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**FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY: CONTRIBUTIONS TO EMERGING
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presented by

KATIA PAZ GOLDFARB

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

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Major professor

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**FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY: CONTRIBUTIONS TO EMERGING THEORY FROM
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH SOUTHERN MEXICAN-AMERICAN
COLLEGE STUDENTS IN A MIDWEST UNIVERSITY**

By

Katia P. Goldfarb

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ABSTRACT

FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY: CONTRIBUTIONS TO EMERGING THEORY FROM QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH SOUTHERN MEXICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS IN A MIDWEST UNIVERSITY

By

Katia Paz Goldfarb

The purpose of this research is to further develop the concept of Family Sustainability. Family Sustainability is defined in terms of a family property or quality that enables the family to maintain the family unity, which is developed and strengthened by continuous and various activities which the family and its members engage in through interactions with their environments. Six southern Mexican-American college students from a midwest university were interviewed. Open-ended questions and in-depth conversations were the format for these meetings. The participants provided letters written by their families. These were used to gather information about the feelings of family members in the place of origin. The participants showed the researcher the different artifacts that they had brought from their place of origin. These objects provide continuity and closeness to their families.

A qualitative approach was used to inquire into the way these individuals give meaning to their social relations, especially their family ties. The interviews explored why and how this group maintains their family unity. The family unity concept proved to be a central value for these families. It is a desirable attribute of the families. The ethnic historical background and the family history

influenced the definition of family, the self-definition, and the views of family unity.

A general model for Family Sustainability and a model for physical encounters were developed. The general model illustrates the continuous process from passive to active interactions which are accompanied by different degrees of emotional intensity. Two types of activities, long distance actions and physical encounters, provided the necessary tools in keeping the family ties. Writing, calling, exchange of gifts, and thinking are the long distance actions. The telephone calls were the most important way of feeling connected. The physical encounters depended on vacation time in the university and economic status of the family. They were high in intensity for emotional and physical closeness. The family connections were maintained regardless of physical distance.

Implications for theory, policy, and practitioners are included. Further research ideas are presented.

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1994

Dear Daughter:

**You told me one day,
too far from the home,
my childhood is gone,
can I stay?**

**Whatever you say
I told you before
myself could have bore
the fact that you stay.**

**Finally I knew,
later that night,
what you did was right
announcing that new**

**What you did that night
most people shall thank
when they understand
the contents you write.**

**Cause you put the seed,
like accurate needle,
the shot in the middle
of a very great need:**

**The best understand
of the relation,
in all separation,
between love and...**

Your Dad

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Now, I turn to my family. I would like to thank my parents, Rebeca and Eduardo, for being the source of inspiration for this work. You showed me that distance will never keep us apart. You are always with me. I would like to thank my brothers, Daniel and Andres, for their questions, comments, and constant support. I would like to thank my daughters, Hannah and Mihal, for their unconditional love. Your presence kept everything in perspective. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Jaime, for being my husband, my friend, and my colleague. You were always there when I needed you.

PREFACE

Since the beginning of human history, families have moved primarily for reason of scarcity of food. However, economical, cultural (intolerance), and social (mobility) circumstances have prompted family members to leave their families and places of origin and adventure in the search of a better life. The main purpose of this study is the application of the concept of Family Sustainability in a group of Mexican-American college students, from South Texas, in a Midwest university.

Family Sustainability is defined in terms of a family property or quality that enables the family to maintain the family unity, which is developed and strengthened by continuous and various activities in which the family and its members engage in interaction with its environments. There are two types of activities, long distance actions and encounters. The long distance actions are writing, calling, sending packages, and thinking. Phone calls are the closest thing that people who live physically separated have to feel close. The encounters are the visits the participants make to their places of origin. These are restricted by university vacation time and economical resources. These activities are greatly influenced by family rituals. Visits are usually planned around family celebrations. At the time of family traditions, family celebrations, and family markers, there is an increase in the need for emotional and physical connections.

The physical encounters are characterized by five phases. The first phase is

the days prior to departure to the place of origin. The second phase is the days immediately after arrival. The third phase is the middle days of the visit. The fourth phase is the days prior to departure from the place of origin. Finally, the fifth phase is the days immediately after arrival to the current place. These phases are not clear cut. They tend to overlap. There is a change in emotions throughout these phases. The continuum goes from happiness and excitement to sadness and resignation.

A qualitative research methodology is used. This approach permits us to hear the voices of the participants. Semistructured and open-ended questions were used to explore the meaning the participants give to their realities. The main question is why and how do Mexican-American college students maintain the continuity of the family unity. Family unity is what connects us with our past and sets the stage for our future. It gives us a sense of continuity. The family history influences our ethnic identity.

This study aims to develop an understanding of family attributes and processes. It will deal with a growing common experience for modern families in the United States which is the spread of family members across the country. These contextual changes have brought new family configurations. Single parent families, divorced families, step families, homosexual families, in service families, among others, also add to the diversity of families. This diversity requires a reconstruction of the relationships and boundaries in the families. This study is also an opportunity to explore the world of Mexican-Americans. This minority group is often underrepresented in the research arena. Finally, at

the personal level, this study is a medium to develop a concept which I have been working on for a long time. This research is even more important because it will help me to understand my own reality and my family's reality.

The first chapter describes the process I went through to arrive to the definition of the concept of Family Sustainability. I also explore the different components of Family Sustainability. The concepts used to analyze the data are defined and explained. They are derived from post-modern and ecological approach to the families. The work in progress of The Stone Center is also used.

In the second chapter I present the methodology used to answer the main question. A qualitative approach to the study of families was used.

Open-ended questions in a semistructured interview, observations, and documents are used to explore the meanings the participants give to their realities. My reason to have chosen this group is explained. Finally, some ethical concerns are discussed.

The third chapter describes the historical background of the making of the Mexican-Americans. The family background of the participants is explored. It includes their definition of family, their family history, and their definition of themselves. The issue of discrimination is presented as an external source of influence in their ethnic identity.

The fourth chapter is the exploration of family unity. The participants define the concept. They illustrate the concept with the view of family unity in their own families. I explore the bringing of artifacts from the place of origin as another

source that helps to maintain the family connections.

In the fifth chapter I present the model of family sustainability. At the beginning, I explain the general model of Family Sustainability and the model of concrete events or physical encounters. Following this description, data are used to illustrate the models.

The sixth chapter is a summary of the findings. There is an exploration of implications for theory, practitioners, and policy. Finally, I present some questions that are not covered in the data and go beyond the scope of my dissertation. They are recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF A CONCEPT

As a citizen of the world, I have always been interested in how families that live physically separated are able to maintain family unity. I have witnessed the enormous social and physical energy that is involved in the preservation of family ties. Based on my experience, observations and informal conversations with family members, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, I have seen how different mediums of communication, such as mail and telephone, become basic components for the continuity of the family. Pictures and special objects are also part of the process of maintaining family unity. "Cherished possessions evoke a whole range of sign-habits or meanings through our transactions with them: they are repertoires of personal and collective memories, they embody kinship ties, they are valued as tangible evidence of friendship and family bonds" (Rochberg-Halton, 1986, p.169). At the beginning, I thought that this experience is common only for individuals and families that have left their country of origin. However, while explaining my proposed study to people who have families in the same country, or even in the same state, I have found that they go through very similar emotional, social, and physical activities which enable them to feel close to their families.

The turning point of my decision to study how families keep their sense of unity regardless of the physical separation was when I was exposed to the work of Boss (1988). She defined physical absence and psychological presence as

one of the two types of "High Family Boundary Ambiguity" (p. 74). According to Boss, this situation is associated with family dysfunction due to the fact that although the person is perceived psychologically present, her/his whereabouts are unknown. Although I can see its application to the population she studied, the families of men missing in action, in normative life changes, where the family is physically separated the experience is different. The family is expected to go through a restructuring of its boundary, and some degree of grief, however, they will be able to maintain the relationships. In order to have continuity in the family ties, the family will need to find ways to adapt to the new situation while preserving the family's unity.

I was concerned with the notion that if a family decides to maintain the psychological presence of a physically absent member, the family will be seen as dysfunctional. I decided that my family is not dysfunctional. I cannot preserve my life in any place of the world without the constant presence of my loved ones regardless of the miles that keep us physically separated. There are decisions that I make that are influenced by these members. There are actions that I take that are influenced by these members. They are here with me. Denying their presence will not be only denying my roots, but also my connection with them.

Contemporary Family

The concern for finding a definition of family that will denote my reality brought to my attention the problem with labeling groups of individuals. As

Cheal (1993) stated:

Modern processes of reorganization rely heavily on using powers of reason to identify those social forms that are best adapted to new conditions. These forms are then considered to be "normal" for that stage of evolution. Identification of the normal forms of living...goes hand in hand with the identification of contrasting abnormal forms that are deemed to be pathological (p. 6).

In other words, in the modern society, there are functional and dysfunctional families. The dysfunctional families need help in bringing them to a "normal" way of performing. This is not the case of today's families. Stacey (1992) argued that "We are living, I believe, through a tumultuous and contested period of family history, a period *after* the modern family order, but before what we cannot foretell" (p. 93). She states that under the present circumstances, it is impossible to characterize and describe family in one way. Furthermore, she says that there is a variety of family cultures that coexist. She identifies the family status as post-modern. The post-modern family is understood not as a new type of family, but as a stage in family history. This stage is filled with uncertainty, insecurity, and doubt. There is not an evolutionary, linear, and progressive change in the family. The definition of family is continuously changing. Cheal (1993) explained that,

The idea of the end of the family does not mean that people are no longer perceived as interacting within sets of social relationships that they refer to as *family*. Rather, it means that the family is no longer taken for granted as having one fixed form (p. 12).

As stated by Rapp (1992) "...family is simply changing, but not disappearing" (p. 50). Thorne (1992) supported the idea that families are socially and

historically constructed. Rapp proposed the notion of differentiating family as a specific household arrangement and as an ideology. Households are defined "...as units of production, reproduction, and consumption" (p. 51). Ideology refers to the ways the members construct the relations. My study investigated the ideology of families that live apart, and how they construct the new relationships created by their present circumstance.

Family Unity

This research is the product of work started by me in 1990 under the supervision of Bubolz and Nelson in Theory Construction and Qualitative Research classes respectively (Goldfarb, 1990). It grew from observations and interviews during an exercise in grounded theory. The participants were my daughter, 9 months at the time, my parents, who live in Venezuela and stayed in our home for 3 weeks, and myself. At the end, it was clear to me that a combination of different types of communication and the encounter helps to maintain the continuity of our family unity. As Sánchez-Ayéndez (1992) stated, "Visits and telephone calls demonstrate a caring attitude by family members which cements family unity" (p. 241). Under communication we find letters, phone calls, pictures strategically located around the house, and special objects. These passive and sometimes relatively active remembrances maintain the continuity of family unity despite the fact that members of the group are not physically present. The encounters are extremely active and intense events that reunite the family for the purpose of celebrating the opportunity to

be physically together.

Through the year, I realized that there are certain rituals and traditions which help me to feel close to my family when I reenacted them. As Fiese, Hooker, Kotary, and Schwagler (1993) stated, "Family rituals may be a particularly potent factor in preserving relationships during times of transition" (p. 634). They also argued that rituals are behaviors that help to organize the family system. They are "...not only the practice of routines, but also the representations and beliefs of the family's identity" (p. 634). They provide meaning and satisfaction to the family members. Bennett, Wolin, and McAvity (1988) defined family identity as "...the family's subjective sense of its own continuity over time, its present situation, and its character....it is...a group psychological phenomenon, which has as its foundation a shared system of beliefs" (p. 212). Rituals range from highly stylized religious observances to daily interaction patterns. The authors stated that there are three groups of rituals. The first group is Family Celebrations. These are holidays and other occasions that are defined by the culture and the family as important. Rites of passage, such as Bar-Mitzvah and weddings, belong to this group. "They denote the family's perceived identification with a wider ethnic, cultural, or religious community" (p. 216). The second group is Family Traditions. These are more specific to the idiosyncrasy of the family, such as birthday customs, summer vacations, and special meals. Another concept related to family traditions is family markers. Burr, Hill, Nye, and Reiss (1979) stated that family markers "...designate significant times for each member's experience as well

as for the family as a world" (p. 179). The third group is Patterned Routines. "Among rituals, these are the ones most frequently enacted but least consciously planned by the participants" (Bennett et al., 1988, p. 216). These interactions organize daily family life by defining roles and responsibilities. I found that family celebrations are good excuses to plan a physical encounter. By continuing with the family celebrations and traditions, I was able to preserve my ties with my family. Due to the physical distance, I lost the patterned behaviors, I created new ones, and we recreated old ones when we got together.

Family Sustainability

Based on the work mentioned above, I realized the need for finding an umbrella concept that will encompass the whole process. I call this concept Family Sustainability. Family sustainability is defined in terms of a family property or quality that enables the family to maintain family unity, which is developed and strengthened by continuous and various activities in which the family and its members engage through interactions with their environments. As stated by Sánchez-Ayéndez (1992) "Family unity refers to the desirability of close and intimate kin ties, with members getting along well and keeping in frequent contact despite dispersal" (p. 241). Furthermore, the author argues that family unity contributes to the strengthening of family interdependence or as the proverb says: *En la union está la fuerza*. ("In union there is strength.")

A similar concept is used by Di Leonardo (1992). She named this concept, **Work of Kinship**. She stated that:

By kin work I refer to the conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross-household kin ties, including visits, letters, telephone calls, presents, and cards to kin; the organization of holiday gathering; the creation and maintenance of quasi-kin relations; decisions to neglect or to intensify particular ties; mental work of reflection about all these activities; and the creation and communication of altering images of family and kin vis-a-vis the images of others, both folk and mass media (p. 248).

She argued that this takes time, effort, intention, and skill. This is work, and it has been culturally defined as a woman's role. Men do not do it. Furthermore, she stated that "Kin work, then, takes place in an arena characterized simultaneously by cooperation and competition, by guilt and gratification" (Di Leonardo, 1992, p. 251). It is a cross ethnic and class phenomenon.

"...cross-household kin contact can be and is affected at long distance through letter, cards, phone calls, and holiday and vacation visits. The form and functions of contact, however, vary according to economic resources" (p. 254).

She based her findings on a study about Italian-American couples. She compared the attitudes of husbands and wives. Within the role of grandparent, Hagestad and Lang (1986) found that "Women most commonly saw continuing the family line as the most important feature of grandparenthood" (p. 118). Kin network, which is defined as a "voluntary system characterized by reciprocal exchanges" (Sussman, 1976, p. 225), is a crucial component of grandparenthood. A member of this system is expected to develop expectation of interpersonal exchange, give emotional support, and be able to provide aid

and assistance under various conditions. There is a sense of "loyalty and identification" (p. 226). Although these concepts, kin work and kin network, are very similar to Family Sustainability, and historically the nurturing role has been delegated to women, I argue that work of kin does not allow diversity and flexibility. It is a very exclusive, gender related concept. Furthermore, it is defined "in contrast" (husband-wife), which is a binary distinction and it can prevent the findings of other forms of kin work.

Ecological Framework

I decided to define and study the concept of family sustainability inside the Family Ecology framework. As Wright and Herrin (1988) argued, this framework "...represents an interdisciplinary approach to the complex study of family phenomena" (p. 275). They claimed that this framework is "...a conceptual orientation that stresses the interrelationships among individual, families, and their environments with a methodology that attempts to measure these in order to understand the interrelating effects of one on another" (p. 265). Family Sustainability is a concept that was defined based on observations of family interactions in the new and specific context, which reinforces the definition of the post-modern family.

The process of arriving at the definition of Family Sustainability began by looking through relevant literature in Family Studies and Family Ecology. The concept, *per se*, was not found. Therefore, I directed my search toward ecological articles that deal, in one form or another, with the concept of

sustenance or sustainability. The idea of using the concept of sustainability was derived mainly from the concept of Sustenance Activities. Bubolz and Sontag (1993) defined this idea as:

Activities in which families engage in order to meet needs and work toward survival of individuals and the family system. These encompass activities that provide economic livelihood as well as family production, consumption, and nurturance activities, including household work and care of family members. Sustenance activities require and transform matter-energy and information. They are regular, repetitive, and enduring; are carried out through management, decision-making, and communication processes; and usually constitute a major portion of the everyday life of families. As is true of other processes, families differ in patterns for carrying out sustenance activities (p. 434).

At the beginning, I related family sustainability as a sustenance activity. However, in further analysis, it was established that the concept of family sustainability belongs to a different dimension of abstraction. Family sustainability is a family property. It is an attribute that can be used to characterize the family as a whole, but more important, it portrays relationships and interactions between members in connection with the environment and other contingent systems. Also, sustenance activities are a crucial component of family sustainability, but they do not convey the whole process.

After exploring the literature, I realized that these concepts, which have different meanings according to their specific applicability, indicate caution about the possibility of borrowing the entire concept to be used in family ecology. The definitions covered issues such as food, emotions, financial aspects, and resources. Although they may differ in their primary purpose,

these concepts which have common basic principles can be common for the concept of family sustainability too. One of these essential components is time. They all convey a sense of continuity. There is an emphasis on the need for constant awareness of the consequences of past and present activities for the present , but also, for the future. Burr et al. (1979) stated that "Family time is different from all other institutional time. There is a temporal development sequence that families traverse because of their intrinsic constitution as a direct and immediate social world" (p. 179).

Milbrath (1989) maintained that we cannot continue to follow the past and present path and patterns of behavior if we want to have a viable future. He stated that:

In my definition, a sustainable society does not merely keep people alive; live must be something more than merely not dying. It is a society in which people live their lives so that nature can cleanse itself and reproduce. It cares for nature and resources so that many future generations of people and other creatures can live decent lives. Such a society can sustain its trajectory (p. 2).

This definition conveys not only the notion of continuity, but also the necessity of being active participants in the process. This need is essential for the process. However, I must add that it is not required that all family members be active participants at the same time. Milbrath (1989) proposed goals in his search for a sustainable society that can also be used in the description of family sustainability. He says that the highest value in a sustainable society is life in a viable ecosystem. Family sustainability cannot occur if the ecosystem does not support and nurture the process. He also states that a sustainable

society affirms love as a primary value. I argue that love is the primary motivational value so family sustainability can exist.

However, it is important to emphasize that the definition of love may vary from one family system to another. A sustainable society would maximize opportunities for personal development and self-realization as the most effective way for people to realize quality in living. This could be seen as the ideal situation to be supported and encouraged by family sustainability. Nevertheless, this family property could be used to maintain the power and domination of family members. A sustainable society will recognize limits to resources. Translating this to family sustainability, the family will decide the allocation of resources for the benefit of the members as individuals and the family as a whole. The use of the family resources may not be at a constant ideal level, but overall, there is an equilibrium.

Another common ground is the sense of survival. All the definitions state certain primary conditions in order to sustain life, such as food, viable ecosystems, emotional support. Survival encloses a broad range of sustenance activities. A basic concept through all the issues is adaptation. Adaptation becomes a requirement to maintain sustainability. It is necessary to be able to change and therefore adapt to new situations and realities. Bennett (1976a) stated that adaptation among human beings

...focuses on human actors who try to realize objectives, satisfy needs, or find peace while coping with present conditions. In their coping, humans create the social future in the sense of generating new problems or perpetuating old ones and may even modify the biological constitution of

the population (p. 847).

This definition summarizes the different components of adaptation which are crucial to family sustainability. It also implies the notion of continuity and change. The author goes further and maintains that "...this behavior is subject to interpretation by values, thus introducing a judgmental dimension in addition to the survival or need-satisfying function" (Bennett, 1976a, p. 849). Milbrath (1990) argued that a sustainable society places greater emphasis on nonmaterial satisfactions to achieve quality of life. Bennett (1976b) suggested that in order to have sustainability, the community, in this case the family, should seek support from outside. In this sense, support systems such as extended family, friends, neighbors, and support groups play a crucial role in family sustainability. Technology, including mail, airplanes, telephones, computers, fax, video will be used for the satisfaction of the family in pursuing a quality of relationship. As stated by Rouse (1991), "...growing access to the telephone has been particularly significant, allowing people not just to keep in touch periodically but to contribute to decision-making and participate in familial events even from a considerable distance" (p. 13). These support systems, including technology, and the specific environmental contexts of the family are critical components of the social conditions for family sustainability.

Connections

Gilligan (1982) maintained that separation does not mean the disruption of a continuing sense of connection. The ideal situation in a healthy connected family will be a family "...where everyone is encouraged to become an individual and at the same time everybody helps others and receives help from them" (p. 54). Family relations should have a balance between the two extremes of family cohesion, "enmeshment - a high degree of connectedness, in which family members are expected to act and think alike - and disengagement - a low degree of connectedness. in which family members are highly independent and have little effect on one another" (Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983, p. 45).

Gilligan (1982) also stated that, in family relations, a connected self will renegotiate relationships incorporating new attributes. In the classical developmental psychological theories, such as Erikson (1963), Mahler (1975), and Levinson (1978), there is an emphasis on the need for separation in order to discover and develop the self and, therefore, reach autonomy. According to Hauser (1991),

Until recently many theories about adolescence viewed gains in independence as requiring *detachment* from the family, the breaking of dependent bonds, thus overlooking the fact that in the process of becoming more independent, teenagers forge close new connections with the parents, siblings, and friends. Rather than see these sometimes profound adolescent changes as requiring a linear exchange, characterized by dependence on friends in exchange for dependence on family, we now see a more complex amalgam, involving adolescent differentiation *and* enduring family bonds, as new movements toward autonomy draw upon and transform family relationships. (p. 237)

According to Grotevant and Cooper (1985), "In recent work, identity exploration is increasingly viewed as a process that can be facilitated within the context of relationships" (p. 415). They suggested that two components of individuation are individuality and connectedness. Individuality is reflected by separateness which is defined as the "...expressions of the distinctiveness of self from others" (p. 416). Individuality is also reflected by self-assertion which is defined as the "...expressions of one's own point of view and in taking responsibility" (p. 416). These qualities open the arena for family members to have opinions that may differ from other members. Connectedness is reflected by mutuality which is defined as the "...individual's sensitivity to and respect for the views of others" (p. 416). Connectedness is also reflected by permeability which is the "...openness and responsiveness to the views of others" (p. 416). Mutuality provides support, acknowledgment, and respect for developing personal beliefs. Permeability consists of management of boundaries between self and others. Healthy development occurs when family interaction involves "...high amounts of sharing of perspectives, and challenges in the context of support" (p. 425). Furthermore, individuality and connectedness in family relationships can be used as predictors of individual competence.

Surrey (1984) presented the concept of "self-in-relation" as the central organizing construct in the understanding of women's development. She stated that based on this concept "...the self is organized and developed in the context of important relationships....The ability to be in relationship appears to rest on the development of the capacity for empathy in both or all persons

involved" (p. 2). She also argued that "It is not through separation, but through more highly articulated and expanded relational experience that individual development takes place" (p. 8). The capacity of empathy is a crucial feature in the broadening of relationships.

Jordan (1984) maintained that empathy is a complex cognitive and affective process. She goes further to say there are several components to empathy:

In order to empathize, one must have a well differentiated sense of self, in addition to an appreciation of and sensitivity to the differentness as well as sameness of the other. Empathy always involves surrender to feelings and active cognitive structuring; in order for empathy to occur, self-boundaries must be flexible. Experientially, empathy begins with some general motivation for interpersonal relatedness which allows the perception of the other's effective cues (both verbal and nonverbal) followed by surrender to affective arousal in oneself" (p. 3).

These components make empathy a critical element of family sustainability. Empathy permits the continuous engagement in relationships. It does not have physical boundaries. This concept also portrays the need for awareness of others and oneself. As stated by Jordan (1984), "For empathy to be effective, there must be a balance of affective and cognitive, subjective and objective, active and passive" (p. 3).

The concepts of connectedness, self-in-relation, and empathy are affiliated concepts for interdependence. "The family is viewed as a set of mutually interdependent organisms; intimate, transacting, and interrelated persons who share some common goals, resources, and a commitment to one another that extends over time" (Paolucci, Hall, and Axinn, 1977, p. 18). To make this view of the family even more appropriate to the present study, I will add the

dimension of space. Interdependence is not necessarily inhibited due to the nonsharing of current physical space.

