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Selecting success: assimilation experiences of 1.5 and 2nd generation Mexicans in Seattle

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**Selecting Success: Assimilation Experiences of
1.5 and 2nd Generation Mexicans in Seattle**

By

Gregory W. Toledo

Accepted in Partial Completion

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Gregory Toledo
October 2010

**Selecting Success: Assimilation Experiences of
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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

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Of the Requirements for the Degree
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Abstract

Relatively recent immigration from non-traditional sending areas such as Latin America and Asia reignited scholarship dedicated to understanding and measuring the adaptation and assimilation of immigrants and their descendents. Segmented assimilation theory emerged from this scholarship and predicts three pathways of assimilation for the children of immigrants: positive, downward and selective. I focused on selective assimilation – an assimilation strategy that intentionally preserves culture of origin and maintains relationships to co-nationals and an immigrant community. I explored successful assimilation strategies employed by 1.5 and second generation Mexicans that live in Seattle, Washington. Surveys and interviews administered to a small sample of this population highlighted, as expected, the basic validity of modes of incorporation, human capital and family as keys to assimilation. In-depth interviews provided an emic perspective of what it means to be Mexican and American and the complexity of living biculturally. Interviews revealed further how culture, family and connections to community influenced an individual's advancement. Without exception, participants utilized a composite assimilation strategy that maximized positive aspects of American and Mexican cultures.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Because I have been able to combine my newfound beliefs, I have been able to create and become the woman I am now and to flourish as an individual [who] can adapt to both cultures but at the same time always honor the strong foundation I was raised with. I can still be true to myself. I am Mexican by birth and Americanized to my own convenience.

- Juanita, age 24

The number of Mexican migrants relocating to the Pacific Northwest has increased three-fold over the last four decades (Fairchild and Simpson 2004). These groups, when compared to Mexican migrants outside of the region, earn lower wages (primarily in agricultural work), make more frequent trips to and from the United States and remit a greater portion of their wages to family in Mexico. Despite these characteristics and conditions, Mexican migrants increasingly choose the Pacific Northwest region to earn a living and raise families. In addition, Mexicans in the United States continue to experience discrimination and racism, have less academic experience (Zhou et al. 2008), earn lower wages and are concentrated on the lower tiers of the job ladder (Canales 2003). The situation is even more dire for those who live in urban areas (Portes and Zhou 1993). These difficult and pessimistic circumstances serve as the context into which the Mexican American second generation are born and raised. In light of this context, it is not surprising that the prevailing story about the Mexican American second generation is largely about derailment and failure. And yet, there are countless stories of success about young people that overcome difficult circumstances, who excel academically, and

who have outstanding professional opportunities. This paper explores those optimistic and hopeful stories.

Seattle has a significant concentration of Mexicans and Mexican Americans and the purpose of this research is to provide a portrait of success among this population. A small sample of 1.5 and second generation Mexicans in the Seattle area were interviewed and surveyed to explore assimilation strategies and identify aspects of both their situations and selves that helped them become successful academically and professionally. A thick, rich description of their experiences investigates the critical role of mode of incorporation, human capital and family in predicting assimilation success.

An insightful direction for understanding the complexity of assimilation is Portes and Zhou (1993) who stated that the children of immigrants, especially those whose parents came to the United States after 1965, will assimilate in three ways: (1) *up* into the middle class of the majority culture, (2) *down* into the urban underclass, or (3) *selectively*. The term *selectively*, refers to second generation Americans that assimilate without losing their connection to the culture of their parents or their relationships to co-nationals and an immigrant community. This third path is referred to as selective assimilation.

According to Portes and Zhou (1993), the assimilation of post-1965 Mexican immigrants and the second generation is largely determined by documentation, the skills acquired through experience (human capital) and by family structure. In

simplified terms, when these conditions are met or exceeded, the children of Mexican immigrants have improved chances for educational and economic growth. Improved opportunities are less likely when the immigrant lacks or has difficulty acquiring documentation, when marketable skills are limited and when families are unsupportive. Selective assimilation involves proactive immigrants integrating their culture of origin with that of their new environment and these immigrants are more likely to improve their economic situation.

Understanding selective assimilation requires determining how individuals use their culture and background as tools for succeeding academically and occupationally, which likely involves support from family and community. Of additional interest is how a strong or weak connection to Mexico influences an individual's experience. The mechanisms of selective assimilation are likely unique to individuals and their families as well as local conditions.

In order to highlight instances of success among the Mexican community, I administered questionnaires and conducted interviews with individuals who lived in Seattle that had Mexican parents or who were born in Mexico but moved to the United States as children, commonly referred to as second and 1.5 generation Americans, respectively (Rumbaut 2006). This research aimed to explore the individual and contextual conditions that allowed them to assimilate selectively, and the interplay between assimilation and their scholastic and professional achievement.

Mexicans in Washington: A Timeline

The migration of Mexicans to Washington State has been documented since the early twentieth century, and, like many other immigrant groups, the migration was driven largely by labor needs in the United States (Gamboa 1990). While immigrants worked along the railroad and in mining, the majority of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the area worked in agriculture. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Washington State and the rest of the Pacific Northwest were engaged in intensive agriculture (Gamboa 1990). The climate, soil and geologic features of the area provided conditions for increased yields of specialty crops such as sugar beets, grapes, hops, strawberries and tree nuts. High yields required intensive labor, and immigrants, primarily Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans from the southwest, provided the labor that fueled this early era of intensive agriculture (Schwantes 1996).

The economic crash of 1929, and the ensuing loss of opportunities in rail, farming, and construction, as well as the tightening of immigration requirements, resulted in reduced Mexican immigration for a period of time (Durand, Massy and Charvet 2000; Gamboa 1990). Mexican immigration again grew after the introduction of the Bracero Program (Durand and Massey 1992; Mize 2006). Established to address the shortfall of farm laborers during World War II, the Bracero Accords were a binational agreement between the United States and Mexico

that allowed Mexican nationals to work temporarily in the U.S. (Canales 2003; Fairchild and Simpson 2004). Between 1942 and 1947, over 46,000 Mexican agricultural laborers, or Braceros, came to the Pacific Northwest. From 1942 on, Mexican farm laborers have been a mainstay of northwest farm production (Gamboa 1987).

The Bracero Accords were terminated in 1964 but Mexican immigrants have continued to fill labor shortages in Washington's agriculture industry. In the 1940's less than one percent of Mexicans immigrants came to the Pacific Northwest, but by the 1970's and 1990's, the percentage of total increased to one and four percent, respectively (Fairchild and Simpson 2004).

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated nation-based immigration quotas and increased immigration from less traditional sending areas such as Asia and Latin America (Farley and Alba 2002). The ethnic make up of this immigrant wave was and is significantly different from that of preceding decades. For example, in 1970, 63% of immigrants were born in Europe or Canada (Card 2005). By 2000, 32% of immigrants were born in Mexico, 26.6% were born in Asia and only 13.6% were born in Europe (Bean, Brown and Rumbaut 2006; Rumbaut 2005).

To be sure, Mexicans and Mexican Americans came to the Pacific Northwest for individual and varied reasons, however, the difference between American and Mexican wages was, and continues to be, a fundamental motivation for migration

(Skop, Gratton and Guttman 2006). Similarly, participating in a more stable economy reduced risk and provided access to capital and social services (Massey and Espinosa 1997). Job opportunities in the Northwest's agricultural industry were plentiful, and the innovations in the fruit industry that helped Washington farms produce crops year-round turned seasonal employment into permanent jobs (Devine 2006). Moreover, the area was attractive because of established immigrant communities that provide informational, material and emotional support to more recent immigrants. Social networks and established communities pulled more Mexicans to Washington.

According to United States census data, the number of Hispanics in Washington is increasing. As a percent of total, for example, the Hispanic population of Washington grew 70%, or from 4.4% to 7.5% of the total population from 1990-2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Of those who identified as Hispanic in the 2000 census, 75% (about 330,000) identified as Mexican. What is more, the Washington State Office of Financial Management estimates that by the end of 2010, the Hispanic population will have increased by 55% over the last decade (Office of Financial Management 2010). While the Mexican population in Washington is highly concentrated east of the Cascade mountain range, many Mexicans and Mexican Americans pursue education and occupation opportunities in Western Washington and Seattle specifically. This research endeavors to contribute to the understanding

of the assimilation experience of this significant, yet little known population in Seattle.

Immigrant Assimilation: Theoretical Perspectives

Assimilation is considered a multidimensional process whereby immigrant groups adapt to, acclimate and become absorbed into a host society or culture (Alba and Nee 1997). The study of how immigrants impact the United States and how immigrants are impacted by the United States gained significant momentum in the early part of the twentieth century at the height of a wave of mass immigration from southern and eastern Europe (Waters and Jimenez 2005). The definition of assimilation emerged from these early studies, and describes a socially adaptive phenomenon that is at once an individual activity and a process that an individual experiences (Estrada 2006).

During this period of time, the Chicago School emerged as a major contributor to the development of assimilation theory in the United States (Alba and Nee 1997; Kazal 1995; Waters and Jimenez 2005). Robert Park and Earnest Burgess of the Chicago School viewed assimilation as a cycle of interaction and fusion between different races. The process came in stages, first with contact, then competition, accommodation and ultimately assimilation. Their theories of assimilation, while based on European immigrants in the United States, were intentionally broad. Their specific stages of assimilation were intended to address immigration in the modern world, both domestically and abroad.

The Chicago School also developed a spatial dimension of assimilation (Alba and Nee 1997). Spatial assimilation assumed that immigrants, upon arrival, resided in ethnic enclaves, often located in urban centers. As these groups interacted with the host population and improved their socioeconomic situation, they become more mobile. With this mobility, they could move out of inner city immigrant enclaves and into Anglo-dominated suburbs (Kazal 1995). The Chicago School theories of assimilation provided a linear structure that described assimilation as a lock-step process towards Anglo-conformity. Under this model, immigrants undertook a one-way process of assimilation and, over time, replaced their birth culture with the majority culture.

