

FRAMING HOSTILITIES: COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSES  
OF MISSION STATEMENTS FROM PREDOMINANTLY MEXICAN AMERICAN  
AND WHITE SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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## ABSTRACT

Through analysis of written texts produced by school districts and high schools with predominantly Mexican American populations, beliefs about Mexican American students that mediate attitudes and expectations can be exposed. In this work, I conduct comparative critical discourse analyses (CDA) of school district and high school mission statements from a total of 35 schools and 20 school districts in the Southwestern United States and Chicago, Illinois. The sites were selected because of their large to predominantly Mexican American students populations. Of the 35 school mission statements I researched, 19 were from predominantly Mexican American high schools and 16 were from predominantly White high schools. Of the 20 school district mission statements I collected, 11 were from largely to predominantly Mexican American school districts and 9 were from largely to predominantly White school districts.

Analyses conducted in this study of the mission statements utilizing several 'tools' of CDA revealed ideologies, or ideological discursive formations (IDFs), of low expectations and negative attitudes for Mexican American students when compared to White students. These IDFs materialize by way of frames and signs that are (re)created in the district and school mission statements. The IDFs serve to mediate the discourses that are utilized to describe Mexican American students and the districts and schools they attend. These discourses serve to mediate beliefs about Mexican American students that in turn reinforce the IDFs already in place.

Understanding the types of discourses that (re)produce low expectations for and negative attitudes about Mexican American students is a first step in changing these schooling discourses that ultimately contribute to low academic achievement.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MEXICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 signaled the creation of a plethora of social concerns for newly incorporated United States citizens of Mexican descent. As a colonized population, Mexican Americans encountered overt physical, psychological, social, and economic hostilities that, despite several individual acts of resistance, served to establish a hierarchy that placed the Mexican American in slighted positions (Acuña, 2004). The passing of more than a century and a half has yielded improvements in the physical hostilities that Mexican Americans have faced. However, the psychological, social, and economic hostilities that Mexican Americans encounter remain. By hostilities I mean individual acts of aggression (usually on a small scale) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Wing Sue et al., 2007) or exclusion, be they verbal, non-verbal, or visual (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) that when aggregated have negative or disturbing effects on the intended targets.

Notably, Vèlez-Ibañez (1996) refers to the effects of such hostilities when he writes of Mexican Americans' unequal "distribution of sadness" and the continuing social and economic concerns of this third largest ethnic group in the United States. To be sure, racism and discrimination are at the root of these hostilities and the vehicle of delivery is often public schooling (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Valencia, 2000, 2002c; Valenzuela, 1999<sup>1</sup>). This investigation is undertaken to understand at least one

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<sup>1</sup> For readers interested in reviews of racism and discrimination in public schools, see Cammarota, 2004; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Monkman, Ronald, & Délimon Théráméne, 2005; Murguia & Tellez, 1996; Pizarro, 2005; Rangel & Alcala, 1972;

mechanism by which these hostilities are delivered in public schools. Specifically, the questions that this work will attempt to answer are primed around the notions of the structural constraints of schooling and include:

- 1) What are the attitudes about and expectations for Mexican American students as communicated in district and school mission statements with large to predominantly Mexican American student populations?
- 2) How do these attitudes and expectations compare to those of districts and schools with large to predominantly White populations?

In this study, I utilize critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method of comparing mission statements from 30 school districts and high schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations to 25 school districts and high schools with large to predominantly White student populations. By employing CDA tools such as problematizing, agent-student relations, and insinuations, I am able to bring transparency to the ideologies that mediate the discourses districts and schools use when referring to their students. I contend that these ideologies emerge through “frames” and “signs” produced by the mission statements and that these “frames” and “signs” differ between districts and schools that have large to predominant Mexican American student populations and those that are largely to predominantly populated with White students.

In order to fully understand the number of Mexican American students upon which the hostilities of public schools have an effect, I will provide a contemporary

demographic overview of the Mexican American community in the United States followed by a statement of the problem vis-à-vis Mexican American schooling.

### Demographics of the Mexican American Community

As of 2004, the total population of Latinas/os<sup>2</sup> residing in the United States numbered around 40.5 million and represents fully 14% of the total U.S. population. Mexican Americans comprise 64% of the total Latina/o population in the U.S., approximately 26 million people, or 9% of the overall U.S. population. Mexican Americans are considerably younger than the White population in the U.S. with the median age of Mexican Americans being 25 years old while the median age of Whites is 40. The youth of the Mexican American population together with higher fertility rates than Whites (8.3% for Mexican American women ages 15 to 50 and 5% for White women in the same age group), promises to increase not only the total population of Mexican Americans but also the proportion of their population in the United States. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau (2008) projects that by the year 2020, over 66.3 million people of Hispanic origin will live in the United States. This would represent 19% of the total U.S. population. The Mexican American population would number approximately 43 million or 12.6% of the total U.S. population<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Latinas/os refers to women and men of Latin American descent residing in the United States independent of immigration status. This is an ethnically comprehensive term that includes persons of Mexican descent. Whenever census data are disaggregated, I will focus on and refer to the term Mexican American.

<sup>3</sup> These calculations assume 65% Mexican ethnic representation of the total projected Hispanic population (total projected Mexican ethnic population ( $66.3 \times .65 = 43.09$ )), and percentage of total U.S. population projected to be 341.3 million ( $43/341.3 = 12.6$ ).

Unfortunately, nearly 48% of Mexican Americans do not graduate from high school compared to only 11.4% of Whites (U.S. Census, 2007)<sup>4</sup>. Solórzano and Ornelas (2002), and Yosso (2006) have referred to the “Chicana/o educational pipeline” wherein they track the schooling sustainability of Mexican Americans. Utilizing census data from 2000, these researchers have been able to graphically show that besides high drop out rates, Mexican Americans have low post-secondary matriculation rates and ever decreasing rates at obtaining bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees (7%, 2%, less than 1%, respectively).

#### Statement of the Problem

Concerns regarding the rates at which Mexican Americans drop out of high school are indeed warranted. Saenz (2006) reports that Mexican Americans have the lowest level of education of any racial/ethnic group. However, as Portes (2007) suggests, there should be an equally, if not greater, concern regarding the achievement gap that exists for Mexican Americans when compared to Whites. This achievement gap has much more to do with differentials noted in grade level academic outcomes, “intellectual development, achievement motivation and the possibility of benefiting from schooling” (Portes, 2007, p. 2) than in retention and drop out rates. Still, links between the benefits of schooling, notably in wages and income, and Mexican American high school dropout rates have been made (Saenz, 2006). I posit that low academic achievement, as demonstrated in achievement gaps, precedes in many cases high school dropout.

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<sup>4</sup> The Census Bureau reports that this data is based on the American Community Survey conducted in 2004. Although the reported percentage of Mexican Americans who drop out of high school varies, official statistics frequently “misrepresent the severity of this situation by undercounting dropouts on technicalities” (Pizarro, 2005).

In public schools, Mexican American school aged children continue to experience low academic achievement in spite of over 150 years of guaranteed educational opportunities (Muñoz, 1989). Valencia (2002c) observes that Mexican American low educational achievement has been persistent, pervasive, and disproportionate in the United States. It is persistent precisely because it has been noted for decades, pervasive because similar educational outcomes are found in most schools that Mexican Americans attend, and disproportionate in terms of the low academic achievement of Mexican American students when compared to the American standard of White students (Valencia, 2002c). Perhaps the greatest issue is that “individual... development, especially in relation to structural constraints, mediated activity, and agency, is yet to be fully understood” (Portes, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, in order to address the achievement gap, initial investigations to understand this relationship must be made. According to Portes (2007), “Only then can the current system be restructured in organizing teaching and learning in ways that...are designed to meet current grade-level standards” (p. 2).

The restructuring and reformation of schools that Mexican American students attend, and improvements in their academic achievement can only be realized if paradigmatic shifts in the belief systems of those who work and study in the schools is made. To accomplish any shift in belief systems requires frank discussion about the ideologies that are currently held. However, frank discussion of beliefs or ideologies some have of Mexican Americans may be difficult for many to engage in (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). Still, as Reed (1996) writes, “It is important to systematically eliminate intentional and unintentional messages that support prejudices and notions of

superiority if all children are to realize their relatively untapped potential” (p. 81). It then becomes imperative that systematic analysis of written texts produced by schools, such as produced by this study, is conducted to uncover these beliefs. In the present case, by written texts I mean written communications that provide information about districts and schools, and the students who attend them and that are produced and distributed by the institutions. Fairclough (1995) refers to this type of investigation as one that works to reveal an “ideological discursive formation” (IDF). Drawing upon Pêcheux’s (1982) ‘discursive formation,’ the determination of “what can and should be said” (p. 111) in a given institution, and Althusser’s (1971) ‘ideological formations,’ the ideological positions held within an institution, Fairclough (1995) conceives of IDFs as “the inseparability of the ‘ways of talking’ and ‘ways of seeing’” (p. 40). Although the IDF disclosed by a mission statement may be only one of several IDFs a district or school may have, it is the dominant IDF precisely because the mission statements are produced and disseminated by the districts and schools in written form and as a result go unchallenged (Fairclough, 1995). Many of these texts are printed in a pamphlet that I refer to as a prospectus. However, increasingly, these texts are found as part of school Internet web sites where they can be accessed widely. After critical analysis of these texts, beliefs and actions that may lead to lowered expectations can then be addressed to help improve academic achievement and increase rates of higher education attendance.

The problem to be addressed, and what I will argue in this study, is that the educational expectations of Mexican American students in U.S. schools is low and that the general attitude that U.S. schools have about Mexican American students is one that

is resigned to a notion that keeps these students in or close to the psychological, social, and economic marginality that their predecessors knew, and that these attitudes and expectations are reflected in district and school mission statements. Equally problematic is that low expectations, in particular, continue to be communicated under the auspices of meeting individual needs of diverse students (Luke, 1995). The goals, then, of this study are 1) to shine a light on the ways with which public schools disseminate information that recreates and ultimately perpetuates these same psychological, social, and economic hostilities, and 2) to suggest ways that schools can recognize such communications and reverse the effects they have heretofore constructed.

The urgency of this dissertation is to be found in the link between the low academic achievement of Mexican Americans, and the high drop out rate discussed above. This urgency is not just located on the individual level for Mexican Americans, it is also located at a larger national level. For when the demographic projection of one-tenth of the total population of the U.S. is combined with low academic achievement and high drop out rates, the impact on the U.S. labor force and national economic well-being is certain to be profound (Saenz, 2006).

#### Format of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation will be organized as follows. In Chapter 2, I present a survey of the schooling history of Mexican Americans. In particular, I emphasize their segregation and unequal treatment in U.S. schools, and the community activism that has taken place in response. Chapter 3 features findings of researchers whose work has contributed to the literature vis-à-vis either Mexican American schooling

or critical discourse analysis (CDA) in education. Here, I review work that attempts to explain the contemporary positionality of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools, as well as literature that utilizes CDA to examine discourses in school settings. In Chapter 4, I present the research methods with particular attention to the theoretical facets and tools of CDA used in the study and the data collection and analysis procedures. I present in Chapter 5 the district and school mission statements. Included here are analyses of the mission statements using 8 separate CDA tools. In Chapter 6, I provide a discussion of the analyses. Specifically, I discuss the emergence of two themes from the mission statements, frames and signs. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a framework through which discourses and, ultimately, ideologies regarding Mexican American students can be transformed in U.S. schools.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORY OF MEXICAN AMERICAN SCHOOLING

Segregation of Mexican Americans in the United States has been commonplace since the end of the Mexican American War in 1848. Despite the inclusion of Mexican Americans as American citizens by way of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, foundations of oppression were laid early on through racial hostility and the divestitures of war. The concept of Manifest Destiny contributed not only to the justification of declaring war with Mexico, but also lingered in U.S. social ideology after the fighting ended. Continued beliefs in the racial inferiority of Mexicans and notions of Mexican Americans as a conquered people contributed to the isolation of Mexican Americans at a time of U.S. westward expansion. Much of the early history of Mexican American schooling in the United States is characterized by their segregation under the belief that Mexican Americans “were ill-clad, unclean, and immoral; interracial contact would lead to other relationships; Mexican children were not white and learned more slowly; and so forth” (Acuña, 2004, p. 159). During the decades following the Mexican American War, schooling of Mexican American children was sponsored either by the Catholic Church, Protestant denominations, or through public school (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Each of these types of schools had its own objective with respect to the schooling of Mexican American children.

Prior to U.S. conquest, the Catholic Church was commonly the institution through which the schooling of Mexicans took place in northern Mexico. After annexation by the U.S., the Catholic Church, in an attempt to maintain its control over religious practices of

the mostly Catholic Mexican Americans in the region, expanded schooling. Responding to increasing anti-Catholic sentiment in the U.S., its objective was to strengthen the beliefs in the Catholic Church during a time of increased presence by Protestants and institutionalized public schooling. Thus, Catholic schools were built throughout the U.S. Southwest for Mexican American children with the goal of preserving a religious constituency in the territory.

Similarly, Protestant schools were created for Mexican American children in the U.S. Southwest. Where the Catholic Church sought to retain its congregation through schooling, Protestant denominations, most notably Presbyterians, sought to convert Mexican Americans. Through schooling of Mexican Americans, Protestant schools sought to prepare some students for leadership positions that would aid in the conversion process and also to assimilate Mexican Americans. In the eighteen years between 1878 and 1896 Presbyterians opened some fifty schools for Mexican origin children. However, once public schools became more widely established, the number of Presbyterian school starts declined. Still, some new elementary schools were created by Presbyterians for Mexican American children into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

Isolation of Mexican Americans was especially apparent in public schools. Separate public schools for Mexican American children were established well after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo despite the absence of any requirement to do

so by law in most states<sup>1</sup> (Valencia, Menchaca & Donato, 2002). Initially, there were only a small number of schools created for Mexican Americans across the U.S.

Southwest due in part to a lack of importance public officials gave to the schooling of Mexican American children (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Consequently, instead of segregated schools, Mexican American children were often placed in segregated classrooms within integrated schools (Gonzalez, 1985). Justification for this segregation included, among other reasons, the need to keep Anglo children from having their education impeded by children who were not able to speak or understand English. However, one superintendent in Colorado made no mistake about why Mexican American children were segregated when he declared, “white people...do not want their children to sit along side of dirty, filthy, diseased, infested Mexicans in school” (Taylor, 1929; as cited in Donato, 2003, p. 79). As a result of such positions, whole schools designated for Mexican American children soon replaced segregated classrooms.

Segregated schools came to fruition usually as a result of city government and local school board policy that reflected the racial prejudice prevalent at the time. During the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a significant increase in the establishment of public schools for Mexican American

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<sup>1</sup> Two exceptions may have existed. The first exception occurred in California where there was legal segregation of Indians and Mongolians starting in 1885. Implicit in this legislation was the classification of Mexican Americans as Indians (Cooke, 1948; as cited in U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971a). Second, Rangel and Alcala (1972) argue that de jure segregation of Mexican American children did, indeed, exist in Texas where ‘Mexican Schools’ were established as a part of a tri-ethnic school system resulting from the explicit language of school segregation for “colored children” in the Texas Constitution of 1876. They further point out that as late as 1948 school districts in Texas operated separate high schools for Mexican Americans.

children. This occurred, in part, as a result of court orders and greater availability of funds (Atkins, 1978; Eby, 1925; Ferris, 1962; as cited in San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). However, as a reflection of widespread social discrimination, even the use of funds to construct segregated schools created Anglo resentment (Rangel & Alcala, 1972). Rangel and Alcala (1972) write:

in 1919, after several citizens in the Pharr district objected to the presence of Mexican-American students in the district's brick school building, the Pharr Board accepted a proposal to transfer these students to a nearby Mexican church. The citizens had arranged to secure its use as a Mexican school. (p. 313)

The dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it a refocusing of the objectives of schools for Mexican Americans. Where literacy instruction was the primary responsibility of public schools for Mexican Americans during the late 1800s, "Americanization" of Mexican Americans in the United States became the primary goal in the early 1900s (Rangel & Alcala, 1972; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). This goal was clearly stated by Ellwood P. Cubberly (1909), dean of the School of Education at Stanford, when he wrote that the task of U.S. public schooling of Mexican Americans "is to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order...and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions" (pp. 15-16; as cited in Sheridan 1986, p. 226). Public schools became responsible for this goal in part because of the perceived impediments to assimilation of

Mexican Americans in Catholic schools (Broom & Shevky, 1952; Heller, 1966; Moore, 1970; as cited in Lampe, 1977).

Schooling of Mexican Americans under the “Americanization” banner furthered the segregationist cause. As early as 1915 the belief that Mexicans and their Mexican American cousins could overcome their shortcomings by becoming more like Whites in the United States led to the official creation of segregated “Americanization” programs in schools (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). As Gonzalez (1985) writes, “it was common for even acculturated Mexican children to be segregated. Whereas segregation was justified on grounds of language and culture, the essential factor was the nationality of the child” (p. 57). For example, by the mid 1930s some 80 percent of elementary school aged Mexican American children in Orange County, California attended segregated schools with 85% of all California school districts segregating Mexican American students by the late 1940s (Gonzalez, 1985). An example of an “Americanization” program was Arizona’s “1C” (Lucero, 2004). As late as the end of the 1950s, “‘1C’ programs were instituted specifically for Spanish-speaking children and functioned, in fact, to keep children in the first grade for two years” (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1996, p. 296). Often, physical abuse of Mexican American students resulted from overzealous Americanization efforts. Vélez-Ibáñez (1996) recounted his experience in his book, *Border Visions: Mexican Cultures of the Southwest United States*, in the following way:

As a five-year-old student in 1C and even though I spoke both English and Spanish, I can recall having my hair pulled by my teacher and being paddled by the principal for speaking Spanish,

which they defined as an offense. (p. 296)

Americanization attempts were based on the opinion that Mexican Americans were of lesser intelligence than whites. This notion provided justification for school boards to allow the use of I.Q. testing as a means of placing Mexican American students in vocational education programs (Acuña, 2004). Later, the use of I.Q. testing for course placement (tracking) purposes would diminish. However, this did not mean that tracking discontinued (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). From the 1960s to the 1980s curriculums for “at risk” students resulted in remedial instruction for many Mexican American students. Here, low academic achievement of Mexican Americans was attributed to the assumption that “U.S. Mexican children had little information, experience, or developed cognitive structures that would allow them to take advantage of instruction” (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1996, p. 85).

Social constructions of Mexican Americans vis-à-vis schooling were initiated during the 1920s and 1930s and continued in scholarly literature well into the 1990s. In early master’s theses conclusions were drawn that placed the blame for low academic achievement of Mexican Americans on the Mexican American. Taylor (1927) cited deficiency in English language, poor nutrition, mental retardation, as well as familial apathy as the causes of the difficulties of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools (as cited in Valencia & Black, 2002). According to Valencia & Black (2002), this work was followed by similar master’s theses by Gould (1932) and Lyon (1933) that reinforced the ‘myth’ of Mexican American familial lassitude.

Some work became the support for the recommendation of further segregationist policies and justified these recommendations based on some stated concern for Mexican American students. Findings declared that separating Mexican American students would benefit them since they would be protected from having to compete with White students. According to Stanley (1920), even more liberal teachers

feared that Mexican contact with bright white children had damaging effects on the Mexican children's psychological well-being. One teacher described the social and academic climate of segregated classrooms: When Mexican children were placed in classrooms with their own kind, their 'faces radiated joy,' they '[threw] off their repression that held them down when they were in the schools with other children,' and there 'was no one to laugh at any peculiarity they might possess. (p. 14; as cited in Donato, 1997)

Later, during the 1960s, peer reviewed literature sustained this ideology of familial apathy by implicating the 'cultural deprivation' of Mexican Americans. Valencia and Black (2002) write that

Voluminous literature spoke to the culturally deprived child and his or her (allegedly) socially pathological family and impoverished home environment...Mexican American children and their families (particularly of low SES background) were, among other racial and ethnic groups, a targeted population of the 1960s mythmakers. (p. 85)

Soon, however, articles replacing ‘culturally deprived’ Mexican Americans with Mexican American students who are ‘at risk’ were published. Studies conducted in the 1990s by Manning and Baruth (1995), and Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm (1997) concluded that low schooling achievement by ‘at risk’ Mexican American students is the product of race/ethnicity, poverty, and single parenthood as well as poor self-esteem, self-destructive behaviors, and juvenile delinquency (as cited in Valencia & Black, 2002).

This history, then, provides the context for the construction of several factors that have contributed to the low academic achievement of Mexican American students. Among these factors is, of course, as outlined above, the segregation of Mexican American students (Valencia et al., 2002), a lack of attention paid to the schooling of Mexican American children (San Miguel, 1987), and socially constructed ideologies of Mexican American cultural and familial deficits (Valencia & Black, 2002). A number of researchers have described the increasing resegregation of Mexican American students (Boger, 2000; Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Horn & Kurlaender, 2006; Lee, 2005; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Vásquez, 2007) through several means including tracking or ability grouping (Arias, 1986; Oakes, 1995; Rubin, 2006; Rubin & Noguera, 2004; Welner & Oakes, 1996) as more contemporary factors in the academic underachievement of Mexican American children.

It is important to note here that although Mexican Americans have historically been treated as second-class citizens by the K-12 schooling system in the U.S., they have not been passive victims. For example, the three decades from the 1930s to the late 1960s marked an especially active era in efforts by Mexican Americans to engage in

efforts to improve the schooling of their youth. This engagement took the form of both litigation and community activism and was quite successful.

### Mexican American Educational Litigation

Legal action taken by Mexican Americans on behalf of their children can be prominently understood in three historical cases, *Del Rio Independent School District v. Salvatierra* in 1930, *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* in 1931, and *Méndez v. Westminster School District* in 1946. Each case was brought forth to address the segregation of Mexican American children in Southwest schools.

#### Del Rio Independent School District v. Salvatierra

In the case of *Del Rio Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930), parents of Mexican American school children charged that the Del Rio (Texas) Independent School District was in violation of the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution resulting from the establishment of a separate school for Mexican American students (San Miguel, 1987). The school board argued that discrimination was not a factor in the desire to establish a separate facility for Mexican Americans by stating that the separation “was not actuated by any motive of segregation by reason of race or color...” (Foley, 2004). Although the District Court sided with the parents, the Texas Court of Civil Appeals accepted the school district’s position and reversed the lower court’s ruling in favor of the Del Rio School District (Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2002). In its ruling, the Appellate Court stated that there was a lack of proof suggesting intent to discriminate. According to Rangel and Alcala (1972), the court’s position was

that the district separated Mexican American students to address language difficulties and that “separation to meet individual needs was permissible and the pedagogical wisdom of local administrators...was held to be adequate” (pp. 334-335).

Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District

*Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* (1931), the first successful school desegregation case in U.S. jurisprudence, involved the segregation of first generation Mexican American students who had been systematically separated from their White peers in the town elementary school, and placed in a newly organized “Mexican school” located elsewhere (Alvarez, 1986). The mostly immigrant parents of the segregated Mexican American elementary school children formed the *Comite de Vecinos de Lemon Grove* (The Lemon Grove Neighbors Committee) and with the aid of the Mexican consul in San Diego brought a Writ of Mandate against the school district for illegal segregation. The school board, to justify their actions, cited the “cultural deficiency” myths described above. According to Alvarez (1986), one of the primary defense arguments read, “That the new school was built for the purpose of establishing an Americanization school wherein backward and deficient children could be given better instruction than they could be given in the larger school” (p. 6). However, the Superior Court of San Diego County ruled in favor of the Mexican American parent plaintiffs and stated that, “the laws of the State of California do not authorize or permit the establishment or maintenance of separate schools for the instruction of pupils of Mexican parentage, nationality, and/or descent” (*Alvarez v. Owen*, 1931; as cited in Bowman, 2001). In the ruling, the Judge opined that separating Mexican American students was

not merely a violation of state law permitting only the segregation of African and Indian students, but that the segregation would hinder the English language development of the Mexican American students (Griswold del Castillo, Ortiz, & Gonzalez, n.d.). However, this positive ruling for Mexican Americans translated neither into the discontinuation of segregation of Mexican Americans in California nor elsewhere in the U.S. Southwest (Valencia, 2005). As Valencia (2005) notes, three explanations exist for the lack of larger legal precedence in the *Alvarez* case, “First, the plaintiffs’ lawyer did not argue any violation of Constitutional law. Second, Judge Chambers did not publish his Opinion. Third, defendants did not appeal the decision” (pp 397-398).

#### Mendez v. Westminster School District

Continued segregation of Mexican Americans in California in the wake of any legal precedence resulting from the *Alvarez* case, soon resulted in another challenge. In *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946), parents of Mexican American school children claimed discrimination and challenged in federal court several Orange County California school district policies establishing separate schools for Mexican Americans. Specifically, the parents challenged the constitutionality of segregating Mexican American students as a violation of the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Valencia, 2005). By challenging the “separate but equal doctrine” established in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) case, *Mendez* became the first such challenge vis-à-vis public K-12 schooling in U.S. jurisprudence (Valencia, 2005). However, in *Mendez*, as a result of the state’s classification of Mexican Americans as White, alleged discrimination was

based on national origin rather than race (*Mendez v. Westminster*, 1946; as cited in Valencia, 2005).

In their defense, the school districts' attorney made a three-pronged argument. First, the segregation of Mexican Americans was based on issues of language learning and Americanization rather than race or ethnicity. Second, the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) had allowed the separate but equal establishment of public facilities, and finally, that the case was beyond the purview of federal courts because issues of education were state matters (Wollenberg, 1974; as cited in Valencia, 2005). The attorney for the plaintiffs countered with arguments that continued to attack the legality of state and federal foundations for segregation. In particular, this strategy involved demonstrating the psychological ill effects of segregation by using expert social science testimony to show "that segregation retards the development of Mexican American children" (Valencia, 2005, p. 402).

