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**An Examination of Worldview in Northeastern Mexico**  
by

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**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

**We accept this dissertation as conforming  
to the required standard**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Cultural diversity renders those in the midst of cross-cultural encounters with rich opportunities for understanding the components of other people's conception of the world, their outlook on life, and their value orientations. There are few studies that examine the construct of Worldview as pertaining to Mexican people living in Mexico. Although research has been conducted with people of Mexican descent (i.e., Mexican Americans, Chicanos) mostly in the United States, the development of their experiences, the impact, and the meanings that such experiences represent to them, differ in many ways from the experiences of the participants in this study "An Examination of Worldview in Northeastern Mexico".

The study focuses on the experiences of nine participants, male and female, between the ages of 25 and 34, who live in Northeastern Mexico and who describe what being Mexican means to them and how they define themselves and their worldview as young Mexican individuals in relationship to five existential categories as proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). The study examines the literature with respect to worldview, in general, and its recent instrumentation in the field of multiculturalism, in particular. This study utilizes heuristic procedures and in-depth, one-to-one interviews to facilitate the emergence of people's portrayals, which were clustered and analysed always observing the five existential categories.

The findings of the study endorse the value of using worldview as a socio-cultural framework for developing awareness and having a more thorough understanding about

differences. McKenzie (1996) says that, “when united in a conversation in which understandings and worldviews are shared, we stand a better chance of reducing the limitations and narrowness of our existing worldviews” (p.123).

Therefore, the implications for using worldview as framework might encourage individuals to reach beyond their own cultural boundaries enabling them to make reflective decisions to enhance the ability to effectively shape an environment inclusive of others from diverse cultures.

**Examiners:**

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**DEDICATION****To my Grandfather**

You are present in the fertile soil; for fertile was your life.  
Present in the strong winds that carry me; for strong is your spirit.  
To you I owe the colour of my skin, the colour of my eyes,  
and the colours of my soul.  
To you, who let go. Blending present, future, and past.



**José Antonio Rodríguez Castellanos (1909-1988)**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

My grandfather taught me that depending on which of the four cardinal directions the New Year "arrived" from, the harvest would be good or bad. Possessing the knowledge of how the climate works in relationship to the growth of crops was fundamental for people like him. His understanding of the world was based on where he lived and what he was doing at the time in Northeastern Mexico. It could seem that his knowledge of the world was narrow and limited; yet, when one looks at it more closely, the sophistication in knowing when planting began is astounding. In tradition, it was believed that the weather in the first day of the month of January foretold the weather for the first month of the year; the second day of January, predicted the weather of February (since it is the second month); January 3<sup>rd</sup> anticipated the climate for March and so forth. When the 13<sup>th</sup> of January arrived, the counting was done backwards so, for example, the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month predicted the weather for June. This idea of going backwards to predict the future is common among those who live off the land. My grandfather's understanding and explanation of how the cosmos works in communion with terrestrial elements was, at the time, enough for me during the serene summer days spent at his house. However, my own understandings and explanations of the world changed and modified as I grew older and experienced the world not through my grandfather's or my parents' eyes... but through my own.

My hope in this chapter is to define worldview or, in Spanish, Cosmovisión and why it is a useful system for understanding cultural variations. An effective way for doing this is to take a look at a group of people from a specific place; I have chosen

Northeastern Mexico or in Spanish, Noreste de Mexico. This leads to the rationale for this study entitled “An Examination of Worldview in Northeastern Mexico”. In this chapter, I have also included a purpose and rationale for the study and an overview of the research procedures, which includes a brief background of the subjects and the context of the study and a concise description of the heuristic methodology.

### **Worldview and Cosmovisión**

A worldview originates out of a natural standpoint of the world, out of a range of conceptions and personal understandings, as the result of the possession of a particular horizon and it expands as one becomes more knowledgeable of the world and experiences life in all its dimensions in a unique way. The concept of worldview is complex and broad as it encompasses much more than personal reflections and understandings about one's values, beliefs, and assumptions. Worldview also consists of what people make with such understandings, how they interact, and how they behave with/in the world. Worldview is cross-cultural, with every culture having a view that reflects the nature of their world (e.g. African, Chinese, European, Amerindians). North American educational practices are rich in the philosophical schemes of worldview that stem from Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and European traditions and it is within the latter that the notion of truth or *aletheia*, as Heidegger (1967) calls it, is understood as an active process of unveiling reality through the sharing of personal interpretations and the resulting fusion of individual horizons. Disregarding that Asian, African, and Indigenous views were not included in Heidegger's notion, his ideas are rich in describing worldview.

