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## **BORDER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: UNIQUE STAKEHOLDER ALLIANCES (PART I)**

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*This article, the first of a two-part series, presents an analysis of data extracted from the dissertation *The Impact of Catholic Schooling on Low-income Mexican-American Students* (Watt, 1999). The research was prompted by the author's interest in *The Coleman Report of 1966*, a controversial document that claimed multiply-disadvantaged minority Catholic school students outperformed their public school counterparts. This study was qualitative in nature, exploring four case studies of 3rd-grade teachers, their schools, and their classrooms in a Hispanic cultural context. Findings will be presented in Part II.*

Since James Coleman's *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966), many Catholic school researchers have proclaimed that minority students in Catholic schools outperform public school minority students. Later studies by Greeley (1982), Carper and Hunt (1984), and Neal (1995) confirmed these findings. This research on the Border Catholic Schools adds to the body of knowledge on high achievement by minority students in Catholic schools, yet provides only anecdotal comparisons to student achievement in local public schools.

Catholic schools have often been viewed as elitist, accused of catering only to middle- to upper-income students; however, in 1992, 65% of the Catholic schools in the country were found to be eligible for Title I services (Brigham, 1992), and by 1997 that figure climbed to 72% (Milks, 1997). In addition, Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe (1982) disproved the commonly held Catholic school elitist myth by randomly selecting 64 Catholic schools in eight cities and examining their student enrollments. They found that 54 of the 64 schools were Title I recipients with 70% minority populations, exemplifying the church's commitment to the poor (Carper & Hunt, 1984).

In a more recent case study by Biddle (1997), one Catholic elementary school was examined to determine why low-income, minority single-parent families sent their children to that particular school. One hundred percent of the children attending the school were African American, 90% were non-Catholic, and the average family income of the students was \$13,000. Biddle found that most parents chose Dayton Catholic Elementary because of the family atmosphere and sense of community, that the staff went "far beyond the call of duty" (p. 7), and because it was a distinctive but not exclusive school. Distinctiveness referred to small classes, teacher interest in students, emphasis on academic standards, discipline and order, and attention to religious values.

Catholic schools serve students from various backgrounds, with Mexican-American students making up a large portion of many of the schools' populations. The percentage of minorities in Catholic schools has more than doubled (24.4%) since 1971, and Hispanics make up the largest minority population in Catholic schools at 10.4% (Metzler, 1998). Despite limited resources, Catholic educators have historically been successful in teaching Hispanic students (National Catholic Educational Association, 1987), even though educational opportunities are often below standard in areas of high Hispanic concentration. According to Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982), Catholic schools generally facilitate higher minority student achievement than public schools, especially for the multiply disadvantaged.

As of July 1, 1998, Hispanics were the largest growing minority group among children younger than 18 years of age, and they are expected to make up more than 20% of the United States population by the year 2020 (Jacobson, 1998). Are some schools doing a better job than others at meeting the needs of this group of children? Can we examine schools that have traditionally assisted the Hispanic student in achieving success and identify the means through which these schools successfully serve Hispanic youth?

Four Catholic elementary schools with Mexican-American enrollments of over 89%, located in a small diocese on the United States side of the Texas-Mexico border, were the focus of this study. The Border Catholic Schools were eligible for Title I services at the time of the study, with one school having over 50% of its students eligible. An investigation of the impact of Catholic elementary school teachers and the religious dimensions of their schools on low-income Mexican-American students in selected Catholic schools is presented in this article.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Several questions about the impact of Catholic schools on low-income Mexican-American students remain unanswered, even after in-depth studies, such as Greeley's (1982) response to the *High School and Beyond* data;



Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore's (1982) *High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private Schools Compared*; the National Catholic Educational Association's (1986) *Catholic High Schools: Their Impact on Low-Income Students*; Bryk, Lee, and Holland's (1993) *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, and many others. Since the purposes of Catholic schools are much broader than the concentration on academics, a complete assessment of Catholic school effectiveness must include an examination of teachers in the classroom; climate factors, including the religious dimension of the school; emphasis on religious values and discipline; parental involvement; and the presence of vowed religious in the schools. The Border Catholic Schools research provides such an assessment.

## METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

A naturalistic qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) into the characteristics and practices of teachers in selected Catholic schools and into the religious dimension of these schools was conducted. A multiple case study approach (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991) was used, with multiple theoretical samples (principals, parents, and teachers). Third-grade teachers within schools, as well as parents, principals, and other teachers, were interviewed and observed in order to learn about the effects of classroom practices and environmental factors on low-income Mexican-American students.

## SITE AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Four teachers were selected from eight border Catholic elementary schools. The diocese chosen for this study is significant because of its high population of Mexican-American families and its location in a high poverty area. Mexican-American students comprised 89% to 96% of the selected Catholic schools' populations, and all of the schools studied had students who were eligible for Title I services.

Prior to teacher selection, the researcher examined results of standardized tests administered by diocesan schools in order to identify four out of the eight schools in the diocese that had histories of above average test scores. The standardized test used in the Border Catholic Schools was the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and, for the purposes of this paper, is used to define student high achievement. During the 3 years prior to the study, SAT scores at the participating schools were 0.7% to 13.7% above the national average in reading, math, and language. In only two instances were SAT scores below the national average at 1.6% and at 3%, once in reading and once in language. Eight schools in the diocese had histories of high SAT scores; however, only four schools were chosen. Once the schools were identified, the researcher selected third-grade teachers who met specific criteria or whose schools met certain criteria. These criteria are explained below.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

Third-grade teachers were selected for several reasons. First, the researcher initially sought to select fourth-grade teachers; however, not enough fourth-grade teachers in the diocese had been teaching at the same school, in a self-contained classroom, for a period of at least 3 years. Second, the third graders had been exposed to the Stanford Achievement Test for at least 2 years. Third, students in the third grade were in self-contained classrooms and had not yet experienced the middle school concept or departmentalization. Finally, because of their age, third graders were more likely to take the achievement test more seriously than the less mature early primary students or the pre-adolescent middle school students.

Several criteria were used to determine which third-grade teachers and their schools were suitable for the study. First, the researcher sought to find teachers who had been teaching the third grade, in a self-contained classroom, in the same school for at least 5 years. Because of the small size of the diocese and because teacher turnover in Catholic schools is generally high, this criterion was not met. Two of the teachers who were chosen had been teaching the third grade at least 3 years, and the other two teachers who were selected had been teaching in the school for at least 5 years but had only been teaching at the third-grade level for 2 years or less.

Second, teachers who taught in schools where the test scores were above the national average were chosen. Third-grade scores over the past 3 years were examined, even though some of the scores did not reflect the chosen teacher's class.

Third, teachers who taught in schools where the family income levels of the children varied and where the percentage of Mexican-American children was high were chosen. Each of these schools had at least some low-income children, with one school having over half of its children identified as low income. One school had mostly middle- to upper-income families, with a small percentage of low-income families. Three of the four schools had between 85% and 96% Hispanic populations. The fourth school reported a 69% Hispanic population, but this school identified over 12% of its population as multiracial (Hispanic and White mixed).

Finally, the researcher desired to examine teachers in a variety of schools within the same diocese. One school differed in size, being at least twice as large as the other three. One school differed from the other three in that it was a private school, operated by a religious order, rather than a parish school. Two of the schools had vowed religious as principals, and lay principals operated the other two schools. Three of the teachers studied were Hispanic, and one was White. Three of the schools enrolled children who resided in Mexico, and in one of these schools over 40% of the children were from Mexico. Demographic data for each school are found in Table 1.



**Table 1**  
**Border Catholic School Demographics**

	<b>Our Lady of Guadalupe</b>	<b>St. Michael</b>	<b>St. Theresa</b>	<b>Sacred Heart</b>
Student enrollment	234	587	268	221
Grade levels	PreK-8	PreK-6	PreK-6	PreK-8
Professional staff	21	34	18	15
Nonprofessional staff	12	13	5	5
Third-gr. teacher's years at school	6	6	7	5
Percent Title I eligible students	21	7.5	10	54
Percent recent Mexican immigrants/residents of Mexico	40	26	0	13
Percent Catholic students	94	98	98	99
Percent Hispanic students	89	85	69	96

## RESEARCH DESIGN

A naturalistic qualitative inquiry was conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) into the roles, practices, and characteristics of teachers in Catholic elementary schools and into the religious dimension of the schools in which they worked. The third-grade teacher in the context of the Catholic school setting was examined. A multiple case study (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991) or collective case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) approach was developed, using a primary theoretical sample, the third-grade teacher. Secondary theoretical samples included the principal, other teachers, and parents. Casanova (1989) suggested one must study teachers within schools, rather than isolated teachers, in order to gain a better understanding of the school and its environment. The researcher will often choose an organization, such as a school, and then focus on some aspect of it (the teacher) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Four Catholic elementary school teachers were examined in their natural settings, which included classrooms, prayer assemblies, and Masses.