The Court's decision, handed down in February 1946, ruled in favor of the Mexican American plaintiffs. In so ruling, the Judge not only found the districts to be culpable of segregating Mexican American students in defiance of California statute, but also cited violation of Constitutional guarantees. The following quotes from the decision illuminate

the school boards and administrative authorities have by their segregation policies and practices transgressed applicable law and Constitutional safeguards and limitations and thus have invaded the personal right which every public school pupil has to the equal

protection provision of the Fourteenth Amendment to obtain the means of education. (*Mendez v. Westminster*, 1946; as cited in Valencia, 2005, p. 404)

The equal protection of the laws pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, text books [sic] and courses of instruction to children of Mexican ancestry that are available to the other public school children [sic] regardless of their ancestry. A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage. (*Mendez v. Westminster*, 1946; as cited in Valencia, 2005, p. 404)

The ruling in *Mendez* was in appeals court by the end of 1946. However, with support from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the American Jewish Congress (AJC), the Attorney General of California, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the National Lawyers Guild in the form of *amicus* briefs, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals returned a unanimous decision upholding the District Court's ruling (Valencia, 2005). Where this decision was indeed groundbreaking for Mexican American students in California, its beneficial effect was limited. As Valencia (2005) notes, "because the *Mendez* case was not appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and because the final appellate court ruling tied the issue of segregation to California state law, this case could not set the same sort of legal precedent that" (p. 401)

is to be found in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case.

### Mexican American Educational Activism

In addition to legal cases that Mexican Americans brought to the courts, efforts to secure improvements in the schooling of their children has included community action. As early as the 1930s, Mexican Americans endeavored to put pressure on local schools to obtain these improvements. Later, in the 1960s, Mexican Americans again implemented the strategy of compelling school boards to act on their behalf. Such efforts, including confronting local school boards during planned meetings and marching down municipal thoroughfares, demonstrate that Mexican Americans have been willing to advocate aggressively to achieve public schooling equity. Although the actions described below may not have resulted in widespread schooling equity for Mexican Americans, they do demonstrate that Mexican Americans have not sat idly by while schools continued to underserve them.

#### Eleuterio Escobar and La Liga Pro-Defensa Escolar

From 1934 to 1956 Mexican Americans targeted the San Antonio (Texas) Independent School District (SAISD) in a grassroots campaign to resist continued schooling inequities for their children. Schools located on San Antonio's predominantly Mexican American west side became the focus of efforts by the local League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Committee for Playground and School Facilities. Mario Garcia (1989) writes that the committee headed by Eleuterio Escobar, and with the support of numerous Mexican American community organizations, "first engaged in what some scholars term 'action research': documenting the unsuitable nature of the

Mexican schools with the intent of affecting public policy” (p. 66). The findings, that there was an inadequate number of facilities to accommodate the large Mexican American student population of San Antonio’s west side, were presented to the SAISD school board. In reply, and as an attempt to appease Escobar and Mexican American parents, the board agreed “to purchasing 15 abandoned frame rooms...and moving them to the west side” (Garcia, 1989, p. 69). The committee summarily rejected the offer and in short order took the issue directly to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Acquiring the support of the Superintendent, however, did not sway the board that now refused to deal further with Escobar. In response, Escobar resigned from LULAC. However, the Mexican American community organizations that supported Escobar’s work with LULAC, persuaded him to continue the campaign as head of their newly formed committee, La Liga Pro-Defensa Escolar (the School Improvement League). Within three years, La Liga was able to secure the appropriation of funds by the school board to build three new schools. Still, as a result of continued population growth, Mexican American children found themselves either in overcrowded schools or unable to attend altogether (Garcia, 1989).

After a hiatus in activity due to World War II, La Liga resumed its work on improving predominantly Mexican American west side schools in 1947 (Garcia, 1989). Invoking patriotic participation by Mexican Americans in the war, La Liga now called for educational justice:

Our fight to preserve our way of life from the endangering and hostile forces of the world has ended victoriously, and we now face the task

of rebuilding our own community...If in the trenches of Europe and the Pacific we were equal and we demonstrated our loyalty and love for the Stars and Stripes, then in civic life we also desire equality... We simply want the same opportunity given our children in education as the equal duty that was given them to fight and die for our country. (Escobar Autobiography; as cited in Garcia, 1989, p 74).

Specifically for La Liga, justice would be found in the replacement of temporary wooden structures labeled as “fire traps” by Escobar with new permanent buildings. La Liga maintained that this label applied to west side schools because in addition to their dangerous construction, west side schools continued to be overcrowded (Garcia, 1989). A somewhat reluctant school board conceded to some demands and promised to construct a few new schools. Only after obvious procrastination by the school board in following through with its promise, and resultant pressure applied by Escobar and La Liga, were more schools built (Garcia, 1989). Despite these new facilities, however, long standing inequities persisted, and La Liga “never fully achieved its objective of equal and adequate educational facilities and opportunities for Mexican-American children” (Garcia, 1989, p. 82).

#### East Los Angeles High School Blowouts

In the late 1960s, despite earlier efforts by Mexican American parents to improve the schooling of their children, negative schooling outcomes persisted. For example, in East Los Angeles, 50% of Mexican American students did not graduate from high school, with the average number of school years being 7.1 as compared to 9 for African

Americans and 12 years for Whites (Inda, 1990). Such persistent negative outcomes now prompted Mexican American youth to take an active role in attempting to secure equitable academic outcomes. In East Los Angeles, youth activism can be traced in part to the establishment of a community newspaper, *La Raza*, which in one article published in December of 1967 asked parents directly

Why is there a 40 to 50% chance my child will not graduate from high school? Why is there a chance my child will be among the lowest in the nation in reading ability? Why is there a chance my child will never know the language, culture and history of his own people? Why is there a chance my child's abilities and talents will never be discovered and developed in our schools? ("Questions???", 1967; as cited in Haney Lopez, 2003, p. 19)

The Los Angeles school board was also messaged by *La Raza*, 'It is now apparent that our voices are not being heard...So to hell with it. Merry Christmas brother. 1968 will be different. Next year the community is going to be heard one way or another' ("Merry Christmas from the L.A. School Board," 1967; as cited in Haney Lopez, 2003, p. 18).

In the spring of 1968, Mexican American students formed committees at several East Los Angeles high schools along with one central committee comprised of representatives from each school. Their first order of business was to draft a list of demands to be delivered to the school board for their consideration. Included in the list of 36 demands were smaller class sizes, bilingual education, school books that marked Mexican American contributions to U.S. society, training of parents as teacher's aides

(Inda, 1990), library expansions, an end to janitorial duty, more Mexican American teachers and counselors, and community empowerment in schools by way of a citizens review board (Haney Lopez, 2003). As a backup plan, the students organized school walkouts if the school board did not meet their demands. However, before the central committee could present these demands to the school board, the school walkouts were hastened by the administrative cancellation of a school play at one school. The students from the school reacted by walking out, and were joined two school days later by students from a second East Los Angeles school (Inda, 1990). By the end of the week, more than 10,000 students walked out of area schools in protest of inferior quality schools (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

As a result of these actions, a coalition of community members and students formed the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC) (Delgado Bernal, 1998). The EICC was successful at securing two meetings with the Los Angeles school board. During the first meeting, the board consented to administrative amnesty for students who had participated in the walkouts, and agreed to convene a second meeting for the East Los Angeles community (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Inda, 1990). However, during the second meeting the school board, although declaring that it agreed with most of the demands students had made, announced, “that the district [did] not have the money to finance the massive changes proposed” (McCurdy, 1968; as cited in Inda, 1990, p. 17.). Therefore, for many involved in the walkouts, there seemed to be a zero-sum result (Inda, 1990). Although they were able to make known their concerns regarding the schooling of Mexican Americans and some demands were met, a majority of the demands proposed

were not.

Despite the litigation and activism of Mexican Americans concerning the schooling of youth, socially constructed ideologies of inherent Mexican American apathy regarding schooling have been difficult to overcome (Valencia & Black, 2002). The persistence of these constructions have become embedded in the ideologies that permeate U.S. social subconsciousness and yield continued lowered academic expectations for Mexican American students (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, Pearl, 2002).

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature takes on two separate domains for this study. One review concentrates on works completed regarding the education of Mexican Americans and is somewhat extensive. Although there is an even larger body of publications concerning the Latina/o population in U.S. schools, this work will focus on the Latina/o subpopulation of Mexican Americans specifically. A second domain gives attention to educational research conducted utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method of investigation. Due to the relatively recent ascent of CDA, literature that involves CDA in educational settings is not as abundant as that concerning the education of Mexican Americans. Furthermore, there is no research that intersects the public schooling of Mexican American students and CDA. Still, there are some studies in education that utilized CDA and a review of these works is included below.

#### The Schooling of Mexican Americans

Some of the earliest literature on the schooling of Mexican Americans comes by way of master's theses published in the 1920s and 1930s (Valencia & Black, 2002). Work by Valencia and Black (2002) included a review of these theses as part of a larger study investigating and refuting assertions that there is a general apathy toward education on the part of Mexican Americans. Valencia and Black (2002) report that most of these early theses concluded that Mexican American undereducation resulted from notions of deficit thinking that places the blame on the victim for "oppressive and inequitable schooling arrangements" (p. 81). Perhaps more importantly, these theses served as bases

for subsequent work that built upon the deficit thinking model. Valencia and Black (2002) note that in the 1960s researchers constructed Mexican Americans as a “culturally deprived” and “intellectually deprived” population, and in the 1980s as “at risk” for educational failure.

To refute these assertions, Valencia and Black (2002) present three forms of evidence: 1) historical and more up to date efforts to secure equality of educational opportunities, 2) documented involvement in the educational process by Mexican American parents, and 3) Mexican American parental involvement in schools over several generations. For these researchers litigation, organizational advocacy, individual activism, political activities, and legislation comprise the areas of historical and contemporary Mexican American efforts to gain equal educational opportunity (Valencia & Black, 2002). Valencia and Black (2002) report that ethnographic studies conducted in the 1990s provided data that suggests the work conducted in the homes of Mexican American parents do, indeed, contribute to the education of their children despite schools’ reluctance to recognize them. Furthermore, Valencia and Black (2002) note that these types of contributions have been present over time.

Refutations of the notions of Mexican American deficits to explain their undereducation are offered by Carter (1970) and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1971a, 1971b, 1972a, 1972b, 1973, 1974). For his part, Carter (1970) was among the first to critique the schooling of Mexican Americans. In particular, Carter (1970) set out to interrupt what he called the “circular nature of arguments” (p. 3) regarding the undereducation of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools. Carter (1970) described this

circulation as such: “Mexican Americans do poorly in school because they are poor, speak Spanish, and are culturally Mexican, or Mexican Americans continue to be poor, speak Spanish, and carry a traditional folk culture because they do poorly in school” (p. 3). As interruptions to this circulation, Carter (1970) focused on the effects of socioeconomics, and the outcomes of programs created by schools as well as their policies and their practices. Carter (1970) presents the failure of schools in the schooling of Mexican Americans by way of the role of schools as gatekeepers to maintain a caste-like system in operation in the Southwest. Carter (1970) communicates the insidiousness of such a role when he writes, “The fact that the school failed...to raise the group status of so many Mexican Americans was evidence of its success” (p. 204).

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a series of reports titled the Mexican American Education Study (MAES) between 1971 and 1974. One of the responsibilities of the Commission was to investigate violations of the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Part of this work involved the study and reporting of the schooling of Mexican Americans in public schools in the Southwest (Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California). Each of the reports generated focused on the various findings of the Commission and was published independently.

MAES Report I (1971a) gave attention to the segregation of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools. Conclusions drawn from this report were three-fold. First, Mexican American students were indeed segregated in U.S. schools. This segregation occurred by district and also by school within given districts. Second, there was underrepresentation

of Mexican Americans in staffing at both district and school levels and boards of education when compared to student enrollment. Finally, of the Mexican American staff and school board members that did exist, most were found in districts where Mexican Americans were the majority.

The second of the MAES reports (1971b) focused on the performance of schools from the Southwest that had various proportions of Mexican American students. School performance was measured by student achievement in five separate areas. The first of these areas was school holding power or the school's "ability to hold its students until they have completed the full course of study" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b, p. 8). Data regarding the reading levels of Mexican American students was collected from individual schools and reported as the second of the areas used to assess school performance. Schools' assessment of reading levels was based on two sources: 1) teacher judgment, and 2) testing. Rates at which Mexican Americans repeat grade levels and the corresponding "overageness" became the third and fourth areas used to measure school success. The extracurricular participation of Mexican American students in school activities was the last of the school performance measures utilized. The findings reported by the Commission in this study were summarized as follows: "minority students in the Southwest...do not obtain the benefits of public education at a rate equal to that of their Anglo classmates. This is true regardless of the measure of school achievement used" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971b, p. 41).

Report 3 of the MAES was written in 1972. The question posed by the Commission (1972a) for this study was, "To what extent are schools practicing cultural

exclusion?” (p. 11) and focused on the exclusion of the language and heritage of Mexican Americans. Similarly, the Commission was interested in the extent to which the Mexican American community was excluded from playing a part in the schooling process. The Commission reported that, indeed, exclusionary practices were in place that denied Mexican American students their cultural capital. While Mexican American heritage was excluded from the schooling of Mexican Americans by way of omissions in textbooks and course curriculums, the Commission also reported that the Mexican American community was excluded from the schooling process by way of a lack of parental contact and inclusion on community advisory boards. However, according to the Commission, suppressing the language of Mexican Americans was the most widely observed exclusionary practice. The Commission (1972a) wrote that, “One-third of the schools surveyed by the Commission admitted to discouraging Spanish in the classroom. Methods of enforcing the ‘No Spanish Rule’ vary from simple discouragement of Spanish to actual discipline of the offenders” (p. 48).

In 1972 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published the fourth report of the MAES series of reports. Of concern in this work was the financing of schools in Texas and its affect on Mexican American students. This study specifically examined 1) aid to local school districts from the state of Texas, 2) the valuation of property within districts, 3) property tax rates within districts, and 4) the economic liability felt by Mexican Americans and Whites as a result of the tax. In each of the above areas, the Commission found that when compared to predominantly White school districts, predominantly Mexican American school districts fared less well. A conclusion of specific interest, the

Commission (1972b) reported on the inequitable economic burden placed on the Mexican American community: “predominantly Mexican American districts are, in effect, imposing a heavier property tax burden on themselves than are Anglo districts” (p. 23).

The Commission examined teacher and student verbal interactions and published their findings in 1973 as the fifth report in the MAES series. For this report, particular attention was paid to differences in the ways that teachers interact verbally with Mexican American students as compared to White students. Statistically significant disparities were found in five categories of teacher-initiated behavior and in one category of student initiated behavior. These behaviors are noteworthy and include as teacher initiated behaviors 1) praise or encouragement, 2) accepting and using student ideas, 3) questioning, 4) affirming teacher responses, 5) teacher talk that is non-criticizing, and 6) the student initiated behavior, student talk. The Commission (1973) noted that, “Mexican American pupils...receive considerably less of some of the most educationally beneficial forms of teacher behavior than do Anglos in the same classroom” (p. 17). Of the greatest magnitude was the Commission’s (1973) conclusion:

It is the schools and teachers of the Southwest, not the children, who are failing. They are failing in meeting their most basic responsibility - that of providing each child the opportunity to gain the maximum benefit of education and develop his capabilities to the fullest extent. (p. 44)

In 1974 the Commission released the final report of the MAES series. Titled *Toward Quality Education for Mexican Americans*, this particular study asked two

questions, 1) “What aspects of the schools’ educational program and staffing patterns bear on the schools’ failure to provide equal educational opportunity to Mexican American children?” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974, p. 2) and 2) “What changes in educational policy and practices at the local, State, and national levels are needed to bring about equal educational opportunity?” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974, p. 2).

The Commission’s (1974) findings vis-à-vis question 1 included: school curriculums, materials, and courses did not represent Mexican American students, legislation had not ensured the equal educational opportunities Mexican Americans are due as per Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Mexican Americans were underrepresented in administrative, counseling and teaching positions, and Mexican American parents were not included in school and district proceedings. The Commission (1974) noted problems with the assignment of Mexican American students in the public schools of the Southwest. Among these problems were the unequal use of grade retention, and the unequal placement of students in low ability groups or Educationally Mentally Retarded (EMR) classes. Likewise, the Commission (1974) reported the unequal representation of Mexican Americans in faculties of education at universities in the Southwest.

As part of the response to the study’s second question, the Commission (1974) proposed the establishment of specific requirements that work to manage the Mexican American schooling experience. These requirements included responding to the interests and language of Mexican Americans students by State departments of education. In

addition, the Commission (1974) urged that State departments of education also be required to deal with the “two principal reasons given by schools for the practice of grade retention – academic failure and emotional immaturity of students” (p. 77). Also recommended was the inclusion of the study of Mexican Americans in the coursework of prospective teachers and counselors, and the hiring of more Mexican Americans educators.

Starting in the 1980s several researchers published works regarding the historical experience of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools. Many of these writings reported on these experiences from a regional perspective. That is, concentration was placed on analyzing the experiences of Mexican Americans living in different states in the Southwest with greatest attention given to Mexican Americans in Texas and California. Many of these studies are considered below, but I will start this review of the historiography of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools by reflecting on work that is wider in its regional scope.

San Miguel and Valencia (1998) studied the history of schooling of Mexican Americans in the greater Southwest starting in 1848. Their approach to examining this history is located in the “plight” and “struggle” of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). By “plight” the authors mean the circumstances under which the schooling of Mexican Americans has proceeded. As described in chapter 2, included in this “plight” have been efforts to Americanize Mexican Americans, segregation of Mexican American students, unequal funding of Mexican schools, curricular exclusion of the Mexican heritage, and low-tracking practices (San Miguel &

Valencia, 1998). “Struggle” refers to the actions in which the Mexican American community has engaged to improve and/or overcome their circumstances. Similar to the later findings of Valencia and Black (2002) reviewed above, San Miguel and Valencia (1998) cite continuous litigation brought by Mexican Americans to improve their education, the establishment of advocacy organizations for educational equity, the emergence of Mexican American scholars whose writings publicized the inferior Mexican American schooling experience, and the passage of legislation as a result of Mexican American community action.

From this historical work, San Miguel and Valencia (1998) draw several interesting conclusions. First, the Mexican American community has shown to be determined in its endeavor to improve the schooling of its children and that this shows no sign of slowing. Second, many of the systemic impediments that have historically hindered the improvement of schooling for Mexican Americans persist. Third, there is a deterioration of schooling conditions for Mexican American students. Fourth, a gloomy outlook exists for future schooling improvements, and fifth, little attention is paid to educational discrimination that continues in schools that Mexican Americans attend.

San Miguel (1983) reported on the Mexican American fight to eradicate segregation specifically in the Texas public schools. In particular, San Miguel focused on the work of two Mexican American community action organizations, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the G.I. Forum. Between 1927 and 1957, LULAC and the G.I. Forum consistently challenged educational inequalities in Texas (see chapter 1). These challenges were made in the form of formal grievances “against

segregation practices, in encouraging the Mexican community to take advantage of the public schools, and most importantly, in establishing the unconstitutionality of discriminatory practices based on national origin” (San Miguel, 1983, p. 355). Still, despite the exceptional actions of LULAC and the G.I. Forum, San Miguel (1983) notes that educational inequalities persisted in Texas. Specifically troubling was the reported continuation and expansion of segregation in Texas public schools well into the 1960s.

Similarly, in his 1987 book, *“Let Them All Take Heed”: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*, San Miguel researched the longer historical experience of Mexican Americans in Texas schools. This work chronologically accounts for the ways that Mexican Americans have “struggled for the reformation of the existing educational institutions so that other Mexican Americans would be provided with greater opportunities” (San Miguel, 1987, p. ix). This study did report that there were limited gains made in challenges to discriminatory segregation policies, curricular inclusion of Mexican American culture and language, and increased access to the educational system from 1910 to 1981 (San Miguel, 1987). However, the study also notes that successful endeavors at improving education for Mexican Americans have been moderated by ongoing discrimination in public schools and assimilationist curriculums (San Miguel, 1987).

Although successfully arguing that the experiences of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools are shared nationally and do not differ regionally, Gonzalez (1985) focuses his work on the segregation of Mexican American children in California. Specifically, this work investigates the segregation of Mexican American children in Santa Ana, California

and subsequent litigious challenges by Mexican parents (see chapter 1). For Gonzalez, the importance of analyzing the practice of segregation reaches beyond education and into a larger social domain. As he observes, “the segregation of Mexican children can be studied as part of a continuing pattern of domination established after the Mexican-American War” (Gonzalez, 1985, p. 55). Centering on the events leading up to and including the case of *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946), this researcher outlines how the Mexican American community in Santa Ana was successful at dismantling the policy of segregation that had existed in their schools. In the end, Gonzalez (1985) refocuses on the vital question to his work and the ultimate success of the efforts to improve the schooling of Mexican Americans:

did desegregation of Mexican children substantially alter the educational practices of schools attended by Mexican children?

The answer is yes no. Yes in that legal segregation was ended, which in itself was a substantial change and a political victory for the Mexican community. On the other hand, schooling for Mexican children continued to be significantly influenced by pseudoscientific intelligence testing, with heavy tracking into slow learner, vocational, and EMR (Educationally Mentally Retarded) classes. (p. 76)

Menchaca and Valencia (1990) expanded on the study of school segregation of Mexican Americans in California in the 1920s. For them, the policy of segregating students stemmed from “racial ideologies of Anglo-Saxon superiority and their

subsequent impact on government policies” (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990, p. 222). Specifically, Menchaca and Valencia (1990) report that language issues and Americanization were the most common justifications offered for segregating Mexican American students from White students. The notion of racial superiority as the basis for the language justification is apparent when monolingual English speaking Mexican American students were segregated together with non-English speakers (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990). Additionally, racist stereotypes grounded the justification of the need to Americanize Mexican American students so that they would become more like their White classmates (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990). In conclusion, the authors note:

Although the knot between past and present school segregation of Chicanos cannot be snugly tied, there is ample evidence from California case studies that segregative policies of the early 1900s have had long-term effects. Despite the variability among the communities of California, segregation of Chicano students today can generally be said to have been strongly influenced by Anglo-Saxon ideologies of the past. (p. 243)

Donato (1997) generalizes the experiences of Mexican Americans in schools from work he conducted in a small, rural town in California. By studying the school district in this town with its rapidly growing Mexican American population, Donato (1997) was able “to characterize many communities across the Southwest by the 1970s” (p. 3). Specifically, Mexican American community efforts to achieve equal education for their children and the resistance that emanated from the White community were studied. The

significant importance of this work is that it documents the influential role of the Mexican American community as a political force in the schooling of their children. This role is critical because it is set as a response to contentions regarding Mexican American educational apathy (Donato, 1997). Unfortunately, despite great efforts from the community, this research concludes, “Mexican Americans were unable to make significant changes...because they lacked political power” (Donato, 1997, p. 152).

Another of Donato’s (2003) works attempts to fill a gap in the historiography of Mexican American schooling by focusing on the Mexican American experience in northern Colorado. Studying Mexican American schooling between 1920 and 1960, Donato (2003) notes that the experiences varied with some students in segregated Catholic schools and others in integrated public schools. Still, within integrated public schools segregated classrooms were established. This was done under the auspices of the “maladjustment” of Mexican Americans students (Donato, 2003). However, ultimately Donato (2003) concurs with Menchaca and Valencia (1990) in his observation that racism was the basis of the segregation of Mexican American students. Indeed, the experiences of Mexican American students in northern Colorado did not differ significantly from that of Mexican Americans in other states, for as Donato (2003) writes, “Mexican Americans were not expected to rise beyond their station in life as manual workers, they were not accepted into the local mainstream, and they were not expected to stay in school after the elementary/junior high school years” (p. 84).

As did many authors of the history of Mexican American schooling, Duncan-Andrade (2005) examines the application of the historical experience of Mexican

Americans on contemporary schooling issues. In this work, he describes the underachievement of Mexican Americans as a function of the sociohistorical context under which they have lived in the United States. Specifically, because Mexican Americans have, since their incorporation as citizens of the U.S. under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, been viewed and treated as a colonized population, social marginalization and social, institutional, as well as internalized oppression have created conditions that contribute to their academic underachievement. This occurs within a narrative frame established by U.S. schools and teachers that creates conflicting realities for Mexican American students. As Duncan-Andrade (2005) writes:

On the one hand, there is the institutional narrative articulated in a teacher's promise: "you can become anything you want, even president, if you just work hard enough." On the other hand, students are given a curriculum narrative that portrays Mexicans and Mexican Americans as a group whose historical contributions to the United States do not extend much beyond the sale of half of Mexico to the United States. (p. 593)

Duncan-Andrade (2005) suggests that reversing the harmful effects of historical marginalization is a matter of terminating ideological perceptions that locate the underachievement of Mexican Americans in historical conceptions of cultural deficiency. In this way, this researcher predicts that "the conditions for success may not be as hard to come up with as the will to commit to doing the difficult work of creating those conditions" (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 601).

Similar to Duncan-Andrade (2005), Stanton-Salazar (2001) refers to “internalized oppression” in his work. This researcher studied whether or not Mexican American youth in the United States receive the benefits of any community and school support resources or mechanisms. Referring to these mechanisms as “networks,” this piece specifically analyzes the tensions that exist when Mexican American youth attempt to establish social and school support “networks” while experiencing what the author describes as an “internalized oppression” (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 5). For this researcher, “networks” are the “webs” of social relations individuals work to create that provide social resources to each member of the “web” that can then be called upon when necessary. In this way, building of social capital becomes the goal of networking as described in this work.