Consider that even the use of worldview has often been co-opted from one specific perspective. For example, Scofield (1991), states that the "Old World" (meaning Europe) was more advanced than the "New World " in terms of the fusion of cultural values and complex social structures into what is called civilization. This is an Euro centric perspective since the inhabitants of the Americas also held social structures and cultural values as well as knowledge in regards to the ways in which the cosmos and thus life was perceived, understood, and lived. Cosmovisión (vision of the cosmos) describes life encircling indigenous folklore, myths, legends, philosophy, and sky-knowledge. According to Malinowski (cited in Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984) "...myth in its living, primitive form is not merely a story told but a reality lived" (p. xv). Therefore, myths favor the portrayal of diverse social functions in that they "...are magic lenses through which we can glimpse social orders and daily life: how families were organized, how political structures operated... how religious ceremonies felt to the people who took part, how power was divided between men and women... how honor in war was celebrated " (Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984). Sky-knowledge was fundamental to farming and owning the knowledge of weather patterns and seasonal changes was crucial for survival.

However, there is more to a culture's cosmic understanding (or Worldview) than just sky-knowledge, folklore, myths, and legends. Cosmovisión also embraces the wisdom, the learnings, and the emblems of a culture giving concrete form to a set of beliefs and traditions that link people living today to ancestors from centuries past. While some of these connections might prevail, other views and perceptions of the world develop and unfold as the result of an ever-changing existence. A culture's evolving normative

modes of subsistence, political ideas, ways of life, values, attitudes, affective perceptions, modes of communication, and even technological advancement give origin to new worldviews. It is within these new perceptions that the notion of Cosmovisión has been recently adopted as the Spanish translation for the construct of Worldview as confirmed in Fantini, Arias-Galicia, and Guay (2001; p. 4).

A worldview is built piece by piece as one leaves a trace in the everyday world; it is constructed in the midst of life's vicissitudes and amongst yearnings and sorrows but also, in the mirrors of the soul. Therefore, it is genuine to attest that, because a worldview takes its shape, texture, and substance only in the truthfulness of lived experience, a phenomenological-heuristic inquiry is pertinent to this study. Despite the fact that the concept of worldview is limitless and complex, the knowledge and understanding of "What is Mexican worldview?" is at the heart of this heuristic study, which is based on five existential categories proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and extending the principles as outlined by Brown and Lundrum-Brown (1995). As a researcher, it is my responsibility to acknowledge the complexities that the construct conveys and to understand that there are no absolutes when it comes to researching lived experience in qualitative studies. Therefore, I must clarify that my intention is to unveil the ways in which people from the Noreste in Mexico perceive, experience, understand, and make meaning of the world from different standpoints (dimensions/categories) within the reviewed literature.

### **Purpose, Rationale, and Significance of the Study**

As a student from Mexico who has recently begun to modify her own perception of the world by gradually understanding, experiencing, and making meaning of an

array of customs dissimilar to my own, unique in their own right, and indispensable to interact with others in a culturally diverse setting, I have come to find myself with the need of deconstructing my beliefs, assumptions, and views in order to understand those around me. At the same time, I have become conscious of the existing need to raise other people's awareness about the way in which Mexicans perceive, know, experience, and make meaning of the world. This need is not only related to folklore, customs, traditions, and rituals of a particular group. It goes beyond such cultural legacies pursuing the understanding of the values, beliefs, attitudes, affective perceptions, normative standard modes of subsistence, modes of communication, technology, and political ideas which materialize the interactional forms that constitute the life worlds of a population and its members. Essentially, because the way in which we create, define, and validate social knowledge is determined largely through our cultural context.

Thus, the ground for this research study calls forth the need for others, in the midst of cross-cultural encounters (inside and outside Mexico), to better understand Mexican ideologies, idiosyncrasies, and customs. The aim, however, is not limited to a definition or an understanding of the construct of Mexican worldview but it is my intention to utilize and extend the research findings to the arena of multicultural and cross-cultural education by drawing some implications that might be useful in preparing educators to have a clearer understanding of Mexican people who live in the Noreste.