Qualitative case study is characterized by the main researcher spending substantial time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on.... What the researchers are unable to see for themselves is obtained by interviewing people who did see or by finding documents recording it. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 242)

Four case studies were developed through several methods of data collection. Observations and document review were used to supplement the primary data gathered in the interviews and focus group discussions. The

researcher chose to use interviews and focus group discussions as the primary data sources and observations and document review as secondary sources.

The case study has several functions (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991):

1. It permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action and social structures in natural settings studied at close hand.
2. It provides information from a number of sources and over a period of time, thus permitting a more holistic study of complex social networks and of complexes of social action and social meaning.
3. It can furnish the dimension of time and history to the study of social life, thereby enabling the investigator to examine continuity and change in life-world patterns.
4. It encourages and facilitates, in practice, theoretical innovation and generalization. (pp. 6-7)

A three-interview series (Schuman, 1982) was used with each teacher participant. In the first interview, participants were asked to describe their experiences prior to their Catholic school teaching career. The second interview allowed the investigator to ask questions about the participants' present experiences in the Catholic school. The final interview allowed the participants to reflect on and make meaning of their experiences in the Catholic school (Seidman, 1991).

In addition to the three-interview series used for each teacher case study, principals of the teachers were interviewed in order to complement each case study. The researcher anticipated how particular interview questions would work in practice, and interview questions were pilot-tested on subjects similar to the planned informants (Maxwell, 1996).

Focus group discussions (Krueger, 1994) were also conducted. "Focus groups produce qualitative data that provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants" (Krueger, 1994, p. 19). In order to verify information collected during the interview process, the researcher assembled a focus group composed of teachers at each school who were not the primary theoretical samples (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A parent focus group was also assembled for each case study to allow the researcher to gain insight into an additional perspective about what happens in the school.

Initially, focus groups were to have at least four participants, but the parent focus groups proved difficult to assemble due to scheduling problems, leaving the researcher with just two to four participants for each group discussion. The teacher focus groups were composed of five to six participants. Teacher focus groups were assembled by the researcher and the principal, and were composed of teachers with a variety of characteristics. Parent focus group participants included parents of third-grade students who were chosen by the researcher after reviewing their returned questionnaires.

Teachers were observed as they interacted with students inside and out-



side of the classroom. At least three classroom observations were made for each teacher studied, and an additional observation was made of the teacher interacting with the students at Mass, prayer, or other activities. By using direct observations in addition to other methods, data collection was triangulated to reduce the risk of conclusions that may have reflected limitations of the primary interviews (Denzin, 1970). "Observation often enables you to draw inferences about someone's meaning and perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 76). Field notes that contained information about the participants in their natural settings accompanied observations.

Three different questionnaires (see Appendix) were used for initial data collection in the fall of 1998, prior to observations, interviews, and focus group work. An initial questionnaire was sent out to principals and teachers in selected schools, and another questionnaire was distributed to the parents of the third-grade students in order to acquire background data on each school and the people associated with it.

Stanford Achievement Test reports were reviewed to determine which schools had above-average test scores for their Mexican-American students. The diocesan superintendent and the selected school principals were also asked to provide demographic data on and a brief history of each of the schools in the study. For purposes of this article, the schools of study are referred to as the Border Catholic Schools.

## **PREPARATION FOR DATA COLLECTION**

### **Instrumentation**

Several instruments were used in this study, including questionnaires, direct observation by the researcher, and interviews and focus group discussions by the researcher. Stanford Achievement Test data were also reviewed, as well as historical documents pertaining to the diocese and the schools of study. The researcher served as the main instrument of data collection and analysis.

