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THE HISPANIC FEMALE SCHOLARS: EXPERIENCES OF AN  
UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY. A STUDY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

A Thesis

by

CECILE CADDEL

Submitted to the Graduate College of  
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

May 2017

Major Subject: Sociology



THE HISPANIC FEMALE SCHOLARS: EXPERIENCES OF AN  
UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY. A STUDY OF THE  
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by  
CECILE CADDEL

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Dr. William Yaworsky  
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Dr. Arlett Lomeli  
Committee Member

May 2017



## ABSTRACT

Caddel, Cecile, The Hispanic Female Scholars: Experiences of An Underrepresented Minority. A Study of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS), May, 2017, 161 pp., 4 figures, references, 58 titles.

This study explores the experiences of the underrepresented Hispanic female scholars. It focuses specifically on ten faculty members from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The use of interviews constructs authentic interpretations of the challenges and conditions, which often affect Hispanic women. Through the triangulation of the interview data, with documental and statistical sources, the study portrays a comprehensive image of the interviewed Hispanic woman in pursuit of academia.

Several emerging themes were found, specifically regarding circumstances, which impede and foster achievement. Mentorship, achievement motivation, a strong support network and collective networking, were regarded as significant to attainment. While service demands, political climate on campus, isolation, racial and gender bias, and familism were seen as deterrents.

Finally, the analysis looks to foster the research on topics concerning Hispanic women, and to further promote an interest in subjects, which are relevant to the study of the marginalized individual.



## DEDICATION

I dedicate the completion of my thesis to my mother, Concepcion Caddel, and in memory of my father William Caddel. Through my parent's guidance I learned early on that some things don't always come easy, but determination is the key to success. To my mother, who instilled in me a love of education, kept my spirit going even in my toughest days, and offered her love and support, thank you. I also want to dedicate my work to the memory of my grandparents, Mama Olga and Papa Chuy who proved that through strength of character and resilience, anything is possible.





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and guidance of my professor, Dawid Wladyka. I would also like to thank Dr. William Yaworsky and Dr. Arlett Lomelí for serving as my committee members.

In addition, I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to the women involved in this study; thank you for allowing me to tell your stories, for your inspiring words, sound advice, and empowering vision within academia. Although we may find that the glass ceiling within the professoriate is not yet shattered; your strength and constant perseverance motivates me not only as a Latina, but also as a woman. Thank you.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As an educator I have come to recognize the reality of a leaky educational pipeline. As a Hispanic woman from the Rio Grande Valley, I have experienced the inequities of higher education, and thus understand the myth of the shattered glass ceiling. In the Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas, where the population is over 90% Latino, lawmakers have acknowledged a need to diminish the gap in academics (*Excelencia in Education*, 2012).

Long before the consolidation of The University of Texas Pan-American and The University of Texas at Brownsville, UTB was the home to the nation's first Hispanic female president of a college or university (Svokos, 2015). As the president of UTB, Juliet Garcia not only "broke barriers and amassed an assortment of recognition and accomplishments," but also helped make UTB a university that "eliminated many of the barriers that first-generation students usually experience, when transferring from two-to four-year campuses" (University of Texas System, 2015, para. 4; Cruz, 2009, para. 1).

Despite marrying at 19, Dr. Garcia was able to continue in pursuit of academia, primarily because of strong familial support. In an article for *Texas Monthly*, she explained that the inspiration to pursue higher education came from her parents, who always set high expectations, and from her husband who supported and inspired her to continue towards the Ph.D. (Kosela, 2003). Regrettably, the challenges of the Hispanic woman often hinder prospects towards higher

education. While Dr. Garcia often grows tired of being the lone representative of Latinos and women in higher education, she also recognizes that “[using the opportunity you’re given allows you] to find [your] own strength and having found it, to become steadfast, powerful and [an] incessant advocate for others” (Svokos, 2015, para. 9).

As the consolidation reshapes higher education for the students of the Rio Grande Valley, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley policymakers and administrators have come to recognize the importance of recruiting, promoting, and retaining more Hispanic female scholars. As of 2016, the number of Hispanic or Latina faculty at the university totals *just* 271 out of the approximately 1,345 faculty members currently with UTRGV, meaning that, only 20.1% of the university’s faculty is Hispanic female. While this is still ahead of the 178 ‘white’ female faculty members, or 13.2%, in comparison to the 296 ‘white’ male scholars, or 22%, the gap remains (*Strategic Analysis and Institutional Reporting*, 2016). So, while the university looks to establish an institution which is bilingual, biliterate and bicultural, they must also recognize that the circumstances which impede, and those which foster the achievements of Hispanic women are distinctive, and subsequently should *not* be placed within the same context as those which plague ‘white’ females and Hispanic males (Texas Monthly, 2016).

Accordingly, this study uncovers the experiences of the underrepresented Hispanic female scholar, while utilizing the personal narrative as a means of exposing their unique experiences in academia (Connelly & Clandinin 1990). Often omitted in scholarship, their thought-provoking and revealing stories go untold. Furthermore, their challenges are repeatedly grouped into the same contexts, which affect ‘white’ women, ignoring their experiences. Despite an increase in the number of Hispanics within the professoriate, Latinas are still severely underrepresented, with few women entering or completing their Ph.D. programs, and even fewer

in pursuit of a career in the academe (Nunez & Murakami-Ramvalho, 2012). Accordingly, the challenges of the educational pipeline and the myth of a shattered glass ceiling represent the truth of higher education and path towards the professoriate.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of the underrepresented Hispanic female scholar has lead academics to wonder whether Hispanic groups have become aware that a problem even exists (Escobedo, 1980). In truth, while the Hispanic population has increased steadily across the nation, the number of Hispanic faculty does *not* represent this trend. Hispanic female faculty demographics throughout the nation depict the shocking reality of the professoriate. Sadly, less than one third of all tenured professors are women, among these only 4.4% are Latinas (Gandara, 2015). Furthermore, only 26% of women currently hold university presidencies in the U.S. (Laporsky, 2014). What the data reveals is the reality of a leaky educational system and how women are relatively absent from the academe. In fact, most often the majority of female faculty members are concentrated in the lower ranks of the university. Additionally, when it comes to positions of power, Hispanic women represent *just* 1.3% of leadership positions (Zayra, 2016). So, despite the gradual improvement in higher education, Latinas are still severely underrepresented within academia subsequently restricted by the structural inequities of the educational pipeline.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The significance of this study lies not only in defining the challenges in pursuit of the professoriate, nor solely on factors leading to success, but in creating a meaningful and elaborate analysis of the experiences of the Hispanic woman in academia. Through the inclusion of the

personal narrative, their stories and experiences play an intricate role in exposing the realities of life in the academe. Consequently, fostering an interest in Hispanic women's issues, in order to stimulate the awareness of experts, and with the purpose of promoting the progress of Latinas within the professoriate.

### **The Glass Ceiling in Higher Education**

The glass ceiling in higher education impedes Hispanic women from gaining equality in academia. From a social perspective, the limited analysis and insufficient literature, not only on Latinas, but also specifically with an emphasis on the Rio Grande Valley, further precludes the progress of these women in the professoriate.

Analysis into the study of higher education often highlights the lack of opportunities and underscores the barriers towards professional advancement. Furthermore, scholarship often neglects to consider that the challenges affecting these women vary from their white female and Hispanic male counterparts. Thus, in order to surmount the barriers of the academe, one must first consider that the challenges of the Hispanic woman are distinctive and that to transcend them, they must not be disregarded, but seen as significant. Consequently, in order to shatter the glass ceiling in the academe, policymakers must examine their experiences and look towards implementing policies with regard to the marginalized.

### **A Complicated Identity**

#### **Latino vs. Hispanic**

While some have called the argument insignificant, and many have used the terms interchangeably, scholars have argued that the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' articulate the

specific history and culture of diverse sociopolitical units, of distinct individuals (Tammelleo, 2011). So, the use of both terms signifies not only an individual's political views, but also their view of self-identity. According Tammelleo (2011) contends that the word 'Hispanic' resulted from the conquests of 1492 between the conquerors of the Iberian Peninsula and the indigenous peoples of Latin America. For some scholars, the synonymous use of 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' signals disregard to the identity of the individual.

Consequently, the term 'Latino' derived from the "surrender of Mexico at the end of the Mexican American War," in which the U.S. acquired numerous Mexican territories (Tammelleo, 2011, p. 547). Thus, the use of the word 'Latino,' not only coincides with U.S. land acquisitions, but also embodies the many waves of immigrants, from nations throughout Latin America into the United States. As a result, many of these immigrant cultures, such as Cubans, Peruvians, Mexicans, etc., came together to create the current Latino(a) societies in the U.S.

For many Latinos the use of the term 'Hispanic' brings about a reminder of the Nixon Era, a time in which the word was coined as a means of alienating the different groups of distinct Latino societies. In fact, the 2000 census, found that of the 35 million Latinos in the United States, "2% identified as black, 50% as white and 46% as 'some other race'" (Priestly, 2007, p. 59). For many immigrants the word 'Hispanic' does *not* identify with their struggles of multiculturalism or ethnic pluralism. Rather, they contend it groups *all* Latinos into the same homogenous category.

Contreras (2004) argues that scholars have struggled to correctly classify Latino history. Subsequently, many Latino groups have struggled with discrimination, so one must be "cognizant that 'Latino' as a category is problematic in that it includes people of different classes, religions, ethnicities, and 'races'" (2004, p. 227). In other words, we cannot and *should*

*not* allocate one term use in reference to Latinos. “Ethnic categories are a means through which groups of people validate and conceptualize their history” (Alcoff, 2005, p. 401). Scholars should not continue to marginalize these groups and invalidate their circumstances or history. Instead, we should apply the use of both terms, as a means of inclusivity and recognition (Jun, 1997).

With respect to each unique individual and their experience, I have chosen to include both terms throughout my study. In reflecting upon the research, I realized that too often we group specific people together, and that in order to promote the uniqueness of each culture, we must regard the histories of its people, we must understand that we cannot continue to disregard their stories or their experiences.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an analysis and movement in which scholars are interested in studying the broader perspectives of race, racism and power (Delgado 2006). While CRT began as a movement in the 1970s, many professionals and researchers in education, use the concept of Critical Race, in order to further understand circumstances of race within the academic system. Aleman (2009) establishes that CRT “helps to highlight the inequities experienced, but perhaps not fully articulated by Latino/a[s],” in academics, while also analyzing the experiences of the individual (p. 307). Scholars also argue that CRT makes the unique experiences and realities of the academe, for individuals of color unequivocally evident. Solorzano and Yosso contend that, “CRT challenges researchers to ‘recognize silenced voices in qualitative data’” (2002, p. 28). Furthermore, Critical Race Theory “recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing,

and teaching about racial subordination” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 27). For the purpose of my study, I consider the influence of Critical Race Theory in depicting the way in which the educational pipeline has often failed Latinas in pursuit of academia.

Emphasizing Latino/a Critical Race Theory or LatCrit, is also significant in education, as it highlights the disparities of the academic system. LatCrit, while similar to CRT, seeks to specifically illustrate the issues of race, racism and power within the hierarchy and how each of these influence Latinas in education. LatCrit also exposes Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities by promoting the “intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” within society (Delgado Bernal 2002, p. 108). Thus, as a means of countering an often overlooked and absent history, scholars must portray the story of the marginalized individual, in order to “shatter complacency and challenge the dominant discourse on race” not just within the academe, but also within society (2002, p. 109).

### **The Interpretive Perspective in Research**

The interpretive approach in narrative studies serves to empower, recognize and honor the forgotten voices of its participants (Creswell, Shope, Clark, & Green, 2016). While the natural sciences explain phenomenon through general laws, social science scholars try and understand phenomenon by means of perspective and through the experiences of the individual (Jun, 1997). Consequently, a researcher who utilizes an open-ended approach is able to gain a better perspective of specific social phenomenon and become empathetic to the subject’s experiences. That is, social scholars use the interpretive approach in order to understand the world from the point of view of the actor, since it is subjective, and within the realm of consciousness (1997). So, in turn the researcher becomes more cognizant of another’s



experience and reality in order to better understand their circumstances, while also recognizing the significance of *their* role in illustrating the narrative. More importantly, in understanding our own roles as interpreters, the study results in richer and more enlightening interpretations of social phenomenon (Hardwood, 1985).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The university was “created by the Texas legislature in 2013 in a historic move that brings together the University of Texas at Brownsville and the University of Texas-Pan American” (UTRGV, 2014). With the opportunity toward educational advancement, the university deals “the students of South Texas the ability to stay close to home to earn their college degrees” (Perry, 2013). The implementation of new initiatives and programs are furthering efforts to include more women into leadership roles and in promoting their professional development within academia (ADVANCE Annual Report, 2015). Thus, UTRGV leadership recognizes the immediate need to incorporate a more diverse faculty, while also improving higher education for students in the Rio Grande Valley (ADVANCE Annual Report, 2015).

#### **The Educational Pipeline and the Academe**

The educational pipeline has established a negative and disheartening analysis on the number of Hispanic women in higher education. Despite steady progress, Latinas in the Rio Grande Valley are often considered a triple minority and thus, remain near the bottom of higher education (Latinas and the Educational Pipeline, 2015). Moreover, inadequate research into the

presence of Hispanic women in the academe has produced an often marginalized and universal perspective. In relation to the study of women in higher education, lie the ill-ignored narratives of Hispanic females in pursuit of academia. Scholarly writings and research results depict an underlying issue in academics, with limited professional advancement for Hispanic women. Consequently, the barriers of the academic world are commonplace for many women of color, and depict the bias found within the university system (Aguilar and Williams, 1993).

In a report on, *Latinas and the Educational Pipeline* (2015) researchers found that the majority of Latinas are held in low esteem, as cultural bias is often reinforced, underlining the scrutiny of social disparity. Furthermore, Latinas are often viewed through a lens of subjectivity and gender discernment, precluding the likelihood of professional progress. Aguilar and Williams (1993) highlight how these challenges are bound by a structural organization, which is filled with discrimination, riddled with inadequate resources, fewer economic opportunities, and influenced by the issues of the past.

Race and gender themes are also substantial issues, which plague Latinas in pursuit of the professoriate. Sexism and prejudice are fundamental challenges in dissuading higher education, but also relatively significant in discouraging the advancement of these women within the academic community. For instance, Espino devised a study in which she discusses Critical Race Theory; in it, she depicts the “prescribed Mexican-American characteristics and images crafted by educational researchers” (2012, pg. 35). In the framework of her analysis, she dissects the image of the Hispanic female, and uncovers the negativity of such a marginalized perspective. Espino (2012) conducts her investigation through a series of personal accounts and finds that the “master narratives and counter narratives” exist not only from within society, but even from within the Hispanic community (pg. 43).

Conversely, Andrade (1982) suggests that the stereotypical perception of the Hispanic woman stems from earlier depictions of the Latina as nurturing, maternal and domestic. To contest this issue, the scholar suggests that Hispanic women compose their own literature, and that these writings integrate aspects of *their* past, present, and future. Accordingly, it is essential that researchers understand that the challenges and experiences of the Hispanic woman should not be trivialized, but rather recognized as distinctive. In the study of Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), we find that LatCrit calls attention to the social processes and the exclusion of minorities by the hierarchy, as they draw and maintain borders of race, gender, etc., (Parker, 2002). Such instances of exclusion, leave CRT scholars with few “remaining scholarly avenues through which to seek changes in education[al] policies and practices” (Parsons & Plakhotnic 2006, pg. 167).

Castellanos (2006) reveals that while Hispanics have become the nation’s largest minority group, the number of Hispanic women in higher education is disproportionate to the population increase. Instead, Medina and Luna (2000) highlight that, Hispanic female faculty tend to be viewed through this concept of “tokenism,” rather than on merit (pg. 191). Gandra (2009) states that several issues also serve to hinder many women from academic advancement. Traditional machismo attitudes tend to exist from within the Hispanic culture, which places women into a more passive and self-sacrificing role (Perez-Hernandez, 2015; Lombardo, 2014). Furthermore, in the Rio Grande Valley women still struggle against issues of responsibility and bias. For instance, limited student services such as financial aid, child services and mentorship support, generated concerns amongst many students at the University of Texas at Brownsville in 2008 (Morris, 2015).

As a means of fostering interest in academia and in encouraging diversity, UTRGV administration have begun to promote, recruit and retain more Hispanic scholars, with some progress (Strategic Planning Committee, 2016; Fagan, 2015). Such initiatives encourage scholarly research and writing for “women of color,” and also aim in providing female faculty the opportunity to establish support systems. Nevertheless, Hispanic women in the professoriate often find that cultural perception, sexism, and narrow-mindedness impede their professional aspirations (Medina and Luna, 2000). This not only discourages a more diverse faculty, but also reflects unremitting issues of racism within the academe (2000). Subsequently, when considering occurrences of race, class and gender bias in academia, the revelation of an unapologetic and disproportionate system of inequality begins to take shape (Kennely, Misra & Karides, 1999). So, in order to contest the reality of disparity in academia, one should not simply add in a ‘token’ Latina, but rather make attempts to understand the world from which they came.

Lopez (n.d.) illustrates that many Hispanic faculty members feel that promotional opportunities are regulated throughout universities, because of discrimination issues, rather than incompetence. Nieves-Squires (1991) agrees, explaining that the university culture often influences how Hispanic women view themselves, and their aptitude to succeed at the academic level. The study, an intriguing segment of the *Project on the Status and Education of Women*, presented the reader with insight into the circumstances of those pursuing the academe. Nieves-Squires (1991) found that, the competitive nature of the academe is often too much for Hispanic women because their culture is all about a group dynamic and collaboration.

While Torres (2006) contends that academia is slowly awakening from its privileged and exclusive past and diversifying its faculty, others disagree pointing to the reality of an

underrepresented field for women of color. Lopez (2006) argues that there's no denying the sense of injury, and larger issues of struggle over resource and power that encompass the professoriate. As well, Gonzalez (n.d.) portrays the challenges of those pursuing higher education, explaining that, usually through a slow and often-difficult process these women learn to become academically socialized. That is to say, the university assists in establishing educational roles for Hispanic women, as it fosters their interest and stimulates their professional progress. Vasquez (1982) agrees, maintaining that while the challenges towards higher education not only reinforce gender roles, socioeconomic status complicates a Latina's pursuit of academia. Those who thrive and are most successful are typically mentored accordingly, used for their expertise and recognized for their professional achievements (Nieves-Squires, 1991). Escobedo (1980) insists that understanding the necessities of the Latino/a student is fundamental to their achievement, thus minority professors ultimately play an intricate role in mentoring and advising their students.

Davies, Lubelska and Quinn (1994), interviewed several women in pursuit of the academe, and detailed their experiences in a book of nineteen papers. In it, they argue that, men have been encouraged within the university setting, while inadequate access to resources and promotion have hindered women. Moreover, they portray a system in which, "deep and surface structures of higher education, its values and process, declare men the subjects of actions, agenda, knowledge, and power [dominance]" (1994, pg. 81). In turn, this relegates the woman to the position of observer, while also further trivializing women's issues and collectively grouping all women. Accordingly, Gandra (2009) highlights, the urgent need to understand and address the gap in Hispanic achievement. She suggests that the literature "quickly became a litany of

horrors” placed upon the circumstances of the past, riddled with omissions and critical of the barriers towards higher education (2009, pg. 5).

Gonzalez, Jovel and Stoner (n.d.) expressed the constant and oppressive barriers facing Latinas in higher education, in comparison to other groups. What they found was that cultural roles play an intricate part in the academic and professional achievement of these women. Expectations for young Hispanic women differ from their male equivalents, as preconceived notions and stereotypes in institutions of higher learning influence the pathway towards the professoriate, leaving many Hispanic females to feel undervalued within scholastic ranks (n.d.).

Also, scholarly writings on Hispanic women’s issues tend to be nonexistent or inadequate, only serving to reinforce issues of discrimination and sexism. Despite efforts to overcome the challenges of the academe, the number of Hispanic women pursuing the professoriate is inconsistent with the population growth throughout the nation. The challenges towards promotion only foster the discrepancies towards professional progress, while insufficient literature further stagnates the advancement of Hispanic women in higher education.

With regard to the analysis of Latinas pursuing academia, exists the sad reality that their stories go untold. Hispanic scholars have attempted to fill the void of absent and inadequate literature, yet as Escobedo (1980) contends, “we find ourselves communicating and agreeing with each other, but the individuals to whom we need to [share our information] are not receiving it” (pg. 10). Comparably, Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011) note that while women have made advancements in higher education, their narratives are relatively absent from academic literature. While ethnic and women’s studies have dug deeper into the issues, which afflict individuals of color, their narratives remain virtually ignored in academic writings. Bernal

(2002) suggests that in approaching educational research, one should consider the significance of race-gendered epistemologies in pursuit of social change on behalf of communities of color.

Unfortunately, in the field of academia policies are often perceived to benefit one group over the other. Within the professoriate women are typically underrepresented, and continuously trying to correct a “decades-long injustice of the exclusivity [in]the academy” (Torres, 2006 pg. 68). Parsons and Plaktnic (2006) argue that, the underrepresentation occurs since graduate students are often reinforced and socialized that exclusion is common in academia. Furthermore, they assert that increasing the number of minorities in the academe does little to benefit women of color, since the hierarchy seeks to regulate and suppress the voices of women (2006). Perhaps the single most important reason for the support of LatCrit Theory is that most academic research does *not* distinguish amongst marginalized groups (Kennelly, Misra, & Karides, 1999). Therefore, the study of minorities often places each group within the same context. Women of color are frequently grouped into one category, neglecting the reality of their diverse circumstances. In fact, studies have shown that PhD attainment varies by racial group; wherein minorities are typically uninformed or lack the accessibility of most highly regarded programs (1999).