However, according to Stanton-Salazar (2001), the social and school “networks” that are created are too often undermined by the internalized oppression of the Mexican American student. His notion of internalized oppression is based largely on the work of Gramsci (1971) and is the product of hegemonic forces that work to create a population that unwittingly consents to further the connivance of their own oppression. Once internalized, this oppression works to create a self-constructed obstacle to the benefits of utilizing the “networks” that may be of great assistance. Stanton-Salazar (2001) summarizes this position when he writes, “we see many low-status youth grappling alone with sizable negative challenges to their healthy development, even though they are embedded in large webs of significant others and institutional agents” (p. 6).

In an earlier work, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) investigated the relationship between the social capital, referred to as “social networks” or social ties, of Mexican origin students, their bilingualism and the expectations schooling agents have for them as well as their academic achievement. Data collected through interviews with 205 Mexican origin high school students suggested “that highly bilingual students may have an advantage over working-class, English-dominant students in gaining access to adult social capital” (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995, p. 131). The authors place bilingual students who receive greater access to institutional resources as either immigrants or children of immigrants who live in households that are insistent on maintaining Mexican cultural ties including language. Furthermore, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) report that the greater access of bilinguals to social capital located within schools is a function of the biculturalism of the student. These researchers conclude that “This kind of bicultural adaptation appears to lead to increases in social capital, both by lowering the risks entailed in help seeking and by increasing the likelihood of genuine support from institutional agents” (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995, p. 132).

Initially a study regarding bilingual language and literacy skill development as it relates to school performance, *Con Respeto: Bridging the Distance Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools* by Valdés (1996), became a work that was concerned with the utilization of family interventions as a means to improving the educational achievement of Mexican American students in U.S. schools. Moreover, the researcher became concerned with the bridging of family intervention programs initiated by schools,

the effects of teachers' perceptions about Mexican American families on the school performance of Mexican American students, and the effects of compliance to school and teacher expectations on Mexican-origin familial structure. At the root of the issue for Valdés is the conflicting conceptualization of "success" for mainstream, White American schools and teachers, and that of Mexican American parents. Conceding that, indeed, compliance to U.S. school and teacher generated family intervention programs would increase parental involvement in the education of Mexican American children, Valdés is concerned that in so doing there would be a disintegration of the Mexican-origin familial structure and a loss of identity. Valdés (1996) clearly makes this point when she writes, "Families' confidence in their ability to socialize their children will be eroded, and they will begin to reflect 'the consequences of being neither 'Mexican' nor 'American'" (p. 201). The importance of such identity issues on the schooling of Mexican Americans is the focus of the work of Marcos Pizarro.

Pizarro's (2005) book *Chicanas and Chicanos in School: Racial Profiling, Identity Battles, and Empowerment* investigates the process and outcomes of identity formation, the role schools play in this formation, and the relationship both have on the academic achievement of Mexican American students. Results from this work suggest that two social identities are inscribed upon Mexican American students. First is the formation of familial-based identities that most Mexican American students considered the "grounding force in their lives" (Pizarro, 2005, p. 44). Obviously, these identities are forged largely outside of the school. Secondly, Pizarro (2005) reports the formation of school-based identities for Mexican American students. School-based identities are

identities that are produced through the experiences of Mexican American youth in U.S. schools. Unfortunately for these students, negative experiences in schools that differentiate Mexican American students from White student too often create school-based identities that have an effect on their larger social identities. Pizarro (2005) writes:

These experiences demanded that the students develop a strategy to deal with them. In most cases, students had to reorganize their sense of self, because who they are racially had become a critical part of who they are in the school. Many students therefore began to develop an identity that valued their ethnic background and even pushed it to the forefront of how they saw themselves, while simultaneously devaluing the need for that identity to be linked to school success, for it is made clear to them that the two cannot be related. (p. 62)

For this researcher, the implementation of any academic improvement program must proceed from a perspective that is inclusive of the Mexican American experience and anyone who implements the programs “must do it *with* Chicana/o communities, parents, and teachers and not *for* them” (Pizarro, 2005, p. 266).

Valenzuela (1999) investigated the mechanisms through which U.S. schools may take away the social and cultural capital of students of Mexican ethnicity. Framed around the notion of “caring” so often claimed by educators, this work distinguishes between “aesthetic caring” and “authentic caring” on the part of educators. “Aesthetic caring” suggests a type of caring that represents teachers’ desires that students commit to their education despite any intellectual and/or interpersonal disconnections they might

feel about their schooling. “Authentic caring” mirrors the Mexican American cultural dimension of “confianza” or mutual trust, and refers to a commitment on the part of Mexican American students that is a “form of caring that emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61). A consequence of these differentiated notions of “caring” is the creation of a vacuum that voids the cultural capital of Mexican American students. For most Mexican American students, then, a process of “subtractive schooling” is implemented that “divests these youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 3).

Schooling of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools is covered in Valencia’s (2002a) edited volume, *Chicano Schooling Failure and Success: Past, Present, and Future*. This work includes chapters dedicated to the role of culture and family on student achievement, language considerations on student achievement, contemporary experiences of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools, special education, and standardized testing. Among the several recommendations for increasing the school success of Mexican American students are increasing academic rigor, providing greater attention to the needs of English language learners (ELLs), creating dropout prevention programs, increasing the involvement of parents, blocking tendencies toward resegregation of schools, and reducing the elevated stakes involved in the use of standardized testing (Valencia, 2002b). Of greatest note, however, is the recommendation toward democratization of public education. As Valencia (2002b) stridently explains, “notions

of students' rights, equal encouragement, useful knowledge, and so forth, can serve as beacons for structuring and implementing school success for Chicanos" (p. 368).

Yosso (2006) examines the experiences of Mexican Americans throughout what she identifies as the "educational pipeline" from elementary school to doctoral study. This research was conducted by utilizing qualitative methods, notably interviews and surveys, to uncover how Mexican Americans experience schooling in the United States. By using "counterstories" to refute "majoritarian" claims of Mexican American cultural deficiency to explain failed schooling outcomes, this work notes that the cultural deficiency explanation is deficient in explaining the persistent inequality of these schooling outcomes. The "counterstories" in this study are the stories of the Mexican American educational experience as told by Mexican Americans. For Yosso (2006), this work provides valuable, valid data that challenges "majoritarian stories that omit and distort the histories and realities of" (p. 10) Mexican American communities.

#### Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Education

Utilization of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of text can assist in making sense of the meanings of the producers of text (Fairclough, 1995). In this way, the relationship between language and society can be critiqued and questions concerning this relationship addressed. The critical nature of CDA calls for analysis of the way societies are shaped by injustice and oppression (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui & O'Garro Joseph, 2005). As research that is considered critical, CDA shares assumptions with other critical research. Among these assumptions are that thought is mediated by historical relations of power, "truths" are embedded in social contexts, a hierarchy of

social privilege exists and results in unequal access to social goods and services, and that hegemonic forces produce oppression (Rogers et al., 2005). This review thus examines literature of research conducted under this paradigm. Specifically of interest was literature focused on the use of CDA in an education context.

Rogers and her colleagues conducted a review of literature involving CDA in education (Rogers et al., 2005). Part of this review included CDA of written texts “where the context was the text itself” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 378). In these articles, the researchers found what they refer to as “unintended consequences of educational decisions, policies, and social practices” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 383) that exacerbated oppression (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001; Chouliaraki, 1998; Corson, 2000; Comber, 1997; Fox & Fox, 2002; as cited in Rogers et al., 2005). Specifically, these analyses focused on the discourse of the reproduction of power with little discourse noted that could be used to change oppressive structures (Rogers et al., 2005). This review was critical of the lack of reflexivity, the acknowledgement of the place of the researcher in the analysis. For these authors, reflexivity is essential to “the stabilization of knowledge claims” that is produced using the “slipperiness of language” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 382).

Ailwood and Lingard (2001) co-authored one of the papers reviewed above. This work analyzed an Australian policy document dealing with gender equity in schools. Findings include the use of what the authors refer to as “commonsense” conceptions of equity. The document analyzed related mis-recognition of “power-knowledge relations” in terms of gender inequity. Ailwood and Lingard (2001) describe the policy’s discourse as one that “glosses over...the differences in, and consequences of, curriculum and

subject choice, socio-economic background and geographic location” (p. 17) that have a role in the marginalization of girls. For these authors, Australian commonsense notions that gender inequity is not an issue because of problems that young men also encounter serve not only to conceal the inequity but also to disrupt reform efforts.

Powell (2004) conducted a CDA of a text produced by the president of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio following demonstrations by some students and faculty regarding diversity and university access. Following a review of incidents leading up to the protests, Powell (2004) analyzes a text written by the president of the university and published in both the university and local newspapers. Powell (2004) describes the impact of the text on discourses within the university as the effect of its large accessibility to faculty, staff and students. The text provided “the ‘official’ words on these issues...and, thus, potentially the most influential words in the daily conversations that take place in classrooms” (Powell, 2004, p. 442). Here, Powell (2004) relates the power of a single published text on the continuing discourse that takes place in the classrooms of the institution from which the text originated. Although the analysis was conducted on a single published text, the producer “was expected to speak...for and about the university” (Powell, 2004, p. 442). In this way, Powell (2004) writes, “I am analyzing and critiquing more than an individual’s words. I am also extrapolating the vision and practices of an entire university” (p. 442).

Cots (2006) conducted a CDA of discourses used in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course. Cots’ goal was to not only analyze the language used in the course, but to create activities that could be used in language learning courses (Cots,

2006). This research focuses then on changing structures that may be oppressive as called for above by Rogers and her colleagues (2005). Interestingly, Cots (2006) claims CDA is not concerned with review of the methods and techniques used in teaching, but that CDA considers language use to be open to critique, reflective of ideological processes in a society, and is “a resource to act upon those processes” (Cots, 2006, p. 336).

The articles reviewed here are not exhaustive of literature that has been written using CDA to analyze educational matters. Much more research exists that is valuable to understanding the relations of power within schools. However, most of the work conducted in educational settings using CDA relies on the analysis of verbal/spoken communications. Indeed, these analyses are essential to uncovering the relations of power. Still, analysis of discourse in its written form is equally as essential. Where the actual thoughts and ideologies of agents of schools may be suppressed by one or the other types of discourse (spoken or written), analysis of both increases the likelihood of uncovering these thoughts and ideologies. Critical discourse analyses of both written and spoken communications become complimentary in the pursuit of social justice in education.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In addition to being a theory (as described in chapter 2), CDA has been referred to by Rogers (2004) as a method for conducting research. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) submit that CDA is at once theory and method. For them, CDA is “a method for analyzing social practices with particular regard to their discourse moments” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 16). However, for Huckin (1997) it is better to describe CDA “as an approach or attitude toward textual analysis rather than as a step-by-step method” (p. 1). Fairclough (2001) supports this position by stating, “CDA is in my view...a theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis” (p. 121) or meaning making.

#### Theoretical Facets of Critical Discourse Analysis

Most critical discourse analysts agree that performing a CDA does not and should not follow some established method because they fear that stabilization would undermine the ability of CDA to analyze “the dialectic of the semiotic and the social” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 17), or the ways sign systems are created and meanings are made along with the social activities the sign systems and meanings create. Still, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) have presented what they refer to as a very complex “framework for critical discourse analysis” (p. 59), or an outline for the actual execution of a CDA. These authors (1999) do advise, however, that “for certain purposes analysts might focus on some parts of it rather than others” (p. 59). The framework is outlined as follows:

1. A problem (activity, reflexivity)

2. Obstacles to its being tackled:
  - a. Analysis of the conjuncture;
  - b. Analysis of the practice regarding its discourse moment;
    - i. Relevant practice(s)?
    - ii. Relation of discourse to other moments?
      1. Discourse as part of the activity
      2. Discourse and reflexivity;
  - c. Analysis of the discourse:
    - i. Structural analysis: the order of discourse
    - ii. Interactional analysis
      1. Interdiscursive analysis
      2. Linguistic and semiotic analysis
3. Function of the problem in the practice.
4. Possible ways past the obstacle
5. Reflection on the analysis. (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999)

Before I detail the particular aspects of the above framework at the heart of this study, I wish to reiterate the specific research questions I outlined in Chapter 1:

- 1) What are the attitudes about and expectations for Mexican American students as communicated in district and school mission statements with large to predominantly Mexican American student populations?
- 2) How do these attitudes and expectations compare to those of districts and schools with large to predominantly White student populations?

As a result of the nature of these research questions, I focused on the following parts from the above CDA framework: A problem (1.), Discourse and reflexivity (2.b.ii.2.), Structural analysis: the order of discourse (2.c.i.), and Reflection on the analysis (5.)

Studies using CDA begin with the researchers perception that discourse is in some way related to the existence of certain social problems (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Chouliaraki and Fairclough refer to one type of social problem as a problem of reflexivity, or of “reflexive construction of a social practice” (p. 60). This suggests that there are “ideational problems” that emerge from “problems of representation and miscognition” (p. 60) in some “moment of a social practice” (p. 61). One of the “moments of social action” that is affected by discourse is “mental phenomena (beliefs, values, desires)” (p. 61). When this is the case, the goal of CDA is to determine the mediational role discourse plays in the (re)production of beliefs, values, and desires.

Structural analysis refers to the analysis of the way that discourse is utilized within what Chouliaraki and Fairclough call “the network of orders of discourse” (p. 63). In this sense, “discourse” is the language that is used “to construct some aspect of reality from a particular perspective” (p. 63). Central to structural analysis in CDA is the belief that specific types of social practices have direct effects on the way that discourse relates to the “network of orders.” The “network of orders of discourse” are the ways language is used to construct these realities, and consists of 1) genre: the language of some specific social practice (i.e. the writing of mission statements), and 2) voice: the “language used by a particular category of people and closely linked to their identity” (p.

63) (i.e. the voice of public school educators). Here, then, analysis is focused on the ways that the “network of orders of discourse,” genre and voice, are used to construct a normalized notion of some social phenomenon.

Critical discourse analysts are resolute on the necessity of researchers to reflect and be clear about the positions from which they approach their analyses.

Straightforward revelation of the theoretical positions and problematizing orientations of the researcher is vital. Reflections that clearly lay out these positions, along with a concurrent recognition of other perspectives, allows critical discourse analysts to view their work on power, ideology, and domination as valid (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). As van Dijk (2001a) writes, “CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position. That is, CDA is biased – and proud of it” (p. 96).

Before providing details about the specific “tools” used in this work, I reiterate the position of critical discourse analysts that CDA is not really a method. van Dijk (2001a) makes this point succinctly:

It should be stressed that CDA, and discourse analysis in general, are not ‘methods’ that can simply be applied in the study of social problems. CDA does not provide a ready-made, how-to-do approach to social analysis, but emphasizes that for each study a thorough theoretical analysis of a social issue must be made, so as to be able to select which discourse and social structures to analyse and to relate. (p. 98)

Still, within the CDA “framework” described above, some descriptions of the “tools” CDA may use have been offered (Fairclough, 1995; Huckin, 1997; Kress, 1993; Luke,

1995; van Dijk, 1993). As Huckin (1997) puts it, “It is necessary...for any CDA analyst to have a broad inventory of possible text-analytic tools to draw from” (p. 4).

### ‘Tools’ Utilized

The ‘tools’ detailed here do not represent all that is available in the “tool box” of a critical discourse analyst. They are, instead, the ‘tools’ utilized in the analysis of the mission statements collected in this study. Specifically, the ‘tools’ employed in this work are explicated by Fairclough (1995), Huckin (1997), and Luke (1995) and include the following:

- 1) Problematizing: the “identifying and focusing on problems, anomalies, and issues” (Luke, 1995, p. 25). Utilization of this tool involves the analysis of utterances that narrate some lack of competence with respect to the subjects of discourse (Ochs & Taylor, 1992). In such cases there exists a problematizer, “a narrator who renders an action, condition, thought or feeling...problematic” and a problematizee “whose action, condition, thought or feeling is rendered problematic” (p. 311).
- 2) Order of discourse: “the ordered set of discursive practices associated with a particular social domain or institution...and boundaries and relationships between them” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 12)
- 3) Foregrounding/backgrounding: the emphasizing and de-emphasizing of concepts (Huckin, 1997).

- 4) Agent-student relations: descriptions that portray some people as “initiating actions...while others are depicted as being (often passive) recipients of those actions” (Huckin, 1997, p. 7).
- 5) Deletions/omissions: exclusion of concepts in the production of texts (Huckin, 1997).
- 6) Presuppositions: statements, or a lack thereof, that work to suggest a certain position is understood or taken for granted (Huckin, 1997).
- 7) Connotations: “special meanings...that certain words and phrases (lexis) carry” (Huckin, 1997, p. 8).
- 8) Insinuations: words and statements that have double meanings and can be used to abdicate accountability (Huckin, 1997).

### Data Collection

The data I collected represent a certain discourse plane (a genre or type of discourse), discourse plane sector (sight of dissemination), and partial sector of the discourse plane (instrument of dissemination) (Jäger, 2001). Within each discourse plane may exist a number of discourse plane sectors and, conversely, a number of partial sectors (Jäger, 2001). Specifically, in the case of this investigation, the discourse plane is written text produced by educational institutions, the discourse plane sectors are school districts and individual schools, and the partial sectors are mission statements produced at both discourse planes (districts and schools).

As the discourse plane, the data I selected for analysis were written texts produced by educational institutions because of their capacity to demonstrate the ideological

discursive formations (IDFs) (Fairclough, 1995) held by the institutions that produce the texts. I gathered data from two discourse plane sectors, districts and schools, and expanded these to multiple district and school sites to make it possible to conduct multi-level/multi-site analyses (Fairclough, 1995). By multi-level analysis I mean examination at more macro-level institutions (school districts) as well as more micro-level institutions (high schools) (van Dijk, 2001b). Multi-site analysis, then, is the examination of data collected from individual institutions across either the macro-level (districts) or micro-level (schools).

Although alternative partial sectors were available (i.e. newsletters, program and course descriptions, and parent bulletins), mission statements were selected as the objects of my investigation because of the greater promise these discourses have, when compared to other partial sectors, to reveal ideologies (IDFs) schools hold with regard to the students they serve. Finally, demographic data were collected to ensure that the mission statements I analyzed emanated from schools that represent the Mexican American and White student populations of concern in this study.

I must emphasize here that this work analyzes the discourses found in mission statements from districts and schools that are distinguished by their different racial/ethnic<sup>1</sup> student demographics. Socioeconomic status of the groups was not researched. My concentration on the racial/ethnic demographics of students is based on the approach to “the organization of ethnic prejudice” as described by van Dijk (1987, p. 202). This approach to ethnic prejudice describes “socioeconomic position”

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the terms racial and ethnic because although Whites are a racial group, Mexican Americans are an ethnic group.

(socioeconomic status) as merely one of a group of categories that constitute the “schemata” by which ethnic groups, such as Mexican Americans, are organized. Socioeconomic status, along with appearance, origin, sociocultural properties, and personal characteristics contribute to the creation of perceptions regarding ethnic groups.

van Dijk writes,

it is plausible to assume that the acquisition, transformation, and application of ethnic attitudes is structured by strategically effective schematic principles...Each time in-group members are confronted with (information about)...salient out-groups, they need not figure out again what properties of such a group are relevant and about which characteristics opinions should be formed. They have acquired an abstract group evaluation schema... (p. 203)

For van Dijk, then, socioeconomic status is but one contributor to the organization of “relevant and effective belief and opinion systems about the out-group” (p. 203).

Districts and schools selected for this investigation are located largely in the Southwestern United States. This region was selected because of the high concentration of Mexican Americans who live there. Data from the state of Illinois was included because it has one of the largest Mexican American populations in the U.S. along with California, Texas, and Arizona (U.S. Census, 2001). Chicago, in particular, is home to a large number of Mexican Americans located in the Midwestern United States (Aponte & Siles, 1997). Data from districts and schools in New Mexico where 43% of the population is labeled as Hispanic, and Colorado where a significant number of Mexican

Americans reside (19% of the total state population) (U.S Census, 2007) were also collected.

Specifically, data were gathered from districts and schools in the following metropolitan areas: Chicago, Illinois; Houston, Texas; Dallas, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; El Paso, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Phoenix, Arizona; Tucson, Arizona; San Diego, California, Los Angeles, California; and Fresno, California (see Table 4.1).

State	Metropolitan Area
Illinois	Chicago
Texas	Dallas, El Paso, Houston, San Antonio
Colorado	Denver
New Mexico	Albuquerque
Arizona	Phoenix, Tucson
California	Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego

Table 4.1 State and Metropolitan Area Data Sites

Data from a total of 35 schools and 20 school districts wherein the individual schools are located were gathered. Of the 35 school mission statements researched, 19 were from predominantly Mexican American high schools and 16 were from predominantly White high schools. Of the 20 school district mission statements collected, 11 were from largely to predominantly Mexican American school districts and 9 were from largely to

predominantly White school districts. Thus, there is a fairly balanced representation of both types of districts and schools for purposes of comparison.

Utilizing the Google Internet search engine, I researched school districts and individual schools from the major metropolitan areas listed above. My initial use of keywords including the city's name and "area schools" produced links to websites of districts located in the specified area. In addition to districts situated in target cities, these searches yielded links to suburban school districts that lie in geographic proximity to the targeted city. For example, in Texas one individual search was conducted with "Houston area schools" as the keywords. This preliminary search produced not only a link to Houston's largest urban school district, but also links to three smaller suburban school districts located near Houston.

I conducted reviews of district websites to uncover demographic information and district mission statements. My initial review involved uncovering demographic data to identify districts that fell into one of three separate categories: 1) integrated districts where 35 to 60 percent of the student population is either Hispanic or White (largely Hispanic or White school districts), 2) segregated districts with a predominantly "Hispanic" student populations, and 3) segregated districts with a White student population that at very least approximates 65% of the total student population. Once I identified a district as falling into one of these three categories, I printed the demographic data and conducted a secondary search of the district website to find and print the districts' mission statement. With very few exceptions, mission statements were included

in district websites. I did not investigate further any districts that did not include a mission statement in its website.

From the selected districts, I then conducted searches of high school websites that were linked within the district websites. My initial investigation of high school websites consisted of obtaining demographic information about the schools. Many schools included this information in their own websites. However, some schools' racial demographics were found only in their district's website, while others were found in state department of education websites. Although there was a wide range in the demographics of the districts selected as described above, only schools meeting the criteria of having a racially segregated student body were selected for further investigation. Specifically, schools selected for investigation were schools that had at the very least either a "Hispanic" or White student population that approximated 70% (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below for the districts and schools utilized).

LOCATION	DISTRICT	HIGH SCHOOL	DEMOGRAPHIC MARKER
Chicago, IL	Chicago PS		"Latino" (37%)
Chicago, IL	Chicago PS	Benito Juarez	"Mexican" (88.2%)
Chicago, IL	Chicago PS	Farragut	"Mexican" (76.4%)
Austin, TX	Austin ISD		"Hispanic" (57%)
Austin, TX	Austin ISD	Lanier	"Hispanic" (73.1%)
Austin, TX	Austin ISD	Travis	"Hispanic" (79%)
Dallas, TX	Dallas ISD		"Hispanic" (63%)
Dallas, TX	Dallas ISD	Jefferson	"Hispanic" (91%)
El Paso, TX	Socorro ISD	El Dorado	"Hispanic" (88.8%)
Houston, TX	Aldine ISD		"Hispanic" (61%)
Houston, TX	Aldine ISD	MacArthur	"Hispanic" (77%)
Houston, TX	Houston ISD		"Hispanic" (59%)
Houston, TX	Houston ISD	Houston	"Hispanic" (91%)
San Antonio, TX	North East ISD		"Hispanic" (45%)
San Antonio, TX	Northside ISD		"Hispanic" (62%)

San Antonio, TX	Northside ISD	Holmes	“Hispanic” (80%)
Denver, CO	Denver PS		“Hispanic” (57.3%)
Denver, CO	Denver PS	Lincoln	“Hispanic” (88.6%)
Albuquerque, NM	Albuquerque PS	Valley	“Hispanic” (75%)
Albuquerque, NM	Albuquerque PS	West Mesa	“Hispanic” (80.9%)
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix Union HSD		“Hispanic” (77%)
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix Union HSD	Carl Hayden	“Hispanic” (91.9%)
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix Union HSD	Trevor Browne	“Hispanic” (80.4%)
Tucson, AZ	Sunnyside USD		“Hispanic” (87.7%)
Tucson, AZ	Sunnyside USD	Sunnyside	“Hispanic” (91.2%)
Tucson, AZ	Tucson USD	Pueblo	“Hispanic” (87%)
Fresno, CA	Fresno USD	Roosevelt	“Hispanic” (73.1%)
Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles USD		“Hispanic” 73.3%)
Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles USD	Lincoln	“Hispanic” (82.9%)
Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles USD	Roosevelt	“Hispanic” (99.1%)

Table 4.2 Districts/Schools with Largely to Predominantly Mexican American Students

(the labels “Latino,” “Mexican,” “Hispanic” reflect labels utilized in websites)

LOCATION	DISTRICT	HIGH SCHOOL	DEMOGRAPHIC MARKER
Austin, TX	Eanes ISD		White (85%)
Austin, TX	Eanes ISD	Westlake	White (85.5%)
Dallas, TX	Coppell ISD		White (67.2%)
Dallas, TX	Coppell ISD	Coppell HS	White (73%)
Houston, TX	Humble ISD	Kingwood	White (84.1%)
Houston, TX	Katy ISD	Cinco Ranch	White (72%)
Denver, CO	Cherry Creek SD		White (65%)
Denver, CO	Cherry Creek SD	Cherry Creek	White (70%)
Albuquerque, NM	Albuquerque PS	Eldorado	White (71.4%)
Albuquerque, NM	Albuquerque PS	La Cueva	White (71%)
Phoenix, AZ	Cave Creek USD		White (89%)
Scottsdale, AZ	Cave Creek USD	Cactus Shadows	White (90.6%)
Scottsdale, AZ	Scottsdale USD	Saguaro	White (84.6%)
Tucson, AZ	Catalina Foothills SD		White (80%)
Tucson, AZ	Catalina Foothills SD	Catalina Foothills	White (83.5%)
Tucson, AZ	Tucson USD	Sabino	White (80.2%)
Beverly Hills, CA	Beverly Hills USD		White (74%)
Beverly Hills, CA	Beverly Hills USD	Beverly Hills	White (70%)
Fresno, CA	Clovis USD		White (54%)

Los Angeles, CA	Palos Verdes Peninsula USD	Palos Verdes	White (81.2%)
Orange County, CA	Capistrano USD		White (67.7%)
Orange County, CA	Capistrano USD	Dana Hills	White (74.4%)
Rancho Bernardo, CA	Poway USD		White (60%)
Rancho Bernardo, CA	Poway USD	Rancho Bernardo	White (63.2%)
San Diego, CA	Grossmont Union HSD	West Hills	White (72%)

Table 4.3 Districts/Schools with Largely to Predominantly White Students

Once I printed all mission statements from websites, I transcribed them onto a single Word document. I further disaggregated mission statements by copying and pasting data from predominantly “Hispanic” schools onto one document and data from predominantly White schools onto another document. I performed this step for ease in identifying the categories of data during analysis.