### **Protocol Development**

A formal letter written to the superintendent of schools in the prospective diocese served as the researcher's initial contact. A meeting was held between the researcher and the superintendent, at which the researcher presented the study proposal to the superintendent and was given access to the schools that were studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Once schools were chosen for study, the researcher met with the principal of each school individually, and then with the teachers who were the subjects of the study. Demographic data questionnaires were given to principals. The principals were also asked to distribute and collect the teacher questionnaires.

Questionnaires were distributed only to prospective teacher subjects, who were asked if they agreed to be part of the study. Once they agreed to be participants, the teachers were asked to distribute questionnaires to parents of all students in their current class. Those parents who returned their questionnaires to the teacher agreed to be participants. From the returned questionnaires, the researcher chose parents for the focus group discussions.

## **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

### **Documents**

Two main types of documents were used for the purpose of subject selection. A questionnaire was distributed to gather demographic data on the schools, their teachers, and families prior to the selection of teachers and parent focus group participants. Stanford Achievement Test scores were also examined in order to identify which schools and teachers had a history of high-achieving, low-income, Mexican-American students for the purpose of this study.

### **Interviews**

A three-interview process was used with each selected teacher, and each principal was interviewed once. Transcribed tape-recorded interviews of teachers and principals assisted the researcher in gathering valid, insightful information.

### **Observations**

Direct observations of classroom practice, an activity other than classroom, and student-teacher interaction were conducted in each school; and field notes were kept.

### **Focus Groups**

A teacher focus group and a parent focus group were assembled by the researcher for each case study. All focus group discussions were tape-recorded; and for those focus groups with more than two persons, the researcher also videotaped the discussions.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

“Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of a study” (Yin, 1984, p. 99). A data reduction method (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to identify, code, and categorize the data gathered. Data reduction sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data so that final conclusions can be drawn and verified. Krueger (1994) suggested considering words, contexts, internal consistency, frequency and extensiveness of com-



ments, intensity of comments, specificity of responses, and big ideas when analyzing qualitative data.

### **Transcriptions**

All audiotaped and videotaped interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the researcher. The transcript is a verbatim representation of the interview; however, the researcher was careful to keep field notes of nonverbal communication such as gestures, emotions, facial expressions, and background noise (Seidman, 1991).

### **Memos**

The researcher kept memos while analyzing data, in order to reflect on methods, theory, or purposes of the study (Maxwell, 1996). Memos assisted the researcher in linking observations with interviews and focus group discussions with interviews.

### **Coding**

Coding, in qualitative research, is used to "fracture" the data and rearrange it in categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories, and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts (Strauss, 1987). Coding involves searching through the data for regularities, topics, and patterns, as well as writing down words or phrases to represent these topics (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998). The researcher coded all interviews and focus group interviews by highlighting and numbering specific responses. After coding, the researcher analyzed the coded transcripts for themes (Seidman, 1991).

### **Contextualizing Strategies**

Contextualizing strategies, also referred to as linking data, were used to examine relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole (Maxwell, 1996). The researcher linked data from different interviews, field notes, and focus group interviews in order to draw conclusions.

## **TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The researcher developed measures to ensure that the study was trustworthy. Miles and Huberman (1994) cite five main overlapping issues when explaining trustworthiness. These include objectivity-confirmability; reliability-dependability-auditability; internal validity-credibility-authenticity; external validity-transferability-fittingness; and, utilization-application-action orientation. The researcher used the terms confirmability, dependability, credibility, transferability, and application in this paper.

**Confirmability**

Records such as transcribed interviews, field notes, video and audio tapes, and documents have been maintained in order to keep an audit trail (Schwandt & Halpern, 1988). The tapes were labeled and dated. The researcher also kept a journal of findings and a log of procedures which are available for public scrutiny.

**Dependability**

The researcher allowed the diocesan superintendent to periodically review her findings and welcomed suggestions on gathering and organizing data. She also invited a colleague to review her data analysis procedures to check for consistency.

**Credibility**

After the researcher transcribed the tape recordings, transcriptions were given to the interviewees and to the focus group members for member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used multiple data sources, or triangulation procedures (Denzin, 1970), to assure credibility.

**Transferability**

This same project could be used in another study, location, or situation. The people, settings, processes, and circumstances are fully described in order to permit comparisons to other studies.

**Application**

Results of this study may prove to benefit both Catholic school personnel and parents and public school educators and parents. The anticipated findings include identifying factors that are related to the performance of low-income Mexican-American students. The procedures used in this study could be applied to other Catholic school studies, as well as to public school research.