The study of immigrant assimilation in the United States was most exemplified with Milton Gordon's (1964) framework of assimilation in *Assimilation in American Life*. Gordon described a set of seven dimensions of progressively integrated levels of interaction between immigrants and the dominant population (Gordon 1964). The first step was acculturation, the process by which immigrants adopted the cultural patterns and language of the majority. Structural assimilation was the second and most influential dimension. Through gradual interaction with the dominant culture, immigrants gained access to the social networks and institutions of the host population. Access to these institutions provided economic opportunities for immigrant groups as well as greater interaction between newcomers and the host population. Once immigrants acculturated and structurally

assimilated, the remaining dimension of intermarriage, unification of identity, and reduction or elimination of prejudice could occur. The end result was complete absorption of immigrant groups into the Anglo majority (Gordon 1964). Changes in immigrant groups could then be measured through generational change; immigrants who had less exposure to the host society were predictably less assimilated. Later generations that had greater access to American social networks and institutions had better opportunities to assimilate (Waters and Jimenez 2005). As with most of the other approaches to assimilation that preceded it, Gordon's framework focused on the immigrant groups' relationship to members of the majority group.

"Straight-line" assimilation emerged in the 1970's and extended Gordon's theory to a multigenerational process in which assimilation grew with each successive generation (Alba and Nee 1997; Brown 2006; Gans 1973; McKeever and Klineberg 1999). These sequential (generational) steps toward incorporation were measured by socioeconomic status, language use, spatial distribution and intermarriage. Each generation confronted a unique set of obstacles and each group was characterized by a distinct pattern of tolerance, then accommodation and ultimately acculturation (Estrada 2006).

Many argued that assimilation was the primary adaptation trend among the European immigrants of the early twentieth century (Alba and Nee 1997). For these immigrants and their descendants, assimilation was responsible for the erosion of

ethnic distinctions and the relative socioeconomic parity with that of Anglo-Americans. The loss of native language ability, high instances of intermarriage and the shift in residential patterns to ethnically mixed suburbs were further indicators of this process. These four benchmarks, over time, emerged as the primary measurements assimilation scholars used to evaluate immigrant incorporation (Waters and Jimenez 2005).

The process of assimilation in the United States is regularly regarded as a linear process by which immigrants become Americans and sacrifice their culture of origin. Yet not all immigrants assimilate uniformly, at the same rate or into similar socioeconomic situations. Segmented assimilation theory emerged out of the need to accurately understand the more nuanced and complex realities of how immigrants succeed or fail. According to segmented assimilation theory, immigrants and their kin adapt and assimilate along three paths that are determined by mode of incorporation, human capital and family structure (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Mode of incorporation refers to the immigration and social policies of the United States, the values, prejudices and structural realities of the majority culture, and the characteristics of the immigrant community (Portes and Zhou 1993). Government policies can actively exclude, passively accept or actively encourage immigration (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Active exclusion aims to eliminate immigration but regularly fails and instead isolates non-documented immigrants who may be forced into an underground and disadvantaged existence.

Passive/neutral acceptance provides legal access to the host country but does not provide additional protections or services that facilitate successful adaptation (Portes and Zhou 1993). Active encouragement commonly targets immigrant categories that are in short supply, usual professionals and laborers who work hard for low wages. Some immigrant groups are given refugee status due to religious persecution in their country of origin. The assimilation experience is enhanced positively or negatively depending on how one is accorded legal immigration status.

The social values of the host population in the United States can also influence the process of assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Appearance, background, language and religion of immigrant groups influence their reception and integration; immigrants who are more similar to the mainstream population are generally received more favorably. Asian and Latin racial discrimination often creates barriers that block occupational mobility as well as social acceptance (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005).

The economic context in the receiving country is also extremely important. Many immigrants find employment in manufacturing, mining, rail and agriculture industries that enables them to accumulate sufficient capital to supply their children with improved education and occupation opportunities (Massey and Hurst 1998; Portes and Zhou 1993). According to Portes and Zhou (1993), these opportunities are in increasingly short supply. From the late 1960's to the late 1990's, the manufacturing jobs that had once facilitated intergenerational immigrant mobility

have fallen dramatically due to deindustrialization and economic reorganization in the United States and abroad (Portes, Kelly and Haller 2005). The number of jobs reduced from over one third of all jobs to less than 15% (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). As manufacturing jobs declined, service jobs rose. The shift from manufacturing jobs to service jobs has contributed to an “hour-glass” economy characterized by high-wage jobs that require advanced education, low-wage jobs that require little education and few jobs in between (Massey and Hurst 1998; Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut 2006; Zhou 1997). This situation creates a more challenging transition to the United States. Immigrants and their children must acquire higher levels of education to improve their socioeconomic status (Alba 2006; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005).

The characteristics of an immigrant community can also be important. The social support provided by people that are already here can facilitate a smoother transition to U.S. society (Fernandez-Kelly and Schauflier 1994; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). These communities can provide information about material resources and emotional support to new arrivals, and can help families more quickly overcome obstacles in the new environment (Boyd 1989). Immigrant communities can also reinforce the norms and values of parent culture reducing stress, anxiety, isolation and culture shock that occur when moving to a new culture with a different language. The community can serve as a collective voice against the social ills experienced disproportionately by immigrants and their children. In other words,

the immigrant community buffers individuals, particularly young people, from prejudice, social pressure, and social isolation often experienced during the process of assimilation when a family is not connected to others shared culture and values (Leslie 1992; Vega, Kolody, Valle & Weir 1991).

Human capital is the knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by an individual, which includes education level, job experience and skills, relational networks and language fluency (Marcelli and Heer 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993). In other words, the personal skill of an immigrant plays an important role in their adjustment to the new setting. More education and sophistication about the host country makes it easier for immigrants to take advantage of opportunities (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Two parent families have larger networks and thus find and exploit economic and educational opportunities more readily than one-parent families (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005). Material resources and emotional support available to children all increase when parents stay together, and this generally translates to favorable outcomes, educationally, emotionally and occupationally for their children (Portes and Hao 2004).

1.5 and Second Generation Assimilation:

As of 2008, 20% of Americans under the age of 18 had immigrant parents (Greenman and Xie 2008). Children of immigrants and emerging immigrant

generations represent an opportunity to evaluate and understand the integration of ethnically, nationally and circumstantially diverse groups. Past research dedicated to the integration experience of these children has focused on how the contextual factors of the United States have affected these groups. Notable researchers (Alba and Nee 1997; Farley and Alba 2002; Gans 1992; Perlmann and Waldinger 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou et al. 2008) have focused on two central concerns. First, would these groups assimilate similarly to second generations of the past? That is to say, would the children of primarily Latin American and Asian immigrants assimilate in the relatively straight line that characterized the assimilation of the children of European immigrants? Second, could the same assimilation benchmarks – socioeconomic standing, residential patterns, language use, and intermarriage – be used to assess their incorporation in the mainstream culture?

The segmented assimilation hypothesis contends that the contemporary children of immigrants will not experience a process of assimilation similar to that of their European predecessors, and that the benchmarks used to evaluate the new second generation should reflect the contextual factors and realities of post-1965 United States. As described above, this theory predicts three assimilation outcomes based on the circumstances of immigration, the human capital possessed by their parents and the structure of their families (Portes and Zhou 1993).

This thesis endeavors to show how the children of Mexican immigrants in Seattle have become successful educationally and occupationally. Through in-depth interviews with individuals from this population, we gain a nuanced and detailed description of their experiences and the strategies they employed to find success. As this research shows, these strategies are in line with what segmented assimilation theory labels selective assimilation. This is of particular importance today and aims to humanize what has become a contentious and often times distracting debate that pits the “new” immigrants and their kin as different, less worthy and inassimilable when compared to older and more established ones.

CHAPTER 2: Tell me a story: Research Methodology

In order to gain a detailed understanding of the integration experiences of the Mexican 1.5 and second generation in Seattle, I drew on methodologies employed by social scientists whose research focused on outlining the complexities of assimilation. I administered questionnaires and conducted in-depth interviews to explore the three dimensions that predict assimilation pathways outlined by the segmented assimilation theory, and to understand how 1.5 and second generation individuals defined, described and perceived their own experience. I received approval from the Human Subjects Review Board before identifying my sample and administering questionnaires and interviews.

My investigation of the strategies employed by successful Mexican descendents in Seattle let me to identify a group that met the following criteria:

- Born in Mexico and moved to the United States as a child.
- (Or) Have at least one parent who was born in Mexico.
- Attended the United States public school system, graduated from high school and completed some post secondary education.
- Over the age of 18.

Participants were identified using a chain referral sampling method (Bernard 2006). Through my personal social network, I contacted people that had direct interpersonal, professional or academic connections with Mexicans and Mexican Americans who were either working in higher education or currently pursuing degrees.

I began my investigation by administering a questionnaire to 35 one-point-five and second generation Mexicans and Mexican Americans that resided in Seattle, Washington (for questionnaire schedule, see Appendix A). The questionnaire focused on the three primary assimilation predictors outlined by segmented assimilation: modes of incorporation, human capital and family structure (Portes and Zhou 1993). My questionnaire was an adapted version of the questionnaire series used in The Children of Immigrant Longitudinal study (CILS) (Center for Migration and Development 2005), a project focused on the adaptation process of the immigrant second generation in the United States.

The results of the CILS study served as the basis for the segmented assimilation theory and thus, I followed the protocol as closely as possible. The CILS data was used in a diverse range of second generation publications (Fernandez-Kelly and Konczal. 2005; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005; Portes and Hao 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 2001 and 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997; Zhou et al. 2008). All of the data rendered from the questionnaire are presented and described in the narrative in chapter three.

In order to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of this group, I conducted interviews to a subsample of 15 participants from the larger pool of 35 participants who returned the written survey. Interviews were used to explore assimilation strategies and identify aspects of both their situations and selves that helped them become successful academically and professionally. I endeavored to

understand how the Mexican 1.5 and second generation defined, described and perceived their experience and ultimately their success. The goal of this research was to acquire a thick, rich description of the experiences of 1.5 and second generation individuals to examine the applicability of segmented assimilation theory, and raise questions about future research and theory expansion. The interviews reflected an emic and idiographic approach to research by asking participants to describe their experiences in their own words (Bernard 2006; Spradley 1980).