In pursuit of academia, many young women notice the absence of female faculty and struggle to come to terms with their own place in academic institutions (Johnsrud, 2002). Furthermore, women are less likely to gain positions of tenure and are instead relegated to the lower ranks of the university system (Kennelly, Misra & Karides 1999). As Lopez (2006) contends, “despite the degrees, experiences, awards, and other expected markers of professional achievement,” it is impossible to be recognized as a faculty member, let alone be respected. (pg.134)



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The approach of this study transpires through a qualitative scheme, with the use of semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the semi-structured interview is to uncover the authentic and captivating accounts of ten Hispanic female scholars from The University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley. Along with the triangulation of data and statistical information, their stories contribute in exposing the challenges and realities of the Hispanic woman in pursuit of the academe.

#### **Qualitative Approach in Research**

The use of qualitative methods in applied research serves as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” wherein researchers study individuals in their natural settings, and look to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people place upon them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, chp. 2). Consequently, inspiring the reader to reinterpret the story and/or experiences of the participant. Most importantly, qualitative researchers seeks to understand every voice and perspective, “while reformulating [their] own interpretation” in order to challenge new and emerging views (Gilgun, 2006, pg. 439). As it pertains to minority studies, the use of qualitative methods, allows the researcher to gather the knowledge and interpretations of the marginalized individual. Consequently, the accounts of underrepresented groups, such as the Hispanic woman, should be cultivated in higher education, analyzed for the benefit of

professional advancement, and interpreted so that we might no longer consider their narratives absent from history (Reyes & Rios, 2005). Thus, the researcher becomes the means by which the participants' experiences are documented and interpreted. In this case, the narratives of the Hispanic female are deciphered, examined and presented, transforming our interpretations and analyses of their stories, with the hope of prompting a paradigm shift, which would recognize the experiences of the individual.

### **Narrative Approach in Qualitative Studies**

The use of narrative inquiry in qualitative research, serves not only as a way in which to “valorize [the] individual’s experience, but is also an exploration of [their] social, cultural, familial, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin, 2013, pg. 27)). In this case, it serves as a lens that exposes how women have been muted, multiple, and contradictory (Chase, Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, it becomes a means of highlighting the experiences of the individual and illustrating their stories. While a challenging approach, personal accounts promote “patterns of meaning, articulated around events, processes, epiphanies, or themes” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, pg. 69). Accordingly, the personal narrative has the capacity to “sensitize and make the listener assimilate the experiences according to their own” (Muylaert, Sarubbi, Gallo, Neto & Reis, 2014, pg. 187). In other words, the individual is then far more capable of emphasizing with the narrator’s experiences. The use of the narrative in effective storytelling considers the many “interpretations of the world, and therefore [is] not open to evidence, or to be judged as true or false,” leaving the reader to glean from it what they may (Muylaert et al., 2014, pg. 186).

Most significantly, an effective narrative account is able to construct a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, culminating in a dialogue, which embodies the authenticity of their truths. With regard to this study, the personal narrative illustrates the stories of these Hispanic female scholars who have shared similar experiences, while also highlighting their diverse and distinctive familiarities in academia.

### **Selection of Participants**

Each participant was chosen through purposive sampling, since the research aims to identify and “explore a particular behavior or characteristic relevant to the research” (Gray, 2014, pg. 217). The participants were individually e-mailed by the researcher, along with a brief synopsis of the study, and then asked for their voluntary participation. The researcher communicated with over twenty women, all fitting the specifics of the criteria for sample, and from this number over ten responded. As per criteria for sample, each interview participant was a Hispanic female scholar from any one of the colleges of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, each of a different professional rank serving as: lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and tenured faculty. As a result of data saturation, which points to the, ceasing of data collection due to the repetitive emergence of themes and ideas, I concluded my data collection process after conducting each of the ten interviews (Gray, 2014, pg. 682).

### **Protection of Human Research Participants**

As per the Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) protocols, every participant received informed consent and a brief overview of the conducted study. The interviewer read the audio release form, consent script, and explained to each participant that they had the option to withdraw at

any time. Subjects were also informed of the purpose behind the study, asked to sign and consent to the interview, before the dialogue commenced. All consent forms were hand delivered to the interviewee on the day of the interview, except in cases where the interview occurred over the phone; an email was sent with an attached file. Each individual was informed that their participation was voluntary and that they may view a copy of the study once it was complete. The interviewer also informed the respondents that the collected information was confidential, that pseudonyms would be used to conceal the identity of the participants, and that all audio reordered data would be securely and safely housed solely by the researcher. Each participant was informed that per IRB regulations all information was to be kept for a period of 3 years.

## **Materials and Procedure**

Before conducting the interviews, a research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. As per IRB protocol, steps towards certification for the research of Human Subjects were completed as well as the submission of all IRB stipulated documentation. Each of these forms, the study invitation, the Consent Script, Informed Consent, Audio Release Form, and Outside Affiliations Form can be found within the ‘APPENDIX’ section of this study. Once IRB approval was received, twenty participants were emailed by the researcher, given a synopsis of the study, and asked for their voluntary participation in the research. Several of the participants were also quite helpful in offering recommendations for interviews.

An interview schedule was generated and used during each interview; the ten questions were constructed to allow for an open-ended dialogue; the interview schedule can also be found in the ‘APPENDIX’ section of the study. Along with these ten questions, an audio recorder was

used, to ensure the precision of the interview transcriptions; brief notes were also taken, in order to highlight the key points of the interview.

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face and by telephone communication. Two of the interviews were conducted by phone; all others were conducted face-to-face, two at a local coffee house, one at the public library, and five at the offices of the participants. Each of the participants were emailed a synopsis of the study and informed by the interviewer that they could choose the specified time and place for their meeting. Before the start of each interview the researcher read each of the confidentiality forms, and asked for the participants' permission to interview them, to audio record and take notes. The ten interviews were conducted from January 2017 through March 2017. Those participating through telephone communication received a copy of the consent script as soon as the interview concluded.

Each of the interviews began with the researcher's inquiry into the job title and description of the participant. The researcher then asked the participant to illustrate their experiences in the academe. Each of the women detailed the issues, circumstances and often times, the sacrifices they made as they pursued their path toward the professoriate. Each participant was asked the same set of open-ended questions. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to 160 minutes. The average length of time was approximately 90 minutes in length per session. At the conclusion of every interview the participants were thanked by the researcher and asked if the researcher could notify them again should they require any more information.

## **Transcriptions and Field Notes**

Each of the interview transcriptions were completed by the researcher, in order to accurately convey the individual narratives. Time and accuracy were taken to guarantee the validity of the dialogue and in order to safeguard the confidentiality of each of the participants. In a one subject spiraled notebook, the interviewer took brief notes during each interview session. Key points, important details and specific facts were written down to ensure that the most significant aspects of the interview were emphasized. The interviewer then transcribed the data, searching for common patterns, themes and key words, in order to illustrate each narrative. By transcribing the interviews, the researcher was able to subdivide the interviews thematically. Then construct two categories, each with four factors, those, which impede and those which foster professional growth in academia. Each of these categories and their respective factors will be discussed in-depth in Chapter IV.

## **Analysis of the Data**

In analyzing the transcribed data, the researcher was able to find specific themes and trends in the study. The researcher began by coding the data from the first two interviews finding similar themes and connections between them. In turn, this allowed the researcher to improve upon not only the research questions, but to also consider other open-ended questions for interviews. With regard to confidentiality, the researcher decided to refer to each participant by ‘participant 1, 2,’ and so on. Steps to respect the privacy of the interviewees were taken by not citing their discipline. Meaning that, generalized information was chosen over clear and concise specifics, in order to maintain confidentiality and consideration for the participant.

The interviewer spent approximately 3-4 hours transcribing each interview. Once the transcriptions were complete, the interviewer read through the transcripts, highlighting key words, important themes and searching for patterns throughout the transcripts. This allowed the researcher to extract the significant topics of the interviews, in order to answer to the questions of the research; the interviewer also identified similar patterns and themes in each of the interviews. Bernard and Ryan (2010) proposed that the repetition allows the researcher to filter the key aspects of the interviews, in order to craft a thematic breakdown of the data.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While the analysis proposes to disclose a compelling and authentic account of Hispanic female scholars, the experiences of other marginalized groups, limits the study. For instance, the narratives of other minority groups, as well as Hispanic males would have reinforced the validity of the research. Consideration for the narratives of other minority groups would have showcased the reality and exclusivity of the academe. Nevertheless, the stories of these women serve as a starting point towards inclusion of minority and marginalized groups in academia.

Another limitation of the study was the insufficient scholarship. The limited availability of research sources on the subject of Hispanic women in academia was rather disconcerting. Unfortunately, the analysis of Hispanic female scholars is lacking from scholarly journals and academic books. Also, it seems as if the majority of scholars group all minorities into the same category. Topics pertaining to Hispanic women are collectively placed with other women of color and in some cases placed within the same context as Latinos. Herein lies the purpose of the study, to not only convey the circumstances of the Hispanic woman, but to improve upon the insufficient literature.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Emerging Themes and Patterns**

What follows are the major interviewer's findings through the use of the personal narrative, the illustration of these stories depicts the distinctive experiences of each of the following women. Through their accounts, we understand not only the challenges of the professoriate, but also look towards their remarkable careers and their contributions to the academe, clearly deserving of the recognition and the accolades.

It should be noted that, only the portions of the narratives, which focus on the themes central to the study, are included in this chapter. The full transcripts of each of these ten remarkable narratives are found within the 'APPENDIX' section of the study.

Each of the ten women interviewed, began by explaining their roles and responsibilities at UTRGV. They discussed their decision to pursue academia, considered the status of higher education for women of color, and talked about the academe today. Several offered advice to Hispanic women seeking a career in higher education, and when relevant made recommendations for continued advancements of Latina faculty at UTRGV. Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed each interview, in order to locate the patterns of repetition, to uncover key words and to identify any major themes within the study. What the interviewer found were two specific categories, each with four major topics. They are: the factors, which



impede success in academia and the factors, which foster achievement in academia. The following section of Chapter IV uses the narratives of the ten participants, to portray each of the significant topics of the study. They are broken up into two sections, and then subdivided into each corresponding topic, four for each category.

### **Factors Which Impede Achievements in Academia**

When interviewing the ten participants, each of them noted the significant factors, which impede success in academia. These factors included: greater service demands for Latinas, political climate on campus, isolation, gender and racial bias, and familism.

#### **Service Demands**

The participants discussed how increased service for female scholars often impede the ability of many women to focus on their scholarship, service and teaching requirements. This was rather substantial, since other studies found, that women of color tend to do more service than others “overloading these academicians with responsibilities” (Valverde & Ramirez, 1979, pg. 28). These women are often bombarded with extra responsibilities, also serving as mentors for Hispanic students at the university. In fact, studies show that minority scholars tend to participate more in service-related committees than their white counterparts (Monforti and Michelson, 2008).

Participant 6 spoke about how being a minority in academia creates an added challenge. Since Latinas are underrepresented in academia, they are typically given multiple roles, including the role of mentoring young Latinas and Latinos within their fields.

*... we talk about wanting to have women of color, specifically Latina here, because then students have someone who looks like them or someone who they feel might understand them better, have a similar background to them... [however] you have to have really careful attention to hiring practices and to retention of those faculty as well, just hiring them but then not having them be completely overloaded so that they don't have a chance to be retained and to stick around...*

The workload for faculty of color tends to be higher than that of majority faculty members, further impeding advancements toward tenure. In fact, researchers note that these workloads can often hinder research, tenure and promotion (Medina and Luna, 2000). So, it becomes more difficult to maintain the required workload the university mandates, as well as teach.

Participant 3, a Lecture I explains how familial responsibilities and increased service workloads have affected her research progress.

*I have not been able to, I can and did the first year I started, but the more I got into my teaching load, because you're primarily hired to teach, it cuts into your scholarship time...*

Blackwell (2000) explains that minority faculty are often “saddled with the dirty chores of the department and time-consuming committee appointments” leaving little time for their commitment to research and scholarship. Participants contend that while service work is expected from everyone, most often women get stuck with extra workloads.

*...more women across the nation will tell you that they're usually expected to do more service work like outreach work and especially when they're in the tenure track...a lot of women will tell [you] that they're typically the ones that do the service work in the department...so that's where you always reach a balance... men will typically gravitate toward the profession 'oh I wanna serve on this committee at this level, at the national level, at the regional level' and the women are the ones that will typically do the community outreach work at the local level. (Participant 8)*

*...partly women do more service, a lot of the sort of housekeeping for the department (Participant 6)*

Furthermore,

*... don't always ask the women to do the service work, ask the men to contribute also, to do talks to K-12 students and you know, so on and so forth. (Participant 8)*

What the research portrays is that, Latina scholars are often burdened by more professional responsibilities compared to majority faculty. Moreover, Latina faculty is not only responsible for their teaching and research loads, but also expected to serve as advisers to minority students, leaving them too busy to complete their other responsibilities (Medina and Luna, 2000).

In response to her concerns, participant 6 offered up the following solutions, suggesting that UTRGV follow in the footsteps of other institutions.

*...there are other things that institutions can do that help to mitigate this, some institutions recognize, 'okay so we have a Latina faculty doing an overload of service so we are going to award some grant, or some special program for Latina faculty [so they can] apply for teaching relief, every once in while they can get a little extra relief to make up for the extra services.'..[they need to].train our chairs to make sure that the Latina faculty aren't being overburdened with service, or women of color in general. Those are things that some institutions do; we don't currently do them though.*

As research has shown, service workload for women of color supersedes that of men. They are expected to complete all the requirements of the university, while also balancing 'extra' service demands within their departments. As a consequence, Hispanic women in the academe find that their research and scholarship responsibilities suffer.

### **Political Climate on Campus**

Several of the participants mentioned that the political climate of the professoriate often forces the individual to also "play the game." In doing so, the individual is more likely to gain recognition and to gain a professional advantage. Thus, workplace politics is a reality in academia and towards the process of tenure. A number of researchers see the position of women faculty as evidence of a chilly political climate (Sandler, 1986).

Participant 4 stated that although she is not *much into the politics*, she's learned to *maneuver through them*.

*There's always gonna be politics, but you also learn to pick your battles.*

She expressed that it's important not to fight every issue and circumstance.

*Is arguing against having a class [about a particular content vs. another similar content] really a battle you want to go head to head, or do you want to save your cards for another really good battle?*

Moreover, academia while often deemed a meritocracy, emphasizes a person's 'worth,' rather than 'merit.' This plays into the idea that many women of color might be overlooked, because they don't necessarily play into the campus or departmental politics. Some researchers argue that the number of Hispanic women in the academe at higher ranks is low due to the "distinctive review problems that women and minorities face" (Menges and Exum, 1983, pg. 123). These 'review problems,' may unfortunately affect whether a woman is offered tenure or not.

*....[if] you get multiple tenure track jobs you're able to negotiate[like] 'so and so is giving me this, what are you willing to give me?' (Participant 4)*

*...there are certain perks, if you want to call it [that] because you are now considered really senior faculty. You can develop or ask to teach courses that you might not asked for before...you can have the ability to be a bit more vocal without the sense that it could put your job in jeopardy... (Participant 10)*

Thus, the desire to achieve tenure transpires because most often having a tenured position allows the scholar to be more outspoken and have more of a say so on certain things, while also gaining a bit more recognition within their own discipline. Furthermore, certain aspects of the

academe mandate that the individual understand how networking and public relations are also necessary to position oneself.

*...the hardest thing for me has been, you're gonna think that this sounds terrible, but it is having to play the game, having to show people that you're just as good as they are.*

*(Participant 7)*

*I'm not tenure track so I don't feel that pressure or that competition...but from what I've seen, there seems to be much more pressure to accomplish tenure than what I go through for promotion. (Participant 3)*

*It was real different for me at the beginning because I would say, 'I know what I'm doing, I'm doing my job'... you have to earn their respect and you have to build those bridges...*

*(Participant 7)*

*...when you get a tenure track job or job offer, you're able to negotiate even the chair you sit on... (Participant 4)*

Ortega-Liston and Soto (2014) explain that many women have strategically considered prospects for advancement, such as seeking opportunities to gain further visibility, by oftentimes accepting difficult departmental tasks. However, these strategies “can only indirectly impact the ‘old social roles’ obstacles that operate at structural levels as powerful political policies” (Ortega-Liston and Soto, 2014, pg. 293). Also, when one considers the issue of more service workloads

for minority women, the process of navigating tenure and promotion is riddled with obstacles (2014).

The political climate within the professoriate depicts the reality of the academe; the progress for women is gradual and the competition real. Jacobs (1996) emphasizes that we should view this “optimistically, [because] if a sizeable fraction of women who are currently assistant professors are granted tenure, then the composition of the faculty” changes dramatically (pg. 177). However, from a more realistic perspective, one must note that the number of Hispanic women with PhDs is still much lower than men, making the path towards tenure more challenging.

### **Isolation, Racial and Gender Bias**

For many of the participants, the reality of isolation, racial and gender bias was an experience in the academe. Despite experiencing only minor instances of these, the presence of isolation and bias in the professoriate, exemplifies just some of the challenges that Hispanic women face in academia. While issues of bias and isolation did come up during the interviews, none of the participants suggested that these were significant enough to keep them from their accomplishments. If anything, they mentioned these in passing, nothing more than a brief circumstance.

Unfortunately, incidences of partiality and feelings of loneliness seem to be common in academia. Nunez and Murakami-Ramvalho (2012) argued that this occurs because Latina scholars have a dual status, one based on gender and the other as a member of an underrepresented group. Furthermore, Hale (1987) agrees, suggesting that Hispanic women are subject to sexism and racial stereotyping.

In the following excerpt the participants illustrate their encounter with bias and discrimination.

*I feel most of the blatant racial bias is pretty under wraps...you know it would be extremely subtle if it's there. (Participant 8)*

*I was the only Latina in the department...it was a lonely place, it was challenging, but I kept at it.... I think, you have to work harder, you have to prove yourself harder, but you can make it...I was the only Latina woman and [my colleague was the] only Latino male on campus, we learned to like each other and to work together. (Participant 2)*

*...[my former institution had] a very low minority student population...and it was not a friendly environment for um a woman of color, I think there was like, one black woman and just a few other Hispanics. And so it wasn't a very friendly environment, lots of just stupid racial bias popping up. So that was part of what made me look for a different position. (Participant 8)*

*I got called in...everything that I thought would happen did...basically she said, 'you know we have to have terminal degrees and you don't have your terminal degree,'... and I said, 'excuse me, I don't want to sound rude, but I am in a doctoral program, I'm already at the end of my program...we have to prove ourselves twice...ten times as hard, and I would say, women more than men because still there is that you know difference there. (Participant 2)*



As Medina and Luna (2000) contend, Latinas in the professoriate often have “to learn to excel in an institutional culture that [is] alien to them” (pg. 16). As research shows, Latinas have had to find their voice in the academe as they’ve overcome instances of bias and tokenism (Medina and Luna, 2000). In literature, this is most often accomplished by uncovering the issues of Critical Race Theory or Latino/a Critical Race Theory. With regard to academia, CRT and LatCrit provide a framework to transform the “structural, cultural and interpersonal aspects of [academia which] maintain the subordination” of the Hispanic scholar (Espino, 2012, pg. 57).

*I applied, and once I got in, a teacher, a professor from the school had overheard me talking to another student and he told me ‘you’ll never get into a PhD program’ and I said, ‘well that’s your opinion you can think whatever you want’ so that made me think, I’m gonna show him, I’m gonna get in some PhD program!’ (Participant 8)*

Additionally, participant 8, explained that while she was working on her PhD, some faculty were not encouraging,

*there were some lack of support, some issues, mostly with faculty who weren’t supportive and tried to sabotage my success.*

The isolation and feelings of loneliness also generate a substantial challenge for Hispanic women in the professoriate. Kennelly, Misra and Karides (1999) explain that many women feel isolated and alone because in many cases they are the only faculty member “hired from their particular gender, racial class group in their department or entire university” (pg. 134). They also highlight the sad reality of the collegiate system, which clearly indicates that the hiring practices of many universities and colleges account for the dismal number of underrepresented Hispanic scholars (1999).

*...it's isolating, it's very isolating.... especially when there's not other Latinos in the program. There were three Latinos in my program, and one student got even less support than I did and I don't know why...(Participant 8)*

*Some of the concerns, and again this relates very well to the absence of women in [academia], is that you have a lot of cases where you might be the only woman in your whole department or there may be one or two and so I think there might be some feelings of isolation. (Participant 5)*

*...academia is a pretty unfriendly place in the environment for a woman's entire career. (Participant 6)*

For Latinas in academia, the isolation of being one of a handful, or in some cases the only woman of color, leads to “alienation because their lives and experiences are distorted by being interpreted through a lens that does not acknowledge their realities and experiences” (Akbar, 2002, pg. 37; Kramarae and Spender, 1992, pg.12). Furthermore, their attempts of “breaking these socialization patterns” are hindered because unfortunately most universities are resistant to change (Parsons and Plakhotnic, 2006, pg. 171; Turner and Myers, 2000).