## **FOUR CASE STUDIES**

The Border Catholic Schools are located in a four-county region that is home to 894,531 residents, 84% of whom are Catholic and 88% of whom are Hispanic (mostly Mexican-American). Over 50% of the people living in this area live below the poverty level. The Border Catholic School diocese was established in the mid-1960s, and has over 60 parishes and approximately 50 mission churches.

Three of the teachers interviewed were Mexican-American, bilingual, and married, while the other one was unmarried, White, and not bilingual. All of the teachers studied were Catholic lay females, raised in two-parent Catholic families, and had been teaching in the same school for at least 5 years.



## **CASE STUDY ONE: IMELDA MARTINEZ AND OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE**

Imelda Martinez had been teaching the third grade at Our Lady of Guadalupe for 6 years at the time of the study. She is a bilingual Mexican-American who holds a bachelor's degree but was not state certified at the time of the study. Imelda teaches in her hometown of Riverton, Texas. Raised in a Catholic, working-class, migrant family, Imelda grew up with both parents, neither of whom attended school after the fifth grade.

Our Lady of Guadalupe opened in 1853 for the children of Riverton, Texas and the neighboring Mexican city of San Mateo. Riverton, located in Salinas County, had a population of over 100,000 people, and San Mateo had over 450,000 inhabitants at the time of the study. Nearly 40% of the people in Salinas County lived below the poverty level, and over 84% were Hispanic (Villas et al., 1998).

This private Catholic school operated by a religious order was established 20 years before public schools were built in Riverton. Sisters from two congregations in France were brought by the first bishop of Texas to teach primary grades and later high school.

Of the 234 students (preK-8th grade) at Our Lady of Guadalupe at the time of the study, 89% were Hispanic, 10% were White, and the remaining were Black or Asian. Ninety-four percent of the students were Catholic, and 40% resided in Mexico. Twenty-one percent qualified for Title I services, for which eligibility is based on family income. The school offered financial assistance provided by the religious order of sisters operating the school, and also through gifts and grants. Tuition and fees ranged from \$2,000 to \$2,400 per child per year. Eighty-one percent of the faculty were Hispanic, 90% were Catholic, and 81% were lay teachers. Female teachers also made up 81% of the faculty. The average teacher salary at Our Lady of Guadalupe was approximately \$20,000 in 1999.

Our Lady of Guadalupe had an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in the middle school. Fifth, sixth, and seventh graders with very low English skills were placed in the ESL classroom for one year. A teacher was employed to teach English skills to the students prior to their being mainstreamed into the regular classroom. First, second, and third graders with limited English skills were usually mainstreamed immediately since all of the primary teachers were bilingual. Children of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten age with limited English skills were taught in both languages and were ready for mainstreaming by the time they entered the first grade.

## **CASE STUDY TWO: ELIZABETH GARCIA AND SACRED HEART SCHOOL**

Elizabeth Garcia was born in Coyote, Texas, and was raised in a two-parent, Catholic, migrant family. Elizabeth is a bilingual Mexican-American who holds a bachelor's degree but did not hold a state teaching certificate at the time of the study. Elizabeth had taught kindergarten at Sacred Heart for 5 years, and was in her first year of teaching third grade at the time of the study.

Sacred Heart School is located in El Rancho, Texas. It was established in 1884 as a three-classroom elementary school run by a congregation of nuns from San Antonio. Classes were conducted in English and Spanish because many of the students came from across the border, especially from the sister city of Tierra Linda, Mexico. El Rancho, a city of approximately 12,000 residents, is located in River County, which was nearly 98% Hispanic and 60% of its inhabitants lived below the poverty level at the time of the study. Tierra Linda, Mexico, had a population of 15,000 people (Villas et al., 1998).

The school expanded to include kindergarten through eighth grade in 1923. By 1969, the kindergarten and seventh and eighth grades were closed, but were later restored in the late 1980s after the school received a \$70,000 grant from the Meadows Foundation. Of the 221 students (pre-K-8th grade) enrolled at Sacred Heart School at the time of the study, 54% of them were eligible for Title I services, 96% were Hispanic, 3% were White, and 1% were Asian. Ninety-nine percent of the students were Catholic, and approximately 13% resided in Mexico.

