A historical perspective: Mexican American elderly socio-economic experiences in the dominant culture

Anthony Ortega
San Jose State University

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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: MEXICAN-AMERICAN ELDERLY SOCIO-ECONOMIC EXPERIENCES IN THE DOMINANT CULTURE

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Social Work
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
APPROVED
EXAMINING BOARD:

By
Anthony Ortega
May 1977

DATE: May 26, 1977
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Chapter I

PURPOSE OF STUDY

During the past ten years there has been a growing awareness and interest in the Mexican-American elderly. The literature written on the Mexican-American elderly has focused on the inadequacy or lack of social services being provided to the Mexican-American elderly here in the United States. There are many areas of concern with respect to this ethnic group. For instance, it is questionable if the health system is delivering relevant services to the Spanish-speaking population, especially the Mexican-American elderly. Secondly, the orientation of the Mexican-American elderly to their roles or functions within the family and American society is also uncertain. Finally, there is a lack of awareness or participation of the Mexican-American elderly in the political aspects of American society.

For the purpose of this study, however, the researcher will not dwell on these issues, but discover and document a body of knowledge which will reflect historical experiences of the Anciano's.* The focus will be on the life experiences

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*For the purpose of this study this term will be used interchangeably with Mexican-American elderly, Chicano elderly, and "las personas de edad." The researcher will use each of these terms when appropriate. The term "Chicano" carries a negative connotation with the Mexican-American elderly because it is interpreted to mean "a person of low status."
of the Anciano in a socio-economic context, such as employment experiences, institutional experiences, and family experiences. The oral approach, although not a new method to this group, will provide a reflection of the Anciano's feelings and viewpoints toward their historical past.

It is the contention of this study that a need exists to document and research the life experiences of the aging Chicano. Historical experiences, if not shared and written, may be lost in the minds of the Anciano. This valuable information could serve many purposes. For instance, the historical perspective of the Anciano could be read by the younger generation of Chicanos and enlighten them to the hardships of their grandparents' past experiences. Also, in terms of research, there is a possibility of developing hypotheses for further research projects and a framework for delivering services to the Mexican-American elderly. Such ideas were expressed by Justino Balderrama in a similar study, as follows:

A new set of perspectives which might be helpful in more adequately describing the "realities" of Mexicano/Chicano population which in turn may contribute new theories that would be appropriate to a new age.¹

In terms of delivery of services, Marta Sotomayor, in her paper, "The Role of the Aged in a Colonized Situation,"

voiced the need to record historical experiences of the Mexican-American elderly when she stated:

Planning for services for the Chicano aged ... offers an opportunity for the development of programs that takes into account ethnicity, culture, language, and a life experience of oppression and material deprivation.2 (Author's emphasis)

Magdalena Miranda also stressed the value of a historical perspective:

We must conduct research ... and we must initiate it soon if we are to have an historical perspective. The characteristics of the aged Spanish-speaking of the future may or may not be very different from those alive today, but we will not know unless we are more deliberate and conscious about recording this history.3

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past, assimilation theorists have explained the social adjustment of the European immigrant. The ideal goal of the "melting pot" theory incorporates this fundamental concept of assimilation. These same theorists have attempted to apply their paradigms to the Mexican immigrants' relationship with the American society.


Thus, the immigrant was compelled to reject his ethnic background and adopt new patterns of values and behavioral styles. The dominant society considers it a "problem" when the process of assimilation is slow or is met with resistance by an ethnic group. Since the Mexican, according to social scientists (Madsen & Heller), was unable to adjust and conform to the dominant values, he was considered a "problem." The clinging of the traditional folk culture by the Mexican-American has been cited as a cause for their not "making it" in the American Society.

The present level and extent of assimilation of the Mexican-American is highly diversified, varying in one extreme from the traditional folk culture to "complete" assimilation at the other extreme.

Joan W. Moore supported this by saying,

Mexicans include both the assimilated and the unassimilated. Full acceptance into American Life is available for many. In Los Angeles the middle class, third generation young people intermarry with native anglos to a large degree. On the other hand, there are still large Mexican enclaves, particularly in certain counties in Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas where ethnic exclusiveness is almost complete...

The existence of such diversity makes it difficult to generalize within the Mexican-American culture.

The scope of this research project has stated the idea that the paradigms of assimilation and acculturation do

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not fully explain the relationships of the Mexican-American within the dominant society. Hopefully, the historical experiences of the Mexican-American elderly will provide data that will explain their relationship with the dominant society.

The study attempts to explore and answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons for the Mexican-born to immigrate to the United States and what are the reasons for the American-born Anciano to migrate to California?

2. What effect did the migration have on the family?

3. What types experiences have the Anciano had with American institutions such as welfare, churches, etc.

4. What are the Anciano's feelings toward their economic condition of the present as well as the past?

5. To what extent will this study be valuable in future planning for social programs in the delivery of services to the Mexican-American elderly?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In studying a particular ethnic group it is imperative to develop a framework that is applicable and provides a defined historical perspective to the problem.

The three basic ideologies that exist in American society are the "Melting Pot," "Assimilation," and "Cultural
Pluralism."

The theory of the "Melting Pot" in the American society is the expectation by the dominant society for the immigrants to be fully assimilated to the extent of losing their cultural heritage. Assimilation is the process of two different cultural groups that come to share a common culture, or a fusion of cultural heritage. Cultural pluralism is the alternative to assimilation by ethnic groups in the United States. It is the preservation of the cultural heritage of the ethnic group within the American Society.

To gain a clear perspective of an ethnic group's relationship with the dominant society, it is necessary to discuss these concepts thoroughly.

**Early Adjustment of the Immigrant**

Upon arrival into a new environment, the immigrant must quickly adjust to the prevailing norms and values. He will go through a rapid process of social adjustments. Previous studies of immigrants' adjustments have attempted to explain the stages or series of events that immigrants experience. The renowned sociologist, Robert E. Park, postulated four cycles in which he concluded "there is a cycle of events which tends everywhere to repeat itself."

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Park's four stages were contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation.

The final stages were referred to by Park as "irreversible and progressive." 6

E. W. Bogardus theorizes another series of stages of race relationship which is particularly applicable to the immigrants of California. Curiosity and economics, the first stages involved the initial acquaintance of the immigrant to the host society. Employers eagerly begin to make use of the new supply of labor while the immigrants see this as an opportunity to improve themselves. The third and fourth stages are characterized by strong opposition to the immigrant by industrial and political sectors. Groups are formed and legislative bills passed to stop the invasion of the immigrants. The fifth stage, fair play tendencies, and sixth stage, quiescence, are the cooling down process of the host society. Friendship develops and sympathetic groups begin to make attempts to remedy past injustices done to the immigrants. Finally, the last stage is the one Bogardus calls the second-generation difficulties. This stage is characterized by the "fact that they [immigrants] have lost touch with the culture of their parents, and are not entirely accepted by the Americans, with the results that they become a "lost generation," cultured

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6 Ibid., p. 131.
hybrids, uncertain and unsure."  

The Mexican, Filipino, and Japanese immigrants' process of social adjustments were primarily based on these seven stages developed by Bogardus.