*...especially for many women of color getting into non-traditional PhD programs, that can be a difficulty to deal with because there's still that little bit of bias that says, 'Mexican-American woman going to get a PhD, I mean come on really' because there's still that 'who does she think she is?' ...sometimes it's the students themselves there's that*

*competitive bias, it may not be as obvious or hostile, or openly hostile as it used to be [but it's there]. (Participant 10)*

Participant 10 also adds, that cultural bias still has a prominent effect in some areas of academia.

*...there is a higher incidence of women being heads of household in Hispanic communities, there's still a little bit of a cultural bias of the idea of women not being at home with the kids or not being family oriented...*

*Some students don't really realize this, but maybe it's right in the back of their minds, somewhere that the wrong message has been planted 'don't expect too much from her, she's Latina' and 'they're lazy' or 'she isn't too smart, she's a woman' (Participant 2)*

*...part of it is historically that men have much more been in these positions of authority and moved up and moved on to other things, and that's a historic problem with gender issues, with research women have to tend to work twice as hard, as in many things in order to get the same kind of level of whatever it is... (Participant 10)*

## **Familism**

Familism is a social pattern where the needs of the family supersede the needs of the individual (Desmond & Turley, 2009). While the majority of the participants noted that their families were very supportive of their aspirations, they also stated that oftentimes the cultural patterns of the Hispanic community give way to familism. As they contend, traditionally the responsibility of the primary caregiver is given to the women of the family, and so in pursuit of academia, this might serve as a hindrance to progress. The reality of leaving home for college

can create tension amongst many Latinas, since they risk severing their familial ties (Desmond & Turley, 2009). However, not doing so limits their post-secondary opportunities.

*I tell my students to go out and explore, take the opportunity...its just like 'no'...students [seem] to have a problem never being away from home." (Participant 4)*

*I want our students to know that there's a lot more, know what's out there and then come back and be a leader. (Participant 8)*

*...if they're married and have a supportive spouse, many women...there's that cultural tradition that if she's the wife, and the mother she's the primary caretaker...(Participant 10)*

*So in many disciplines, you will find many women with master's degrees, so they can't move up to a tenure-track because they don't have a PhD. So I mean it just depends, some of them I mean I know with women...as women we encounter, I guess we will have issues...as a mother, you just have to balance your work and your family right and for men, men will tell you 'I'm a parent too' you know, but I think there's more expectations of a woman who's a mother.*

Familism is stronger amongst Latinos compared to other groups, and those effects are usually felt through future generations (Ovink, 2014). The concept of familism dictates that family priorities take precedence over the individual's priorities. In some cases, the woman is expected to be the caregiver and that comes before other priorities.

*the issue of childcare, many of them have children and that's not valued and that might be across the board for all women... but the fact that they have to do it if they have children, they have families, they have to do double duties...( Participant 9)*

Remarkably enough, the university childcare facility is primarily available only for students, not faculty.

*...the childcare is only for students and faculty, if there's space, then faculty can send their children. (Participant 9)*

Ovink (2014) adds that, traditionally Latinas were expected to take on the role of primary caregiver, looking out for the siblings and aging parents, while men are usually deemed the breadwinners of their families.

*... I think as a woman, those personal challenges that occur when you're studying and you're working on professional [advancement]... as a woman, I have to go grocery shopping, plan a meal, cook...and on top [of that], being a professional with more and more demands...I also have a home, a family, and a husband, it's just added responsibility. (Participant 1)*

*...I think it's a combination of factors, I think just generally, traditionally, women have had more family responsibility and it makes it more difficult...they have a lot of competing time demands...(Participant 5)*

She adds that UTRGV has begun to try to change some of its policies in order to provide more flexibility for its female faculty.

*That's also something we are trying to change...because we do realize that women face a different set of time demands than men. I think especially when we consider Hispanic women, because there are additional cultural factors, again like a whole, there's a role of being the caretaker. Taking care of the kids, but also it could be your parents or extended family and that can make it difficult for women faculty if they're on the tenure track or the track toward tenure.*

Medina and Luna (2000) contend that, “the mothers and mother-images for Latina women have traditionally been dynamic and determined women who have prevailed over their own social obstacles” (pg. 7). For Participant 3, the sobering reality of trying to maneuver the university's workload and motherhood has been challenging. When asked if Lecture I faculty are as involved in research activities she stated that, *I'm [also] a mom, so my time is already so divided that what's suffered is the scholarship.*

Participant 10 explained how the cultural factors, often affect how far Latinas are able to go within the academe.

*...there is that cultural tradition that mom or the wife has to be there, and that the support for the husband, the idea of sharing the responsibilities and salary making, equal is okay except there is still that idea that the husband is a little bit more important to the family which is a cultural thing.*

Correspondingly, the education of women can suffer when parental concerns about loss of daughter's time for household chores take effect (Chandler, 1996). Participant 7 spoke of the circumstances for many Hispanic students, pursuing higher education and academia: “...[our

*students] have families, other responsibilities it's not that [they] don't have the desire or the skills, it's just that life happens...*" As a result, familism often impedes the progress towards higher education for many Latinas, because as participant 3 explains many of life's responsibilities often restrict Hispanic women, even keeping them from attending class.

*...some of my students, they're moms and so sometimes they'll need to bring their kid [to class] or sometimes they don't come to class...*

She further discussed how cultural norms can impede Latinas from pursuing higher education.

*So you're looking at some of the students, they're some of the first ones to go to college in their family...some are the first generation and there's just different expectations of them because there's always the pressure of marriage and family.*

For many Hispanic women the academic and familial cultures often cause a 'cultural clash,' creating dissonance for those pursuing academia (Gonzalez, 2006). So, familism often deters many young women from attainment. In the Rio Grande Valley, many women are torn from leaving behind their families and going off to venture into the unknown.

*...maybe they don't want to, some can't leave the Valley they have families, many of our students are married and have children and have families and they take care of their parents and they are the family income provider, they might not be able to leave...the females that I know of, they are more open to leaving, the female students, but they won't necessarily go beyond Texas. (Participant 9)*

Ovink (2014) alleges that, Latinas often feel pressured to complete their college education, as a means of asserting their independence, although they are more likely to attend a college closer to home compared to Latinos. As a means of exercising their independence, they are willing to move, albeit nearby. This clearly depicts the circumstances of familism and how it often influences Latinas in pursuit of academia.

### **Factors Which Foster Professional Achievement in Academia**

In interviewing the ten participants, they discussed the factors, which foster professional achievement in academia. The factors they shared were: mentorship, achievement motivation, strong support system, and collective networking.

#### **Mentorship**

Mentoring programs are substantial to the success of Latina scholars, because they ensure that female minority scholars can navigate the tenure process effectively and achieve uniformity with other minority and gender groups (Ortega-Liston and Soto, 2014). According to researchers, mentoring programs benefit the retention and promotion rates of Hispanic women. Accordingly, Nora and Crisp (2007) identified four components to mentoring, which are: emotional support, career and goal setting support, content level knowledge, which aims to advance a student's knowledge of their academic discipline, and specification of a role model. Conversely, Rose (2000) created the Ideal Mentor Scale, which illustrates the three major characteristics doctoral students want in a mentor. These are: Integrity, Guidance, and Relationship. Unfortunately, the majority of mentoring studies focus on undergraduate students, rather than post-secondary students, it should also be noted that these seldom, if ever include



significant numbers of Hispanics students, while results involving gender have been mixed (Rudolph, et al., 2015).

The majority of participants discussed the importance of having mentors throughout their PhD programs, and into their positions as professors. The influence of mentoring programs depicts the positive experiences, specifically for women in academia. For most of these women, mentors and advisers played a crucial role in encouraging them to pursue academia.

*...I met the faculty and they immediately involved me, I became the head of the honor society, I wrote in the newsletter for them, I mean, they just really included me and I liked what they did, and I thought, 'this is what I want to do!' I don't know why, but I felt so at home. (Participant 1)*

*...it was my advisor...she saw the potential, she said 'you might want to do this,' she was the one who lit the fire under me, and once I got focused I was there... that woman [was] all over the globe and basically she was a strong advocate for women, so she pushed us like, 'you've got to get your doctorate, you've got to get into academia!' (Participant 2)*

Participant 2 also explained that despite her reluctance to do so, her professor was able to get her to enroll in two other programs.

*...but because of [my professor] I basically came out with a degree in administration and reading credentials. So it set me up. As I [continued in administration] I said, 'hey this is cool!'*

*... I thought for sure I was gonna go into medical school, um, but then I walked into [this one] class and I fell in love with it and my professor just became my mentor...*

*(Participant 3)*

She continued,

*But for him to tell me, 'no you're really good at this, have you considered majoring in this?' That really put me on a different path...*

Gonzalez (2006) explains that “Latinas [are most] successful when they [are] integrated with similar-minded scholars who support and encourage [them]” (pg. 351). Armstrong (2011) notes, that research on the mentoring of female graduate students, by female faculty further exposes the issues of gender disparity in academia.

As participant 5 stated,

*If all [Hispanic female students are] doing is taking these classes from men then it's almost like...even if you don't think about it consciously, you may not see yourself in that role... with new faculty they are assigned a mentor when they come in, um and that person is designed so that the faculty member has somebody they can ask questions*

She added,

*...you can never have too many mentors, so with the Associate to Full they have mentors, with the Leadership Institute, they have mentors as well... (Participant 5)*

*I have mentors and professors from other universities that I've had um you know find me scholarships, send me scholarships, ask me how I'm doing, uh you know really push me.*

*Even here I have another [colleague] who's like, 'hey I just got this sent to me, I think it's more you than me, you should apply. (Participant 4)*

A report on Latinas and the Educational Pipeline (2016) emphasizes the importance of retaining more Latinas in academia. According to the report, these women would inevitably become mentors and role models showing their mentees “how to effectively balance the demands of a white male-dominated academy while maintaining the traditions and customs of the Latina culture” (pg. 4). Thus, what the research reveals is that employing more Latina scholars, fosters the professional growth of those they mentor.

*I had those mentors telling me, 'you should be applying here' or 'why don't you go to this other program' and so that's when I learned about graduate school... (Participant 8)*

So now, she does the same for her students,

*I think it's important to motivate this group and represent minorities and women... whether they get a PhD and teach in a university or whether they go into industry, we just have very few and so uh the idea there is to encourage them to get a PhD and we need more diversity in academia. (Participant 8)*

She also explained how Hispanic female students are more inclined to pursue careers in academia when they see someone like them.

*...if somebody looks like you, you're gonna see that person as a role model, it makes a big difference...I never encountered a Hispanic female as an instructor, when I was in undergraduate or graduate school, but I had a Mexican American professor in graduate school, he's the one that motivated me, he's a great motivator. (Participant 8)*

In one study, the “productivity of PhDs was examined in relation to gender of” their adviser, what the study found was that the productivity and achievement was greater for those who had an adviser of the same gender (Menges and Exum, 1983, pg. 123).

*...the teacher was a Latina, psychology [and] she was a PhD student, and she had a masters in psychology but she was getting a PhD...and so I thought, ‘I wanna do what she does’ because she was really good and I wanted to teach, I thought it would be good to contribute, and a good way to give back to the community... you need to see people who look like you and to have mentors and luckily she did become a mentor... once I got into grad school I did find an excellent Latina mentor and she still mentors me and helps me...(Participant 9)*

*I think if you have women who are mentors, they understand more of where you’re coming from, there’s a personal connection, someone else may not understand.  
(Participant 5)*

*...I think you need a female mentor to guide you through the process....I think there might be more similarities than what the men have to go through. (Participant 3)*

Conversely, participant 4 argues that,

*...my dissertation chair is a man who has nothing to do with my topic (she laughed)...but I’m able to talk to him freely, I think you need a mentor that you’re able to speak to and that you feel comfortable with, not a person that you have a very ‘yes sir, no sir’ you have to be comfortable to ask questions. (Participant 4)*

She also added that,

*...as an undergrad the professor that helped me get into the program was female and to this day I still speak to her...I've cried to her. When I was in the program they set me up with a different mentor and it was very much a more formal relationship, very much 'yes ma'am, no ma'am, thank you for my edits' and then walk out. So then I had two females and it was two very different relationships...*

One of the most effective ways to retain Latinas in the academe is to provide mentoring programs, “because mentoring programs, ‘can lessen the feelings of loneliness and isolation that occur] when they are the only minority in their department’” (Wolfe, Arroyos-Jurado & Coppola, 2006, pg. 508); Gilroy, 2004). It is often found that effective mentorships in the professoriate for women, cultivate their development in several ways, one that includes “integrating [these women] into the departmental fabric” (Farmbry, 2007, pg. 121; Davidson and Foster Johnson, 2001).

*... A teacher that I had while at UTPA, she's the one that encouraged me to really get into research, into academia, she says, 'we need more women in showing students that women can be professors and all these kinds of things' and that's sort of what lead me into [this] ...strong women support each other...mentor each other...and to end on a more positive note, that's one of the things I see at UTRGV.*

*I think it is my way of giving back, like the way in which professors treated me that they saw something in me, sometimes you don't see that in yourself, strength or whatever, and I tend to do the same thing with my students. (Participant 2)*

While mentorship programs provide minority women with the guidance and support they need to maneuver academia, the research on mentoring programs “for marginalized groups in an academic setting is scarce” (Chandler, 1996, pg. 83). Furthermore, the limited research that exists tends to identify the experiences of men in the academe, subsequently using them as the standard by which we study Latinas’ mentorship experiences in academia (1996).

### **Achievement Motivation**

The majority of the participants described how their desire and aspiration to succeed, lead them towards attainment in academia. As Fortune, Cavazos and Lee (2005) explain, individuals with high motivation are more likely to prosper in their careers. In what they coin as expectancy-value theory, they suggest that there are several determinants to achievement. (2005) Most notably, they explain how value, intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, serve as factors towards academic tasks. Allen (1999) contends that persistence, ambition and the aspiration to achieve in college are often strong indicators of academic attainment. Furthermore, Nettles et al., (1986) found that “aspirations toward a college degree were a significant factor that affected” minority students (Allen, 1999, pg.463). Arcuri, Daly and Mercado (1982) cite an individual’s level of motivation and effort as the single best predictor of academic success.

*...we have students who are going through some tough challenges, ill husbands, some who are ill themselves....and the one’s who really want it, it may take them a little longer, but they get it! (Participant 1)*

*... you gotta ask, you can't wait for people to knock on your door that's not gonna happen... You get confidence in yourself, and sometimes not everything will work, but you notice that there's that possibility that it could! (Participant 8)*

*... probably a mix of things um I have always felt about myself that I'm not necessarily brilliant, but that I will work very hard if it's something I'm interested in. (Participant 6)*

As Pittman and Boggiano (1992) found that “self-determination decreases and motivation is impaired when external rewards or other controlling strategies are used,” as opposed to an individual’s need to accomplish their goals based on internal desires (pg. 21). In other words, it is the individual’s “innate desire to satisfy internal interests that is seen as consistently enhancing self-determination and motivation” (1999, pg. 467). As Heyman (2008) asserts, “the way individuals conceptualize ability has important implications for how they cope with the academic challenges they face” (pg. 361). So, when individuals “hold incremental beliefs about ability, in which they view ability as a malleable quality” they are more likely to approach academic obstacles as nothing more than something that is easily overcome (2008).

*A lot of it is...a big part of it is that I always, had from the earliest time, I always had, sort of an intrinsic drive to learn, to want to know...the idea of knowing not just the thing itself, but why and this and that... (Participant 10)*

*I think for me a lot of it is that I'm competitive and so I'm driven to always want to be on top... if someone tells me I can't do something that motivates me to prove them wrong. (Participant 3)*

She illustrated an example of this, by briefly discussing a situation she encountered while in graduate school.

*...when I got to college, they were giving a tour of the campus and they have what's called 'The Honor's Wall' and they had a plaque with student names, so I asked 'what's this?'...they were so dismissive like, 'oh it's not gonna happen' and I was like, 'oh no!?' that's all it took was for someone to say, 'it's not gonna happen' and then I want it, so I'm very driven that way...*

The drive to succeed is often lead by intrinsic motivation, which is a desire to engage in an activity for it's own sake, and often plays an intricate role in academic attainment (Fortune, Lee and Cavazos, 2005). According to Pajares (1996) "knowledge, skill and prior [accomplishment] are poor indicators of subsequent attainment" because a person's beliefs about their abilities "powerfully influence the ways in which they behave" (pg. 543). As Allen explains, persistence and motivation may be especially significant when considering its influence on specific subgroups of minorities. It is also what many Hispanics call *ganas*, or the desire to attain a goal or complete a task. The *ganas* that is, as Allen says, often considered to be the "missing link in many marginal performers" (1999, pg. 461).

*I am who I am because I tend to say 'watch me' anybody that doubts me I say, 'watch me.' The key to my academic achievements, basically has been that whatever opportunities have been there, I drive right straight through them...it's the drive!*  
*(Participant 2)*



## **Strong Support Network**

Each of the scholars I interviewed noted that the support, from both family and friends as they pursued their path in academia, was significant to their accomplishments. Research has shown that strong support networks influence an individual's academic attainment. As a report on Latinas in the Educational Pipeline established, the most accomplished scholars, depict the support of their families, while the emphasizing the need for a strong work ethic and "concrete support of their academic efforts" (2010, pg. 4).

*I was never directly, always encouraged, but never directly demanded to do well in school, a lot of that sort of came from my internal personality...but I had a very supportive extended family, my parents, my grandparents...who always indulged me whenever I'd ask questions...and I was always supported in whatever I wanted...*  
(Participant 10)

*My parents never necessarily said, 'don't do it' they always just said, 'if that's what you want to do, then fine.'* (Participant 9)

*She would say, 'mijita go ask... my mom would say, 'you go ask, you've got the grades!'*  
*So I would go.* (Participant 8)

Fligstein and Fernandez (1985) found that mothers tend to demonstrate higher levels of motivation for Latina youth, which is often linked, to educational attainment. In fact, studies have shown that strong support from family members plays an intricate role in the academic achievements of Hispanic women (Vasquez, 1978).

*...my mom was equally encouraging because her parents, who were wonderful parents, but they had an old fashioned mentality. My mom wanted to become an airline stewardess, but she had to go study away from Brownsville to do it...and [her parents were] like, 'why aren't you gonna get married and have a family?' But then when she had us, she wanted something a little different...she wanted for us to choose (Participant 1)*

In a report for Latinas and the Educational Pipeline, the study illustrates that “high achieving Latinas” live in homes where the stereotypical patriarchal dynamic is nonexistent. (2010, pg. 4). Many of the women, had very supportive families, although most of them had minimal education. (2010)

*My parents were always supportive; they were...we were new to this; I was a first generation college student. They had no idea how to help me, but they didn't discourage me... they never once told me 'no you can't do it' or 'you shouldn't do that.' They made me feel very good about what I was doing... (Participant 4)*

*I was very fortunate because my family was extremely supportive... I'm the middle kid, my sister started college and didn't finish, but then my brother was five years younger and he saw me finish and get my PhD and said 'that's really neat!' so he went off and got a PhD as well, my dad loves saying that he has two kids with PhDs and they didn't pay anything because we had scholarships that covered our education. (Participant 5)*

What researchers have found is a correlation amongst Latino familial support and opportunities towards academic attainment. While, many will argue that familism, deters Hispanic women from professional achievement, Cavazos et al. (2010) found that “family [is] an integral component of personal resilience” (pg. 176). Thus, familial support is central to the fulfillment of academic endeavors.

*My father would always say ‘you two girls,’ because there’s two of us, ‘you two can do anything you want in life, don’t let anybody in life push you or pull you down, you keep going forward, you wanna do something just do it, don’t be asking, just do it!’ (Participant 2)*

*...they were always supportive and encouraging even though they had expected me to do these things, and so...they’ve supported every decision I’ve made in my life...between my parents and a very tightknit circle of friends who never judge... (Participant 10)*

*...I was really fortunate to live in a home where I didn’t realize I was a Hispanic woman...dad and mom were like, ‘your life starts after your graduate from college, so I knew nothing more that you’re just gonna go to college...they weren’t rich, they made sacrifices.’ (Participant 1)*

*When I went back for my second master’s I had a kid and that was very challenging, and I was doing a full time job, my parents were around so they helped me. (Participant 4)*

Furthermore, having minimal support can often hinder prospects in the professoriate. As Participant 10 notes, the effects of not having a shoulder to lean on, or someone to confide in, deter many women in pursuit of higher education.

*...if you don't have a support network that believes that you can do it, and to encourage you during the downs um it can be, it can become very difficult. I have unfortunately seen some graduate school colleagues who have never finished their dissertation because they don't have that support network...*

### **Collective Networking**

In pursuit of academia, it is imperative to interact with others, in order to establish connections within the university system. In this section I will specifically focus on the Women's Faculty Network, as it was mentioned by each of the ten participants. This organization, focuses on connecting the faculty of women from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and also offers many opportunities for professional development and initiatives targeting the promotion and retention specifically, women of color.

Networking in the academe is necessary in order to further opportunities with like-minded individuals (Hale and Kelly, 1989). In doing so, Latinas are likely to gain opportunities towards professional advancement, by getting to know and making connections with other people in and out of their disciplines. As Sadl argues, if we are to understand the concept of a meritocracy, the individual should be rewarded on merit alone, however within the case of academia, merit alone is not enough to attain professional prosperity (2009). Rather, the individual must participate in collective networking in order to establish social relations with other scholars.