Thirty-three percent of the teachers at Sacred Heart were Hispanic, 93% were Catholic, and 93% were women. None of the teachers at Sacred Heart were state certified, but all had bachelor's degrees. Sacred Heart had three religious staff members, two lay staff, and a principal.

The school offered two forms of financial assistance to families who were unable to afford the tuition. The sponsorship program allowed each teacher to sponsor one child, and the parents only needed to pay the registration and book fees. Often the student sponsored was a child or relative of the teacher. The financial aid program was included in the yearly budget, and was approximately \$17,000 at the time of the study. Tuition and fees at Sacred Heart were less than \$2,000 per child in 1999. Families participated in annual fundraising activities, which kept tuition low, and raised about \$164,000 in 1998.

The local school district provided to Sacred Heart a Title I mobile van with a teacher and a paraprofessional. Only 64 students were serviced in the computer van at the time of the study, since some of the 119 who were eligible did not qualify academically. In addition, the public school district brought free breakfast and lunch to Sacred Heart and provided health care through immunizations, maintenance of medical records, and access to a doc-



tor. Special education students were also transported to and from the public school by the district's vehicles.

### **CASE STUDY THREE: SUZANNE MILLER AND ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL**

Suzanne Miller, the subject of the third case study, was born in Savannah, Georgia, and was raised in a two-parent, Catholic family. After graduating from Boston College, Suzanne joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and began teaching middle school language arts at a Hispanic, inner-city Catholic school in Houston, then began teaching at St. Michael's in Riverton shortly thereafter. Suzanne returned to Boston College to complete a master's degree in 1996.

St. Michael's School had an enrollment of 587 students (preK-sixth grade) at the time of the study, and, like Our Lady of Guadalupe, was located in Riverton, Texas. The parish was established in 1969, and the school opened in August of 1970 as an outgrowth of another Catholic school that was developed in 1951. The school originally had kindergarten through sixth grades, and recently added a Montessori program for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. The Early Childhood Development Center was built in 1990; and a gymnasium and cafeteria, teacher resource library, and computer lab have been added since 1983. The student body at St. Michael's was 85% Hispanic, 13% White, and the remaining 2% of the population included African Americans, Asians, and multiracial individuals. Ninety-eight percent of the students were Catholic and 26% resided in Mexico.

The teaching staff consisted of 34 professionals and 13 paraprofessionals. Forty-eight percent of the teachers were Hispanic, 97% were Catholic, 91% were women, and 15% were state certified. Three sisters were also employed at St. Michael's at the time of the study, and the average teacher salary at St. Michael's was approximately \$22,000 in 1999.

Even though only 7.5% of the students were eligible for Title I services, the school provided financial assistance to those in need. Parishioners (Guardian Angels) sponsored children by paying tuition, and seven Guardian Angels contributed during the year of study. Of the \$44,000 used for tuition assistance, \$35,000 came out of the school budget, and \$7,000 to \$8,000 came from the parish. Tuition and fees for one child attending St. Michael's was over \$2,400 in 1999.

The local school district provided St. Michael's with a mobile computer van and a facilitator for those children who qualified for Title I services. Several students with dyslexia from St. Michael's attended the public school for part of the day to receive computer lab services. A speech pathologist not associated with the school district visited the school three times a week.

## **CASE STUDY FOUR: MARIA MONTES AND ST. THERESA'S SCHOOL**

Maria Montes is a Catholic lay teacher who had been teaching third grade at St. Theresa's School for 4 years at the time of the study; however, she had been teaching at the school for a total of 7 years. Maria was born and raised in a small town 20 miles from St. Theresa's and grew up in a large, two-parent, migrant farm worker family. Maria's father and mother were born in Mexico, were both Catholic, and just recently became U. S. citizens. Her father went to school through the second grade, and her mother had no formal schooling. Maria is a bilingual Mexican-American and was married with two children at the time of the study.

St. Theresa's School is located in Salinas County, about 30 miles from Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Michael's, in the city of Stonewall. Stonewall had a population of about 50,000 people and St. Theresa's was the only Catholic school in Stonewall. In May, 1946, a five-classroom school was built in the parish of St. Theresa's that housed first through seventh grades, and kindergarten was added in 1958. With the establishment of an Air Force base in Stonewall, five more classrooms were constructed in 1960. Enrollment grew to 476 in 1961-1962, until the Air Force base was closed in the late 1960s. From 1960 to 1985, St. Theresa's included kindergarten through sixth grade, and pre-kindergarten was added in 1985.