Both of these frameworks demonstrate a partial understanding of the adjustment process of the immigrant, even though both have been sternly criticized. In his last two stages Park's theory is questionable, stating that assimilation and amalgamation are the ultimate outcomes with little or no conflict. Bogardus' theory also may not be "universal to other immigrant groups and he does not claim so."  

Melting Pot Theory

In adapting to a new environment, the immigrant has no alternative but to adhere to and follow the standards and norms of behavior set by the dominant group. The less conspicuous and the more similar he is to the dominant group, the more this will enable him to successfully compete socially and economically. These ideas are what basically constitute the "Melting Pot" syndrome.

Historically, the ideal of the "melting pot" can be traced as far back as 1782, when Jean Creveceur spoke of his family's past and present generations melting into a

7 Ibid., p. 131.
8 Ibid., pp. 134-135.
new race of men in America. But it was not until Israel Zangwill's play, in 1908, which used the term "Melting Pot," that it became popular in America. Since then, the melting pot concept has been used by many authors interchangeably with terms such as Americanization, Anglo-conformity, and amalgamation. Assimilation or acculturation is also related to these terms, but it is used here as the process in which the "melting" occurs.

Glazer and Moynihan viewed the goal of the "melting pot" in America as,

The notion that the intense unprecedented mixture of ethnic and religious groups in American life was born to blend into a homogenous end product.

Kallen used the term "Americanization" as equivalent to "melting pot." He described it as,

To signify the adoption of the American variety of English speech, American clothes, and manners, the American attitude in politics. It implies the fusion of the various blood and a transmutation by the 'miracle of assimilation' of Jews, Slavs, Poles, Frenchmen and so on into being similar in background, tradition outlook, and spirit of the descendants of the British colonists, the 'Anglo-Saxon' stock.

Gordon placed a distinction between "melting pot" and Anglo-conformity. He saw the melting pot as a blending

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10 Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, (Massachusetts: M.I.T. and Harvard University, 1963), p. v.

of two cultures in "the same container, as it were, and forming a new cultural product with standard consistency."\textsuperscript{12} This would entail, according to Gordon, a complete biological merger by miscegenation. The second concept, Anglo-conformity theory, required the "complete renunciation of the immigrants' ancestral culture in favor of the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group."\textsuperscript{13} Anglo-conformity is what Gordon feels has been the "prevalent ideology in our nation's history."\textsuperscript{14}

In summary, the "melting pot" assumes two pervasive ideologies in the American society. First, a blending of racial and cultural heritage of the minority group to the dominant society. This is frequently referred to as amalgamation. This doctrine's basic foundation is that different cultural stocks will blend into a new culture, and that only the best qualities and attributes will be represented in the end product.

The second assumption within the realm of the "melting pot" theory is the conformity to Anglo norms by the newly arrived immigrant. This American societal goal requires the relinquishment of the ethnic group's cultural values and heritage, and the acquisition of the dominant society's values. Furthermore, the dominant group maintains

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 89.  \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 85.
a position of superiority, in terms of power and numbers, and the minority group is perceived as being culturally and racially inferior.

**Assimilation**

Within the confines of the "melting pot" theory, the process of assimilation is the prerequisite variable in attaining this goal. Acculturation has frequently been used by social scientists interchangeably with assimilation, while others have defined acculturation and assimilation differently.

Park and Burgess included acculturation in their definition of assimilation by stating it as

> a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a cultural life.15

Gordon takes a step further by developing a model which explains the process of assimilation. The main theme of his model is "that assimilation is not a single social process, but different subprocesses or dimensions."16 The

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model of assimilation incorporates seven variables which are used to analyze the assimilation process in the attainment of the ultimate goal of society, the "melting pot." The two most important variables that Gordon emphasizes are a) cultural or behavioral assimilation, and b) structural assimilation. Cultural or behavior assimilation is the process by means of which the new immigrant becomes acquainted with the new life style (norms and values) of the host society. Gordon states that cultural assimilation is the most likely form of assimilation that will occur first when the immigrant arrives in a new environment. Structural assimilation, on the other hand, refers to "the entrance of the immigrant into the social cliques, organizations, and institutional activities of the receiving society."  

Structural assimilation is what Gordon feels is the key variable in his conceptual model of assimilation. Once the immigrant is fully assimilated structurally, all of the six assimilation variables (cultural, marital, etc.) will eventually follow without conflict. Although Gordon's framework provides in depth analysis of the process of assimilation of the immigrant, there exist several shortcomings within it. William Newman argues that Gordon's theory on cultural assimilation is a linear process.

Furthermore, he claims there is no reversal in the process to allow a minority group to choose the pluralistic or assimilative direction depending on their social goals.

"Melting Pot:" Myth or Reality?

The "melting pot" and its relationship to the immigrants, particularly the Chicano, is viewed here as a myth with many shortcomings. Although it is not the scope of this paper to disprove this ideology with each ethnic group, there is a general agreement among social scientists that the "melting pot" does not explain the relationship and social adjustment of the immigrant within the American society. For example, using his framework, Gordon claims the major pitfall of the theory is the idea of marital assimilation or amalgamation. This involves the intermingling of racial stock blending into the ideal "American." Gordon further emphasizes the shortcomings of the "melting pot" by stating it as a "neglected aspect of the model [melting pot] of cultural intermixture is whether all groups will make an equally influential contribution to the boiling pot, or whether there is to be a proportionate influence depending upon its size, power, and strategic location of the various groups."\(^{18}\)

A Paradigm: Cultural Pluralism

The "melting pot" and the adherents of this ideology

\(^{18}\)Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 124.
are based on two goals: amalgamation and Anglo-conformity. These two goals do not reflect the relationship of the immigrant or minority group to the dominant society. A minority group may not necessarily share common social goals and its goals may be different than those of the dominant society. Thus an alternative framework is needed to explain the historical and present status of a minority group, particularly the Chicano.

Cultural pluralism, a concept first developed by Horace Kallen, provides a partial understanding of the majority-minority relationship in the United States. Kallen's theme was based on the rejection of assimilation by ethnic groups which retain their identity. Also, Kallen contended that "each of the minority cultures have something positive, something of value, to contribute to the American society."19

Gordon further explains that the goal of the cultural pluralists "is to maintain enough subsocietal separation to guarantee the continuance of the ethnic cultural tradition and the existence of the group, without at the same time interfering with the carrying out of standard responsibilities to the general American civic life."20

19 Newman, American Pluralism: A Study of Minority Groups and Social Theory, p. 69.
20 Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 158.
Glazer and Moynihan provide a theoretical perspective on cultural plurality which Newman called a "Modified Pluralism." Nevrman's analysis of Glazer and Moynihan's theory formulates a framework that may be applicable to the Chicano experience. The framework is based on the following formula:

\[ A + B + C + A_1 + B_1 + C_1 \]

The following example illustrates Newman's model:

A, B, C represents different groups which are the first generation immigrant (A=Japanese from Japan, B=Blacks from Africa, C=Mexicans from Mexico). \( A_1, B_1, C_1 \) represents groups that are distinct from one another but also different from A, B, C. In other words, Japanese from Japan are different from the Japanese-American (\( A_1 \)), Blacks from Africa are different from Afro-American (\( B_1 \)), and Mexicans from Mexico are different from the Mexican-American (\( C_1 \)).