In the construction of the interview schedule I borrowed from aspects of positive psychology, including appreciative inquiry (for full interview schedule, see Appendix D). Appreciative inquiry (AI) is an interview philosophy that collects information by asking questions that heighten the strengths, positive potential, and opportunities for participants (Cooperrider and Whitney 2008; Watkins and Mohr 2001). AI hinges on the idea that by focusing on positive experiences and instances of success and by visualizing what interviewees want for the future, they become better equipped to negotiate a path to get to that desired outcome (McNamara 2008). By framing interview questions with AI, interviews serve to build a constructive union between an individual's past experience and future potential. Because my research centered on success, it was appropriate to frame the interview with an appreciation for the past, the present and the potential of the future.

Fourteen interview participants volunteered the use of their first name. A pseudonym was used for the one participant that did not. Most interviews lasted between one and two hours, and some required multiple follow-up contacts. With permission, the interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder. Notes taken during the interview were intended to capture key concepts; direct quotations used in the body of the analysis were transcribed from the interview tapes. In order to facilitate readability, the data from the interviews were often written in the form of vignettes to demonstrate the applicability, or inapplicability, of segmented assimilation theory. Use of a digital voice recorder was fundamental to capturing the diverse topics covered in each interview.

Interviews were unitized to identify major themes and patterns in the analysis. A unit represented a concept, comprised of one or two sentences, and each interview had a range of 40-70 units. A total of 637 units were identified, analyzed for patterns and appropriately categorized. The categories, or the most common patterns or themes, were organized into researcher-identified groups, which were referred to as domains (Spradley 1980). Five domains, or major themes, emerged from content analysis of the data.

All data were collected through the questionnaire and interviews. Segmented assimilation determinants were used to organize the questionnaire analysis and thus focused on mode of incorporation, human capital and family structure. The discussion section that follows (Chapter 3) includes vignettes that elucidate the

patterns that emerged in the questionnaires as well as the interviews (Bernard 2006). Patterns that recurred in interviews but were not specific to segmented assimilation determinants have been included in Chapter 4. These are patterns that most or all interviewees referenced that describe, more acutely, the strategies they employed to advance in school and the workplace.

Throughout sections of analysis, discussion and conclusion, I refer to participants differently according to their country of birth. Therefore, those born in Mexico (1.5 generation) are referred to as Mexican and those born in the United States (2nd generation), as Mexican American. Participants were not asked how they self identify, however, if participants described themselves as something other than Mexican or Mexican American, I used their terminology within vignettes.

CHAPTER 3: Ways the Puzzle Fits Together: Questionnaires & Interviews

The questionnaire and interviews with Mexicans in Seattle highlighted the basic validity of modes of incorporation, human capital and family as keys to assimilation. This supports the position argued by Portes and Zhou (1993) that assimilation is most significantly influenced by context and not simply dictated by personal attributes such as motivation and intelligence. As mentioned earlier, modes of incorporation are three contextual factors that immigrants and their offspring confront in host societies. They are significant because they fundamentally influence an individual's ability to convert human capital to opportunity and they profoundly impact immigrant family structure (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Mode of Incorporation: Policies, Values and the Immigrant Community

Documentation played a vital role to my sample because it dictated how families lived, types of employment they pursued and whether or not they had access to educational or institutional assistance. Everyone in my sample had documentation enabling them to be in the United States legally. While the entire sample had legal status in the United States at the time of the survey, not all entered legally.

Because the second generation had citizenship by way of birth, they always had access to educational assistance and social programs. Of those interviewed, education assistance was vital to their scholastic achievement; one hundred percent

of the second generation interview sample either earned academic scholarships or received federal loans. Financial support, accessible only to those with legal status, fundamentally affected academic achievement. As one interviewee pointed out, “it came down to scholarships and what I got in order to determine where I was going to go to school.”

Marisol moved from Mexico to the United States as a child. She, along with her mother and younger sister, “crossed the river” to get to the United States and made their way to Seattle after an unsuccessful start in San Antonio, Texas. Throughout her schooling, Marisol excelled scholastically. Her formative years were dedicated to family and studies. Her mother was an adult returning student and the family of three spent their free time on schoolwork. Marisol applied and was accepted to the University of Washington (UW). Just before high school graduation, Marisol learned that she did not have residency status in Washington, and that she would have to pay out-of-state tuition to attend UW. Marisol’s family could not afford the tuition rate, nor could she procure sufficient financial assistance. Marisol settled for a local community college. Once enrolled, she received residency status and successfully transferred the University of Washington and received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work.

As Marisol’s case demonstrates, documentation was a key to academic scholarships and funding. Without it, those that could not afford college were forced to adjust their course to reach their educational objectives. Marisol’s experience is also an example of the academic determination displayed by those I interviewed. I will return to this theme later in the paper.

While many Mexicans receive a harsh reception in the United States, there are instances of government programs that provided Mexican laborers with working visas or other pathways toward legalized status. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) was vital to many participants in my sample. While

the thrust of the act was to illegalize intentional hiring of undocumented immigrants, it also created a pathway towards legalization for agricultural workers who had been working in the United States since 1982 (Donato, Durand and Massey 1992). IRCA played a vital role in the lives of 65% of 1.5 generation sample members, and served as the means by which they were naturalized.

Discrimination of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans was widespread according to my sample and was particularly common in school and the workplace. Discrimination also came from diverse areas including housing and rental markets, from teachers and professors, secondary school administrators, supervisors and co-workers.

Most of the sample (80%) experienced racial discrimination in many facets of life and almost all believe there was discrimination in economic opportunities in the United States. However, despite the discrimination they experienced, and the recognition that life in the United States was an uphill battle for non-whites, the majority believed that there was no place better to live than in the United States.

Marisol experienced prejudices because of her appearance. Her father was Japanese, her mother was Mexican and she looked like her father. Marisol was a good student, was energetic and loved school. Marisol was on the fast track in her classroom at the beginning of each school year. She was smart, looked Asian and her teachers were attracted to her. She was lumped in with the “model minority” Asian student group. At first, this opened doors for her that was not available to her sister (her sister did not look Asian). However, once it was revealed that she was Mexican and not Asian, she felt that her classroom status was reduced and teachers and student attributed negative Mexican stereotypes to her.

A strong Mexican community can provide emotional and material support, a strong cultural foundation, job opportunities and improved parental influence over children. Insight into a participant's immigrant communities was garnered through interviews. The interviews revealed data that both supported and opposed some of the positions outlined by segmented assimilation. Four examples illustrate the distinctly different adaptation approaches employed by sample members and their families. Fernando's and Marisol's families intentionally distanced themselves from the Mexican communities in the United States, while Juanita and Andrea were deeply entrenched in large Mexican communities.

Fernando's father owned a small textiles business in Mexico that had fallen on hard times. Fernando's parents left Mexico for the economic opportunities of the United States, and a year later, Fernando and his brother joined them. Once the entire family was in the Los Angeles area, Fernando's father took steps to get his family out of their Mexican neighborhood. He worried that living among Mexicans would insulate his children from the dominant population and would negatively affect their ability to adapt. By moving to a wealthier neighborhood and away from the Mexican community, his children would be forced to learn English, they would be challenged at school and they would not be susceptible problems such as drug use, incarceration and early pregnancy. He wanted them "to be in a different place, to see different things, to have a different perspective on, basically the world." Within two months of Fernando's arrival in the United States, his family moved to Alhambra, a wealthy, primarily Asian neighborhood.

Marisol came to the United States in the mid-1980's. Her family lived for three years in San Antonio where, "the envy was so high. The Latino envy. It was really difficult to move up, you know, in around San Antonio. Because, if you try to speak English then they say you are becoming a gringo. And they did not let you move ahead. So we moved to Seattle." Where the immigrant community in San Antonio was dense, large and developed, Seattle's Mexican community was dispersed, small and weak. Marisol and her family chose to live in Seattle because it would help them make a new life for themselves in the United States. Moving from a

concentrated Mexican community to a predominantly Anglo one was a successful step towards their goal, despite the isolation they felt in Seattle.

Contrary to the experiences of Fernando and Marisol are those of Juanita and Andrea. Juanita was born in Michoacán, Mexico. Her stepfather was a migrant agricultural worker. For years, he came to the United States to work for nine months and returned home to Mexico for the other three. He always came to the Yakima Valley because the work was good and members of his extended family also worked and lived there. Juanita's family had been migrant farm laborers for generations; her grandfather worked the Yakima Valley as a member of the Bracero program. Juanita immigrated to the United States and into a dense, supportive and well-established Mexican community. Transplants from Michoacán were well represented in this community; Juanita had friends in Yakima that she had known in Michoacán. With plenty of job opportunities and an entrenched Mexican community, Juanita's family became quickly established in the Yakima Valley community and never entertained alternative options. Her childhood was a happy one. She grew up surrounded by extended family and formed supportive relationships with people that shared her cultural background.

There were several aspects of the Yakima Valley community that contributed to Juanita's success. Because of the large Spanish speaking population in Yakima, the school system had robust English as a Second Language programs. The density of Mexicans allowed her to maintain her bilingual language skills and to remain immersed in Mexican culture. The Mexican community and extended family provided support to Juanita but also to her parents. "You couldn't go anywhere without having somebody that doesn't know you." For example, "if you go to a wedding, no matter where it is you know that if you act out or if you do anything that could possibly embarrass yourself or your family, they'll find out. Whether it takes a day, or they find out that night, or it might take them a week, but one way or another, my parents would find out about anything I would have done."

Juanita was guided by a number of positive examples. All around her were immigrants who worked the fields with little opportunity for advancement. This made a strong impression on her at an early age. She knew that education was her way out. Without a degree, she would be working the fields for the rest of her life.