Most of the children attending St. Theresa's lived in Stonewall or surrounding towns, and none were residents of Mexico. At the time of the study, 268 students were enrolled, 69% of whom were Hispanic, 17% White, 12% multiracial, and the remaining Black or Asian. Ninety-eight percent of the students who attended St. Theresa's were Catholic, and 10% were eligible for Title I services.

The school offered financial assistance, which came directly from the parish to families who were in need. The amount given was \$35,000 to \$40,000 at the time of the study. Tuition and fees per child were \$1,900 for the older children and about \$2,200 for the Montessori-age children in 1999.

St. Theresa's had 18 professionals and 5 paraprofessionals that composed the school's staff. Eighty-three percent were Hispanic, 100% were Catholic, and 94% were female. Seventeen percent of the teachers were state certified and the average teacher salary at St. Theresa's was roughly \$22,500 in 1999.

The local public school district provided computers, software, and a lab manager for students who qualified for Title I services. Most of the children who received special education services through the local districts were dyslexic or they received speech therapy. The Stonewall public school district did not provide transportation for students to and from the public and Catholic schools; however, a smaller, more affluent district nearby did provide transportation.



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## APPENDIX

### CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions as best as you can by circling the appropriate answer. Some questions may require that you circle more than one answer. If you wish not to answer some of the questions, please leave them blank.

#### Background Questions

1. What is your age?      Under 25      25-30      30-35      35-40      40-45  
45-50      50+

2. If married, what is your spouse's age?      Under 25      25-30      30-35  
35-40      40-45      45-50      50+

3. What is your religion?      Catholic      Episcopal      Lutheran  
Methodist      Baptist      Jewish      Protestant      Other (specify)

4. What is the religion of your spouse?      Catholic      Episcopal  
Lutheran      Methodist      Baptist      Jewish      Protestant      Other  
(specify)



5. What is your ethnicity? Mexican American Other Hispanic  
White African American Asian American Native American  
Other (specify)
6. What is the ethnicity of your spouse? Mexican American  
Other Hispanic White African American Asian American  
Native American Other (specify)
7. What language is predominantly spoken in the home? Spanish  
English Other (specify)
8. Are you a single mother father or neither?
9. What is your occupation (please write in)?
10. If married, what is the occupation of your spouse (please write in)?
11. What is your highest educational attainment?  
GED High School Diploma Associate's Degree  
Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctorate Professional  
Less than 2 years of college Other (specify)
12. What is your spouse's highest educational attainment?  
GED High School Diploma Associate's Degree  
Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctorate Professional  
Less than 2 years of college Other (specify)
13. What is your household income? Under \$20,000  
\$20,000-\$30,000 \$30,000-\$40,000 \$40,000-\$50,000  
\$50,000-\$60,000 \$60,000-\$70,000 Over \$70,000

### **School-Related Questions**

14. How many children do you have enrolled in Catholic school? What are their ages and grades? (please write in)
15. How long have your children been attending Catholic schools?  
Less than 2 years 2-3 years 3-5 years 5-8 years  
Over 8 years





4. What is your ethnicity?    Mexican American    Other Hispanic  
White    African American    Asian American    Native American  
Other (specify)
5. Are you bilingual (English/Spanish)?    Yes    No
6. What is your highest educational degree?    Bachelor's    Master's  
Doctorate    Professional    Other (specify)
7. If a lay principal, what is your marital status?    Single    Divorced  
Married    Separated    Widowed
8. If married, what is your spouse's occupation (please write in)?
9. What is your salary?    Under \$25,000    \$25,000-\$30,000  
\$30,000-\$33,000    \$33,000-\$36,000    \$36,000-\$39,000  
\$39,000-\$42,000    Over \$42,000
10. What is your approximate household income?    Under \$30,000  
\$30,000-\$40,000    \$40,000-\$50,000    \$50,000-\$60,000  
\$60,000-\$70,000    Over \$70,000
11. What type of professional certificates do you hold?  
Texas Teacher Certificate    Texas Mid-management Certificate  
Administrator's Certificate    Texas Superintendent's Certificate  
Certificate(s) from other state(s) (specify)