*it's an organization here at UTRGV by women... what's interesting is that the work they do is mainly for female faculty and staff... they'll go to the faculty senate, they'll go to the president with issues that need to be taken care of, but it's mostly for professional development. (Participant 1)*

Sadly, women are often excluded from these networks and so they are unable to have say so on important decisions about rank, status and academic conditions (O'Leary and Mitchell, 1990). Thus, at UTRGV the Women's Faculty Network, brings together its female scholars to discuss the topics, which are essential to their concerns.

*...[WFN] is looking at ways to bring up issues that women had concerns with, we wanted them to have a forum for women to feel empowered and we found that the Women's Faculty Network was just a very natural vehicle to do that...there seemed to have been some very pent up demands. (Participant 5)*

*...if I bring a particular situation to the Women's Faculty Network and [then] bring it to the Provost, [and] the Provost says, 'eh we can't do anything about it' and we say 'okay I guess so'...(Participant 6)*

*I know that [the university has] the Women's Faculty group and they hold meetings and also they advertise writing sessions and I know right now for the summer...if you finish a*

*writing seminar if you finish writing by the end of the summer you get \$600 in travel funds... Participant 4)*

*It started at UTPA...the WFN kind of took the lead on creating a branch at the Brownsville campus, so it was one of the first ones before the faculty senate... there are 7 committees and each one tries to provide different support for women faculty. So there's a committee on tenure and promotion, one on wellness and health and one on achievements in advancement...there's a seat for WFN rep in several university organizations so that there's a voice specifically from women faculty. (Participant 3)*

Professional growth in the academe is affected by what many researchers call, social capital. The theory of social capital is understood as a resource, which results from an individual's participation in collective networks (Sadl, 2009). According to Nahapiet and Goshal (1998), social capital can serve as an asset to women of color, in that they are not just interacting with many different kinds of people, but receiving substantial benefits and support through these interactions.

*Within the Women's Faculty Network, they're also creating a mentoring program, because you can never have enough mentors. (Participant 5)*

*...this program that the university has and it's called ADVANCE, and it's ADVANCE and it was a grant that they have received, to advance especially women, minority women into leadership roles, understanding that this was new to me I applied right away to be a part of that program... what was important was...[we were] forming networks, that was what*

*was important and so then this next semester I got into ADVANCE II the next level.*

*(Participant 7)*

*Yeah so through the ADVANCE grant we have what's called the Women's Faculty Network and so there we have monthly get togethers and it'll be a specific topic or maybe an external person will come and speak... and so faculty from both campus are welcomed...(Participant 8)*

As Sadl (2009) explains, networks such as the WFN, are “important providers in information” and also establish solidarity and influence amongst women of color. However as Bourdieu (1986) notes, social capital is “not a given and is usually a product of an investment strategy, establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (pg. 252). So, if we are to take Bourdieu's definition literally, we should view social capital as being a powerful asset, which provides the individual with useful resources and connections.

*...when I think about, one of the reasons why [we called] it the Women's Faculty Network, is to give women the opportunity to network. (Participant 5)*

*It's fun working with other people! I love working with other people! I'd rather write an article with someone else, than to do it on my own, you learn a lot more, you're forced to discuss and you're forced to think about things that way.*

*(Participant 9)*

*it's a group that was originally started and funded The National Science Foundation [I think], and at UTPA they got this started...the focus of it, was because UTPA is a Hispanic Serving University (HSU), the specifics of the WFN and the other part of it is the ADVANCE...was to actually promote women, especially women of color in lots of different places... it's specifically to try, and the 'of color' was specifically for Hispanic/Latina women especially in the sciences (Participant 10)*

She continued on by discussing the “Associate to Full Program”

*...one of the initiatives that the WFN spearheads is a program that's called, 'Associate to Full' and the idea is that associates that are women, become mentors and give training sessions to women faculty primarily to give them guidelines...because one of the things that happens for many women, and this isn't just Hispanic women but, I think many women in academia, you end up having and if you look at sort of the real nationwide, the numbers of women going into full professorships are outnumbered by men (Participant 10)*

While she recognizes, that not as many Hispanic females are a part of the university's current administrative team, she notes that,

*...the fact that there is a presence of women who have some major power, some decision makers, is very helpful especially for junior faculty and then the WFN is definitely helpful. (Participant 10)*

Thus, the WFN looks to overcome the ‘old boy network’ of the university, which is based on the traditional and patriarchal power systems of society. Sadly, as history shows, the hierarchy controls most university systems; they tend to be male dominated and often exclude women from having a voice. The expectation is that through this newfound initiative not only



will Hispanic female scholars, but also the general female faculty of UTRGV, gain further authority in the decisions, which affect them.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Latinas in the academe, specifically with regard to those in the professoriate, at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Through the use of the personal narrative, the stories of Hispanic female scholars at UTRGV illustrated the unique and ill-ignored view of Latinas in academia. Accordingly, the study found eight major themes emerging from the interviewees' narratives. Ultimately, there are a multitude of situations and challenges, which hinder progress, as well as circumstances, which foster professional advancement.

#### **Conclusion and Discussion**

While Hispanic women have not yet shattered the glass ceiling in academia, and the insufficient scholarship remains a substantial concern, the progress within the professoriate is encouraging. At the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, administration and policymakers have taken steps to promote the professional growth of its female faculty. These efforts aim to enhance interest in STEM centered fields and also serve to encourage younger generations of Latinas to become passionate about education.

The findings of the research are not at all similar to my anticipated results. My initial assumptions made me feel that each of the women would be swayed by the cultural aspects of the Hispanic culture. That is not to imply that those issues are insignificant, nor that they do not exist, however they did not seem to hinder the advancements of the scholars I interviewed. Rather, each of them mentioned, familial support, mentorship and encouragement as aspects that aided in their success.

Furthermore, aspects of race, while relevant to the study and significant in the experiences of the participants, were not enough to deter their success. While the issue of race is prevalent in understanding the challenges of the marginalized individual, the interviewees did not just focus solely on racial issues when discussing the challenges of the academe. Rather, the participants seemed to focus on what led to their personal achievements, alluding to their strong character, high enthusiasm and achievement motivation as factors towards attainment.

Moreover, while theorists argue whether structure or agency play the most fundamental role in influencing social phenomena, one cannot disregard the significance of each of these paradigms on the individual (Maslak, 2008). As Maslak contends (2008), one-sided adherence to either the macrostructural perspective or the micro-individual perspective results in the inability to comprehensively depict existing sociological phenomena, “thereby ignoring the interactions among them” (pg. xvii). So, with regard to educational attainment, each paradigm is substantially as significant as the other.

As Critical Race Theory and LatCrit Theory emphasize, the subtle microinsults, microassaults of racism, while emphasizing that “people of color’s experiential knowledge [is] valid, legitimate and appropriate” (Urrieta, Mendez, & Rodriguez, 2015, pg. 1156). The study found that the significance of ‘storytelling’ is in depicting the specific circumstances of the

Hispanic woman within the professoriate. So, the “narrative is valuable in the study of race because [it] link[s] the individual’[s] experience” allowing society to “forge a better understanding of race” (Lazos Vargas, 2003, pp. 13-14).

Furthermore, the analysis showed that many of the concerns and recommendations found in the previous studies and discussed in Chapter I are still relevant to Hispanic female scholars today. For instance, many of the women discussed the need for mentors, and moral support. They also explained that the need for more information on topics relating to Latinas in academia is essential. Many of them also spoke about their isolating experiences in the academe and how at times, they did have to prove themselves more so than the men. Moreover, like the literature portrays, Hispanic women are often relegated to the lower ranks of the university, most often getting stuck at the associate level of teaching, finding it difficult to move up to a tenured position. This illustrates the significant educational pipeline problem that exists after the receipt of the Ph.D. (Monforti & Michelson, 2008).

Women, regardless of ethnicity, still have a long way to go in shattering the glass ceiling of the academe. The political climate of the university can often affect the professional opportunities of many women seeking to move up the university ranks. Higher demands for minority professors also discourage many women of color, in that it increases their workload and personal responsibilities (Escobedo, 1980). Moreover, the majority of the participants agreed that familism can impede professional growth, although it did not seem to effect any of them. Correspondingly, most of the interviewees mentioned some sort of experience with isolation, racial bias and/or gender discrimination, although this too did not seem to deter their success.

The factors, which were found to most often foster achievement, were: mentorship, achievement motivation, a strong support network, and collective networking. Notably, each of

the participants also emphasized how strong character, *ganas*, mentorship, and familial support fostered attainment. So, what the researcher found was that mentoring programs and collective networking are often very significant in because they aid in guiding and ‘opening up’ opportunities for Hispanic women.

### **Implications for Future Research**

It is my recommendation that in order for UTRGV to continue its progress toward the promotion, retention and employment of Hispanic women, the administration *must* consider the extension of the Women’s Faculty Network, as well as initiatives central to promotion. Each of the women interviewed, mentioned the influence of the program within the university. The organization, which began in October of 2012, at the University of Texas Pan-American, became a substantial component in not only employing more Latinas, but also in “increasing the representation of [Hispanics] at all levels of leadership” (WFN, 2012, para. 1). Moreover, it affords all female faculty an opportunity to interact with women outside their discipline, establishing networks, in order to foster prospects within academia.

It should be noted that the WFN is one part of the ADVANCED initiative. The overall project, funded by the National Science Foundation, strives to encourage all women, but specifically women of color, to pursue a degree in the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematical Fields (STEM). The program also offers other opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, The Associate to Full Professor Program, The ADVANCE Graduate Research Assistant Program, and other professional prospects. The funded project is the university’s answer to the gender gap within academia. Thus, what the five-year initiative hopes to

accomplish is to foster an environment in which all female scholars at UTRGV are afforded the opportunity toward advancement.

What I also found was that mentoring is significant in that it affords women the opportunity to gain the perspective of someone who's had similar experiences. Accordingly, the guidance and familiarity of these women encourages newer generations to pursue academia. So, mentorship programs are necessary in stimulating social capital amongst women, in order to promote a positive familiarity with the academe, and to improve the retention rates within the professoriate. Moreover, university administration *must* recognize the asset that women of color and minorities are to the institution. What I gathered from the research was that the inadequate literature on Hispanic women's issues conveys an increased need for further analysis in the area of ethnic and women's studies. So, the recruitment, retention and promotion of Hispanic females, further influences what is written, researched and studied.

The limited number of Hispanic women in the academe suggests a need to increase opportunities and accessibility toward higher education, specifically in the Rio Grande Valley. While Latina female faculty, outnumber the total amount of 'white' female faculty; the number of Hispanic female scholars with tenure is abysmally low. If we examine the data from 2015 and 2016, we notice that there is a slight increase of Hispanic female faculty members on the track towards tenure. In 2015, the number of Hispanic women on tenure track was at 9.8%, with a slight increase to 10.3% in 2016. Furthermore, of the 256 female scholars who identified as either Latino or Hispanic in 2015, approximately 20.7% were tenured, with a slight decline in 2016 to 18.8%. In comparison, of the 172 'white' female scholars at UTRGV, in 2015, 45.9% were tenured, with 16.9% on tenure track. In 2016, from the 178 'white' female faculty, 33.7% had tenure, with 20.2% on the track towards tenure. Despite a slight improvement for Hispanic

women, the numbers depict the sad reality of academia; Hispanic women are often the minority. So, as the institution's enrollment continues to grow, and student admission increases, the number of Latina faculty must also progress.

UTRGV's Enrollment Profile for the Fall of 2016, shows that 89% of the student population is Hispanic, with 57% of this population being female. Consequently, while the rise of female faculty members has improved, slightly, there is certainly a ways to go. Thus, I found that the significance of retaining and promoting more Hispanic women, also influences younger generations, by inspiring them to further their academic careers. Seeing someone who looks like you or who has encountered many of the same challenges makes the individual feel less isolated and more at ease in higher education.

Upon further analysis I also recommend that a similar initiative be implemented for university female students. What research shows is that Latinas ultimately face challenges, which are separate from Hispanic men and 'white' women. The foundation of an organization, which promotes the pursuit of higher education for the female student population of UTRGV, would serve to help Latinas overcome the challenges of academics, while also offering guidance and mentorship from its female faculty. Many of the women that I interviewed, discussed the influence their mentors had. Some mentioned that it was the guidance and persuasion of their advisers that lead them into higher education, so the implementation of a similar undergraduate initiative is essential in overcoming the leaky educational pipeline.

Furthermore, it is also crucial that UTRGV policymakers continue to communicate with local district leaders, in order to collectively promote higher education within community schools and local districts. I found that initiatives, which promote early childhood education,

and those, which encourage more female participation in STEM programs, are able to foster an interest in higher education. In other words, it is imperative to get students thinking about academics and higher education as early as possible, in order to stimulate an interest in education.

The information presented in this study serves as a means of recognizing aspects of gender, race and the inequities of a leaky educational pipeline. The limited number of Hispanic women in the upper ranks of the academe brings about an unfortunate reality of academia; Latinas are *still* a marginalized, and frequently forgotten group. The numbers depict that the “[amount] of Hispanics in [the] academe decreases as the rank increases, between assistant professor and associate professor ranks” (Escobedo, 1980, pg. 9). Furthermore, what the data shows is that, Latinos outnumber Latinas 3 to 1 at the associate and assistant levels of academia (1980). Yet, these statistics are even more shocking when considering that Hispanic females surpass Hispanic males in both bachelor and graduate degree attainment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 656, 000 Latinos obtain their graduate or professional degrees, while over 798,000 women graduate with a masters or higher.

The purpose of this study goes far beyond the barriers toward tenure or the circumstances impeding success. Instead, it is my hope that progress in scholarship, along with improvements in higher education will promote and foster advancements for women in the field of academia. Women, and most certainly women of color experience multiple marginalities. Consequently, Hispanic women have distinctive challenges, so “it is important to acknowledge, that [Latinas] are not all the same and institutions should not expect them to behave as such” (Viernes Turner, 2001, pg. 79). Topics and studies pertaining to Hispanic women, as well as challenges towards promotion and retention must be documented. Likewise, research on females in higher



education, must become a focal point of consideration and inquiry. As the research shows, the personal narrative promotes an understanding of the experiences of the Hispanic woman and should be employed in further research. Researchers must recognize the diversity and distinctiveness of topics relating to Hispanic women, so that their stories are not overlooked.

In closing, each of the women I interviewed had their own unique story to tell. Through the toughest of times, the most challenging circumstances and isolating moments, they endured. Through their own persistence, drive and determination, along with the support of their loved ones, they found attainment in the academe. I am often reminded of what Susana Martinez (2012); the governor of New Mexico once said when she spoke of her accomplishments, “success, they taught me, is built on the foundation of courage, hard-work and individual responsibility. Despite what some would have us believe, success is not built on resentment [or] fear.”

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## APPENDIX A

## DEFINITION OF LATINO, HISPANIC, CRITICAL RACE THEORY

### LATCRIT THEORY, TENURE and TENURE TRACK

CNN defines the terms Latino and Hispanic as follows:

Hispanic: a term which was first used in the 1970s during the Nixon administration, in an attempt to count people from Cuba, Mexico, Central and South America.

Latino: was first used during the 2000 census as a more inclusive way of including mixed races as “mestizos” and “mulatos” in Latin America

The UCLA School of Public Affairs, defines Critical Race Theory as follows:

Critical Race Theory: recognizes that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the American society. The individual racist need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture.

Purdue OWL defines Critical Race Theory as follows:

Critical Race Theory: is a theoretical and interpretive mode that examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression. In adopting this approach, CRT scholars attempt to understand how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how they are able to represent themselves to counter prejudice.

Dolores Delgado Bernal defines LatCrit theory as follows:

LatCritTheory: a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression.

UTRGV defines tenure and tenure-track as follows:

Tenure: Status of a personnel position, or a person occupying a position or occupation, with respect to permanence of position

Tenure Track: Status of personnel positions that lead to consideration for tenure

## APPENDIX B

Figure 1

## UTRGV Campus Locations Throughout the Rio Grande Valley

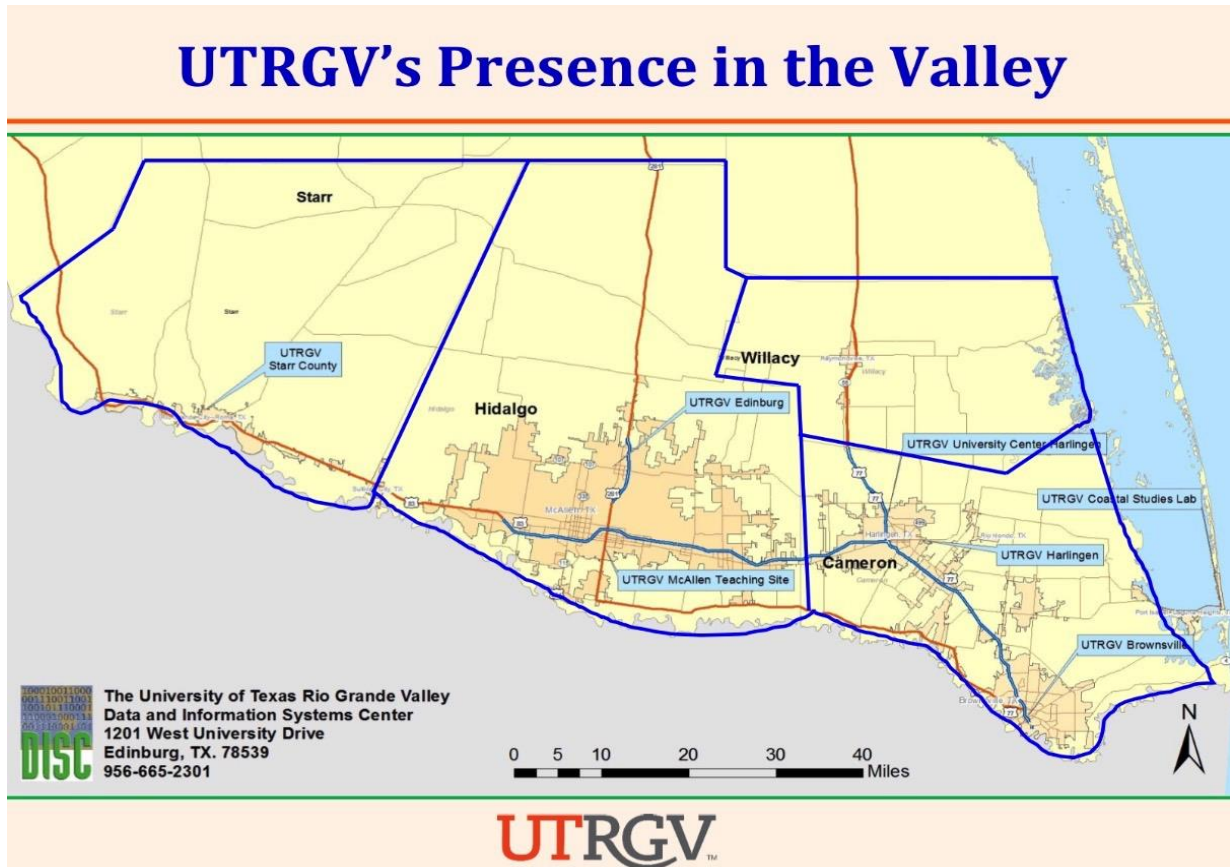


Figure 2

**Faculty by Rank and Tenure Status-UTRGV-Fall 2016**

Rank	Tenure			Total
	Non Tenured	Tenured	On Tenure Track	
Professor	-	170	-	170
Associate Professor	-	280	1	281
Assistant Professor	-	-	232	232
Other Faculty	627	-	0	627
Teaching Assistant	35	-	0	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>1,345</b>

Source: CBM008, Fall 2016, Strategic Analysis & Institutional Reporting, UTRGV.

Figure 3A

## Faculty by Gender, Rank, Tenure and Ethnicity

MALE FACULTY - FALL 2016 - UTRGV					
Race/Ethnicity	Rank	Tenure Status			Total
		Non Tenured	Tenured	On Tenure Track	
White	Professor	0	66	0	66
	Associate Professor	0	92	0	92
	Assistant Professor	0	0	54	54
	Other Faculty	82	0	0	82
	Teaching Assistant	2	0	0	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>296</b>
Hispanic or Latino Origin	Professor	0	19	0	19
	Associate Professor	0	34	0	34
	Assistant Professor	0	0	31	31
	Other Faculty	143	0	0	143
	Teaching Assistant	8	0	0	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>235</b>
Other Races including International	Professor	0	26	0	26
	Associate Professor	0	45	0	45
	Assistant Professor	0	0	44	44
	Other Faculty	36	0	0	36
	Teaching Assistant	1	0	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>152</b>
Unknow or Not Reported	Professor	0	17	0	17
	Associate Professor	0	11	1	12
	Assistant Professor	0	0	12	12
	Other Faculty	28	0	0	28
	Teaching Assistant	3	0	0	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>72</b>

FEMALE FACULTY - FALL 2016 - UTRGV					
Race/Ethnicity	Rank	Tenure Status			Total
		Non Tenured	Tenured	On Tenure Track	
White	Professor	0	22	0	22
	Associate Professor	0	38	0	38
	Assistant Professor	0	0	36	36
	Other Faculty	81	0	0	81
	Teaching Assistant	1	0	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>178</b>
Hispanic or Latino Origin	Professor	0	15	0	15
	Associate Professor	0	36	0	36
	Assistant Professor	0	0	28	28



Figure 3B

**Female Faculty: Other Races/ Unknown or Not Reported Fall 2016**

	Other Faculty	176	0	0	176
	Teaching Assistant	16	0	0	16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Other Races including International</b>	Professor	0	3	0	3
	Associate Professor	0	18	0	18
	Assistant Professor	0	0	20	20
	Other Faculty	46	0	0	46
	Teaching Assistant	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Unknow or Not Reported</b>	Professor	0	2	0	2
	Associate Professor	0	6	0	6
	Assistant Professor	0	0	7	7
	Other Faculty	35	0	0	35
	Teaching Assistant	4	0	0	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>54</b>

Source: CBM008, Fall 2016, Strategic Analysis & Institutional Reporting, UTRGV.