In relationship to the Chicano, the framework takes into account the differences that may exist between the Mexican-born and the Mexican-American. In seeking their identity, the Chicanos do not see themselves as belonging to Mexico, although they acknowledge its cultural and historical influence in their lives. Neither do they consider themselves to be totally assimilated to the extent.

\[ ^{21} \text{Newman, American Pluralism: A Study of Minority Groups and Social Theory, p. 78.} \]
of denying their cultural values and heritage. The framework acknowledging cultural identity also stipulates the political interest by each ethnic group. The term "Chicano" not only denotes a cultural identity, but signifies a political movement by this minority "to acquire its share of society's rewards."\(^{22}\)

In conclusion, the cultural pluralism theory has attempted to provide a framework which may explain the Chicano's relationship with the dominant society.

**A Synthesis**

The concepts of "melting pot" assimilation and cultural pluralism have been presented to gain a clear perspective of the social processes and relationships that a minority group experiences. The "melting pot" goal has been noted as being only an illusion or figment of society's imagination. Gordon's model illustrates a comprehensive analysis on the processes of assimilation. Applying Gordon's paradigm to the Chicano elderly perhaps, may explain the degree to which the Chicano elderly are assimilated. The researcher, however, does not totally agree with Gordon's analysis on the degree of assimilation at the Spanish-speaking population. Gordon's analysis states that the Spanish-speaking population is either partially or mainly assimilated in six of the seven variables he presents. It

\(^{22}\)Ibid., p. 79.
is only in the variable "Identification" that the Spanish-speaking population has not been assimilated. Structural assimilation requires a large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on the primary group level. This is one of the variables in which the Spanish-speaking population, especially the Chicano elderly, have not assimilated. Based on the researcher's experience, the Chicano elderly have been hesitant in participating in programs to which they are unfamiliar. Only recently have programs been reaching this particular population by being sensitive to their particular cultural needs. The problems of language barriers and cultural awareness are areas where these programs are now beginning to focus their attention.

Cultural pluralism maintains that an ethnic group will be able to participate in the socio-economic system without losing their cultural heritage. Epps supports this notion,

Cultural pluralism involves the mutual exchange of cultural content and respect for different views of reality and conceptions of man. Pluralism assumes that ethnic groups have the right to preserve their cultural heritages and also contribute to American civic life.23

The framework that Newman presents may or may not provide a total picture of the Chicano experience in the American society. It is an attempt, however, to explain

23Epps, Cultural Pluralism, p. 177.
for example, how Mexicans from Mexico are different from Mexican-Americans. The framework, based on Glazer and Moynihan study, states that "each racial and religious group assimilates into American society at different rates and time. But on the other hand, ethnic, racial, and religious differences remain distinct, but also assume new social meaning." 24

The position taken in the study is that the Chicano elderly have not assimilated to the extent of losing their cultural identity and value. The Chicano elderly have maintained their cultural heritage despite societal pressures to conform. Their presence within the Chicano community has reinforced the cultural values which in turn have stimulated or influenced the younger generation of Chicanos toward the trend of cultural pluralism.

24 Newman, American Pluralism: A Study of Minority of Group and Social Theory, p. 79.
Chapter II

METHODOLOGY

Historical Research

The nature and scope of this study is to record the historical experiences of the Mexican-American elderly. The historical approach was thus the appropriate research design for collection of data for this study.

The information obtained from the respondents was taken at face value with secondary resources used as a cross reference. The secondary resources consisted of recorded observations of others, such as historical literature of the Mexican-American.

"Participant-Observation" and open-ended interviews were techniques used by the researcher in obtaining information from the informants. "Participant-Observation" is informal and unstructured in its nature, where the observer takes on, to some extent at least, the role of a member and participant in the group and its functioning. However,


this scientific tool has its limitation of reliability and validity (Selltiz, Pearsol).

Open ended interviews were mainly used in ascertaining the findings. The researcher's style of interviewing closely followed two of Young's techniques of interviewing. The "indirect approach," as Young states, involves having unplanned interviews in a relaxed or leisurely environment, such as in clubs or organizations. Also the development of a rapport-type relationship with the respondent was very important and helpful in the initial stage of the interview. "Rapport" is developed by "showing interest, attention, or admiration, by identification, by observation of conventionalities, by listening, by meeting people on their own grounds ...."27

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role for this study was mainly "observer-as-participant." The researcher initially assumed the role of an observer in the field and at times participated in the activities. In assuming the role of the "observer-as-participant," the researcher was careful not to actively become over-involved or act as a complete participant because of the possibility of losing objectivity. 28

In the role of "observer-as-participant," the researcher was able to identify the respondents for this study. Twelve Ancianos were selected from four nutrition programs in the east side of San Jose. The criteria used by the researcher in selecting the respondents were:

1. Sixty years or older.
3. American born Anciano who migrated to California.
4. Willing to recall and relate personal historical experiences.

Rationale for Method

The researcher felt "participant observation" was the most appropriate method to collect the data for various reasons. First of all, the researcher decided that open ended interviewing along with direct observation would be a more effective means to obtain personal data from the respondents. The researcher's reluctance to rely on the conceptual framework and methodology of previous studies on the Mexican-American was also a deciding factor in choosing the "participant observation" techniques. Lastly, the make up of the group itself was a justification for this particular methodology because of the age differences that existed between researcher and informants. The quality and quantity of information acquired was possible due to the researcher's development of a rapport with the
Ancianos, both male and female, involved in the nutrition programs.

**Tools and Techniques**

No formal or structured questionnaires were used in collecting the data. The researcher found that achieving an interpersonal level with the Anciano was very productive in the interview process. In order to receive the quality as well as quantity of responses from the Chicano elderly, the interviewer must pass from the formal level of hablando (speaking to) and conversando (conversing) to the personal level platicando (transacting)."29

Most of the informants knew of the purpose of the inquiry and (were) very cooperative in revealing the needed information. The researcher was careful to explain to the informants that all information regarding their personal lives or history would remain in strict confidentiality. Their real names were not to be used in the study to insure this privacy. At times, leading questions were needed when the informant went astray from the topic or when it was necessary to clarify and develop certain points of the discussion.

During the course of an informal interview, notes

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were taken if possible, depending on the setting, while those interviews that occurred in the field were not recorded by note taking in the presence of the individual. In interviews conducted in the homes of the respondents, note taking and/or tape recording were used. A tape recorder was very helpful and convenient in recording all the information provided by the informant, which otherwise could have been missed by simple note taking. The tape recorder was used, depending on the informant's feelings toward having the discussion taped. The tape recordings were voluntary on the part of the informants and the idea was very clearly stated from the beginning that all information on the tape would be held in confidence.

When the conversation would arise regarding their past experiences while in the field, the author would attempt to document the experiences verbatim at the end of the day. The use of Murdock's Outline for Cultural Materials enabled the author a method to systematize and organize information acquired while in the field.

The majority of the informal interviews were conducted in Spanish, although most of the informants were bilinguals who preferred to speak in their native language because of their being more comfortable with the Spanish

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language than English. The author was not fully fluent in the Spanish language, but had no difficulty in the interview process to communicate key concepts and ideas of the study to the respondents, and when the occasion did arise, the informants were very patient in attempting to understand the content of the conversation.

