college.

Some of the literature reviewed in this report suggests that Hispanic parents are not as supportive of their daughters' education as they are of their sons' (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Velez (1989) also concluded from a study conducted in Austin, Texas, that Hispanic girls were more likely than Hispanic boys to drop out of school. In our study, we found *that there was not a significant difference between Mexican-American males and females in their educational aspirations and expectations* as indicated by the number of years of education they would like to complete and the number of years they thought they actually would complete. Additionally, we found that *Mexican-American females in general valued education more highly than Mexican-American males and that they perceived the influence of their parents over their educational decisions to be greater than their male counterparts*. These findings are encouraging in that perhaps these young Mexican-American women are becoming increasingly aware of the relationship of low educational attainment to low income and a low standard of living. We may also be observing a turnaround in the attitudes of Mexican-American parents in terms of the need for their daughters to be educated as well as their sons.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Johnston and Packer in *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century* (1987) predict that more than three-fourths of the expected new entrants into the workforce will be women and minorities—groups that have been underutilized and under-educated. The Texas Department of Community Affairs (State of Texas, 1986) reports that an

estimated forty-five percent of Hispanic students can be expected to drop out of school before they graduate. According to a 1989 report by the Texas Senate Select Committee on the Juvenile Justice System, this dropout problem is costing the state over $17 billion in lost individual income and tax revenue per year in addition to adding to the cost of providing welfare benefits, unemployment insurance, adult training and education, and incarceration. These compelling statistics make it critical for educators to capitalize on the educational aspirations that Mexican-American parents have for their children and the strong role they play in their children's educational and occupational decisions.

Although few students in this study indicated that they had ever seriously considered dropping out of school, state and national statistics suggest that at some point a large percentage of them do make this decision. The National Council of La Raza (1992) reported that in 1991, less than 6.2% of Mexican Americans over the age of twenty-five had completed four or more years of college, compared to 9.7% of Hispanics in general and 22.3% of non-Hispanics. Because Mexican-American parents appear to have a strong influence on their children, educators must work with these parents to help them use this influence to ensure that their children do not become dropout statistics. Educators at all levels must take advantage of the strong influence of Mexican-American parents by involving them in the education of their children as much as possible; and this partnership between the educators and parents must begin early. One of the critical points made in *Education that Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities* (Quality Education for Minorities Project, 1990) is that "families must become full partners in the educational process—at home and at school" (p. 4).

Parents in this study have higher educational aspirations for their children than their children realize. Because so few of the parents have been to college, they may not be able to assist their children in realistically planning to pursue education beyond high school. Educators, therefore, have an obligation to work with parents to ensure that they have accurate and adequate information which will in turn enable them to help their children achieve their aspirations. It is important also that schools seek to hire more Mexican-American teachers and administrators who can motivate students to continue their education by serving as role models, something which many Mexican-American parents are unable to do because of their relatively low educational attainment.

Mexican-American parents are generally not able to provide much financial assistance in meeting college expenses. On the other hand, they have high educational goals for their children. The discrepancy between available resources and the cost of the goal (e.g., completing high school and going on to college) may serve to discourage students and their parents. These factors working together may make it more socially acceptable and even economically necessary for Mexican-American students to drop out or at least to lower their educational aspirations, especially if they are unaware of—or unable to access—sources of financial aid outside the family.

The National Council of La Raza (1992) has stated that "many schools do little outreach to Hispanic parents" (p. 10). Parents with low educational attainment need encouragement and assistance in negotiating the educational system, which may often be intimidating if not downright frightening! Those who brave the system must find a welcoming, helpful environment. Schools must be staffed with administrators, counselors, teachers, and admissions personnel who are bilingual and who exhibit sensitivity to and appreciation for the Mexican-American culture.

Because financial aid is an important factor in a Mexican-American student's decision to continue his or her education, programs for parents and students must provide specific information on costs involved (e.g., tuition, fees, and books), financial aid (e.g., qualifying for, types available, and how to apply), and the potential for student employment. This information should be produced in formats other than just print media. For example, videotapes can be developed in both English and Spanish and should be available through a free loan program to students and parents. Print materials in Spanish, while useful to some, may have limited value to Mexican-American parents who cannot read in either language.

Parents whose socioeconomic status is low and who have difficulty with the English language may be too embarrassed to pursue information aggressively. Therefore, it is essential that schools and colleges develop outreach programs which are directed at assisting parents. These programs should be designed so that they can be taken or sent to parents rather than expecting the parents to come to the institution to take advantage of them.