## APPENDIX C

## PERSONAL NARRATIVES

What follows are the personal narratives of each individual participant. Each entry is separate and their respective page can be found within the TABLE OF CONTENTS page of this study.

### PARTICIPANT 1

The interview with participant 1 was conducted in her office at the university. The participant is a faculty member with the College of Education and P-16 Integration. The interview started with a brief discussion of her roles and responsibilities within the university. She was very welcoming and very open about her experiences in academia. She explained to me that from an early age her parents were quite supportive of her career path, although she was not pursuing a career in academia at the time.

*...I was really fortunate to live in a home where I didn't realize I was a Hispanic woman...dad and mom were like, 'your life starts after your graduate from college, so I knew nothing more that you're just gonna go to college...they weren't rich, they made sacrifices.'*

After entering college, she quickly realized that the medical field wasn't for her and opted for another career.

*...after that first semester of college I gave up that, 'medical doctor dream' I just knew that I wanted to teach adults.*

For participant 1, it was the mentorship and support she received from one specific department, that lead her to consider and recognize a career in academia....*I met the faculty and they immediately involved me, I became the head of the honor society, I wrote in the newsletter for them, I mean, they just really included me and I liked what they did, and I thought, 'this is what I want to do!' I don't know why, but I felt so at home.*

With the encouragement of the department faculty, she quickly realized that in order to achieve a career in academia, she needed to pursue a doctorate.

*...I knew that getting my bachelors and getting my masters wouldn't give me a permanent career...so from the very beginning I asked them and they said... 'you can't stop, you get your bachelors, you get your masters, and you get your doctorate to teach in higher education, you'll need it!'*

On the advice of her mentors, she recognized that if she wanted to maintain job security, the doctorate was the only possible route.

*...my faculty mentors had told me if you stay at the bachelors or masters level, you're gonna be part-time your whole life and that's not job security.*

Her mother was also encouraging and supportive of her pursuit of this career, because as she explains it, her mother had grown up in a more traditional household, and so she wanted things to be a little different for her children.

*...my mom was equally encouraging because her parents, who were wonderful parents, but they had an old fashioned mentality. My mom wanted to become an airline stewardess, but she had to go study away from Brownsville to do it...and [her parents*

*were] like, 'why aren't you gonna get married and have a family?' But then when she had us, she wanted something a little different...she wanted for us to choose*

After the university where she was working on her masters from, closed down, due to a student strike, she came back to Brownsville and took the last two classes for her masters, at the University of Texas at Brownsville. While, attending a professional development conference she ran into a woman she knew from Human Resources, who worked at a university in Texas. Upon their meeting she was asked if she was interested in applying for the doctorate program, to which she hesitantly respond 'yes.'

*...the director of Human Resources and I knew each other very well...she says 'are you going to apply [to the university]?' I said, 'yes, but I don't know, I'm already 34,' and she puts her arms on my shoulders and she says, 'at this stage of your education it's not about ability!' She says, 'you finished your masters, obviously you can do it! It's about persistence! How bad do you want it?'*

As she continued to detail this encounter, she brought up how she's confronted many students at UTRGV with challenges.

*...we have students who are going through some tough challenges, ill husbands, some who are ill themselves....and the ones who really want it, it may take them a little longer, but they get it!*

Indeed, that drive and persistence was something important, because as a mentor had explained to her,

*...she said people would ask her, 'how old will you be when you finish?' and she'd say, 'well, I'm 40 now, so...I will be 44, 45 years when I'm finished' and people would*

*say, '45?!' and she'd say, 'well how old will I be in 5 years without the Doctorate?...45.'*

*So either way she was going to be 45, it's all about how bad you want it.*

As we continued on with our conversation she discussed the challenges that some Latina's face in pursuit of the professoriate,

*...I've been fortunate that things have run fairly smoothly...but I think as a woman, those personal challenges that occur when you're studying and you're working on professional development....and there's also challenges for men...they need to be the bread winners...but as a woman, I have to go grocery shopping, plan a meal, cook...and on top [of that], being a professional with more and more demands...I also have a home, a family, and a husband, it's just added responsibility.*

Still, she was quick to point out that,

*... the ones that really want it, it won't deter. They are strengthened by the challenges.*

As we continued to chat about the changes taking place at the university, since the merger in 2015, I wondered what sort of progress was being made for Hispanic female faculty. I was curious to see if any new policies were being enacted, which help promote tenure or professional growth within academia. Participant 1 explained that since the transition the university had begun a path towards promotion.

*...they're doing an amazing job of having free workshops for us from 'how to get tenure' for every level of faculty. And do have some for female faculty. They have a lot of energy!*

As she continued on, she asked me to look into the organization known as the Women's Faculty Network. She even suggested that I speak to some of the women involved with the organization.

*The university has something interesting that I haven't seen anywhere else. The Women's Faculty Network...it's an organization here at UTRGV by women. What's interesting is that the work they do is mainly for female faculty and staff, but not just for us...they'll go to the faculty senate, they'll go to the president with issues that need to be taken care of, but it's mostly for professional development.*

As I inquired more about the organization, she added:

*It was around for UTPA and they brought it in for UTRGV and just expanded it. The president and administration have a lot of respect for the Women's Faculty Network, they share a lot of information with them*

As we continued our conversation over the Women's Faculty Network, I inquired more about the process of tenure. She explained to me that:

*We get evaluated every year, tenured faculty gets evaluated every 5 years...every college develops their own tenure criteria...we are evaluated on the basis of teaching, scholarship and service.*

"So does this mean that you are able to attend as many conferences as necessary?" I questioned.

*So, it's a balance, some years some travel is different, because of schedules and money, but there's also a lot of online conferences we can attend.*

As we continued to discuss the specifics of tenure, and neared the end of our interview I asked her, "what, if any advice do you have for someone pursuing a career in academia?"

*Apply to several places, then you make a choice...I believe I am where I'm supposed to be, doors would close and I'd be devastated and crying and then all of sudden a door would open and be like, 'this is great!'...that closed door really opens the door for something else.*

*...I wouldn't stop, life happens, you just [try] and do your best!*



## PARTICIPANT 2

Although I had a little trouble locating the office of my second participant, once I arrived I found an office filled with student-centered materials, and so my first initial thought was, “she must have been a teacher!” The office was filled with colorful books and what looked like a large picture frame, like one you’d use at a party to take a picture with. The participant was a soft-spoken and very welcoming woman. Once I sat down for the interview, and reviewed each of the consent forms, I began by asking her for her job title and responsibilities. She is currently a Lecturer with the College of Teaching and Learning, but has held several higher-level positions throughout her illustrious career.

She began her story by saying that:

*...some people know exactly what they want to do. For me I didn’t have a goal, it was my adviser...she saw the potential, she said ‘you might want to do this,’ she was the one who lit the fire under me, and once I got focused I was there*

As our conversation continued she delved into her experiences at a university in California,

*I was the only Latina in the department...it was a lonely place, it was challenging, but I kept at it.*

As she continued her studies, her advisor became her mentor, a woman who, as described her “traveled the globe” and often encouraged her students to push themselves.

*...my advisor...that woman [was] all over the globe and basically she was a strong advocate for women, so she pushed us like, ‘you’ve got to get your doctorate, you’ve got to get into academia!’*

She added:

*...but that's what it has taken and depending on what we have gone through, each person as a Hispanic woman, you try to drive and pull the next people over because we have a lot to offer.*

This got me to consider her thoughts on growth and tenure for Latinas within academia.

*I think, you have to work harder, you have to prove yourself harder, but you can make it...and I would say that it depends on each individual, how you react, how you listen.*

She detailed her experiences in the classroom, in a diverse setting at a school in California and also talked about how she always intended to stay in the classroom. Especially as job offering started coming up.

*I told them I didn't really have any ambition to go into the university.*

But when an opportunity presented itself, and through some reluctance to say “no” to an esteemed professor, she found herself getting a dual certification

*...but because of [my professor] I basically came out with a degree in administration and reading credentials. So it set me up. As I [continued in administration] I said, 'hey this is cool!'*

Eventually, she would enter the university to start up a new program. She along with another male colleague were the only Latinos on campus

*I was the only Latina woman and he was the only Latino male on campus, we learned to like each other (she said with a laugh) and to work together.*

Still, she seemed relatively certain that despite being qualified for the job, that eventually she and her male colleague would be released

*They put me here and what's gonna happen is that we will develop the program....everything will be going okay and then 'bye bye' I could see it, I really could.*

So, in that moment she remembered the words of her father:

*My father would always say 'you two girls,' because there's two of us, 'you two can do anything you want in life, don't let anybody in life push you or pull you down, you keep going forward, you wanna do something just do it, don't be asking, just do it!'*

So as she describes it, she knew what had to be done, she spoke with her colleague and together, they decided to enroll (secretly) in a PhD program. She also reinforced that women often have to work harder than men to overcome sexism within the academe.

*I got called in...everything that I thought would happen did...basically she said, 'you know we have to have terminal degrees and you don't have your terminal degree, and I said to her, 'when do I need my terminal degree?' and she said, 'oh no honey, that means you have to go take classes, be enrolled in a doctoral program'....and I said, 'excuse me, I don't want to sound rude, but I am in a doctoral program, I'm already at the end of my program, I've written my dissertation and need to defend...I went to the committee, did my defense, and ran back and said, 'here it is!' I had my little piece of paper!' So, in answer to your question, we have to prove ourselves twice...ten times as hard, and I would say, women more than men because still there is that you know difference there.*

As we continued one about her experiences, she spoke about her academic achievements

*The key to my academic achievements, basically has been that whatever opportunities have been there, I drive right straight through them...it's the drive!*

This led us into a discussion of changes (albeit slow) that incorporate academia

*But slowly when I look around I see different things going on. Women are becoming more powerful; we have tended to be meek. I am who I am because I tend to say 'watch me' anybody that doubts me I say, 'watch me.'*

When I inquired more about these types of changes with regard to UTRGV, she explained the growth and diversity, but was still quick to emphasize that it is a slow and steady process

*I see the difference within the university, you're beginning to see more ethnic diversity...slowly...diversity goes beyond ethnicity, it can be in language, the way we learn, gender and the gender issues we face*

As an advocate for early childhood education she has worked with large companies, in establishing programs to encourage literacy with preschool children, whose families may not have the resources for early education. As a result, the participant has seen many positive results, results, which she hopes will promote education in general.

*I think it is my way of giving back, like the way in which professors treated me, that they saw something in me, sometimes you don't see that in yourself, a strength or whatever, and I tend to do the same thing with my students. I try to raise them up...we cannot afford to drop off, you have to have your line, 'jump this high' you should just keep going higher and higher.*

As our interview came to a conclusion, she extended upon her thoughts on educating Latinas, recounting that:

*Some students don't really realize this, but maybe it's right in the back of their minds, somewhere that the wrong message has been planted 'don't expect too much from her, she's Latina' and 'they're lazy' or 'she isn't too smart, she's a woman'...so for my students I always say, 'Are you having a problem? Talk to me, do you need an extension' I work with them...I want them to succeed.*

### PARTICIPANT 3

As I move on to participant 3, we decided that our meeting would take place at a local coffee house, in order to make the conversation a bit more relaxed and engaging. From our email conversation before the interview, she seemed quite willing to offer recommendations of others for me to interview, and was also very encouraging about the study. Despite the relaxing atmosphere and nice conversation, it was quite noisy and so “you live and you learn,” next time the library might be a better option. Nevertheless, our discussion ran pretty smoothly. As I did with the other two participants, I started off, by thanking her for her time and asking if she could briefly tell me about her job title and responsibilities with UTRGV. She is currently a Lecturer within the College of Liberal Arts.

Because I was a little unclear about the difference between a Lecturer 1 professor and a Lecturer 2 I began by asking her to briefly elaborate on the differences.

*Well a minimum of 3 years in the current position, until you can apply for promotion...  
you have to have served as a Lecturer 1 for 3 years in order to apply for promotion as a  
Lecturer 2.*

And so, we began a brief discussion on tenure and promotion. I asked her whether she felt the path towards tenure was more difficult for a Hispanic woman than a Hispanic male.

*I'm not tenure track so I don't feel that pressure or that competition...but from what I've  
seen, there seems to be much more pressure to accomplish tenure than what I go through  
for promotion*

I wondered if the requirements were similar, if she was also required to research as tenured faculty do

*I have not been able to, I can and did the first year I started, but the more I got into my teaching load, because you're primarily hired to teach, it cuts into your scholarship time. I'm [also] a mom, so my time is already so divided that what's suffered is the scholarship.*

As our conversation continued, we spoke about her path towards academia and who inspired her to pursue the field.

*I would have to say my undergrad professors, I thought for sure I was gonna go into medical school, um, but then I walked into [this one particular] class and I fell in love with it and my professor just became my mentor...I just switched and ended up in the humanities.*

I inquisitively asked her if that was the moment she knew that she was meant for academia.

*Yeah, I wanted to do what they did...I just really fell in love with that environment that career...they just made it seem so wonderful... [although] I think my dream job would have been to be a student and collect degrees.*

She continued by describing a conversation she had with a professor, who consoled her when she opened up about not getting a good grade in a medical class, and how this might affect her chances of getting into medical school. As he consoled her, he also made a momentous suggestion.

*It never occurred to me that I could major in [this particular course] because I just saw it as a white old man's field (she laughed). But for him to tell me, 'no you're really good at this, have you considered majoring in this?' That really put me in a different path...*

As she spoke of her path into the professoriate, I wondered what exactly drew her to UTRGV and she explained the reason behind the appeal.

*One of the draws was that [UTB] was a small school and the other was, the types of students at this university, in this area because I also came from that background. I had to learn the language and adjust to the culture; you know I'm first generation.*

So, I asked her if she could expand upon on what challenges she felt the students of the Rio Grande Valley face, as she said,

*...probably the biggest roadblock because of culture, specifically Mexican culture, um, it's changed a lot from when I was starting out, but not completely. So especially for a girl, to go into college and have a career, again while that's changing, I think it's still also a slow process. So you're looking at some of the students, they're some of the first ones to go to college in their family...some are the first generation and there's just different expectations of them because there's always the pressure of marriage and family. So I have some of my students, they're mom's and so sometimes they'll need to bring their kid [to class] or sometimes they don't come to class, so these types of challenges.*

As we expanded on her background and she spoke to the support of parents, who despite not having not gone through similar experiences, supported her decision to pursue a career in academia.

*My parents were always supportive; they were...we were new to this; I was a first generation college student. They had no idea how to help me, but they didn't discourage me...I'm the first born and a girl and then I moved to the other side of the country which was really scary for them...but they never once told me 'no you can't do it' or 'you shouldn't do that.' They made me feel very good about what I was doing.*

She also described their support as she sought a second master's degree.

*When I went back for my second master's I had a kid and that was very challenging, and I was doing a full time job, my parents were around so they helped me.*

We then transitioned to a discussion on the university and what UTRGV administration was doing to promote professional growth for Hispanic women; she brought up and discussed the Women's Faculty Network

*It started at UTPA...the WFN kind of took the lead on creating a branch at the Brownsville campus, so it was one of the first ones before the faculty senate. WFN was already trying to merge the 2 [campuses].*

Because I had already heard about this organization, from the other two participants, and I was rather curious as to the role of the program within the university, so I inquired further.

*There are 7 committees (she said) and each one tries to provide different support for women faculty. So there's a committee on tenure and promotion, one on wellness and health and one on achievements in advancement. We find that women have a hard time celebrating their achievements...and for tenure and promotion you've got to!*

She explained further how the WFN has reached out to the provost and how the organization is always given a chance for representation.

*There's a seat for WFN rep in several university organizations so that there's a voice specifically from women faculty.*

Wondering whether this existed for the Hispanic female students of the university I inquired further,

*That's an excellent question, I don't know but we should have one...that is a great idea! It would be very interesting to try and develop a support network to meet the specific challenges of the female students on campus.*



We then spoke the campus expansion and she discussed the launch of a new mentorship committee, which would focus on female faculty,

*...I think you need a female mentor to guide you through the process....I think there might be more similarities than what the men have to go through.*

As we neared the end of our interview I asked her, what she felt were the underlying causes for her success, she stated that:

*I think for me a lot of it is that I'm competitive and so I'm driven to always want to be on top. For example, when I got to college, they were giving a tour of the campus and they have what's called 'The Honor's Wall' and they had a plaque with student names, so I asked 'what's this?'...they were so dismissive like, 'oh it's not gonna happen' and I was like, 'oh no!?' that's all it took was for someone to say, 'it's not gonna happen' and then I want it, so I'm very driven that way...if someone tells me I can't do something that motivates me to prove them wrong.*

#### PARTICIPANT 4

The interview with participant number 4 was conducted over the phone, because I was unable to meet with her. She was very engaging, extremely friendly and shared quite a bit of interesting thoughts on her path towards the professoriate and on higher education in the RGV. I started the interview as I did the previous three; by going over the consent forms and then asking her to introduce herself. She was more than happy to oblige.

*I am a lecturer within the [college of liberal arts]*

I then asked her how she came into academia, she illustrated:

*That was not actually my choice in the beginning, I had a professor when I was an undergrad tell me, that I was gonna do my PhD...just a little background about me...I am the daughter of two immigrants, my parents have a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade education, also my sister was the first person to go to college in my family. However, she left college after her first year....she's comeback and finished now, but keep in mind I was the first one in my family to complete and get a B.A.*

She continued on by elaborating on the role her professor played in her path towards academia.

*So I had actually already taken the exams to become a school teacher and I had taken all the exams, I had been accepted to the school of education for the teaching program and I had a teacher who looked at me and she asked me, she was like, 'what are your plans after you graduate?' keep in mind I'm a junior, so I'm like a year away from graduating and I tell her and she says, 'nope you're gonna go to grad school, you're gonna do your PhD' and I kind of laughed and then she said, [and] I'm gonna tell you how...now that I look back, I think I wanted more than what I thought I did.*

I then ask, 'so at first you apply just to make her happy and then you realized you wanted it?' to which she added:

*Yeah, because I never thought about getting a masters or a PhD because getting my B.A. alone was difficult, because I didn't have somebody to go back and say, 'hey how do I do it?'...let alone know how to apply for a masters or a Ph.D.*

So it was that support? I inquired.

*I got really really lucky cuz I got the support I needed and the help I needed to get into grad school, I got into a PhD program straight from a B.A. program.*

I inquired about her move to the Valley, what lead her to UTRGV.

*I do like the whole point that it's at the border...the different kind of student. I was also a little intrigued about the new idea of merging two universities and having students who were commuting back and forth and how it would work, but also the difference between the students at each border.*

We then spoke of the challenges that students in the Rio Grande face. She emphasized the fact that many are first generation. As I inquired on her perspectives of higher education within the region, she was concerned about the lack of programs promoting graduate school.

*I really do think that there needs to be more programs to teach students how to get into grad school, I think some students are thinking about grad school their junior and senior year instead of their sophomore year. Also, I think the Valley needs more programs that teach and tell students about the jobs regarding their majors...I tell my students to go out and explore take the opportunity...its just like 'no'...students [seem] to have a problem never being a way from home...and also it's financial.*

We continued on by discussing her experiences from with the university system, her experiences and challenges. She was very detailed and willing to share about her experiences. She spoke of the political climate that can sometimes occur because of the competitive nature of academia, she talked about the pursuit of tenure and why so many professors are compelled to work so hard to attain it.

*I don't have a chip on my shoulder, and there are certain female professors that will tell you that because they are Hispanic they are silent. I haven't had that feeling; I'm treated great by everyone, but also because I'm not much into the politics.*

Curiosity lead me to inquire about to the political climate on campus.

*I think I face more pressure from female faculty...I've found that males are very nice, respectful I've really only had [one issue] with [a] female professor. I've also learned to maneuver the politics. There's always gonna be politics, but you also learn to pick your battles. Is arguing against having a class [about a particular content vs. another similar content] really a battle you want to go head to head, or do you want to save your cards for another really good battle?*

I asked if she could elaborate on her own personal challenges, and she laughed and said,

*...well one, okay I need to finish this dissertation and two would probably be the committee of my peers picking to review my contract and allowing me to teach upper level courses...because they're on rotation and usually professors with tenure are the ones that teach them.*

“So Tenure really is something that professors push towards?” I questioned.

*...yeah, cuz you have priority on courses, um...you have, you're able to [have a say so] in higher policy and just have more of [a voice].*

I became rather curious about other aspects of the campus climate, so I asked about the requirements for tenure and whether the student evaluations really “count against professors.”