Andrea's family had a history of seasonal agricultural work in the United States; her father worked the spring and summer harvests and her grandfather was part of the Bracero program. Family members always came to Washington and many of them stayed for years. Andrea's parents

and nuclear family moved to Mattawa permanently when she was three years old.

Mattawa is an agricultural town of 2500 located just east of the Columbia River and south of the Wanapum Dam. Ninety percent of the town's population is of Mexican origin. Andrea's upbringing was decidedly Mexican; she was never a numerical minority until she went to the University of Washington. Recounting her past, Andrea reflected, "I guess I never thought about the importance of [community] when I was growing up. But it was nice to be able to grow up with people that are like you." The fact that Andrea peers and community members shared her cultural background and immigration experience was a privilege. She never felt like an outsider, she never felt different and she was not aware of the opportunities she did not have access to. Her community insulated her from the difficult realities that descendants of immigrants face when they are culturally and ethnically isolated. Mattawa was socially insulated as well. While the social pitfalls of teenage years (such as drugs, alcohol, crime, and unprotected sex) were present, they were in much lower and manageable quantity. In such a small town, Andrea asserted, you knew who to trust, who to avoid and how to stay clear of trouble.

Mattawa gave Andrea early exposure to poverty. Her family was working class and all family members (including Andrea) had to work in the fields to make ends meet. While she worked in the fields, Andrea was exposed to impoverished immigrants and their children who had limited opportunities for advancement. Andrea saw first-hand the limitation of monolingualism. She also had a clear sense that some people were succeeding and others were failing. She understood early that success could come only with education, which motivated her to focus on school and leadership activities that carried her towards her educational goals.

These four examples provided contrasting perceptions of the role of an immigrant community. In the cases of Fernando and Marisol, a concentrated and established Mexican community was perceived as an impediment to advancement. Their parents intentionally removed their children from communities that shared their culture and immigration experiences. Fernando and Marisol's parents feared their children's English skills, educational achievement and overall assimilation

would be delayed. They clearly believed that the best opportunities were outside of the Mexican community.

On the other hand, Juanita and Andrea told a different story. For these two women, their respective immigrant communities were catalysts for their personal growth. Living in small, rural and primarily Mexican communities gave them first-hand exposure to the challenges immigrants and their children face. Being embedded in their communities also encouraged supportive relationships with individuals that shared their cultural heritage and immigration history. Lastly, their community helped them see the direct benefits of education and bilingualism as well as the limitations of monlingualism.

My interview data raised a question about location – participants that grew up in cities tended to see the immigrant community as an impediment to advancement. In all cases, their parents worked to move away from the urban Mexican enclaves. Participants cited drug abuse, high drop out rates and crime as motivations to leave their communities. Conversely, those that grew up in rural areas, specifically farming communities in eastern Washington, perceived their Mexican community as a support system. While these communities were not immune to drug abuse, high drop out rates and crime, participants looked back on their community experiences positively. For them, the Mexican community allowed them to maintain their roots, maintain their bilingualism and provided direct examples of success and failure.

Human Capital: Educational and Occupational Skills

As discussed in Chapter 1, human capital is the endowment of skills possessed by an individual and includes education attainment, job experience and skills, relational networks and language fluency (Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2008). It is most commonly cultivated through education and work experience. The questionnaire sample was about a 50/50 split of students and working adults. Of those attending school, 30% were employed. On average, the sample began to work at the age of 15 and almost all (90%) worked throughout high school and during college or graduate school.

Aspirations, realistic goals and parental expectations played an influential role in the attainment of human capital among the second generation. Overall, 81% of my sample had college aspirations during their childhood. These goals and aspirations matched their parents' expectations, as reported by the participants: 93% expected their children to attend college.

These high expectations contrasted sharply with the educational attainment of the parents. Most sample members had fathers who did not complete high school and many did not attend high school at all. Results for participants' mothers were similar. Over half of mothers did not complete high school and some never attended any high school.

Participant education attainment, when compared to that of their parents, showed the intergenerational progress of this sample. The levels of human capital my participants accrued provided substantial professional and personal gains. One hundred percent of those interviewed had some level of college education and 87% had completed their bachelor's degree or will be graduating from college within a year. Fifty-three percent of those interviewed either completed or were currently enrolled in graduate degrees.

In almost all cases, the participants in my interviews benefited from teachers, counselors or siblings to get to college. In almost all cases, participants lamented that while their parents pushed them to strive academically, they could never help. Because their parents never navigated a school system in the United States and most had not completed high school, their children relied on school system resources for support and information. In addition to illustrating the lack of parental human capital in this area, these scenarios additionally bespoke the self-reliance and perseverance of the individuals in my sample. Two examples illustrate these points.

Monica attended public schools in Ephrata, Washington. She was a high-achieving student; she took honors classes, was involved in extracurricular activities and performed well on standardized tests. Her academic portfolio reflected her desire and ambition to attend college or university. When she began her senior year in high school, she realized that she had no idea how to get to college. She talked with her parents about college opportunities. They passively encouraged her, but could not help directly. She went to the high school college counselor and got "soft advice." The college counselor suggested a local community college despite the fact that Monica was excelling in and out of the classroom. Unclear about alternatives, she attended Big Bend Community College, where she met an advisor who put her on a better path. The community college advisor was Mexican,

understood Monica's background and laid out the steps that Monica needed to take to get to a four-year university. After two years of community college, Monica transferred to Western Washington University. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a Master's degree at Seattle University.

Juanita was also an honors student, was the senior class president of her high school and was heavily involved in extracurricular activities. Both her parents had minimal school experience and could not provide academic assistance outside of encouragement. Juanita was the oldest child in her family and had no siblings with college experience. She did, however, have a math teacher who gave her extra attention. This teacher set up after-school meetings with Juanita to help her plan her coursework so she would be competitive for college admission. By her junior and senior years, Juanita was in all AP classes, had a strong science and math background and was involved in school activities. When it came time to apply for college, she knew exactly what to do and had a strong academic portfolio. On the other hand, many of her friends were blindsided by the application process. They followed the pack, and "a lot of the students stayed in the Valley and they were going to go to a community college and they would somehow try to get ahead but they didn't. And a lot of my friends... they ended up getting married and having kids." Juanita received a full academic scholarship to Seattle University and at the time of the interview, was in graduate school at Seattle University. When she arrived at Seattle University, she felt absolutely prepared for the academic rigors that awaited her.

Family economic situation is another human capital measure that impacts outcomes. During their upbringing, the entire sample was lower-middle class, working class or poor; none came from affluent or privileged backgrounds. However, over the course of their lives, 78% reported that their family's economic situation had improved. Similarly, 48% of this group expected their economic status to improve in the future.

The occupational experiences of participants and parents further illustrate the transfer of human capital and socioeconomic mobility. My sample reported that seventy-three percent of their fathers worked in blue-collar jobs while 48% of their

mothers worked blue color jobs (28% were homemakers). In contrast only one sample member worked in blue color jobs. The occupations represented in the sample included law, accounting, education, medical assistance, clerical, social work and technology.

Language skills play a vital role in the adaptive experience of immigrants and their children. English language proficiency is generally required to advance educationally and professionally. All sample members were English proficient and most were fluent. By and large, the parents of sample members struggled with English proficiency. My interviews indicated that participants regularly translated legal documents, bills, report cards and other written materials for their parents. In some cases, participants translated for their parents when visiting doctors, buying groceries and other day-to-day tasks.

While participants endured the added challenge of learning and maintaining two languages, and at times this challenge affected their academic performance and social integration, knowing two languages was still considered an asset. Interviewees discussed the professional and cultural benefits of knowing two languages however, one statistic was particularly telling: 100% of sample members intended to raise their children bilingually.

Substantial intergenerational mobility with respect to human capital was achieved by my sample. Since Mexican immigrants have relatively low levels of human capital compared to other immigrant populations (Zhou et al. 2008), the

growth demonstrated by sample members was impressive. The greatest mobility was found in the traditional areas of human capital: educational attainment, occupational training and experience and language skills.

Family Structure

Parental influence over their children, material resources and emotional support all increase when parents stay together, and this often translates to better educational, emotional and occupational outcomes for their children. A two-parent household, by definition, has twice as many resources to support the children. Extended families, where aunts, uncles and grandparents are involved, further increase the familial reach and improve a child's chances for success (Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2008).

Over half of participants grew up with their biological father and all grew up with their biological mother. Most grew up with both mother and father in the household (stepfathers included). Almost all grew up with siblings and many grew up with grandparents, aunts/uncles and other relatives.

Marisol lived most of her life in the Seattle area. When her family immigrated to the United States, they stayed in San Antonio for three years. After finding the Mexican community too restrictive they relocated to Seattle. For the first six months in Seattle, they lived on the street or at the YMCA. In Mexico, Marisol's mother had attended college and was a social worker. They were a middle class family in Mexico. In the United States, her mother's education and occupational experience did not translate to a job opportunity and they became very poor. The human capital she had built in Mexico was lost once they came to the United States. This was a short-term struggle that proved to have long-term gains for the children. Marisol's

mother returned to school in Seattle to earn another degree, and was dedicated to building her education into occupational opportunity.

Moreover, without a Mexican community around them, the family of three women turned inward. They spent all their time together, at home, buried in their books. Marisol and her sister saw that studying paid off, and that education was the route to a better future. Their mother led by example: “She was studying, even though she was a single mom. She was walking the talk. She wasn’t telling me, ‘go study, go study.’ She was studying and because of it I knew that was the only way we were going to make it.”

Gustavo was born in Mexico but immigrated to Pasco, Washington when he was three months old. His family was enormous; he had over 80 cousins and had over 28 cousins in Pasco alone. His extended family was the center of his universe. He had friendships in school but never spent time with them outside of the classroom. His extended family served as his friends, his community and his support system. Even with an established immigrant community to interact with, his family was so large and was so cohesive that there was no need for anyone else. “We didn’t see the need to, kind of, go out and expand and meet other people.” His family provided both support and discipline. Gustavo felt pressure to stay out of trouble, to maintain his good grades and to represent his family appropriately.