Although parents purport to value education for their children, the reality of paying for college may be one of the primary reasons that many Mexican-American students do not achieve this goal in the proportions that this study would suggest. Going to work following graduation—or working while in school—may be an economic necessity; and a college education may become a distant, even unattainable goal—especially if an institution of higher education is not located nearby so the student can live at home and keep costs down.

Mexican-American parents in this study appear to want more education for their children than they themselves have, but their family income would suggest that they simply do not have the financial resources to provide much financial assistance. At the same time, eighth and twelfth graders see their parents as the primary source they will look to for funds to pay for college! It is a source that most likely will not be available. This incongruity leads us to conclude that unless financial aid from other sources is readily available and easily accessed, Mexican-American students will probably continue to have high aspirations but low educational attainment.

Although the aspirations and encouragement of parents are very important, they alone are not enough to ensure that Mexican-American students will be able to meet their educational goals. Tangible assistance in the form of financial aid appears to be a critical factor for the students in this study. Because the workforce needs of Texas and the nation as a whole demand a world class workforce, we can ill afford to ignore the needs of this rapidly growing segment of our population—one that has traditionally been under-educated and underutilized. Because of the growth and urban concentration of Mexican Americans in our state, it is incumbent upon us not only to encourage Mexican-American students to aspire to higher levels of education, but it is essential that policymakers view an increase in student financial aid for education as a wise investment in our future: "Unless Hispanic educational opportunities and attainment increase significantly, nearly half the Hispanic population will be unprepared for the job market in the 21st century" (National Council of La Raza, 1992, p. 12).

There are signs that some progress is being made. In 1990, former President Bush signed Executive Order 12729, which mandates a report to the Secretary of Education on the educational status of Hispanics. It has the potential to improve education for Hispanics by recommending increased funding for educational programs run by Hispanic community-

based organizations. Programs such as Project EXCEL, developed by the National Council of La Raza, can lead to significant improvements in student performance through increased parental and community involvement in the educational process. In addition, another positive result of the executive order could be a greater commitment to developing partnerships among the federal government, business and industry, and community-based organizations—with the objective of improving education for Hispanics (National Council of La Raza, 1992).

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Appendix A
PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Independent School Districts (ISDs) in Texas

Beeville ISD (Rural)
Location: Beeville
Size of ISD: 4,215 students
Mexican American: 68%
Annual Dropout Rate: 3.4%

Corpus Christi ISD (Urban)
Location: Corpus Christi
Size of ISD: 43,000 students
Mexican American: 68%
Annual Dropout Rate: 3.9%

Dell City ISD (Rural)
Location: Dell City
Size of ISD: 225 students
Mexican American: 64%
Annual Dropout Rate: 0%

Devine ISD (Rural)
Location: Devine
Size of ISD: 1,700 students
Mexican American: 45%
Annual Dropout Rate: 1%

El Paso ISD (Urban)
Location: El Paso
Size of ISD: 64,950 students
Mexican American: 72.8%
Annual Dropout Rate: 4.06%

Fort Hancock ISD (Rural)
Location: Fort Hancock
Size of ISD: 401 students
Mexican American: 93%
Annual Dropout Rate: 3.8%

Northside ISD (Urban)
Location: Northside
Size of ISD: 53,000 students
Mexican American: 46.3%
Annual Dropout Rate: 2.6%

Round Rock ISD (Urban)
Location: Round Rock
Size of ISD: 20,626 students
Mexican American: 13%
Annual Dropout Rate: 2.2%

Seguin ISD (Rural)
Location: Seguin
Size of ISD: 6,431 students
Mexican American: 49.58%
Annual Dropout Rate: 3.4%

Socorro ISD (Urban)
Location: El Paso
Size of ISD: 18,000 students
Mexican American: 89%
Annual Dropout Rate: 2.2%

Weslaco ISD (Rural)
Location: Weslaco
Size of ISD: 12,000 students
Mexican American: 96%
Annual Dropout Rate: 9.8%