*It does affect our ratings...cuz we are rated...if you're gonna get rehired as in my spot, or if you're gonna be able to go up for tenure...when you get a tenure track job or job offer you're are able to negotiate even the chair you sit on....[if] you get multiple tenure track jobs you're able to negotiate[like] 'so and so is giving me this, what are you willing to give me?'*

As our conversation neared a close, I asked her what she felt, has lead to her academic achievements. Similar to the other three participants, she mentioned the impact of having good mentors

*I guess really good mentors, uh I have mentors and professors from other universities that I've had um you know find me scholarships, send me scholarships, ask me how I'm doing, uh you know really push me. Even here I have another [colleague] who's like, 'hey I just got this sent to me, I think it's more you than me, you should apply.*

With regard to whether it's significant to have a female mentor, another female she said,

*...as an undergrad the professor that helped me get into the program was female and to this day I still speak to her...I've cried to her. When I was in the program they set me up with a different mentor and it was very much a more formal relationship, very much 'yes ma'am, no ma'am, thank you for my edits' and then walk out. So then I had two females and it was two very different relationships...my dissertation chair is a man who has nothing to do with my topic (she laughed)...but I'm able to talk to him freely, I think you need a mentor that you're able to speak to and that you feel comfortable with, not a person that you have a very 'yes sir, no sir' you have to be comfortable to ask questions.*

As our interview came to a close, she discussed the Women's Faculty Network; with regard to it's promotion of professional development.

*I know that [the university has] the Women's Faculty group and they hold meetings and also they advertise writing sessions and I know right now for the summer, this is for everyone, the entire university...if you finish a writing seminar if you finish writing by the end of the summer you get \$600 in travel funds, but I've never seen anything for just female faculty.*

## PARTICIPANT 5

When I met participant 5, we held our meeting on the Brownsville Campus, in an office of the second floor of the Life and Health Science Building. This was not her office, but since she made her way to the Brownsville Campus that day, she was kind enough to fit me into her busy schedule and so we spoke there. I had communicated with her a few times over email and she was always very helpful and very pleasant. We started the interview by reading each consent form and with me asking about her job title and responsibilities with the university. As one of the university's top ranking officials, and also a professor in The College of Business and Entrepreneurship, participant 5 described some of her tasks.

*Some of my particular tasks include bringing about awareness to issues in higher education. So your study actually fits very well, with the interest, which we're aligned. We are trying to promote for our campus to be a place where women would feel very comfortable, we want all faculty to feel comfortable, but we envision this as being a place for women to thrive.*

Since I wanted to know more about this initiative, I asked her expand upon it

*Our university has something called the ADVANCE University Transformation. We have a 3.1 million dollar grant from them it's a 5 year project, it's specifically designed to increase the representation and the advancement of women in STEM, which includes Sociology, by the way because it's a social science...and part of that is a special focus on Hispanic women...this started at Pan-Am, with the merger obviously its campus wide and so we try to host events, try to make this a family friendly climate....we are developing leadership skills...we have a leadership institute that we offer in the spring...it's designed to help us try and increase our recruitment efforts, but also retention efforts...we don't*

*just hire women, we want to keep them here and see them develop and become academic leaders.*

This lead me to then ask her why there seems to be such an absence of Hispanic women in academia.

*I think there's a lot of reasons why that happens...If you look at the different ranks, you look at the bachelor's level you have a smaller representation of Hispanic women, then as you go up to the masters the numbers get smaller, if you go to PhD, then they're even smaller, and so it's ...people have described it as a 'leaky pipeline' because you're losing a significant number of the population at each level...I think it's a combination of factors, I think just generally, traditionally, women have had more family responsibility and it makes it more difficult...they have a lot of competing time demands...[WFN] is looking at ways to bring up issues that women had concerns with, we wanted them to have a forum for women to feel empowered and we found that the Women's Faculty Network was just a very natural vehicle to do that...there seemed to have been some very pent up demands.*

As I probed further into the absence of Latinas in the academe I also wondered what those demands or concerns might be,

*Some of the concerns, and again this relates very well to the absence of women in STEM, is that you have a lot of cases where you might be the only woman in your whole department or there may be one or two and so I think there might be some feelings of isolation...and we found that maybe bringing people together, like maybe you're the only woman in your department, the only Hispanic woman in your department, there are others across campus and so when I think about, one of the reasons why [we called] it the Women's Faculty Network, is to give women the opportunity to network.*



We then began to discuss higher education in The Valley, and so I wondered what her perspective on the issue was.

*....well, I think it's extremely important and I think that we have a fantastic university we have some very fantastic faculty, my hope is that as the university continues to grow that we will be able to advertise our faculty more because I think sometimes people assume, that because it's the 'local university' that it's not as prominent, but we have internationally known faculty*

We discussed what led her to pursue a career in academia, and what she said, kind of made sense, like most people you kind of fall into it.

*It was somewhat of an accident, when I was getting a bachelor's degree I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do. The economy wasn't doing that well...I got into a program and I got it with funding and so they had an assistantship for masters students and said 'okay that's good,' and so I did work with students...and then when I was in my master's program I found I really liked research and I liked and I guess I got a glimpse of the life of an academic and so my concern was I was extremely shy...but I was a graduate assistant for our department chair and so one day I would go to his class and take notes and I would meet with students, if they had any questions and one day he told me, 'well go give the review session, I have a meeting.' I was terrified, the class had like 200 students and so after about 10 minutes I calmed down and I just thought, 'okay what's the worst thing that can happen?'... so by the time the class was over I just felt very comfortable and decided at that time that I would apply to Ph.D. program.*

As we casually conversed about academia and administration, I wondered if any one specific individual inspired her, while she reaffirmed that she had accidentally stumbled upon an academic career, she did say that the current Vice Provost of the university has been an inspiration for her.

*In terms of someone who's inspired me a lot is, in terms of doing an administrative part of my career, is our Provost here at UTRGV. In fact, he's the head of this ADVANCE that we have as well, when he came to UTPA he just brought this breath of fresh air and I had known other provosts...he was an excellent administrator, he kept doing his research...he's found a way to balance, [and] it does start at the top.*

I ask if she could talk a little about tenure and tenure track advancement opportunities at the university level for Latina faculty and how UTRGV is going about being more flexible with its requirements.

*That's also something we are trying to change...because we do realize that women face a different set of time demands than men. I think especially when we consider Hispanic women, because there are additional cultural factors, again like a whole, there's a role of being the caretaker. Taking care of the kids, but also it could be your parents or extended family and that can make it difficult for women faculty if they're on the tenure track or the track toward tenure. So we are trying to raise awareness amongst departments. For example, not to have department meetings late in the afternoon, because you might have to go pick up your kids. Um...to try to be more, to offer more flexible opportunities, more flexible teaching schedules, or if somebody knows that they're going to be a caretaker, we have a lot of classes that can be taught online. We have hybrid classes where we can teach online and some days you're in the classroom*

*and some days you're doing online teaching. There are some ways to meet you're teaching work load, where you don't have to meet in the classroom five days a week.*

We talked about PhD programs offered at the university and whether some students might be discouraged by having to leave the Valley, to go to school.

*...oh I think so, because it goes back to some of the family demands and the culture, we have a higher percentage of women students than we do male, and I think some of that it, that the families don't want the girls to leave and UTRGV offers an excellent education but they're still able to stay at home and be close to family, and I think having more graduate programs would offer them the opportunities that they might not have otherwise...and given our demographics of the student body if we can have more students go through a graduate program get more PhDs, then we should have more Hispanics in Higher Education and more Hispanic women in Higher Education.*

About her field of study and the limited number of women who pursue it she says,

*Compared to some of the natural sciences, we have fewer women graduating, like compared to biology, for example it has to do with again it doesn't sound very friendly, it's not as a discipline very friendly tends to be a little hostile sometimes, we kind of...I was at a panel at the American [sic] Association Annual Conference last month and I was invited to talk about how do we increase diversity in the [our] profession, and we were kind of laughing at our panel, because it's just like what we make people go through as graduate students, it can be hostile. So, I had to take as part of my PhD an oral exam and I think I passed it because I didn't cry, I swear to this day that's why I passed...so yes, we need to be more nurturing as a discipline.*

With regard to mentors and role models for graduate students here in the Valley, she says that there is a definite need for more Hispanic women in the classroom.

*...we need more role models in the classroom and I think that can make a difference especially if you consider some of the disciplines where you have few women, Hispanic women in particular. If all they're doing is taking these classes from men then it's almost like...even if you don't think about it consciously, you may not see yourself in that role...and again with our ADVANCE Program that's part of our focus recruitment and retention, we want to see more women and Hispanic women...when you consider academic administration it's very, very few...so when you think of a pyramid, you see fewer and fewer women, associate professor, full professor and at the administration level, very, very few.*

As we discussed women with tenure or on tenure track, she explained that the challenges that we spoke of earlier often play a pivotal role in impeding progress.

*...the associate professor level women tend to get stuck there instead of, moving on to full professor because there you don't have a strict time when you go up for promotion. So like with assistant promotion you'd have to go up within a given amount of time but with associate professor, you can be associate professor the rest of your career, and nationwide you tend to see women getting trapped at that associate level. At UTRGV we started last year what's called 'An Associate to Full Program' and it's designed to raise awareness and help faculty manage their time as associate professors so they can move up the rank to full time professor and we really want to put a lot of focus on women and Hispanics to move through that, because we need to see more women, we are under represented in higher education to begin with and particularly at the highest levels.*

She also expanded upon the current mentorship policy at the university and detailed the purpose of program.

*With new faculty they are assigned a mentor when they come in, um and that person is designed so that the faculty member has somebody they can ask questions. Within the Women's Faculty Network, they're also creating a mentoring program, because you can never have too many mentors, so with the Associate to Full they have mentors, with the Leadership Institute, they have mentors as well...I think if you have women who are mentors, they understand more of where you're coming from, there's a personal connection, someone else may not understand.*

We then talked about her own path toward academia, and she spoke about how fortunate she was to end up in academia.

*Because I got in with funding I think that's what was so critical for me, I had no plans to get a PhD, the masters was just a backup plan because the job market was bad...so I feel very fortunate, because I accidentally fell into it and it was in the master program that I decided I wanted a PhD.*

With regard to the implementation of policies and they're effects on minorities she stated:

*One of the issues, that I'm always on a soap box about is you have a lot of economic policies that are not being designed by representatives of that population, so you have policies affecting women and yet a lot are designed without women, policies affecting Hispanics, and you might not have any Hispanics at the table to give you perspective of what's actually happening in those communities.*

As the interview came to a close, she spoke about her family and their support.

*...I think we need to raise awareness about the importance of higher education, again I was very fortunate because my family was extremely supportive...I'm the middle kid, my sister started college and didn't finish, but then my brother was five years younger and he saw me finish and get my PhD and said 'that's really neat' so he went off and got a PhD as well, my dad loves saying that he has two kids with PhDs and they didn't pay anything because we had scholarships that covered our education.*

## PARTICIPANT 6

Unfortunately, I was unable to have a face-to-face meeting with participant 6, but was fortunate enough that she was willing to work with me, and we held a phone interview instead. She is currently serving as a Professor with the College of Sciences at UTRGV. We began the interview with a brief overview of the study, she was concerned about the coding policies and procedures, but I made sure to explain to her the specifics of the interview, and to reassure her that steps would be taken to protect her privacy. Also, I did send her a copy of the consent script when the interview was complete. The following are a few of the highlights from the interview. We began the interview talking about her responsibilities within the university and we also discussed her community outreach service.

*I tend to do community service that's informed specifically by my research area so doing things like giving guided nature tours, I give training workshops to the community...it's educating the public in my particular area of my expertise.*

She also mentioned her participation in HESTEC, which I found interesting and asked her to expand upon.

*It started on the UTPA campus and has been expanded this year to both campuses. So that is the celebration of science and engineering where we have a big sort of open house for the community and there's all kinds of stuff...*

We discussed what lead her into the professoriate and she stated:

*Well I knew I wanted to be in the area of [sic] my initial goal was to be a medical doctor and I spent a lot of time around hospitals growing up, and so that was my initial goal um but I took [in my specific discipline] and I found that [certain aspects] were interesting...[what I] really cared about [was] the treatment part of*

*it. I cared about [that specific] part of it. And from there started to pursue [my current field]. And I think what probably kept me in academia was that I was at an institution, that had a really active, graduate and undergraduate research program and faculty that were highly involved with research and so there was a real community of other students.*

After some discussion about her path towards academia, we began the discussion of promotion to tenure and how the path towards tenure might differ for Hispanic women.

*I feel most of the blatant racial bias is pretty under wraps...you know it would be extremely subtle if it's there. Probably the main place Hispanic women have a harder road is in service. There's a lot of reasons why women and especially women of color get a lot of service responsibilities that others don't.*

I was rather intrigued, and my research found that studies *have shown*, that women of color tend to do more service than others “overloading these academicians with responsibilities,” (Valverde & Ramirez, 1979) so I asked her if she could expand upon on this:

*...partly women do more service, a lot of the sort of housekeeping for the department...and another issue, we talk about wanting to have women of color, specifically Latina, here because then students have someone who looks like them or someone who they feel might understand them better, have a similar background to them, but if you're the only person in your department with that background then 50% of the students, or 60% of the students from that department have you to fixate on as the mentor.*



As I listened attentively to her concerns, I wondered myself what more could be done, and so I asked her what she felt the university needed to do to improve the lack of Hispanic women in the professoriate, she offered a few recommendations.

*You have to have really careful attention to hiring practices and to retention of those faculty as well, just hiring them but then not having them be completely overloaded so that they don't have a chance to be retained and to stick around...there are other things that institutions can do that help to mitigate this, some institutions recognize, 'okay so we have a Latina faculty doing an overload of service so we are going to award some grant, or some special program for Latina faculty [so they can] apply for teaching relief, every once in while they can get a little extra relief to make up for the extra services.' And we can train our chairs to make sure that the Latina faculty aren't being overburdened with service or women of color in general. Those are things that some institutions do; we don't currently do them though.*

We discussed the “leaky” educational pipeline and she contends that.

*Tons of women apply to our job, um I don't think the pipeline breaks down at hiring or applications, the pipeline breaks down at hiring and retention into the upper levels...there's been a ton of studies about this pipeline issue um it seems like most of it is that academia is a pretty unfriendly place in the environment for a woman's entire career.*

She also shared with me that when she was a professor at another university, she felt the sting of racial bias, since she was one of only a handful of minority women there.

*...that institution has a very low minority student population...and it was not a friendly environment for um a woman of color, I think there was like, one black woman and just a*

*few other Hispanics. And so it wasn't a very friendly environment, lots of just stupid racial bias popping up. So that was part of what made me look for a different position.*

With regard to the three areas of teaching, service and scholarship she explained that even student evaluations can effect whether a professor is considered for tenure.

*...its definitely a primary consideration for whether or not you clear the bar promotion and um one thing that we, there's a lot of data across the country showing that women get lower student evaluations scores, and faculty of color get lower student evaluation scores and they also show that they aren't correlated with student learning, so the only thing we know about student evaluations is that they're bias against women and faculty of color.*

Her comments regarding racial bias, stuck with me because based on my studies, it seems to be a sad reality of some institutions and the professoriate.

As we neared the end of the interview, we transitioned to her achievements in academia and she noted that her work ethic and passion have contributed most to her success, she also spoke of some considerations for improvements in the university.

*... probably a mix of things um I have always felt about myself that I'm not necessarily brilliant, but that I will work very hard if it's something I'm interested in...I think having good mentor programs that were specifically designed for me...*

*...I feel where there really needs to be some changes is in how the administration considers input that they give, if I bring a particular situation to the Women's Faculty Network and [then] bring it to the Provost, [and] the Provost says, 'eh we can't do anything about it' and we say 'okay I guess so'.*

For the last part of the interview, she was quite helpful in offering advice on what to expect in a PhD program, especially when it comes to the mentoring programs.

*Usually when you join a department, when you submit an application for PhD program, there's some matching process, either you already have someone in mind and mention them, or you have to do a rotation...but you're not just assigned to someone...you have a matching process.*

When we completed the meeting, I thanked her for her time, and emailed her the consent script as promised.

## PARTICIPANT 7

I met participant number 7 at the Public Library, because we both figured it would be a bit more relaxed and allow for better conversation. As soon as she introduced herself to me I could tell that she was quite warm and very thoughtful. She was apologetic because in truth I had been trying to speak with her since November and we could never align our schedules. I was more than thrilled that we were finally able to speak in person. After going over each of the consent scripts, we began our conversation.

*...I started with TSC... so I've been in academia for [a specific amount of years], but in the last two years since the partnership, I now assume the role of [sic] Professor at the College of Education...so I made the transition from administration...to now the College of Education as an [sic] Faculty and I'm very fortunate to be given that opportunity. So I've been doing that, and it's the [sic] program, for students getting their doctoral degree, so I'm really enjoying the classes...this is in the classroom, but it's helping students, doing what I can to help students continue and hopefully complete their doctorate degrees.*

We went on to discuss the process of tenure, and how she was able to attain tenure.

*...so because of my years' experience as an [sic] and because of my seniority then before Dr. Garcia moved on, just thing's happened I was able to secure a faculty position with tenure to kind of help me, position myself, I wasn't ready to retire I felt I needed, I still wanted to work, so then because once you lose that person that was in charge...I felt that that would be a good transition for me and that's when I was able to apply.*

*...I was fortunate in that my former president helped me make that recommendation and it was just accepted...usually when you go the route and you come in as a lecturer, you*

*have to do certain things in order to acquire tenure, you have to publish, teaching and have good evaluations by both the students and your peers, so there's a process by which you obtain tenure, there's also a process by which if I wanted to pursue a full professor position I would need to go through a certain process...*

After realizing that her current career wasn't for her, she went back to obtain her masters and began a career at Texas Southmost College.

*...I really hadn't been to Brownsville that much but then I got the job and I said, 'look I just needed a job, I had my own need to work' so I really thought 'look I'll work in Brownsville a couple of years and then move on,' well I never moved on. I stayed because I've enjoyed the different stages that I've had, different responsibilities....what started out as something I was gonna do for a while, became my life's work, and I can't imagine doing anything else.*

She spoke on how mentorship and support encouraged throughout her studies.

*...aside from family, one of the professors at the Brownsville Campus was very involved in [the program] he was encouraging several of us to pursue it so probably him and once I got into it then I was always nurtured by my supervisors at that time and then Dr. Garcia once she knew I was in it, she kept encouraging the completion because of course they always want to have more women with those credentials especially in the Valley, so I was fortunate to receive support at the various stages*

She also spoke about the number of women at the leadership position in the university.

*To be honest I think we had more prior to the merger, all of that, if I'm going to be honest it's based on your leadership, who's in charge, what their agenda is. When Dr. Garcia was President, she being the first Hispanic you know Latina female President...she had*

*on what we call, the executive board, which is all the vice presidents, she had more women than had ever served in an executive board and had...she had three vice presidents that were female. So that unfortunately didn't stay during the transition...but I think eventually it's going to kind of comeback at some point. I keep thinking that as opportunities continue to grow in the Valley with the medical school and other opportunities, I think this UTRGV really solidifies its position in the Valley, I think it's going to continue to grow. I'm doing my part in trying to grow the [educational program].*

She discussed the need for further scholarships, and financial assistance for the students of the university.

*I know there's a need in the Valley, to pursue that, what's not helping us is that we don't have necessarily enough scholarships, the money to help. I also know that our students can't just afford to quit and go to school full time and be a student full time, you all have families, other responsibilities it's not that you don't have the desire or the skills it's just that life happens*

Then we spoke about why a higher-level degree is so substantial in academics, and how not having one can impeded progress towards growth.

*If you wanted to go further, having that other degree, it'll help you know that opportunity whether in the Valley or somewhere else, to move on cuz if you're looking for job opportunities, many times they'll say 'advance degree preferred' so if you are competing with someone you may be just as good, if not better, but that other person that's the only thing they have over you they're gonna take it.*

She also opened up about the reality of the “public relations” aspect of academia, networking so to speak.

*Um I think that the hardest thing for me has been, you're gonna think that this sounds terrible, but it is having to play the game, having to show people that you're just as good as they are. It was real different for me at the beginning because I would say, 'I know what I'm doing, I'm doing my job,' I don't have to go explain that to anybody, I had to learn the hard way, that 'yes you do' you have to earn their respect and you have to build those bridges...the other piece is the PR that's required in order to grow...to show why we're an important part of [that], so that was difficult. And then when you get into a higher role, that game become even tougher, because it's almost like you have to deal with each other in an ideal role, but it's almost like you're all competing for the same pocket of money...*

She also elaborated on the ADVANCE program within the university and how she's taken advantage of the opportunity.

*...this program that the university has and it's called ADVANCE, and it is it's ADVANCE and it was a grant that they have received, to advance especially women, minority women into leadership roles, understanding that this was new to me I applied right away to be a part of that program...what was important was the group that was formed in that class, cuz we had faculty from all the different colleges who came together the first Friday of the month and we'd spend the day together, going through topics, listening and going through the leadership thing, but then also forming networks, that was what was important and so then this next semester I got into ADVANCE II the next level...they've opened it up to men also, it's not just women*

With regard to attending professional development conferences and how the university funds aids in helping professors fund conferencing she says,

*...the Provost office also makes available money in small stipends, \$500, \$1000 depending to help faculty travel or with their publication, so if you wanted to go to a conference it's not like before as an administrator if I wanted to go to a conference I would look at my budget, 'can I afford it?' I'd go, of course with the president's approval. Now you don't have a travel budget, in the college, I mean you do but it's very limited for everybody so it's not like, anybody that wants to go to a conference can go on your full expenses or pay ...sometimes you're given \$500 so you can decide if you want to go.*

I was a little surprised, since the university expects professors to attend a certain amount of conferencing hours.