“[The] parents were not afraid to discipline us, even if it was an aunt or uncle. We all felt comfortable with each other so I could always go to one of them if my parents weren’t around. And I feel like they felt they could treat us as their own kids too. If we ever need help we could go to them.”

Supportive two parent families also arm children with greater cultural capital. For example, Jorge was by far the youngest in his family. Before he was born and during his formative years, his siblings were going through high school and college. And as they became more embedded into American culture, Jorge was watching. At a very early age, Jorge was learning how to move between Mexican and American cultures. By the time he was in school, he had the cultural capital to

negotiate American culture outside of the home and Mexican culture inside the home. Jorge believed this cultural fluidity was especially instrumental to his academic progress and achievement.

The influence of parents and family extends well beyond material and emotional support. For this sample specifically, the sacrifices made by family and community have been driving factors in their pursuit of advancement. The immigration process itself represented a series of sacrifices parents made to improve opportunities for their children. Leaving their country of origin for unknown opportunity abroad was risky and difficult. Working labor and farm jobs for 12-14 hours a day to provide improved economic opportunities for their children was sacrifice as well. Parental sacrifice emerged again and again in all interviews.

Many participants worked as children to contribute to family income. They worked alongside their parents in the summer and after school and had direct exposure to difficult jobs with little growth opportunity. They knew that education was the way out and that the opportunities provided by their parents were precious.

“It comes down to my parents’ influence on me. Growing up working and working in the fields and working in grocery stores. To see my parents working so hard and not being able to move up and with them emphasizing that we have a great opportunity. This and going back to Mexico and seeing my cousins struggle has motivated me to pursue education. They did, they came here for us and did everything for us and I did not want my parents’ sacrifices to be in vain.”

Some individuals had the financial and emotional support of their entire family. In these cases, older siblings worked to ensure their younger siblings went to good schools and had better access to opportunities. This level of support is indicative of the family value system prevalent in my sample. To be supported in such a way kept interviewees focused on harnessing opportunity.

“I feel like I owe them a lot, [my siblings] and my parents. My motivation for being successful is I want to repay them for everything they've done for me. I don't owe it to them but they were always there for me and I was never without anything. They spoiled the heck out of me so I just want to give back to them. I know for a fact that [my father] has been working to support his kids his entire life and to get them through school. He has told me many times that that is why he is working, to get us through school and college. They are always there for me; they made so many sacrifices in order to support us and to ensure that we are enjoying our lives. I just want to give back to them for everything they've provided for us.”

For others, motivation came from their family histories, which were filled with stories of sacrifice, risk, hard work and limited success. As immigrants, they made do with little and worked long hours to ensure their children had the opportunities they did not.

“It's my parents personal experience [that motivates me]. They came from nothing and that was the example for us to become better. My parents didn't come this way to have fun. They came here to sacrifice so that [their children] can become something more. That is always in the back of my head. For me, it makes me want to do better and to not fail.”

Siblings were another source of influence for sample members, particularly with respect to college aspirations. Where participants had older siblings that attended college before them, the process of applying to higher education was

simplified. Their siblings provided leadership and key knowledge about the process: “By the time I was in high school, she was already a sophomore [at UW], and she was like 'you need to make sure that you are taking chemistry and other classes,' because that is what is going to prepare you to gain admission’.” Moreover, that their sibling made it to college proved that it was within their reach:

“I have three older siblings and I saw that they were going to college so I think that is one of the main reasons I knew I could do it. Maybe if they hadn’t gone to college I don’t know if I would have. I was not the very first one in my family to go to college, so I saw my older siblings doing it and I think that really impacted me and my ability to think that I could do it.”

In summary, the survey and interview data provided support for the applicability of the many aspects of segmented assimilation theory, including the multiple modes of incorporation and the components of human capital. Interviews revealed two areas that were not described by segmented assimilation. They are the role of the Mexican community and the examples parents set for their children. The role of the immigrant community was not universally embraced. In general, those that lived in rural areas saw a Mexican community as a support system while those that lived in urban areas saw it as an impediment. I also found that the examples set by parents seemed more pivotal to their children’s motivation, work ethic and pursuit of education than sheer family size. I described each of these in greater detail in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: In their own words: Mexicans & Mexican Americans in Seattle

In- depth interviews revealed highly promising new areas for understanding how these sample members themselves understand the reasons for their academic and professional advancement. While not part of my original methodology, I've included the recurring themes that went beyond segmented assimilation because they provide an emic perspective of what it means to be Mexican and American and the complexity of living biculturally. Similarly, it highlights the process by which these individuals have used a composite of cultures as a strategy for advancement. Lastly, most in this sample are concerned with how their children, the third generation, will carry on their Mexican cultural foundation. The childrearing strategies they intend to employ provide insight into how other immigrant groups and their kin can advance by holding closely their culture of origin while embracing American culture.

The Influence of Mexico

For all interviewees, Mexico as a place and as a concept has shaped their past, is shaping the present and will shape their future. Each individual assigned different meaning to Mexico, but all linked its significance to their identity: it was a connection point to family and their cultural history, and/or provided a footing for them to launch into the future.

When participants or their parents immigrated to the United States, it was most often permanent. The high instance of applying for IRCA Amnesty 1986 underscored this desire to remain in this country beyond seasonal work. These families made long-range plans and took the requisite steps to realize these plans. Their immigration process was intentional and premeditated. And in the cases where parents wanted to go back, they quickly understood the improved education opportunities for their children were in the United States. For instance, in reference to his parents, one participant said, “After they saw that we established ourselves here [academically], they decided not to go back to Mexico.”

Of the 1.5 generation Mexicans interviewed, many agreed that their connection to Mexico was not only severed by the physical relocation to the United States, but also by the emotional and cognitive decision to let go of one life in Mexico in favor of another life in the United States. This decision fundamentally influenced their connection to Mexico and how they approached their adopted country: “We moved here to make a new life and that is where we made it. We left everything we had. Now when we go to visit, just like anyone else from here, it’s like vacation.” With the relocation process often came a voluntary process of letting go of the past, embracing the present and looking forward towards the future. For many in this sample, letting go of their connection to Mexico was inevitable but also intentional.

For others, the loss was tangible and present. Some participants lamented that they were losing their connection to Mexico. This loss was particularly sharp

during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Many participants were immersed in Mexican culture through family or by living in areas with high concentrations of Mexican immigrants. As they moved beyond the influence of their families and communities to pursue educational or professional opportunities, they lost their vehicles for speaking Spanish and for living and celebrating their culture. When participants visited or returned to Mexico, they were often embarrassed by their deteriorating language skills and struggled to interact with their relatives. Due to time away from Mexico, relatives had become strangers. The fading influence of Mexico weighed on their conscience particularly in Seattle; there were limited opportunities to remedy the cultural isolation. One participant confessed:

“Leaving my culture behind is always on my mind. I constantly struggle with it. And sometimes, when I feel like I am losing it, I want to hold that much more and I assert my identity. But is it something that is on my mind all the time. I worry about it.”

This struggle to hang on to a Mexican identity was particularly difficult for those whose Mexican roots and culture were the foundations from which they found success. Their connection to family and values cultivated by family, coupled with the reality of being poor and Mexican in the United States motivated them to take advantage of educational and professional opportunities. And it was their culture that served as the tool kit they used to face challenges and overcome adversity. Moreover, many worried that the loss of cultural identity will be even stronger with the next generation. This is cause for concern; intergenerationally, they fear that they are losing their way:

“With that next generation, there is no sense of work ethic. I don’t know if they think their parents had it easy, they didn’t see how hard they were working, they are not striving to do better I guess. It’s because they’re not connected [to their culture].”

For a few participants, the connection to Mexico was non-existent. By and large, this response was directed at Mexico as a physical space but also represented a shift away from family in Mexico. Those who were born in Mexico but have been in the United States for most of their lives found that their memories of Mexico were fading. And for those born in the United States, some were never able to foster any connection to Mexico in the first place. The process of Americanization that first took place during their childhood and burgeoned once they left their family and a Mexican community to pursue academic or professional opportunities then deepened this effect. Not surprisingly, this period of time was when anxiety about culture loss became most pertinent.

The influence of a co-national community can be significant and the strategies of either embracing or repelling this community had different outcomes for participants. Most interviewees grew up in distinctly Mexican households. For some, the traditional Mexican household was reinforced by integration with a Mexican community. For others, the household was the only thing Mexican in their American lives. These two different situations resulted in distinct childhood experiences.

For participants that grew up in eastern Washington agricultural towns, life at home was very similar to life outside of the home. Towns such as Mattawa,

Sunnyville, Toppenish have well-established Mexican communities and are demographically majority Latino (89%, 73% and 75% respectively). Most of their peers shared their at-home experience, spoke Spanish in and out of the home, celebrated similar holidays and practiced the same traditions. Being Mexican was the norm and their cultural ways were reinforced and celebrated around them. The shared experience created a comfort zone that allowed interviewees to flourish. For those with this experience, growing up Mexican was a pleasure. “In Yakima, the majority of people in my town happen to be from Michoacán. I had a very happy childhood. I grew up with my cousins, and it was a very small knit community and very Mexican.”

For some that did not have access to an established Mexican community, life inside the home was drastically different from life outside the home. The sharply contrasting expectations from in and outside of the house (to be Mexican and to be American, respectively) created tension between child and parents. Children resented their parents for forcing their culture on them while parents felt that their background was being supplanted. Without a community that shared their cultural values, the pull of an American lifestyle, and a peer group that actively promoted it, was difficult to resist. Interviewees lived two lives and seldom found a balance. The incongruous nature of their upbringing manifested in other ways; as children, they were embarrassed by their family and culture, they struggled to understand their parents’ expectations of being and acting Mexican, they were socially isolated

because they were different and often this difference went unaddressed. Frequently, these individuals had no one with whom to share their situation.

For these individuals, the transition from adolescence to adulthood helped them find this balance. And in this balance was a newfound respect for their parents, the sacrifices they made and the triumphs they realized.

“My father was illiterate, he didn’t know how to read or write in any language. I look back and I was embarrassed. We were reading the mail for my father. Looking back now, as an adult and not a child, I am proud of my father and what he did. He worked really hard for us.”