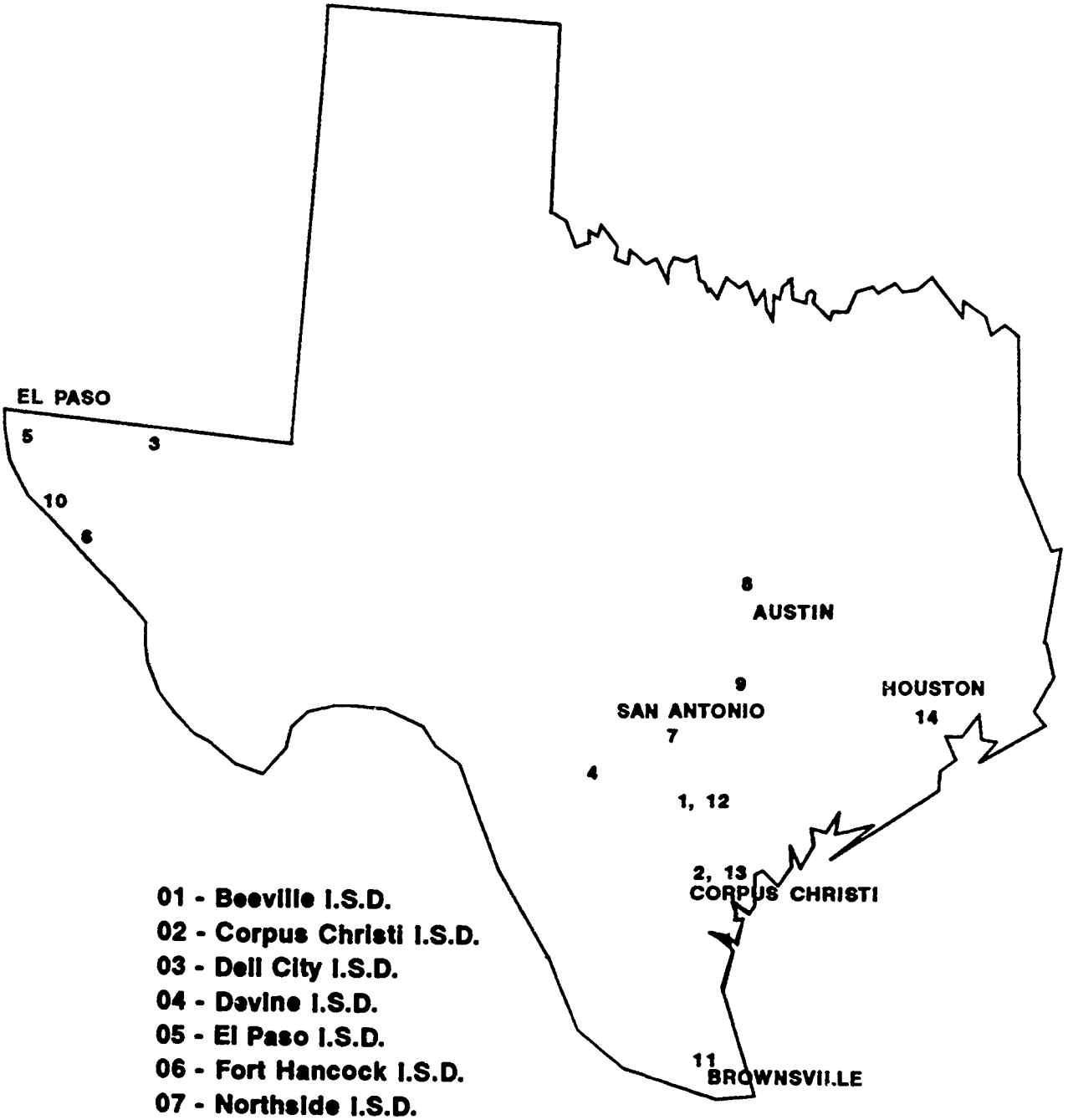
Community Colleges

Bee County College (Rural)
Location: Beeville
Size of College: 2,267 students
Mexican American: 53%

Del Mar College (Urban)
Location: Corpus Christi
Size of College: 11,139 students
Mexican American: 49.4%

North Harris County College (Urban)
Location: Houston
Size of College: 10,170 students
Mexican American: 9.5%

Appendix B
LOCATION OF PARTICIPANTS



01 - Beeville I.S.D.
02 - Corpus Christi I.S.D.
03 - Dell City I.S.D.
04 - Devine I.S.D.
05 - El Paso I.S.D.
06 - Fort Hancock I.S.D.
07 - Northside I.S.D.
08 - Round Rock I.S.D.
09 - Seguin I.S.D.
10 - Socorro I.S.D.
11 - Weslaco I.S.D.
12 - Bee County College
13 - Del Mar College
14 - North Harris County College

Appendix C
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* Advisory Committee members who assisted with data collection.