Taping the interviews was a great asset to the researcher, especially those done in Spanish. The author could not possibly have written down everything that an informant said in Spanish because not all of the Ancianos spoke with the same Spanish accent. Those Ancianos from Mexico had a high degree of stress on their Spanish words and talked at an extremely fast pace, while the Ancianos born in the United States spoke in a Spanish dialect that was easier to understand because they spoke more slowly with a good degree of fluency.

Since the purpose of the study is to record and document historical accounts of the Mexican-American elderly, the techniques given by two oral historians were extremely helpful. Swain, for instance, proposed the need for stressing important points during an interview. He states that an interview is particularly useful in getting at "emphasis" and "atmosphere." Emphasis is defined as an "indication of the relative importance assigned to the
issues by the participants themselves."\(^{31}\) Atmosphere is the "social, political, economic, and personality inter-relationship that explains why certain issues were important and others were not."\(^{32}\) The "atmosphere" of an interview is applicable to this study because of the focus on the socio-economic experiences of the Mexican-American elderly.

Benson, in his article "Reflection in Oral History," listed four points of techniques that an oral historian should follow.

In particular, two of these techniques were used by the researcher in this study. First, the oral historian must be familiar with extant primary and secondary source so as to be able to see relevant historical relationships and defined historical problems. Secondly, the historian should be armed with a tape recorder.\(^{33}\)

Analysis of the Data

Interviews on tape were transcribed and the information was categorized under the Outline for Cultural Materials. Based on the findings, the following four factors were developed and analyzed:


\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Saul Benson, "Reflection in Oral History," American Archivists, 28, January 1965, p. 64.
1. Immigration and migration of the Anciano
2. Economic experiences
3. Institutional experiences
4. Family relationships
Chapter III

FINDINGS

The respondents for this study were twelve Mexican-American elderly from four Senior Citizens Nutrition Programs in the East Side of San Jose. Five of the respondents were from the northern and central part of Mexico. The remaining seven respondents were born in the United States. However, none of the respondents were born in California.

Based on the findings, four categories were developed: 1) immigration and migration, 2) economic experiences, 3) institutional experiences, and 4) family. The immigration and migration category will focus on the reasons for the Mexican-born immigrating to the United States and the American-born Chicano migrating to California. Three case histories of the Mexican-American elderly will provide their economic experiences in the United States. Institutional experiences will primarily discuss the Ancianos' past and present experiences and feelings toward the church, and briefly touch on their experiences with other institutions. The fourth category will cover the Ancianos' present attitudes toward the family.

Immigration and Migration

There are many factors that influence individuals
and entire families to leave their original homeland. One explanation for immigration and migration to a new and different environment may be explained by the "push" and "pull" phenomenon. The "push" factor is the decision of an individual to leave his homeland because of undesirable living conditions and the existing economic hardships. The "pull" factor is the attracting conditions of economic affluence that will lure an individual to the new environment.

The respondents born in Mexico provided a variety of explanations as to why they immigrated to the United States. In particular, two respondents immigrated from Mexico during and after the Revolutionary period in that country. It was estimated that 425,000 Mexicans migrated to the United States during the period of 1910 to 1924. The causes of migration can be explained by the turbulence of living conditions in Mexico during that period. By 1910 Mexico was experiencing extreme economic hardship and revolutionary disturbances. The inequalities in land ownership and low wages provided additional impetus for migration. The Mexican revolution, itself, was also seen as a cause for the Mexican to move to a more secure and stable environment.

One respondent, Mr. H., vividly remembers the

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situation which occurred at the time of the Mexican Revolution and why he chose to leave (push) Mexico.

I was sixteen years old when I first crossed the border to El Paso. I am originally from the State of Chihuahua where I was raised on a large ranch. My parents did not own the ranch but worked for an Espanol named Castillo. I remember his name because he was always fighting with my father and complaining about his work. When I was fourteen years old the revolution, had brought about many deaths and uncertainties. My father, older brother, and I were forced to join the Villistas. This was the beginning of my family's separation. My father and brother died in the battle of Chihuahua. Upon hearing of my father's and brother's deaths, I decided to leave Mexico as I did not want to be further involved in the deaths of many innocent people. During the night, I left the Villistas in Chihuahua in search of my mother and younger brother. Upon finding them I told them the sad news and tried to convince my mother to go with me to the United States. She said she was too old and did not want to leave her home so she encouraged me to go without her. Reluctant to go without her, I decided to leave, promising to come back when the war was over.

The "pull" factor was also very influential in the wave of migration from Mexico to the United States. There was a shortage of domestic labor in America due to WW I and this created a good reason for agricultural growers and industrial businesses to solicit cheap labor from Mexico. Mr. D., 76 years old, born in Chihuahua, shared his experience as to why he left Mexico.

I came to the United States when I was 17 years old. My father advised me to leave Mexico and not get involved with political matters. He said his brother was in El Paso working for the

35 Ibid.
railroads and there were many other jobs with high wages available. I did not want to leave but I could not live in such a place of pobreza (poverty). I had heard from friends how easy it was to cross the border and find a job. This new information convinced me to leave Mexico. Once reaching El Paso, I was recruited by a contractor to work in the ranches picking cotton for 75¢ a day.

Mr. H. eventually moved to California in the early 1960's because of the job opportunities that were available in the fields and canneries. Mr. D. moved to California four years ago when he married his second wife.

The "push" and "pull" factors also apply to internal migration. This was particularly the case for three of the respondents from New Mexico. These three respondents represent a large number of Spanish-speaking people migrating from the rural areas of New Mexico to an urban setting after WW II. WW II brought about an increase in agricultural work and created more industrial work in the city. Also, there was a decline of mining in New Mexico, leaving many Hispanos without jobs.36 Mr. C. indicated that he moved to California to improve his living conditions. He lived in a small rural town of 50 people while working in the mines and on ranches. He recalled some of his experiences working on ranches that led him to move to California.

"When there was no work in the mines I would work

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on a ranch raising sheep and cattle. The jefe (foreman) of
the ranches were Americanos that never paid me fair wages.
Many times, if they were not happy with the work they would
not pay me at all."

Mr. C. preferred working for the mines because
the wages were higher, even though it was more physically
demanding and longer hours. Mr. C. decided to move to
California, where his sister was living, when the mining
jobs became scarce.

The Ancianos who were born in Texas came to
California for different reasons than the Ancianos from
New Mexico. The Ancianos from Texas came to California
because they wanted to be near their sons and daughters
and relatives who had moved to California earlier. One of
the respondents from Texas explained in his own language
why he came to California.

Yo y mi esposa tenemos quince años viviendo en
California. Somos de San Antonio, Texas adonde
trabajé en construcción. Yo estaba ganando
buen dinero y la renta y comida no estaba tan
cara como aquí. Venimos para California por
que todo mis hijos vivían aquí. Pues casi
cada año viajábamos para visitar los hijos.
Al fin decidimos quedarnos en California
cuando mi hija se puso mala.

Two of the Ancianas from Texas had similar reasons
for coming to California. Mrs. E., a 64 year old Anciana,
has been a resident of San Jose since 1957. She explained
why she came to California.