### **School-Related Questions**

12. What is the enrollment of your school (please write in)?
13. What are the enrollments of the following grade levels in your school?  
K\_\_\_\_\_ 1\_\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_\_
14. How many full-time teachers are employed in your school  
(please write in)?
15. What is the average teaching salary for your full-time teachers?  
\$15,000-\$17,000    \$17,000-\$19,000    \$19,000-\$21,000  
\$21,000-\$24,000    Over \$24,000

16. Are any of the grades, K-5, departmentalized? If so, which ones?  
Yes (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

16. How many of your students are considered to be low-income?  
Less than 10%    10-15%    15-20%    20-25%    25-30%  
30-35%    35-40%    40-45%    45-50%    Over 50%

17. How many of your students are eligible for Title I services?  
Less than 10%    10-15%    15-20%    20-25%    25-30%  
30-35%    35-40%    40-45%    45-50%    Over 50%

18. Do you offer special programs for Title I students?  
Yes (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you offer scholarships for families who cannot afford the tuition?  
Yes    No

If yes, what are the criteria for being eligible for a scholarship?

If yes, how many students receive scholarships each year?

20. How long have you been a Catholic school principal?  
Less than 2 years    2-3 years    3-5 years    5-8 years    8-10 years  
10-15 years    15-20 years    Over 20 years

21. Do you have public school experience?    Yes    No  
If yes, in what capacity?    Teacher Counselor    Assistant Principal  
Principal    Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, for how many years (please write in)?

22. What is the student-teacher ratio by grade level in your school?  
K \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

## CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

*[Handwritten mark]*



Please answer the following questions as best as you can by circling the appropriate answer. Some questions may require that you circle more than one answer. If you wish not to answer some of the questions, please leave them blank.

### Background Questions

1. What religion are you?      Catholic      Episcopal      Lutheran  
                                          Methodist      Baptist      Jewish      Protestant      Other (specify)
  
2. What is your age?      Under 22      22-25      25-30      30-35      35-40  
                                          40-45      45-50      Over 50
  
3. What is your ethnicity?      Mexican American      Other Hispanic  
                                          White      African American      Asian American      Native American  
                                          Other (specify)
  
4. Are you bilingual (English/Spanish)?      Yes      No
  
5. What is your gender?      Female      Male
  
6. Are you a      lay      or religious      teacher?
  
7. If a lay teacher, what is your marital status?      Single      Divorced  
                                          Married      Separated      Widowed
  
8. What is your highest degree held?      Associate's      Bachelor's  
                                          Master's      Doctoral      Professional      Other (specify)
  
9. What is your salary?      Below \$15,000      \$15,000-\$18,000  
                                          \$18,000-\$21,000      \$21,000-\$24,000      \$24,000-\$27,000  
                                          Above \$ 27,000
  
10. What is your approximate household income?      Below \$18,000  
                                          \$18,000-\$25,000      \$25,000-\$35,000      \$35,000-\$45,000  
                                          \$45,000-\$55,000      Above \$55,000
  
11. If married, what is the occupation of your spouse (please write in)?

**Teaching-Related Questions**

12. How many years have you been teaching in the Catholic school? 1-3  
3-5 5-7 7-10 10-15 More than 15
13. Have you ever taught in the public school? Yes No  
If yes, how many years?
14. What grade level(s) do you teach? K 1 2 3 4 5
15. What other grade level(s) have you taught? N/A K 1 2  
3 4 5
16. Do you team teach? Yes No
17. Do you hold a Texas Teacher's Certificate? Yes No
18. Do you hold teaching certificates from any other states?  
Yes (specify) No
19. In what type of classroom do you teach? Traditional Graded  
Self-contained Non-graded Montessori Departmentalized  
Other (specify)
20. Do you have any of the following personnel assisting you in teaching?  
Teaching Assistant Paraprofessional Student Teacher  
Other (specify)
21. What is your class size? Under 10 students 10-15 15-20  
20-25 Over 30 students
22. What are some activities/duties you participate in with your students  
outside of the classroom? Before/After School Tutoring  
Sunday Liturgy Festivals Athletic Events  
Academic Competition Family Activities Community Projects  
Church-related Activities (specify)  
Parent-Teacher Organizations Other Activities (specify)



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