Appendix D
TABLES

Table 1
Summary Characteristics of Responding Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Mexican-American Students (N = 1,351)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Grade Level		
8th	897	67.9
12th	454	32.1
Age (years)		
11	1	.1
12	1	.1
13	165	12.2
14	459	34.0
15	203	15.0
16	59	4.4
17	98	7.3
18	261	19.3
19	68	5.0
20	17	1.3
21	1	.1
Missing	18	1.3
Sex		
Male	677	50.1
Female	671	49.7
Missing	3	.2
Fluent in Spanish		
Yes	671	49.7
No	677	50.1
Missing	3	.2
Fluent in English		
Yes	1,270	94.0
No	78	5.8
Missing	3	.2
Living with at least one parent		
Yes	1,262	93.4
No	86	6.4
Missing	3	.2

Table 1 (cont.)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Attended private school		
Yes	158	11.7
No	1,176	87.0
Missing	17	1.3
Overall grade average		
A	72	5.3
A-B	304	22.5
B	213	15.8
B-C	539	39.9
C	119	8.8
D	23	1.7
D-F	24	1.8
F	4	.3
Missing	53	3.9
Perceived progress toward career goals		
Excellent	199	14.7
Very Good	445	32.9
Satisfactory	545	40.3
Somewhat disappointing	126	9.3
Totally disappointing	25	1.9
Missing	11	.8
Seriously considered dropping out of school		
Yes	135	10.0
No	1,198	88.7
Missing	18	1.3
Enrolled in a vocational program in school		
Yes	679	50.3
No	617	45.7
Missing	55	4.1

Table 2

Summary Characteristics of Responding Mexican-American Community College Students (N = 55)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Status in college		
Freshman	37	67.3
Sophomore	16	29.1
Missing	2	3.6
Age (years)		
18-20	30	54.5
21-30	21	38.2
31-40	3	5.5
41 and above	1	1.8
Sex		
Male	20	36.4
Female	32	58.2
Missing	3	5.5
Marital Status		
Married	11	20.0
Single	41	74.5
Missing	3	5.5
Overall grade point average		
4.0	1	1.8
3.0-3.9	23	41.8
2.0-2.9	27	49.1
1.0-1.9	1	1.8
Missing	3	5.5
Fluent in Spanish		
Yes	23	41.8
No	32	58.2
Fluent in English		
Yes	55	100.0
Living with at least one parent		
Yes	35	63.6
No	20	36.4
Receiving financial assistance		
Yes	37	67.3
No	18	32.7

Table 2 (cont.)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Enrolled in vocational program in high school		
Yes	24	43.6
No	30	54.5
Missing	1	1.8
Enrolled in honors courses in high school		
Yes	15	27.3
No	38	69.1
Missing	2	3.6
Attended private school		
Yes	13	23.6
No	42	76.4
Perceived progress toward career goals		
Excellent	8	14.5
Very good	18	32.7
Satisfactory	20	36.4
Somewhat disappointing	7	12.7
Totally disappointing	2	3.6
Missing		
Seriously considered dropping out of college		
Yes	8	14.5
No	44	80.0
Missing	3	5.5

Table 3

Summary Characteristics of Mexican-American Parents Who Responded to Mailed Questionnaire (N = 301)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Relationship to student		
Father	70	23.3
Mother	218	72.4
Other	13	4.3
Missing	0	0
Age (years)		
20-30	9	3.0
31-40	138	45.8
41-50	94	31.2
51-60	30	10.0
61 and above	11	3.7
Missing	19	6.3
Fluent in English		
Yes	271	90.0
No	29	9.6
Missing	1	.3
Fluent in Spanish		
Yes	225	74.8
No	76	25.2
Missing	0	0.0
Years of education completed		
0-8	48	15.9
9-11	38	12.6
12	114	37.9
13-15	69	22.9
16	16	5.3
17+	14	4.7
Missing	2	.7
Total annual family income		
$0 - 9,999	65	21.6
$10,000 - 19,999	75	24.9
$20,000 - 29,999	62	20.6
$30,000 - 39,999	45	15.0
$40,000 - 49,999	29	9.6
$50,000 or more	13	4.3
Missing	12	4.0