Yo vine para San Jose cuando mi esposo se
Murio. Unos de mis hijas estaba en San Jose
y ella me mandó dinero para el viaje si yo
quisiera vivir en California. Al principio
no quise venir, pero tenia mucho tristeza sin mi viejo.

Mrs. G., one of the oldest respondents, who was 86 years old, recently moved to San Jose with her daughter. Although she is unhappy with her new environment because of unfamiliar surroundings, she chose to be here with her daughter rather than to stay in Austin, Texas, as she explains,

Vine a California con mi hija, El doctor le ordeno que se moviera a un lugar adonde el clima es mas caliente. Tenemos sobrinos que viven aqui y en Los Angeles vive mi quinta generacion. No me gusta mucho aqui, y quieremos regresar cuando mi hija se alivie. Nunca he salido di Texas y me parece muy extranjero aqui.

The Texano (Texas born) respondents in this study are primarily older and more recently arrived in California than the New Mexicans. The Texano reasons for moving to California were based on being closer to their families. The New Mexican respondents on the other hand, came to California ten to fifteen years prior to the Texano because of economic reasons. The researcher also knew several other Chicano elderly from Texas who came to California for the same reasons and similar circumstances as the New Mexicans. However, cautionary measures must be taken in over-generalizing about other Chicano elderly in San Jose.

Economic Experiences

Three life histories of the Mexican-American elderly are provided here to illustrate their experiences
and feelings toward their past economic situation. Mr. R.,
Mexican-born who immigrated in 1909, discussed his personal
experiences with the railroads and his feelings toward
his social and economic status during the 1940's. Mr. C.,
a 64 year old Anciano from the rural towns of New Mexico,
described an historical event that occurred in New Mexico
during the 1930's. Finally, Mrs. G., a recent arrival to
San Jose from Texas, shared her past life experiences
dealing with working and living conditions.

Mr. R. was 78 years old and originally from Chihuahua.
He moved to El Paso in 1909 with his parents. Once in El
Paso, the family worked as laborers in the ranches. He
remarked on his economic experiences in El Paso:

We came to the United States like many other
Mexicanos, in search of better jobs. In El
Paso it did not take my father long to get a job
that paid about four times more than he received
in Mexico. My dad was very happy and considered
himself lucky to get such a high-paying job. In
Mexico there was so much pobreza (poverty) that
often children were begging in the streets. In
the United States the pobreza was not as great
because there was plenty of work for the
Mexicano in the fields and for the railroads.

Mr. R. stayed in El Paso until 1923, when he decided
to move to Denver, Colorado. In Denver he married his
first wife and raised 13 children. He often worked at two
jobs a year. During the summer months he worked in the
ranches as a laborer, while in the winter he was employed
by Southern Pacific Railroads. The job in the railroad
yard consisted of unloading boxes and crates of merchandise.
While working for the railroad, Mr. R. earned $2.50 a day,
an increase of 75¢ more than he was earning at ranches in El Paso. Mr. R. worked on and off for 15 years with the railroads without substantial increase in salary or promotion. Mr. R. expressed his feelings to the researcher regarding his situation at that time:

I labored for 15 years in the railroad yard receiving little appreciation. All the patrones (bosses) were gabachos (Anglos). They treated us good as long as we did our work and did what we were told. But if we complained to them they would fire us. Many times I was passed up for promotion to be foreman. Instead they would promote the gabachos who were hired at the same time I was. I would ask why, and they would say I was too slow and did not know how to do the job well. This made me very mad because I had worked at the same job for 15 years.

After leaving Mexico, Mr. R. saw improvement in his economic situation. However, after living in the United States for twenty years he became aware that his economic status remained at a constant level with little improvement. To improve his economic situation, Mr. R. would work on the ranches during the summer months. He made more money every day on the ranches and the fields because the whole family could work together ten or twelve hours daily. Mr. R. did not view himself as being poor because he was always gainfully employed. Poverty to Mr. R. was based on being unemployed. He felt there was no excuse for anyone who did not work because there were plenty of jobs available in Denver during the 1940's. Here he compares the past economic conditions with the present:
In those years (1940's) there was no verguenza (shame) because there were enough jobs for everyone. If you could not find a job in the city there was always a job in the ranches and the fields. Nowadays, there are so many people without jobs because there is no longer the large number of fields to work in. My sons are making more money than I did 30 years ago, but most of the money goes to buying a house and food, which is very expensive. In Denver, I used to pay five dollars a month for rent and bought enough food to last my family for three days.

Mr. R. did not feel that he was poor because he was never unemployed, but his living conditions were less than he desired. Here he relates his situation:

I bought a two-bedroom house that was located in the Barrio of Denver. This was the only place I could afford to live. There were few conveniences in the home like there is today. The bathroom and water facilities were located outside. I did not stay in the Barrio very long because it reminded me of the pobreza that I left in Mexico. All the Mexicanos coming from Mexico moved to the same Barrio where I lived. Many of them had no jobs and were very poor. This is one of the reasons why I left Denver to move to Washington.

Mr. R. took two of his older sons to Washington to seek employment. Upon finding work in the fields as a fruit-picker, he sent for his wife and eleven children.

Mr. R. stayed in Washington for 30 years, raising his family. During the winter he worked in construction, while in the summer he worked in the fields because, as he puts it:

I made as much as $200 a day picking apples in the field. This was possible because my wife and 13 children helped me pick.
Mr. R.'s reason for moving from one state to another was to improve his social and economic conditions. In Washington, Mr. R. felt he could provide for his daughters and sons the education that he never received. He proudly boasts of his children's achievements in school, their employment, and economic status:

I have a family of thirteen children, seven daughters and six sons. They all finished high school and four of them finished college. When they were young, my wife and I would never let them miss school. When school was out for the summer I would quit my job in the construction company to take my sons and daughters to work with me in the fields. My oldest daughter is a very intelligent woman. She is presently working as a social worker in Washington.

Mr. C., a 64 year old Anciano, was born in New Mexico, but he has been residing in San Jose since WW II. Mr. C. prefers to be called Spanish-American rather than Mexican-American, or Chicano. His last name is not a Spanish surname, but that of French descent. He can trace his ancestry back to his great, great grandfather, who immigrated to the United States from France. He explained that his great, great grandfather married a Mexican in New Mexico and bought thousands of acres of land. Through the years, Mr. C. claimed the land was either sold out of necessity or lost because of taxes imposed by city or state officials. His ethnic identity and his explanation for the loss of his great, great grandfather's land reflects the attitudes and conditions that existed in New Mexico. For instance, as Carey McWilliams noted in his book, North of
Mexico, Spanish-speaking persons from New Mexico classified themselves as Spanish-Americans. McWilliams stated three purposes for this identity: "It lifts from the New Mexican the opprobrium of being a Mexican; it makes him a member of the 'white race,' and expresses his American 'citizenship.'"

Mr. C. does not deny his Mexican heritage, but quite often would prefer to talk of his French ancestral background. It also was indicated to the researcher that he did not fully understand the meaning or the reasons for using the contemporary term "Chicano."