*That's on you...but sometimes the school will give you some stipends to offset some of the costs, and the Provost knows that so they're trying to be better about that.*

As we ended our interview she shared her perspective on the university, since the merge.

*I think this President...was brought in partly, to bring in additional resources in order to advance the university, and I think he's done a good job of that, he's kind of brought in this...recently there was some additional money, another \$5 million for the medical school, so all that helps! (She laughed)*



## PARTICIPANT 8

My meeting with participant number 8 took place inside of her colleague's office located in the Life and Health Science Building of the Brownville Campus of UTRGV. She was very cordial and also extremely helpful in offering me some good advice and in telling her story. I began to interview, exactly as the others, I read and asked her to sign each of the consent forms, and then began with the questioning. Participant 8 began by sharing with me that she is currently a professor with the School of Mathematics and Statistical Sciences.

I was interested in getting her perspective on higher education here in the Valley; she also shared with me that she is also from the RGV.

*I see it...as an opportunity that the Rio Grande Valley citizens can certainly take advantage of...I'm originally from the Valley...and I'm the oldest in my family, first generation college student, etc., so I know how important it is to go to college, cuz I know having been raised in The Valley they're a few opportunities for career advancement unless you have a college degree. I believe going to college is important, and I mean I know we can make a big difference, in the nation I mean especially because we have a lot of first generation college students here, big Latino population and so I tell my students quite often...that we need to go off to graduate school, go get that PhD and start populating academia at other universities.*

We discussed the effect of mentorship, on her academic pursuit.

*Oh no yeah that definitely helped, I wanted to become a high school teacher...but then along the way I went to a summer research program, and so I push that quite a bit to my students, you get paid, you do research and you know you went to another part of the country and so along the way you know I had those mentors telling me, 'you should be*

*applying here' or 'why don't you go to this other program' and so that's when I learned about graduate school...*

*Do you think mentors are vital to a lot of students, I asked?*

*Yes, I think so because what I tell students, I give a lot of these talks to K-12 students and undergrads, and so what I tell them is, 'you gotta take it a step at a time,' I didn't know I wanted a PhD...but then along the way going to these research programs, I noticed there's this possibility of getting the PhD...so in my discipline, we have very few women in STEM disciplines, whether they get a PhD and teach in a university or whether they go into industry, we just have very few and so uh the idea there is to encourage them to get a PhD and we need more diversity in academia, in terms of gender and ethnic diversity also...and so I think it's important to motivate this group and represent minorities and women.*

*Why do you suppose there are such few women within those fields? I probed.*

*What I know from the literature, women are not, or girls tend to lose their interest in middle school math, so that's where you can see a big difference in the boys who do well or exceed in [this discipline] and take more courses [in it], and girls in middle school who start getting disinterested...but I think we need to motivate the girls, tell them 'you can'...when you go to academia...I had very few instructors that were females...I can just remember like one or two... so when I give talks, and even my own students in my classes...we are in the Valley you would expect that we'd have more Latinos, but that's the least nationwide picture.*

With discussion of Latinos in the STEM program, I was curious to find out whether this was also an initiative all over local high schools in the Valley.

*So yeah right now there's a lot of interest, to get more students to improve their skills in STEM um and to encourage them to get a college degree, like a Bachelors instead, because in a few years also, they're will be a big impact and many folks who are in STEM will be retiring soon, and we need to fill those positions, we need more students to go into STEM...we need more of them to go into STEM, especially Latinos, and I'll quote some data. So in the U.S. the underrepresented population, is 30%, and that makes up Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, they're a very small percentage, Alaskan Eskimo and Pacific Islander, so that's what's termed 'underrepresented' minority so that population by itself totals 30% of the U.S. population but when it comes to PhDs, that population only receives 7% of the PhDs in STEM and so that's the reason why we're so underrepresented, because our populations are not meeting the same percent at the bachelors level, at the masters level and at the PhD level, at least in STEM.*

We also discussed how the consolidation of UTPA and UTB were affecting this particular program.

*So I think that a lot of the initiatives that both campuses, Brownsville and Edinburg did in the past with, HESTEC, those initiatives...they worked well.*

We then transitioned into the process of tenure and why perhaps, some women just stay at the Lecturer position and don't move up to tenure.

*So in many disciplines, you will find many women with master's degrees, so they can't move up to a tenure-track because they don't have a PhD. So I mean it just depends, some of them I mean I know with women...as women we encounter, I guess we will have issues...I have friends who were for example, graduate students and females and they were pregnant and they were fine, finishing off the PhD, cuz they noticed that the last two*

*years of the PhD all you're doing, at least in [my discipline] you're writing or behind the computer...so I just tell women anytime you just have to look at the situations in your environment, and then a lot of them will say I wanna wait until I get my tenure track position, right you know but by that time, you're well into your 30s, and then you ask yourself 'how many children can I have, I'm in my 30s?' so I tell women look at the situation and things will work out...maybe your family is available to help you.*

We discussed how the university offers childcare facilities for students and faculty women in need.

*UTRGV does, they have a childcare...within the UTPA campus, students take first priority and then faculty and staff come later, in the lower list. We also have nursing facilities on both campuses, where women can...they call them lactation centers, so we have that on both campuses, so we felt that we needed to provide that.*

She also explained how the university now has the NSF, ADVANCE grant and what that means for UTRGV Latina faculty.

*...it stands for National Science Foundation so that's like the big science funding foundation in the U.S. and so we have that grant here with UTRGV, and its basically to increase the number of women, of Latina women in STEM disciplines at UTRGV. It's specifically for all women, and that number is extremely small...so we aim to hire more women...so under the grant were these initiatives like the lactation centers and modified workloads. So if a father/mother, a couple has a child, they can request an extension to stop the tenure clock...so you can apply for an extension to expand your tenure clock, so instead of applying for tenure your sixth year, you say 'oh maybe I'll apply my seventh year because I need to take care of my child this sixth year' so we implemented that.*

I then wondered, she had faced any challenges as a Hispanic woman in her career?

*Yes I think so, you know just having to balance, as a parent and as a mother you just have to balance your work and your family right and for men, men will tell you 'I'm a parent' you know, but I think there's more expectations of a woman who's a mother ... more women across the nation will tell you that they're usually expected to do more service work like outreach work and especially when they're in the tenure track. Right so once you get tenure that's good, because you're almost like permanent, as long as you keep your workload, you're active with your workload. But a lot of women will tell that they're typically the ones that do the service work in the department, the men may not do it, so that's where you always reach a balance, don't always ask the women to do the service work, ask the men to contribute also, to do talks to K-12 students and you know so on and so on so forth.*

Since this peaked my interest, I had to investigate how that was even possible. *But its required from both so...*

*Yes, but the men will typically gravitate toward the profession 'oh I wanna serve on this committee at this level, at the national level at the regional level' and the women are the ones that will typically do the community outreach work at the local level.*

We also spoke about the benefits of networking within the system, where she discussed the Women's Faculty Network

*Yeah so through the ADVANCE grant we have what's called the Women's Faculty Network and so there we have monthly get togethers and it'll be a specific topic or maybe an external person will come and speak and so faculty from both campus are welcomed to join and we uh, we connect to the opposite campus through teleconference.*

She then spoke about the impact of sending former students to PhD programs across the country

*...I want our students to know that there's a lot more, know what's out there and then come back and be a leader...we encourage our students to attend conferences, because many of these conferences are aimed at the underrepresented minority to encourage them to go to grad school...I want you to go out there and see what's out there, and many of them will come back and say 'wow there's other people like me, this is possible!' So like I said, I'm from the Valley, and so when I went to Austin it was like, 'what in the world, just a culture shock!' So I want our students to know what's out there and then come back and do the same thing for the community, become of leader!*

She continued by discussing mentors in academia and their influence on minority students.

*So if somebody looks like you, you're gonna see that person as a role model, it makes a big difference...I never encountered Hispanic female as an instructor, when I was in undergraduate or graduate school but I had a Mexican American professor in graduate school, he's the one that motivated me, he's a great motivator.*

As our interview came to a close, she expressed the need to take charge, something her mother taught her from an early age.

*I tell my students take the initiative, because my mother taught me that. She would say, 'mijita go ask,' sometimes certain scholarships were only for certain students, if you didn't have connections, so my mom would say, 'you go ask, you've got the grades!' So I would go. So I learned from my mom, you gotta ask, you can't wait for people to knock on your door, that's not gonna happen. So you notice that you network and more doors open up. You get confidence in yourself, and sometimes not everything will work, but you notice that there's that possibility that it could!*

## PARTICIPANT 9

The meeting with participant number 9 took place in her office she was extremely helpful and gave me quite a lot to consider. She brought up the title to my study, and specifically the use of the word 'Hispanic', and honestly gave me so much to think about. She was kind enough to spend the first 30 minutes of the interview sharing some very important research material on *Hispanic vs. Latino*, so that I could understand how they differed. She also suggested that I contact some well renowned academics and inquire on the proper use of the term. She was also very helpful in finding some statistical information for me about the number of Latinas on campus as compared to Latinos, etc. Her welcoming and supportive manner is something that really stuck with me and I truly appreciated it. She is currently a professor in the College of Liberal Arts.

We began by speaking about her perspective of higher education here in The Valley.

*In terms about what I know historically about the university, I came when it was the University Pan-American, and the University of Pan-American, has since it became a part of the UT system, has had a very positive effect in terms of not only increasing the educational opportunities for Latinas but for the entire Rio Grande Valley community. The population here had not had access to quality higher education nor did they have access to PhD programs or professional um education prior to 1989. So in 1989 a lawsuit was filed against the state of Texas because the community here complained that the university of Texas system did not provide access to the flagship university system and the lawsuit was adjudicated in 1991 and so um...the lawsuit was argued by lawyers in the Mexican American Defense in Education Fund and they argued that Mexican Americans of the region, that all of the border universities. They argued that a lot of the border*

*universities, were not providing the flagship education as UT Austin or Texas A&M, and so that lawsuit forced the state of Texas to create what was called the South Texas Border Project, and it was to improve the educational programs at all the border universities...And that meant increasing the number of graduate programs, masters and PhD programs...it has had a positive effect on the improvement of higher educational in the Rio Grande Valley...*

*...in terms of higher education for Latinos and Latinas, it has provided a way for, some access to get PhDs, mostly in the College of Education.*

She further expanded on the opportunities for doctoral programs here at UTRGV and the limited number of PhD programs.

*...there are a few programs that will developed, one in psychology because they received a large grant to develop a PhD in psychology. And the other one that people have been graduating from is a Doctorate in Rehabilitation Studies...because the number of doctoral programs are limited, the opportunities are gonna be limited...so I would say the biggest barrier to PhD programs is the funding.*

She explained how this often impedes students from thinking about PhD programs.

*Students in Rio Grande Valley have to see themselves getting PhDs...and they have to know that there are people that look like them and that they can go to graduate school*

When asked if mentorship was important and whether it made any difference for young Latinas to see more Latina professors in the classroom, she responded 'yes' and explained how this inspired her to do the same.

*...I took a class after I graduated from college...I took a class that I thought looked interesting at a community college, and the teacher was a Latina, psychology she was a*



*PhD student, and she had a masters in psychology but she was getting a PhD...and so I thought, 'I wanna do what she does' because she was really good and I wanted to teach, I thought it would be a good to contribute, and a good way to give back to the community is to be involved in education in some way, so that's how I got interested so yeah, so to answer your question, mentorship is extremely important, you need to see people who look like you and to have mentors and luckily she did become a mentor...once I got into grad school I did find an excellent Latina mentor and she still mentors me and helps me...I also have mentors here at UTRGV just my colleagues, my colleagues are excellent mentors...they have to provide not only emotional support but academic support*

She expressed how Latinas are less likely to be mentored than Latinos and then discussed the severely underrepresented numbers of Latinos with the professoriate.

*....academia is still male dominated...and it's still white male dominated because statistically, about only 2% of all professoriates is Latino and Latina...*

She rationalized that in order for Latinos in the RGV to obtain PhDs, outside of education, they might need to leave the Valley

*...they're gonna have to leave the Valley and many maybe not, maybe they don't want to, some can't leave the Valley they have families, many of our students are married and have children and have families and they take care of their parents and they are the family income provider, they might not be able to leave...the females that I know of, they are more open to leaving, the female students, but they won't necessarily go beyond Texas...it's the insolation, the Valley is very insulated and it's very comfortable and the unknown is scary*

She then spoke about when she decided to leave The Valley.

*After I graduated from college I left my home town and went to a different state and I got a job and I called my mom and dad and said 'can I stay?' and they said, 'well if you want to stay ' so I stayed and then I went to graduate school there and then I went back to my home town for my PhD, because I wanted to go home and also the school was excellent and there were faculty members there that I wanted to work with and that's where I met my mentor who ended up being a really good mentor...that's I think that's the message I would say, mentorship is important.*

She spoke about how many times; Latinas tend to question themselves throughout their PhD programs and from within the professoriate.

*I've read a lot of literature where many women Latinas question themselves in terms of their abilities, not their abilities but their 'should I be here?' kind of questions and sometimes I say that to and I have colleagues that say, 'yes you can, you will' I did have a mentor here that says, 'you better do this!' I'm gonna push you, I'm gonna keep you on your toes' and that was very helpful. She said to me, 'you will publish your book, it's very difficult but you will do it!' and you know that's all I needed to hear.*

She talked briefly about her family and also about how students are not informed from within the system, impeding their progress.

*My parents never necessarily said, 'don't do it' they always just said, 'if that's what you want to do, then fine' my dad did go to college but he doesn't have a graduate degree and my mom, didn't go to college and she wanted to go to college, but her circumstances were...she didn't have the information, but if she did, she would have. She would have done it and that's another thing, students need information they don't get the*

*information, lack of information, the idea is 'oh they're not gonna use that information' or they just don't get it*

We discussed the challenges, which often plague many Latinas within the academe.

*In terms of addressing the issues Latinas face, many Latinas face issues...and many Latina issues and maybe many other women do as well, the issue of childcare, many of them have children and that's not valued and that might be across the board for all women, but the fact that they have to do it if they have children, they have families, they have to do double duties and not that they can't do it. All the women that I know have done amazing jobs so it's not that, and support is important, the university [needs to] provide more support for women in that area.*

When I asked, what kind of support she was referring to, she said.

*Well they don't have a childcare facility on campus, the childcare is only for students and faculty, if there's space then faculty can send their children.*

Then we began to discuss the specifics of tenure, and she explained that it is up to department to determine what the specifics will be.

*...in the sixth year you make an application for tenure and as long as you meet the criteria and the standards for those three areas, your teaching, teaching evaluations and teaching in terms of students, how much contact you have with students, how much mentorship that you've done with students, do you help students with research, um do you help students with community engagement projects...service you must do service for the department, the college and the university and maybe even your profession so for example serving on an editorial board of you profession's journal and then research,*

*your publications, you must publish in academic journals or an academic presses and show that you have done that...*

When asked what the university is doing to promote professional growth for female faculty.

*...they do have a summer writing program, it's called a summer writing program, depending on your field of research you get paired with two or three other people, you're supposed to meet and write together and produce an article within the summer months or maybe even the semester and if you complete it and submit it, you get \$500 of travel.*

Again, she emphasized the need for moral support from your peers.

*My main moral support has been with my colleagues in [both disciplines] I get emails from colleagues who say, 'have you submitted this, have you submitted that?' and that is probably method of support, someone actually cares.*

We then delved into networking and working with other people in different fields, and she said:

*It's fun working with other people! I love working with other people! I'd rather write an article with someone else, than to do it on my own, you learn a lot more, you're forced to discuss and you're forced to think about things that way.*

Then she touched upon the Women's Faculty Network and STEM,

*...that was created by the ADVANCE GRANT and it's a grant it's for 5 years and it started in 2013 I think...the grant is [also] supposed to increase the number of Latinas in STEM...usually programs need to be in place longer than 5 years, 10 years to see the result...there needs to be this push to get girls to stop saying, that they're not good at math and that Latinos need to stop saying that they're not good in math, and so it's both and the data shows that most college students are female, in other words there's more*

*Latina students in college then there are males. So, the number is almost 50/50...so there is a breakdown by gender*

I asked about what she envisions in the next 10-15 years for the university.

*... that UTRGV, will come or produce bilingual, bi-literate, bi-cultural students, and that initiative has started, the initiative is that many students come in bilingual but the importance of the need to perfect their language skills and their literacy skills and their cultural skills, because they will work with the community. They will be doctors, and lawyers and teachers and many students, parents and community members don't speak English there are issues like health issues that are specific to Latinos so those ideas need to be understood...so my vision, my hope is that this university will be fully bilingual, fully bi-literate and bi-cultural in that students are taking classes in Spanish, can write and read and speak in Spanish and be able to have a profession in both language...and the other is if this university aims to become a research institution I hope that the funding is increased to help faculty research that goal or help faculty help the university reach that goal through research and not just STEM research, but research in the social sciences too...those are also areas for research, so hopefully in 10-15 years the funding should be dedicated to helping faculty in non-STEM areas to produce and to help the university provide and quality and top notch education for Latino students.*

We then spoke briefly about the obstacles she faced in education.

*So I decided to shift my interest and I did...I applied and once I got in, a teacher a professor from the school had overheard me talking to another student and he told me 'you'll never get into a PhD program' and I said, 'well that's your opinion you can think whatever you want' so that made me think, 'I'm gonna show him, I'm gonna get in some*

*PhD program' and then [when I got into the PhD program] there were some lack of support, some issues, mostly with faculty who weren't supportive and tried to sabotage my success.*

She further spoke of the reality of the professoriate for many Latinos.

*....it's isolating, it's very isolating.... especially when there's not other Latinos in the program. There were three Latinos in my program, and one student got even less support than I did and I don't know why, but she ended up doing very well. She probably just thought to herself, 'you just got to push through.'*

As the interview came to a close, she spoke about searching for funding when looking for good quality PhD. programs.

*Funding. How [else] are you gonna fund it? Find out which universities offer full funding, fellowship, TAs, tuition waver, you want the university to pay for the whole tuition...look around, do the research to find the program that fits you!*

## PARTICIPANT 10

The interview with my last participant took place in a local coffee house, we decided on a time, which was convenient to both of us, in a more relaxed setting. She was a very welcoming and outgoing person and made me feel quite comfortable. She greeted me with a hug as we sat down to begin our conversation. I began the interview, the same way in which I began the others, by going over the consent forms and thank her for her time and participation. She currently works as a full professor within the College of Liberal Arts, where she also serves as a graduate advisor for her department.

We began the interview by talking about tenure and what it means to get tenure as a university professor

*When you receive tenure it gives you a certain amount of what I would call, job security because you are no longer on a probationary period...if you are an assistant professor you are sometimes a little less secure because there are more requirements, and other kinds of things that might happen in the university that might happen so it's usually the assistant professors, those on tenure track who if for whatever reason...would be the first ones to get axed basically, because you are on a probationary period, once you get tenure and promoted to associate professor you have a little bit more job security, still some [you have] some major requirements to fulfill...you can be let go but it has to be for something grievous...many people end up staying there, so reaching full professor for some people takes a little bit longer...*

She talked about how the consolidation of the university affected her decision to apply for tenure position.

*I decided that I was going to, in my first post tenure review because frankly because of the consolidation I was involved in so many aspects of it, major working groups and a lot of administrative things, doing graduate advising and redoing curriculum and getting involved at all sorts of different stages so I said, 'you know whay, this is the time to do it' and on top of it, when I did it, because it was within the first two years of the merger, I was still under UTB guidelines, so 'I said, this is the time to do it because the UTB guidelines would base it on the requirements that were in place when I reached tenure and not that it was less strict, but because most of what I was doing fit under those guidelines so I figured I'd do it that way...there are certain um perks, if you want to call it because you are now considered really senior faculty. You can develop or ask to teach courses that you might not asked for before...you can have the ability to be a bit more vocal without the sense that it could put your job in jeopardy, I mean little things like that.*

With regard to what the university does to get more of Hispanic female faculty into tenure, she noted that *'its getting better'* and also explained,

*we have a... it got started with UTPA and the year before it became UTRGV when we knew we were going to consolidate, there's a group that's called The Women's Faculty Network. And it's a group that was originally started and funded The National Science Foundation [I think], and at UTPA they got this started...the focus of it, was because UTPA is a Hispanic Serving University (HSU), the specifics of the WFN and the other part of it is the ADVANCE...was to actually promote women, especially women of color in lots of different places and its...at UTPA it's specifically to try, and the 'of color' was specifically for Hispanic/Latina women especially in the sciences, but they decided at*



*UTPA that given the nature of the schools down here that they were gonna open it up, not just for science or STEM related, but all disciplines, so in 2014 when we were in talk,s they extended the WFN to the Brownsville Faculty as well. So from 2014 on we have really been involved, in trying to promote women in all these areas, one of the initiatives that the WFN spearheads is a program that's called, 'Associate to Full' and the idea is that associates that are women, become mentors and give training sessions to women faculty primarily to give them guidelines...and to encourage them to apply.*

She went on to describe how some women get stuck at certain ranks within the university system and then elaborated extensively of the social and cultural perspectives, which perhaps hinder many women professionally.