#### Data Analysis

Initial analysis occurred with the collection of data (Huckin, 1997). Quick readings of mission statements were made when locating mission statements through school websites. I conducted these readings with as non-critical a stance as I could. This meant reading the mission statements only to ensure that they were original. Some mission statements that appeared in individual school websites were identical to district mission statements as well as to other schools in the district. I excluded these mission statements because of my desire to analyze statements that reflect more closely on the attitudes and expectations of individual schools or districts. Identical mission statements for districts and schools found within the district suggests possible hierarchical positions that while interesting and significant in and of themselves, do not reveal how individual schools think about the students they serve directly.

Several analyses made subsequent to the initial analyses just described were performed with a critical orientation. These critical analyses were conducted to uncover discourses that reveal attitudes and/or expectations those individual school districts and individual schools have for the students they serve. Specifically, subsequent analytical readings of the mission statements proceeded systematically with each ‘tool’ of CDA being utilized individually. “Problematization” (Luke, 1995) was the first of these analyses concentrating on the ways with which mission statements characterize the students who attend the schools. Included in these analyses were both positive and negative descriptions of the students. Analysis focusing on the “order of discourse” (Fairclough, 1995) followed with particular attention paid to the organization with which concepts involving students and student expectations are listed in the mission statements. Examination of the emphasis placed on the contextualization of students was made next by utilizing the “foregrounding/ backgrounding” (Huckin, 1997) tool of CDA. Descriptions of the agency of the students, or their active engagement in the schools, were then analyzed using Huckin’s (1997) tool of agent-student relations followed by investigation of concepts conspicuous by their absence in another of Huckin’s (1997) tools of CDA, deletions/omissions. Statements that reflect a taken for granted assumption as proposed by Huckin’s (1997) notion of presupposition were examined next. Finally, analysis of the data gathered was conducted to reveal connotations and insinuations that emerge from the mission statements. In these analyses, uncovering the meanings that words and phrases carry and the way the mission statements pass along the

assumption or abdication of responsibility for students and their academic success is studied.

In Chapter 5, I present the mission statements as they appear in the district and school websites. Included in the chapter are the detailed analyses I performed on each mission statement. While not every mission statement is analyzed using all of the eight CDA “tools” described above, each mission statement is analyzed with at least one tool.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MISSION STATEMENTS

This chapter presents the mission statements collected for this study and the analyses performed. Each section details analyses of the mission statements utilizing the different CDA tools described in chapter 3. Subsections are arranged around themes that emerge from both districts and schools with large to predominantly Mexican American students and districts and schools with predominantly White students while employing the different CDA tools.

#### Problematization: Disparagement and Praise

As described by Luke (1995), problematization refers to “identifying and focusing on problems, anomalies, and issues” (p. 25). In mission statements, analysis through problematization yields descriptions of the institution (district or school) and students through the lens of the agents of the institutions who produce and disseminate the mission statement. Analysis utilizing problematization then calls for critical readings focused on the discourses used to characterize the districts, schools and/or the students.

Though titled problematization, contrary descriptions may also be revealed in this analysis. In other words, affirmations of the positive qualities of the district, school or students can just as easily be (re)produced.

#### Disparagement of Mexican American Students

Below is the mission statement from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). This district’s second largest ethnic group is “Latino” at 39% (“At A Glance,” n.d.).

To ensure that all high school students have the opportunity to

be engaged in a variety of learning experiences which will enable them to graduate well prepared for any post secondary option, i.e. college, employment, or military or technical training. For under-performing students, our goal is to decrease course failure rates, decrease dropout rates, and increase graduation rates via targeted support strategies for both students and schools. We seek to ensure that students are motivated and prepared to pursue higher education or challenging employment via advanced academic programs, career preparation programs, and college test preparation.

Analysis of this mission statement by way of problematization reveals that this school district views many of its students as deficient. The only student characterization highlighted by the district is “under-performing students”. By specifically calling out “under-performing students” the district has established that these are students who fail courses and dropout of school. Although some positive goals are sought for the students’ futures including preparation for higher education, the present status of the students is presented as bleak.

Benito Juarez Community Academy is a comprehensive high school within CPS with an 88.2% “Mexican” demographic as described by the district’s demographic report (Chicago Public Schools [CPS], 2007). This school’s mission statement reads:

The mission of Benito Juarez Community Academy is to provide an academic program that involves the administration, staff, parents,

LSC members, and the community at large working as partners to ensure that all students, including those with special needs, are actively engaged in a continuous process of reading improvement in all subject areas.

Similar to the district's mission statement, in Benito Juarez Community Academy's mission statement the only student characterization included is that of students with "special needs". Again, problematization of students is established in the only description of students offered, that is "special needs" students.

In the mission statement of Lanier High School in Austin, Texas, a school where 73% of the student body is Mexican American (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2005-2006), similar foregrounding of the characterization of students is found. This characterization is found in the last stanza of a comparatively lengthy mission statement:

WE BELIEVE that educating our youth to their maximum potential is a shared responsibility among students, school staff, parents, and community.

WE RECOGNIZE the uniqueness and dignity of each individual and respect environment differences.

WE SEEK to promote an appreciation of the rich and diverse cultures and heritages represented in our student body and staff.

IN OUR EFFORT to educate the total person, we strive to provide not only a superior academic program, but also opportunities for creative expression, physical activity, and vocational development.

WE ENCOURAGE in Lanier students an attitude of caring and enthusiasm, a feeling of pride and acceptance, and a desire to use their many talents to contribute to their families, the community, the city, the state, and the nation.

AS STUDENTS complete their education at Lanier, they will take with them the confidence that they are equipped to compete as productive citizens and lifelong learners in an ever-changing and complex society.

OUR CHALLENGES are many, but with teamwork we can make a positive impact toward improving the educational climate for all our students.

Some affirmative characterizations are offered in this mission statement. However, all of these are either future or possibility oriented characterizations of what the students can become, not of how they are currently viewed. For example, under the “WE ENCOURAGE” stanza, allusion is made to the school’s desire that the “many talents” of the students be used. Although the school may characterize the students as being multi-talented, it problematizes the students as lacking the innate desire to utilize these talents and in need of the school’s encouragement to do so. Likewise, under the “AS STUDENTS” stanza, students are characterized as confident but only in the future as they “complete their education at Lanier.” In the final stanza, students are characterized as part of what the mission statement reveals as “CHALLENGES” for the school. Specifically, the challenge is to improve “the educational climate” for the students.

However, the students in part construct the climate of the school. In the end then, students are characterized in this mission statement as “CHALLENGES” for the school.

As does Lanier High School, MacArthur High School in Houston, Texas, with a 77% “Hispanic” student population (TEA, 2005-2006b), develops in its mission statement a future oriented characterization of students. This mission statement is delivered as follows:

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages them to develop their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in our multi-ethnic society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, can realize self-worth, and learn that education can make a difference in their lives.

Couched in the discourse of a positive future outlook for MacArthur students is a contemporary description of them that is pessimistic. This is accomplished through the use of the phrase “in order to be” which problematizes students as not being currently “responsible, capable contributing citizens.” The manner with which MacArthur High School students will become, at some point in the future, “responsible” and “capable...citizens” is through an educational program offered by the school that will “encourage” responsibility and capabilities. Additionally, this mission statement refers to deficit notions (discussed in Chapter 2) to problematize MacArthur students. The

suggestion that MacArthur students “learn that education can make a difference in their lives” implies that the school does not believe that students upon entering MacArthur High already understand this concept. In a school where almost 8 of every 10 students are Mexican American, the often-heard adage of “Hispanics don’t value education” is reproduced.

Analysis through problematization of the mission statement from the Houston Independent School District (HSTNISD) with its 59% “Hispanic” population (Houston Independent School District [HSTNISD], 2007a), uncovers a concern that is not primarily with the students, but rather with the manner in which the students have an effect on the greater well-being of Houston as a city. The mission statement is referred to as the district’s “purpose” and reads as follows:

The Houston Independent School District exists to strengthen the social and economic foundation of Houston by assuring its youth the highest-quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere.

At issue for the school is a desire to “strengthen the social and economic foundation of Houston”. The “highest-quality...education” for the students is “assured” not for the students’ own well-being, but for the well-being of the city of Houston.

When the mission statements of districts and schools attended by large numbers of Mexican Americans are analyzed by way of problematization, notions of students as problematic are uncovered. Descriptors used in these mission statements deliver characterizations that are inauspicious. Some of these descriptors include “under-

performing,” “failure,” “dropout,” “special needs,” and “challenges.” Collectively, utilization of such descriptors reveals a portrayal of districts and schools with predominantly Mexican American students, and by extension the students themselves, as academic problems. However, different descriptors are used in mission statements from districts and schools that have predominantly White student populations.

#### The Praise of White Students

In comparison to the above mission statements disseminated by districts and schools where there are significant to predominant numbers of Mexican American students, mission statements produced by schools with significant to predominant numbers of White students tell a different story. The mission statement of Kingwood High School in Houston, Texas, with an 84.1% White student population (Humble Independent School District [HBISD], 2007), presents in its mission statement a characterization of the students that is optimistic.

The mission of Kingwood High School is to create a collaborative learning environment that is supportive, challenging, and disciplined, resulting in life-long learners whose exemplary performance is a credit to themselves and their community.

Of specific note is the last notion of this mission statement where the descriptor of students as a “credit to themselves and their community” is given. Although Kingwood High is indeed interested in the well-being of the community, it initially shows interest in the students’ credibility. The concept of initial or primary interest in the student is particularly noteworthy when compared to the mission statement of the HSTNISD

reviewed above where individual advancement of the student is secondary to that of the interests of Houston as a metropolis.

Descriptors of students used in the Kingwood High School mission statement include “life-long learners” and “exemplary” as well as the aforementioned allusion to the students as credits. Still more validating is a descriptor utilized by Cinco Ranch High School with its 72% White student population that is also located in Houston, Texas (Cinco Ranch High School [CRHS], 2006). The Cinco Ranch High School mission statement reads as follows:

Cinco Ranch has the mission of providing a challenging education and promoting leadership, blended with personal skill development to a highly talented and diverse student population, thus helping to ensure success by enabling students to become responsible citizens, leaders, and individuals who have a passion to continue their learning throughout life.

As was seen above with mission statements from Lanier and MacArthur High Schools, Cinco Ranch High School also utilizes a future oriented discourse to describe students when it states that the school will help “students to become responsible citizens, leaders, and individuals” sometime in the future. However, what differentiates Cinco Ranch from both Lanier and MacArthur is the descriptor used to characterize the students currently. The current characterization offered of the students at Cinco Ranch High School features the extremely affirming descriptors “highly talented”. Interestingly, Cinco Ranch positively describes the student body as “diverse” while no more than 11.6% come from

any other race beside White (with “Hispanic” equaling 10.7%) (Cinco Ranch High School, 2006).

The encouraging, affirming tenor of student characterizations found in mission statements from high schools such as Kingwood and Cinco Ranch can be expanded to include not just the students but also the school itself. Although not directly giving credit to the students, the heralding of the school that students attend has the effect of depicting the students who attend the school as part and parcel of the school’s positive characterization. Sabino High School in Tucson, Arizona, with a White student population of 80.2% (Tucson Unified School District [TUSD], 2006), assumes this tone:

The mission of Sabino High School, as a Professional Learning Community, is to graduate all students. Our students will value cultural diversity, collaboration, and life-long learning. Sabino students will exhibit quality character, academic excellence, mental and physical skills and talents necessary to become successful participants in a democratic and global society.

Once again, this school has assumed a future oriented description of its students.

However, an affirming current characterization is understood since Sabino High School is described as a “Professional Learning Community” and there is no exclusionary discourse added to suggest that students are not a part of this.

Beverly Hills High School where approximately 70% of the student body is White (California Department of Education [CDE], 2007) verifies both the character of the high school and student population.

Beverly Hills High School is a four year, college-oriented high school unique in its international population and high achievement. BHHS strives to ensure that our students are humane, thinking, productive citizens who respect diversity. The faculty, staff and administration are dedicated to helping all of our students from diverse backgrounds reach their individual academic and personal goals.

Together, the use of affirming descriptors “college-oriented” and “high achievement” create a description of the school and students that is positively focused. The Coppell Independent School District (CISD) in Dallas, Texas constructs this same bright focus of the district on a grand scale. In this district where 67.2% of the students are White while only 9.5% are labeled as “Hispanic” (Coppell Independent School District [CISD], 2006) the mission statement reads:

The mission of the Coppell Independent School District, as a global leader in our educational excellence, is to ensure our students achieve personal success, develop strong moral character, and become dynamic citizens through a customized, innovative learning experience led by a visionary staff and community.

This district’s affirming character is boldly described by using the descriptors “global leader” by way of its “educational excellence.”

When compared to descriptors utilized in mission statements from schools that are predominantly Mexican American, descriptors used in mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White student bodies construct an image of the school and students that is resoundingly optimistic.

#### Foregrounding/Backgrounding: Localization and Globalization

As described by Huckin (1997), foregrounding/backgrounding is the emphasizing and deemphasizing of concepts. Mission statements make use of foregrounding/backgrounding to forecast various social level contexts under which the districts or schools anticipate students will participate. In general, these contexts fit into the multi-leveled social order described by van Dijk (2001b) as micro, meso, and macro levels. Micro level contexts suggest more localized social environs, with the context becoming larger at the meso level and still larger at the macro level. Mission statements from districts and schools that are largely Mexican American often utilize discourses that place their students in micro level social contexts as compared to mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White student populations.

#### Localization of Mexican American Students

Lincoln High School in Los Angeles, a school where “Hispanics” make up 82.9% of the student body (Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD], 2007), has a mission statement that reads as follows:

It is our vision to produce problem-solving, critical thinkers who are responsible citizens and assets to their community. Lincoln High graduates will be technologically literate and prepared to

successfully function within family, job, and society in our modern world.

Students who attend Lincoln High School are asked to be “assets to their community” with no immediate conceptualization made of “community” in this statement. However, later discourse does allude to the expected level of social order for the students and a clearer conceptualization of “community.” The mission statement calls for students to be functional “within family, job and society in our modern world.” Analysis under the lens of order of discourse reveals a micro level social context within which Lincoln High graduates are expected to participate (i.e. “family, job”). Only after these very micro level contexts are mentioned is a more macro level context referenced (i.e. “...society in our modern world”).

Similarly, the mission statement from Chicago’s Farragut Career Academy High School, with its 76.4% “Mexican” student population (CPS, 2007), orders discourse that reveals an expectation of social engagement for its graduates that is located on a micro level.

Our mission at Farragut Career Academy High School is to blend the rich resource of our staff and community to support a well-designed, structured academic and career skills curriculum which nurtures, educates, trains and inspires each student to be a responsible 21<sup>st</sup> century leader in their home, workplace, and community.

Here, students are to become leaders. However, they are only to become leaders in the micro level contexts of the homes, workplaces, and communities. The order of discourse of this mission statement places the home as its initial context with the workplace only one step beyond. In the end, it reveals no expectation of students becoming leaders anywhere beyond their community.

Where the notion of community often goes undefined, revisiting the mission statement from the Houston Independent School District (HSTNISD) offers some conceptualization.

The Houston Independent School District exists to strengthen the social and economic foundation of Houston by assuring its youth the highest-quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere.

The social level presented here is clearly located as Houston. While the more micro level communities located within Houston would be included, there is notable exclusion of any greater macro level social order outside of Houston.

Aside from the use of the descriptor “community,” utilization of the term “society” is found in mission statements produced by districts and schools with large numbers of Mexican American students. The micro level connotation of “society” is found in the primary definition of society provided by Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2006): “companionship or association with one’s fellows: friendly or *intimate* intercourse” (my italics, p. 1184). District mission statements where this micro level of social order is suggested include those from Denver Public Schools (DPS) with

its 57.3% “Hispanic” student population (Denver Public Schools [DPS], 2006), the Austin (Texas) Independent School District (AISD) where 57% of the students are “Hispanic” (Austin Independent School District [AISD], 2007), and the Sunnyside Unified School District (SUSD) in Tucson, Arizona which has an 87.7% “Hispanic” student population (Sunnyside Unified School District [SUSD], 2006). The DPS, AISD, and SUSD mission statements read as follows:

DPS

The district’s mission is clear: to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society.

AISD

All students will progress academically and intellectually, and will graduate prepared for personal success and inspired to contribute to society.

SUSD

The mission of the Sunnyside Unified School District is to ensure that all students achieve academic success and contribute positively to a diverse, changing, democratic society.

In each of these mission statements, the level of social order is demarcated as “society,” with no expansion to more macro level social orders presented.

Employment of the descriptor “society” is also used to foreground the social order

level expected of students who attend individual schools that are predominantly Mexican American. Schools such as MacArthur High School (MHS) in Houston (77% Hispanic) (TEA, 2005-2006b), and Carl Hayden High School (CHHS) in Phoenix (91.9% Hispanic) (Phoenix Union High School District [PHXUHSD], 2007a) qualify the societies referenced in their mission statements as heterogeneous.

### MHS

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages them to develop their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in our multi-ethnic society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, can realize self-worth, and learn that education can make a difference in their lives.

### CHHS

Carl Hayden Community High School will prepare all students to be lifelong learners to meet the challenges of a multicultural and technological society.

In each of these mission statements an expectation is revealed that places its students at a level of social order that is a bit larger than other statements heretofore analyzed. Since most Mexican Americans live in and attend schools in communities that are segregated (U.S. Census, 2002), mention of students engaging in a multiethnic or multicultural

society represents some expectation of engagement at a level larger than their current community. Still, there is a cautious tone to the mission statements' social order expectation by way of the definition of the limiting descriptor "society."

Of special note in the analysis of mission statements produced by schools with predominantly Mexican American students by way of foregrounding/backgrounding is the mission statement disseminated by Lanier High School of Austin, Texas. As described above, Lanier is a school with a reported 73% "Hispanic" student population (TEA, 2005-2006). Its mission statement is quite lengthy and consists of several stanzas. I will reproduce here only the stanzas that relate to the current analytical tool:

WE ENCOURAGE in Lanier students an attitude of caring and enthusiasm, a feeling of pride and acceptance, and a desire to use their many talents to contribute to their families, the community, the city, the state, and the nation.

AS STUDENTS complete their education at Lanier, they will take with them the confidence that they are equipped to compete as productive citizens and lifelong learners in an ever-changing and complex society.

Analysis of this statement using foregrounding/backgrounding and order of discourse places students primarily in a localized, micro level social order. Only after this initial localization ("students... contribute to their families, the community, the city...") is a wider macro level social order mentioned ("...the state, and the nation."). However, the

wider macro level social order referenced in the preceding stanza is minimized in the utilization of the descriptor “society” in the subsequent stanza.

#### Globalization of White Students

The localized foregrounding of Mexican American students as revealed in the micro level social order contexts employed in mission statements of educational institutions where they predominate becomes more apparent when compared to the social order context foregrounded in districts and schools that are attended mostly by White students. In these mission statements, meso to macro level social contexts are tendered. District mission statements that use a macro level social context refer to the world as its contextual level. Such mission statements include Catalina Foothills School District (CFSD) in Tucson, Arizona, and Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD) in Phoenix, Arizona with their 80% and 89% White student populations respectively (Catalina Foothills School District [CFSD], 2006a; Cave Creek Unified School District [CCUSD], 2007).

#### CFSD

The mission of Catalina Foothills School District is to guarantee that each student achieves academic and personal excellence, becomes a lifelong learner and is a responsible citizen of the world, by engaging all students in meaningful programs which meet the highest educational and ethical standards within a caring, collaborative learning community.

#### CCUSD

The Cave Creek Unified School District community will provide diverse learning experiences to challenge and inspire all students to become thinking, responsible, contributing leaders with the passion and energy to shape our changing world.

In each of the above mission statements students are referenced according to their anticipated place in the “world.” This macro level representation reveals expectations that students will be participating in a wide-reaching, international context.

Mission statements produced by schools with predominantly White student populations likewise construct a macro level social context for student participation. Indeed, many schools with predominantly White student populations employ the descriptor “global” when foregrounding/backgrounding the anticipated social context within which students are expected to participate. Below are examples where this is the case with the school’s White student population percentage noted.

Coppell High School in Dallas, Texas (73% White student population (Coppell High School, 2006)):

The mission of Coppell High School, a unified educational community embracing a common vision, is to develop self-reliant learners who maximize their potential in an ever-changing global society through the utilization of community resources and relevant, customized educational opportunities that foster problem solving, critical thinking and character development.

Catalina Foothills High School in Tucson, Arizona (83.5% White student population (CFSD, 2006b)):

The mission of Catalina Foothills High School, as a collaborative learning community committed to excellence, is to guarantee that each student demonstrates outstanding academic and personal achievement, graduates, and becomes a contributing member of the global community by engaging students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences within an environment that fosters a passion for learning and personal behavior of the highest standards.

Cactus Shadow High School in Scottsdale, Arizona (90.6% White student population (Arizona Department of Education [ADE], 2007)):

It is the mission of Cactus Shadows High School to provide a foundation for each student to become a lifelong learner, to promote development of the whole individual, and to provide opportunities for each student to become a productive member of a global society.

Construction of the expectations of the social context within which students who attend these schools is achieved through the use of the macro level descriptor “global.”

Although “society” is referred to in two of these mission statements, the use of “global” contextualizes society. That is, students in these schools are indubitably expected to participate in a context that is international in scope.

### Within District Disparities

Analysis using foregrounding/backgrounding of mission statements that emanate from schools in the same district but with differing demographics can shed further light on the divergent social order contexts expected. Such is the case for schools located in the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) and the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). In Albuquerque, La Cueva High School (LCHS) with a 71% White student population (Albuquerque Public Schools [APS], 2007) has a mission statement that reads in a much greater macro level context than that of West Mesa High School (WMHS) with its 80.9% “Hispanic” student population (APS, 2007).

La Cueva High School helps students become contributing,  
self-sufficient members of communities in our school, our nation,  
and our world and engages in continued improvement.

Micro level descriptors “communities” and “school” initially foreground the social context for La Cueva students. Quickly, however, the descriptors move to larger macro level contexts by the use of “nation” and “world.” A similar micro level context is noted in the mission statement from West Mesa High School. However, for WMHS there is no inclusion of any greater context for its students.

West Mesa High School promotes continuous learning so that we  
realize our full potential as individuals and community members.

Discourse found in this statement reveals, through order of discourse, a micro level framework beginning with the individual and only extending to some community.

Differing courses of social order are foregrounded for the futures of these students as compared to the students at LCHS. Students attending LCHS are engaged in an education that projects that they will become future participants in a society that is global in context, while for WMHS students, participation in a context no greater than their community is envisaged.

Similarly, a comparison of mission statements from schools within TUSD foreground a macro level social context for students attending a school with predominantly White students. This becomes clear when analysis of a mission statement from a school with predominantly Mexican American students reveals the localization of its students in a micro level social context. A comparison of the mission statements from Sabino High School (SHS) with its 80.2% White student population (TUSD, 2006) and Pueblo High School (PHS) where 87% of the students are “Hispanic” (TUSD, 2006) is presented here:

The mission of Sabino High School, as a Professional Learning Community, is to graduate all students. Our students will value cultural diversity, collaboration, and life-long learning. Sabino students will exhibit quality character, academic excellence, mental and physical skills and talents necessary to become successful participants in a democratic and global society.

SHS employs the descriptor “global” in its mission statement to assert the expectation that its students will be involved in this most macro level social order. In this way, SHS

students are foretold to become participants in worldly matters. The PHS mission statement makes no such global expectation.

The mission of the Pueblo Magnet High School Faculty and

Staff is to make a lasting difference in the lives of our students.

We are driven by an ethical and moral commitment to provide a safe and supportive environment with a curriculum grounded in standards and application, so that our students may graduate into society as innovative learners who value honor, respect diversity, and pursue excellence.

PHS's mission statement establishes "society" as its social order context. While no conceptualization is made to establish the level into which this "society" fits, omission of any macro level descriptor similar to that used by SHS suggests an expectation with micro level underpinnings.