Bubolz and Sontag (1993) stated that not only are family members interdependent, but also the family and the environment are interdependent. "Families are unable to function satisfactorily without use of environmental resources" (p. 434). Paolucci, Hall, and Axinn (1977) went further to say that "The family organization mediates the relationships between family members and environments" (p. 17). Sánchez-Ayéndez (1992) defined interdependence as "...reciprocity among family members, especially those in the immediate kinship group" (p. 242). Interdependency is an intrinsic component of family sustainability. The family members should have empathetic relations among them to understand and better provide for each other's needs. This will maintain the family unity and the sense of connectedness.

Being connected is being in a relationship. Surrey (1984) defined relationship as "...an experience of emotional and cognitive intersubjectivity: the ongoing intrinsic inner awareness and responsiveness to the continuous existence of the other or others and the expectation of mutuality in this regard" (p. 9). This definition implies that there is a process of mutual relational interactions that permits a self-knowing and the knowing of others. This process is maintained over time and space. These relationships become units that are larger and different from the whole and from its parts. They exist beyond the individuals. They have to be cared about, attended to, and nurtured. Furthermore, "...the ongoing process of intersubjective relationship

obviously does not involve continuous physical connection but does involve a continuous psychological connection" (Surrey, p. 10).

My research addresses relationships which are not constrained to a specific time and space, but are strongly affected by its environmental circumstance.

Rouse (1991) stated that "Two socio-spatial images have dominated the modern discourse of the social sciences concerning the people of rural Mexico" (p. 9). The author called the first one community. This concept involves the notion that there is a single population in a specific territory or place. Also, it implies commonality and coherence. The second image is labeled as "center/periphery." This assumes a concentric organization around a dominant core.

Migration has always had the potential to challenge established spatial images. It highlights the social nature of space as something created and reproduced through collective human agency and, in so doing, reminds us that, within the limits imposed by power, existing spatial arrangements are always susceptible to change (Rouse, p. 11).

The author said that since migration is a clear case of changing places, it has been seen as a movement from one set of relations to another and a movement from one significant environment to another. This way of looking at migration failed to see it as a circular process where the people "...remain oriented to the places from which they have come" (p. 11). The place of origin and the current place are influenced by this movement. Sometimes, it is found that,

important kin and friends are as likely to be living hundreds or thousands of miles away as immediately around them. More significantly, they are often able to maintain these spatially extended relationships as actively and effectively as the ties that link them to their neighbors (p. 13).

Consequently, not only both places are affected, but also a new social place is created. This social space, applied to families, is maintained by family sustainability.

In conclusion, Family Sustainability developed based on my personal experience. The definition is derived from the lack of the literature able to portray the reality of my family. As stated previously, Family Sustainability is defined in terms of a family property or quality that enables the family to maintain the family unity, which is developed and strengthened by continuous and various activities in which the family and its members engage in interaction with its environments. The different components of family sustainability are the need for emotional and physical connection, the rearrangement of family relations in terms of the new contextual realities, the creation of support systems, and the utilization of technology as a resource for interaction. This concept permits a flexible and inclusive way of looking at the process of sustaining family unity. Throughout the following chapters, I will explore how these concepts and components operate in the lives of a group of Mexican-American college students from South Texas who are living in the midwest United States. The next chapter describes the methodological framework used to examine the concept of Family Sustainability.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

in this chapter, I present the methodological framework of my research. I briefly introduce the participants and how they came to be my informants. I describe the tools I used to gather data. I include the set of open-ended questions that were the skeleton for the interviews. Also, I include the type of documents I had access to and the type of observation I did. I include specific ethical concerns pertaining to this study. Finally, I describe the steps I used in analyzing the information provided by the participants.

Qualitative Approach

Due to the fact that the ideas of this research are in their initial stages, there is a need for a discussional theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method is less formally or precisely structured and includes more discursive narration, description, suggestions and examples of what is meant. The authors stated that "comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on theory as process; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as perfect product....[it] renders quite well the reality of social interaction and its structural context" (p. 32). As Gilgun (1992) argued, "Grounded theory by definition is rooted in data, which in turn is rooted in place and time" (p. 30).

The concept of Family Sustainability was coined by me based on a classroom exercise in grounded theory. A tentative definition was developed.

The next logical step in its development is to apply it to a population. The most suitable method is the use of qualitative approach. As Jacob (1988) stated, there is not *one* qualitative approach. Therefore, there is not a correct way of using this methodology. "The processes of qualitative research include ways of conceptualizing, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Most forms of qualitative research are qualitative in all four of these processes" (Gilgun, 1992, p. 24). As stated by Leininger (1985), qualitative research studies natural events happening in their ongoing contexts. There is an openness to environmental influences. Leininger argued that the orientation of this methodology is to discover, explore, compare, expand, include, and describe.

In the broader sense, qualitative family research "...relies on verbal rather than numerical notations and that focuses on the symbolic or phenomenological aspects of family life" (LaRossa & Wolf, 1985, p. 531). They go further to state that this approach is indispensable in the study of dynamics of family systems. Daly (1992) argued that "...qualitative methods are suited to understanding the meanings, interpretations, and subjective experiences of family members" (p. 3-4). Under this approach, the monolithic definition of family is challenged. This allows the presentation of diversity in family forms and experiences. Qualitative methods focus on "...the processes by which families create, sustain, and discuss their own family realities" (p. 4). In other words, the intention is to understand how families give meaning to their own experiences. This methodology permits a holistic view of the family.

Leininger (1985) said that the relation between the researcher and the

people being studied is "Frequently direct involvement and participation with people" (p. 14-15). Reinharz (1984) described the relationship between the researcher and the participants as being involved and as sharing of fate. There is a sense of commitment in this connection. As stated by Daly (1992), "A challenge to qualitative researchers is to enter the relatively closed and highly protected boundaries of families' experiences" (p.4). There is a construction of a relationship. Gradually, trust and rapport are built. The participants are the ultimate gatekeepers of the information. However, as the relationship gets more intimate, often there is access to more sensitive and private family meanings. The author went further to say that:

Qualitative research with families is one way to take the obvious (and therefore the hidden),...put it in a new light and make it comprehensible. What participants think of as habitual, takes on new meaning when compared and contrasted with the habits of others (p. 5).

In my study, all the participants were surprised when I explained the focus of the research. They saw it as such a normal and daily thing that they could not see the relevance.

As stated by Gilgun (1992), "The research remains family research as long as it centers around experiences within the families or between families and other systems" (p. 23). The use of one or more informants depends on the focus of the research and availability. In this case, one informant per family was used due to the geographical distance of the remaining family members. Also, at this point, the interest was in the meaning given by the participants to their experiences due to the fact that they were the ones who left their place of origin.

Selection of Participants

The group of individuals used as participants was a convenience sample. Since this research is the first application of the concept of Family Sustainability, I needed to find a group of individuals going through a similar normative experience and coming from a similar background. Although I believe the concept of Family Sustainability could be applicable to any family situation, whether being physically separated or not, this study will focus on families that are miles apart during the major part of the year. The research will explore how this family property, Family Sustainability, operates in the concrete case of a group of southern Mexican-American college students in a midwest university. They were chosen due to easy access. Their situation is interesting not only due to the fact that for all of them this is the first time they live far away from their family, but also they have left a predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American community, a Mexican-American neighborhood. It should be pointed out that, as is going to be clear in the family background of the participants, going away for college became a normative event only in the generation of the participants. Also, the participants used the university vacations to fly and visit their families, which allowed me to develop the model for physical encounters.

As stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), "Since accurate evidence is not so crucial for generating theory, the kind of evidence, as well as the number of cases, is also not so crucial" (p. 30). I chose to interview in depth six Latino college students, three females and three males. They all came from the same

southern part of the state of Texas. They all came to the same midwest university. Access to the group was made through one of my students during the Fall semester of 1992. The idea to interview them came after this former student introduced himself, during the first class, by saying that he misses his family a lot. I explained the purpose of my dissertation to him. I said that I was studying the relationships of family members when they are physically separated. I asked him if he will be willing to participate. He accepted. I told him that I would start the study soon. I also asked him if he thought that some of his friends would also be willing to participate. He asked me how many people I needed, and I told him that I would like to have six, three females and three males. He responded by saying, "no problem". He provided the telephone numbers of the other two male participants and two female participants. One of the latter gave me the name of another female participant. In order to preserve their anonymity, they were asked to choose a pseudonym to be used through the study.

The participants are:

Rolando. At the time of the interview, he was 21 years old. He was born in 1971. He had been at the university for three years . He is an Occupational Therapy student. He graduated at the top of his high school class of 260 seniors.

Marina. At the time of the interview, she was 19 years old. She had been at the University for two years. She is interested in studying Child Psychology.

Joey. At the time of the interview, he was 21 years old. He had been at the

university for three years. He graduated 13th in his high school class.

Maria. At the time of the interview, she was 20 years old. She had been at the university for one year. She is undecided about her major. She graduated 25th from 400 high school seniors.

Luis. At the time of the interview, he was 21 years old. He was born in 1971. He graduated 12th from a high school senior class of 254. He had been at the university for three years .

Vanessa. At the time of the interview, she was 20 years old. She had been at the university for two years. She was an "A" student in high school. She wants to major in Accounting.

A more detailed presentation of the participants is found in Chapter III.

Conducting the Study

Interviews, including the questions asked, observation, and document analysis are described below.

Interviews

As stated by Gilgun, Daly, and Handel (1992), "Establishing relationships with one or more participants through interviews is foundational in qualitative studies of family experience" (p. 41). In-depth interviews were used to generate highly descriptive and expressive data of the actual thoughts of the participants. The set of open-ended questions served as a basis to explore and reconstruct the individual's meaning of her/his present situation. They were used to generate the disclosure of their stories because, as Seidman (1991) said

'...stories are a way of knowing' (p. 1). They provided the skeleton for the interviews. These were the minimum topics asked to each participant.

The three-step-interview proposed by Seidman (1991) was used as framework for the conversations. As the author stated,

The first interview establishes the context of the participant's experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (p. 11).

Each encounter lasted a minimum of 60 minutes, and in most cases we met on three separate occasions. The initial contact was made by telephone. I explained who gave me their names, who I am, and the general focus of the study. They knew about me because my informant(s) had previously told them. They all agreed to participate and the time and place of the first interview was set. The next meetings were scheduled at the first interview. In the case of the female participants, there were only two meetings. The reason is that the interviews were done at the end of the winter semester and the participants were going back to their place of origin. The first and second interviews were done at a private room in the university library. The second interview with the females and third meeting with the males were at the participants' dorm. The first meeting centered in the questions. The consent form was signed. I should say that all of the participants wanted to use their real names, but after I explained issues of confidentiality and anonymity they chose to use pseudonyms. These also allowed us to build a trusting relationship. By the end of the second and at the third meetings, the participants felt more

comfortable. They told private stories not directly related with the questions and they discussed highly sensitive topics such as discrimination.

All the interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were conducted mainly in English with some inclusion of Spanish, as the two languages are part of their realities. Spanish was mainly used as a way of showing me that they can speak it. Also, they used it especially when they were quoting their parents.

The interviews were conducted during the months of April and May 1993. The fact that I am Latina allowed me rapid access to the participants. Even though the participants and I have Latino background, I do not have a Mexican heritage. We speak the same language with some colloquial differences. Therefore, both languages, Spanish and English, were used throughout the interviews. Although our cultures differ, a sense of common history and experiences was felt from the first meetings, opening the arena to intimate and private family experiences.

In addition to the interviews, I kept a set of field notes in which I described interview situations and relevant aspects of the community context. They also included documentation about all nontaped conversations. Also, I kept a journal. In this analytic journal I recorded my personal reactions to conversations and interactions with the participants. The journal also contains inferences, emerging questions, and assertions that developed during and after the interviews.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed based on the final papers in my Qualitative Research Methods and Theory Construction classes. The definition of Family Sustainability was the starting point. Assuming that families have this property, the next step was to find out how it is developed and strengthened. The questions focused on the process and activities family member(s) use to maintain family unity and the contextual changes and influences.

The following questions were asked to the participants throughout the meetings. Each participant answered all the sets of questions. I used the questions to have an instrument that will serve as an equal denominator among the participants. As it happens with open ended questions, not all of the participants offered the same quantity and quality of responses. I made sure that all the questions were answered, but I also allowed a free arena to bring any issue about which they wanted to talk. Often, they asked me about my own experience. I did my best to share with them, trying to do it after they had answered. I answered all their questions. Although there is always going to be a sense of hierarchy in the relationship, I tried to get a friendly and egalitarian relation. The participants were proud and interested in sharing their family history. They felt important.

Main Question:

Why and how do Mexican-American college students maintain the continuity of the family unity?

In order to find out the answer of this question, I believed the interviewee had

to go through a series of more concrete questions. It was not my intention to find a direct answer. I believed the answer was going to be built throughout the process of the interviews, observations, and interactions.

A. What does family mean to Mexican-American college students?

1. How do you define yourself?
2. Who do you usually think of as being a member of your family?
3. Where does each person live?
4. What is your definition of family?
5. Why do you choose to define family that way?
6. Do you think it is important to have strong family connections? Why?
7. How do you define family unity?
8. Do you think that family unity is a high, medium, low value for you and your family? Why?
9. How do you think your ethnic background influences your definition of family? Why?
10. How often do you think about your family?
11. What type of occasions provoke more intense thinking about your family? Why?

B. How do Mexican-American college students maintain the family unit?

1. How often do you see each family member?
2. In what occasion(s) you see each person?
3. How often do you talk and write to each person?

4. How do you decide to whom to talk and write?
5. What did you bring (artifacts) with you from home? Why?
6. Where do you keep this/these object(s)? Why?
7. Are there any special things that you do to keep in touch with your family?
What are they? Why do you think they are important?
8. What is the content of your letters?
9. What is the content of their letters?
10. What language do you use?
11. What language do they use?

C. How do Mexican-American college students feel about family visits?

1. When you go back home, who do you see and how often?
2. How do you decide with whom you are going to meet?
3. How do you decide the allocation of your time and energy among your family members?
4. Do you think you have any preference? Why?
5. What are your usual feelings before you go for a family visit?
6. What are your usual feelings during the family visit? Do those feelings change from the immediate arrival, after a couple of days, close to your imminent departure?
7. What are your usual feelings immediately after your departure? Do those feelings change? How and when?

D. Can you describe your community of origin?

1. How is the physical environment (weather, vegetation, buildings, roads)?
2. How is the social environment (language, people, economy)?

Observation

The last meeting occurred in the participants' rooms. This allowed me to see the dwelling arrangements. Also, the participants showed me the artifacts that they had brought from their homes. Due to time constraints, the observation was done during the second meeting for the female participants and during the third meeting for the male participants.

Document Analysis

"Although qualitative researchers typically rely on the firsthand accounts of their participants for data, a wealth of meaningful data lies dormant in diaries, letters, books, and magazines" (Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992, p. 261). The participants lent me personal letters and cards. These correspondences were between them and various family members. They were written before the participant had any knowledge of the study. Consequently, they are normal and not influenced sources of information. One participant provided me with her own poetry. Since the rest of the family members were not interviewed, these letters provided the research with their voices.

Ethical Concerns

This part of the dissertation will focus on ethical concerns that existed previous to the study and some that were developed as the research was conducted. "Although all researchers face ethical dilemmas, the kind of issues

that qualitative family researchers face are unique in that they actively have chosen to enter into a personal relationship with the participants" (Snyder, 1992, p. 49). In this relationship the researcher gets information about the feelings and thoughts of the participants. Moreover, conflictive and abusive events can emerge. I assured the participants that I will use only the pseudonyms when referring to them throughout the writing. We met at the library which is a neutral place. One of the female participants raised a very personal and sensitive topic. I asked her if she would like for me to stop the tape recorder and she said no. She then asked me if I think the information that she had given me is important for my study. I responded that it was not crucial. Then, she asked me not to use it if I do not really need to. I respected her feelings by not mentioning any thing about this issue in the dissertation. Also, I referred her to a person that can help her. Another sensitive situation was developed with one of the male participants. He did not want to elaborate an incident that had happened to him where he felt discriminated based on his Latino physical appearance. The refusal was at the first meeting. I respected his feelings and I assured him that he can tell only what he wants, that there are neither sanctions, nor judgments. In the third meeting, he said that he would like to tell about the incident because he thought about it and he thinks it is important for the people to know. I told all of the participants that their own transcripts and copies of my dissertation are available to them.

Daly (1992) posed a very relevant question, especially for this dissertation:

"...how do our own family experiences affect the choices we make about what to

study, who to ask, and how to ask it?" (p. 9). This study was born from observations of my own family and conversation with friends. I had shared my findings with my family and with my friends. It is a very personal issue and because of that I feel so passionate about it. I needed to be constantly aware of this in order to avoid pressuring the participants to comply with my biases.

Analysis

"An ongoing dialogue between data collection, identification of significant themes, and subsequent coding and analysis is a hallmark of qualitative research....Ideally, these processes occur simultaneously - in a pulsating fashion - over the course of the research" (Snyder, 1992, p. 51). In my study, the majority of these processes occurred after I had finished interviewing all the participants and I had transcribed all the interviews. The data consisted of transcripts of all the interviews with the six participants. The transcripts are the original words of the participants. I inserted the punctuation which was often difficult because many informants spoke with few pauses. Sentences in Spanish are normally longer than English. I translated the parts in Spanish to English as accurately as possible. The remainder was English as close as possible to how it was said by the participants. Also, the data included all the analytic memos I had written before and after the interviews, as well as notes written through all the stages of analysis. These notes included ideas for main themes, issues to be looked at in the literature, tentative outlines of the chapters, things that had, or had not, worked in the interviews, ideas, and

personal reactions.

In order to analyze the data, I made a hard copy of all the interviews. I read them all at least twice. I maintained all the participants separately. Based on these readings, I developed a set of general categories. They were family background, reason and process of moving, self-definition, context of origin, and model of Family Sustainability.

The second step of analysis was to create new transcripts that I separated according to the above categories. I read them again and I generated subcategories (See Fig. 1). Some of them were already at the first step, but at this time I made separate transcripts for them. Among the new ones, under family sustainability, I separated the long distance actions and the encounters. Under family background, I separated family history and definition of family, and family unity.

In the third step I extended the details of the categories. For example, long distance actions were separated into thinking, writing, calling, and others, which turned out to be mainly packages that the family or the participants have sent and flowers. At this time, I also created a new section which I called discrimination. It was evident from the information gathered from the participants that the issue of discrimination played an important role in their ethnic definition. The pieces of data from each participant were compiled in different files and I analyzed them further to arrive at conclusions in terms of similarities and differences. This was done with the purpose of eliminating repetitions.

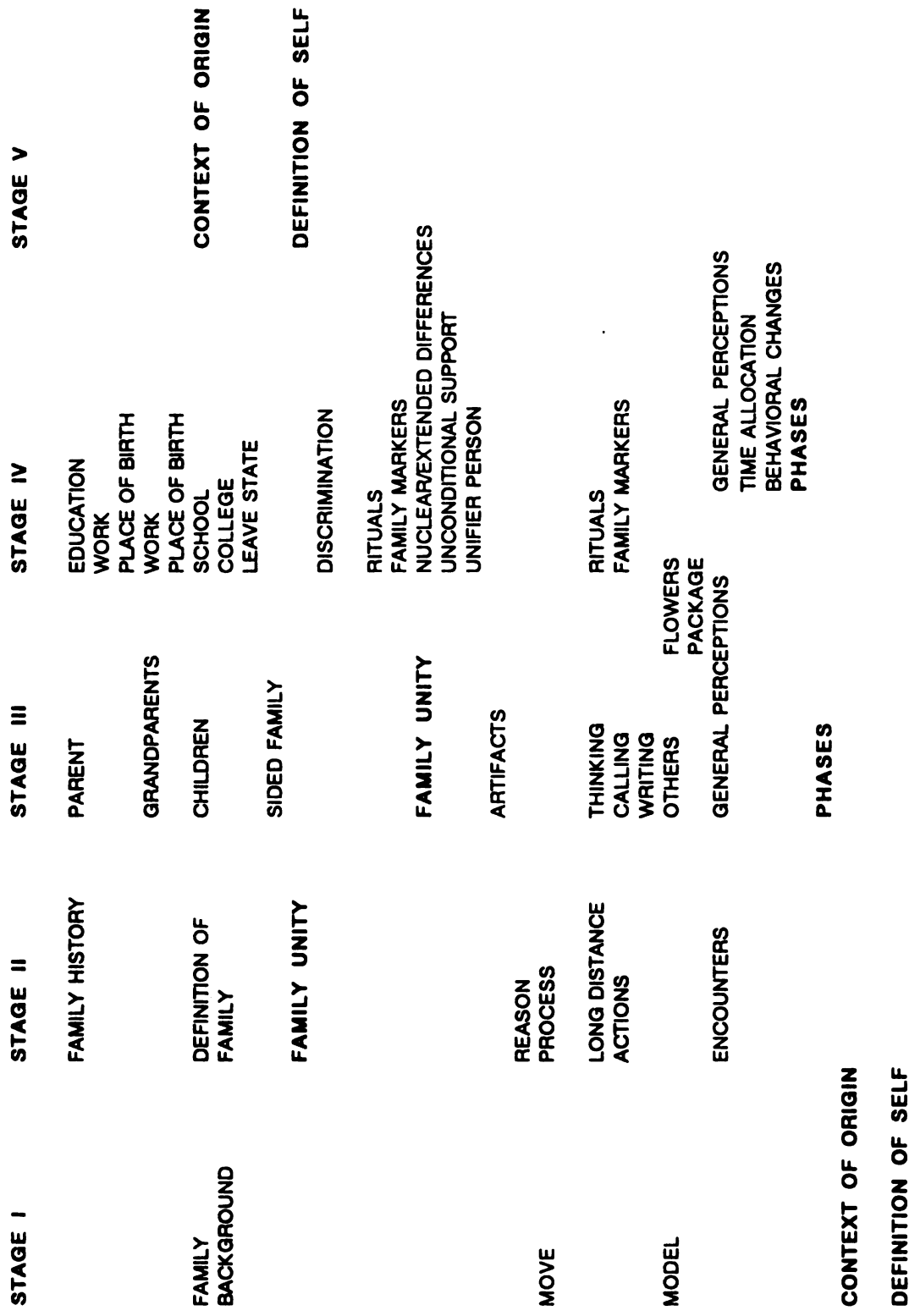


Figure 1. Example of coding classification

The next chapter describes the background of the participants. It begins with a brief description of the history of the making of the modern Mexican-Americans, followed by the presentation of the family background and the issue of discrimination as it plays in their ethnic identity.

CHAPTER III

PARTICIPANTS

This chapter is a detailed description of the participants. In order to understand the meaning of the informants' realities, it is crucial to present their family history. This context influences not only their definition of family, but also how they define themselves. At the same time, these families have been influenced by the historical background of their ethnic group, Mexican-American.

Historical Background

Although the focus of the dissertation is the development of the concept Family Sustainability, the historical background of the Mexican-American people, especially Texans, is very important for the understanding of the socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, and emotional context of the participants. As stated by Chilman (1993) "The historical background of a people also influences the behavior of its members in a number of subtle and not-so-subtle ways" (p. 148). The following pages will briefly describe the journey that had led to the modern Mexican-American people. The use of the term Mexican-American throughout this dissertation is to distinguish the specific background of the participants from the background of the Latino population in general.

As described by Samora and Simon (1993), statistics for the Mexican-American population have been difficult to obtain. In 1930, the United

States Census Bureau attempted to enumerate them. The Census takers were told to mark Mexican for all people who were born in Mexico or had Mexican born parents. In 1940, they changed the criterion to language spoken in the home. In 1950 and 1960, a list of several thousand Spanish surnames was compiled and it was used as a means of identification. In 1970, Mexican-Americans were counted throughout all the country, not only in the five southwestern states as in prior years. The categories were expanded to self-identification as Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Central and South Americans, Cuban, and other Spanish speaking countries.