Mr. C. frequently referred to his past economic experiences in New Mexico. In New Mexico Mr. C. primarily worked in the copper mines from sunup to sundown, earning three to four dollars a day. He recalled a significant event which occurred when he was working in the mines near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

I remember after the Depression (1930's) the strike that occurred in Gallup. I was working thirty miles south of Gallup when the Mexicanos decided to strike. Workers from Gallup came to our camp to encourage us to join forces with them. The majority of the workers were Mexicanos who supported their compadres and left the camp with their families to join others in Gallup. I did not go with them because my wife was expecting a baby. I was sorry that I could not join them but I respected the strike by not working in the mines. I went to work in the ranches instead and made enough money to feed my family. The strike ended in four months but did not accomplish anything. The

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Mexicanos that worked with me in the mines were sent back to Mexico. Fortunately for me, being a Gùero (light complexion) and not having a Mexican surname saved me from experiencing the same fate that my friends did when they supported the strike.

Mr. C.'s account of the strike in Gallup accurately corresponds to the event that McWilliams presents in his book, North From Mexico. The strike occurred in the mid-thirties in Gallup, New Mexico, involving many of the workers who were from Chihuahua, Mexico. According to McWilliams, the strike lasted six months, ending in violence and riots. Jesus Pallares, a Mexican immigrant, was one of the leaders who organized the Liga Obrera de Habla Española. The strike was not entirely successful and many of the Mexicanos who supported it, including Jesus Pallares, were eventually "arrested and deported to Mexico." 38

Mr. C.'s experience with the Gallup strike and its consequences influenced his attitude toward involvement with activities that might jeopardize his job and family. As he stated, "Since the Gallup strike, I have minded my own business. My family has always come first and I never wanted to risk my job by joining unions." Mr. C. also worked on the railroads for a short period of time near Santa Fe. When the researcher made inquiries regarding Mr. C.'s position and relationships with his employer and employees

38 Ibid., p. 195.
Many of my patrons were gringos, and at times they would seek a person who would be able to talk English and Spanish. Many times I was elected as a translator because they saw me talking in Spanish with my friends. I made a lot of enemies because the patrons would order me to give orders to my fellow workers as to what they were assigned to do on the job. I soon became an outsider with my friends because of being identified with the patrons. The patrons of the railroads treated me fairly, but my friends who were darker complected and did not speak English were treated badly. I remember seeing one of the patrons kicking a Mexicano in the back for not doing what he was told. This gringo would always threaten the Mexicanos by saying, if they did not do what they were told, he would tell the Immigration authorities to send them back to Mexico. All the Mexicanos, including the ones born in New Mexico, had fears of being sent back to Mexico. I did not like being in this position and decided to quit and work on the ranches.

In the mid-forties, Mr. C. moved to California because he was not happy with his economic condition. The mining jobs of New Mexico were not as abundant as before, and the jobs on the ranches did not pay adequately to support his family of nine. Thus, Mr. C. and his wife decided to move to California where his sister lived. In California he primarily worked on the ranches and in the fields picking fruit. The researcher asked him if his lifestyle changed when he moved to California and he responded:

In New Mexico my wife and I were always concerned about how long the jobs in the mines would last. When I was laid off from the mines, I would have to work in the ranches making very little money. There were days when the meals were only frijoles and tortillas. When we moved to San Jose, I did not have problems finding a job in the fields. My wife did not worry very much because I had enough money to buy food for the family. The meals were a little better because we now had frijoles, tortillas, and papas.
Southeast of New Mexico lies the second largest state, Texas, in which over a million and a half Chicanos live. Since the turn of the 19th century, Texas has been known for its cotton and cattle industries. There was a need for cheap labor to pick the cotton, and one great resource was the Mexican immigrant. One of the oldest respondents in this study spent 30 of her 84 years working on a cotton plantation near Austin, Texas.

Mr. G. is from Mexico but has lived 80 of her 84 years in Texas. She first married at the age of 16 and had four children. After ten years of marriage, Mr. G.'s husband died leaving her to support the family with no source of income. Mrs. G. continued working in the fields picking cotton. Mrs. G. described her life after her husband died.

We lived on a big ranch owned by an Americano. We were one of four families who were responsible for cultivating cotton on 200 acres of land. My husband and I would work twelve hours a day sembrando algodon (planting cotton). One night after we arrived home from the fields my husband became very ill. He did not complain very much because he was a proud man. My husband died three days later leaving behind four children and 20 acres of cotton to pick. Many of my husband's relatives and friends came to help me pick the remaining acres of cotton.

Mr. G. remained working at the same ranch for twenty years. The ranch owner provided her with a parcel of land from his ranch that she and her family could live on. Her relationship with the owner of the ranch was, according to her, a "good one." Mrs. G. discusses this below:
The Americano treated me and my four daughters fairly. After my husband died, he allowed me to stay and work for him. The crops I planted and picked were divided in half between me and the Americano. Every month he would visit me and we would discuss the amount of cotton that would be picked. He trusted me because he never questioned the amount of cotton I gave him. The Mexicanos that worked for him were also treated fairly. Because of this, the Mexicanos never complained of the wages that they received for their work."

Mrs. G. was happy with her relationship with the ranch owner. She thought highly of the Americano because he not only treated her fairly with the cotton she harvested, but he was able to communicate with her in Spanish. Mrs. G. did not remarry until her four daughters left home. She then moved to Austin, Texas, with her second husband, where she worked in chili factories and laundromats. There were no significant experiences working in the factories that she could recall. Although her jobs did not pay her very much, she had few complaints, as she stated:

I have worked hard all my life in the factories and ranches. The money I earned was not very much but it was enough to pay for the rent and buy food for the family. I was happy with the jobs because the patrones have always treated me good.

Mrs. G. related to the researcher that being poor was a "fate of God." However, in another interview with her, she commented that her life could have been better economically if her two husbands had not died. She also saw the need for an education to obtain a good job. Mrs. G. commented:

My father sent me to Mexico so I could learn to
I read and write. I stayed there only two years because my father could no longer afford keeping me in school. When I came back to the United States I helped my father in the ranches because he was not earning enough money to support the family. My father wanted me to have a good education so I would not have to work all my life in the fields. School was not as important fifty years ago as it is today. One of my grandsons graduated from college and now he has a good paying job working for the state.

Mrs. G. never learned to speak English and understands it very little. She accounted for this:

It was not necessary for me to learn English because all my jobs had bosses who understood and spoke Spanish. Also, the majority of the people I worked with were from Mexico. Most of the bosses I worked for were either French or Italian.

Mrs. G.'s second husband died fifteen years after they were married. She continued to work in the factories until she was 65 years old.

Institutional Experiences

The church played an influential role in the lives of Chicano elderly. Their experiences and attitudes toward the church were the most common discussion with the researcher. The Chicano elderly interacted very little with other major institutions. The focus of the institutional experiences will primarily be on the Chicano elderly's attitudes toward the church.

The Ancianos interviewed in this study were mainly affiliated with the Catholic church. Unfortunately, the researcher did not have the opportunity nor time to interview Ancianos affiliated with other religions. Ancianos
observed in the four nutrition programs were not exclusively Catholic, but many belonged to Protestant and Jehova Witnesses churches.