#### Insinuations and Connotations: Abdication and Acceptance

Analyzing discourses found in mission statements with particular concentration on insinuations and connotations helps to uncover the responsibilities districts and schools believe they have with respect to students' academic achievement and their future prospects. These beliefs need to be uncovered because they are often implicit approaches taken by districts and schools. Referring to the definition provided in chapter 3, insinuations are the multiple meanings discourses carry and the manner with which the discourses denote the abdication or acceptance of accountability (Huckin, 1997). Indeed, abdication of responsibility by districts and schools with respect to the academic

outcomes and future prospects of Mexican American students is the major theme that emerges in these analyses.

Examination of mission statements through the lens of connotations also assists in revealing abdications by districts and schools. According to Huckin (1997), connotations are “special meanings...that certain words and phrases (lexis) carry” (p. 8). Specifically, concentration on the syntactic analysis of transitive and modal verbs used in mission statements facilitates the discernment of connotations found in the mission statements. Transitive verbs are verbs that have direct objects associated with them while modal verbs put forward propositions based on beliefs or obligations and suggest probabilities. Synthesizing the two, Hodge and Kress (1993) introduce the use and analysis of transactive verbs. For these theorists, transitives can be transactives depending on the modality, the strength or weight, of the verb. At the heart of this kind of analysis, therefore, is the modality of the transactive or the force that it conveys and the uncovering of the speech or mental processes that “indicate the authority of an utterance” (Hodge & Kress, 1993, p. 126).

#### Abdication of Responsibility to Mexican American Students

Abdication of responsibility by schools with predominantly Mexican American populations to the students in their charge is noted through insinuations and connotations. Such insinuations and connotations are found in school mission statements that are disseminated by Valley High School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Sunnyside High School in Tucson, Arizona. Valley High School reports that “Hispanic” students

represent 75% of its total student body (APS, 2007), while Sunnyside High School's "Hispanic" student population is 91.2 percent (SUSD, 2006).

The mission statement at Valley High School appears in this way:

Valley High School promises to promote excellence in education in the community by providing opportunities to learn and by encouraging success in academic and technical pursuits. The staff, faculty and administration will enhance character by assisting students in developing greater appreciation and respect for individual differences and cultural diversity.

A modal auxiliary is introduced in this statement through the use of *will*. A modal auxiliary is a type of transactive verb or verb phrase that "establishes the degree of authority of an utterance...but...contain a systematic ambiguity about the nature of authority – whether it is based primarily on knowledge or on power" (Hodge & Kress, 1993, p. 122). Although *will* carries a strong modal force and some degree of authority, here it also carries some negative connotation when considered together with the transitive verb *enhance* and its direct object *character*. There exists in this utterance the transmittal of the belief from an authority (Valley High School) that the character of Valley High students needs enhancement, or is somehow lacking. Furthermore, the endeavor carrying the greatest modal force in this mission statement is the enhancing of character, which is not an "academic...pursuit" that Valley High earlier promised to encourage.

In addition, the use of the modal auxiliary phrases “by providing opportunities to learn” and “by encouraging success,” added to demonstrate how Valley High School promotes excellence, ultimately weaken the promise to “promote excellence” initially made in the mission statement. Without these demonstrators, the first sentence of the mission statement would have a strengthened obligatory, modal force and would have read:

Valley High School promises to promote excellence in education  
in the community and success in academic and technical pursuits.

Abdication of responsibility can also take the form of placing others as having primary responsibility in matters. Through the ordering of discourse in mission statements, schools can abdicate some of their responsibility to others. The mission statement disseminated by Sunnyside High School in Tucson, Arizona exemplifies just such ordering. This mission statement is produced as follows:

The mission of Sunnyside High School is to help all students  
acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for  
productive living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This mission is the  
shared responsibility of students, parents, staff and  
community.

Students and parents are placed as those primarily responsible for carrying out the “mission” established by Sunnyside High. Only after these two groups are assigned responsibility is the “staff” at Sunnyside High listed. In this way, the school makes an insinuation that there is abdication to others, students and parents specifically, of their

greater role in the responsibility of carrying out the mission. Some abdication of responsibility is further made by Sunnyside High's use of the weakened transactive "help," which connotes a diminished obligation by the school when compared to transactives with stronger modalities such as 'ensure' or 'guarantee.' Furthermore, employment of another transactive in the first sentence works to reveal the expectation of precisely how the function of schooling will proceed at Sunnyside High. Utilization of the transactive "acquire" functions as a modal auxiliary in that it connotes an establishment of power and authority by the school over the students. Consistent with Freire's (1970) 'banking' concept of education, students at Sunnyside High are directed to receive ("acquire") "knowledge," "skills," and "attitudes" that will be delivered by the authorities at Sunnyside High School "who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 72).

#### Insinuating Abdication Through Negations

Negations are found within mission statements from districts and schools with significant Mexican American student populations. By negations, I mean words and phrases that imply nullification of some assertion. Modal verbs or modal verb phrases that connote a weakening of the force of statements are employed in these situations as the negations to what would otherwise be powerful declarations (Hodge & Kress, 1993). In this way, there exists in the present study insinuations and connotations that districts and schools serving large numbers of Mexican American students are abdicating any assurances of heightened academic outcomes. Such a negation is found in the mission

statement produced by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) where 39% of the district is labeled as “Latino” (“At A Glance,” n.d).

To ensure that all high school students have the opportunity to be engaged in a variety of learning experiences which will enable them to graduate well prepared for any post secondary option, i.e. college, employment, or military or technical training. For under-performing students, our goal is to decrease course failure rates, decrease dropout rates, and increase graduation rates via targeted support strategies for both students and schools. We seek to ensure that students are motivated and prepared to pursue higher education or challenging employment via advanced academic programs, career preparation programs, and college test preparation.

The positive, powerful assertions made twice in this mission statement of ensuring preparedness for college and “that students are...prepared to pursue higher education...” is negated by use of the modal auxiliary “seek” in the last sentence. Here, the district will *try* to make sure that their students are prepared for post-secondary education, but leaves room for abdication if this does not occur.

Likewise, negation is found in the use of an insinuation and a pair of connotations that work to weaken the modal force of the mission statement produced by MacArthur High School of Houston, Texas. This school, with a “Hispanic” student population of 77% (TEA, 2005-2006b) has a mission statement that reads as follows:

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages them to develop their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in our multi-ethnic society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, can realize self-worth, and learn that education can make a difference in their lives.

In the first line of this statement, a weak transactive verb “seeks” is employed to describe MacArthur’s mission. Later, in the same sentence, a second weakened transactive, “encourages,” is used. Together these weak modality transactives negate any stated positive endeavors and the modal force of this mission statement and its related obligatory stance is also weakened.

A belief held by the school regarding the students is revealed in the last sentence of this mission statement. In this sentence, MacArthur High employs the use of the transactive modal auxiliary “can.” This modal verb connotes the ability of students to obtain something. Here, it is the realization of “self-worth.” However, utilization of the modal auxiliary “can” places obligation upon students with help from others (i.e. students have the ability). Any obligation by the school to guarantee the realization of “self-worth” is abdicated by using such a modal auxiliary. A transactive modal auxiliary that has both more modality and confers some obligation back to the school would be the modal auxiliary “will.” Making this change, the statement would read:

Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, *will* realize self-worth...

Finally, in the last clause of this mission statement, MacArthur, in effect, insinuates some belief in the myth, “Mexican Americans don’t value education” (Valencia & Black, 2002). This insinuation is made in the mission statement with the following phrase:

...and learn that education can make a difference in their lives.

This clause insinuates only some future possibility and not a current condition. This is achieved through the use of the negating modal auxiliary *can* that insinuates a current condition where this is not the case (Hodge & Kress, 1993).

Mission statements also negate present conditions in other utterances that are not modal auxiliaries. These may appear in noun forms yet carry the same negating connotations as modal auxiliaries. The mission statement from Lincoln High School in Los Angeles, where nearly 83% of the students are labeled as “Hispanic” (LAUSD, 2007), exemplifies such a negation.

It is our vision to produce problem-solving, critical thinkers who are responsible citizens and assets to their community. Lincoln High graduates will be technologically literate and prepared to successfully function within family, job, and society in our modern world.

The noun *vision* serves to weaken the force of the first sentence of this statement by connoting a possibility at some point in the future. Simultaneously, *vision* creates a negative account (Hodge & Kress, 1993) of Lincoln High students’ current abilities as

“problem-solving, critical thinkers who are responsible citizens and assets to their community.” If students do not meet these characterizations, Lincoln High School has postured in such a way that abdication of their responsibility is possible. For Lincoln High, these characterizations are part of a *vision* for the future, but not guaranteed.

Examination of the second sentence of Lincoln High’s mission statement insinuates a lowered expectation for its students. Although the mission statement employs a relatively strong, obligatory modal auxiliary, *will*, to the subjects (“Lincoln High graduates”), it at this point proceeds through a modally weak transactive verb, *function*. Finally, adverbs that place Lincoln High graduates functioning at a very micro-level social order (“family, job...”) are offered. Using only the subject, modal auxiliary, main verb, and adverbs to simplify the sentence reveals clearly the main idea of the sentence and the lowered expectation it carries:

Lincoln High graduates will function within family, job.

‘Encourage’ and ‘Promote’: Weak Transactives

Negations may also be created through the use of modally weak transactives. Due to the low modality of such transactives, the persuasive character of positive statements diminishes. Two such transactives, *encourage* and *promote*, appear in mission statements from districts and schools that have large numbers of Mexican American students. Such mission statements are found from districts in San Antonio, Texas, and from schools located in Austin and El Paso, Texas, and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Two school districts in San Antonio, Texas employ the weak transactive *encourage* in their mission statements. North East Independent School District (NEISD),

where 45% of the districts students are labeled as “Hispanic” (North East Independent School District [NEISD], 2007) disseminates this mission statement:

We challenge and encourage each student to achieve and demonstrate academic excellence, technical skills, and responsible citizenship.

Also in San Antonio, the Northside Independent School District (NISD), with its 62% “Hispanic” student population (Northside Independent School District [NISD], 2006-2007), releases the following as its mission statement:

The mission of the district is to encourage each student to strive for personal excellence and to ensure all students learn to function, contribute, and compete as responsible individuals in an ever-changing world.

The use of the transactive *encourage* effectively negates in each the positive call for excellence, “academic excellence” in the case of NEISD, and “personal excellence” in the case of NISD. This negation occurs as a result of the diminished obligation to “excellence” that the term *encourage* connotes, especially when compared to transactives with greater modality such as ‘ensure’ or ‘guarantee.’

Equally effective as a negation is the weak transactive verb *promote*. As is the case with utilization of the transactive *encourage*, employment of the transactive *promote* works to decrease the modality of mission statements. Cases in point come from mission statements produced by Travis High School in Austin, Texas (79% “Hispanic” student population) (TEA, 2005-2006a), El Dorado High School in El Paso, Texas (88.8%

“Hispanic” student population) (TEA, 2005-2006a), and West Mesa High School (80.9% “Hispanic” student population) (APS, 2007) and Valley High School (75.2% “Hispanic” student population) (APS, 2007) of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The following are the mission statements from Travis, El Dorado, West Mesa, and Valley High School respectively:

- The mission of William B. Travis High School, through its commitment to excellence, is to promote individual student success and responsibility within a caring and cooperative environment.
- El Dorado High School will promote for all of its students the development of academic, career, and personal/social growth through a partnership with teachers, parents, and the community.
- West Mesa High School promotes continuous learning so that we realize our full potential as individuals and community members.
- Valley High School promises to promote excellence in education in the community by providing opportunities to learn and by encouraging success in academic and technical pursuits. The staff, faculty and administration will enhance character by assisting students in developing greater appreciation and respect for individual differences and cultural diversity.

In each mission statement, the modality of the statements is weakened by use of the weak transactive *promote*. “Student success” at Travis High School, and “development of academic...growth” at El Dorado High School are merely *promoted*. Even though West Mesa references a much less ambitious “continuous learning,” it too is weakened by utilization of the modally weak transactive *promotes*, as is Valley High School’s call for “excellence in education.” All four forego the employment of modally strong transactives and as a consequence (re)create negations that abdicate at the very least some responsibility to fulfilling their stated missions. This abdication is understood when the possibility of replacing this passive transactive verb with a more active, stronger transactive such as *guarantee* is made. For example, Valley High’s mission statement could read with a much stronger obligatory stance:

Valley High School promises to *guarantee* excellence in education...

Or simply:

Valley High School *guarantees* excellence in education...

#### ‘Opportunity’: A Weakened Commitment

Commitments to ‘*opportunities*’ made in mission statements actually work to negate obligations and increase abdications made by districts and schools. This decreased obligation is achieved by way of the utilization of a noun (*opportunity*) rather than some modally strong transactive verb. Another examination of the first sentence of the mission statement provided by Chicago Public Schools (CPS), reviewed above, exemplifies this.

To ensure that all high school students have the opportunity to

be engaged in a variety of learning experiences which will enable them to graduate well prepared for any post secondary option...

The use of the noun “opportunity” serves to weaken the modality of the transitive verb “ensure” in the first line. This noun is employed instead of a transactive verb or verb phrase that carries greater modal force. For example, the transactive verb phrase ‘will be’ could have been used in place of “have the opportunity to” to yield a declaration with a much stronger modality:

To ensure that all high school students *will be* engaged in a variety of learning experiences which will enable them to graduate well prepared for any post secondary option...

The mission statement for Denver Public Schools (DPS), where over 57% of students are “Hispanic” (2006), similarly uses weakened modalities in vital lexicological positions:

The district’s mission is clear: to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society.

DPS utilizes a relatively weak transactive, “provide,” in its mission statement where strengthened modalities could have been used. By using such a weak transactive verb in this position, DPS is able to abdicate any greater responsibilities that might have been forthcoming if a stronger transactive were used. Furthermore, in another vital position, what the district is providing to its students is only “the *opportunity* to achieve,” and not any guarantee of achievement. Simple substitution of stronger modal transactives in each

of these positions could result in a statement with significantly greater obligation to the district's mission:

The district's mission is clear: to *guarantee* all students *will* achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society.

Although this does not affect what the district would guarantee (i.e. knowledge and skills), it does insinuate a greater degree of obligation on the part of the district.

Holmes High School in San Antonio, Texas, with its 80% "Hispanic" student population (NISD, 2006-2007), likewise employs a weakened modal transactive and the noun *opportunity* in critical positions. The Holmes High mission statement appears as follows:

Recognizing that each student is a unique individual, Oliver Wendell Holmes High School commits itself to it's (sic) mission by...

- promoting high expectation for all staff members and students;
- providing each student the opportunity to make significant gains in educational skills commensurate with his/her abilities regardless of his/her educational level;
- establishing an atmosphere where students develop an appreciation of our national heritage

as well as an understanding of their responsibilities  
and rights as a citizen;

- preparing students to adapt to ongoing changes

in our technological society; and

- guaranteeing a consistently high quality of

education for which the school assumes

accountability

Holmes High School “commits” in the second stanza to a weak modal transactive, “providing,” then to a weak noun form, “opportunity.” Similar to almost all the other stanzas of this mission statement that utilize relatively weak modal transactives (“promoting,” “establishing,” “preparing”), the second stanza serves to negate to some degree that to which Holmes High School has committed. Only in the final stanza does Holmes High School employ a relatively strong transactive, “guarantee,” which also serves to highlight the earlier weakened transactives.

In each of the preceding statements there is a weakening of the modal force of the mission. In each, the weakened modal force results in a negation of the obligations and some degree of abdication on the part of the districts and school. Obligations that are revealed in powerful assertions can be negated through the use of weak transactive verbs or through the employment of unmodalities nouns such as *opportunity*. Negations of otherwise encouraging, powerful assertions, and resultant abdications through vehicles beside employment of low modality nouns, are found in the mission statements from a school district in San Antonio, and schools in Houston and Austin, Texas.

Northside Independent School District's (NISD) mission statement also includes a negation. Located in San Antonio, Texas, the district has a "Hispanic" population of 62% (NISD, 2006-2007). Its mission statement reads:

The mission of the district is to encourage each student to strive for personal excellence and to ensure all students learn to function, contribute, and compete as responsible individuals in an ever-changing world.

Although not largely optimistic in its vision, even the marginally encouraging endeavor of students' "personal excellence" is negated by the mission statement's use of the modal "encourage" and insinuates a quite modest expectation of students.

Houston High School, a school where 91% of the student population is recorded as "Hispanic" by the Houston Independent School District (HSTNISD) (HSTNISD, 2007b), writes the following as its mission statement:

The Sam Houston High School Community, consisting of the administration, faculty, business partners, and parents, works relentlessly to assure educational success for all its students. We achieve this by meeting and surpassing on our goals daily. Our mission is to graduate students who are effective communicators, proficient problem solvers, team players, critical and independent thinkers, and responsible, well informed citizens prepared to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Negation of the compelling assurance of the students' "educational success" is made by the inclusion of a weakening modal force. The weakened modal force comes by way of the modally weak transactive *works* and its reinforcing adverb *relentlessly*. This negation carries with it the ability of the administration, faculty and others listed as the "Sam Houston High School Community" to abdicate full assurance to "educational success" of the students. Ultimately, this mission statement insinuates the transference of ultimate responsibility for unsuccessful educational outcomes to the students who are inconspicuously absent in the listing of those considered to be relentless workers of the high school community.

Lanier High School of Austin, Texas, as referenced above with its 73% "Hispanic" student population (TEA, 2005-2006a), also disseminates a mission statement that exemplifies the use of negations. Written as separate stanzas, this mission statement includes three stanzas that include negations:

WE SEEK to promote an appreciation of the rich and diverse cultures and heritages represented in our student body and staff.

IN OUR EFFORT to educate the total person, we strive to provide not only a superior academic program, but also opportunities for creative expression, physical activity, and vocational development.

WE ENCOURAGE in Lanier students an attitude of caring and enthusiasm, a feeling of pride and acceptance, and a desire

to use their many talents to contribute to their families, the community, the city, the state, and the nation.

Inclusion of the weakening modals “seek,” “strive,” and “encourage” in the first, second, and third stanzas respectively, negate the stated *promotion* (itself a negation) of “appreciation,” the provision of “a superior academic program,” and “an attitude of caring and enthusiasm” put forward by Lanier’s mission statement. These negations collectively work to insinuate a lowered expectation by Lanier High School that its students will appreciate “rich and diverse cultures,” that the students will take advantage of the schools deliverance of “a superior academic program,” and that students will have “caring” and enthusiastic attitudes.

#### Insinuation Through Potentialities: The Mexican American Case

Notions of the “potential” of students often either goes without conceptualization in districts with significant numbers of Mexican American students and schools where Mexican American students predominate, or is conceptualized in some diminished capacity. when compared to districts and schools with predominantly White populations. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) where 73.3% of the students are “Hispanic” (Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD], 2007) proclaims a commitment to the potential of its students in its mission statement that reads:

The teachers, administrators and staff of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) believe in the equal worth and dignity of all students and are committed to educate all students to their maximum potential.

Teachers, administrators and staff are all committed to what at first appears to be a commendable position. That is, they are all committed to working with students to reach the students' "maximum potential." However, no conceptualization is made in the mission statement that elucidates this "potential" or its adjective "maximum." The lack of conceptualization of either term detracts from what should otherwise be a phrase that transmits a praiseworthy goal and instead insinuates some other, possibly lowered, expectation. Similar to LAUSD, schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Houston, Texas refer to students' potentials in their mission statements.

At West Mesa High School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where 80.9% of the students are "Hispanic" (APS, 2007), the mission statement is as follows:

West Mesa High School promotes continuous learning so that we realize our full potential as individuals and community members.

This mission statement simply leaves the students' potential undefined. Although it does site the "full potential" of students as being *promoted* (see use of *promote* as a negation above), as was the case with LAUSD's use of the phrase "maximum potential," the lack of conceptualization of "full potential" renders any gains to this promotion inane.

However, by combining this analysis through insinuation with the critical discourse tool of foregrounding/backgrounding discussed above, a clearer notion of "full potential" can be gained. The "full potential" of students that West Mesa refers to is as "community members." Here then, at the very least, a localized social order is employed that places West Mesa students in a context that insinuates their "full potential" can be located within a small scale, micro level social order.

Although similar in its use of the phrase “full potential,” and its small-scale projections for students, Houston’s MacArthur High School differs from West Mesa High School in its elaboration of what this phrase suggests. A school with a student population that is 77% “Hispanic” (TEA, 2005-2006b), MacArthur High School’s mission statement, reproduced above, is repeated here:

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages them to develop their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in our multi-ethnic society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, can realize self-worth, and learn that education can make a difference in their lives.

This mission statement’s reference to “full potential” is conceptualized further along when declaration is made that students at MacArthur High School should become “responsible” and “capable.” These two utterances clarify the school’s notion through the mission statement of just what is the “full potential” of the students and insinuates an expectation of relatively low, simplistic future prospects.

#### Acceptance of Responsibility to White Students

Districts and schools with large to predominantly White student populations reveal a tendency to accept the responsibility of high academic outcomes. These tendencies emerge through analyses that focus on the insinuations and connotations put

forth by mission statements from these districts and schools. The insinuations and connotations found in these mission statements reveal acceptance of responsibility because they tend to take on optimistic, high expectancy conceptualizations and obligatory themes. As a refresher, Huckin (1997) refers to the various meanings discourses may have as insinuations. These insinuations work to signify the acceptance or abdication of accountability (Huckin, 1997). Meanwhile, connotations refer to the remarkable associations that are carried by words and phrases (Huckin, 1997).

#### Insinuation through Potentialities: White Students

Conceptualization of the term *potential*, problematized above in the discussion of mission statements from districts and schools with large numbers of Mexican Americans, is delineated in mission statements from districts and schools with large White student populations. Examination of the mission statement from Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) in Orange County, California, where 67.7% of the students are White (Capistrano Unified School District [CUSD], 2007a), reveals an optimistic conceptualization of the students' potential.

CUSD's mission, in partnership with the home and our richly diverse community, is to educate students and to assist them in realizing their full potential as responsible, productive, and contributing members of society by providing an educational environment in which students are challenged, excellence is expected and differences are valued.

CUSD makes reference to the “full potential” of the students in the district then later offers its conceptualization. Conceptualization of the “full potential” of students in CUSD is insinuated with utilization of the phrase “excellence is expected.” In other words, the “full potential” of the students in CUSD is believed to be located in the realm of “excellence.”

In a similar vein, the mission statement released by Coppell High School (CHS) in Dallas, Texas, with its approximately 70% White student population (TEA, 2006-2007), reveals optimistic conceptualizations when utilizing the term *potential*. The CHS mission statement reads as follows:

The mission of Coppell High School, a unified educational community embracing a common vision, is to develop self-reliant learners who maximize their potential in an ever-changing global society through the utilization of community resources and relevant, customized educational opportunities that foster problem solving, critical thinking and character development.

Conceptualizing the term “potential” in this mission statement requires analysis using van Dijk’s (2001b) notion of social orders discussed above. The mission statement contextualizes the potentialities of the CHS students within a “global society.” In this way, CHS insinuates a positive contextualization of the potential of its students by locating their potential within a large scale, macro-level social context.

High expectations are passed along in mission statements in even simpler ways. Though utilization of the term *potential* may be absent from mission statements, the high

expectations the school has of its students can be quite clear. West Hills High School near San Diego, California, where 72% of the students are White (Grossmont Unified High School District [GUHSD], 2005-2006), employs an understanding of Bloom's taxonomy of learning (1956) in communicating its high expectations.

The mission of West Hills High School is to graduate life-long learners who think critically, solve problems resourcefully, communicate thoughtfully, and contribute positively to society.

West Hills expects its students to "think critically." By doing so, West Hills is communicating that it has an expectation that its students will have elevated levels of cognition.

Rancho Bernardo High School, also near San Diego, California, similarly communicates a clear heightened expectation of its students. Unambiguously, Rancho Bernardo expects its students to attend a university.

Rancho Bernardo High School students will be expected to successfully complete a course of study that prepares them to meet the "a-g" application requirements of the CSU/UC systems, and that also prepares them for the world of work and for making a lifetime of informed decisions.

### Obligatory Stances

Most revealing of the responsibilities that districts and schools with large White student populations believe they have toward positive academic outcomes for their students is made when analyzing the utilization of transactive verbs (Hodge & Kress,

1993). As discussed above, transactive verbs are transitive verbs that carry some force, or modality, with them and propose probability and obligation (Hodge & Kress, 1993). Consideration of transactives sheds light on the connotations found in mission statements and works to reveal the obligatory stance schools with large numbers of White students take.

Mission statements disseminated by school districts in Denver, Colorado, Tucson, Arizona, and Austin, Texas utilize modally strong transactive verbs that clearly relay the obligations each district accepts. Specifically, the mission statements come from the Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) near Denver, Catalina Foothills School District (CFSD) in Tucson, and Eanes Independent School District (EISD) in Austin where the White student populations are 65%, 80%, and 85% respectively (Cherry Creek School District [CCSD], 2006; CFSD, 2006a; Eanes Independent School District [EISD], 2006).

The CCSD and CFSD mission statements appear respectively as follows:

- Ensuring every student graduates with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in higher education, regardless of the path they plan to follow after high school.
- The mission of Catalina Foothills School District is to guarantee that each student achieves academic and personal excellence, becomes a lifelong learner and is a responsible citizen of the world, by engaging all students in meaningful programs which meet the highest educational and ethical standards within a caring, collaborative learning community.

CCSD's mission statement employs a modally strong transactive to obligate the school to *ensuring* the high expectation that students have "the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in higher education." CFSD's mission is to *guarantee* to students their "academic...excellence." The obligation connoted by the modally strong transactive *guarantee* leaves CFSD as the responsible party to each student's "academic...excellence."