The Mexican-American population has changed from being predominantly rural, before 1940s, to more urban. From this group, 80% are located in the states of California and Texas, followed by New Mexico and Illinois. The history of the modern Mexican-American begins with the arrival of the Spaniards in the western hemisphere. In 1519, Hernan Cortes sailed from Cuba to Mexico. In two years, he succeeded in subduing the natives. As a consequence, the Spaniards began the imposition of their laws, language, religion, and social structures. Massive conversion and the creation of villages made it easier to regulate, supervise, and dominate the natives. The mixing of races began by mostly having children from Spanish fathers and native mothers. This produced the mestizos. "They represented the blending of blood and of culture that has produced the modern Mexican and Mexican-American" (Samora & Simon, 1993, p. 25).

The colony started to move northward seeking mines, land to cultivate, and

land to own. A group of settlers, under the command of Juan de Oñate, built a new colony at the edge of the Rio Grande in northern New Mexico. Slowly, the Spanish population increased and the Indian population decreased. Mission Settlements were tried in Arizona, Texas, and California; those in California became the most profitable to the crown. After the independence in 1821, Mexico engaged in the destruction of the mission system because it represented the hated Spanish crown. A secular system was established and the natives were declared free and independent.

The South-West was also economically interesting for Anglos. First, England won control of Canada and the the English settlers and adventurers started to move southward. Second, the Anglos became increasingly interested in occupying the entire territory of what became the United States, particularly after they bought Louisiana from the French.

Third, after Mexican independence from Spain, the trade between Mexico and the United States increased. The Anglos massively settled in Texas. However, most of them had little regard for Mexican laws. They brought black slaves in spite of the fact that the Mexican government had given emancipation to the slaves at the time of independence.

In a big land with rich resources, Anglos in Texas wanted a separated state from Mexico. Most Mexicans in Texas were supportive because they perceived that such separation may provide political and economic stability and progress. In 1836, the Texans declared independence (Samora & Simon, 1993). Consequently, the United States was pulled into the political arena in

support of Texas in its separation from Mexico. Mexico was never at ease with this move. In 1845, the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate offered to Texas annexation to the U.S.. The Texas Congress accepted the offer even though Mexico stated that this would be considered an act of war. The Mexican American war began. In the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Texas was annexed to the United States. The government of the United States gave the Mexican-Texan people a choice: they can either leave, or stay and become Americans (Mexican-Americans). The majority stayed.

Even though the Mexican-Americans were protected by civil guaranties, they were seen and treated as second class citizens. Different than in an independent Texas, Mexican-Americans were not recognized as owners of land, therefore they lost property that had belonged to them for generations. This relegated them to a lower social class status. "A new stereotype emerged - a stereotype of the Mexican-American as an unskilled worker, uninterested and incapable in politics or education" (Samora & Simon, 1993, p. 107). This situation created feelings of hostility and bitterness among the Mexican-Americans. However, Mexican-Americans, as cheap labor, became a backbone of the economy that emerged in the New Southwest-the backbone of an agricultural empire (p. 117).

Meanwhile, in Mexico farming ownership was concentrated in few wealthy hands, leaving the majority of the rural families without land. The Mexican people lost their lands on both sides of the Rio Grande. The Mexican Civil War created instability and uncertainty driving thousands of Mexicans to cross the

Rio Grande toward the United States. This brought the cheap labor needed for the agriculture and industry in Texas. This new wave of Mexicans was different from the old Mexican-Americans since most of them did not have their roots in Texas and the South-West states. Yet, they shared poverty and discrimination. For many of these Mexicans there were not enough jobs in the southern states which forced big populations to migrate North and be dispersed throughout the country.

During World War I, the economy of war drove many people who used to work in the farms to jobs in the war related industries. The Mexicans filled many of these jobs in farming and also some in industry. However, after the war, during the Great Depression, in a jobless America, the anti-Mexican feelings grew. "During the first four years of the 1930s, well over four hundred thousand Mexicans were repatriated to Mexico. Most of those repatriated Mexican citizens were legal residents of the United States; many were American citizens." (Samora & Simon, 1993, p. 137).

When World War II began, a similar situation to the prior war was created. There was a crucial need for labor in farming. Importing workers from Mexico was a solution. This time an accord was reached between the United States and Mexico, in 1942. It was called the Bracero Agreement; the word bracero in Spanish means hard physical labor on farms; the origin of the word is brazo: arm. This agreement was to provide security in the matters of health, housing, and salary to the Mexicans now citizens and/or legal residents of the United States. However, little attention was paid by the government and the landlords

to ~~the~~ workers' rights. It got to a point that the Mexican government decided to ~~forbid~~ the utilization of the braceros, i.e., imported labor. But, the imperative ~~need~~ for work on the part of Mexicans who lived in poverty in Mexico created a ~~new~~ situation. The legally "imported" braceros were substituted by the ~~mojados~~, i.e., wetbacks, who were people without any rights. Until now, they are ~~poor~~ and unskilled. They are seasonal workers. They became the new Mexican-Americans since they stayed in American territory and developed their own families and networks.

Because of the "illegal" status of many of these immigrants as well as because of their limited economic power, they also lacked political power. Being unrepresented in politics also meant being unrepresented in the making of ~~their~~ ethnic identity as part of the American experience. For example, the Mexican-American voice was not present in the school curriculum either. As ~~stated~~ by Samora and Simon (1993), "The educational history of Mexican Americans in this country has been, unfortunately, one of neglect and ~~misunderstanding~~" (p. 162). There has been no recognition of their culture and language. Schools have attempted to Americanize the children by a curriculum that ~~silenced~~ their Mexican heritage.

Although great advances have been made, there is still much to be done in providing equality to the Mexican-Americans. They are underrepresented in colleges and universities, as judges, in government offices, and positions of power. The percentage of drop-outs or thrown-outs is alarming. "In 1991, the High School Credential rate for Hispanics declined to 52.1 percent....is the

lowest registered since 1972....It also is more than 10 points down from the high mark of 62.9 percent reached in 1985" (Carter and Wilson, 1993, p. 4). At the college level, these authors reported that "Overall, the total Hispanic population ages 18 to 24 had a college participation rate of only 18 percent in 1991..." (p. 7). Chilman (1993) stated that the fastest growing minority population is from Mexican origin. As for employment and income, "Spanish American men and women are more apt than the rest of the population to be in blue-collar and service occupations" (p. 144).

In conclusion, Mexican-Americans share a history of dispossession, inequality, poverty, and discrimination. Although the different immigration waves and the deep roots of many Mexican-Americans can be traced to Native Americans and Mestizos, for most of them, their voices have been silenced and their rights still are in legal disputes. In a sense, being historically identified as a different group in social and ethnic terms also helps understand the need for group cohesion. This is the socio-historical context for the families of the participants in this study.

Family Background

The family background of the participants is composed by their definition of family and the history of their family. Also, the definition of self is included as part of the family background because it is strongly influenced by the family history.

Definition of Family

This type of research aims to explore the participants' meanings and interpretations of their family experience. These definitions describe how the participants portray their families. The following excerpts are the answers to the question of who they think their family is.

Rolando: For me family is the people who I am closest to, which is my mom, my dad, my two oldest brothers and my two youngest sisters, that is what I consider family.

Marina: I have two younger brothers, they are the babies of the house, two older sisters and one younger sister, and we are all really close....Family as far as my parents and brothers and sisters? or family as in everybody? There is a difference. I wish I can say that we are all a big family as in like in my dad's side and my mom's side but there isn't, I know there isn't.

Joey: My dad, my mom, and my seven brothers and sisters, I guess that who I will say my immediate family would be.

Maria: I said my family has five members, I love all my brothers, all my family, I worry about them, but I would say that my family is my sister, which is my mom, J. which is my dad, L. my nephew, and my baby sister, five.

Luis: I consider my family those individuals who are very close to me, or have been very close, and who have had an influence in the way that I behave, in the things that I have learned, like in terms of respect...my parents, my mother, my father, my grandparents in both sides of the family, because I had good communication with both of them, because they live so close to each other, and also my aunt, my mother's youngest sister...she was very close to me in particular because she was my mother's youngest sister and she first, she always wanted a son, so she looked at me as being probably her son, I remember she always come see me, when I was small she threw me my first birthday party, she bought my first pair of cowboy boots...when I was about six years old, she had a son, the son that she always wanted, and then, I think that it was about six or seven years ago, her son got to grow up to be like 11 years old, and he passed away, he

drowned during the summer, in an accident, so she lost her son, it was very hard for her and it was very hard for me, so once again she turned to me, and once again we became very close....My sisters and my little brother. I have learn a lot of things from them, but indirectly, should I said, they haven't sat down and said you are going to learn this, this and that, but just because the way they are, the things they say, how they act with other people, how they behave, with certain people, how the behave at home, the little things that they do, how they eat, no elbows on the table, no talking, those are so many things that I have learn from them, that have made a big different. So my definition of family will be those individuals who have established both relationship with me and have made a big impact, a big influence in who I am today, and that will be my grandparents in both sides of the family, my parents, my aunt, and my siblings.

Vanessa: I have a strong connection with my mom. With my dad, I don't think I do because since we were little kids he never was like a dad that will be with us or talk to us, you know how parents are now they like put the little girls to bed or give them a bed time story, he was never like that, he was very distant from us, he doesn't want to show his feelings and I guess that is why most of us are like that way, because the way he is, I guess we all inherited that part of him, I guess I did because I was always like that with my sisters, I never wanted to talk to them, I didn't want to tell them anything about me, but none of us has ever been close to my dad except my older brothers, he loves the boys, and the girls he is like, ya se hecharon a perder ustedes (you already spoiled yourselves) or something and he doesn't talk to us, I guess that I've been the only one, lately, who really talks to him the most, because I need stuff from him and I need to talk to him, otherwise probably I wouldn't talk to him, none of the sisters have strong relationship with him.

All the participants, except for Luis, define their family as what we know as nuclear family, parents and siblings. This supports the findings of Wilkinson (1993) who stated that "...the most frequent household type among Chicanos is nuclear centered..." (p. 37). Luis broadened that definition by including grandparents and his maternal aunt.

Family History

The following excerpts will describe the family history of each of the participants. They help in the understanding of the present circumstances of the participants by providing a sense of historical and family continuity. Also, they provide a framework to comprehend the reasons and emotions behind the decision of leaving the participants' place of origin. The descriptions provide diversity and similarities among the families. They also give specific names to the history of Mexican and Mexicans-Americans in the southern United States.

The diversity of arrangements of the families is reflected throughout these histories. There is an emphasis on what is commonly known as nuclear family: father, mother, and children. However, some of the fathers do not live daily in the household. In general, there is a high average number of children. Except for Maria's adoptive father who is her white, brother-in-law, all the marriages are ethnically homogenous. The histories of their families begin with their grandparents. Also, it is useful to notice that the description of the families' histories is divided in two: the mother's side and the father's side.

Rolando: ...my grandparents were both from Mexico and they came to Texas and settle in South Texas which is where I live now... my Parents were born there, my dad was born in 1943 and my mom in 1941, my mom in Texas....(Interviewer)Both sets of grandparents came from Mexico? yes, and they lived in a rancho, my mom grew up in a rancho...there they got married, they met and got married, and I was born in 1971....First of all my family we are seven, five children, including my parents are seven all together.

Marina: My daddy was born in Texas and he has been here all his life and my mom is from Mexico and my mom's grandmother lived right next to my dad's house, that is how they met and they got married and end up living in the same town that my father was in the other side of the block and

they have been living there ever since so all these years about 24-25 they have been there. My mom, of course, her parents are from Mexico also, she is the first one, and my grandfather, actually I don't know where he was born, I don't know too much about my dad's side, my dad is a very quiet man and he won't tell us unless we ask him questions and honestly, my dad himself doesn't know too much about his past, so it is hard for me to know about my past because my father, his mother passed away when he was 2, his father didn't raise him, his father gave him to his sister so he was raised by them, he didn't know his father until he was like 18 years old... my grandmother on my dad side, she told me that my grandfather was in W.W.II. he was a marine... My dad's mom, she passed away, and I don't know much about her, my mom's mom passed away when I was two months old and my mom's dad he barely passed away last January, a year ago....I guess we were so many grandchildren, somos muchos, so it was impossible to have a close, close relationship with my grandfather, now I have no grandparents...my dad was the only product of his parents...there is only one sister that I know, I know well because they live right next to us.

Marina presents the other side of her family, her mother's side. She contrasts the closeness in her mother's side with what does not exist in her father's side.

My mom's family, we are all close, we are very united, my mom's sisters and brothers, I know them all, there are seven children, six now because one had passed away, they are all widows, I know their children, we are about 100 and so cousins and my cousins' sons and daughters....I have two younger brothers, they are the babies of the house, two older sisters and one younger sister, and we are all really close, my two older sisters are married....the family where my father was, they treated him really hard because, oh well when my grandfather gave my father away, he also had my aunt the one who lives next to us.... they were treated really bad, at the kitchen table they will eat dinner first and then all the left over are there go and serve yourselves, in a way they raised themselves and did everything on their own because they were not love or care for the way their cousins were....I am so intrigued about psychology and all that, because my dad, they had to put him under medication and everything....I think about it, my father is addicted to those drugs, I don't know how I am going to do it but I am going to help my father to take him out of those drugs.

Joey: My grandparents are from a little ranch...around the border, that is where my grandparents are from, both sides. My parents met in my mom's ranchito, my mom was born there and she was raised there, and my father

was from a nearby ranchito, they grew up and they got married, I really don't know the whole situation what happen, but I know that something happened, something complicated happened, they never told us. So my mom and my dad came over here, they didn't have an education or anything....most of the relatives in my mom's side of the family, I think just about everyone lives in Mexico except for one nephew that lives in Florida....My father's family, actually, none of them have ever come over here except from one of his sisters who lives in Miguel Aleman, close to the border.

Maria: My family background goes back to Mexico, because I was born in Mexico and I was raise in Mexico until I was 12 years old. My grandma, according to my mom...my sisters told me that part of my grandma's family was from Spain, she has blue eyes, and I asked why she has blue eyes?, I think that my father's side is Aztec, which is Indian. Then my mom and dad got married, I think that it was 1985, we used to be very poor and my father never took care of the family, my mom had 13 kids, a lot of kids, and she had to raise them by herself....I am the only one who is not married, When my mom found out that she was sick, she came, my sister who was married already, she was diagnosed with cancer, and this was like 1984, so after that, my sister decided to bring my mom up here to Texas for better medical attention.

At this point, Maria's life makes a radical change. Her mother will die soon and her oldest sister and her husband become her parents.

...so my sister decided that she was going to get us, she was going to go to Mexico and get me to come over here to Texas, I didn't want to come because I had all my family back there, not my family but my friends, my grandparents had died by that time, like in 1983, my grandpa died in 1983, my grandma died a year later, and my mom died a year later. So what my sister did is since my mom didn't want us to go with my dad because he had never taken responsibility, he wouldn't drink anymore, but he used to drink and beat her up, and my mom didn't want me and my nephew, cause I grew up with one of my nephews cause one of my sisters was raped when she was 13, he grew up with me as my brother...and she wanted my older sister to adopt or take care of us...so she adopted me and my brother, I think that it was 1987, since then, I have been here living here with my sister . I am the youngest, we are eight guys and five girls. They are all here in the United States, all over the place...We (Maria and her brother) have been very lucky, because my brother in law, he is white, and he has protected us, he has given us everything, he is very loving, because they could not have kids

for 13 years, they have given us everything that we need, they never spoil us, actually my brother in law spoils my brother, my sister, she is very strict, she is very conservative and she expects a lot from me. In 1989 they really wanted a baby, they decided that they were going to adopt anyway...she is going to be four in July....My father, I call him my father because he has done a lot for us, I am not ashamed that I don't love my dad, he has done a lot of things that have hurt me, personal things, to me and my sisters....his mom is very loving.

Luis: The parents of my father...were both born near Monterrey, Mexico, they both grew up in Mexico...I know my grandfather had a previous marriage with another women, and had two sons, and he married my grandmother and they were married in a small ranch near Monterrey is where their family was born, it was my father and two daughters, they were three, and they were born in the rancho and they grew up there basically until they were about sixteen, seventeen year old, my grandfather was a farmer, he knew the land very well, he used to grow so many crops, specially corn, wheat, and onions, he used to grow a lot of onions, and he had a small produce stand next to his home where he had his separate little business, where he will sell produce, when the season will come around. On my grandmother's side, they also had lot of land they owned near Monterrey, Mexico, they said that he was more like a business man, he never went to school, he didn't have any type of education, but he was a very, very smart man, and this is my great grand father, he had a small store where he sold, all kind of, like candies, household items, he sold produce, a small little minimarket should I said. I got to meet him, before he died, I was about twelve year old when he died, I remember him because he used to impress me with his math, he used to be very good at math, and he can count, divide, multiply of the top his head, very, very quickly, he was just amazing.

For Luis, the proximity to Mexico is crucial. He is able to maintain close connections with his family on the other side of the border.

...I will said that 90% of my family lives in Mexico...near Matamorros, Reynosa, and some live in Monterrey, in small ranchos like I mentioned, so I am very familiar with them because I loved to go to Mexico, and I loved to visit them. I visit them, before...when I was smaller, I used to go to spend summers with my family and relatives back home, because they have lot of my cousins we are the same age....On my mom's side of the family, her parents are originally from a small ranch near Monterrey, and my grandfather and grandmother, they grew up in that town, they met and they

married there in el rancho, my mom was also born there...my grandparents had to move out of there they moved to South Texas, with the same purpose, of trying to look for a better future for their family, there are more opportunities for work in trying to establish themselves. They came over to the U.S., if I am not mistaken, it was 1954, and they started themselves in a little town in South Texas....My parents, they met and got married in Texas, where we still live, my parent still live there...that was three of us, in 1981 the fourth and last was born.

Vanessa: My grandparents, I never really got to know them, just my granddad I never got to know him, just my grandmothers, I got to know them, one already died and we have one alive, and she still in Reinos, they are the only part of the family here. I have like two families that are uncles and aunts in different sides, I have a family on dad's side and a family on my mom's side, they live where we live, that is the place where we live, and the other family, lives an hour away from where we live. One from each side. Well, total we are eleven, somos seis mujeres y cinco hombres (we are six women and five men). I am the seventh...when my parents got married they started migrating to Texas....The oldest, my brother, he is married...he already has a child, my second brother he is probably getting married this October, then my oldest sister, the one that got business administration, she is not married....The one after her, she was married, she is now divorced and she has a child.... My other sister after that, she is married, she has an old child, my other brother is married too....I get to see my grandmother...we hardly get to see her, I haven't seen her like in two years, last year she gave us a scare, we thought she was going to die, she is probably in her late sixties, and she lives alone in her little house and she doesn't want to move, she is really terca (stubborn).

There are numerous similarities among these families' backgrounds.

Probably, the strongest recurrent theme is the migrant family. The participants' parents are either the first or second generation in the present United States.

All of them came from what we know as Mexico. All the participants were born in south Texas but one, Vanessa. The majority still have family in Mexico. The migration theme returns even when they had established themselves in Texas.

This is due to the fact of the seasonal work mostly in agriculture. Even some of

the participants themselves had worked in the fields or they had accompanied their parents.

Rolando: ...I always heard about Michigan because my dad used to migrate up here to work in the strawberry fields.

Marina: They were taken out off school, they had to migrate, they had to work in the field.

Joey: They met, they really travel a lot, you can see how they travel a lot because there is eight children and none of us was born in the same city. They hated the idea of having, putting us to work in the field, which is very popular in South Texas in the valley, go work in the la labor, go work up north, which is Michigan, one summer vacation we did try, we went north texas, which is a lot of cotton and onion and we worked there for a long time, he was never comfortable with the idea of taking us out of school to work, he has always wanted us to finish school....my grandmother got her paper work fixed over so she came also, and then little by little more of his family came over, more of my dad's sisters and brothers came over, actually, is more like sisters.

Maria: So all my sisters, when they grew up and stuff, they all came to the United State and work as maids in houses, and one of my sisters got married, actually all my sisters got married....they (classmates) would tell me things like oh you mojada, you go back, you don't know english, cause you are darker, you don't belong here, go back to Mexico, they were chicanos, hispanics.

Luis: My father and two of his sisters with their parent they came over to the United States in 1957, they crossed over, across the Rio Grande river, into south Texas hoping to reestablish themselves in the United States, my grandfather and my grandmother were thinking more on their children, and hoping to establish a better future for them, so they came to the U.S. and the only work that they could find was short term labor work in factories, that didn't hold up, it was not enough for them, so they had to migrate into different states, they started migrating to Ohio, into Michigan, to work in the cherries, to work in beets, green peppers, cucumbers, all that type of labor, field labor, they used to be members of crews, and labor workers unions, and so forth. After a few years they decided to travel to California instead, to work in the vineyards, in grapes, there, my grandparents got to be, they were members of , they were part of the bracero movement that was headed by Cesar Chavez, in California, my grandparents were part of his unions, for few years, during those years this is when my father was

growing up, but they establish themselves in South Texas, that is where they had their permanent home, they were travel back and forth...he and his sister decided to leave school because they couldn't stay in school for one whole academic year they had to travel so much back and forth to Ohio, and back and forth to California every year to work. like the other side of the family, they will migrate into different states, and they migrate so much, they migrate to Illinois, Indiana, they also got to go to California for few years, they worked in West Texas, in West Texas my mother and her family they got to work there for so many years in the Cotton.... They will work there for so many months out of the year at that point, and they will come back to South Texas, for few months and they will once again leave at that time my father decided that we had to start migrating as well, we were having a very hard time in the Valley in South Texas, financially...so my father decided to take us during summer, we started to migrating to west Texas to work in the cantaloupe and watermelon, and that is when I started to work in field at that time. My family went through so many years, so many summers, from 1980 all the away up to 1990, that we work in the field....we would come back late, like we would come back in the middle or late September, and the school would start late August, sometimes we had to leave early, as well, that is very typical of a migrant family, we didn't miss too much but it was hard.

Vanessa: My parents came from Mexico, and they were the first ones out of the whole family that, we still have family in Mexico...we were all born in Mexico, and then my parents brought us all here, legally!, so we are here as legal residents.

Another significant theme is limited education. Most of the parents did not finish elementary school. This is with the exception of Maria's father and Luis' mother who earned their G.E.D. Nonetheless, the stress on educational achievements for the participants' generation is evident. All of the participants are the first family members to leave Texas in pursuit of an education. All the children of school age attend school and some of the brothers and sisters have gone to vocational education or local universities. This is important to comment because there is a myth about the Latino population "that is we live in a poverty

stricken community, we don't care about our living conditions and that we don't care about education' (Teleconference, 1993, p. 7). Education is emphasized as a means for social and economical mobility. All the participants' parents had sacrificed and traded their education for work in the belief that they can give to their children what they did not have.

Rolando: My mom I believe she finished only six grade education and my dad tenth grade...they don't have the GED or anything so it is kind like tough, they are wonderful parents! they teach good value, morals, they are supportive....how come you (parents) never finish high school?, they say at the time the primary concern for their family was getting money, they grew up in farms, en el rancho...they were put out to work instead of going to school, they never finish high school even though they are intelligent people, like my dad and my mom. Sometimes I wonder if they would have gotten to school and gotten educated what kind of people they will be in society right now....I have two older brothers, one already graduated from college he is a special education teacher and my oldest brother, he went into the army first for four year and then decided he needed a education, college education so right now he is a senior and he is majoring in elementary education...my younger sister, well I am in the middle, there is two older brothers and two younger sisters, the youngest sister, she is nineteen years old, she is right now in the local university ...she is majoring in elementary education, and the youngest sister she is in high school she is going to be a senior next year, and she is motivated, she is for sure thinking about going to college because I have stressed to her that it is important and all that...she wants to come up here, but I don't know if she can handle being away from home, but I'll leave it up to her, and basically we are the first generation going to college me and my brothers, my sisters....los padres, nosotros somos la primera generacion para ir al colegio, ellos trabajan duro, ellos me dicen que me tratan de dar todo lo posible que puedan para mejorar, para vivir una vida que ellos no vivieron, porque ellos trabajaban en las labores, en el solazo y era una vida, lo que dicen ellos, yo trabaje tres veces en las labores, esta duro, esta caliente, estan las moscas, ay no, que vida (parents, we are the first generation to go to college, they work hard, they tell me that they try to give me everything to better myself, to live a life that they could not live, because they worked in the field under extreme hot conditions, I worked three times in the fields, it is hot, it is hard, the flies, oh no, that is not life).