As adults, these individuals saw the benefits of their upbringing and endeavored to pass that along to their children. The focus on family and the work ethic were most often cited as beneficial values of the Mexican culture. In effect, as they matured, the participants in my sample have acquired a more nuanced perspective of their cultural identity. During childhood they could not see the true value of their family or their background. During adulthood, becoming reacquainted with Mexico and finding value in their birth culture has paid dividends: with better perspective and respect for the tribulations of those that came before them, these individuals were able to properly connect their upbringing to Mexico and its culture.

Bicultural Experience

Many of the 1.5 generation participants I interviewed described their childhood as living between worlds. Moving from Mexico to the United States as children, they struggled to make sense of who they were and where they came from.

Introduced to American culture through the school system, these immigrants were acutely aware of their differences. They looked different, could not speak English and their parents were significantly different from the parents of their classmates. In Mexico, however, they could be immediately identified as 'nortenos.' Since their departure to the United States, they had changed considerably, if unintentionally. Language, clothing and behavior were all signs that they were no longer the Mexicans they were when they left. Some participants lamented that they were as different in Mexico as they were in the United States. Many felt like they no longer belonged in either place.

“When I did see relatives, I was embarrassed that I wasn't fluent in Spanish anymore. Because I was never educated in Mexico, speaking Spanish at home was not enough to retain it so when I went back [to Mexico] I had difficulty communicating with my grandparents and I felt like an outsider. I felt like I was not Mexican enough. That was a struggle. I had a lot of pride and a lot of, I feel connected to Mexico, I loved being Mexican, but it was my idea of what being Mexican was, and not what my relatives perceived me to be, and that was tough to take.”

By living most of their lives in the United States, 1.5 generation participants identified more with the American way of life. They were no longer Mexican as defined by Mexicans; they were a blend of both. But in the United States, according to one interviewee, once an immigrant always an immigrant.

“Even if you have the citizenship here, you never really belong here [the US] because you are an immigrant forever. In my own world, I love [the US], this is home for me. But when you encounter people, you know, you are always treated differently.”

Second generation sample members had similar experiences. Inside the home was Mexican, outside was American and they were a product of both. For some, this dichotomy translated to a diluted cultural experience. In most cases their primary influences, parents and peers, had competing messages. Some felt as though they struggled to embrace both cultures because they were being pulled in different directions.

Many sample members remembered their childhoods as culturally confusing; they recalled how their differences put them at odds with peers and parents. In effect, their bicultural experience kept them from belonging to one world or the other. Once they transitioned from adolescents to adults, many saw that their bicultural experience connected two worlds. Where their differences had once been a source of anxiety and isolation, it was now the platform from which they connected to all people. Bridging worlds then became an intentional process that was born from the valuation of two cultures. As mentioned above, finding value in being both Mexican and American most commonly occurred during adulthood. That they can speak two languages, understand two worldviews and have navigated foreign systems is a set of skills that influenced their personal and professional growth. It is at once a strategy for success and a way of finding meaning in a once confusing experience.

Participants felt strongly about their bicultural experience and their selective assimilation and intended to transfer this experience and perspective to their

children. Participants agreed that there are good and bad aspects to both cultures, and there was a process of selectivity that they learned over time.

“There are things I battle with too within the way I was raised and within Mexican traditions. But because I am able to combine my newfound beliefs, I have been able to create and become the woman I am now and to flourish as an individual that can adapt to both cultures but at the same time always honor the strong foundation I was raised with. I can still be true to myself. I am Mexican by birth and Americanized to my own convenience.”

Notions of being between worlds and bridging worlds overlapped in most interviews, which was indicative of the process sample members experienced as they transitioned from their teen years into adulthood. Reflecting on childhood often elicited memories of looking and feeling different, of being excluded and or feeling awkward about their background. As adults, many sample members looked at their differences as assets, a set of cultural tools that enabled them to move seamlessly from one cultural situation to the next.

Considering the Next Generation

Throughout the interview process, supporting the process of selective assimilation of the next generation (3rd generation Americans) was prominent. All participants have or endeavored to have children and almost universally, participants worried about how they will transmit their cultural foundations to the next generation. This anxiety was tied to their own cultural journey.

Some intended to move back to Eastern Washington to raise their children in Mexican and American environments. Their lives in Seattle did not provide the

immersive experience required to learn and maintain cultural traditions and Spanish language skills. Moving to a small Mexican town in Washington would satisfy professional, cultural and child rearing goals.

Others intended to expose their children to the current and historical realities of Mexican laborers. Because many grew up poor, they were required to contribute monetarily to the family at a very early age. Many individuals worked in the fields during middle school and high school and believed that the experience was critical to their respect for immigrants and Mexican culture as well as the importance of education. They believed that if the next generation is to find success while holding their cultural heritage closely, they will need to experience first-hand some of the struggles their parents or grandparents faced.

Overall, the trajectory of the third generation and how they will preserve and embrace their Mexican heritage was of great importance to this sample. According to interviews, this concern is directly connected to how they perceive their own experiences. As adults, they came to realize that their cultural underpinnings were assets and they endeavored to pass along these assets to their children.

CHAPTER 5: “An individual achieving something starts a chain reaction.”

The segmented assimilation theory suggests that immigrants and their children will assimilate along three different pathways. Modes of incorporation, human capital and family structure will largely determine the direction of the assimilation. And while the goal of this research is not to prove or disprove the segmented assimilation theory, certainly all three played major roles in the trajectories of this sample.

Documentation enabled interviewees to secure educational funding which they all required to achieve their academic goals. The importance of the immigrant community was not as clear-cut as that of documentation. Indeed, this sample provided contrasting examples of how the immigrant community shaped their lives. Segmented assimilation stipulates that the immigrant community can be the primary mechanism of social support for immigrant families. The community can provide emotional and material support and can catalyze the skills, or human capital, of immigrants and their children. But my sample of 1.5 and second generation Mexicans did not universally embrace the immigrant community. Fernando’s and Marisol’s stories, contrasted with Juanita’s and Andrea’s stories demonstrated this variance. While Fernando’s and Marisol’s parents viewed the Mexican community as an impediment to successful assimilation, the parents of Juanita and Andrea saw the opposite. For Juanita and Andrea, a community of co-

nationals provided shared cultural identity and helped normalize the often-dichotomous pull of parents and peers.

Intergenerational mobility was demonstrated by the increased amounts of human capital possessed by my sample as compared to that of their parents. Mexican immigrants come to the United States with relatively low levels of human capital when compared to other immigrant groups (Zhou et al. 2008). Considering family background, socioeconomic status and the harsh reception most Mexicans experience, the academic achievement of those interviewed was remarkable. The growth of human capital from one generation to the next is further demonstrated by the almost wholesale shift from blue to white-collar jobs.

A two-parent household, by definition, has twice as many resources available to support the children. Extended families, in which aunts, uncles and grandparents are involved, increase the familial reach and can improve a child's chances for success. However, I found that two-parent households were not necessarily required to provide important support to their children. Overall, interviews revealed that the examples set by parents were more pivotal than sheer family. Indeed, those who grew up in large and extended families had wider support networks with more discipline and accountability checkpoints. For smaller families, including one-parent households, role modeling through hard work and/or the pursuit of adult education provided examples to follow and motivation. Family influence went beyond support - participants were particularly motivated by their

parents' sacrifices and the positive examples they set. Parents of this sample almost universally shelved personal goals in favor of opportunities for their children. In turn, all have worked hard to see that those sacrifices were not in vain.

Given the nature of my sample, it was part of my selection criteria that participants demonstrate positive assimilation through academic and professional achievement. The question, thus, for my research study was not whether participants assimilated positively, but whether segmented assimilation theory would explain the selective assimilation of this particular sample of individuals. While the questionnaire provided insight into how documentation, human capital and family structure influenced their success, it was the interviews that addressed their selective assimilation strategy and the role that connections to culture, family and community played in participant's lives.

Each participant's experience was unique, however, consistent patterns and themes emerged from interviews. Mexico was an important concept in the lives of all participants, however, in different and often contrasting ways. Mexico represented a point of departure and origin, a place of anxiety and celebration, a source of cultural confusion and cultural grounding. Almost universally, participants used their conceptualization of Mexico as a background, a place and an idea from which to draw strength and identity and to overcome obstacles. As interviewees transitioned from adolescence to adulthood, the concept of Mexico became

increasingly relevant. If Mexican roots were once perceived as a liability, they were later understood as irrefutable assets.

For many participants, the understanding of the bicultural experience emerged during the transitions from youth to adolescence and adolescences to adulthood. The childhood stage was characterized by a growing awareness of positions of dominance and subordination and a realization that parents and peer groups often moved in opposition. Most participants had incongruous and competing lives in the home and at school. Some resented their parents and struggled to make sense of their Mexican background. Living between Mexican and American worlds was of concern to many during adolescence. In America they were treated as Mexican and in Mexico they were considered outsiders.

While once confusing, sometimes dichotomous and often exhausting, growing up biculturally also provided clear assets that included knowing two languages, understanding multiple perspectives and having empathy for the immigrant reality. For many participants, this perspective again emerged during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Almost universally the goals participants identified directly honored their Mexican heritage. In particular, members of my sample aimed to provide improved services to Latino communities, often through the educational process. Whether working with high school students applying to college, supporting university students of color, working with families to understand the process or creating

positive space for underrepresented students, participants were motivated to contribute to the academic process of Latinos or minority student groups. Others in my sample planned to return to small agricultural towns as professionals to fill the service gaps they experienced in their youth. They were aware that the services school counselors, psychologists and lawyers provided played decisive roles in these communities. Moreover, there were tangible benefits for the interviewees; they could simultaneously reconcile their professional and cultural goals.