Table 4

Summary Characteristics of Respondents to Telephone Questionnaire (N = 100)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Relationship to student		
Father	26	26.0
Mother	70	70.0
Other	4	4.0
Age (years)		
28-30	2	2.0
31-40	31	31.0
41-50	36	36.0
51-60	11	11.0
61 and above	6	6.0
Missing	14	14.0
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	0	0
African American	0	0
Native American	2	2.0
Mexican American	90	90.0
Asian American	1	1.0
Other	7	7.0
Fluent in English		
Yes	26	26.0
No	73	73.0
Missing	1	1.0
Fluent in Spanish		
Yes	98	98.0
No	2	2.0
Missing	0	0.0
Years of education completed		
0-8	74	74.0
9-11	13	13.0
12	6	6.0
13-16	2	2.0
17+	2	2.0
Missing	3	3.0
Total annual family income		
$0 – 9,999	26	26.0
$10,000 – 19,999	37	37.0
$20,000 – 29,999	20	20.0
$30,000 – 39,999	7	7.0
$40,000 – 49,999	3	3.0
$50,000 or more	2	2.0
Missing	5	5.0

Table 5

Responses of Mexican-American Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students Regarding Educational and Occupational Plans after Graduating from High School (N = 1,351)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Go to college full-time	579	42.9
Work part-time	564	41.7
Go to college part-time	511	37.8
Work full-time	203	15.0
Enter military	152	11.3
Be a full-time homemaker	24	1.8
Other career plans	59	4.4

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 6

Results of t-Tests Comparing Mexican-American Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Respondents with All Other Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Respondents on Selected Educational and Occupational Variables

	Mexican-American			Other				
Variable	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	t	p
V1	1,311	15.33	2.15	552	15.78	1.89	4.24*	.000
V2	1,304	14.68	2.30	555	15.39	1.96	6.35*	.000
V3	1,340	3.50	.92	565	3.67	.90	3.65*	.000
V4	1,265	4.52	.97	540	4.64	.79	2.57*	.010
V5	1,329	4.57	.85	563	4.46	.97	2.50*	.013
V6	1,321	3.66	1.28	560	3.45	1.32	3.17*	.002
V7	1,312	3.60	1.33	553	3.31	1.37	4.13*	.000
V8	1,306	3.37	1.37	555	3.19	1.39	2.56*	.011

* Statistically significant, $p<.05$

V1 – Number of years of education student would like to complete
V2 – Number of years of education student actually expects to complete
V3 – Student's perception of progress toward career goals
V4 – Student's perception of father's value for education
V5 – Student's perception of parents' influence on decision to continue education
V6 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of career
V7 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of major
V8 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of college

Table 7

Results of t-Tests Comparing Mexican-American Eighth Graders with All Other Eighth Graders on Selected Educational and Occupational Variables

	Mexican-American			Other				
Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
V1	869	15.12	2.35	331	15.68	2.11	3.78*	.00
V2	867	14.40	2.50	332	15.28	2.18	5.65*	.00
V3	888	3.54	.95	337	3.63	.94	2.56*	.01
V4	869	3.77	1.28	328	3.59	1.35	2.13*	.03
V5	881	3.52	1.35	333	3.32	1.40	2.27*	.02

* Statistically significant, $p<.05$

V1 – Number of years of education student would like to complete
V2 – Number of years of education student actually expects to complete
V3 – Student's perception of progress toward career goals
V4 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of major
V5 – Student's perception of parents' desire for student to work after high school

Table 8

Responses of Mexican-American Community College Students Regarding Career Plans after Graduating from Community College (N = 55)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Attend four-year college full-time	30	54.5
Work part-time	17	30.9
Work full-time	16	29.1
Attend four-year college part-time	10	18.2
Enter military	0	0.0
Become full-time homemaker	0	0.0

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 9

Results of t-Tests Comparing Mexican-American Community College Respondents with All Other Community College Respondents on Selected Educational and Occupational Variables

	Mexican-American			Other				
Variable	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	t	p
V1	55	3.36	1.57	129	2.76	1.39	2.59*	.010
V2	55	3.22	1.46	129	2.68	1.32	2.44*	.016
V3	55	4.64	.59	129	4.27	.78	3.12*	.002
V4	55	4.33	1.01	129	3.88	1.27	2.29*	.023