Marina: I am the first one to leave the state and I am also the first one to

go college, in all our cousins and everything, there are four that have gone to college and the four of us are women, oh I forgot, well we are five, still five out of all of us, so many of us, many are still young but all the ones who could have gone they didn't go, my two sisters didn't go, I still don't know why but they didn't go. One didn't finish, they go to Texas university, my parents look up to me and everything because I am up here, I am the only one that is out...My father's highest grade is 6th grade, and I told my dad, I asked him, dad why you didn't continue school? they wouldn't let me, his family wouldn't let him, they took him out to work in the fields.... My mom's education, tambien, I would say around 6th grade, because same reasons, she had to work.

Joey: My father I think that he has a third grade education and my mom like a sixth grade education. My father's family, they had, they worked , they had a lot of animals and that kind of stuff, and my grandfather on my mom's side was a musician....My older brother, he just graduated Saturday from the University of Texas, San Antonio, with an engineering degree...and then the sister after me, she is a freshman in the University of Michigan, she in the engineering program...I wouldn't say they are fluent in English, they both speak Spanish, they understand English but they are not fluent, you can tell right away when they are trying to speak English....he (brother) is an Architecture, associate degree and my other sister graduated in the top ten in her high school in 85 she went on to college, she is now a teacher, she is working in her Master now, and my next sister who graduated in 87, she is also a teacher and she is also working in her Master, and then is me, I graduated in 90, I am in college, and my other sister graduated in 92 she has completed her first year in U. of M. and my other sister is a freshman in high school, the other one is in ninth grade and my little brother is in fourth grade....my younger sister, the one that is in U. of M. I think she graduated 6 or 7 in her class.

Maria: ...all my sisters got married, I am the only one who is not married, I am the only one who is pursuing an education, because all of them are already married and have kids.

Luis: ...my father only went up to sixth grade of education, he decided, he and his sister decided to leave school because they couldn't stay in school for one whole academic year....From my mom's side of the family, out of five children, only three of them graduated from high school. One of them who is my mother, she got her G.E.D. she went back to high school and finished her GED after few years, the two youngest of her siblings, they did graduate from high school, but that was it, they didn't go any farther than that....My little brother he is now 11 years old and he is out on his own, and my little sister, she is 15, and she is in high school, so they are all pretty

much grown up, my other sister, she is now a student in U. of M., she is now there and she is a freshman student, she is the type of person who is kind of quiet but very ambitious, you can tell by her also choosing at the University of Michigan which is a totally different story from a smaller school, but I am very proud of her.

Vanessa: Everybody is living in Texas, but I've been the second one to go to college, second women, well, my other sisters they went to a voc. tech. school, and she quit, she didn't last about a semester when she quit, and my brother went to the army so he got his schooling paid, he never really went to a college he also went to a voc. tech., he finished. They have full time jobs. My little sister after me, she is pregnant, she was going to school, to college but she got pregnant, so she is not going to go anymore, I guess, and everybody else is still in High school and Junior high, they all have plan to go to college and I hope they fulfill it.... My parents, they probably made to Junior High, we really don't call it Junior High, primary or secondary, they really don't have a lot of school..... my oldest sister, the one who did go to college....She finished college, she got her bachelor in business administration, she was working in a bank but then she quit because she started her own company....I guess she has motivated me a lot to go into business.

The parents' educational level and the fact that these families have a past of frequent moves influenced in the type of job they have access to. They mainly work in blue-collar and service jobs. Not all the fathers are the sole breadwinner of the family. Most mother work.

Rolando: My mom she is a sitter, right now her occupation is to taking care of old people and my dad works as an agricultural appraise for the state of Texas.

Marina: He (father) is not working at all, he cannot have a steady job because of the drugs, sometimes he is too hyper or too down that he cannot go to work, he has different moods, sometimes he goes to his brother, one of the cousins that he grew up with, he goes and works with them in the fields, he owns this big produce company and sometimes they take my dad with them, when he is feeling okay....she sews dresses in a factory, they sell jackets and a couple other stuff, she has worked there for a long time, so my mom has had to work for the family and bring, my mom's is the only income in the family, no disability, they say that he is not disable, they really

condescend us, they cannot really understand us, you live in my home and you know, of course, I would be able to say that my father is disable.

Joey: My dad has always been really good in construction, mechanics and construction, he knows and he works with it, my mom she doesn't work, When we were in the valley and my dad couldn't find a job, because the valley is mostly education or agriculture, there is no growth in the valley, where in Houston, a city, there is always, always, construction, so he went back to Houston, he has been working ever since then, the very first few years, he would just go home during the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, my mom has always gone to visit, it is seven hours north to us, so that is the situation with work, and as this day he still lives in Houston. My mom was working, but she is not now, she was working in a Mexican restaurant, I really wouldn't feel comfortable her staying at work, she is already old, not old but older.

Maria: She (mother) works at Levi's, yo ya estoy aqui (I am now here), but that is not what I want for you, she goes, I want something you can be happy....He works with my grandpa, they own, they plant grapefruit, he gets paid not good but, if that doesn't work, because he has back problems, they pay him anyway, he knows what's going on, he is in charge of everything, he knows all the workers, plus he is the only one who knows Spanish, my grandpa doesn't know Spanish. He works in the computer now....In my senior year, I started working in a bakery, then is when I started helping my mom, she didn't want my money, she said you use it for whatever, para ayuda, sometimes she wouldn't have any money so I'll put \$20 in her purse and she'll go how did this money get here?, no, I put in there, I borrowed ten from you here is your ten dollars or whatever, but she won't take my money, still she doesn't take my money, since my senior year I don't depend on her for like clothing, besides I buy for my sister.

Luis: He (father) is a truck driver, he drives a huge semi, 18 wheels truck, huge, big, big, he has done that ever since, a little before I was born, he loves to do that, so when my parents met and married, that was my father's profession, my mother worked, she got to work in a sewing factory, where she lives, that was establish there....my father travels, my mother has taken now the role like a state social worker, she has been working these past few years with the state and the juvenile department, where she tries to provide counseling and she tries to encourage other students who have dropped out of high school, or somehow have a bad criminal record, not criminal record but some kind of record with the state, I mean with the county, with the city, she tries to encourage the students and work with the families to help the students to go back to school, she loves it.

Vanessa: My dad used to come to Houston working here, he will work in Houston and areas like that because he was a carpenter, so he worked in construction, and he was able to bring us all to the U.S. and then he got a stable job in construction, my mom is just a housework, just (laugh).

Definition of Self

The following quotes describe the ethnic self-definition of the participants.

They were asked how they call themselves in terms of group labeling such as Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Mexican, Mexican-Americans, and Americans.

The influence of the historical and family background is evident. Martinez

(1993) defined the ethnic groups as follows:

Hispanic group identifiers such as *Chicano*, *Mexican American*, and *Latino* are sometimes used interchangeably; however, the terms have different connotations for individuals who identify themselves as such. *Latino* refers to Latin American origin - that is, to Central or South America - as well as to Hispanic North Americans. *Spanish*, *Spanish American*, and *Hispanic* refer either to persons who immigrated to the United States from Spain or to descendants of Hispanic or Indo-Hispanic ancestors who resided in today's Southwest when it was under Spanish and later Mexican rule. The terms *Chicanos*, *Mexican*, and *Mexican American* are used interchangeably ...Chicano(s)...recognize and take pride in their racial mixture....is... a political identifier....Mexican Americans are making a bicultural statementMexicans are making a statement about their ethnic loyalty or preference....Hispanic is...applied...by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (p. 184-185).

Another important consideration in the naming is the specific context. These circumstances could be political meetings, social gathering, and university events. The participants tend to respond according to the audience.

Rolando: I am from South Texas... how would I define myself of what I am I would say I am a Mexican American, Chicano, Hispanic, Latino...right

now, back then I didn't really think much of it, I am Hispanic looking, I didn't really have to identify myself because it never came to my conscious where I live is mainly you know your people so why do you need to identify yourself, I was, It never was in my conscious, but when I came up here after several semester of being here and getting accustomed to the new life style, I identify myself as a Latino, Chicano, Mexican-American, that is how I identify myself.

Marina: Mexican, most times I would say Mexican, but there are some people that I guess wouldn't know, if you say you are Mexican you should be from Mexico, but I don't care, I don't care what they think, that is who I am and I am proud of it, some cousins of my, they will never say Mexican, they will say I am Mexican-American, they make sure you heard American, hey you are Mexican, you cannot deny it, they see being label as Mexican something bad, something cheap, something low quality, again, I guess because of being up here, I found more about myself and who I am by being up here at school and by taking classes, by seeing how others react to me and how they see me, and I go back home and I am proud, I am very proud to be Mexican, the other people, I feel so sorry for them, you can never change who you are, and if you are not happy with who you are, I just feel so sorry because you are not going to be able to change it, it's with you forever and if you are not happy with it you are not going to be happy with yourself.

Joey: I would choose Mexican-American, some of the reason why we left Houston, at that time in Houston if you were a Chicano, that 's why I couldn't never tell my dad that I am a Chicano because that has a bad name from where we grew up, people don't understand that, for instance, when we were growing up, you were a mojado, which is a wetback, we have problems with that, a bunch of people were joke, they thought that being a Chicano, so if I would tell my dad that will sound stupid, I am more like a Mexican-American, I wouldn't think myself a latino or Hispanic, it was funny because we've seen movies where, it wasn't a movie it was a comedian who was saying you are living in Mexico and you are a Mexicano, you cross over to the U.S. and you are Hispanic, and latino is the same thing, I wouldn't use those name, I am more a Mexican-American than anything else, and Chicano I think that is more of a movement, there was an era in the 60s, like my girlfriend's parents, he was in the Chicano movement in the 60s, so that was more of a movement, not really.

Maria: I would say Latina, I would say Mexican, Mexicana, because of the fact that I was born in Mexico, but that is not my definition, I don't think because, say Mexicana, and is always going to be in my heart but it's so

behind, but I don't forget where I am from, or my heritage, on the contrary, I will teach it to my kids, and teach it to everybody, and tell everybody that I run into and ask me what are you? I am Mexicana I consider myself Latina, I say both, I am Mexicana-Latina, because my definition of latino is like any country that speaks Spanish.

Luis: It depends on the situation, it depends with who I'm with and where I am at, I like to say that for example, if I am in a political surround or situation where I have to be conscious of which term I am going to use, at this point I'll use Latino, but if it was totally up to me, ignoring any personal judgment, any political type of situation, I would called myself Mexican, I am not a Mexican citizen, I was born in the U.S., I am a U.S. citizen, I have adapted a lot of the American type of society's ways of living, norms, and values, and stuff like that, but the way that I am now, has had a big influence based upon what I have learn from my family who are all Mexican, my siblings and myself are the only U.S. citizens, all the rest of my family was born in Mexico, I have spend so much time in Mexico, I've learn so much from my people, from my family, I would like to identify myself as Mexican because that is what I have adopted the most, forgetting in terms of what I was born, just because of what I've learn so much from my family, I don't know, U.S. citizen I would be, but in terms of my identity.

Luis describes the dual identity. He is not only an American, and he is not only a Mexican.

The other term, that I've learn, that I like to use is Pocho, the term Pocho, that is another term that I can sort of relate to, because at certain point I kind of cut in between, I am not a Mexican citizen, I wasn't raised in Mexico, I was born in the U.S., I am a U.S. citizen, but I am not a gringo, I am not an americano, I am kind of just cut in between. Pocho is a term that have been used in my family, and among the Mexican-American people, that is used pretty frequently, when I got to read this book "Pocho", that is when I think that I learn to realize the real definition of that term pocho, and identify myself with the individual who is described in the book as Pocho, as being an individual who is cut in the middle, he is like the middle-man minority, who cannot identify completely with Mexican, his Mexican family, because of the conservatism and the different values by his family, and how they are so relying in religion and Catholicism , and he cannot identify with the American society because is so different, the contrast, so he is kind of between, so that is sort of the way I feel sometimes.

Vanessa: I guess that I will be a Mexican-American, because I was born in Mexico, and while I just was born there and I've live here all my life,

why we can just be an American? I live in America, but mostly I will say Latina, Mexicana-Latina, because I've got more culture of my parents' background than I do about American, because I don't really know anything about whites and their culture, it's really like we lived next to it but I never really got it and I didn't want to be around I just wanted to be around my culture.

All of the participants acknowledged a high degree of Mexican influence. This is due to a series of contributing factors. Chilman (1993) presented the results of recent research on Mexican-American households. She stated that "There was a generally strong feeling of ethnic identity, with many of the younger members of the population showing a particularly enthusiastic movement in this direction" (p. 147). All the participants showed pride in their Mexican heritage. They also acknowledged their biculturalism. As translated by Rouse (1991) from Gomez-Peña,

Today, eight years after my departure, when they ask me for my nationality or ethnic identity, I cannot answer with a single word, for my identity now possesses multiple repertoires: I am Mexican but I am also Chicano and Latin American (p. 8).

Another factor is their place of origin. The participants come from towns in the south part of Texas, nearby the border. "As in the case of other immigrant groups, those who live near the borders of their "mother" country are less likely to acculturate readily than those who live far from their native land" (Chilman, 1993, p. 151). Finally, these individuals are defined by themselves and by the college community as being of Mexican origin.

As stated by McAdoo (1993), "Our sense of uniqueness, of being rooted in one space to one group, comes from our membership in families" (p. 3). As we

saw in the self-definitions, ethnicity cannot be separated from who we are as well as who our families are. The family is the primary context for human development. As in this case, "Many of the attributes of ethnic culture are mediated through the family" (McAdoo, 1993, p. 3).

Discrimination

I have decided to include discrimination in this chapter because I found that it has shaped the participants' ethnic identity. Discrimination is an external source of union or disintegration. Racism is a form of discrimination. It can be done in a subtle or more overt way. It is based on stereotypes, prejudice, and ignorance. The following excerpts are the more clear statements made by the participants about the way they feel and see their new reality.

Rolando: A lot of people, I feel a lot of my friend, they are in the same situation I was, listening to Spanish music was bad, speaking Spanish was bad...(people outside the culture) they degrade you they put you down cause you do that but when I got there exposed to outside South Texas, you know, upper in the United States, I realized that a lot of things are different from what I was used to when I was growing out there in South Texas, is a different life style and is totally different (laugh)....our first semester here as we would walked to our class, or walk outside, people would look at us, and I don't know, I am still curious to find out why they looked at us, they would stare at us and I am okay, why? my roommates and I we will talk, do you know there are people staring at us? I wanted to find out why they stare at us. (researcher) Did it make you feel bad? (laugh, reluctant to answer), in a little way, yes, you kind, like what, do they hate us or something, why they are staring at us? No, that's the feeling we get you know, these people are staring at us cause they don't like us, the way we look, that is the impression we have, that's the impression we got, it was like, it look like what are you doing here?, you know, something like. There were instances that people, you heard talking behind your back, those Mexican down the hall..., you kind of feel that they are talking about you...over all, I say we got along with

people pretty well, like people, Caucasian, they are interested in our culture, they want to know Spanish, would you teach us some Spanish? As it is always, in all places you encounter people that don't like you and people that likes you, so is basically the same in here.

Rolando describes how discrimination makes the Mexican-American group more cohesive. Also, he explains the importance of being able to identify people from their same language background.

We stuck as a group, we identify ourselves as Latinos, Chicanos. We got involved in what was called at that time The Hispanic Student Association we got involved in that, our first year we got involved in a lot of interesting stuff.... When we see a latino or hear someone speaking Spanish we will stop and make friends with them and talk, someone from your own culture, someone you will stop and hey! how are you doing, como estas? Empiezas a hablar en español (you start to talk in Spanish), so it felt kind like good to see someone else of you, of your people, it felt good to see someone else....So, we get a negative stigmatism about hispanic, dark skin, they are usually into drugs...so back there you don't really think about, but when you are up here, like in the airport, when we were flying out, out of no reason, we were exciting to go home, the agent, the law enforcement agent, they stopped us, they searched us, they made a big scene, and I was hurt inside, a lot of people seeing us, they thought we were the criminals, they gave us a hard time, that was the first time it happened to me, but Joey, my roommate it's the second time, the first time he told I said it's their job they got to do it, but once it happened to me I notice, I realized, it made, the enormous impact it has, are they speculating oh, ahi van unos Mejicanos (there go some Mexicans), let's search them, out of the whole people that were there they only searched us, in Detroit City, to Joey happened in Detroit Metro, the procedure they do, to ask for information, it's not right, it really left a negative impact on me, made us feel like we are drug dealers, the media portrays us as being drug dealers, like in commercial, they put us low, I am not the only one who sees it that way, my friends see it that way, and even Joey's dad, he, when we were coming up, Sunday morning, they dropped us off at the airport, and we were watching the T.V. and he said, mira (look), he said it in Spanish, he said that they portray us as being low, the only white people, they only put white people in good commercials and they only include us in bad commercials, and that's why people think like oh man. When I used to be at home, I've never thought of being different, I thought everybody is the same, it was just my environment, the little, once I came over here, I realized that God I am a minority, and I am discriminated, and it does affects me.

Marina: I think it will be good for me, for me to get out and experience, like here we are the same kind of people, as much as I hated it but I had many stereotypes, because I was down there, I wasn't expose, once you are expose and you learn, I was down there in my own little Mexican world, with Mexican families all around me, Mexican friends, Mexican everything down there, I came up here and it was totally different....In my English class that I had last year, I have an accent and everything, some students, I guess they didn't think I was good in English, and I got an A+, you got an A+!? why are you assuming that about me, just because I am not from here and just because I have an accent and because I speak another language that you don't speak, well I guess, and I am like sorry but don't ever underestimate someone, I think that it is probably the opposite, they know two languages, they know more than you do, they are more educated than you are, I mean in that sense, it is not fair.

Joey: I think that in south Texas where we are the majority being Mexicans I can see the differences that color skin plays. The first time it was during Thanksgiving, I went to drop off some friends at the airport in the Detroit Metro and we've being followed by the drug enforcement agents, administration, which are a bunch of idiots, they were the typical, tall, dumb, asking stupid questions, they were both whites, they are so full of bullshit, I got down to and asked them if we were blond blue eyes if they would have stopped us, they said, they gave me a bunch of stuff, screw them, I got home later that evening and Rolando was study, and I told him what are you doing I am studying, oh yes but society tell us what we are made of you don't supposed to be study, the drug enforcement administration tells us that we suppose to be drug dealers, why you are going study, he didn't understand what happened, so then, three weeks ago, when we flew out of here out of Detroit City this time, we got pulled over again by the drug enforcement administration, and the same thing, and now Rolando understand what it was, but, before then, I've never experienced something like, any racial things, people would say well, color of skin doesn't make a difference, and I can see now that it does, but people in the valley wouldn't see that they can see that because we are all Mexican, we are the majority down there, and I think that it is very sad from the government side....I already told you that in South Texas we are limited as far as education, we don't have a law school, we don't have a medical school, we just barely getting....When I am up here, I came to learn that a lot of this stuff was done because we are all Mexican down there. The governor at the time, one time he said that, one of the old governor, his name was Williams, I forgot what his name was, but he said yea, yea, down there, to them, we'll just send them to technical school, like the one my brother graduated from, why bother.

Maria: Overall we are very lucky to be a majority here in Texas because we get or feel more comfortable...It doesn't matter to me but other people do care.

Us is like a rainbow composed
of many different colors (ethnic backgrounds)
and just like colors blend in together
we should all join hands and enjoy
the beauty of life. (Poem, 3/9/93)

Luis: I didn't receive any minority scholarship, they were all academic scholarships, part of it was need based financial aid but it's federal money, and the rest is scholarship for academic, I want to say this because there is a whole lot of people here in the campus have said well you Mexican-American, Latinos, you got minority money from the government, and just because you are minority you get so much help, and they are mad, and that is not true, money that we have we work for it, it's academics, it's not because oh, you are Mexican you get two thousand buck, it doesn't work that way.... I will start by saying that I went through a cultural shock when I first got here, coming from a community that is was a 100%, practically 100% Mexican-American, into a community here were 12% is minority, and I said 12% minority, out of that 12%, there is only about 1 1/2% Latinos, there is approximately 9 to 10% African-American, I have never been around so many black people in my life, in a way was scared because I've never been in any place like this, I've never been in a place that is so many white people, and if I did, like I travel to Houston, I travel to Dallas, I travel to El Paso with my father, I was always with my father and I was always around people who are the same ethnic background, so I never saw the difference, I saw the differences from far away, but I always thought, you know, that's them, this is myself, and I am over here away from them, when I finally lived among them, that was a totally different story, I found it very difficult to adjust, it was a long process, but it was a successful process.

There are common themes throughout these descriptions. The participants present a new reality. By them moving from their towns in South Texas, they entered a new social context. They talk about living in a predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American community in contrast to a more diverse population. They changed from being a majority to being in the minority. They

encountered barriers due to their new status. They faced discrimination, racism, and hatred.

They were singled out as a group based on prejudices. Skin color, physical appearance, accent, language, are some of the stereotypes. Assumptions, such as low class citizens, low achievers, low performers, drug dealers/users, and recipients of government money, are based on these stereotypes. Also, they witnessed silent rejections not because of who they are as persons, but because of their membership in an ethnic group. A more overt rejection was the disrespectful behavior toward their culture, e.g. music and language. Some of the mechanisms used to counteract these rejections are the creation of support groups, immediate identification with Spanish-speaking people, and compensation. The latter is especially evident when Marina said that she believes that a person who speaks two languages is more intelligent. A more subtle way is their pride in their culture and strong identification with their Mexican heritage. Also, these encounters with discrimination accentuate the ties with the family and the community at the place of origin.

Context of Origin

Following, there are some of the participants' descriptions of their place of origin and their current place. These narratives present the perspective of the participants about the differences and similarities between the two places. This will help in the understanding of their behaviors, feelings, and meanings. The place of origin is defined as the place where they live when they are not at the

university. This is the place where their nuclear family lives. It is part of their realities. It has also influenced their cultural identity.

The six participants are coming from the same area. Since they are describing one common place, I accumulated their descriptions and used different things from each person. The purpose was to complement each other rather than repeat the same observation.

(Luis) The community...has a population of about 3000 people. It is located approximately 16 miles north of the U.S.A.-Mexico border. The larger area that is made up of four counties is known as the "Rio Grande Valley"The land is completely flat!....The Rio Grande Valley survives with two things:It has a rich agriculture. (Rolando) a lot of fields, a lot of corn fields, a lot of tomato fields. (Luis) The Valley's second main support is its import. Mexico imports so much produce virtually all year round. The weather here in the Valley is so different from that of the midwest. It is said that here in the Valley there are only two seasons, one Summer and two a short winter. (Marina) it is hot and humid. (Joey) everyone has to use air condition in their houses and cars. (Marina) Deciduous forest: mesquite, palms. (Luis) In terms of the housing and buildings, there is a balance of both brick and wood houses. (Marina) Mainly average small homes, three bedrooms, one living room, one bath. (Joey) I think we have one that maybe has 40 floors I guess, I don't know. (Luis) There is a low income level in this community. A good 30% to 45% of the people in this small city are migrants. Families pack up during the months of May and June to the northern states, where they work in the fields. (Rolando) The people that are considered rich, rich to the standard down there, people, families that make over \$20,000, easily they make \$25,000...those families are like teachers in the school system there, the city is poor...it is the poorest school district in the state of Texas....and it is rare that you'll see a nice house, you see nice houses, compare to the standards up here. (Luis) I would say 97% of the population is of Mexican descent....Almost everyone knows each other in this small city. (Marina) People are very simple and personal. (Maria) ...about 6% white and about two or three families are black, we hardly see a black person. (Luis) The language! Now this is a characteristic in itself. Many have said that our language is so wrong and incorrect. This language I speak of is a mixture of Spanish and English. We call it "Tex-Mex" or "Spanglish"...because we are bilingual, it is easy for

us to mix both languages at once because we know people will understand!...I believe this Spanglish we speak here is as correct as the best English the President of Harvard University can speak....Overall, I see this community living and enjoying life at a slower pace than those in the midwest....Mexico has a big influence on our lives, culture, and language, and this modern American (U.S.) society also makes a major impact on our lives.