The EISD mission statement is short but of high modality:

The Eanes community is vitally committed to educational excellence by engaging every student in rigorous academic experiences and enriching opportunities.

EISD utilizes the transactive verb phrase *vitally committed* in its mission statement.

Modally strong, this transactive verb phrase obligates EISD to strong educational duties.

Specifically, a noun (*excellence*) and three adjectives that carry equally strong positive connotations (*engaging, rigorous, enriching*) are to what EISD is *vitally committed*.

Interestingly, Catalina Foothills High School (CFHS), the only high school within CFSD, likewise strongly obligates itself to its students, of whom 83.5% are White (CFSD, 2006b), through the use of modally strong transactives.

The mission of Catalina Foothills High School, as a collaborative learning community committed to excellence, is to guarantee that each student demonstrates outstanding academic and personal achievement, graduates, and becomes a contributing member of the global community by engaging students in meaningful and

challenging learning experiences within an environment that fosters a passion for learning and personal behavior of the highest standards.

CFHS's pledge to its students that they will attain "outstanding academic...achievement" is noted through the utilization of *committed* and *guarantee*. Through the strength of these two modally strong transactives, CFHS makes clear its obligatory role in the students' academic outcomes.

#### Presuppositions: Ambiguity and Confidence

Analysis of mission statements through the lens of presuppositions offers the readers an opportunity to contemplate the tacit perceptions districts and schools have of their students. As stated in chapter 3, Huckin (1997) relates presuppositions as statements, or a lack thereof, that work to suggest a certain position is understood or taken for granted. Presupposition analysis calls for a consideration of these taken for granted positions. It is important to highlight that analysis of presuppositions proceeds with the understanding that the propositions that are being presupposed may lack detailed information (Ward & Birner, 2001). This is significant for as Fairclough (1995) states, when compared to "what is 'in' a text" (p. 5), "absences" in texts are "just as significant from the perspective of sociocultural analysis" (p. 5). It is with this understanding that my analysis of mission statements from districts and schools with large Mexican American populations proceeds.

### Absence and Ambiguity

Commonly found in mission statements from districts and schools with large Mexican American populations is the desire of these institutions that its students have *knowledge, skills and attitudes*. These outcomes are often listed without details that would conceptualize them. In addition, the *knowledge, skills and attitudes* called for are frequently listed as necessary for purposes that are either ambiguous or low in expectation. Such mission statements are found from school districts in Dallas, Texas and Denver, Colorado. Pronouncements from the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) (63% “Hispanic” student population (Dallas Independent School District [DISD], 2007)), and the Denver Public Schools (DPS) (57.3% “Hispanic”) (DPS, 2006) refer to *knowledge and skills* in very similar mission statements.

#### DISD

The district’s mission is to prepare all students to graduate with the knowledge and skills to become productive and responsible citizens.

#### DPS

The district’s mission is clear: to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society.

In addition to these districts forecasting and communicating modest expectations for their students, both call for their students to have “knowledge and skills” that are left without conceptualization. In neither mission statement is there any clarification as to precisely

what *knowledge* and *skills* their students need. However, what is known is that this *knowledge* and *skill* should be sufficient for students to meet the unremarkable goal of being *productive, responsible, contributing citizens*.

Phoenix Union High School District (PHXUHSD) in Phoenix, Arizona, where 77% of the students are labeled as “Hispanic” (PHXUHSD, 2007b), publishes a mission statement that similarly is absent of conceptualizations.

The mission of the Phoenix Union High School District is to provide a learning environment that enables every student to develop those understandings, attitudes and skills needed for success.

Here, the specific “understandings, attitudes and skills” that PHXUHSD desires for their students are left undefined. Furthermore, although PHXUHSD wants their students to succeed, there is no elucidation of just what the district perceives as “success.”

Individual schools with predominantly Mexican American student populations also employ such terms along with humble or ambiguous future forecasts in their mission statements. Jefferson High School in Dallas, Texas, with a 91% “Hispanic” population (DISD, 2006), refers to *knowledge* and *skills* in its mission statement.

The mission of Thomas Jefferson High School is to prepare all students to graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the challenges of the new millennium.

The *knowledge* and *skills* students are to graduate with are not conceptualized here but are needed for the ambiguously proposed “challenges of the new millennium.” Likewise,

Trevor Browne High School in Phoenix, Arizona, where 80.4% of the students are “Hispanic” (PHXUHSD, 2007c), has a mission statement that reads as follows:

Our graduates will demonstrate the skills and attitudes to be confident, competent and responsible citizens who value learning and each other.

In place of *knowledge* called for in the Jefferson High mission statement, Trevor Browne High is concerned with the *attitudes* of its students. Still, just what these *attitudes* should be is not defined, yet they are to be demonstrated. Whatever the character of these *attitudes*, they are meant to result in the humble outcome of students who become “confident, competent and responsible citizens.”

Sunnyside High School (SSHS) in Tucson, Arizona (91.2% “Hispanic” student population (SUSD, 2006)) utilizes all three previously mentioned student outcomes, *knowledge*, *skills*, and *attitudes*, in the mission statement it disseminates.

The mission of Sunnyside High School is to help all students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for productive living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This mission is the shared responsibility of students, parents, staff and community.

Again, there is ambiguity in precisely the “knowledge, skills and attitudes” a SSHS student is to “acquire.” SSHS does make clear that their students should use them in order to achieve a certain outcome. However, another ambiguity is noted in the outcome. SSHS’s desired outcome for students is that they make, humbly, a “productive living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” without “productive living” being conceptualized.

Another theme revealed in the presupposition analysis of mission statements from schools with predominantly Mexican American student populations is that students are lacking in some positive characteristics. Reexamination of the first sentence of the MacArthur High School (77% “Hispanic” (TEA, 2005-2006b)) mission statement, discussed above, reveals this theme.

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages them to develop their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in our multi-ethnic society.

MacArthur High *encourages* its students develop positive intellectual, physical, and social characteristics. By employing this particular transitive verb (*encourages*), MacArthur High is presupposing that students need to be *persuaded* to develop these positive characteristics that they are currently lacking. Similarly, Valley High School of Albuquerque, New Mexico (75.2% “Hispanic” student population (APS, 2007)), communicates this theme in the last sentence of its mission statement.

The staff, faculty and administration will enhance character by assisting students in developing greater appreciation and respect for individual differences and cultural diversity.

Valley High looks to *enhance* the *character* of its students suggesting that the character of the students is in need of enhancement. Additionally, Valley purports to “develop greater appreciation and respect” within its students. In this way, a presupposition is

made that the students are lacking, at least to some degree, the positive personal characteristics of *appreciation* and *respect*.

#### Confidence in White Students

Districts and schools transmit confidence in students when there are large numbers of White students in their charge. Although presuppositions are to be found in the mission statements disseminated by these districts and schools, they are frequently contextualized within the mission statement by optimistic present positions of the students or by optimism in the future prospects of the students. Mission statements produced by Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) in Denver, Colorado (65% White student population (CCSD, 2006)), and Kingwood High School (KHS) near Houston, Texas (84.1% White student population (Humble Independent School District [HBISD], 2007)) display such optimism. Likewise, Westlake High School (WHS) near Austin, Texas (85.5% White student population (TEA, 2006-2007)) in its lengthy mission statement, presupposes little by conceptualizing expected student outcomes.

#### CCSD

Ensuring every student graduates with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in higher education, regardless of the path they plan to follow after high school.

#### KHS

The mission of Kingwood High School is to create a collaborative learning environment that is supportive, challenging, and disciplined, resulting in life-long learners whose exemplary

performance is a credit to themselves and their community.

### WHS

The Westlake High School graduate will be able to apply real world skills to real world applications as demonstrated by producing quality products and by demonstrating the following proficiencies:

1. **Possess Necessary Academic Knowledge, Skills, and Proficiencies** A Westlake graduate is able to read critically, write correctly and clearly, and is able to perform mathematical operations.
2. **Communicate** A Westlake High School graduate is able to listen critically and speak correctly and clearly; is able to collaborate and contribute by working with others in a variety of settings and under a variety of conditions; is able to resolve conflicts in acceptable ways; is able to understand and appreciate diverse cultures as well as the individuals who comprise them; is able to exercise leadership qualities; is able to communicate using modems and networks.
3. **Think Critically** A Westlake graduate is able to identify, assess, infer, integrate, and utilize information and resources necessary to make

decisions and resolve conflicts.

4. **Solve Problems** A Westlake graduate is a self-directed and life-long learner who creates a vision and plans for the future; is able to use a wide range of strategies for managing complex issues; is able to select strategies appropriate to the resolution of complex issues and tasks; is able to determine and locate appropriate resources, especially technological resources, and apply them appropriately.
5. **Apply Technology** A Westlake graduate is able to apply technology to solve problems; is able to apply technology to the appropriate work settings and personal; is able to produce, edit, and store documents; is able to demonstrate competencies in the basic use of personal computers including word processing, data base, spreadsheets, presentation software, and graphics; is able to demonstrate competencies in the use of other technological tools and instruments including scientific technology, graphic calculators, and emerging technologies.
6. **Contribute to the Community** A Westlake graduate is a community contributor able to demonstrate honesty,

integrity, self-discipline, and responsibility; is able to demonstrate a sense of civic duty; is able to demonstrate an appreciation of aesthetics; is able to demonstrate a value for personal well being and a healthy lifestyle.

CCSD presupposes the conceptualization of the *knowledge* and *skills* their students will need. However, any negative impact this has is negated by the optimistic future proposition of using the called for *knowledge* and *skills* for success in higher education. KHS presupposes the optimistic current position of its students in its mission statement through utilization of the adjective *supportive* in describing the environment the school will create. By supporting the students, there is connotation that the students are already in preferential positions and, therefore, need not be lifted, and that the school simply needs to maintain (support) them in these positions. WHS conceptualizes each of its expected outcomes. Doing so helps WHS avert a presupposition in the first stanza when the school identifies the “knowledge, skills, and proficiencies” its students will need as being “academic.” There is no ambiguity as to what type of *knowledge*, or *skill* the students are to possess. The school is confident in the academic abilities of its students and openly conceptualizes as *academic* the *knowledge* and *skills* to which they refer.

#### Agent-Student Relations

A critical discourse analysis of district and school mission statements utilizing the tool of agent-student relations focuses on the agency students are deemed to have in these institutions. Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary’s (2006), secondary definition of *agency* is “the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power” (p. 24).

Huckin (1997) refers to the CDA tool of agent-student relations as descriptions in discourse that portray some people as “initiating actions...while others are depicted as being (often passive) recipients of those actions” (Huckin, 1997, p. 7). This type of analysis, then, is conducted to contemplate the active participatory role that districts and schools believe belongs to their students as revealed through their mission statements.

#### Participatory Exclusion in Mexican American Schools

Objectification of Mexican American students in districts and school where they represent a large proportion of the student population is noted in mission statements that are produced by these institutions. This occurs as a result of the exclusion of students in what amounts to a listing of agents who act as subjects in the execution of the schooling process. The student as object of the actions of others is clearly presented in the mission statement published by Houston High School (HHS) (91% Hispanic student population (HSTNISD, 2007b) in Houston, Texas.

The Sam Houston High School Community, consisting of the administration, faculty, business partners, and parents, works relentlessly to assure educational success for all its students. We achieve this by meeting and surpassing on our goals daily. Our mission is to graduate students who are effective communicators, proficient problem solvers, team players, critical and independent thinkers, and responsible, well informed citizens prepared to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At HHS, the list of agents referred to as the school “Community” does not include students. This omission expresses students as objects of the actions of the HHS “Community.” Likewise, Benito Juarez Community Academy High School (JCAHS) (88.2% “Mexican” student population (CPS, 2007)) in Chicago, Illinois presents a listing in its mission statement exclusive of students.

The mission of Benito Juarez Community Academy is to provide an academic program that involves the administration, staff, parents, LSC (Local School Council) members, and the community at large working as partners to ensure that all students, including those with special needs, are actively engaged in a continuous process of reading improvement in all subject areas.

“Community” is listed as one of the “partners” of the school. Where students *could* be part of the “Community,” certainty that “Community” *does not* include students is made by naming students as the recipients of the actions of those on the list.

The opaque (Kress, 1993) employment of *community* as the listed agents of a school is also seen in the mission statement from Farragut Career Academy High School (FCAHS) (76.4% “Mexican” student population (CPS, 2007)) in Chicago.

Our mission at Farragut Career Academy High School is to blend the rich resource of our staff and community to support a well-designed, structured academic and career skills curriculum which nurtures, educates, trains and inspires each student to be a responsible 21<sup>st</sup> century leader in their home, workplace, and community.

Although ambiguous in its inclusion of students upon initial reading, “community” in this mission statement is understood not to include students upon further consideration. As was the case with JCAHS above, FCAHS students are merely objects of the actions of “staff and community” and not active participants who have some “rich resource” to offer.

MacArthur High School (MHS) of Houston, Texas (77% “Hispanic” student population (TEA, 2005-2006b)) also establishes “community” as one that does not include students. This edict is made in the second sentence of the mission statement.

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages them to develop their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in our multi-ethnic society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, can realize self-worth, and learn that education can make a difference in their lives.

Although “working together *with* the staff and community” (my italics), students are listed apart from both. In this way, MHS creates the foundation of “community” as exclusive of students and a negation of student agency exists.

At Valley High School (VHS) (75.2% Hispanic student population (APS, 2007)) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, it is the “staff, faculty and administration” that will be most active in the implementation of the schooling process.

Valley High School promises: to promote excellence in education in the community by providing opportunities to learn and by encouraging success in academic and technical pursuits. The staff, faculty and administration will enhance character by assisting students in developing greater appreciation and respect for individual differences and cultural diversity.

Because the “staff, faculty and administration” will be “assisting” the students, the students do hold some agency. However, this agency is marginalized because the mission statement suggests that students do not have the power/ability to develop fully “appreciation and respect,” and are in need of assistance.

#### Pronominal Othering of Mexican American Students

Agency of students who attend districts and schools that have large or predominant Mexican American populations is diminished through *othering*. Coupland (1999) describes *othering* as “the process of representing an individual or a social group to *render them* distant, alien or deviant” (emphasis in original) (p. 5). The *othering* process is often designated by utilization of contrasting pronouns, “us” vs. “them,” “we” vs. “they,” “our” vs. “their” (Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). Therefore, by analyzing mission statements for *othering* through the presence or absence of contrasting pronouns, student agency can be detected.

In the following mission statements from Chicago’s Farragut Career Academy High School (FCAHS) (76.4% Mexican American student population (CPS, 2007)), Lincoln High School (LHS) in Los Angeles, California (82.9% “Hispanic” student

population (LAUSD, 2007)), and Holmes High School (HHS) (80% “Hispanic” student population (NISD, 20007) in San Antonio, Texas pronominal *othering* is accomplished through the use of “our” and “their.”

#### FCAHS

**Our** mission at Farragut Career Academy High School is to blend the rich resource of **our** staff and community to support a well-designed, structured academic and career skills curriculum which nurtures, educates, trains and inspires each student to be a responsible 21<sup>st</sup> century leader in **their** home, workplace, and community.

#### LHS

It is **our** vision to produce problem-solving, critical thinkers who are responsible citizens and assets to **their** community. Lincoln High graduates will be technologically literate and prepared to successfully function within family, job, and society in **our** modern world.

#### HHS

Recognizing that each student is a unique individual, Oliver Wendell Holmes High School commits itself to it's (sic) mission by...

establishing an atmosphere where students develop an appreciation of **our** national heritage as well as an

understanding of **their** responsibilities and rights as a citizen

In each of the above mission statements, the school refers to students in terms of a diminished agentive “their” and highlights itself as “our.” At MacArthur High School of Houston, Texas (77% “Hispanic” student population (TEA, 2005-2006b)), the student *others* are “their” and “them” while the school is the *self* by way of the pronoun “our.”

MacArthur High School seeks to provide all students with an educational program that encourages **them** to develop **their** full potential intellectually, physically, and socially; in order to be responsible, capable contributing citizens in **our** multi-ethnic society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students, working together with the staff and community, can realize self-worth, and learn that education can make a difference in **their** lives.

Meanwhile, in the Chicago Public Schools’ (CPS) (39% “Latino” student population (CPS, 2007) mission statement the highlighted *self* takes on two different pronominal forms, “our” and “we” with students being the *othered* “them.”

To ensure that all high school students have the opportunity to be engaged in a variety of learning experiences which will enable **them** to graduate well prepared for any post secondary option, i.e. college, employment, or military or technical training. For under-performing students, **our** goal is to decrease course failure rates, decrease dropout rates, and increase graduation rates via targeted support

strategies for both students and schools. **We** seek to ensure that students are motivated and prepared to pursue higher education or challenging employment via advanced academic programs, career preparation programs, and college test preparation.

The mission statement disseminated by Lanier High School in Austin, Texas (73% “Hispanic” student population (TEA, 2005-2006a)), employs a plethora of *othering* pronouns:

**WE BELIEVE** that educating **our** youth to **their** maximum potential is a shared responsibility among students, school staff, parents, and community.

**WE RECOGNIZE** the uniqueness and dignity of each individual and respect environment differences.

**WE SEEK** to promote an appreciation of the rich and diverse cultures and heritages represented in **our** student body and staff.

**IN OUR EFFORT** to educate the total person, **we** strive to provide not only a superior academic program, but also opportunities for creative expression, physical activity, and vocational development.

**WE ENCOURAGE** in Lanier students an attitude of caring and enthusiasm, a feeling of pride and acceptance, and a desire to use **their** many talents to contribute to **their** families, the community, the city, the state, and the nation.

**AS STUDENTS** complete **their** education at Lanier, **they** will take

with **them** the confidence that **they** are equipped to compete as productive citizens and lifelong learners in an ever-changing and complex society.

**OUR CHALLENGES** are many, but with teamwork **we** can make a positive impact toward improving the educational climate for all **our** students.

Although there is no pronominal *othering* of students from Houston High School (HSTNHS) (91% Hispanic student population (HSTNISD, 2007b) in Houston, Texas, the school does refer to itself (the *self*) by employing the pronouns “we” and “our.”

The Sam Houston High School Community, consisting of the administration, faculty, business partners, and parents, works relentlessly to assure educational success for all its students. **We** achieve this by meeting and surpassing on **our** goals daily. **Our** mission is to graduate students who are effective communicators, proficient problem solvers, team players, critical and independent thinkers, and responsible, well informed citizens prepared to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Despite the absence of pronominal *othering* of students at HSTNHS, *othering* indeed does occur. Because HSTNHS establishes the school “Community” as one that excludes students, later references to actions taken by the school reinforce the objectification of the students. The second and third sentences employ “We” and “Our” as the subjects of the transactive verbs “achieve” and “mission.” Exclusion of the students as part of the

school “Community” to which “We” and “Our” refer, by default, places the students as the *other* at HSTNHS.

#### Pronominal Absence and the Agency of White Students

*Othering* of students is not found in mission statements disseminated by districts and school where there are large White student populations. The absence of *othering* and the maintenance of agency are achieved in two ways. First, although these mission statements may employ pronouns, they are utilized for only one group. If the school employs a pronoun to refer to students such as “their,” it will not then employ another pronoun to refer to itself. Likewise, if the school uses a pronoun to refer to itself, it will not utilize a separate pronoun to refer to students. Utilization of only one group pronominal negates, at least to some degree, the loss of agency for students. District mission statements from Clovis Unified School District (CLUSD) (54% White student population (Clovis Unified School District [CLUSD], 2005-2006)) in Fresno, California, where the pronoun “their” is employed for students, while absent of a school pronominal, and Beverly Hills Unified School District (BHUSD) (74% White student population, (CDE, 2007), in Beverly Hills, California, Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD) (89% White student population, (CCUSD, 2007)) in Phoenix, Arizona, and Coppell Independent School District (CISD) (67% White student population (CISD, 2006)) near Dallas, Texas where the pronoun “our” represents the schools exemplify this:

#### CLUSD

To be a quality educational system providing the opportunity for all students to reach **their** potential in mind, body, and spirit.

BHUSD

The mission of the Beverly Hills Unified School District, the heart of **our** city's tradition of pride and excellence, is to ensure that **our** students are humane, thinking, productive citizens through an educational system characterized by state-of-the-art technology; a dynamic interdisciplinary curriculum; an exemplary instructional and support team; student-centered active learning; respect for diversity; strong parent and community involvement; and a nurturing environment where all share a common purpose and a joy for learning.

CCUSD

The Cave Creek Unified School District community will provide diverse learning experiences to challenge and inspire all students to become thinking, responsible, contributing leaders with the passion and energy to shape **our** changing world.

CISD

The mission of the Coppell Independent School District, as a global leader in **our** educational excellence, is to ensure **our** students achieve personal success, develop strong moral character, and become dynamic citizens through a customized, innovative learning experience led by a visionary staff and community.

Individual schools also avoid *othering* its students by using pronouns to refer to either the school or the students, but not both. As is the case with district mission statements, school mission statements are able to maintain student agency through pronominal absence. Pronouns are used to refer to students in mission statements from Kingwood High School (KHS) (84.1% White student population (HBISD, 2007)) and Cinco Ranch High School (CRHS) (72% White student population (CRHS, 2006) near Houston, Texas, and Coppell High School (CHS) (73% White student population (TEA, 2006-2007)) located in Dallas, Texas, but none use a school pronominal.

#### KHS

The mission of Kingwood High School is to create a collaborative learning environment that is supportive, challenging, and disciplined, resulting in life-long learners whose exemplary performance is a credit to **themselves** and **their** community.

#### CRHS

Cinco Ranch has the mission of providing a challenging education and promoting leadership, blended with personal skill development to a highly talented and diverse student population, thus helping to ensure success by enabling students to become responsible citizens, leaders, and individuals who have a passion to continue **their** learning throughout life.

#### CHS

The mission of Coppell High School, a unified educational

community embracing a common vision, is to develop self-reliant learners who maximize **their** potential in an ever-changing global society through the utilization of community resources and relevant, customized educational opportunities that foster problem solving, critical thinking and character development.

Pronouns used to refer to schools appear in mission statements as well. However, when there is a lack of pronominal use to refer to students, the school pronoun's capacity to diminish student agency is decreased. The following school mission statements exemplify this:

Cherry Creek High School (approximately 70% White student population (Cherry Creek High School [CCHS], 2006)) in Denver:

Our mission is to help every student develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to function as a lifelong learner in a changing society.

La Cueva High School (71% White student population (APS, 2007)) in Albuquerque:

La Cueva High School helps students become contributing, self-sufficient members of communities in our school, our nation, and our world and engages in continued improvement.

Sabino High School (80% White student population (TUSD, 2006)) in Tucson:

The mission of Sabino High School, as a Professional Learning Community, is to graduate all students. Our students will value cultural diversity, collaboration, and life-long learning. Sabino

students will exhibit quality character, academic excellence, mental and physical skills and talents necessary to become successful participants in a democratic and global society.

Dana Hills High School (74.4% White student population (CUSD, 2007b)) in Orange County, California:

We will ensure that all our children will learn more today than yesterday, and more tomorrow than today.

The second manner with which mission statements from districts and schools with large White student populations maintain student agency and avoid *othering* its students is through the complete absence of pronominal referents. Eldorado High School (EHS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico where 71.4% of the student are White (APS, 2007), and West Hills High School (WHHS) and Poway Unified School District (PUSD) both near San Diego, California with 72% and 60% White student populations, respectively (Grossmont Unified High School District [GUHSD], 2005-2006; Poway Unified School District [PUSD], 2007), avoid *othering* in their mission statements.

#### EHS

The mission of Eldorado High School is to provide an educational environment that inspires a lifetime love of learning!

#### WHHS

The mission of West Hills High School is to graduate life-long learners who think critically, solve problems resourcefully, communicate thoughtfully, and contribute positively to society.

### PUSD

To ensure that each student will master the knowledge, and develop the skills and attitudes essential for success in school and in a diverse society.

Indeed, mission statements may do more than maintain agency and avoid *othering* of students, they may actively build the agency of students. This is accomplished through the inclusion of students as part of the community about which the mission statements speak. Palos Verdes High School (PVHS) (81.2% White student population (Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District [PVPUSD], 2006-2007)) near Los Angeles actively builds agency through its mission statement in this manner.

The Palos Verdes High School community is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in student's intellectual, physical and social development within an evolving world. Diverse programs provide students with a learning environment emphasizing research, critical thinking, and collaboration to master the California content standards. Students gain an appreciation for learning as a life-long process and apply skills and knowledge necessary for success in an evolving world.

Similarly, Catalina Foothills School District (CFSD) and Catalina Foothills High School (CFHS) in Tucson, Arizona where 80% and 83.5%, respectively, of the students are White (CFSD, 2006a; CFSD, 2006b) actively engage in building student agency.

### CFSD

The mission of Catalina Foothills School District is to guarantee

that each student achieves academic and personal excellence, becomes a lifelong learner and is a responsible citizen of the world, by engaging all students in meaningful programs which meet the highest educational and ethical standards within a caring, collaborative learning community.

### CFHS

The mission of Catalina Foothills High School, as a collaborative learning community committed to excellence, is to guarantee that each student demonstrates outstanding academic and personal achievement, graduates, and becomes a contributing member of the global community by engaging students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences within an environment that fosters a passion for learning and personal behavior of the highest standards.

In either event, whether district and school mission statements employ a pronominal for just one entity, or pronouns are omitted entirely, agency of students who attend school districts that are largely White or schools that are predominantly White is reserved.