All participants in this sample have assimilated up and all have done so with determined preservation of their parents' culture and their first language. These participants assimilated selectively and have used both Mexican and American cultures as a foundation with which to achieve their goals. As they reflected on their childhood, participants often recalled memories of looking and feeling different, of being excluded or feeling awkward about their background. As adults, many sample members saw their differences as assets, a set of cultural tools that enabled them to move seamlessly from one cultural situation to the next. This newfound valuation of both cultures served as motivation to harness their bilingual ability, their understanding of multiple worldviews and their experience navigating foreign systems. It was at once a strategy for personal and professional growth and a way of finding meaning in a once confusing experience.

Participants felt strongly about their bicultural experience and their selective assimilation, and intended to transfer this experience and perspective to

their children. Participants agreed that there are good and bad aspects to both cultures and an individual can use both to achieve their goals. As described at the beginning of this paper, one participant put it this way:

Because I have been able to combine my newfound beliefs, I have been able to create and become the woman I am now and to flourish as an individual [who] can adapt to both cultures but at the same time always honor the strong foundation I was raised with. I can still be true to myself. I am Mexican by birth and Americanized to my own convenience.

Conclusion:

In summary, the context of assimilation, individual skill sets, family and a co-national community influenced the experiences of this sample as outlined by segmented assimilation theory. Exceptions to segmented assimilation were the perceived role of the co-national community and importance of parental role-modeling versus family size. Concepts covered in interviews went beyond segmented assimilation and revealed new areas for understanding how these sample members themselves understand the reasons for their academic and professional advancement. Interviews outlined the difficult process by which individuals learned to value aspects of both Mexican and American cultures and to use their bicultural upbringing as an asset. Ultimately, the interviews highlighted the process by which individuals identified selective assimilation as their strategy of choice. Sample members that have assimilated selectively have developed a mental model that honors and protects the best of both Mexican and American

cultures. In effect, they have each created their own framework that results from the valuation of different ways of living.

Segmented assimilation asserts that immigrants and their children can assimilate positively with deliberate preservation of their birth culture and their connections to the immigrant community. However, it does not describe the dynamic nature of how people come to identify selective assimilation as a strategy nor does it address the process of selection. I found that most participants did not intentionally chose this as a strategy, rather, as adults they came to see the utility and meaning in maintaining their Mexican culture. From the point that they attributed selective assimilation as a contributor to their success, it then became intentional. Furthermore, segmented assimilation does not describe the process of selection. Certainly, the selection process is dynamic and is not an individual's action or choice alone. Context, family and community must play an influential role in the selection of different cultural attributes to hold or discard.

Clearly there are numerous opportunities for future research that could further define and measure the process of selective assimilation. Specifically, what are the external conditions, as well as the internal decision-making processes that contribute to this process? How do individual attributes, specifically volition, influence this process? What can families, community members and public institutions do to cultivate selective assimilation? What is the applicability of selective assimilation for third, fourth, and fifth generation Americans?

Overall, segmented assimilation describes well the influence of context. This theory seems to be actionable and useful only at a very high policy level. It is unclear to me what an individual, a parent, or a community member can do to affect the context individuals are received in. Since mode of incorporation, the greatest contextual influencer, is primarily policy based, it seems limited to policy makers. However, segmented assimilation theory, coupled with in-depth interviews can be informative at the individual level. It describes and humanizes the process by which a small group has assimilated positively and selectively. Parents, teachers and community members that understand how children can assimilate selectively are certainly better equipped to help Mexican and Mexican American youths negotiate the process by which they find meaning and importance in both cultures. If children themselves understand the utility and meaning of both Mexican and American cultures, they will be in a better position to succeed.

Understanding the process by which Mexican immigrants and their children are meeting challenges, overcoming obstacles, and finding success under formidable circumstances is critical given the contemporary immigration climate. The experiences of this sample provided powerful insight into how immigrants and their kid are progressing and contributing to the fabric of US society. Highlighting these experiences actively dispels contemporary fears and insecurities that attempt to characterize Mexican immigrants as somehow less intellectually and motivationally qualified to gain acceptance in America.

Mexican immigrant research typically focuses on the challenges and obstacles and rarely documents the successes of this immigrant and second-generation group. Indeed it is critical to understand the challenges and study the conditions that lead to failure, but it is also critical to highlight experiences of success. By focusing on positive experiences and instances of success, people become better equipped to negotiate a path to achieve their goals.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Schedule

1. What is your first name?
2. How old are you?
3. What sex do you consider yourself?
 Male
 Female
4. At least one of my parents (mother or father) was born in Mexico.
 Yes
 No
5. Where do you currently live?
6. In what city and country were you born?
7. If not born in the US, how long have you lived in the US?
8. Which of the following best applies to you?

US citizen by birth _____	US citizen by naturalization _____
Not a US citizen _____	Dual citizenship or nationality _____

9. What is your current marital status?

Married _____ (when)	Engaged to be married _____	Living with partner _____
Single _____	Divorced _____	Separated _____

10. Do you have any children? (Yes/No) _____ If yes, how many? _____

11. Where do you live now? (That is, where do you stay most often)

Your parents' home _____	Your own place _____	A relative's home _____
A friends home _____	Group quarters _____	Other (specify) _____

12. What is your present work situation?

Employed full time _____	Employed part time _____
Unemployed and looking for work _____	Laid off and not looking for work _____
Unemployed and not looking for work _____	Attending school full time and not working _____
Attending school full time and working _____	Attending school part time and working _____
Disabled and not able to work _____	Other: (write in) _____
Self employed _____	

13. If you are currently working, what is your job? (please describe the primary activity and the place where you work)
14. How many hours per week do you work at this job? _____
15. Approximately how much do you earn per week in this job? _____
16. Since leaving high school, how many jobs have you had (that is jobs you have worked at for at least 6 months or longer)?

17. How old were you when you had your first real job (this does not include chores or other household duties)?
18. Did you work during high school? ____ Yes ____ No
19. Did you work during other schooling? ____ Yes ____ No
20. What was your first full-time job?
21. At your current job, what race or ethnicity is your immediate supervisor?
22. What is the race or ethnicity of most of the employees that do the same kind of work that you do?
23. Do you own the house or apartment where you presently live? ____ Own ____ Rent

Childhood: The following questions are about your childhood.

24. Did you live with your biological father when you were growing up (That is, during most of your childhood, did you live with your father)? ____ Yes ____ No

25. If not, where did he live when you were growing up?

Same city ____	Another city in WA ____	Another state or country ____
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26. Did you live with your biological mother when you were growing up (That is, during most of your childhood, did you live with your mother)? ____ Yes ____ No

27. If not, where did she live when you were growing up?

Same city ____	Another city in WA ____	Another state or country ____
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28. Which of the following best describes the living situation you experienced growing up?

- ____ I lived with my (biological or adoptive) father and mother.
 ____ I lived with my father and stepmother (or other female adult).
 ____ I lived with my mother and stepfather (or other male adult).
 ____ I lived with my father alone.
 ____ I lived with my mother alone.
 ____ I alternated living with my father and mother

(divorced/separated).

- ____ I lived with other adult guardians.
 ____ Other (please explain)

29. Who else did you live with when you were growing up?

- ____ Brothers or step-brothers How many? ____
 ____ Sisters or step-sisters How many? ____
 ____ Grandfather/mother How many? ____
 ____ Uncles/aunts How many? ____
 ____ Other relatives How many? ____
 ____ Non-relatives How many? ____

____ If relatives and non-relatives lived with you intermittently, please specify relation and number:

30. In total, how many people, beside you, lived in the same house with you when you were growing up? _____

How often is/was each of the following true about your immediate family (the people you lived with or have lived with for prolonged periods)?

31. Family members like to spend free time with each other.

Never ____	Once in a while ____	Sometimes ____	Often ____	Always ____
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32. Family members feel very close to each other.

Never ____	Once in a while ____	Sometimes ____	Often ____	Always ____
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33. Family togetherness is very important.

Never ____	Once in a while ____	Sometimes ____	Often ____	Always ____
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34. When you were growing up, what was the highest level of education you hoped to achieve?

Less than high school ____	Finish high school ____	Finish some college ____
Finish college ____	Finish a graduate degree ____	

35. When you were growing up, what was the highest level of education you **REALISTICALLY** thought you could achieve?

Less than high school ____	Finish high school ____	Finish some college ____
Finish college ____	Finish a graduate degree ____	

36. When you were younger, what was the highest level of education that your parents wanted you to get?

Less than high school ____	Finish high school ____	Finish some college ____
Finish college ____	Finish a graduate degree ____	

37. When you were growing up, what job/occupation did you want when you were an adult?

38. Among the following job categories, which one comes closest to the job that you wanted when you were growing up?

Factory worker ____	Office Clerk ____	Salesperson ____
Technician/computer ____	Nurse/physical therapist/dietitian ____	Business executive/manager ____
Engineer ____	Teacher/Professor ____	Lawyer ____
Doctor (Physician) ____	Other (write in) ____	

Family Detail: This next section asks questions about your parents and family.

39. In what country was your father born?

40. In what year, approximately, did he come to the United States on a permanent basis?

Year: _____ Never came: _____

41. Is your father now a US citizen (if diseased, was he a US citizen at the time of death)? ___ Yes
 ___ No
42. What did your father do for a living (or step father or adult man that lived with you)? Please include his primary activity in the place he worked.
43. Did he work in any other occupations when you were growing up? ___ Yes ___ No
 If yes, what were they?
44. What is his current work status (If diseased, what was work status at time of death)?
 working _____, unemployed _____, retired _____, or disabled _____?
45. What is the highest level of education that he completed?
46. Why did your father (step father) come to the United States? (Check one of the following that most applies)
 ___ To improve his economic situation
 ___ For political reasons
 ___ To reunite with his family
 ___ Other (please explain)
-
- ___ Don't know/Does not apply
47. Does your father (step father) identify himself as an American now? (Yes/No) _____ If no, how does he identify himself?
48. In what country was your mother born?
49. In what year, approximately, did she come to the United States on a permanent basis?
 Year: _____ Never came: _____
50. Is your mother now a US citizen (If diseased, was she a US citizen at time of death)? ___ Yes
 ___ No
51. What did your mother do for a living (or step mother or adult woman that lived with you)? Please include her primary activity in the place she worked.
52. Did she work in any other occupations when you were growing up? ___ Yes ___ No
 If yes, what were they?
53. What is her current work status (if diseased, at time of death)?
 working _____, unemployed _____, retired _____, or disabled _____?
54. What is the highest level of education that she completed?
55. Why did you mother (step mother) come to the United States? (Check one of the following that most applies)
 ___ To improve her economic situation
 ___ For political reasons
 ___ To reunite with her family

____ Other (please explain) _____

____ Don't know/Does not apply

56. Does your mother (step mother) identify herself as an American now? (Yes/No) ____ If no, how does she identify herself?