Historically, the Chicano have been primarily identified with the Roman Catholic Church and it is estimated that 90% of the Chicanos presently belong to the Catholic Church, but many are only nominal Catholics.³⁹

In this study, the married Ancianos and the Anciano widows attended church more often than the widowers. The female Mexican-American elderly was observed as being more religiously conscious than the male. The females openly expressed their feelings toward the church. Mrs. B., a 69 year old native of Jalisco, Mexico, expressed her past experience with the Catholic Church:

I was raised as a Catholic in Mexico. My mother and father would take me to the Catholic Church in Jalisco every Sunday. The church was always full of loyal worshippers. In Mexico everyone was expected to be Catholic. It is different here (United States). There are many other religions that a person could choose. When I first came to the United States, I think it was in 1945, I was surprised that not very many Mexicanos attended church every Sunday. In Mexico the priest expected everyone to attend church and confess every Sunday, and only if you were sick were you excused. But here not all of the Mexicanos pay attention to the priest and do not feel guilty if they miss church. To me this is bad because they are losing their faith in God.

In the past fifteen years local Catholic churches

³⁹Moore, Mexican Americans, p. 87.
in the Spanish-speaking communities have been changing their rigid doctrine of Roman Catholicism to a more liberal viewpoint. The changes have been centered around the Catholic Church involvement in political and community issues. The social action and support by the Catholic Church have been more evident in the agricultural areas, such as the grape boycotts. These local community churches have also changed internally and structurally. Not all of the Barrio churches, as they are called, in the Spanish-speaking communities, follow the traditional Roman Catholic philosophy. Many Barrio churches have taken down the traditional crosses and saints, leaving only one or two of them. The priests do not dress in the traditional elaborate attire which characterized the priest in the middle class Catholic churches.

These recent changes have affected the attitudes of the Chicano elderly. Mrs. F. expressed to the researcher her disapproval of the changes that have occurred in a local Catholic church in the East Side of San Jose. Her criticisms were toward the breakdown of the traditional Catholic customs.

I have been living in San Jose for 20 years. During that time I have been going to the Guadalupe Church. I do not go as often as I used to. The church has been changing very much and I do not like it. They have taken down many of the saints from the walls. The people who attend the church do not dress respectfully. The women no longer wear dresses and veils. I still attend this church because I have faith in God and the Fathers in the past have been good to me.
Mrs. F. remained loyal to the Guadalupe Church despite the changes. She lived in the West Side of San Jose for five years and she would still go to the Guadalupe Church every Sunday. She presently does not attend church as often but when she does go she attends the same church.

The traditional customs and beliefs of the Catholic Church were not as strong among the American born Anciano. This was particularly evident among male Ancianos. Mr. B, a 66 year old New Mexican, who has been living in San Jose for approximately twenty years, felt that the Catholic Church was due for changes. The changes he felt were needed related to the Catholic Church's involvement in community issues. The Catholic Church in the past, Mr. B. claims, "has done little to help the poor. The Church's role in the community has always been a one-way street where the Church expected its followers to give and support it, while in return gave nothing." Mr. B. also stated, "I attend church mainly because my wife goes. This does not mean I have no faith in God. I do not believe in having confessions because I do not feel I have sinned, such as committing adultery or murder."

Mr. B. attends the same community church as Mrs. G. He feels this church is moving in a "right direction by supporting the farm workers and the poor."

Public agencies, such as welfare, did not play a significant role in the lives of the Chicano elderly. The majority of the respondents had little interaction with
such institutions because, as one respondent remarked, "There was no such thing as welfare fifty years ago."

Pride was evident among the Chicano elderly's responses toward public assistance. Mr. C. recalls an incident in New Mexico sometime after the Depression:

I never received any type of welfare for my family. My wife and nine children were never without any food or shelter. There were times when I was laid off from the mines, but I managed to buy food and pay for the rent. I took my sons with me to the Sundia Mountains to cut trees and sell the wood in Albuquerque. I remember one day an investigadora (social worker) came to our ranch and asked us if we needed food. In those days they gave away commodities, such as powdered milk and potatoes, to poor people who could not afford to buy food. I told the investigadora that my family did not need the commodities because we had enough food to feed the family. She was a nice Americana lady who always tried to help the poor. She believed I needed help because I had no job and nine children in the family to feed.

Family

The role of the family was an important aspect in the Chicano elderly's experiences in the past and in the present. In the previous discussion, the respondents displayed a loyalty to the family and made sacrifices to support and maintain the family structure. Mr. R., for example, continually strived to improve his family's social and economic conditions. He was never separated for a long period of time from his family of thirteen. The family's adjustment from a rural to an urban setting was indicated by Mr. R.'s strong feelings about the need for his children to learn to read and write. Mr. C. consistently expressed
his concern for his family's welfare. His main priority was to provide shelter and food for his family. Mr. C. decided to take his family of nine to California when the mining jobs became scarce. He felt by moving to California he could improve his living conditions. There was little effect on family structure when Mr. C. brought his family of nine to San Jose. San Jose during the 1940's could be considered semi-rural because it was mainly an agricultural valley. So the change for Mr. C.'s family was not necessarily from a rural to urban setting.

The Ancianos' present attitudes and feelings toward the family structure (roles and child rearing) are primarily traditional. However, many of the Ancianos acknowledged the fact that changes within the family were needed in order to survive in the United States, but they still did not approve of it.

Ancianos coming from a rural background such as isolated towns in Texas were more traditional than the Ancianos who had been living in a urban setting for a longer period of time. For instance, Mrs. A., who recently moved to San Jose from a small town in Texas, frequently complained about her grandson's inability to converse in Spanish. Mrs. A. has problems communicating with her grandchildren because she does not speak English very well. She feels her daughters and sons are at fault for not teaching their children to speak Spanish. She comments:
My daughters' children talk very little Spanish. She is very lazy for not teaching them to speak Spanish. I taught her and my other children how to speak Spanish, and it is their responsibility to teach their children."

Mr. M., originally from Arizona but living in San Jose for the past thirty years, is less critical:

My grandsons speak very little Spanish. I do not speak to them in Spanish very often because they do not completely understand me. I do not expect them to speak Spanish because they are learning English in school, which is very important.

Mrs. B., a 60 year old Mexican-born woman who has been living in the United States for 40 years, provides another perspective:

When my sons were young children I would always talk to them in Spanish, but it was no use because they would go to school and learn English, forgetting what I taught them.

Mrs. R. expressed a negative experience he had while working in the railroad yards in Denver that made him realize the importance of education and learning English. He commented:

When I was young I was very ignorant because I did not know how to speak English. Many times it was difficult for me to communicate with the patrones at work. The Mexicanos were often called "dumb Mexicans" by the patrones because of this. This would make me very angry. Since then, I did not want my children to be as ignorant as I was. During the summer I would take my children to work on the ranches, but when the summer was over I would move back to the city so they could begin school.