Throughout this chapter it is possible to see the historical origins of the families. The family's history gives a framework to the understanding of the ethnic definition of the participants. Discrimination is brought into the context as an external source that influenced the informants' identity as Mexican-American. The next chapter explores the meaning the participants give to the concept of family unity and how it plays in their families. An analysis of artifacts brought by the informants is made to explore the meaning of objects as extensions of the presence of the family.

CHAPTER IV

FAMILY UNITY

We, as human beings, develop through relationships. In our society, in our world, it is impossible to exist in complete isolation. We need to be connected. Usually, the strongest relationships are the ones taking place within the family. Family unity is what connects us with our past and sets the stage for our future. It gives us a sense of continuity and belonging. In the case of the Latino family, "...the family continues to be the most important resource for coping with life's stresses, regardless of length of time in the United States, social class, religious preference, or geographical area of residence" (Sotomayor, 1991, p. xiv).

The importance of the family unity and interdependence is a crucial part of the Latino culture. For example, Shorris (1992) stated that "The Mexican sense of *family* was widely known to Anglo as well as Mexican-American bosses who used the desire to provide for one's family as a means of disciplining employees" (p.46).

In the traditional Latino family, the rules follow rural traditions; that is, children are considered an asset, adding to the family's ability to plant and harvest crops or to bring in money. Each person understands himself and his role in terms of the family - the responsibility of the individual is to contribute to the group. Adjustment to urban ways, in which the individual exists for himself and the family is responsible for the individual, the parent for the child is difficult. The notion of a mother scrubbing floors to send a child to college makes sense in the urban, individualistic world. In the rural, familial world, it makes sense for the child to scrub floors to help the mother (Shorris, 1992, p. 218).

This quote presents a case in which Latino families find themselves. To blend the traditional Latino beliefs and ways of living with the modern western Anglo society poses a difficult task for all the generations involved. Following are the participants' definitions of family unity and how this concept operates in their families.

Participants' Family Unity

Rolando: We (parents) just wanted you to know that if you don't like it over there, you can tell us, you can come back, you are free we love you, you know....my father's sister, the only time I would see her is when she would go to my grandma's house and like in Christmas we will see each, all my relatives will come down from up north and we see each other in my grandma's place, Texas there, where I live, in the city I live. My other relatives here in Michigan, my dad says that I have a lot of relatives second cousins, first cousins, but I don't know them, so that is why I cannot visit them, my dad knows them, but I don't know them. I would like to meet them, I would like to know them, but right now, I am too busy with school I don't have time, I should make time (laugh).... family unity to me would be my parents my brothers and my sisters, people I am closest to, but then family unity would be also my uncles, my aunts, my grandma, my grandparents, I have only one grandma alive presently, I, I can give you two different pictures of family unity, my family which I am close to, close to which is my mom, my dad, my brothers and sisters, the other one, is my grandparents, my cousins, my aunts and uncles, you know, I value them but not as much as my closest personal family which is my family right now, my brothers and sisters and all that, I would rating not as high but close to high....my dad stress go visit your grandma, go visit your uncle antes que te vayas, anda diles que adios, diles que (before you go, go tell them goodbye), go see them before I leave, something may happen to them and when you come again they may not be here.

Marina: My mom's family, we are all close, we are very united...I guess that's something my mom never wanted us to experience what my dad has experienced that he doesn't know his family, my mom always made sure, even when my tias (aunts) live one hour away from where we live, she always managed to take us over there and to make sure we see our tios and tias (uncles and aunts)....we are happy that we are close on my mom's

side, and that is one thing I am going to make sure to do with my children....I think two words probably sum the whole family it is true about all my mom's family, love and united, we always have to make sure that we stay together, my dad's family to me I'll describe it as a mystery because I just don't know....As far as my family is concern, as far as my parents and my brothers and sisters, it's a mixture of the three that I've mentioned for both of my families, we have love and we are united and it is also a mystery to me because we love each other very much and we are all together, except there is something there that makes my family a mystery that even my own family I feel they cannot see it.... After that, I guess is sad, in a way I hate my ties for doing that to my father because in a way, that is how my father is with us...my father was never loved in such a way that he will know how to do, how are you going to know how to love someone if you'll never loved....It is extremely high, it's way above high. It is important to have strong connections, I don't have it in my father's side, I have it in my mom's, I see the difference and I see the importance yes it does, in a lot of ways it really doesn't matter but in a lot of ways it does, because I have my mom, my dad, they pass on these norms and values to me....I am really tight to my brothers, right now my brothers need me so much, they are so attach to me.

Joey: We are not really emotional, but we are a strong family, but we are never emotional. I think it is a high value....I think that as far as the family is concern, I think the family is valued strongly in the Mexican family, as far as religious tambien (also), strong Catholic, my mom, right away I would say probably no but if you look deep probably you would say yes, it does have to do....but as you grow older you kind of branch out, the Mexican family always says, you provide for your kids until they grow up and they will come back to help you out, or when the parents are older they will come back to the family, put money into the house and stuff like that, but in most cases the kids grow up, they get married and they are out of there, so doesn't always work that way at least....it's home I guess, you can always go home.

Maria: We (Maria and her brother-nephew) have been very lucky, because my brother-in-law...and he has protected us, he has given us everything, he is very loving...they have given us everything that we need...everything changed, I don't know, it kind of bonded us together, I mean the baby, she was the center of attention....My father, I call him my father because he has done a lot for us, I am not ashamed that I don't love my dad....They made me a quinceañera (15th birthday celebration for girls), with my dress, and my music and everything, all my brothers went, my mom had already died at that time...we always go to New Orleans, cause there is where she (father's mother) lives, we get together, they have three kids....Yes, very important, (family connections) because, not only because

of the fact financially (laugh), but also because, it's important, they are there for you no matter what, no matter what they are there for you, and if you do wrong...she (mother) is like it's going to hurt me but I am not going to leave you out there by yourself, you know that you can always come back to the house, and if you are out there in the road and if it doesn't work for you, I have a house ready, this is always going to be your room...you know how the world is, it's something that I think that you need because they teach you the morals, and they teach you the rights and wrongs, and they teach everything, plus, it's always something that you can go back to....she is like our second mom, everyone runs to her, even my older brother runs to her when he is in trouble.....It's high (unity as a value), because when you are not united especially with your family, you tend to do a lot of things that you are not suppose to, for example, if I wouldn't have this bond that I have with my sister, it will be very easy for me to start drinking up here. Family unity and communication is very important because of the fact that you can always go to them and tell them this is what happened to me, this is what is wrong, help me, tell me what should I do...Mexican or any Latino family I feel that they always go back to your family, it's very bonded, it's very warm and united.

Luis: Yes, I think it has a big influence (ethnic background), because once again I probably go back to say that I compare, I compare my family, the way I've grown up, to the others' families here in U.S. of America...when I came to college, it was very difficult for me to leave, it was difficult for my parents to say goodbye, they really didn't say goodbye, they just told me hasta luego, see you later, so in another words, it is difficult to that adjustment to the separation from the family, I see cases back home, we even had a case in our family where we lived with my grandparents, for some time, other relatives will live together within the same home....I've noticed and I've seen so many times that the parents tell the kids, hey! you are 18 you are out of here, goodbye, it is totally the opposite, you go out find a job, find yourself a woman, go get married, go get an education, or something so you can get out of here, like I've met of my responsibility until now, you either go out and take your own responsibility or let the government take care of you or something...in my family, it's difficult to say you are on your own, there is a lot of support, what I've seen here...there is not support from the family, the family structure is very cold, there isn't any communication, there isn't there a relationship among the parents and their children, they know who they are, their names, but do they really know what kind of emotions they have? Do they really know their personal feelings?

Luis compares his Latino family background with a stereotypical Anglo family.

I think that it is very common in my family, my father, when I am depress, even if I trying to hide it, he knows, he can tell by the way I talk, by the way I look at him, I know when my father is upset just by the way he looks at me, boy do I know!, I am speechless....I can even tell when he is calling by just the way he whistles, and I can pik his whistle from a crowd, and when he whistles I know that is my father calling me, that are just examples of me telling you how I know my parent and how they know me...I think it is high, family unity is a very high value for us, in my family they shout it to me, they prove it even with the fact that I am in school so far away, my family keeps in touch, they are constantly calling, or they write to us, and they want for us to do the same, and in terms of my sister and I we are up here and there is unity among us and there is unity with my cousin, for example, this afternoon we are going to get together, just to sit down, I don't even know what we are going to do.

He emphasizes how hard it was for his parents to let him go. Also, he describes the support he continues to receive from them.

My parents didn't want me even to apply, not because they wanted to hold me back from education, no, just because I think it is hard for them to accept the fact that by me applying to a school that was out of state, that meant a separation, a division in the family....I remember my daddy used to call me, and I will complain to him I will say dad I want to go home, ya me quiero ir, ya no aguanto, es tanta presion, le hecho de menos a todos (now I want to leave, I can't stand it, there is so much pressure, I miss you all), my family, the studies are hard, I had basic courses, but it was totally different from high school, it was a change of pace, and I remember he just telling me, one time he told me he goes bueno sabes que Luis, si acaso estuviera facil yo ahi estuviera tambien contigo estudiando, pero como no es facil, yo no la he podido hacer, asi que tu tienes la oportunidad de hacerlo (you know Luis, I haven't been able to do it, but you have the opportunity), and ever since then that really picked up my encouragement, he encouraged me to stay behind, he says, well, if it was easy, I would be there myself, and that is not the case, so it's a challenge, ever since then I sort of took a different perspective and I said, I am going to do it, I am going to try my best.

Vanessa: There isn't family unity, I really don't know why but our family has always been separated, and my parents, they know it, they always say por que no se hablan (why you don't talk to each other) and stuff like that, but it was their fault because they never told us how to play with each other or talk to your sisters or talk to your brothers be close, and respect each, my mom has always drill respect, respect, respect, so I've always have respect

for everybody in my family....I am trying to get all of us together, get us some kind of unity, but it's hard because she is always concentrating in her business, she really doesn't have time for the family, and I am over here, so the family is like all separated, we are never all together. (family supposed to be) I would say closer, and they can call me whenever they want it, they treat me like I am not, well we all treat each other the same way, like we are not even part of each other, or something, you know how brothers and sisters call each and just to say how are you doing, my brothers never do that to me, I never do that to them because I think that it is their responsibility, since they are older, they should try to get the family together, they were the ones who grew up and they should know about this, but I feel like I am stuck with all that burden.

Vanessa assumes the function of unifier of her family. At the same time, she explain the animosity between her and her sister because she is favored by her father.

I miss like all the things that my dad does...he always comes and he makes B.B.Qs., and that is the biggest thing in our family, he makes it into a big thing, he invites all the family, everybody comes over, there is Spanish music in the background, I miss just everybody getting together and just eating like pigs, eating all that meat that my father makes....my dad is always really happy, all the family is together, but it's not really together they are just there to be with my dad, not to be a family.... because I've always felt that my dad likes me more from all the other girls of the family...he is always favored me in some or another way.... my parent and all my relatives, my aunts and uncles, all of them are so close, and I am like what is different between us that we cannot be like them...and I am like what's wrong?, if we are so family oriented between all our family put together, why is so hard for us just our family, I've never could figured it that out....I do, I feel envy for them because they are so close and we don't have that, I know I shouldn't be that way, jealous, I am really jealous about people being that close and I cannot have that closeness with my family and it is so hard because you cannot really go up to them and talk to them because after all this time has passed you cannot really changed everything in one day, it's so hard because it's has been like this all my life.

Throughout these descriptions, it is evident that the family is a family for better and for worse. The parents assured their children that no matter what

happens they can always return home. The family as a unity provides emotional and economical support. The participants divided their families as nuclear and extended. They placed a higher degree of unity with their parents and siblings.

As Wilkinson (1993) stated "Generally, in Hispanic families, close relationships with maternal and paternal grandparents are fundamental. Of special importance are the emotional ties with the mother's relatives" (p. 37). This is especially true in the cases of Luis and Marina. In the case of Marina and Maria, the mother is seen as the unifier. In the case of Rolando, the father is the one who tells him to go visit the extended family. In the case of Luis, the father is the one who offers support and understanding, and he sends him a post card every place he goes. In the case of Vanessa, the father is the one who organizes the family barbeques. These examples illustrate the notion that work of kin is done not only by the mother or another female figure, but also it is done by the father. All the participants express their feelings of family unity. In the case of Vanessa, who reported little family unity, there is a deep need for being able to accomplish family unity.

Rituals are crucial parts of the family unity. In the above narratives, there are examples of family celebrations such as Quinciañera (girl's fifteenth birthday) and Christmas. The barbeque in Vanessa's family is an example of family traditions. Through these descriptions, I realized that there is a fourth type of ritual, the preservation and enactment of the values, norms, and rules of the family. The participants followed them even if they are physically separated

from their parents and family who are the ones that had taught them.

Artifacts

Rochberg-Halton (1986) stated that "The home is in many ways one of the few spheres remaining in the modern techno-piecemeal world where it is possible to have a direct and continuous relationship to objects either produced or cultivated by oneself" (p. 168). The author argued that the objects are extensions of personal identity. They are not mere trophies, rather they have a personal significance and value. The degree of significance and emotional value depends on the way the artifact was acquired. They might be inherited, received as gift, or purchased. The author also said that "...remembrance, mediated by the photos, the living memory of her family acts as an animated socializing sign in the cultural microcosm of the home" (p. 187). The following narratives are based on the last interview with the participants which was done at their rooms. First, I will quote their words referring to what they brought from home. After that, I will describe what I observed during the interview.

Rolando: I brought, (he showed me a sweater with the logo of Dallas Cowboy from Mexico) pictures, pictures I always forget, me iba a traer tortillas, but my mom, well my mom, I told my mom me quiero traer tortillas, the night before I leave go to the store and buy me tortillas, I was going to do it but I didn't do it, bring tortillas. I have pictures in my wallet.

Marina: Since I live so far and we have a limited amount of how much luggage we can bring from Texas up here, if we bring more, we have to pay like \$40 a package, so I really, you have to take the basic, basic necessities I cannot really bring much, some little things that I have in my room, or stuffed animals, I cannot bring because, I cannot, it cost a lot, pictures are

not hard to bring but otherwise, since I don't have so much space in my dorm room, usually what I do, I get pictures a lot, pictures that my sister sends me that my mom sends me, cards that they send me....I wish they will let us bring more stuff, I really don't have too much space so I really wouldn't bring that much, but would be nice, by the time I finish and I have to take everything back home. A blanket that my mom bought for me, the only book that I brought from back home it has really helped me, it is so inspiring, I read it, I go back and read a chapter and then I put it away and then I come back again, I read more chapter, I just read it again, I like it so much, a teacher in high school lent it to me, in fact it is his, he has encouraged me so much to keep, continue my education, he really believed in me, well he still believes in me, he told me, Marina you are going to be someone one day, I know you have a lot of potential to do so many things.

Joey: I have pictures and stuff like that, I have a lot of pictures, from Mexico when I would go down there, and from Texas. Actually, right before I left, I guess like a going away present, my girlfriend gave me a Bible, they bought me, her family was very into religion, they are from a different religion than we are, I don't know what they are, Pentecostal. I used to use it a lot, and now I don't, I really don't read a whole lot. Not a whole lot, I guess, my sister bought me this for graduation, this necklace, she also got me a cross, not a lot, we cannot bring a lot in the plane.

Maria: That is from my baby sister (showing me a picture). (Showing me her desk) pictures of my friends, pictures of my brother, my baby sister. (The wall behind the desk between the table and the shelf is full of pictures). Because when we came over here all we had was two luggages....That, I got when I went for Christmas and worked at the bakery It is a calendar in Spanish....(We are talking about a wooden picture of Jesus that she has on the wall hanging above her head). I had a big one, it was bigger, and it burn when the house burn, so my mom gave me that one. Un cuadro....I brought pictures and letters, I felt that it was empty, es tan vacio, and I call my friend D. and my mom, and I said I need some stuff, so they send me my senior picture (it is on the wall, it is a large picture).... I just brought one blanket and two sheets to my bed because we were very limited on space...a teddy bear blanket, and then I told my dad and he send me a blanket. Because I had a queen size bed my blanket was really big and it was kind of dumb to bring them here, so my brother had a teddy bear blanket for a long time, I didn't ask him, I just got it, he wasn't home when I left, and he was, why did you take my blanket? now he doesn't say anything, how is my blanket doing, oh, it has been very good. I brought a small teddy bear, that it on my bed, my friend gave it to me, she said that it can take care of you, and my other friend gave me a doll. This one I brought from Florida, people, volunteers give stuffed animals, it was her, and she

got so attached to me that she gave it to me, for a little kid to give you something so precious.

Luis: I was a little worried because I didn't want to leave anything behind that was important to me, you know, clothes or books, I packed a lot of things....He has an album with the post cards that his father has sent him. He got me started, because he keeps sending them to me, so now everywhere I buy them. What he does is sometimes, he buys four or five, wherever he might go, and he'll stuffed them all in a big envelop and send them all to me at once, very seldom he send one at the time. I brought some things for example, just reminders or little things from Guadalajara, I got to make a trip down there two years ago, these posters are from Costa Rica and he is a good friend. For example, these cans, I am a big Cowboy fan, a Dallas Cowboy fan, so I brought those over from home....I brought my Spanish bible that was given to me, remember I told you about those groups I took to Mexico, they gave me this book, I think it was the summer of 90. It just has like aerial pictures of Mexico and it is beautiful. (He has pictures in an album)....this English-Spanish dictionary, was given to me also as a gift from another lady from one of those groups because I was working as an interpreter....I have a few pictures that I brought back with me. A lot of those pictures are pictures of family, of the groups that people that I have been working with in Mexico. *Aqui esta mi papa* (here is my father). He looks very happy. That are my grandparents, my mother's parents, that is a little cousin of mine, just running around, those are ones of her first few steps, that's her first birthday. My mother, she is in these ones, this is my grandmother, my uncle, piñata party for my cousin, this is my mom. *Mi hermana es la payasa y la niña le tuvo tanto miedo* (my sister is the clown and the little girl was very scared of her). Basically, all these pictures are since I have been here in Michigan.

Vanessa: I have pictures, I didn't bring any objects. Just pictures of birthdays and Christmas, father's day, comidas (dinners) that we made. I have a pillow that my mom made, and I have it in my bed, I don't really use it a lot because *tiene muchas plumas y pica* (it has a lot of feathers and it itches), so I put it there in my bed, well she made everybody's pillows, she sew it, she stitched it.

The bringing of objects from home is an action that maintains and strengthens family unity in the environmental context of being physically separated. All of the participants brought pictures. They are the easiest thing to

bring, specially due to the space problem. The pictures are from family events, special occasions, and family members. Besides the photographs, the participants brought different artifacts. Although the artifacts per se are different, they have in common the great emotional meaning attached to them.

Family unity is the core of the concept of Family Sustainability. Family unity is seen as a desirable state that the family wants to preserve. It does not occur without a series of actions that the family takes to sustain the connections. Objects brought from home are extensions of the life at their place of origin. They have special emotional meanings. The next chapter presents the models that I developed to illustrate the concept of Family Sustainability.

CHAPTER V

MODEL OF FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY

This chapter is the presentation of two models, the general model for Family Sustainability and the model for the physical encounters. The detailed description of each model is followed by their applications to the realities of the participants.

General Model of Family Sustainability

I developed a model to illustrate the concept of Family Sustainability (See Fig. 2). Family Sustainability is defined in terms of a family property or quality that enables the family to maintain the family unity, which is developed and strengthened by continuous and various activities in which the family and its members engage through interactions with their environments. The model displays the continuous process, from passive to active interactions that accompany the maintenance of family unity with different degrees of emotional intensity. The activities are separated in two types. The first class includes the physical encounters or concrete events and the second class includes the long distance interactions. A model for the first type of interaction was developed and it is going to be explained following the presentation of the Family Sustainability model.

The second type of connection is any active interaction between members of the family. These interactions go from reciprocal to individual interactions. Reciprocal interactions are the ones where the individual and the family actively

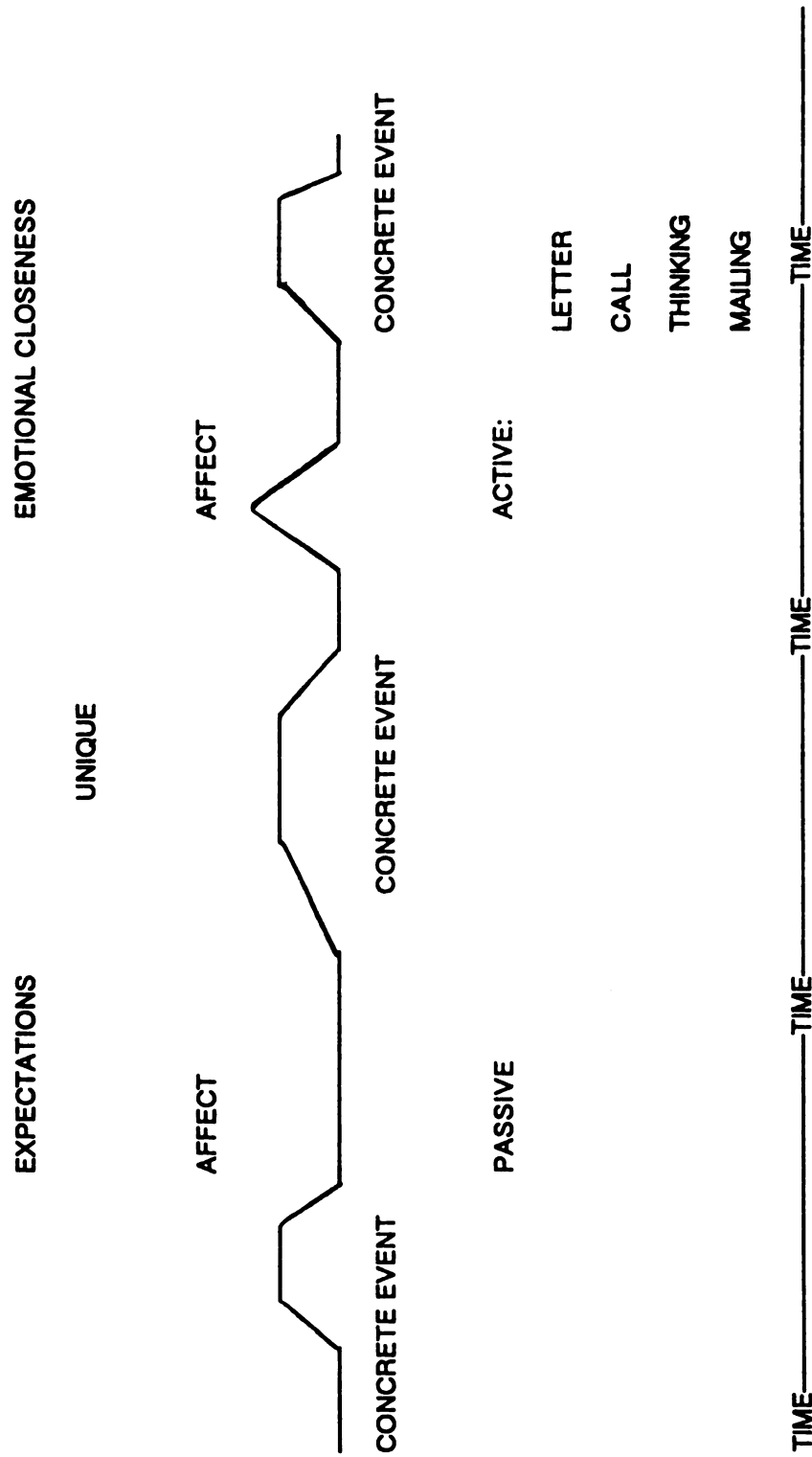


Figure 2. Model of family sustainability

participate. They can be in a form of a telephone call, a letter, a card, flowers. These interactions rely heavily on the technology available and the economic resources. The telephone calls are higher in the degree of emotional closeness and are more intense than the cards or letters. With cards and letters the reciprocity takes more time, the emotional intensity is high at the moment of writing dissipating and increasing again with the arrival of the response. Physical and emotional closeness are crucial parts of this process. There is a need to be connected.