*...because one of the things that happens for many women, and this isn't just Hispanic women but, I think many women in academia, you end up having and if you look at sort of the real nationwide, the numbers of women going into full professorships are outnumbered by men, part of it is historically that men have much more been in these positions of authority and moved up and moved on to other things, and that's a historic problem with gender issues, with research women have to tend to work twice as hard, as in many things in order to get the same kind of level of whatever it is...that men, it is sort of naturally assumed that men can get more time off, especially if they're married or you know, for family or research... for women [regardless of] color or not, but it's doubly the issue for women of color, and especially Hispanic women because number one: there is a higher incidence of women being heads of household in Hispanic communities, there's still a little bit of a cultural bias of the idea of women not being at home with the kids or not being family oriented, or even if they're married and have a supportive spouse, many*

*women...there's that cultural tradition that if she's the wife, and the mother she's the primary caretaker...and there's also a guilt factor for many women, it's not as, not to say that for the dominant culture, or white or Anglo or whatever you want to call it, not to say that women don't have the guilt, but it seems to be more, accepted that women can be ambitious and can go and go forward.*

I was rather engrossed by her story, because I thoroughly understood everything she was describing. My research had depicted that Hispanic/Latino women were more likely to be seen and expected to be the caregivers of their culture and thus, not encouraged as often to pursue professional careers. As she continued to illustrate the struggles of women, she said,

*...there is that cultural tradition that mom or the wife has to be there, and that the support for the husband, the idea of sharing the responsibilities and salary making, equal is okay except there is still that idea that the husband is a little bit more important to the family which is a cultural thing, it's starting to change but slowly, so definitely so if the woman starts to get higher, that creates lots of problems.*

She also spoke about the representation of Hispanic females in media, and how that might often influence certain cultural perspectives.

*And you because there isn't a lot of what I would say, strong representation in media and in other areas where we see that, it's kind of an issue for many Hispanic women to see themselves as the pioneer of doing that, because it's kind of like, 'that's too risky.' It's starting to change, especially when you go into schools, into academia where you have very strong Latino studies or gender studies, or any kind of ethnic studies or departments that have strong representation. It's starting to change where we see, not necessarily just*

*Hispanic women, but women in higher administration, so it's starting to change...but I mean we are already 2017 and it's not changing fast enough!*

She explains how she goes about encouraging her female students to pursue careers in academia and also in how she highlights Hispanic figures, as an instructor.

*I see it with my students, I encourage all my students, but especially my female students who have a real talent for academia, for research to really go into graduate school to not sort of stop towards the more traditional...so one of things that I try to do is bring out these role models where you see them in other areas, media, popular culture, even it's a 'traditional' class, cuz I never do anything traditional (she laughed)...cuz I think it's important to see ourselves cuz if we don't, we don't think we are allowed or that we can.*

She also touched upon the current progress for women, as depicted through the UTRGV administration

*One of things that I thought that was incredibly important when we were UTB was the fact that our president was the first Hispanic President of a major university; this was a UT school. One of the things that I'm glad is continuing with UTRGV is a higher presence of more women in positions of power. Not as many, unfortunately Hispanic, as I would have liked to see or women of color, but still the fact that there is a presence of women who have some major power, some decision makers, is very helpful especially for junior faculty and then the WFN is definitely helpful.*

With regard to the role that mentorship plays in encouraging students pursuing academic or professional paths, she explains

*...even if we aren't 'traditionally Latina' that we don't necessarily 'look Latina' I mean I walk into a classroom and they see me and they see [ my hair] and [eye color] and they*

*think, [that must be her married name]’ or they see me and they think Irish, whatever and then they see that I teach [my discipline] and think ‘for sure this woman is’ you know and then I start talking about Hispanic women in the middle ages and then I start launching into perfect Spanish and all this, and I can see it in their eyes, it’s the shock, the confusion...and then those little moment of ‘she knows better Spanish than me.’ I want them to have that moment, because it ends up completely exploding their inner stereotypes.*

With regards to overcoming the stereotypes she emphasized she says,

*...we need to let our brown girls know, that brown is okay and that brown can climb, we need that, but we also need to let them know that brown is not the only thing that Hispanic and Latino covers, all sorts of things because otherwise there’s an internal stereotype.*

She spoke about how she encourages her students, not to just leave the Valley and not come back, but to instead use the knowledge they’ve obtained for the better good of the community.

*...I think there’s two things [the ones that are comfortable here, and the one’s that can’t wait to get out]...so what I try to do is bring them to a middle point, I say, ‘you’re comfortable here, that’s wonderful, what about experiencing something outside and then bringing it back, because think of the kinds of knowledge you can bring back and allow others to see and then you become real role models.’ I wasn’t born here, I came here when I was a teenager and I’m a real sort of ‘mut’ because I’m French, I’m Spanish, I’m Italian, I’ve lived all over the place, by the time I was 14 I’d moved eleven times about every ten years, but then when I got here I kind of felt this affinity and sort of stayed put for a while, [I was also ready to get out] and then I’d come back to visit and I thought,*

*'you know I really, really like this place, I like the culture, the traditions, the area...the uniqueness of this place, really unique.' ...think about what it is that drives you to want to want to get out of here, what it is that you don't like, then turn around and be the change!'*

With respect to the influence of the consolidation on higher education, she discusses the changes it's brought to the Brownsville campus.

*...like with any endeavor, there are some things we need to address, with the diversity of classes that are offered across The Valley, not so much that there is still 'us and them' sort of feelings, but there really are sometimes some issues, of making sure that students are properly served, on both ends...part of the problem with us in Brownsville, is that we have space limitations, and there are ways to [respond] to those space limitations that some departments and some administrators are starting to address, like being able to share a classroom space, having hybrid courses...I think it does a disservice to the students, if we expect them to constantly be traveling...we need to find a happy medium*

She also added, how the consolidation has influenced faculty.

*.... within our own departments [before the merger] we were much more flexible at helping each other with things, we would team teach, we would help each other with curriculum, we would sit down and design a new course together, that doesn't happen as much, part of it is the distance, part of it is the new structural divisions of the colleges...the other thing is, that the UTPA culture was much more geared towards a much more what I would call a much more traditional academic route than we were. We were much more geared towards a teaching university first, although there was always rigorous academics, the idea of preparing our students for the kind of traditional paths,*

*were not the primary focal point, for us it was that making sure that our students understood...it was a much more service to students' culture...so a big part of how we were [evaluated] at UTB was in our service to students, in how we managed to mentor them, as opposed to an emphasis on scholarship.*

As we continued to talk, I wondered what she attributed to her success in academia.

*A lot of it is...a big part of it is that I always, had from the earliest time, I always had, sort of an intrinsic drive to learn, to want to know....the idea of knowing not just the thing itself but why and this and that...a big part of that comes actually from my parents both my mom and dad have an insatiable curiosity about everything, so books were always a part of our house, and this goes for my siblings as well. My dad's favorite thing when I was growing up if I wanted to know something, 'you know there's a very good book on that shelf over there, it's called a dictionary go look it up.' My mom loves history, the moment that she learns a fact about something, she then wants to know more, so I grew up in a family, with parents and grandparents who all loved learning things. I was never directly, always encouraged, but never directly demanded to do well in school a lot of that sort of came from my internal personality...but I had a very supportive extended family, my parents, my grandparents...who always indulged me whenever I'd ask questions...and I was always supported in whatever I wanted...I would have to say that what lead [me] into academia...I missed out on being [able] to study things just to study things [when I had my other career].*

She continued her story by telling me that it was a colleague who suggested she apply for a Ph.D. program, she also expressed the continuing support of her parents.

*... A teacher that I had while at UTPA, she's the one that encouraged me to really get into research, into academia, she says, 'we need more women in showing students that women can be professors and all these kinds of things' and that's sort of what lead me into...and then I started teaching high school after I got my masters and then a colleague of mine at the school I was teaching was the one who encouraged me to apply for a PhD, and so because of those [people] and again, it's not that my parents pushed me into being an 'A' student or any of that kind of stuff, but...were...incredibly supportive...and my dad who constantly supported me and [would] sit and help me with homework, and sit and listen with me endlessly about my explanation of what I had learned and all these things, they were always supportive and encouraging even though they had expected me to do these things, and so...they've supported every decision I've made in my life...between my parents and a very tightknit circle of friends who never judge... one of them who's now a teacher and we were talking the other day, and I said, one of the things I love is that my students are going out and being role models to others and then I said, 'I'm thinking about what my legacy might be' and she looks at me for a second and she goes, 'what your legacy might be?' She says, 'ma'am do you realize how many mini you's are in the school district already?' she says, 'that studied under the School of Dr.[sic]?!' And she just made me cry and I thought, 'oh my god', and I start to count up, and I realized 'yeah, the legacy is there already'.*

She spoke to me about the importance of a support system for women pursuing the professoriate.

*I think especially for women of color or other marginalized groups, it's the idea of making sure that you balance, that yes you have to know what the realities of the situation are, but that you also have to have somebody that believes in you and*

*encourages you. If it's just you, you can do it, but if you don't have a support network that believes that you can do it, and to encourage you during the downs um it can be, it can become very difficult. I have unfortunately seen some graduate school colleagues who have never finished their dissertation because they don't have that support network...especially for many women of color getting into non-traditional PhD programs, that can be a difficulty to deal with because there's still that little bit of bias that says, 'Mexican-American woman going to get a PhD, I mean come on really' because there's still that 'who does she think she is' and so you may sometimes encounter are not necessarily from the professors, although a few might still harbor those feelings, but sometimes it's the students themselves...there's that competitive bias, it may not be as obvious or hostile, or openly hostile as it used to be [but it's there].*

As we closed the interview she ended our discussion by speaking about how the university has pushed for further empowering of its female faculty.

*...strong women support each other...mentor each other...and to end on a more positive note, that's one of the things I see at UTRGV, is a real positive movement towards doing that, The Women's Faculty Network, the WFN is supported by the Provost and Vice Provost and [the Vice Provost's], all of his senior staff are women, and he's very supportive of women, and the executive team of WFN are very diverse as well, so there's a real movement to try and make sure that we create a culture of support and mentorship, and wellness, of not being afraid to be vocal about things, and that I see is a very positive thing. One of the main missions of the WFN is to get more women into the higher ranks at the university and we're heading that way!*



## **APPENDIX FORMS**

## APPENDIX D

# **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**

## **Informed Consent Form**

### **“Disparity in the Rio Grande Valley: The Absence of Hispanic Women in Academia”**

Investigators: Cecile Caddel, Graduate Student

Background: I am conducting a research study on, disparity in the Rio Grande Valley and the absence of Hispanic women in higher education. In recognizing that the challenges of higher education impede opportunities towards professional advancement, I hope not only to examine society’s response to these barriers, but to also understand how researchers analyze and interpret the experiences of the Hispanic woman. Thus, the goal of my research is to stimulate interest in Hispanic women’s issues while exposing the barriers and circumstances, which hinder progress in the academe. Procedure:

Thank you so much for participating in the interview. I will be interviewing you as a part of my research study, the interview consists of several prearrange open-ended questions. The questions cover the central theme of my study, the absence of Hispanic women in higher education. The interview will last for approximately 1-2 hours. However, if I do need to follow up with you and speak to you again at some point throughout the research process, I would appreciate your consent to do so.

If at any point and time you wish not to respond to a question, please let me know and we will move on. Also, if at moment you wish to withdraw from the interview, let me know, so that we may end the session. Please also be aware that all information is confidential, so you should not write your name, or any identifying information on the survey. I would also like to audio record the session; if you approve please sign the audio/video consent form. Only I, the interviewer will have access to the collected information, and audio recording of the interview and will safely store them in a secure storage file and location; no personalized information will be released at anytime, throughout the research process.

Risks or Possible Discomforts Associated with the Study: There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study, however participants will possibly be subjected to minor levels of emotional discomfort.

Benefits of Participation: There is no direct benefit to participants. However, the importance of the study lies in stimulating interest in and fostering awareness of Hispanic women in higher education.

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# The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

## Informed Consent Form

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. If for any reason you decide that you would like to discontinue your participation, simply let me know that you wish to stop.

Anonymity and/or Confidentiality: Informed consent and data from the interview will be kept confidential; all files will be securely stored, all identifiable information will be deleted and transcribed information shredded at the end of this study. The interviewer will have access to all identifiable data, but will secure the interview information in a safe location. The interview dialogue will be transcribed in a manner, which codes the names of the subjects (e.g. subject 1, subject 2, etc.) Furthermore, the interviewer will obtain a Certificate of Confidentiality.

Who to Contact for Research Related Questions: For questions about the research itself, or to report any adverse effects during or following participation, contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dawid Wladyka at [dawid.wladyka@utrgv.edu](mailto:dawid.wladyka@utrgv.edu).

Who to Contact Regarding Your Rights as a Participant: This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-2889 or [irb@utrgv.edu](mailto:irb@utrgv.edu).

Signatures: By signing below, you indicate that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study and that the procedures involved have been described to your satisfaction. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own reference. In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years of age. If you are under 18, please inform the researcher.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Date

Payment for Participation: No payment for participation will be given.

Treatment for Physical Injury: No medical risk is involved in this study.

Termination of your Participation by the Researcher: The interviewer may withdraw the subject from the interview if certain circumstances warrant doing so.

# **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**

## **Informed Consent Form**

Early Withdrawal from the Study: If the subject wishes to do so they may withdraw from the interview, since their participation is voluntary.

Taping (Audio/Video) or Photographing. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer. Only the interviewer will have access to these audio recordings; all recordings and interview dialogue are to remain confidential. These audio recordings will be kept in a secure location, under safe storage file held by the interviewer. The purpose of these audio recordings is to provide a firsthand account of the subject's experiences in higher education. Furthermore, the audio recording and personal narratives offer the reader a clear insight into the circumstances of the participant. The audio recordings will be deleted once the recordings have been transcribed and the research study has been completed.

Additional Costs to you as a Participant: No additional costs necessary.

Treatment Studies. No treatment or medication will be received by the participant.

Significant New Findings: Any significant findings developed during the course of the research, which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.

Approximate Number of Participants Involved in the Study: Approximately 10 subjects will be selected for the research study.

## APPENDIX E

## **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**

### **Consent Script**

“Hello, my name is Cecile Caddel. I am a researcher at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). I am conducting a research study about disparity in the Rio Grande Valley and the absence of Hispanic women in higher education. Would you mind consenting to an interview? It will take about 1-2 hours to do so. Your responses are confidential; any individually identifiable responses will be securely stored and will only be available to those directly involved in this study. If there are any questions that you would prefer to skip, simply let me know and we will move. If you choose to withdraw from the interview, you can do so at anytime.

IF THE INDIVIDUAL AGREES, confirm that they are 18+ .

PROVIDE THEM WITH A COPY OF THE SURVEY AND A STUDY INFORMATION HANDOUT.

---

### **Research Study Information Sheet**

*(Please keep this information for your reference)*

Study Title:           **“Disparity in the Rio Grande Valley:  
The Absence of Hispanic Women in Academia”**

Researcher contact information:   Name: Cecile Caddel  
  Title: Graduate Student  
  Dept: Department of Sociology  
  The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley  
  Phone: N/A  
  Email: cecile.caddel01@utrgv.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-2889 or irb@utrgv.edu.

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## APPENDIX F



# **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**

## **Audio Release Form**

### **Disparity in the Rio Grande Valley: The Absence of Hispanic Women in Academia**

**Researcher: Cecile Caddel**

**Phone: N/A**

**Email Address: cecile.caddel01@utrgv.edu**

**Faculty Advisor: Dawid Wladyka, Ph.D, dawid.wladyka@utrgv.edu, (956)-883-8225**

I hereby give permission to Cecile Caddel to audio record my responses during the interview for this study, **“Disparity in the Rio Grande Valley: The Absence of Hispanic Women in Academia.”** I further understand that the researcher will use a pseudonym to identify me and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or transcription of my recorded responses. The recorded material will only be used for research purposes. As with all research consent, I may at any time withdraw permission for audio recorded material of me to be used in this research project.

I acknowledge that there is no compensation for allowing myself to be audio recorded.

I am permitting the review and transcription of my recorded interview by the investigators. The recorded material will be securely stored in a file drive for a minimum of 3 years after the study is complete. After that time, all recorded data will be destroyed. No one other than the investigators will have access to the data.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please keep a copy of this sheet for your reference.*

## APPENDIX G

### Outside Affiliations Disclosure Certification for Researchers

This form applies to all researchers and is used to determine the existence of potential conflicts of interest as per HOP 4.1.3. Please complete this form and submit as an attachment to your research protocol.

First Name	Last Name	UTRGV Email Address
Cecile	Caddel	cecile.caddel01@utrgv.edu

Please provide a descriptive title for the research project or study in which you are engaged. You may also provide the IRB number for the study in which you are engaged in, if available to you:

Disparity in the Rio Grande Valley:  
The Absence of Hispanic Women in Academia  
IRB #: 909661-1

By completing and signing this form, I certify that I am aware of the requirements found in HOP 4.1.3, Financial Conflicts of Interest in Research, and acknowledge my responsibilities to disclose outside affiliations that may be perceived as a potential significant conflict of financial interest. Examples of outside affiliations that may represent a significant financial conflict of interest include: outside employment and fiduciary positions in, or payments, royalties, gifts, and travel paid by, an entity that has a relationship with the research study that is being conducted.

Please mark with an "X" below in the blank space that applies:

I certify that, I and my covered family members (as defined in HOP 4.1.3), \_\_\_\_\_ have / X do not have an outside affiliation that may be perceived by a reasonable person as a significant financial conflict of interest in research. *(If you responded in the affirmative, please also complete Attachment A. Otherwise, please sign and submit with the research protocol).*

Please note that certifications are good for a year and pertain to the specific research project described above. If there is a change in circumstances, please notify it within 30 days of the change.

Cecile Caddel  
Signature of Researcher

5/16/16  
Date

## APPENDIX H

Good Evening Dr. [REDACTED]

My name is Cecile Caddel, I am a graduate student, and currently within my last semester at UTRGV. I am working on my thesis proposal and so, I would love the opportunity to interview you for my study. The focus of my research is on Hispanic women in the field of academia, with an emphasis on the Rio Grande Valley and UTRGV.

I would really appreciate your input, and hope that you might consider meeting with me. My intent with this study is to highlight not only higher education, but to also stress the importance of the personal narrative, in understanding the experiences and obstacles of the individual.

I know your time is valuable and I would be willing to work with your schedule and set up a convenient meeting time. Thank you for taking the time to read my email. I hope to hear from you soon!

Best,  
Cecile Caddel

## APPENDIX I

### **Interview Schedule**

***The response to each of these questions is anonymous.***

- 1.What lead you to pursue academia? Was there a specific individual that encouraged you, to continue your education?
2. What is your perspective of higher education the Rio Grande Valley?
3. In your opinion, are the challenges towards higher education more challenging for Hispanic women in the Rio Grande Valley?
4. Do you feel that the path toward professional growth and tenure is more challenging for Hispanic women? If so, why?
- 5.What challenges have you had to overcome from within academia? Are the opportunities towards tenure as available to women as they are to men?
- 6.Did any one individual influence or inspire you the most? How significant do you think this was to your accomplishments?
7. What would you say has been the key to your academic achievements?
8. What recommendation do you have for promoting higher education in the Rio Grande Valley?
9. How does UTRGV promote the professional growth of its female faculty and encourage their research and writing?
- 10.Do you know of any new or upcoming programs, which foster such professional growth?

***Thank you for your time.***

## APPENDIX J



**APPLICATION FOR THESIS COMMITTEE**

Student's name Cecile Gaddel Date 3/23/17  
Student ID 0180911  
Degree sought M.A.I.S. in the department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Thesis title: The Hispanic Female Scholars: Experiences of an Underrepresented  
Minority. A Study of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

**TO BE APPROVED BY THE STUDENT'S ADVISOR, THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE  
AND BY THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE COLLEGE**

Name of Committee Chair Dr. Dawid Wladyka  
Name of Committee Member Dr. Arieli Lomeli  
Name of Committee Member Dr. William Yaworsky  
Name of Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_

**Type a brief statement of the proposed thesis topic:**

While the number of Hispanics in the academe has improved, Hispanic women are still severely underrepresented. Furthermore, a leaky educational pipeline impedes advancements in academia, by reinforcing gender disparity and trivializing the experiences of the Hispanic woman. Through the personal narratives of Hispanic female scholars, from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, this study unmaskes the realities of the professoriate. Accordingly, the study also emphasizes the urgency for continued inquiry into the experiences of Hispanic women in academia. ■

I agree to supervise this student in the preparation of the thesis described above

Signature of the Committee Chair 

**APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE AS NOTED**

Student's Graduate Advisor  Date 3/23/17  
Dean of College  Date 3 27 17  
Dean of the Graduate College \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cecile Caddel is within her 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year of study at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Cecile obtained a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at Brownsville in the fall of 2006. In May of 2017, she graduated from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley with a Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a concentration in Sociology.

She is a high school teacher with the Brownsville Independent School District, wherein she teaches Pre-AP World Geography and Sociology as an elective. She is also the teacher of record for the dual enrollment Psychology course at the high school.

She is also currently working on the completion of a secondary research study, *“Extreme Drought and its Influence on the Well-being of Small Locally Based and Owned, Fruit and Vegetable Vendors.”* The completion of this study is tentative to the fall of 2017.

In the short term, Cecile will begin teaching the Sociology dual enrollment course at Hanna Early College High School, and apply for the Gender Issues and Women Studies Program at UTRGV. In the long term, she hopes to apply and enroll in a Doctoral Program in the field of Sociology, and pursue a career in academia.

Her mailing address is 24 Deer Haven Court, Brownsville, Texas 78520. Her email address is [cecile.caddel01@utrgv.edu](mailto:cecile.caddel01@utrgv.edu).