Mr. R. further added that his children eventually learned English but they are still able to maintain a conversation in Spanish.
Many of the Ancianas were critical of the female role within the Chicano family. The Ancianas felt that the young Chicana mothers were giving too much freedom and not giving enough attention to their children. This attitude was especially true for Mrs. U:

My daughter's children never go home after school. They are in the streets and school grounds getting into trouble. My grandchildren are not very disciplined because they do not obey their parents. The children of my daughter's friends are also muy mal criados. Do you know why the children are this way? It is because the parents are working and are not home to take care of their children. My daughter and son-in-law work all day and come home very tired. I tell my daughter to quit work and stay home with the children. But she says she wants to help pay for the house and buy new furniture.

Traditionally, the Chicano elderly have depended on the extended family for emotional and economic support. However, the family structure has been weakened due to increasing urbanization. The Anciano's role within the family has diminished. They no longer play a major role in child-rearing and religious training, but this does not indicate the Chicano elderly have no function within the family. Many of the Ancianos stated that their sons and daughters visit them frequently. Their children respond to problems and needs the Ancianos may have. By the same token, the Ancianos also have given consejos (advice) and provided economic support when their children needed it.

All the Ancianos interviewed for this study were economically independent and living with spouses or by themselves in apartments. The Ancianos did not expect their
children to support them economically because they did not want to be a burden to them and they realize that many of their children could not financially support them.
Chapter IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study has attempted to collect and depict the Chicano elderly's experiences in the United States. As stated, the data obtained from the Chicano elderly were categorized in four subject areas: 1) immigration and migration, 2) economic experiences, 3) institutional experiences, and 4) family.

The reasons for the Anciano migrating from Mexico to the United States were explained by the "push" and "pull" phenomenon. The "push" was provided by economic instability that existed in Mexico during the first three decades. Also, the Mexican revolution indirectly influenced the decision of the Mexican immigrant to move to a more peaceful environment. The "pull" was provided by the need for cheap labor by American industry and agricultural businesses. The Anciano born in New Mexico migrated to California to seek social and economic improvement. The Texano respondents, on the other hand, moved to California because they wanted to be closer to their children. They had more recently arrived in California than the New Mexican.

Three life histories of the Chicano elderly in this study were presented to focus on their past economic
experiences. The primary reasons for external and internal migration for the Chicano elderly were to improve their social and economic situation. Mr. R. and Mr. C. frequently expressed the desire to better their standard of living. Mrs. G. perceived herself as being helpless in improving her economic status because of the loss of her two husbands.

Mr. R. and Mr. C. had experienced racial discrimination in their employment. Mr. R. felt bitter when the patrones bypassed him for promotion. Instead, the patrones promoted the Anglo workers. They considered Mr. R. to be inferior because he did not know how to communicate in English.

Mr. C. also observed injustices done to the Mexicanos working in the railroads and mines. According to Mr. C., the Mexicans were often threatened to be deported to Mexico if they did not obey the orders of the patrones. After the Gallup strike in New Mexico, Mr. C. had witnessed the deportation of Mexicans. This had influenced him to stay away from participating in organizational activities.

In contrast to Mr. R. and Mr. C., Mrs. G. had no negative experiences with her employers. The relationship that Mrs. G. had with her employers was a good one. She complained very little about her past economic situation.

In regard to institutions, the church was the main subject of discussion among the Chicano elderly. The Chicano elderly had diverse views toward the church. One of the Ancianos who had traditional beliefs, criticized the changes
that were occurring in the local Barrio church. The Anciana mainly disapproved of the traditional saints being taken down from the walls of the church.

Mr. B. had a different attitude toward the church's role in the community. He felt that the churches in the past have not been responsive to the needs of the poor. He approved of the Guadalupe Church's involvement and support of the farm worker's plight. Mr. B.'s opinions, however, were not necessarily shared by the other Chicano elderly in the study. Many of the Chicano elderly, especially the female, were traditional in their religious beliefs. Mr. B.'s attitudes may indicate a growing awareness among the Chicano elderly toward the role of the Catholic Church in the community. The Chicano elderly's past experiences with other social institutions were very minimal. Several of the Chicano elderly came from a rural background which may explain their having little or no contact with public agencies. Pride was also common among the Chicano elderly.

One of the Ancianos had refused aid from a social worker during the Depression. Several Ancianos related to the researcher that they were reluctant to retire from work because they did not want to receive any assistance from social security or welfare.

The family was the central theme among the Chicano elderly's past experiences. The families of the Chicano elderly remained intact despite the frequent mobility the families experienced. The Chicano elderly's family adjust-
ments from a rural to urban setting were only indicated in the case of Mr. R.'s family. Mr. R. felt the need for his children to gain an education. Mr. R. saw education as a means to obtain a secure and high paying job.

In general, most of the Ancianos still maintained the traditional values toward the family. They were critical of their grandchildren's inability to speak in Spanish. The Ancianos also disapproved of the working mother's role that many of their children and grandchildren were assuming in the family. However, despite the Ancianos' criticism toward their children's and grandchildren's acquisition of Anglo values, many of them realized the changes were necessary to survive in the United States. The Ancianos did not expect their children to economically support them because the Ancianos did not want to be a burden to their children.

Conclusions

Las personas de edad were very much aware of their past economic conditions. They never desired to be poor and were continually searching to resolve their state of poverty. They observed and even experienced discrimination toward them and other Mexicans. The Ancianos in this study reacted two different ways to the prejudices they experienced. They would either choose the path of accepting the Anglo values, such as obtaining education to achieve equal status with the Anglos, or the Ancianos would avoid conflict
with the Anglos. This avoidance was due to witnessing institutions oppressing organized efforts of the Mexicanos. This was particularly true of Mr. C.'s experiences of the Gallup strike.

The intent of this study was to document historical experiences of the Chicano elderly. However, the data obtained from them was not entirely historical experience. The Ancianos frequently discussed their present situations such as their roles within the family or their present attitudes toward the church. The researcher believed this added information was very important to document. Their present attitude toward institutions and the family are the reflection of their past experiences. Also, documenting the Ancianos' present attitudes, feelings, and beliefs provided a body of knowledge which may assist social programs in the delivery of services to the Ancianos.

In conclusion, the Chicano elderly's experiences, attitudes, and feelings are unique to this study only. Generalization to other Chicano communities must be taken under extreme caution. The diversity of experiences and attitudes were evident even among the Chicano elderly in this research project.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations are a necessary component of a research endeavor such as this one. The recommendations provided by the researcher should be used only as a guide
for planning and implementing delivery of social services to Chicano elderly in Santa Clara County.

1. If social programs are to be effective in delivery of social services to the Spanish-speaking elderly, they must have staff personnel who are bilingual and bicultural.

2. The success of social programs that are providing services to the Chicano elderly will depend on the staff's attempt in achieving an interpersonal relationship level with the Chicano elderly.

3. Historical experiences have indicated that they had relatively little interaction with social institutions. This was partially due to pride among the Chicano elderly in accepting aid.

   Thus, outreach should be considered a main priority in social programs. Effective outreach will initially provide information about the programs' services which will dispel any fears that the Chicano elderly may have.

4. Because of the diversity of experiences and attitudes among the Chicano elderly, it is essential that the Chicano elderly be included in program planning of delivery of services and program activities. Their own particular needs can only be expressed by them.

5. A comprehensive information and referral component is necessary if a social program is to address to the total needs of the Spanish-speaking elderly. Staff members should be cognizant of the resources available in the community.
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