A more individual type of action, but always integrating the family, can be thinking about the family, talking with someone about her/his family, writing poems, and writing papers. It was found that the emotional intensity increases in the above interactions, specially at times of family markers, family celebrations, and family traditions.

Time and space become two crucial environmental components of this model. This model shows the intersection of two important spaces, the place of origin and the place of current living. The place of origin becomes an abstract space which is latent and represents a special attachment. As it was mentioned in the definition, the actions to maintain the family unity interact with the environmental circumstances of the family. The physical distance will influence the amount and frequency of the concrete events. The emotional intensity is also affected by distance. If the concrete events are more sporadic, the emotional intensity increases. Greater physical distance has the potential to create the need to rely more on media to be able to continue the relationships. Mechanisms such as

telephone, fax, video, cassettes, pictures, and services such as mail, are necessary resources.

There are two types of time involved in this model. One is the chronological linear time and the other is a suspended one. The calendar time involves the passage of time, day after day, month after month, and year after year. It involves the daily routines and expected present and future events. The suspended time refers to the overlapping, without a linear occurrence, of events or feelings from the past, present, and future. At the same time, certain feelings and memories are encapsulated. They exist in a passive form. They are prone to appear during the concrete events, before or/and after them, family markers, family celebrations, family traditions, and for the need to feel emotional closeness. Life in the place of origin and the life in the current place continue. They have their parallel existence. Their routines are interrupted by the different actions taken by the family in order to be and feel close. At the same time, both places are being affected by this process. The success and visits of the participants influence the place of origin by broadening the academic perspective, opening of new choices, changing the patterned behaviors, and bringing new demeanors of the midwest culture. The current place is affected by the fact that there is an inclusion of a new group in the community.

Model of Concrete Events

The concrete events are the family activities with highest level of action in the continuum. These encounters provide the arena for emotional and physical

closeness. They have the potential to be high in intimacy. They are intense moments. This intensity will depend on the reason for the encounter, the frequency of encounters, and the physical distance between family members. A concrete event occurs in a specific place and time. These environmental circumstances will influence the event.

Concrete events are different from each other. Past encounters affect future encounters. The family will tend to expect certain things based on the experience of past visits. Some families may have specific rhythms of visits; in some families the encounters can be random, while in others, physical closeness will depend on a specific routine. The visits can also be on the basis of need. The economic situation of the family will play a crucial role especially if the family members are far away.

The separation and subsequent encounters change the individual's, as well as the family members', perceptions of the family itself. The encounters have the potential to create in family members new behaviors that were not expected, either from the family perspective or from the individual perspective. Family members become increasingly concerned with the allocation of time. The amount of time is designated according to the importance of the person.

This model (See Fig. 3) exposes five phases that develop with each encounter. The first phase is the day/s prior to the visit, the second phase is the first day/s of the visit, the third phase is the middle day/s, the fourth phase is the final day/s prior to departure, and the fifth phase is the immediate day/s after separation. The notion of phases does not imply a clear cut division between them. There can be a

HIGH LEVEL OF ACTIVITY

EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL CLOSENESS (INTENSITY)

HIGH INTIMACY

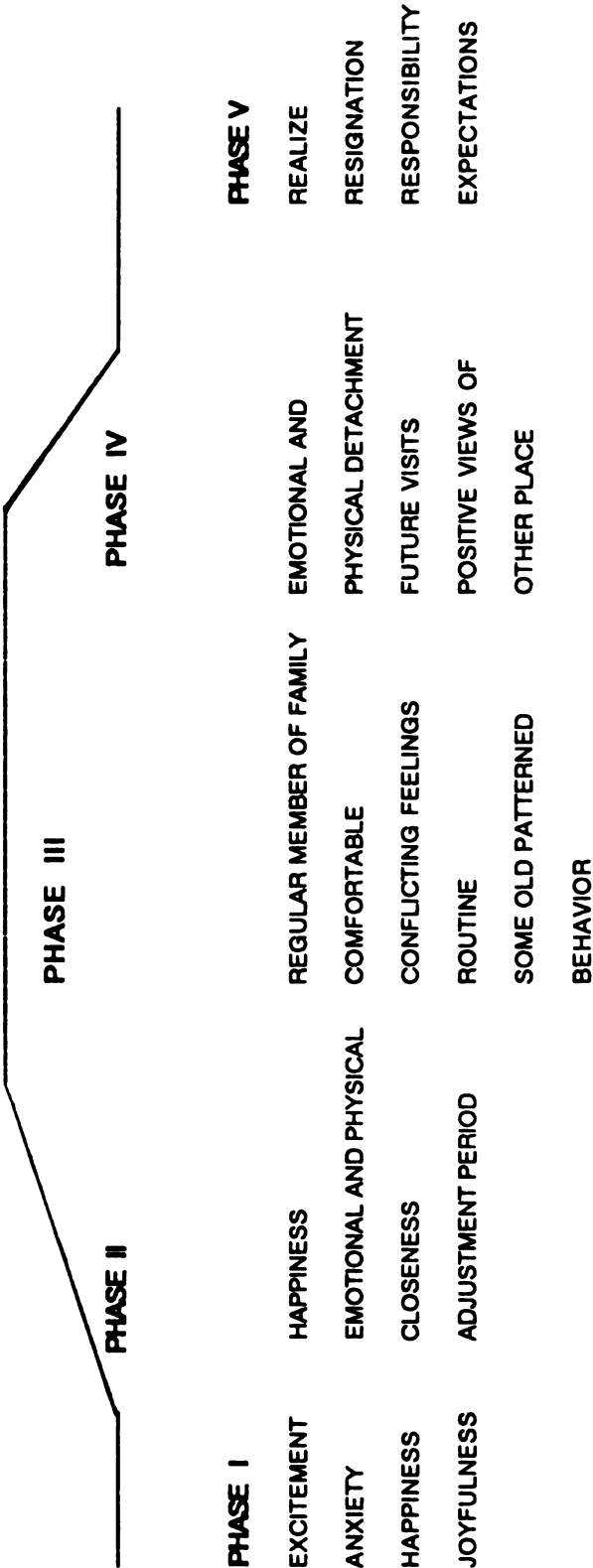


Figure 3. Model of concrete events

smooth, sometimes even imperceptible, transition from one to the other.

As was mentioned before, each event is unique. However, there are patterns of behaviors common to all of them. The degree in which each of these behaviors appears will be influenced by the frequency of the encounters, reason for the encounter, and physical distance between family members. During the first and second phase there is a high probability to find high degrees of apprehension, excitement, anxiety, happiness, fear, and tension. Past experiences are of great influence during these phases. Expectations are constructed based on failure or success of past encounters combined with new expectations for the future. There is a sense of union. Before the concrete event occurs, the members actively start to incorporate their expectations of what is going to happen into their daily activities. The actors expect certain things to occur. They will also create an expectation about how they are going to perceive the other members.

The third phase is when the encounter reaches a plateau. The degree of these behaviors decreases. The family creates a new routine. Time becomes linear again. During the fourth and fifth phases, behaviors such as apprehension, anxiety, fear, and tension resurface increasing again their intensity. There is less excitement toward the encounter and more excitement toward returning to the new life routine. There is a sense of separation and sadness. The family members begin to construct expectations and plans for future encounters.

Throughout the second, third, and fourth phases, the patterns of communication change. At the beginning, there is an exchange of what had happened during the physical separation. This exchange allows the family to get reacquainted with

each other and it brings the relationship to the present. This, in turn, allows the creation of a new routine. Conversations are around normative, daily life events topics. The individuals, who were separated, are physically part of the family again. By the time separation becomes imminent, there is less communication. There is a sense of whatever was said, was said; now there is no time to start anything.

The specific physical space of these encounters will have influence on the behaviors. The place can be familiar to all or new to all of the family members or mixed. The place can have special meaning which in turn will increase the intensity of the event.

These models portray the process that families seem to go through to maintain the unity among their members regardless of physical distance. The models are in their early stages of conceptualization. At this point, they present a flexible diagram of the family property called Family Sustainability. They have the potential to be applied to any type of family regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and class. They are inclusive models. There is not a maximum or minimum of family members that can be involved. The fact that one process is going on does not imply that other processes are not occurring in a parallel fashion. However, the different processes can affect each other. These models can be applied to understand Family Sustainability in families that live from a few houses away to thousands of miles away. They are flexible enough to accommodate different actions which are suitable to the family's economic situation and ethnic background. They do not have a beginning. The actions that families take to preserve the unity are constant.

Nonetheless, these activities may change due to transitions in the family. Also, as the process evolves, the members may change their views toward the family.

Application of the Models of Family Sustainability

At this stage, I have decided to apply these models to families that are living physically separated. These estrangements are normative. Each of the individuals freely decided to go to the midwest university. Following are some of the reasons stated by the participants.

Rolando: ...it will be a learning experience to get out of the state of Texas just hearing that got me interested, I like sight seeing and seeing places, I like traveling, I heard, I've always heard about Michigan because my dad used to migrate up here to work in the strawberry fields. I said I have lots of family over here, I don't know, relatives here, leaving in Ohio and Chicago and it is an opportunity go see places plus get educated, and the money is there so why not take it....I got interested for the simple reason that you know, if I would have stayed at the local university, I would not have seen the rest of the world, I see it that way, I would have seen the same old thing, you know, wake up in the morning, see you know, the same stuff go to the university, drive and the same atmosphere, to me is if you see, it gets boring after a while and like exploring places seeing places and basically what motivated to come up here was to get out of the state of Texas and experience something different, learn from other people, and just basically see what Michigan had too, the snow the change of seasons, and all that, over there in south Texas is really hot, is hot! I have heard a lot about in Michigan the snow is nice. Basically what got me motivated to come over here is the different change growing up in south Texas like I said is the same old routine we see it, you are going to live up to what, whatever until you died and you never going to go out of that place and see what the world has to offer, like in seeing places that is basically what got me motivated.

Marina: ...then I started thinking, you know mom, I think it will be good for me, for me to get out and experience, like here we are the same kind of people, as much as I hated it but I had many stereotypes, because I was

down there, I wasn't exposed, once you are expose and you learn,....I came up here to get an education....I chose this university not because I wanted to get away from my family, because I knew I needed to go away because I needed to learn, I knew it will work and I was right.

Joey: The reason I came up here for the change basically, just the change, from what I can tell down there, the same routine that Junior high school, but now I have to work, I have to go to college, you have to come home, I am depending on me a lot to go run errands, do this, do that, everything, down there you go to college and then in the house, you can never study, it's always too loud or something is going on, that's why I decided to take a chance and a change.

Maria: I was applying to all these colleges and stuff, and I applied to plenty of colleges, my dad helped me a lot, I got accepted to University of Texas, and University of Louisiana, because my grandma wanted me to go and live with her, I think that I decided to come up here because they made everything so easy for us...

Luis: I was planning to go out from home, I was planning to leave home to go to school, I wanted to go to the University of Texas at Austin....I really didn't want to leave Texas, and here comes my girlfriend and says I have an uncle he is the Associate Graduate Dean I was really excited, I was admitted in April in my Senior year, I said fine, I have been admitted great, but I also had been admitted to all these other schools in Texas, and when I starting getting award letters and financial statements, that is what's so convincing, right there, that made a big difference in my decision to come to school.

Vanessa: I came here to try to help them (siblings) because my parents will not be able to help them (siblings), to pay for the tuition, so I am up here to try and get some money and some sort of stability here, so if they (siblings) want to come here they come here and I will be able to support them (siblings)..... I felt that if I would have stayed there, I would have stayed in a minimum job, the way everybody has, they just work at department stores, the grocery stores, and they stay there just as long as the money keeps coming in every week, and I didn't want that to happen to me, and I wanted my parents to be proud of me that I got an education.

The above excerpts present common reasons for pursuing an education far away from the place of origin. The need to see the world, the need to break

with the routine, the need for a change, the need to explore and experiment new and different places, the need to broaden one's understanding, the need to meet new and different people, the need to have the financial situation be covered, the need for appreciation and recognition of academic achievements, and their proper compensation. Vanessa presents an interesting motivation which is the possibility of opening and broadening the horizons for her younger siblings. None of the participants left their families in order to run away from them. Their reasons are based on a necessity to better their lives.

As I mentioned before, Family Sustainability does not have a clear cut beginning. However, for the purpose of this study, I have chosen as the starting point for the application of these models the moment that each of the participants decided to move from the south of the United States to the midwest of the United States. The decision to leave the family in pursuit of an education was difficult for all of the participants. For each one, it was the first time that a family member decided to go to college in another state and so far away. The process of making the decision is important in order to understand the participants' circumstances.

Rolando: My senior year I decided... I was looking through universities, I was thinking of going to the local university because there is where all my friends..., eventually for hispanics that's is where..., is cheap and all that, they go, so, but then my friend Luis, which is my roommate right now, he got me, he showed, he shared with me some information, he said look at this, and they offer good financial aid and these other stuff, it will be a learning experience to get out of the state of Texas; just hearing that got me interested...so I apply, I got accepted and when I got accepted I kind of got second thoughts, god am I sure I'm making the right decision, at that time I had a girlfriend and it was

tough leaving her and my family....I checked, I read about it, what it was, where is located, how many students were enrolled, what degrees they offer, and I researched about the university, all the information seems to influence on me....I talked to my girlfriend, I am thinking of going to this university and she said go ahead, better yourself, I could tell she was kind of mad, (laugh), I went with this for about two weeks.

Rolando had a lot of difficulties when the time came to tell his parents. He waited until the last minute . He was sure it was going to be difficult for them.

It was getting close to the end of the year of my senior high school, and around the week before graduation I told my parents one night, it was like around ten that night, they were already getting going to bed, I showed them the applications, all the information about the university, all the information that I have gotten, they said yes! they were all for it, they were encouraging, yes go, yes, they were all happy, my dad started to tell me stories when he was up here in Michigan, you know, that we have lots of relatives, he grew up here, he knows lots of people in Holland, Michigan, in Flint, we have a lot of family over here, he was motivated, my mom was also motivated, yes go go, and my oldest brother he didn't want me to go, he said you are going to run into financial problems you'll have to take a lot of loans and no you are going to be homesick, don't leave, my sister didn't find out, they didn't really know, they were going to school, I didn't really tell about it, and Okey, I applied and I got a respond like a month later that they have accepted me it was something new, I was kind of afraid, so I talked to my high school principal, because my high school principal was very involved, he was one that also encourage me to come over here, he said, he also gave me his experiences of going away from home, leaving home, and going to another university like far away, cause he had gone through that and he told me that he didn't have any regrets it was the best thing he did for himself and that it is good to leave home because you get to learn from other cultures, other races and that you basically grow up, you mature like that, there is not your family to helping you out you do not have distractions from friends, let's go party or something like that, he said that the best thing you can do leave your house, your home to go far away and get educated, that's the best thing you can do, he was motivated, he was encouraging...

Marina: It was not a process like where should I go or something like that, I was in an economic class in high school and I am really close to my principal, he is a really good friend of mine, I love, I love him to death, two weeks before I graduated and I still didn't know what to do, I was 13th in my class out of 200 and some, I had a fair grade, I didn't know what I was going to do, my cousin had graduated a year before I did, and I say I am going too with her, I didn't

look into universities and what they have to offer me or anything, *pase lo que pase* (what happens, happens), and it is weird because I am not like that, I was a senior, I wasn't thinking much. I filled my application two weeks before I graduated, I guess that because I was offer a Volleyball scholarship, I really love volleyball, so I had an alternative, I really wasn't making much about it, a Junior college in south Texas, but then he told me how about [this university], and I was like what?, do you want to fill an application, well, yeah, come on let's go to my office, he faxed it, they asked me for this and that, he did everything for me and by June, I graduated June first, by the end of June, you have been accepted and you get all these stuff, you are getting this and this scholarship and you are going to live in this dorm, and I was like, I am? but it was cool how I got accepted, and then I told my mom, I wasn't too serious about it, and then I started thinking, you know mom, I think it will be good for me, for me to get out and experience.

Joey: First, it was Luis who got involved, because his girlfriend was [the assistant dean's] niece, then he later got Rolando to get involved, and this all being worked out through our principal, which is a very good friend of mine, I worked with him for the last, other than this summer, I've worked with him since my freshman year, so I've been very close with him, he was my track coach, he is one of our roommate's father, he is working on his Master here. My principal never asked me because I have already decided that I was going to a local university, Pan American, that is where my other sister was going, graduated from, so he never asked me because he knew I was pretty much set, I was going to business and they have a good business program there. In July he asked me do you want to go?, I told him I'll get back to you on that, cause one of my best friend, he had graduated second in his class and he had turn on all this information to colleges and they hadn't written back to him, they hadn't send anything back, so I told him if you want to go, and we will go, and I knew he had a good chance of coming because the other universities were not really showing any interest in him, so we said yea, and I spoke to my mom and at first they were kind, they didn't want to let me come, but my dad said go ahead and go, my mom, well really my older brothers they didn't want to let me come.

Maria: ...so I apply and they gave me two years free, free ride for two years, I got a scholarship for my grades, and grants so I don't have to worry about anything, the third year it depends on my grades....I feel like I should go out there and get the experience and be, learn to be responsible, she (mother) didn't want me to, but then, she decided that it was my education, it was my decision and whatever I wanted to do...

Luis: ...here comes my girlfriend and says I have an uncle he is the Associate Graduate Dean of (this university), our friend, she says, I have you talk to him, because he is interested in recruiting more hispanic, she says I

hooked you up with my uncle, he really love to talk to you so she told me about [the university] and her uncle thinking that I was not going to fall for it, she says I am going to push him a little bit, he is going to get scare and stay home, she really didn't want me to leave, here she goes, she talks to her uncle, her uncle talked to me, her uncle called me, he asked me what kind of student are you, I began telling him a little bit about myself, he got so excited, he got so excited, he said you are the kind of student we really like to have (here) and he said I will try to see what I can do to get you up here, and I was like yes, yes whatever, I don't think I'll even go, so I started concentrating at things in school, he started to send me so much information, application for this, application for that, scholarships, financial aid, I sent all the applications he sent me, I was admitted to (this university), I was really excited, I was admitted in April in my senior year, I said fine, I have been admitted, great.

Vanessa: I started to think about it when I was in junior in high school, I really wanted to go somewhere out of state, and I really didn't know it was going to be Michigan, but then, my boyfriend always wanted to come to [this big university], a childhood dream or something, and I started thinking about Michigan, and this opportunity came about, like all these students were coming to [this university], and it is so close to [my boyfriend's university], so I was like wow! it's a gift from God or something, be so close to him, and I started to think more about it, and I talk to my mom about it, and she was like well is your decision, and if they are paying for it, go for it, but she also thought that I can get a better education at the universities close by, and I was well, no mom, because they couldn't get me a car to get there, and that was going to be more money that I didn't have, that my parents didn't have, and I was like, mom I am just going to come up over here and see what happens if I like it I'll stay, and if I don't I'll come back, so she was like, okay, it's your decision you can do whatever you want. I guess I wanted to set an example for my other little brothers and sisters, they can do whatever they want, it's in their hands to do whatever they want, don't let anybody hold you back, just do it. I needed a change of place.

The process of making the decision was based on a word-by-mouth information. The emotional support given by the parents made the decision easier to make. Throughout the interviews of Rolando, Joey, and Marina, it was clear that the principal was an important and influential figure in the life of the participants. The principal's experiences played an important component by

role modeling the benefits of getting an education out of state. It was also crucial for the participants to go with people from their place of origin: friends with whom to experience the same transitions, people who will bring with them a piece of their community of origin.

As stated in the description of the model, there are two types of interactions, the physical encounters or concrete events and the long distance actions. Following, there are some examples of long distance reciprocal interactions.

Rolando: ...it was fun so we finally got settle at our place in the dorms, everybody made phone calls, I am already here, I am fine and all that, everybody called their girlfriends we are already here....They stress that, my dad always says, I am expecting a letter in the mail, you never, don't you write to me, my dad wants me to write to him, my mom, my brothers and sisters they all want me to write to them, my friends want me to write to them, you know....I love my mom, I write to her....when I call home I tell them financially wise I am fine here, don't worry about, I am doing fine, I am eating fine, when I get sick, I don't, I let them know but after once I get better, once I'm better, I tell oh I was sick last week but I am already fine, so I try not to worry them when I call them, because I know they worry.... At first I used to write to them, but now, I write to them only now and then, but I talk a lot over the phone.....in English and a little phrases in Spanish.

Marina: I write and I call, my freshman year, my first semester, I call every weekend, every single weekend, maybe twice on the weekend, after my freshman year I said, Marina, you are stronger than that, so I call my mom, I will say four times max for the whole semester, this year, I did both I write and I call, I talk a lot to my oldest sister, and she call me, my mom she never calls me, I always tell her not to call me, and I write to her, I write them separately. My mom writes back to me, my oldest sister also, my dad doesn't write to me, my brothers write back to me more than my little sister, she says I don't have time, I write to everybody and you don't have time to write to me, you don't have anything else to do, you are not in sport, all you do is to go to school, you don't even have a boyfriend, so you don't have time, well I don't know, I have no time. We are so different, compare to her, I am so much mature, she is into how she looks, hair condition, and I don't care....I say, hola como estan (hi, how are you), that I miss them, about

school, how things are going at home, if somebody got sick, the baby. My mom's first lines, I wish you were here, she is always telling me, que me cuide mucho, aqui te mando esto o lo otro (take care of yourself, here I am sending you this or that).

Joey: I call them just about every day also, my girlfriend complains that I call a lot, I think my bill was like \$300, I call my mom and my dad, I call them a lot, just to stay in touch, talk to them and see how are they doing, I do keep in touch with them just about every day, and they always call me....Since I call them so often I really don't have to write to them, at the very beginning I used to send postcards, write to them and stuff like that, in English, when I was writing to my sisters and brothers in English, when I was writing to my mom was in Spanish or my dad was in Spanish, I think they wrote to me, I know my sisters did, I think my mom wrote to me, I don't think my dad has ever written, he calls.... I guess, the times that I would really get emotional was when my sister will write to me, I will miss specially the food, I will miss the food, I always keep in touch with them over the phone, but as far as when they will write to me, it was very emotional.

Maria: ...like my phone bill is over \$300, I am serious....I managed, I call them, I used to call them like every day, it's so hard for me because when I was home I had to ask my mom everything, what do I do about this?, this goes with this?, and now all the sudden I am by myself, it really affected me....if I don't call in two days she'll call me or my dad will call me from the office, and he will say what are you doing? oh nothing, I'll send you oranges, cause they ship me oranges and grapefruit, not anymore because the season is over, but they use to, and he goes is an opportunity to check up on you and my mom calls two hours later what are you doing, how are you doing, dad said to check up on you, well he just called and she goes oh, okey. My brother also, I talk to my brother, I like writing, but I don't like to write letters, I can always use the phone. I do write, I write home.... My mom doesn't write, my dad always writes to me, my dad, he tells me everything, he writes very nice and he express himself, he tells me. My dad tells me oh I miss you so much, the first letter he sent me, oh my gosh he made me cry because he said I cannot believe my little girl is in college, I remember when you first came over here and you didn't know English. My sister draws for me. My brother tells me about his life in high school, he tells me everything, my mom doesn't write to me because she didn't get a lot of education, plus she doesn't like writing, and she doesn't have time to do it because she is too busy with work, second grade in Mexico, she can write and read and that is about it, but she writes to me once in a while, my mom writes in Spanish and my dad and brother in English, my little sister I still don't know which language (laugh).... I write to my friends, one of my friends that I have a very close relationship, she is my best friend, she is in Texas,

and she doesn't talk that much with her mom because her mom is very religious, she is Catholic and she has a lot of hard times with her, she wrote me like this nine pages letter, and I can follow everything she says and I can read very quick and I write her back, I think that I write more to my friends than I write to my mom, but I also talk more on the phone with my family.