### Deletions and Omissions: A Question of Leadership

Investigation conducted through the critical discourse analytical tool of deletions and omission reveals expectations (Tannen, 1993) districts and schools have of their students. Huckin (1997) simplified the idea by stating that deletions and omissions are the exclusion of concepts in the production of texts. According to Tannen (1993),

“omissions can indicate expectations, especially when contrasted with what is included by other speakers” (p. 41). Tannen’s position is well understood when studying the written texts of mission statements from Mexican American and White school districts and schools. Initial review of mission statements from largely White districts and schools reveals the expectation that its students will become leaders in society. This expectation then becomes a baseline from which mission statements produced by largely Mexican American districts and schools can be compared.

#### Leadership Expectations of White Students

Explicit inclusion of the expectation of leadership is part of mission statements disseminated by districts and schools with large White student populations. Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD) near Phoenix, Arizona (89% White student population (CCUSD, 2007), Saguaro High School (SHS) also near Phoenix (84.6% White student population (MuniNetGuide, 2007), Westlake High School in Austin, Texas (85.5% White student population (TEA, 2006-2007)), and Cinco Ranch High School (72% White student population (CRHS, 2006)) all include discourses specific to the expectation of students becoming leaders in their mission statements.

#### CCUSD

The Cave Creek Unified School District community will provide diverse learning experiences to challenge and inspire all students to become thinking, responsible, contributing **leaders** with the passion and energy to shape our changing world.

### SHS

Saguaro High School is a school of choice. The acquisition of basic skills primarily through direct instruction is viewed as the foundation of the learning process. Priority is given to the fundamental tools of learning in the core academic areas of phonics and reading; grammar, spelling and writing; mathematics; history, geography and science.

Students will be given opportunities to apply those skills in a meaningful, reinforcing way. Similar to other schools in the Scottsdale Unified District the traditional school will provide an academic environment that will develop respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, **leadership** and citizenship in accordance with the district's mission statement.

### WHS

The Westlake High School graduate will be able to apply real world skills to real world applications as demonstrated by producing quality products and by demonstrating the following proficiencies:

1. **Possess Necessary Academic Knowledge, Skills, and Proficiencies** A Westlake graduate is able to read critically, write correctly and clearly, and is able to perform mathematical operations.

2. **Communicate** A Westlake High School graduate is able to listen critically and speak correctly and clearly; is able to collaborate and contribute by working with others in a variety of settings and under a variety of conditions; is able to resolve conflicts in acceptable ways; is able to understand and appreciate diverse cultures as well as the individuals who comprise them; is able to exercise **leadership** qualities; is able to communicate using modems and networks.

### CRHS

Cinco Ranch has the mission of providing a challenging education and promoting leadership, blended with personal skill development to a highly talented and diverse student population, thus helping to ensure success by enabling students to become responsible citizens, **leaders**, and individuals who have a passion to continue their learning throughout life.

In each of the above mission statements students are positioned to become leaders. The expectation that the students will be leaders or that they will hold leadership positions is plainly stated and becomes clearer when compared to mission statements that omit such leadership claims.

### Leadership Exclusion of Mexican American Students

Mission statements produced by districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations omit references to students becoming leaders in the future. This is clear when comparing these mission statements to those described above from districts and schools with large to predominant White student populations. The mission statements disseminated by Aldine Independent School District (AISD) (61% “Hispanic” student population (Aldine Independent School District [AISD], 2005)) of Houston, Texas, Dallas Independent School District (DISD) (63% “Hispanic” student population (DISD, 2007)), Lincoln High School (88.6% “Hispanic” student population (DPS, 2006b)) of Denver, Colorado, and Roosevelt High Schools in Los Angeles (RHS (L.A.) and Fresno (RHS(F.)), California where 99.1% (LAUSD, 2007b) and 73.1% (Fresno Unified School District [FUSD], 2007-2008) of the students, respectively, are labeled as “Hispanic,” exemplify this.

#### AISD

We exist to prepare each student academically and socially to be a:

- critical thinker
- problem solver; and
- responsible and productive citizen.

#### DISD

The district’s mission is to prepare all students to graduate with the knowledge and skills to become productive and responsible citizens.

LHS

All students graduating from Abraham Lincoln High School will be prepared both academically and socially to become positive and productive citizens. The focus of Abraham Lincoln High School will be to engage students and involve parents to create a community of learning and achievement.

RHS (L.A.)

The Roosevelt Learning Community Will:

- Provide** a stable, safe, nurturing environment with access to resources for lifelong learning.
- Encourage** all members to realize their full potential through risk-taking, critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication.
- Integrate** technology throughout the learning community.
- Promote** individual and community responsibility, respect for diversity, and global awareness.
- Establish** and maintain high expectations and standards for all community members.
- Value** parent involvement and encourage a dynamic, reciprocal relationship with the community at large.

RHS (F.)

Roosevelt High School will prepare students to be productive

citizens, well prepared for post secondary education and the world of work.

In all, 5 of 25 (20%) districts and schools researched in the present study that have large to predominant White student populations submit that students are expected to be leaders. By comparison, only of 1 of 31 (3%) districts and schools that have large Mexican American populations suggest student leadership possibilities.

#### Variability in Mission Statements

Some readers may take the mission statements presented here as a monolithic depiction that is without variability. This is not the case, for indeed, there is some variability in mission statements disseminated by districts and schools with large to predominantly Mexican American student bodies. For example, the following mission statement from Alhambra High School (80% “Hispanic”) (PHXUHSD, 2007d) in Phoenix, Arizona resembles mission statements from schools that have predominantly White students:

Our mission is to empower students to be life-long learners in an ever changing world.

The resemblances are noted in the agency of students as empowered as well as in the insinuation of optimistic potentiality located on a macro-level social order in the phrase, “an ever changing world.”

Still, the data presented here reveal that most Mexican American district and school mission statements (30 out of a total of 37 researched)<sup>2</sup>, in one way or another, tell a story about the ways these institutions pessimistically view their students and their future prospects. This story is told as a cumulative effect of the critical readings and analyses performed using the various tools of CDA. In Chapter 6, I will discuss these effects as *frames* and *signs* that are woven into the mission statements.

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<sup>2</sup> 3 out of 28 total mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White students revealed pessimistic perceptions when critically analyzed using the same CDA tools.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FRAMING AND SIGNS

Discourses presented in mission statements from school districts and individual schools work to transmit perceptions and expectations these institutions have about the students that attend them. Mission statements are published and disseminated by districts and schools as official positions. In this sense, these statements provide direct evidence about the ways the districts and schools think about their students and their future prospects. This is direct evidence about the ways the institutions think because these statements represent discursive artifacts of ideological positions, or ideological discursive formations (IDFs) (Fairclough, 1995). Conducting critical discourse analyses (CDA) of district and school mission statements where large numbers of students are Mexican American reveal ideologies (IDFs) of negative perceptions and low future expectations. Specifically, these notions come to light through analyses of individual mission statements from districts and schools using various tools of CDA (see Chapter 5).

In this chapter, I will discuss the process of the materialization of these notions by way of two themes that emerge in the analyses: framing and signs. It is imperative that this process be analyzed within the sociohistorical context of Mexican American schooling as discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, the ‘discourse strategies’ (Gumperz, 1983) implemented in the mission statements must be understood as a reflection of the sociocultural milieus from which they emerge (Mehan, 1997). By discourse strategies, I mean the language that is used in mission statements that works to (re)construct a contemporary representation of Mexican American students. When considering mission

statements from districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations in these sociohistorical and sociocultural contexts, there is clarity regarding the construction of IDFs of negative perception and low future expectation.

### Discursive Framing of Mexican American Students

Discourses of mission statements that have been critically analyzed can reveal current perceptions and future expectations when done so through the theoretical lens of framing. Conceptualization of framing comes from a number of disciplines but all are entrenched in the idea of expectations. Tannen (1993) expresses expectations as responses to lived experiences:

the realization that people approach the world not as naive, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli as they exist in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated veterans of perception who have stored their prior experiences as ‘an organized mass,’ and who see events as objects in the world in relation to each other and in relation to their prior experiences. This prior experience or organized knowledge then takes the form of expectations about the world...  
(pp. 20-21)

Frames (re)created by discourses, then, become the contextualization for (re)establishment of present perceptions and future expectations of the objects of the discourse. Although the conceptualization of framing is multidisciplinary, I will refer specifically to the conceptualization offered by linguistics. From this perspective,

framing is deconstructed through a frame-and-scene analysis of the use of language. Fillmore (1975, as cited in Tannen, 1993) conceives of a frame as a structure of linguistic alternatives, or the ways of speaking and writing, that are related to typical scenes. Scenes are the contexts within which discourses are conducted. Frame-scene associations become inextricable when specific *scenes* grow to be linked with particular frames. The frame-scene associations detailed below are depicted in Table 6.1.

CDA Tool	Frames of Mexican American Schooling	Frames of White Schooling
Problematization	“under-performing,” “failure,” “dropout,” “special needs,” “challenges”	“exemplary,” “a credit,” “highly talented,” “professional learning community,” “college oriented,” “educational excellence”
Insinuation	“individual,” “community,” “responsible,” “capable”	“global,” “excellence,” “critical thinkers”
Foregrounding/backgrounding	“family,” “home,” “job,” “workplace”	“our nation,” “our world,” “citizens of the world,” “changing world”
Connotations	“help,” “encourage,” “promote,” “seek”	“guarantee,” “ensure,” “assure”

Table 6.1 Frames of Mexican American and White Schooling by CDA Tool

#### Problematization and Framing

Mission statements analyzed through various CDA tools reveal discursive frames within the schooling scene. In other words, with respect to this study, there exists a particular way of writing (frame) about Mexican American students within the scene of districts and schools and their mission statements. Analysis conducted through the CDA tool of problematization, for example, uncovers quite different discursive frames for

students who attend districts and schools with large Mexican American student populations when compared to discursive frames structured in districts and schools with largely White student populations. Specifically, Mexican American students are “problematized” by the districts and schools they attend. Here, I intend for “problematized” to mean that Mexican American students are framed as being in some way difficult to school or in need of special programs. Some of the discourse frames that describe Mexican American students include “under-performing,” “failure,” “dropout,” “special needs,” and “challenges.” Utilization of these particular types of frames work to reveal IDFs of Mexican American students that negatively situates them within the district and school.

The negatively situated frames that problematize Mexican American students become even clearer when they are compared to the greatly divergent discursive frames that situate White students. Juxtaposed to the disparaging frames found in mission statements from districts and schools with large Mexican American populations, students who attend largely White districts and schools are framed in mission statements by discourses that positively situate them. Rather than the “challenges,” “failure” and “dropout” frames of Mexican American students, White students are praised as “exemplary,” “a credit” and “highly talented.” Instead of the negatively situated Mexican American “special needs” student who attends a school framed as “under-performing,” White students go to schools that are “professional learning communities,” “college-oriented” and boast of “educational excellence.” Employment of these discursive frames act as descriptors that narrate the excellence of the district and school and the positive

qualities of the students. They assist in the (re)production of IDFs that are conducive to the construction of heightened expectations, while the utilization of negative frames contributes to the (re)production of IDFs that do the opposite.

### Insinuations and Framing

Negative framing of Mexican American students as revealed through problematization is exacerbated in mission statements that employ discourses of potential. Mission statements suggest diminished potential and display little confidence in students when the mission statements are from districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations. These negative frames emerge through analyses of mission statements utilizing CDA that focuses on insinuations. In these analyses the “potential” of students is either not clearly conceptualized, or conceptualized in a way that is diminished. In both cases, the insinuation is that Mexican American students lack potential. For example, mission statements from large to predominantly Mexican American districts and schools refer to the “full” potential of its students while insinuating a conceptualization of “full” that is revealed by the social level contexts within which students are situated. Social levels, according to van Dijk (2001b), vary from localized levels referred to as micro or meso levels, to macro levels that are more global in scope. In mission statements from predominantly Mexican American schools, “individual” and “community” is used as the described social level. The micro level of “community” is clarified when compared to more global, macro level descriptions found in mission statements from predominantly White schools (discussed in more detail below). Therefore, a diminished perception of students is insinuated when

the “full potential” of students from predominantly Mexican American schools is joined with a contextualization of the students in “individual” and localized “community” contexts. Moreover, mission statements referring to the “maximum potential” of students may go undefined. In order to clarify what is meant by “maximum potential,” reference can be made to the historical outcomes of Mexican American students. Doing so assists in providing a sociohistorical conceptualization of “maximum potential.” In this case, given the history of unflattering schooling outcomes, some lowered perception of the potential of Mexican American students is insinuated. Still other mission statements from predominantly Mexican American schools conceptualize the potential of students in relatively simplistic capacities. Conceptualizing student potentialities as merely “responsible” or “capable,” as these missions statements do, make clear a perception and IDF of some diminished potential of Mexican American students.

Clarity of the IDFs about Mexican American student potentialities is found in the comparisons made with mission statements from districts and schools with largely to predominantly White student populations. Instead of localized social contexts, such as “community,” employed in mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly Mexican American students, identifiers such as “global” are referenced in mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White students. Furthermore, White student potentialities are located in the realm of “excellence” by these mission statements in contrast to the conceptualization of the “full potential” of Mexican American students as “capable.” Indeed, districts and schools with predominantly White students write of the potential of their students as much more than

“responsible” or “capable” as is the case with Mexican American students. These schools write of their students as “critical thinkers” and of students who will complete their high school years with readiness to matriculate into universities.

#### Foregrounding/Backgrounding and Framing

Analyses of mission statements utilizing the CDA tool of foregrounding/backgrounding further frames Mexican American and White students differently. The differentiated foregrounded/backgrounded frames established using this tool are separate planes described by van Dijk (2001b), briefly discussed above, as micro, meso and macro social levels with micro levels being more localized and macro levels being more global in scope. Discursive frames exposed through this kind of analysis situate students in either micro or meso (more localized) or macro (globalized) social contexts. As was revealed in analyses focusing on potential, districts and schools that have large to predominant numbers of Mexican American students employ discourses that frame students in micro level social contexts. The localized frame of Mexican American students appears as “community” in many mission statements. These communities become contextualized as communities of “family,” “home,” “job” or “workplace,” and the city where the district or school is located. Within the micro level social order, mission statements from districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations may at times utilize “society” as its frame. Determining which social level “society” falls into can start with the definition of society referred to in Chapter 5: “friendly or intimate intercourse” (Merriam-Webster’s, 2006, p. 1184). This definition adds clarity to the social level to which “society” belongs because of its

“intimate” nature. As defined here, mission statements that employ this utterance establish a localized frame.

Localized discursive frames of Mexican American students in district and school mission statements are made more transparent when compared to wider discursive frames established in mission statements where the student populations are largely to predominantly White. Unlike the utilization of the unconceptualized utterance “society” in mission statements from districts and schools that have large to predominantly Mexican American student populations, as just discussed, “society” is developed as a macro level social order in mission statements from large to predominantly White districts and schools. Often, these societies are defined in an international context by the adjective “global.” In addition, while districts and schools frame Mexican American students within micro social orders such as “family,” “home,” “job” or “workplace,” districts and schools that are largely White frame their students within more macro social orders that include phrases such as “our nation,” “our world,” “citizens of the world,” and “changing world.” These differentiated frames, then, (re)present the IDFs regarding the expected future milieus of students. Districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American populations employ backgrounded/foregrounded frames in their mission statements that reveal IDFs of a lower expectation of the future prospects of its students when compared to mission statements from districts and schools that have large to predominant White students populations.

### Presuppositions and Framing

Categorically diverse IDFs by way of different frames for Mexican American and White students continue to appear in the analysis of mission statements using the CDA tool of presupposition. In these analyses, as was the case in the problematization of “potential” described above, there is ambiguity regarding the expected outcomes of students from districts and schools that are largely Mexican American. Here, for example, Mexican American students are expected to reach the imprecise goals of being productive, responsible, or contributing citizens. Furthermore, these districts and schools frame expected student outcomes in terms of the undefined knowledge, skills and attitudes students will possess. The only conceptualization of this group of frames is that they lead to the imprecise goals listed above. All of these outcomes are presuppositions because their conceptualizations are taken as understood (Huckin, 1997) in mission statements from districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations. Their patterned ambiguity and absence of conceptualization are especially significant (Fairclough, 1995) when compared to frames constructed in mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White student populations.

Mission statements from districts and schools with large to predominantly White student populations also utilize the expected student outcome frames of knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, unlike mission statements from districts and schools with many Mexican American students, these mission statements conceptualize knowledge, skills and attitudes as belonging to an academic domain. There is no ambiguity with respect to

the confidence these districts and schools have that their students are destined to continuing their education. For these students, a discursive frame is established that constructs an expected student outcome within a scene not visited by mission statements from districts and schools with mostly Mexican American students: higher education.

### Connotations and Framing

Although districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American student populations reveal their low expectancy IDF's through the discursive frames established in mission statements, these same mission statements often include connotations that work to remove institutional accountability for outcomes that may match the low expectations. Accountability of institutions is revealed through analyses that focus on the connotations of discourse (Huckin, 1997). Abdication of institutional responsibility to educational outcomes of Mexican American students is achieved by way of modally weak transactive verbs or a negating noun form. Specifically, mission statements of schools that have predominantly Mexican American student bodies, when referring to their role in the learning of students, utilize modally weak transactive verbs such as "help," "encourage," "promote," and "seek," rather than strong transactives like "guarantee," "ensure" and "assure" that carry a greater obligatory posture and are found in mission statements of schools that have predominantly White student bodies. Accountability for the academic outcomes of Mexican Americans is further renounced when mission statements from their districts and schools utilize the modally weak noun "opportunity." Although offering an "opportunity" may appear to be altruistic, such an offering is problematic because it allows for repudiation of negative outcomes. Because

all nouns carry little, if any, obligatory weight, districts and schools that use non-modal nouns in their mission statements, as do many that have student populations that are largely to predominantly Mexican American, in effect, negate any commitments they may have made to the academic outcomes of students.

### Signs and IDFs for Mexican American Students

Construction of the negative perceptions and low future expectations delivered by districts and schools with large to predominantly Mexican American students is furthered when one considers their mission statements as signs that create social semiotics (meanings). Signs are the media through which social meanings are produced (Kress, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). Wertsch (1990) describes the Vygotskian view of signs as tools that essentially construct and define the activities within “the sociocultural milieu in which they exist” (p. 114). Kress (1993) refers to signs as the reflection of two separate, yet related, entities: the signified, or the object(s) represented by the signs, and the signifier, the expressed characteristics of the signified. When signs are produced they are not constructed casually. Their production is stimulated by the interests of the producer and by the signified’s signifiers (the object’s characteristics). Kress (1993) writes that it is precisely these interests “which determines the characteristics that are to be selected and to be represented” (p. 173). Furthermore, “‘interest’ leads the producer of the sign to focus on a particular characteristic of an object” (p. 174). These focused upon characteristics (signifiers) contribute ultimately to the IDFs districts and schools have about their students.

Students are the signified (objects) of the mission statements disseminated by districts and schools. To be more precise, mission statements put forth the district's/school's expectations of and forecasts for the signified (students). Meanwhile, the signifiers in mission statements are the expressions that reveal these expectations and forecasts. These expressions commonly appear as both implicit and explicit written textual discourses. However, just as significant to the analyses of signs in mission statements are the unwritten or ambiguous signifiers that are equally as effective in characterizing the students (Fairclough, 1995). Although the interests of the producers in communicating signifiers are not always revealed in district/school mission statements, consistently applied signifiers in mission statements do disclose particular foci with regard to students. As revealed in this study, there is a differing use of signifiers in mission statements for districts/schools with large Mexican American student populations versus districts/schools with large White student populations. To be clear, these signifiers construct signs (Kress, 1993) that are utilized as media in the (re)production of a differential schooling semiosis (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1990) or understanding, what Fairclough (1995) refers to as an ideological position, regarding these students. These ideological positions grow to be the IDFs that are developed and, in turn, become the foundation of the (re)use (or exclusion) of signifiers. This line of construction from signifiers to IDFs is displayed in Figure 6.1.

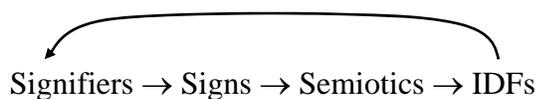


Figure 6.1 IDF Line of Construction

The signs that (re)create schooling semiotics and IDFs are noted when implementing various CDA tools to analyze the signifiers used in the signs. Among the CDA tools that can be used to read these signs are problematization, presupposition, and agent-student relations.

### Problematization and Signs

Deconstruction of district and school mission statements contributes to understanding IDFs regarding students. Readings through the lens of problematization of the signs developed by mission statements from districts and schools with large numbers of Mexican American students, as opposed to districts and schools with large numbers of White students, reveal the different perceptions the institutions have regarding the students (Luke, 1995). These perceptions are communicated by the way the statements focus on signifiers that portray the students as being in some way taxing (in the case of Mexican American students) or laudable (in the case of White students). For example, Mexican American students are adversely signified in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) mission statement by the sentence, “For under-performing students, our goal is to decrease course failure rates, decrease dropout rates, and increase graduation rates via targeted support strategies for both students and schools.” The signifiers used by CPS are troubling when juxtaposed to those used by Cinco Ranch High School in Houston, Texas, where 72% of the students are White: “a highly talented and diverse student population...”

Specifically, in districts and schools with predominantly Mexican American students, the IDF line of construction presented above proceeds as follows: signifiers

focus on students as problematic (signifiers of students include “underperforming,” “failure,” “dropout,” “special needs,” and “challenges”). Such signifiers construct signs that negatively portray students who are predominantly Mexican American. Because these signs are produced and disseminated by the districts and schools themselves, they become an authoritative medium by which a negative understanding or ideology (semiotic) of the Mexican American student is designed. The mission statements, within which the signs appear, are the discursive artifacts (Fairclough, 1995) that (re)create and (re)present these pessimistic ideologies (IDFs) for Mexican American students.

Although the template for the line of IDF construction is the same for all districts and schools, the characteristics of each step in the line differ between districts and schools where students are predominantly Mexican American and districts and schools that have predominantly White students. Because each step of IDF construction builds on the previous step, the differences to be found in the last three steps of the line result from differing signifiers that are initially utilized. Specifically, districts and schools with predominantly White student populations utilize signifiers that are in contrast to those used in districts and schools with predominantly Mexican American students. In contrast to the signifiers noted above to be found in districts and schools with students who are predominantly Mexican American, signifiers found in districts and schools with predominantly White student populations include “credit to...their community,” “exemplary,” “highly talented,” and “college-oriented.” Through such signifiers signs are fashioned that optimistically characterize students at these schools. These signs

generate a positive semiotic of White students that ultimately results in IDFs that reflect this optimism.

### Presuppositions and Signs

Reading of signs reproduced in mission statements is further facilitated by analysis through the CDA tool of presupposition. To be clear, it is my position that signs are not produced, but are merely reproduced by presuppositions made in mission statements. Reproduction is made because the presuppositions are based on understandings (semiotics) that are already in place and taken for granted (Huckin, 1997). Because the signifiers used in the (re)production of signs is a matter of choice (Fairclough, 1995), signs can be (re)produced in mission statements by way of the utilization as well as the absence of signifiers. In other words, the selection of certain signifiers instead of others works to create differentiated signs. Still, according to Kress (1993), “all signs are always opaque to some degree...” (p.180), and the importance of the use or absence of modifiers is related to their effect on the degree of opacity of the sign. Therefore, to make signs more transparent, there must be analysis of the signifiers used and of the signifier options not used (Kress, 1993). Moreover, and importantly in the case of district and school mission statements as described below, the use or absence of modifiers that would work to conceptualize signifiers that are utilized also contribute to the (re)production of signs. In the end, critical readings of texts such as mission statements using the CDA tool of presupposition assist in understanding the choice of signifiers used and excluded and the subsequent signs that are reproduced, their mediation of schooling semiotics, and eventual IDFs.

The importance of presuppositions to the creation of signs in mission statements from districts and schools with large Mexican American student populations is not to be found in the use of signifiers. Indeed, identical signifiers are noted in district and school mission statements with predominantly White student populations. Instead, it is the presuppositions made regarding the conceptualization of the signifiers and the subsequent use or absence of modifiers for the signifiers that contribute to the reproduction of the signs forwarded by mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White or Mexican American students. Interestingly, mission statements from districts and schools, whether they have predominantly Mexican American or White student populations, often utilize the signifiers “knowledge,” “skills,” and “attitudes” to describe desired student outcomes. It is here, however, where differentiated conceptualizations of these signifiers recreate diverse signs. Mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly White student populations conceptualize the signifiers “knowledge,” “skills,” and “attitudes” with the modifiers “academic” and “higher education,” while mission statements from districts and schools with predominantly Mexican American students modify these same signifiers as needed to be “productive,” “responsible,” and “competent” with a noted absence of any modifiers representing academics or higher education. Utilization of these differentiated modifiers sets in motion the line of IDF construction in the following sequence (Figures 6.2 & 6.3): 1) increased transparency of signifiers for districts and schools with predominantly White students (these students will have academic knowledge, skills, and attitudes)/opaqueness of signifiers for districts and schools with predominantly Mexican American students (these students will be

productive, responsible, and competent in an undefined way), 2) reproduction of the sign (for White students: preparation for/expectation of enrollment in higher education; for Mexican American students: not prepared for/expected to enroll in higher education), 3) these differentially reproduced signs work to reinforce similarly differentiated semiotics regarding the schooling expectations for each group, and 4) IDFs that reflect these semiotics are recycled and utilized to reproduce specifically chosen signifiers for each group and the line of IDF construction is renewed.