* Statistically significant, $p<.05$

V1 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of career
V2 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of major
V3 – Student's value of educational experiences to date
V4 – Student's perception of parents' influence on decision to continue education

Table 10

Educational Aspirations of Responding Mexican-American Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students (N = 1,351)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Years of education would LIKE to complete		
0-8	26	1.9
9-11	21	1.6
12	170	10.8
13-15	221	15.4
16	318	23.8
17+	555	43.2
Missing	40	3.3
Years of education will ACTUALLY complete		
0-8	35	2.6
9-11	46	3.4
12	223	16.5
13-15	324	23.8
16	341	25.2
17+	335	24.8
Missing	47	3.5

Table 11

Educational Aspirations of Responding Mexican-American Community College Students (N = 55)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Years of education would LIKE to complete		
13	3	5.5
14	0	0.0
15	7	12.7
16	15	27.3
17+	30	54.5
Years of education will ACTUALLY complete		
13	4	7.3
14	3	5.5
15	11	20.0
16	14	25.5
17+	23	41.8

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations on Selected Educational Variables for Mexican-American Community College Students

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Age (years)	55	22.29	4.85
Education student would LIKE to complete	55	16.25	1.06
Education student will ACTUALLY complete	55	15.89	1.23

Table 13

Results of Dependent t-Tests Comparing Mexican-American Parents and Their Children on Selected Educational and Occupational Variables

		Mexican-American Parents		Mexican-American Children			
Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
V1	306	16.06	2.40	15.54	1.98	+ 3.28*	.001
V2	304	15.19	2.02	14.88	2.17	+ 2.24*	.026
V3	312	4.96	.27	4.48	.70	+11.28*	.000
V4	310	4.61	.69	4.62	.81	− .18	.858
V5	306	4.28	.87	3.64	1.33	+ 7.71*	.000

* Statistically significant, $p<.05$

Note: "Children" refers to the eighth grade, twelfth grade, and community college students who responded to the questionnaire.

V1 – Years of education parent would like child to complete compared to years of education child would like to complete
V2 – Years of education parent actually expects child will complete compared to years of education child actually expects to complete
V3 – Parents' value of education in general compared to child's perception of parents' value of education
V4 – Parents' perceived influence on child's course of study compared to child's perception of parents' influence
V5 – Parents' perceived influence on child's occupational plans compared to child's perception of parents' influence

Table 14

Factors Which Might Prevent Mexican-American Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students from Continuing Their Education (N = 1,351)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Lack of funds	678	50.2
Low grades	440	32.6
Marriage plans	264	19.5
Lack of desire to continue	201	14.8
Location of college	176	13.0
Responsibility for children	132	9.8
Responsibility for parents	106	7.8
Other	61	4.5

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 15

Factors Which Might Prevent Mexican-American Community College Students from Continuing Their Education (N = 55)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Lack of funds	30	54.5
Low grades	36	20.0
Location of college	10	18.2
Responsibility for children	8	14.5
Marriage plans	6	0.9
Lack of desire	4	7.3
Other	3	5.5
Responsibility for parents	2	3.6

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 16

Factors Which Will Influence the Choice of College for Mexican-American Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students (N = 1,351)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Parents	560	41.4
Location of college	545	40.3
Cost of tuition	438	32.4
Availability of program	379	28.1
Availability of part-time work	355	26.3
Availability of financial aid	371	27.5
Availability of transportation	247	18.3
Marriage/Spouse	81	6.0
Other	46	3.4

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 17

Factors Which Will Influence Mexican-American Community College Students' Choice of a Four-Year College (N = 47)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Availability of financial aid	31	66.0
Location of college	30	63.8
Cost of tuition	20	42.6
Availability of part-time work	20	42.6
Parents	18	38.3
Availability of program	16	34.0
Availability of transportation	15	31.9
Marriage/Spouse	12	25.5
Other	3	6.4

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 18

Responses of Mexican-American Eighth- and Twelfth-Grade Students Regarding Sources To Be Used for Paying for College (N = 1,351)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Parents	725	53.7
Work	705	52.2
Scholarships	510	37.7
Loans	449	33.2
Personal savings	370	27.4
Grants	352	26.0
Relatives	176	13.0
Other	67	4.9

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 19

Responses of Mexican-American Community College Students Regarding Sources for Paying for College (N = 47)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Grants	31	66.0
Work	28	59.6
Loans	20	42.6
Parents	18	38.3
Scholarships	17	36.2
Personal savings	11	23.4
Other	7	14.9
Relatives	2	4.3

Note: More than one item could be checked.