Luis: I remember my daddy used to call me, and I will complain to him... my father travels so much, he calls me from Los Angeles, he called me from Portland, Oregon, he is in Detroit, he is in New York City, but he calls every weekend, he is always calling, even if it is to tell me a joke, even if it is to tell me this stupid work, I just fed up with it, or whatever, but the point is that he just calls to see how are we doing, and that makes a difference because it tells me that he is interested. I like to call, my freshman year, I wrote so much, I wrote a lot, I think because it was a transition...I think that it is just easier for me to pick up the phone, we called a lot, I usually call my mother, she hardly ever calls me, once a week, every weekend, any time between Saturday and Monday, we sit down and talk, nothing out of the ordinary, typical conversation.

Luis describes how he used to write more and to more people when he had just arrived. The distance and the college pressure changed that.

When I first came up I wrote a lot, as I said I had my girlfriend back home, and all of my family, my parents and grandparents so I would write to them, my grandparents they are illiterate, so I would send them a post card and they understand little things like I love you, o te quiero, los extraño (I love you, I miss you), little things like that, I would send them post card and I would write to my parents and my sisters and my little brother, I would write them practically all separate, I will take turn every few days I will write to different people....I write, maybe two times at the semester, just to my parents, I write more to my mom, he travels so much. What my father does, he sends me postcards, I have like a collection of post cards from places that he has been in the U.S. that he sends me just for me to look at, he will say this is where I've been, this is so beautiful....I have sent flowers to my mom, flowers, some kind of florist that I call home and they make an arrangement and I have it deliver at home, and when I have done that, it's been for no particular reason...when I would call her to see if she received them, she will pick up the phone, she recognized my voice and she just cry, she wouldn't say anything for a while, so I just sit there and say mom I am doing pretty good mom, this and that, actually, that happens probably my whole freshman year.... I had relatives calling me wishing me good luck with my finals.

He explains how he writes about daily activities as well as more specific and important events.

I used to just write basically, how different was here from what it was at home, and I used to compare how different it was to be in college, in comparing my life now, comparing it when I used to be in high school...I remember writing to them little by little, telling them about my experiences, and what happened during that week, or that particular day....I used to write a lot to my younger brother, and he used to tell me how he misses play baseball with me and now he was starting to go to practice, and things that happened to him at school, and how he and my other sisters were always asking for something from the university, they wanted some T-shirts, they wanted stickers, they wanted a folder, they wanted a notebook that says the name of the university, because they wanted to show off that they have somebody up in here. My little brother used to write me that whenever I would go home, that he wanted from me to go home and the same day that I got there, if got during the day, go pick him up at school, I want you to go into my classroom so everybody can see you. She (mother) told me, just encouraging me to stay in school, convey everybody's greetings, she will always told that everybody back home was asking for me and how I was doing, te mandan saludos tus abuelitos o tu tia, o tal persona que vi en la escuela en la iglesia (your grandparents or your aunt are sending their regards, or another person that I saw in the school, in the church), her letters were pretty short, but to the point. It is very interesting, she would write in both, both her and my father mix English and Spanish a lot, a lot, they will mix it, it's like a bilingual letter, mostly Spanish but they mix it quite a bit, the first year she wrote a couple of letter and sent me a card, she sort of express to me things that she has never told me before, when I was younger and before I left home, and in a sense, now, that I've left home that I was away, she noticed how important I was sort of speak, she noticed that she would take it for granted that I was always there, she noticed the difference and that she actually misses me more than she expected, me and my mother, we talk, we were close, but never, she really expressed me how much she loves me or how important I was to her because being her first son. My father wrote one letter to me in that fashion, as well.

Vanessa: my older sister, the one who did go to college, she was talking to me, we talk a lot, we are writing to each other, she is giving me a lot of support, she told me a lot of things that I needed to hear....I guess that I've been the only one, lately, who really talks to him (father) the most, because I need stuff from him and I need to talk to him, otherwise probably I wouldn't talk to him....I just ask her like what she did this past week, who is there and what are they doing, that I miss her, how is she, como esta, si esta

bien de salud (if I am healthy), I talk to her in Spanish, when I first get the phone I say Hi mother, we all say like Hi mother, we all call her mother, it's funny, she likes it, she doesn't say anything....I buy a lot of stuff for my little niece and I send it in a big box.

Throughout these narratives, the importance of the telephone is evident.

Talking is the most intense and reciprocal action. It brings an instantaneous reward. It is used as a fast and direct way to dissipate worries. It permits the family to hear each other's voices which allows a physical closeness regardless of the physical distance. The participants expressed the easiness and rapidity of the phone calls. However, as stated by Climo (1992) "The most common problem children mention is the absence of frequent opportunities to communicate the details of daily life" (p. 137). Another medium of communication is by mail.

The letters have different purposes. "Letter exchange, for example, is the least interactive communication form since the writer must wait for a reply" (Climo, 1992, p. 110). Some of them are just to say hello, others are used to give words of encouragement. Others are to plan the activities they can do together when the participants come for a visit. They allow a more comprehensive recount of the experiences. Joey's sister tells him about the girlfriends of friends (Letter, 9/17/90) and his brother tells him about the progress in school (Letter, 9/17/90). They are vehicles used to express emotions that are difficult to say face to face. As Vanessa's sister wrote to her "So you see, I have not pushed you away and I do not hate you!" (Letter, 3/26/93); Luis's mother sent him a card (4/2/91) where she describes her

feelings toward him, feelings that she had never shared with him. Also the inscription in the card, which is in Spanish, is directed to my loving child and describes how proud the mother is and that even though there are families that cannot wait for their children to leave that she cherished his presence. Maria's father wrote her "She (mother) is really proud of you too. Like I said before she might not let you in on it, but I will....I know L. (brother) is missing you even if he does not say it (Letter, 9/1/92). Due to the fact that phone calls are more expensive and shorter than mail, letters can contain routine, day to day, details, and not so important experiences that otherwise would be impossible to cover during a telephone call, such as the problem with Rolando's sister's glasses (Letter, 1/26/93). His mother tells him how much they cost in different places, why she needs them, what the doctor said, what the coach said, and what his sister said. Luis' mother wrote (Letter, 9/30/91) an extensive letter about different medicines and when to use them. She even sent a package with them. This is an example of the change in patterned behavior. The mother's role is being changed by the fact that they are separated. She cannot take care of him the way she used to, so she creates a new way. Luis' mother also writes (Letter, 9/20/90) how there has been a change in family traditions, "Papi, everyone is asking how you are doing? Remember we are also praying at church for you Fridays and Sundays we are there, and of course there is an empty space behind the pulpit."

Another form of interaction is thinking. It can be assumed that the family is thinking about the participant, as Luis' mother writes "You know mi hijo (my

son) you are so far away, but still we feel you are close by" (Letter, 10/29/90). Marina's brother writes "I love you very, very much, I'll think of you every single day." (Letter, no date) For the purpose of this study, only the interviewees' thoughts are going to be used. Thinking is a rather passive action compared to the telephone call and a letter. Passive in the meaning that there is not immediate reciprocal interaction with the family. It has the potential to trigger the necessity for closeness. Remembrance is usually done by the individual alone. However, a collective reminiscence can be used as emotional support and legitimation of their own feelings.

Rolando: now that I am up here I'm trying not worry them....At first I did but now in my third year I don't think much as then, but I do think about them.

Marina: I guess that since I've been up here I have had so much time to look back and think about my family, where I am, where my family stands and who I am in my family and why I stand in my family, I've just been thinking and thinking and thinking so much that I've figured out a lot of stuff about my family that I know my family hasn't figure it out, maybe my mom and dad have, but my brothers and sisters have not.... every day, there is not a single day that goes by that I don't think about them....if I see a picture of my brother, I say oh, he is so cute, but if I see a picture of my parents, I start to think about oh, they have problems at home and they don't tell me and I am not back home to help them, I start to think so many bad things about my parents, I miss them a lot, it is sad to me...they (brothers) are going through years that they need me so much, they came up to me and start to ask questions, they really come to me for advice and I cannot be there for them, they are in their teenage years, those are the hardest years, they change so much, I cannot say when I get home, okey guys, now you can start growing, I cannot see them growing up every day.

Joey: Just about every day, every day I think about my family...

Maria: 24 hours of the days (laugh), I think about them....I think about my

family every day, specially when I have things going on...

Luis: I think about my family a lot, when I first came to school it was a lot more than I do now , I've became so involved with so many things, and studies, and with my girlfriend, it takes a lot of my time, but I do think about them, if you want like a particular time of day, mostly in the evenings because I sit down.... My sister is here so when I talk to my sister we are always talking about the family, so my family crosses my mind a lot, very often....in the first semester that we didn't have anything to do other than study, we will spend our time at home, in the dorm because we couldn't say we will go visit so and so because we didn't know so and so, we spent our time at the dorm, and we sat there we started talking and talking, thinking about home and how much we miss home and that made it worse.

For the participants, thinking about their families is a daily action. The thinking process conveys the flexibility and nonlinearity of time and place. Their families are constantly psychologically present. The participants think about their families and places of origin as static events. They remember the things as they left them, although it is very probable that life as they knew it in their homes has changed. During remembrance there is a sense of presence of those who are far away. The separation gives them a chance of looking at the family from outside.

The emotional intensity of writing, calling, and thinking increases around special occasions, such as family celebrations, family traditions, and family markers. Each family will create its own family markers. The need for emotional and physical closeness intensifies before and during these events.

Rolando: that is another thing that is tough being up here, when a tragedy happens back home you are not there for the support you are not there, it is sad, you cannot be there.... my brother, my first year here, my second semester, he was in a car accident, he was severely injured, he

was in a coma, and the doctors were pretty pessimistic about his chances of surviving, and it was tough, I would cry every night, pray every night, it was tough, talking to my family and you know, I couldn't do too much about it, I mean, I wanted to go back home but it was already toward the end of the semester, I stay here and finishing it up, hopefully my brother will snap out of the coma, which he did, he was fortunate to be fine, and other tragedies, like my cousins have died, passed away, I wasn't there to attend the funeral, other tragedies, like friends, it is sad, you are not there to see them or be with the loved ones, families friends to console them, it is tough when a tragedy like that happens and you cannot be there, it's tough and you are being up here.... Yes, at time when there is a special holidays, like in this university or Spring break, or something like that, that all the students leave and go out to their families, we used to stay in our dorms we were the only ones there, with foreign students or other people that cannot afford to go with their families, yes, in times like that the campus is quiet, you are the only ones there, you think gosh I wish I could be home with my family and friends, at times like that when all the students leave to be with their families you feel like going home and being with your family and friends, like I said, you take it for granted when you are there you learn to appreciate their love and their presence.

Marina: I call home and I just tell mom, how are you doing, como la pasaron (how was it), oh we had a big party, piñata and everybody came over we had an this university egg hunt, that it's why it is so hard.... Of course, like Thanksgiving, I cannot go home, I call home and everybody is having a ball, and everybody goes like Hi Marina, okay, everybody at once say hi Marina, that is the hardest, when I am not home for a special occasion, my mom's birthday, little things like that, they may not mean a lot to other people but to me, they mean a lot, I guess that that is part of the package.... I send my mom cards and my little nieces cards for just about every occasion, Thanksgiving, Christmas, I send my mom pictures and stuff. Valentine's cards, this university cards, I am always sending them stuff, all the time, I should get a discount in Hallmark or something, specially for my two little nieces.

Joey: ...more intense. I would think that, probably the week of Good Friday, those kind of holidays, Christmas also, Thanksgiving, certain birthdays...

Maria: the day that I got the scholarship I called her at 1:00 a.m. she said what's wrong, what's wrong, porque estas hablando tan tarde (why are you calling so late)? I just call you to tell you that I got the scholarship.... I send them card like at this university or Valentine, I never used to give them those things when I was back home, but now I look for any little special day

to send them cards.

Luis: Lately I've thinking a lot about my mom because it was my mother's birthday, this Monday, so that is why I thought a lot about my mom, for example in January, when the Super Bowl came around, I am Cowboy fan, my father was in my mind a lot because exactly a year ago my father was here and we watched the Super Bowl together, it just happen that he came on a trip to Detroit, so we spent the evening together, so It was like a year ago my dad was here and this and that....once I sent my mom for her birthday....I remember the first chemistry that I had, that I took, it was so complex to me because I couldn't understand the grading system of the professor, what he did, he scribble in my exam, I saw all these red marks so I thought I failed, but I looked at the top and there was a 93-94, I go home and I kind of I don't know what the heck I did but I did it, so I would call right home and I would tell my mom about.

Vanessa: It's like, Father's Day, I am there and Mother's day I am there, but next year I am not going to be there because I am going to stay and that is going to hurt a lot because we always make a big deal for Father's Day and Mother's Day, my dad is always really happy, all the family is together... Thanksgiving, this university, specially for my niece and my nephews because they go over to my mom and my sisters make an egg hunt for all the little kids, and I used to help in doing that, I like to take pictures of them, I am going to miss my niece's birthday.

Family markers are not only the ones imposed by the society or the community. The families create their own special occasions. The Super Bowl game for Luis is an example. It is clear that those are the most difficult time to be separated. They are a change in the old routine and now, because of the physical distance, there is not a possibility of going through the family rituals. Throughout the above narratives, it is evident that family celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving are very important occasions for these families. Another type of occasion that intensifies the separateness is when unfortunate events happen like accidents and death of a family member and/or

friend. Although the fortunate and unfortunate events that become family markers increase the need for physical closeness, they also create an emotional closeness beyond the physical constraints.

Concrete Events

The following selection will illustrate the model for the concrete events. It will include the participants' perceptions of these encounters as well as the five phases. Throughout the quotations, it will be possible to see the changes which occurred in the participants' behaviors due to the physical distance and the changes of behaviors influenced by past concrete events.

General Perceptions

The following excerpts describe the general perceptions of the participants. The perceptions are based on changes occurred as consequences of their departure from the place of origin.

Rolando: The first semester it was tough, getting adjusted to the transition, getting adjusted to new faces, new people, different races, different lives styles, different cultures!, different food, I mean totally different, getting adjusted to that was pretty interesting, it was a learning experience....I was kind of afraid...when I was over there before coming over here, I didn't appreciate the little things like the food, the speaking, listen to music, and other little things you take for granted when you are there, it is different when you leave for a while and go back you say God this is what happen, I better don't loose it...leaving my family, I appreciate their love their support they gave me all my life I had a different meaning, love for them....I still get excited going home, see that there are changes...I still want to preserve, go back to my culture, eating the food, speaking, and the only difference there is from the first time to now, is that leaving is a little, it is much easier, I've got used to being away, saying bye, it is much easier, it's not as hard as the first time or second time when I left. After being over there seeing my family, they are fine, my brothers are fine, my friends are fine....I noticed all these changes, you don't know about them because

when you are there you don't really pay attention, you have it, you are not really concern, but when you leave and come back you see all these changes...

Marina: It was really hard for my parents, my mom, the day that I was coming up here, she was crying, she had me crying, I said don't cry, if you don't cry I will be okay, I'll hold it, if you cry I am going to break down, I know I will break down, before we even left for the airport, I go to my room and my mom was crying, no mijita (my daughter), and my father, he was very strong and he was able not to show even if it hurt him, but my father, the day I left, he didn't say good bye to me, he couldn't, I knock his door, I am leaving, okay mija (my daughter), my dad takes the quickest showers ever, I'll wait for daddy to come out, y no salia, no salia (he would not go out). The second year it was as hard, I cry a little, my mom of course cry. My brothers, it is hard for my brothers tambien (also), one of my brothers he is like my father, the other he will always hug and kiss me, but he will not touch my sisters. (The first one) I had to leave after he went to school, he had a straight face but once he touch me, he started crying, he couldn't hold it no more, and his friends were there, he didn't care about his friends, he was like crying and crying. It is hard for them also, they didn't want me to come up here, why you don't go here to the university, they didn't really don't care the why, they just care about having me there physically all the time, I have always been there for them, all the time.

Joey: As far as familiarities with other states and big cities, I was in touch with that, I grew up in Houston, I was very active in high school in accounting, in track, in cross country so we will go to San Antonio, Austin...so I wasn't culture shock or anything like that, I knew you have to watch your own back, those kind of basic natural thing, so I wasn't really, I was able to adapt to the conditions.... It was kind of weird because all our friends were up here, we'll asked them aren't you happy, aren't you excited to go home for Christmas?, most of them will respond yea, or I don't get along with my family, I am not going home I am staying with another friend's place, so like they were not really looking forward to going for Christmas to their families, like we were, we were counting way long time for that, to go home, we were very excited to go home and spend time with the family and friends back there, so we were looking forward to it a lot. We knew that the things that we took for granted when we were down that they were sure missed up here so that was , that gives more excitement and made it more special.... My mom is very happy when I am down there, it has been getting easier, I think my mom, my older sister tells me, I told them that I wasn't going to be able to come home between now until Spring semester starts, and my sister called me back and she told me that mom is disappointed that you are not coming home, cause I told my mom that I was going to take

Spring and Summer, so she was disappointed, so that is why I went before the Summer semester started.

Maria: It (leaving) taught me to appreciate more what I have, when I left home I said I learn to appreciate my family a lot more, and I don't appreciate the little things that I have back home.... and now all the sudden I am by myself, it really affected me, I cried a lot, I don't cry anymore, now I cry when I am depress, when I don't have anybody to tell everything and I go I want to go home (pretended cry).... One thing that also, what hurt me, I said well gee. they have, the things are going so good for them, oh, they don't need me no more, they don't need me any more, it will hurt because before, I would go to the store to get tortillas or something else, and when I was there my mom will say L. (brother) go to the store to get tortilla, and I was like why you didn't tell me to get tortillas, I am here, but I wouldn't say anything.

Luis: Before the trip, I was more excited than anything, I was very sentimental because my father...he really opened up and talked to me, and that really made it a little harder to leave home, but it encouraged me because he told me that he was proud of me for what I was doing and that was something that nobody else have done in my family, from my mother's side, there are five other grandchildren, I am the sixth one, and none of them even graduated from high school, none of them went to college and they all grew up in the U.S. where they have the opportunity, so to him it was a major, major step that I was going to take, so I was very excited to make my parents proud, my family proud, I was looking forward to it, I really hadn't thought of how it was going to be to spend so much time away from home, all I was thinking was, I am so excited because I am going to (this university), and I've never been to college and this is going to be a new experience, I was more happy and excited than anything else, that I can remember, I was a little worried because I didn't want to leave anything behind that was important to me, you know, clothes or books, I packed a lot of things, and what I felt was felt by my other friends, when we got into that plane, we couldn't help but to be excited, that was the second time I had ever been in an airplane too, so that was another part of the excitement, traveling. The first semester it was the hardest semester of all, I think, I mentioned we had support but not that much, but it wasn't until I actually got here to Michigan, after the first maybe after the second week that I was here, I finally settle down, I got to really get into my studies and my classes, I didn't have difficult classes, but I starting to get into classes and having to learn how to effectively study, use my time.

The excitement started to dissipate and reality became evident. Luis became aware of the distance he had put between him and his parents.

...all the sudden I realized and I said, I am not going to see my parents, and I am not going to see my family, until, oh! my God December, four months of this studying, no parents, just my friends and stuff, so I started I felt a lot of discouragement, I felt alone, in a way, I felt like I was so far away from home, the worst thing that I did was that I looked in a map and I saw Texas, because when you fly in matters of four five hours you can travel two thousand miles, and I looked at the map and I saw Michigan across the country, two weeks before that day I was only few minutes away from Mexico, now I am only few minutes away from Canada, the other side of the country, so it was, I realized it was a drastic change, move in distance for me, distance in a sense that I couldn't jump in a car and say I would go to see mom, because it was going to take too much money, a lot of time, and danger to go do that, so I felt very discourage, I felt like I didn't want to be here, what I've done?, did I really make the right decision?, what's going on with my life?, and I start asking myself of these questions, and then I would pick up the phone, and talk to my mom, and she would cry, I would call my girlfriend and she would cry because I wasn't home.

Vanessa: I've always wanted to come here and I've been so excited being here and the excitement hasn't gone, because once that we are here more people are coming, makes you feel that we have to teach them the basic like what everybody was teaching us when we came here, we got to help them out. Like where everything is, and taking them where to eat, what classes they are going to have, they know about which professor should take, just helping them and guiding them in whatever they need help in that makes you feel more excited, I am always excited to be here, it's a whole new different place, and there is a whole new different world that I've never got to know, like we got out and I go like I am going to go and discover this, I discovered this today, you really don't think about it that way, it just happens and you go wow.

At the beginning, it was fear of the unexpected, of the new. The fear began to dissipate, opening the way to consider the experience as it changes from difficult, to interesting, to a learning experience. Excitement and sadness accompany each concrete event. As time passes, a new family routine is created. There is a realization and acceptance of the circumstances. The new routine allows the participants to gain a new perspective on the family and on

their place of origin. A common pattern of appreciation for who and what they have left is evident. Actually, it seems as if the physical distance has created a greater emotional closeness.

Time Allocation

The following excerpts describe the changes on time allocation. The participants managed their time according to emotional closeness.

Rolando: ...when I am there in Christmas or when I am around there in the summer, I spend a lot of time with them, spend precious time with them, we go out, we go out and eat, it's different from when I was there, when I was there I hardly spend time with them I was always with my friends....There has been some change, I spend more time with my family, less time with my friends.

Marina: I was just as excited to go home (second year). The first time I saw all my family and some of my friends, the second I didn't see my friends, it wasn't really because I didn't want to see my friends but I didn't make any effort to go and see my friends, they can come and see me, I am busy with my family, I don't want to take time away from my family, my family is the most important for me, my family is my first priority. The second time one of my sisters had a baby the day after I got there, other than that, I spent a lot of time with my family, I spent a lot of time with my dad, he was home, my brothers and sisters were in school, my spring break.

Joey: More or less the same amount of people, when I was first go down there, my girlfriend was in high school so I would spend a lot of time with her, we spent a lot of time with her family, which I kind of regret toward the end, but now I spend a lot of time with my family. I probably have to be here for another year and half to graduate. During the summer I am just going to work, then I can go down whenever I want to and come back whenever I want to, in the summer, right now I cannot go home whenever I want to because of classes.

Maria: ...I saw my two best friends...

Luis: ...in the middle of February, the university sponsored a trip, a recruitment trip to go down to South Texas and recruit Latino students, Mexican-American students to come up here, and I was invited to go as the student representative, so it was very good, I was fortunate to represent this

university, I went to visit my old high school, and I got to speak with the students and make presentations, so I got to go home and spent another three or four days at home with my family and some students, we were suppose to work, according to the university but I spent a lot of time at home.

Luis explains the changes which he experienced when time becomes a luxury.

It really has changed, because my first year, the first time I was home for Christmas, everybody wanted more time, everybody wanted to sit down and talk, I basically visit mostly relatives, I went home to Mexico, every time I go home I visit my great grandmother, she is old, I take time to go see her because her time is limited....I would usually see my friends, I guess the closest friends that I have, or some times what we would do is that we will call each other up and try to get five or six of us to go put one night and try to spend some time together like that instead of having to visit each individual. I will spend an evening and having dinner with my grandparents, and another evening with another grandparents, aunts and uncles. My first year, sometimes I felt really bad because I spent a lot of time with the family, but not my immediate family....I visited her (girlfriend) a lot and her family. Technically, I was home, but in a sense I wasn't because I'm always in and out, when I came home back to Michigan after my first Christmas break, I felt really bad, it was hard, because I didn't really spend time with my parents, and my dad will spend time at home to be with me and I wasn't around, so when I went home for Spring break, that same year, I tried to spend most of the days just with my parents, just at home doing nothing....Now, as the years have come by, three years, not many relatives come to see me, it kind of died off a little bit, only the immediate, immediate family. Now I only have about three close friends that I still keep in touch from high school, who I make an effort to go see or they come see me and we spend some time, like over the holidays or over the summer break, but that number has decreased.