57. Did your parents (or adult guardians) own or rent the house/apartment you grew up in?
____ Own ____ Rent

58. What do you think your family's economic situation was when you were growing up?

Wealthy ____	Upper-middle class ____	Lower-middle class ____
Working class ____	Poor ____	

59. Compared to when you were growing up, do you think that your family's economic situation now is?

Much better ____	Better ____	About the same ____
Worse ____	Much worse ____	

60. And in three years, what do you think your family's (i.e. your parents') economic situation will be?

Much better ____	Better ____	About the same ____
Worse ____	Much worse ____	

61. How many times have you been back to visit your or your parents' home country? ____

62. Have you gone back and lived there for longer than 6 months? ____

63. How often do you send money to anyone there?

Never ____	Less than once a year ____	Once or twice a year ____
Several times a year ____	Once or twice a month ____	About once a week ____

64. Which feels most like "home" to you: The US or your or your parents' country of origin?

65. When you were growing up, which country or countries did most of your friends' parents come from?

66. When you were growing up, how many close friends did you have in the school(s) you attended?

None ____	One ____	A few ____
More than 5 ____	More than 10 ____	

67. How many of these close friends have parents who came from foreign countries, that is who were not born in the United States?

None ____	Some ____	Many or most ____
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Language: This next section is about the language(s) you speak.

68. When you were growing up, did you know a language other than English? (Yes/No) ____ If yes, what was it? _____

69. In what language do you prefer to speak most of the time? ___ English ___ Other
 Language ___ Either/Or

70. How well do you speak, understand, read and write that non-English language?

	Very little	Not well	Well	Very well
Speak	___	___	___	___
Understand	___	___	___	___
Read	___	___	___	___
Write	___	___	___	___

71. How well do you speak, understand, read and write the English language?

	Very little	Not well	Well	Very well
Speak	___	___	___	___
Understand	___	___	___	___
Read	___	___	___	___
Write	___	___	___	___

72. How well does your father speak, understand, read and write the English language?

	Very little	Not well	Well	Very well
Speak	___	___	___	___
Understand	___	___	___	___
Read	___	___	___	___
Write	___	___	___	___

73. How well does your mother speak, understand, read and write the English language?

	Very little	Not well	Well	Very well
Speak	___	___	___	___
Understand	___	___	___	___
Read	___	___	___	___
Write	___	___	___	___

74. When you were growing up, did people in your home speak a language other than English?
 (Yes/No) ___ If yes, what was it? _____

75. How often did the people that lived in your home speak this language when talking to each other?

Seldom ___	From time to time ___	Often ___	Always ___
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76. In what language(s) do you speak with your parents, spouse/partner, children, friends and co-workers? (mark one that applies for each)

Language(s) you use to speak with:	English only	English mostly	English and non-English about the same	Mostly non-English	Non-English only
Your parents	___	___	___	___	___
Your spouse/partner	___	___	___	___	___
Your children	___	___	___	___	___
Your closest friends	___	___	___	___	___
Your co-workers	___	___	___	___	___

77. When talking with friends when you were growing up, did you sometimes use a language other than English? (Yes/No) ____ If yes, what language? _____

78. How often did you use this language when talking to friends growing up?

Seldom ____	From time to time ____	Often ____	Always ____
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79. In what language would you like to raise your children (if you have children, in what language are you raising them?)

English only ____	Non-English only ____	Bilingually ____
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Identity and Discrimination: This section asks a few simple questions about identity and discrimination.

80. How do you identify yourself? That is, what do you call yourself? (Examples: Anglo, African-American, Hispanic, Mexican-American, etc.)

81. How important is this identity to you, that is, what you call yourself?

Not important ____	Somewhat important ____	Very important ____
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For the next 6 questions, indicate to what degree you agree or disagree with the following statements:

82. There is racial discrimination in economic opportunities in the US.

Agree a lot ____	Agree a little ____	Disagree a little ____	Disagree a lot ____
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83. The American way of life weakens the family.

Agree a lot ____	Agree a little ____	Disagree a little ____	Disagree a lot ____
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84. There is much conflict between racial and ethnic groups in the US.

Agree a lot ____	Agree a little ____	Disagree a little ____	Disagree a lot ____
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85. Non-whites have as many opportunities to get ahead economically as whites in the US.

Agree a lot ____	Agree a little ____	Disagree a little ____	Disagree a lot ____
------------------	---------------------	------------------------	---------------------

86. There is no better country to live in than the United States.

Agree a lot ____	Agree a little ____	Disagree a little ____	Disagree a lot ____
------------------	---------------------	------------------------	---------------------

87. Americans generally feel superior to foreigners.

Agree a lot ____	Agree a little ____	Disagree a little ____	Disagree a lot ____
------------------	---------------------	------------------------	---------------------

88. Have you ever felt discriminated against? ____ Yes ____ No

89. If yes, by whom did you feel discriminated? (check all that apply)

Teachers (when I was in school) ____	Students (when I was in school) ____
At work (coworkers/supervisors) ____	White Americans in general ____
Black Americans in general ____	Asian Americans in general ____
Latinos in general ____	Others (write in) _____

90. What do you think was the main reason for discriminating against you?

Do you have comments about this survey? Please leave feedback in the space below:

Thank you for completing this survey. The information you have provided is critical. Are you interested in contributing more to this research? We would like to conduct an informal interview to further understand your experience. If you are willing to help, please write-in your email address below. We will send you an email shortly to set up a time to speak. Interviews can be over the phone, in person, email, even over internet messenger. Thank you!

Email address: _____

Appendix B: Questionnaire Consent Form

Purpose and Benefit:

The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of second generation Americans in Seattle that have at least one parent born in Mexico.

We aim to understand more about the lived experience of this group. By completing this questionnaire, you are helping an important body of research that is committed to improving the educational, economic and cultural opportunities of second generation Americans.

I UNDERSTAND THAT:

1. This experiment will involve filling out a questionnaire. My participation will involve approximately 30 minutes to answer questions on the questionnaire.
2. There are no anticipated risks or discomfort associated with participation.
3. One possible benefit to me may be a better understanding of the varied assimilation patterns experienced by second generation Americans in Seattle. Similarly, I may gain a better understanding of how education, economic attainment and cultural opportunities influence assimilation patterns among the children of immigrants.
4. My participation is voluntary, I may choose not to answer certain questions or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
5. All information is confidential. My signed consent form will be kept in a locked cabinet separate from the questionnaire. Only the primary researcher will handle consent forms and questionnaires. All questionnaires will be destroyed at end of study.
6. My signature on this form does not waive my legal rights of protection.
7. I am at least 18 years of age.
8. This research project is conducted by Greg Toledo. Any questions that you have about the research or your participation can be directed to Greg at 206.385.5037 or toledog@cc.wvu.edu. If you have any questions about your participation or your rights as a research participant, you can contact Geri Walker, WVU Human Protections Administrator (HPA), (360) 650-3220, geri.walker@wvu.edu. If during or after participation in this study you suffer any adverse effects as a result of participation, please notify the researcher directing the study or the WVU Human Protections Administrator.

.....
I have read the above description and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Note: Please sign both copies of the form and retain the copy marked "Participant."

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

Purpose and Benefit:

The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of second generation Americans in Seattle that have at least one parent born in Mexico.

We aim to understand more about the lived experience of this group. By participating in this interview, you are helping an important body of research that is committed to improving the educational, economic and cultural opportunities of second generation Americans.

I UNDERSTAND THAT:

1. This experiment will involve participating in an interview. My participation will involve approximately 45 - 60 minutes to answer interview questions.
2. There are no anticipated risks or discomfort associated with participation.
3. One possible benefit to me may be a better understanding of the varied assimilation patterns experienced by second generation Americans in Seattle. Similarly, I may gain a better understanding of how education, economic attainment and cultural opportunities influence assimilation patterns among the children of immigrants.
4. My participation is voluntary, I may choose not to answer certain questions or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
5. All information is confidential. My signed consent formed will be kept in a locked cabinet separate from the interview transcription. Only the primary researcher will handle consent forms and questionnaires. All questionnaires will be destroyed at end of study.
6. My signature on this form does not waive my legal rights of protection.
7. I am at least 18 years of age.
8. This research project is conducted by Greg Toledo. Any questions that you have about the research or your participation can be directed to Greg at 206.384.5037 or toledog@cc.wvu.edu. If you have any questions about your participation or your rights as a research participant, you can contact Geri Walker, WWU Human Protections Administrator (HPA), (360) 650-3220, geri.walker@wvu.edu. If during or after participation in this study you suffer any adverse effects as a result of participation, please notify the researcher directing the study or the WWU Human Protections Administrator.

.....
I have read the above description and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Note: Please sign both copies of the form and retain the copy marked "Participant."

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Tell me about your family's immigration story:

What kind of ongoing connection does your family maintain with Mexico and family or friends in Mexico?

Tell me about your academic or scholastic experience growing up. I am especially interested in hardships or triumphs.

Tell me about your family and community experiences growing up. I am especially interested in hardships or triumphs.

Tell me about your social experience (at school or in home town) growing up. I am especially interested in hardships or triumphs.

What do you see for yourself for your future? How did you come to know that those ambitions will suit you?

What is it about you as a 2nd (or 1.5) generation Mexican American that allowed you to flourish?

What is it about your family or community that allowed you to flourish?

Is there anyone in that has played an influential role in your life?

What advice do you have for young Mexican Americans who are growing up in Seattle?

Are there any questions that you think I should have asked? Is there anything else you would like to say?