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations on Selected Variables for Mexican-American Parents Responding to Mailed Questionnaire

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Age (years)	282	41.87	8.48
Years of education completed	299	11.62	3.18
Spouse's years of education completed	264	10.90	3.31
Number of years of education parent desires for child	300	16.07	1.60
Number of years of education parent expects child will complete	298	15.20	2.01

Table 21

Means and Standard Deviations on Selected Variables for Mexican-American Parents Responding to Telephone Questionnaire (N = 100)

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Age (years)	86	44.28	8.45
Years of education completed	97	6.70	3.18
Spouse's years of education completed	92	6.48	3.69
Number of years of education parent desires for child	100	15.82	1.92
Number of years of education parent expects child will complete	100	15.34	2.09

Table 22

Responses from Mailed Questionnaire Regarding Mexican-American Parents' Value of Education and Perceived Influence on Their Child's Educational and Occupational Decisions

Variable	N	Mean	SD
V1	301	4.92	.34
V2	263	4.85	.44
V3	300	4.95	.27
V4	265	4.89	.45
V5	300	4.61	.68
V6	264	4.59	.77
V7	300	4.24	.86
V8	264	4.23	.92
V9	301	3.93	.98
V10	265	3.89	1.02
V11	298	3.61	1.27

1 = No value or influence, 5 = A great deal of value or influence

V1 – Respondent's value of education in general
V2 – Spouse's value of education in general
V3 – Respondent's value of education for child
V4 – Spouse's value of education for child
V5 – Respondent's perceived influence on child's education
V6 – Spouse's perceived influence on child's education
V7 – Respondent's perceived influence on child's occupational plans
V8 – Spouse's perceived influence on child's occupational plans
V9 – Respondent's perceived influence on child's courses or major
V10 – Spouse's perceived influence on child's courses or major
V11 – Perceived influence by other family members

Table 23

Responses from Telephone Questionnaire Regarding Mexican-American Parents' Value of Education and Perceived Influence on Their Child's Educational and Occupational Decisions

Variable	N	Mean	SD
V1	100	4.92	.39
V2	88	4.84	.58
V3	100	4.96	.24
V4	89	4.87	.57
V5	100	4.58	.74
V6	88	4.47	.82
V7	98	4.22	1.00
V8	85	4.12	1.05
V9	97	4.25	1.08
V10	85	4.15	1.10
V11	97	3.79	1.37

1 = No value or influence, 5 = A great deal of value or influence

V1 – Respondent's value of education in general
V2 – Spouse's value of education in general
V3 – Respondent's value of education for child
V4 – Spouse's value of education for child
V5 – Respondent's perceived influence on child's education
V6 – Spouse's perceived influence on child's education
V7 – Respondent's perceived influence on child's occupational plans
V8 – Spouse's perceived influence on child's occupational plans
V9 – Respondent's perceived influence on child's courses or major
V10 – Spouse's perceived influence on child's courses or major
V11 – Perceived influence by other family members

Table 24

Results of t-Tests Comparing Mexican-American Male and Female Students on Selected Educational and Occupational Variables

	Mexican-American Males			Mexican-American Females				
Variable	**N**	**X**	**SD**	**N**	**X**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
Eighth Grade								
V1	428	3.57	1.40	422	3.20	1.26	4.04**	.00
V2	447	4.22	.91	440	4.37	.82	2.55**	.01
Twelfth Grade								
V1	222	3.56	1.09	224	3.25	1.14	2.88**	.00
V2	224	4.51	.76	228	4.69	.62	2.76**	.01
V3	225	4.11	.85	228	4.34	.73	3.10**	.00
V4	224	4.59	.78	228	4.74	.67	2.22*	.03
V5	221	4.34	.98	226	4.52	.87	2.04*	.04
V6	217	3.13	1.40	226	3.47	1.30	2.69**	.01

* Statistically significant at $p<.05$
** Statistically significant at $p<.01$

V1 – Overall grade average
V2 – Student's value of education in general
V3 – Student's value of educational experiences to date
V4 – Student's perception of parents' desire for child to continue education after high school
V5 – Student's perception of parents' influence on decision to continue education
V6 – Student's perception of parents' influence on choice of college