Vanessa: ...when I go over there, I don't really want to see anybody, I just want to be home with my family, because I guess you miss them so much that you want to be there, and you can care less about your friends right now because your friends are not going to give you happiness at that time because you really want to be with your family more than you want to be with your friends, if your friends want to be with you they'll come looking for you, I am not going to go looking for them if they don't want me to be around them, I rather let them give me a call instead that being me let's go out, I rather let them call me, but I didn't really want to be with anybody, I just wanted to be at home, I didn't want go out.

During the very first encounter, after the original separation, the participants wanted to see as many people as possible. They were the news in town, therefore, people also wanted to see them. As the routine of coming and going settles down, the participants realize that there is small and pressured amount of time available during the visits. They become increasingly protective of this time. Consequently, they allocate their time according to emotional closeness, more close more time together. When this goal is not achieved there is a feeling of regret.

Behavioral Changes

The participants changed their behaviors in respond to the physical separation. These new behaviors portray the change in relationships.

Rolando: I clean up, I try to alleviate some of the stress that they have, like house chores, job, getting the money, paying bills, basically that it is they have done all their lives , struggle, struggle, struggle, struggle, now that I am up here I'm trying not worry them....now I am outside, I love them, I mean I used to love them (laugh), but I love them more actually, one of these days they may not be there and I want to pay them back for all that they have done.

Maria: Now if I would go back home, it will be totally different, it is going to be very different, the first thing that I know it's going to affect me is because when I want just to get out and go somewhere and I am not going to be able to do it, mom can I go over there? I know that if I would still be home I would still be fighting with my mom, when you have the things with you, you don't learn to appreciate them, until they are gone and you think about it, then is when it hits you, oh it meant so much to me and I didn't know it, there is nothing I can do about it because I am not there anymore, like my first project over here about leaving home, and it is about how I struggled to get here, to get comfortable here and how I never told my mom I love you or gave her a good hug or tell her that I'll miss her, I never did that, she knows because I told her.

Luis: I think that emotions have changed, situations have changed, now, my dad every now and then he goes as far as joking around, when I go home for the summer he says, ya, vete! tu comes bastante yo no se como la haces, o que te mantenga el gobierno (enough, go! you eat too much I do not know how you do it, or the government should support you), he is trying to tell me, when are you going to school, he never said anything like that when I was first going to come up, but now we have grown a little more comfortable with each other, now the subject comes up and we talk about.

Due to the physical separation, there is a behavioral change in the family.

Topics that were sources of discussion become irrelevant. There is more openness. The participants assume new responsibilities.

Phases

The following passages describe the phases of the concrete event as experienced by each of the participants.

Rolando: (Phase I) I remember in the plane, I couldn't, all exciting, I couldn't wait for the plane to land in Texas in the local airport, and when it landed, we are already here, I told my friends, we are already here, we were all happy, I can feel that in the airplane there is people that spoke Spanish, so we felt like we were back home, people were speaking Spanish so we started speaking in Spanish, and I told them, ya llegamos, mira (we arrived, look), and we started to joking around, **(Phase II)** as soon we got off the airplane into the airport you could feel the climate, the heat, it was there, it felt good, cause in Michigan at that time it was cold (Christmas break) and over there it was winter season but it was warm, you can feel the change, a bunch of Mexicanos in the airport, and then my family, well my family didn't go to the airport because my dad and mom were working, but my other roommates' families were there, my friend was there, we hugged, get to see them and get to be home and we drove home, my parents were there, I hugged my brothers and sisters, everybody, we just talk, good to be home....Yes, at first, I was really close to them, when I got them, I was close, we went out to eat, we will eat at home, I was really close, **(Phase III)** but then toward the middle of the vacation I started leaving the house, going to see my other people, my friends that I haven't seen them from high school, I went out to see them, I started to going out to places that I used to go out when I was there, **(Phase IV)** and toward the end, toward when I was going to come back, I didn't want to get too close

because I knew I will miss them, so I'll stay a little away from them because I know I will end up to hold it, you don't try to show that , but the tears came out, it was sad, my mom, usually when I see someone else crying makes me cry, so my mom started to cry, and my dad, my dad didn't, I could tell his eyes were watery, I cannot see the tears, it was tough, I said to myself hopefully it won't be as tough as the first time I left, but, it was tough (laugh), still , even though I said to myself hopefully will not but it was, I got to plane and I was in my way over here, (Phase V) when I got back here, I saw the snow , god what a change like in eight hours, in eight hours over back home was hot, it wasn't hot , it was just nice weather, and here, when I got here was cold and I can see the snow, totally different.

Marina: (Phase I) I am going home, I was so happy, I miss my mom and my dad and my little brothers and sister, if we get pizza all the time, I didn't care, I just wanted to be home, and I wanted to be in a warm weather, it is a different smells, being up here and being down there, it is two different smell, it is different everything, I am going to come back, but I don't care, I just want to go home for two weeks, I was excited, and when we got to the airport , I was so nervous, I'll see my mom, every time I go home that's how I get, I get very nervous every time I go home, I guess I am confusing nervousness with excitement, I am so happy that I am going to be home...(Phase II) when I first went, I was so excited, at the middle of it, (Phase III) I stopped being so happy about it, I was very happy but it also made me sad, I have to leave my family again, I don't want to and I was sad, toward the end, that is what I was thinking, instead of realizing the time that I had, and just be happy about it, I don't want to go back to school, I like it here, (Phase IV) the day before I left, okay, you have to come back to school, you cannot do too much about it, go pack, no crying...(Phase V) it wasn't hard, hard leaving because I knew I was going to come back, I told myself, you are going to go back.

Joey: (Phase I) When we left actually I think we were crying all over the place in the airport, when we got there not necessarily crying but it was a very joyful time, everyone was there, at the airport, so it was very nice, it was a good welcome back. (Phase II) When we were first there everything was great, and toward the end, when we knew we had to come back, it was kind of tough...(Phase III) we knew we will going to be there for a while so we didn't think about leaving again, (Phase IV) when that time started, when we started to think about leaving again, it was tough also, it was tough again. Being a student it was a good time for me to relax, it came in a good time, it was like a break from study and we would go back during Spring break, two months later, it was a good break, (Phase V) and then we knew what we had to do, we knew what was expected from us, as far as school work, our family, it was just back to school, to work again, and

then we will have another chance to go home.

Maria: (Phase I) I was sad and I was happy, I was sad because I thought that I was going to a place where I don't belong anymore, not belong family wise or anything, but I am a part of them but I am not with them, I can do whatever I want and they don't have influence in my decisions so I felt I didn't belong anymore, it was really weird and it was really sad, my roommate she went back home two weeks before, and she never cried, and she was telling me that when she came back, when she got over there she felt like a stranger, like out of place, and it was very hard for her to feel that way, I said, I don't feel that way but then I started thinking well, you know, it's true, I was really happy, but I felt I was going to be a stranger, I wasn't going to be part of it anymore. **(Phase II)** When I got there, I couldn't find my mom because there were so many people in the airport, and my best friend was there, I saw them and Ah!!! crying, I started crying, we hugged for a long time, and then we went home, **(Phase III)** it was hard to adjust at first but then when you are there two or three days you get the hang of it, it is like you are back home, but you don't have this thing of or you never say oh have to go back, I want to go back home, back to the dorm, you spent time you forget about school for a while but you know that you have to come back, that's how I felt, I thought the pressure is going to be off but the pressure was still there, I just knew that I had to come back and get more classes. **(Phase IV)** I was very anxious to come back, I don't know why, I love my mom, I love everybody, we never fight when I was there, I was working those two weeks, I felt really sad because I was oh my gosh here I go leaving them again, we'll go through the same thing again, but it was different this time because I knew they were there, I knew they were fine, I knew I had to come back, it was sad, my sister wouldn't let go of me at the airport, I was really anxious to come back...**(Phase V)** back, I started crying, I started crying in the plane, when I came back I felt relieved because I was back here but then I felt sad because they were back there, it was very confusing.

Luis: (Phase II) when I first arrived, I was very sentimental, I really couldn't say anything, I was crying, I was proud, I saw my parents and my family crying when I first arrived, there were four of us arriving but we had a third of the town picking us up, it was a great feeling because it showed us that people were very interested in of what we were doing, that they were happy that we were home, **(Phase III)** I felt at ease, I felt like a whole load had just been like slapped out my shoulders, I felt comfortable that I was home, I don't know, I guess that just the feeling of being home again made it better, I was comfortable, I am comfortable here, but it is different, when you are home, you are home, there is no where else but your own home, then toward the middle of the break, I felt overwhelmed, because there were so

many people that I wanted to see, there were so many people that wanted to see me, that I felt like the days were come by so fast, so fast, I didn't have time to slow down practically, because I was practically on a time table....I wanted to spend time with everybody, so time flew by so fast. I think that it will be hard for me to describe my feelings, my emotions at the middle of the break because I was so cut up with doing so many things that I didn't even remember, (Phase IV) before I knew it, two days before I left, I wanted to slow down because I knew that I was flying to Michigan, two days before I took off, it's when my mom started to say, give me all your dirty clothes, give me all your clothes because I have to wash them, everything that you want to be ironed place it in one pile so I can iron them for you, and that meant departure, that meant leaving, so once again I started to feel, already I felt the separation right there, my brother and my sisters they felt that there is no sense in doing anything anymore because he is going to leave, we cannot do too much, so it was once again hard, nobody said anything, nobody will bring up the subject, something you really didn't want to talk about it, because you know I had to leave. The day we went to the airport, it was kind of ironic because we lost the key of the trunk, and none of us really complained, I was a little nervous, I was nervous because I thought I would miss my flight, we looked for the key, but nobody said anything, I guess I really didn't want to leave, I had such a good time at home, I had a lot of relatives and friends that went to drop me off at the airport, and I remember it was early in the morning, we took like a 6:45 flight in the morning and we had a lot of people there, it was hard to say goodbye, sometimes I prefer to just maybe leave the house by myself than have so many people at the airport saying goodbye, the intensity grew up....(Phase IV and Phase V) yes, they have, they have changed in the sense that they are not as intense anymore, it used to be but now I think we've, I've made the adjustment into knowing that my family misses me and that I miss my family, but there are things that I have to take care of before hand, I am not as emotional anymore, sentimental as I used to be, now sometimes when I go home I tend to miss Michigan, I thought I've never hear myself saying that, after the first year and a half, I got so used to being busy and studying, and be involved, that I went home, it was so different, I got to be with my family but it was so different, I wanted to work, I wanted to study, I wanted to read, I've never had heard myself say that before, but I got so used to be a student, it was a full time thing for me, second and third year emotionally it wasn't that intense. I started to adjust, my family started to adjust, they started to accept the fact that I was going to be away from home for a long, long time, my parents, my grandparents, my family they all felt , I can tell they were proud of me, because out of the ordinary, I turn to be quite different, from my high school there was nobody, nobody, ever got out to Michigan, in the longest time, so many years, to study out of state, and those who had gotten out of state had somehow, one or some other way failed, they had gone back

home because they couldn't hack it, so I was afraid that something like that would happen to me, that I would ended going back home....now, my mother she doesn't cry anymore, my brother doesn't cry anymore when I leave, it's not a goodbye, it's more like I see you later, type of thing, I'll see you when you get back, they know I'll be back, so they are looking forward to it.

Vanessa: (Phase I) I was happy and I was sad because I wanted to get presents for everybody and the first people that I really wanted get is my mom and my dad, I was able to get everybody a present, and I was like I really hope that my parents see this present as like I really giving it to them out of love, and I really hope that there is not a fight in the family, I hope that everybody is like close, the way Christmas is supposed to be, like really warm all the family, I just wanted it to be happy, and I was happy because I was going to see them and sad because I thought that like all of us are not really a family, but more than anything else I was happy. **(Phase II)** Oh, it was great because my dad was there, he was making comida, ay!, tengo que ir a traer un chivo mija para que venga toda la gente (I have to go and get a goat, my daughter, so everybody can come), I felt really special, I was put up there, but him doing that there is also like envy from my sisters toward me and that is what really kept us apart all the time, I was like, oh, it is my fault that he is doing that, they don't really see it that way they are just, the way they see is that is, I've try to tell them, you cannot change the way they see it. I moved here, I am doing what I wanted, I want to make myself better, I don't want to ruin my life like they (sisters) have...I want to know that I did something and that there are people who are able to be proud of what I did and what I am going to be, I am proud of myself. **(Phase III)** Then, I wasn't a big deal anymore, I was so happy to be to be with everybody, I spent more time with my niece and my mother, and took her to buy clothes and stuff, they don't really give that much attention to me the way I give it to them, I don't know why I am doing it, but I don't really mind doing it, I love to give attention to everybody. **(Phase IV)** I didn't really want to leave because it is hard saying goodbye and see everybody crying, I knew it was coming up, you know that is coming up, and you are getting prepared, I am not going to cry, it was hard, but my mom is pretty strong about it and my dad really didn't show it, everybody knew he was sad, he was there when I was there.

Although, for the purpose of analysis five phases are presented, they are a continuum. There is not a clear cut division between them. There are feelings that may reemerge. However, there are some common emotions to each facet.

High levels of excitement, anxiety, happiness, and joyfulness are found predominantly during the first phase, the day/s prior to the encounter. The second phase, immediate arrival, is filled with happiness and emotional and physical closeness. It is an adjustment period. The individual becomes again an in-place family member. There is a homey feeling brought by the place and the people.

Between phases II and III, the individual goes from being a noticeable person to being like any other member of the family. Phase III, middle days, is a comfortable period. There is a creation of a new routine. After being emotionally and physically very close to the family, the person tends to leave the house more. S/he gets to see his/her friends. It is a period when conflicting feelings appear, such as whether to stay home with the family or spend time with friends, staying in the place of origin or going back to the university.

Phase IV, day/s prior to departure, brings anxiety, sadness, and tension. There is a feeling that separation is imminent. There is a sense of physical and emotional detachment. There is planning for future visits. The person starts to look for positive things that are waiting for her/him. During phase V, arrival to the current place, the person realizes the situation. There is a feeling of relief and resignation. The individual knows that there are responsibilities and expectations s/he should meet.

The two models illustrate the process these families go through to preserve their connections. The data supported the two types of family activities, physical encounters and long distance interactions. The role that these family actions

play in the sustainability of the family was shown. The final chapter will be devoted to the summary and the implications of the concept of Family Sustainability.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

One of the primary contributions of this research is the application of the concept of Family Sustainability. Since the concept is in its early stages of development, considerable research remains to be done. However, important considerations emerged based on this study. In this chapter, I will present the most relevant findings on how the definition was applied to the lives of six Mexican-Americans living in the midwest United States. The different components of Family Sustainability will be exposed. Also, I will offer some implications for theory, practitioners, and social institutions. Finally, I will indicate some of the recommendations for future research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to apply a theoretical concept, Family Sustainability, using qualitative research methodology. Six southern Mexican-American college students from a midwest university were interviewed. Open-ended questions and in-depth conversations were the format for these meetings.

The data collected in this research are based on how families give meaning to their own experiences. Three female and three male Mexican-American students provided insight on their families. The information gives relevance to daily and habit behaviors. In this study, the voices of the family members who

left the place of origin are used. This methodology challenges the notion of a single definition for family. The participants defined themselves and their families. Their family definition and their self-definitions are influenced by their historical background and family history.

The fact that they are living extremely close to the border with Mexico influenced their high degree of ethnic identity. Their ethnic identities are also influenced by the college community. They are all migrant families. The parents work in blue-collar or service jobs. The parents' educational level is low. However, they stress education as a mean for social and economic mobility. The change from being a majority in South Texas to being a minority in the midwest made the participants face discrimination, racism, and hatred.

Family Sustainability is defined in terms of a family property or quality that enables the family to maintain family unity, which is developed and strengthened by continuous and various activities in which the family and its members engage through interactions with their environments. The specific actions the individual should take in order to preserve these relationships are influenced by the environmental circumstances of the family. In this case, the context is a physical separation of thousand of miles. The family is expected to go through a restructuring of its boundaries. Boundary ambiguity is a means of coping with the new situation.

During the period of physical distance, the participants had maintained their family unity using mainly two types of actions, physical encounters and long distance actions. The encounters are predominantly on university's vacation

time and family celebrations. These encounters are high in emotional and physical closeness. There are patterns of behaviors common to all the encounters. The degree in which each of these behaviors appears depends on the frequency and reason for the encounters. Also, it will be influenced by the physical distance. As seen in this case, the visits were very intense. The allocation of time follows a hierarchical order. More time is given to the closest family members. These visits are characterized by five phases, The days prior to departure, the days immediately after arrival, the middle days, the days prior to departure, and the days immediately after separation. Every encounter is unique. However, each is influenced by past experiences.

The second type of activities are the long distance actions. These actions are writing letters and cards. The letters are used to give a detailed description of daily activities, to offer words of encouragement, and to express feelings. The family exchanges objects through the mail. This is done with the purpose of receiving a more tangible thing from the family. Phone calls are crucial to the maintenance of family ties. They give immediate emotional reward. They permit a physical closeness regardless of the physical distance. Another type of long distance action is thinking. This is done daily, however, the emotional intensity increases around family rituals and markers.

The family as a unit provides constant emotional and economical support. The activities necessary to maintain the family unity, or the work of kin, are done by family members regardless their sex. Rituals are crucial components of Family Sustainability. Family celebrations and traditions are particular

moments of high intensity in the need for physical and emotional closeness. In the new context, families create new traditions and family markers. The third type of ritual is patterned behaviors which are the ones that change the most due to the fact that a member of the family who leaves the place of origin creates a new reconfiguration of roles. Other members may step in or the void is maintained. The participants try to reenter the old patterned behaviors during the physical encounters.

Based on the exploration of the literature and the data collected, the components of Family Sustainability are connectedness, empathy to family members' feelings, and love. There is a need for a viable ecosystem to provide support and nurture the process. Technology becomes an especially crucial medium for families that live physically separated by thousands of miles. The creation of support systems and the renegotiation of relationships and boundaries will allow this process to be successful in maintaining the family unity. The economic situation will influence the availability of resources.

This study has served as an opportunity to explore the world of members of a minority group in the United States, the Mexican-American. This group is often underrepresented in social studies. Their voices are too often forgotten. At the personal level, this research has been a medium to further develop and apply a concept that I have been researching for a long time. Moreover, this dissertation is even more important because it has helped me to understand my own reality.

Implications

In the next part of the chapter, I will present implications of this study for theory, practice, and policy.

Theory

This research is my first attempt to apply the incipient concept of Family Sustainability. It is conceptualized as a family property. It was developed based on observations of family behaviors. It expands what had been done in the study of families. It is expected to contribute in our understanding of family processes. It can help us to understand the dynamics of the relations involved in reconfiguration of families. It supports the pushing away of the monolithic definition of family by looking at the complexity and variety of ways in which families sustain themselves.

Practice

The concept and the models have practical applications for persons who study and work with families. At this time, the definition of family goes beyond the nuclear family. Family configurations, such as step-families, biological family and adoptive families, international adoption, and service men and women stationed out of the country, to name a few, create a renegotiation of relationships. If the decision to maintain the prior relationships and reorganize the present situation is made, this concept can help in the understanding of the process. It can also be a tool to compare environments that enable or inhibit the maintenance of these relationships. It can also help to identify the resources available to the family and how to work within those parameters.

Policy

Since this research is based on the lives of college students, I will argue that this concept can have a specific implementation at college and university level. The recruitment of out-of-state, foreign, and minority students can be encouraged by demonstrating a sensitivity to the new realities of the students. Understanding the process the students go through by deciding to leave their places of origin can help to facilitate resources that contribute to the well being of the students and their families. Based on this research, discrimination was found to influence ethnic identity. It also contributed to the isolation of these people. Institutions can be aware of that and take necessary precautions to limit the isolation and offer appropriate counseling. The model can help institutions of social welfare to identify the elements that may contribute to sustaining emotional and psychological needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

After reading the findings, I began to think of future research that can contribute to the development and implementation of this concept. One main idea is to develop the models into two way models. As it is now, the models portray the process and experiences of the family member who left the place of origin. The next step will be to interview the family members that stay and display their realities.

There are issues for which I did not find support in the data and that go beyond the scope of this dissertation. The first issue is the role of different

social institutions in the process of family sustainability. Some of the participants referred to the school principal as a source of encouragement.

What is the role of the school as a social institution and as an intrinsic part of the community in this process? Colleges and universities are institutions that receive individuals that are physically separated. Do they provide an environment that inhibits or enables the maintenance of family relations? Another interesting question is what is the role of religion, as a social institution, in family sustainability?

The following are some questions that can be explored which are not answered by the data. What are the influences of new ethnic groups in the new place? How is the place of origin affected by the return or visits of the individuals or families that left? What happens when the children form nuclear families of their own? What happens with the death of the parents? How is the process viewed by the family members who remain at the place of origin?

Although there is some mention of economical resources, such as money for the telephone bill and for airplane tickets, the dissertation points to the need to further explore and analyze the issue of social class. The data showed no evidence of gender differences. However, it will be useful to see if by adding informants or changing the population of study, differences can be found.

Another worthwhile issue to explore could be the formation of unified groups for support. Are they ethnically homogeneous? Are they established at the beginning and dissolved as time passes? What happens with the leaving and arriving of members?

Finally, it will be very helpful to compare how Family Sustainability is played based on ethnic background, sexual preferences, and age.

Every study invites a new study. There are issues supported by the data and there are issues that invite further exploration. It is not my intention to present a finite work, but rather to begin the journey in the development of a new concept.

Epilogue

This research has taken us through the process of how and why this group of southern Mexican-Americans sustain their family unity. The how was answered based on long distance actions and physical encounters. The why was answered based on participants' needs. These needs were emotional support, continuance of family ties, connectedness, and preservation of the family unity. This process triggered changes in the family relations. Boundaries became ambiguous. Individual and family expectations also changed. As the participants and their families changed, so did the university's view of the program. These dynamics produced some developments since the last formal interview that I had with the participants. These developments have been mainly in two dimensions: group composition and involvement of families.

Group composition changed by adding more southern Mexican-Americans and by reaching a more diverse population. At the beginning, there were only four males. Now, there are over one hundred, males and females. Every year the enrollment has increased. The first couple of years, the midwest university brought only students that were in the top of their graduating class. The

students had to have an excellent record in school at the academic level, at the disciplinary level, and at the interpersonal level. As the group became larger, and the program was a success, the university officials decided to increase the academic diversity of the applicants. They started to accept students who were not at the top of their graduating class. They also started to reach and recruit students at the beginning of their high school years. The university will present financial and academic incentives for the potential students to help them to succeed in high school and to attend college. With these interventions, the university opens a world to young people that otherwise would not had access to out of state, and sometimes in state, college education. Furthermore, to some students already in their senior year at the university, to attend this university has opened for them the possibility to enroll in graduate school and pursue a more advanced degree. For them this was not a goal when they decided to move to the midwest to study in college.

The involvement of the family in all this process also changed. At the beginning the parents were involved only at the decision making point to support their children's move. As their sons and daughters started to study and succeed in the university, they became active advocates of the program. They would spread the news in the community. They would advertise the university. They would do active recruitment. Further, when the number of students increased, the parents created a "family support group" in their community. They give emotional support to each other. They share news and ideas. For instance, Luis' parents were elected the representatives from the group and, in

October 1993, they were invited by the university to spend a long weekend on campus.

The decision by the participants to leave their place of origin provoked a series of changes in different spheres: in their lives, in the lives of their families, in the community of origin, and in their current community. Thus, the four spheres had a new dynamic of interaction and a new reality as result of the experience of sustaining family unity. Certainly, more research is needed to unveil and unpack these new processes and the impact of interventions to further our understanding of Family Sustainability.

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