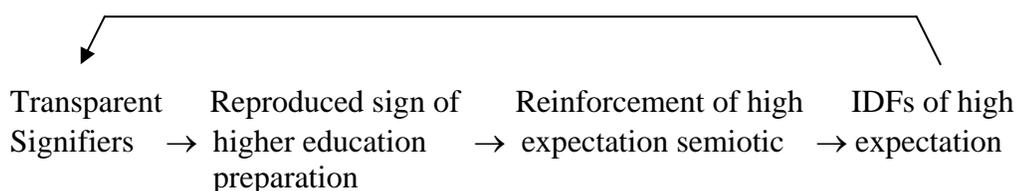


Figure 6.2 IDF Line of Construction for White Students by Presupposition

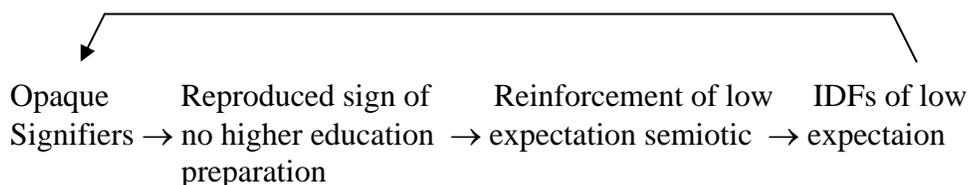


Figure 6.3 IDF Line of Construction for Mexican American Students by Presupposition

### Situated Meanings and Signs

Related to the production of signs by way of presupposition analysis is the analysis of the situated meanings of words (Gee, 2002). This type of analysis considers the sociocultural and sociohistorical context of words and discourses to answer the following questions: 1) why do we believe that words have only general meanings? and, oppositionally, 2) how can there be different meanings for the same words? To answer question 1, several researchers have proposed that “Discourse models” be analyzed.

Discourse models are narratives that are readily accessible to each of us that explain, “how certain things are connected or pattern together” (p. 94) in usually unconscious ways (D’Andrade, 1984; D’Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1999; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Strauss & Quinn, 1997; as cited in Gee, 2002). They “are simplified pictures of the world (what is taken as ‘typical’)” (p. 94) and offer presupposed meanings to words.

Barsalou (1987, 1992) and Clark (1989, 1993, 1997) (as cited in Gee, 2002) begin to address question 2 when they suggest that meanings to which words are connected “are *assembled*, out of diverse features...in terms of the contexts and Discourses within which they are being used” (p. 93; italics in original). In this way, words can have different or “situated” meanings when located within different sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts. In other words, the way word meanings are assembled or mediated is through “embedded or unconscious cultural structures” (Marcus & Fischer, 1999) that are used to construct presuppositions that are based on the contextualization of words.

When like words are used in mission statements from districts and schools with largely White or Mexican American student populations without modifiers in either case, “situated meanings” of these words are developed (Gee, 2002). This occurs precisely because of the different sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts within which they must be read. Understood within these contexts, the situated meanings of the often used words “skill,” “knowledge,” and “attitude” are distinct for the two student groups addressed in this study. For example, within a sociohistorical context of elevated dropout rates and low academic achievement for Mexican American students (Valencia, 2002c), there is a negative divergence in the “situated meanings” of the words “knowledge,” “skill,” and

“attitude” when compared to the “situated meanings” of these words for White students. Thus, a critical reading of these words uncovers the “situated meaning” of them and makes them more transparent as signifiers. For Mexican American students, these signifiers assemble “situated meanings” that are connected to academic underachievement. Then, in keeping with the line of IDF construction, they assist in the reproduction of signs, semiotics and IDFs regarding the schooling of Mexican Americans.

#### Agent-Student Relations and Signs

Production of signs that contribute to social semiotics can also be facilitated through the utilization of signifiers that address agency. Agency can be established in texts in two ways: 1) through the arrangement of subjects and objects (signified) of discourse, and 2) through the utilization of pronominal othering. Arrangement of discourse refers to the order of discourse in texts (Foucault, 1981) and the way discourses are arranged, according to Fairclough (1995), “are characteristically ordered in dominance” (p. 12), power, or agency. The agency of subjects of discourse is, of course, much greater than the agency of the signified of discourse with particular note that there is a marginalizing and objectifying (minimized agency) effect upon groups when they are excluded from the discourse (Gee, 1999). In addition, signifiers that appear as pronominal otherings (Jaworski & Coupland, 2005) also affect the agency of the signified. These exclusions and pronominal othering signifiers mediate the subsequent production of signs (Kress, 1993) and ultimately contribute to a social semiosis (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1990) and ideological positionings. Analysis of the effects on

agency of subject exclusion and pronominal othering is revealed through the employment of the CDA tool of Agent-Student Relations (Huckin, 1997). Utilization of this analytical tool to the texts of district and school mission statements reveals the agency of students as addressed by signifiers and the initiation of the line of IDF construction.

Othering of students in districts and schools where Mexican Americans represent a large to predominant student population is achieved by way of their exclusion as subjects in mission statements. Because they are often not listed as having a space within the institution, the mission statements marginalize and objectify them. Furthermore, the exclusion of students as subjects of the schooling process has a profound signifying effect. It (re)creates signifiers that reduce the agency of Mexican American students and results in the (re)construction of signs that portray Mexican American students as only passive recipients of the schooling process, or other members of the district or school relatively uninvolved in and uncaring about their own education (Valencia & Black, 2002).

Clarity of the othering effect of subject exclusion comes from a comparative analysis of mission statements. Othering is avoided in mission statements from White districts and schools because students are openly included as subjects of the schooling process. Their inclusion as subjects facilitates the (re)creation of a signifier regarding the existence of agency of students in their own schooling. This agentic signifier then mediates the (re)construction of signs that portray White students as those with a truly vested interest in their schooling.

In addition to exclusions, pronominal othering signifiers used in mission statements from districts and schools with large to predominantly Mexican American student populations have the effect of diminishing agency of students (Coupland, 1999; Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). Consistent use of contrasting pronouns such as “they,” “their,” and “them” set apart Mexican American students from other entities described as “we,” “our,” and “us” in mission statements. This regular pronominal othering of Mexican American students in mission statements results in 1) Mexican American students losing agency because of the district’s and school’s denial of their space as the greatest stakeholder in the institution, and 2) greater signifier transparency of the institutions’ perception of Mexican American students vis-à-vis schooling. From here, signifier transparency works to (re)construct signs, semiotics, and IDFs regarding the schooling of Mexican Americans.

By contrast, although mission statements from districts and schools that are largely White also employ pronouns, othering is avoided by the absence of contrasting pronouns elsewhere in the mission statement. If students are referenced by pronominals “they,” “their,” or “them,” there is no contrasting pronominal referencing other entities in the mission statement. The mission statement from Kingwood High School in Houston exemplifies this:

The mission of Kingwood High School is to create a collaborative learning environment that is supportive, challenging, and disciplined, resulting in life-long learners whose exemplary performance is a credit to themselves and their community.

Yet more powerful in the mission statement construction and/or maintenance of agency for White students is the use of the pronominal “our” without use of any contrasting pronominal. In this case, agency is constructed and/or maintained for the student because of the space they are recognized as having within the institution. For example, the mission statement from La Cueva High School in Albuquerque reads:

La Cueva High School helps students become contributing, self-sufficient members of communities in our school, our nation, and our world and engages in continued improvement.

The recognition of agency assists in the (re)production of the districts’ and schools’ positive signifiers for White students. As usual, these positive signifiers mediate positive sign construction that, in turn, mediates positive semiosis (Kress, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1990), and positive IDFs (Fairclough, 1995) regarding the schooling of White students.

### Summary

Critical readings of mission statements produced by districts and schools with large to predominantly Mexican American student populations bring transparency to their (re)creation of negative IDFs. From such critical readings, employing the tools of critical discourse analysis, emerge frames and signs within which perceptions and expectations of the schooling of Mexican Americans can be based. Specifically, Mexican American students are often (re)presented through their district and school mission statements as being either problematic or uninvolved in their schooling. Furthermore, expectations districts and schools have for Mexican American students as revealed by their mission

statements are at best modest and locally constrained. These perceptions and expectations become even more transparent when they are compared to those of White students as revealed through critical readings of mission statements from districts and schools that have large to predominantly White student populations.

In the next chapter I will present how IDFs noted in district and school mission statements with large to predominant Mexican American student populations are reflections of larger social discourses regarding Mexican Americans. In addition, I will offer recommendations that will help districts and schools to understand how they can recognize and change the structure of their discourses as found in mission statements.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
TRANSFORMING DISCOURSES IN THE SCHOOLING OF  
MEXICAN AMERICANS

Reversing the persistent, pervasive, and disproportionate negative outcomes of Mexican American students in U.S. schools (Valencia, 2002) is beyond the scope of any one programmatic, especially instructional, implementation (Reyes, 2007; Bartolomé, 1994). Of this we can be sure because despite a plethora of interventions that have been put into practice, dismal outcomes and widening achievement gaps between Mexican American K-12 students and their White peers have persisted (Portes, 2007). As Bartolomé (1994) writes

Although it is important to identify useful and promising instructional programs and strategies, it is erroneous to assume that blind replication of instructional programs or teacher mastery of particular teaching methods, in and of themselves, will guarantee successful student learning, especially when we are discussing populations that historically have been mistreated and miseducated by the schools. (p. 174)

The ‘methods fetish’ persists as part of a symbolic approach that promises to improve “K-12 student achievement by improving classroom instruction” (WestEd, 2008) with little substantive effect. Missing by and large from such process-product programs vis-à-vis Mexican American students are the ways Mexican Americans have been rendered extraneous by the U.S. schooling system (Vásquez, 2007) as a consequence of the

symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) that exists in schools where they predominate.

One manifestation of this symbolic violence is to be found in the mission statements produced by districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American populations. The symbolic violence noted in mission statements, however, should not be understood as always being the product of conscious manipulations. Undoubtedly, hegemonic processes that yield specific practices can be indicted. Although districts and schools have available to them a variety of pedagogic actions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) from which they can select, the choices that are made may be mediated by some sense of 'reality' concerning the schooling of Mexican Americans. This 'reality' is the product of "a whole body of practices and expectations...a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practice appear as reciprocally confirming" (Williams, 1976, p. 205). The 'reality'-based choices schools make, then, are reflective of and responsible for the emphasizing of the (re)creation of schooling semiotics and practices while simultaneously rejecting and ignoring others (Williams, 1976). Ultimately, as Apple (2004) writes, schools "act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony" (p. 5).

#### Anti-Immigrant and Mexican American Schooling Discourses

Evidence to support this indictment includes the use of language that prevails in districts and schools where there are large numbers of Mexican American students. This language results, in part, from the larger sociohistorical and sociocultural perceptions and experiences of Mexican Americans and is (re)produced in the discursive practices that are

employed in their schooling. The larger social discourses, then, mediate the conveyance of schooling expectations and attitudes that are based on some sense of absoluteness (Williams, 1976). A contemporary sociocultural example of the attitudes regarding Mexican Americans is to be found in the anti-immigrant discourses that saturate our society. Recent dehumanizing U.S. public discourses portraying Mexican immigrants metaphorically as animals in the media (Santa Ana, 1999) are not only racist but contribute to a hegemonic 'reality' concerning Mexican Americans in the United States. Santa Ana (1999) articulates the impact of the media on the perceptions of immigrants by stating that although members of the media "are not overtly racist, the continued use of the metaphor contributes to demeaning and dehumanizing the immigrant worker" (p. 217). Furthermore, Santa Ana (1999) notes the relationship of newspapers to hegemonic reproduction when he writes, "Rather than explicitly legitimating racist practices and power relationships, in these political contexts the newspaper merely reflects the *embodied basic values* of the dominant political order that subjugates immigrants" (my italics, p. 217).

This issue is of concern to all Mexican Americans (immigrants and native U.S. born) because although these discourses are centered on an immigrant population, they are transferred on to the native born Mexican American population (Mehan, 1997; Pachon & Moore, 1981) in both explicit and more opaque discourses and behaviors. Such transference is noted in U.S. schools where immigrant, non-English-speaking students and their Mexican American monolingual, non-standard English speaking cousins are subject to like discourses and held to equally low academic expectations (Santa Ana,

2004). The former are held to such expectations, according to Cummins (2001), precisely because of their English language learning (ELL) status. However, for bilingual or monolingual English speaking Mexican Americans explaining these expectations is a much more complex endeavor. Not only might lowered expectations occur under the auspices of doing what is best for the student (Garcia, 2001; Winfield, 1986), but there may also, “for the sake of positive self-presentation” (van Dijk, 1987, p. 92), be denials that lowered expectations actually exist (Winfield, 1986)<sup>3</sup>. Support for those taking these altruistic and renounced positions may come in the form of the routine utilization of certain utterances that without critical analysis appear to challenge research findings suggesting low expectations for Mexican American students (Carter, 1970; Murguia & Telles, 1996; Robisheaux, 1993; Romo & Falbo, 1996; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995). An example of this is the routine use of the utterance *success* in mission statements from many districts and schools regardless of demographic makeup. Without critical analysis or conceptualization, *success* is presented as a taken-for-granted understanding that exemplifies the existence of high expectations for all students. However, what, precisely, is meant by *success* can be at variance when uttered by different individuals about different populations. Indeed, *success* as uttered by one can be disappointment or even failure to another. As discussed in this study, the sociohistorical and sociocultural milieu of Mexican American as compared to White

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<sup>3</sup> Goldenberg (1992) goes a step further and argues that low expectations may actually have a paradoxical effect and ultimately lead to teacher actions that benefit the students by improving academic achievement.

students can help make transparent differing conceptualizations of *success* and continuing low expectations for the former.

### Contribution of This Study

In this study I have undertaken the task of performing a comparative critical analysis of the discourses that are found in mission statements from districts and schools with large to predominant Mexican American and White student populations. I analyzed mission statements from a total of 35 high schools and 20 school districts. Of the 35 high school mission statements analyzed, 19 were from schools with predominantly Mexican American student populations while 16 were predominantly White schools. Eleven of the school district mission statements I analyzed were from predominantly Mexican Americans schools with another 9 coming from schools with predominantly White students. All of the districts and schools whose mission statements I analyzed are located in the Southwestern United States with the exception of 1 district and 2 schools located in Chicago, Illinois. I selected these sites because of their large Mexican American populations. Specifically, mission statements come from districts and schools from the following metropolitan areas in the southwest: Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and El Paso, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; and Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Diego, California.

Filling a gap in the extensive literature regarding the low educational achievement of Mexican Americans in U.S. schools as detailed in Chapter 3, I identify precisely how districts and schools (re)create negative discourses regarding the students for whom these institutions are created to serve. Such practices are certainly troubling in and of

themselves. However, the problem initiated at this discursive level is that they ultimately mediate potentially 'lethal' (Reed, 1996) schooling beliefs regarding the students.

This work also contributes to the literature regarding CDA because it applies CDA to heretofore unexamined discourses. It shows how the tools of CDA can be used to analyze the written discourses in mission statements that are produced and disseminated by public schooling institutions. Additionally, this study demonstrates the importance of performing analyses utilizing CDA to uncover ideologies that mediate the public schooling problems encountered specifically by Mexican American students.

The value of this work is that it uncovers 'unintentionally disinviting' (Purkey, 2001) school district and high school discursive practices or ways of communicating about Mexican American students. These discourses are unintentionally disinviting because districts and schools may not be aware of the insidiousness of such practices. Still, these practices constitute messages or signs (Kress, 1993) that promote the production of beliefs or semiotics regarding Mexican American students. These beliefs ultimately generate ideologies, what I have referred to in this work as ideological discursive formations (IDFs), that in turn mediate the utilization of signifiers or characteristics that initiates anew the IDF line of construction (Fairclough, 1995; Kress, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1990) outlined in Chapter 6. To disrupt this, what for Mexican American students becomes a *negative*, line of IDF construction, "it is important to *systematically* eliminate intentional and unintentional messages that support prejudices and notions of" (Reed, 1996, p. 81; my italics) Mexican American academic inferiority. It is precisely these notions that contribute profoundly to the schooling crisis within which these

students find themselves, for besides the cyclical mediation of signifiers, IDFs mediate behaviors found at the level of greatest schooling impact: teacher's actions vis-à-vis students in the classroom (Winfield, 1986).

Systematic elimination of unintentional prejudicial messages is exemplified in the limited variability found in mission statements produced by schooling institutions with large to predominant Mexican American student populations. As noted in chapter 5, a small number of variations do exist that illustrate how mission statements can be written without unintentionally disinviting discourses. These mission statements may act as guides in demonstrating precisely how a disruption of the IDF line of construction can occur. Unfortunately, such guides are few perhaps as a result of what critical race theorists describe as common sense racism. From this perspective, contemporary racism manifests itself through notions of common sense that are seldom reviewed. Haney López (2003) describes common sense racism as:

a complex set of background ideas that people draw upon but rarely question in their daily affairs. These background ideas do much of our thinking for us, for they provide ways to comprehend and act in the world that we constantly draw upon, thus sparing ourselves the need to repeatedly reconsider the already familiar. (p. 6)

In addition, Haney López states, "We follow the scripts laid out for us by common sense not only in our thinking but in our decision-making and in our actions" (p. 7). Actions such as discourses, then, ascribe to such "taken-for-granted notions" and are then "reproduced in everyday language" (van Dijk, 1987, p. 232). In the case of most mission

statements from districts and schools with large to predominantly Mexican American students, common sense or taken-for-granted discourses result in “scripts,” or what I describe in this work as frames, that are informed by the sociohistorical and sociocultural experiences of Mexican American students in U.S. schools that are at best infrequently critiqued.

### Caveat

As a critical discourse analysis of texts produced by districts and schools, this study deliberates on making transparent the existence of low expectations and negative attitudes regarding Mexican American students in publicly disseminated mission statements. According to many researchers, discourses of low expectation and negative attitude will then mediate and be mediated by the IDFs (Fairclough, 1995), communicative events (Bakhtin, 1981; Foucault, 1972; Kress, 1993; Mehan, 1997; Voloshinov, 1986; Wertsch, 1990), and pedagogic actions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) utilized by teachers when working with students. Apple (2004) calls for a “relational analysis” of “the larger arrangement of institutions” (p. 9) and their effects on schooling. Indeed, inequity does exist ubiquitously and is dialectically mediated in small and large social arrays (Winant, 2000). However, the current study does not include in its scope an evaluation of such mediations. As discussed above, the line of IDF construction as a mediator of pedagogic actions must be *systematically* eliminated (Reed, 1996). This *systematic* elimination requires that each step, as much as possible, in IDF construction be investigated individually. Within this *systematic* approach, the questions addressed in this research, as posed in Chapter 1, were narrowly focused on 1) the attitudes about and

expectations for Mexican American students as communicated in district and school mission statements with large to predominantly Mexican American student populations, and 2) a comparison of these attitudes and expectations to those for students from districts and schools with large to predominantly White student populations.

### Positionality of This Research

This research represents part of a *systematic* investigation of the workings of schools and the ways with which they (re)create antagonistic relationships with Mexican American students. The workings of schools are not usually explicitly racist. Compared to the open hostilities Mexican American youth encountered in schools historically and the possibility of overtly discriminatory practices taking place in contemporary schools from time to time, today's Mexican American student is schooled by a system that operates with what have become accepted ideological norms. Such conventions become embedded in the larger social discourses regarding Mexican Americans in the United States (Santa Ana, 1999).

Utilization of the findings of this work can ground further investigations of the continued mediation of discourses along the IDF line of construction. Perhaps most important will be research that builds *around* the findings of this study. Specifically, discourses found in larger, macro-level spaces and those found at the most localized, smaller, micro-level, or classroom, must be interrogated and positioned before and after the discourses revealed in this research. In so doing, direct mediational effects can be understood not in isolation, but as part of the continuum that is the line of IDF construction.

Micro-level, classroom discourses can be investigated by utilizing ethnographic methods. Ethnographic studies in classrooms have been done and assist in directing research that I call for. Spindler and Spindler (1987), for example, describe in detail ethnographic methods that can be used to conduct classroom-based research.

Ethnographies concentrating specifically on discourses in the classroom include Mehan's (1979) study that uncovered a systematized way of talking in classrooms, and Freeman's (1998) ethnographic discourse analysis of 'alternative educational discourses' and the development of academic-oriented identities. More contemporary work that utilizes ethnography and discourse analysis includes Duff's (2002) research on teacher's attempts to direct discourses aimed at recognizing cultural identity, and Putney and Frank's (2008) study of patterned academic discursive practices.

### Recommendations

Before outlining any recommendations, I must make clear that I view the K-12 schooling of Mexican American youth to be in systemic crisis. As such, the recommendations I make are indeed bold. It is my opinion that to be less than bold with respect to transformations is to be accepting in some way of the persistent, pervasive, and disproportionate low schooling outcomes of Mexican American students (Valencia, 2002c). As I stated above, I do not believe there to be a panacea that will reverse these low schooling outcomes. However, I do believe that immediate action is needed to begin the transformation process. It is from this perspective that I make my recommendations.

As revealed in this work, at issue are the discourses regarding the schooling of Mexican American youth. These discourses reflect the expectations and the attitudes

districts and schools have for these students. When low expectations and negative attitudes structure the actions of agents of school districts and individual schools, negative schooling outcomes for Mexican American students indubitably result. It is imperative, therefore, that any transformative processes for the schooling of Mexican American students begin with critical reflection of the ideologies that mediate the discourses produced where Mexican American students predominate. Since agents of schools are the producers of the discourses found in mission statements, it is their ideologies that are reflected and they who must cogitate. Such reflection, if entered upon honestly, can make transparent deep-rooted ideologies that perpetuate low expectations and negative attitudes. To be sure, critical self-reflection is difficult to carry out. Still, as an initial move toward the transformation of the schooling experiences for Mexican Americans in U.S. schools, it is vital that critical self-examination occur.

#### Critical Self-Examination

Haberman (2008) has offered a template for the self-examination of teachers. The five steps outlined in this template can be expanded and implemented by all agents of schools (administrators, teachers, counselors, etc.) where Mexican Americans make up a significant student population. This template proceeds as follows:

1. Critical self-reflection of prejudices regarding Mexican Americans, as described above, is the first of these steps. Haberman cautions, and I concur, that some agents of districts and school will deny any prejudice. When these denials take place, “there’s always the possibility that they may never get beyond this first step. If so, they should not be allowed near children or youth” (p. 243).

2. Step two involves the identification of the sources of one's prejudices. This step will make clear how the prejudices have been mediated by their experiences. In addition, further reflection here can expose how these ideologies are embedded into everyday actions.
3. Step three involves an individual cost-benefit analysis of prejudices. Such an analysis can reveal how they affect one's daily life. Peggy McIntosh (1990) exemplifies this step in her work on the daily effects of White privilege.
4. Consideration of how one's prejudices impact students is the next step. Here, a connection can be made between school agent ideologies and their practices.
5. This final step involves a strategy for resolution. "Step five is the phase in which we lay out a plan explicating what we plan to do about our prejudices" (Haberman, 2008, p. 244). Specifically, Haberman proposes that agents of schools resolve to "unlearn," "counteract," "and get beyond" (p. 244) their prejudices.

### Final Thoughts

Impetus for engaging in this work comes from two different sources. Both are born of personal experience but they are separated by many years. The first source is a singular event that occurred while I was in elementary school, although I did not find out about it until I was an undergraduate. The second source of motivation for this research has occurred over time during my tenure as a high school teacher. While the first was a deed directed toward me personally, and the second only observations I have made of others, they have been equally profound in their effect on me as a Mexican American and compelled me to undertake this investigation.

As an undergraduate, my mother shared a story with me regarding a parent-teacher conference conducted in my fifth-grade year. Throughout my elementary schooling years, parents were routinely asked to attend parent-teacher conferences in lieu of report cards being sent home. During one such conference, my teacher informed my parents that I was receiving average grades on my work. However, the teacher also advised my parents not to be too concerned. This consolation was offered because he believed that I was an average student and that I would never be much more than average. In addition, he went on to recommend that he and my parents not hold expectations too high. To do so, he maintained, would be to risk my self-esteem. Upon hearing of this event, I had mixed emotions. Since I was already in college, I was relieved that I was able, in some way, to confute his assessment. However, I was also pained to learn that one of my teachers would make such disparagements and wondered how his evaluation affected my fifth grade year in school. I do not remember much of that year, but that may be precisely its effect. There is nothing memorable about it perhaps because the teacher held such positions. There are no lasting memories, no moments of excitement for being in school, no recollection of learning discovery.

My personal indignation of the negative attitude and low expectation of my fifth grade teacher regarding my own schooling and potential grew to a concern for other generations of Mexican American students soon after I began working in a segregated, predominantly Mexican American, urban high school during the 1992-1993 school year. As a new teacher attempting to familiarize myself with the school, I spent much time with faculty already on campus. This time was spent in faculty meetings and in faculty

lounges during lunch periods. It did not take long for me to recognize that the message of my fifth grade teacher was shared in the discourses of many members of the faculty. Ranging from overt racist remarks to subtle overtures regarding the lack of intellectual capabilities, daily discourses of low expectations and negative attitudes prevailed. I was troubled by the realization that the meeting my parents had with my fifth grade teacher years before may not have been an exception to the rule for Mexican Americans, but the rule itself. Not just a rule with respect to a teacher willing to share such attitudes and expectations with parents, but a rule with respect to the presence of ideologies that mediate these discourses.

I do not pretend to believe that the schooling experiences like those I have experienced and observed nor those of most Mexican Americans will be changed quickly. I fear that the ideologies of the sort revealed by my personal experiences and noted in the mission statements examined here are socially profound and not easily overcome in school settings. Transforming these ideologies may take as long to reverse, as they have to construct. Indeed, not all agents of schools will avail themselves to the ideological transformation I call for here. Still, I believe sufficient transformation to change the schooling experiences for Mexican Americans is possible in time. In that time there exists the possibility of developing an egalitarian society that transforms promises of equity into educational practices. It is from this outlook of hope that I have engaged in this study.

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