Even though research in cross-cultural and multicultural issues is extensive, very few qualitative studies have focused on the construct of worldview and its application to multicultural Education. These studies (Canino & Canino, 1982; Casas, 1995;

Comas-Diaz, 1988; Marin, 1992; Soriano, 1994), conducted mostly in the United States with Mexican-American, Hispanic, Latino, and/or Chicano individuals only reflect their reality, which is not the same as that of a Mexican living in Mexico. Therefore, the significance and value of this research study lies in this scarcity of studies that explore worldview within the Mexican context creating a discontinuity that leads to misconceptions about the ways in which people from Mexico experience and understand the world.

### **Overview of the Research Procedures**

#### **The Participants and the Context**

In trying to define and understand the way in which people from a specific region in Mexico perceive the world and make meaning of it, this research study poses the question *"What is Mexican worldview?"* Since the history, the cultural influences, and the regional development vary extensively within the country, the focus of the present study was only the Northeast part of Mexico, which comprises the states of Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas. This study explored the experiences of 9 young Mexican citizens (2 male and 7 female) between the ages of 25 and 34 who live in the Northeast region of Mexico in order to yield some understanding about the way in which people experience and make meaning of the world. My decision to examine young people's worldview was based on what I see as "the changing face of Mexico". According to estimates from the Consejo Nacional de Población (National Population Bureau, 1997-1998), it is estimated that by the year 2003 Mexico's population will have reached 108 million of which more than 56 percent will be aged 28 or under. Given these facts, it seemed pertinent to consider what is their perception and sense of the

Mexico in which they live; a Mexico that is different from that of their parents. Today, access to education, international trading, expanding economy, and globalization in general, are the grounds for transformations that have an impact in the way people experience and understand the world.

### **Rationale for Using Qualitative Research: Heuristic**

Since one purpose of qualitative research is to generate knowledge about an individual's experiences within a context and to describe in rich detail how an experience is perceived, heuristic inquiry requires that the researcher have a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. It is a method aimed at discovery in order to find underlying meanings of human experience (Moustakas, 1990) as the result of an interaction. The heuristic researcher is intimately related to the question posed thus creating a thirst to discover and to understand crucial dimensions of knowledge and experience (Moustakas, 1990). Such was my experience in reflecting about my view of the world as a young Mexican.

To gather this type of data, the relationship between the researcher and participant must be based on trust and the researcher becomes an empathetic, interactive listener with the focus remaining on the participant's story (Stiles, 1993). In this research relationship, the participants are asked to share personal experiences in return for their contribution to the advancement of understandings about human experiences.

The importance of understanding worldview in its Spanish context, *Cosmovisión*, is vital in appreciating how the participants responded to the interviews since these were conducted in Spanish. The specific setting, Noreste, brings more specificity to the diverse and youthful population of Mexico. Since the aim of

heuristic research is discovery in order to find underlying meanings of human experience, using this qualitative research method provided much richer data than would have been possible with a different type of methodology. In the process of participating in this research study, the participants claimed and they came to some deeper understanding of their own experience even when this was not the major focus of the relationship. In this research, my passion for Mexico and consequently the topic, helped me attain the purpose that heuristics pursues as well as my own. The anticipated advantages of being a Mexican woman doing research in Mexico became facts as I developed trust and did my best to understand (and afterwards translate) the words of the interviewees, making sure that I conveyed as much as possible, the message and the meaning. This required a balance among my biases and my familiarity with the place, the people, and my own experiences. First, the understanding of the culture, and the nuances of the Spanish language were assets in conducting the study and examining Mexican worldview. Second, I had the advantage of having the ability to relate to people in a familiar environment. Finally, I believe there was great benefit for me in establishing a relationship of confidence and trust with the subjects than there would have been for a non-Mexican researcher. However, the familiarity with the place, the culture, and the topic in general, contributed sometimes to “see” myself so close to the phenomenon that I had to recognize my own biases and excitement with the responses thus realizing that I should be careful of any potential involvement at a personal level.

Throughout the study, and even before I began in a “formal” way, heuristic schemes were present in my inquiry, which started as a personal quest in trying to

understand my own “Mexicanness”, single out the elements that identify me as such, and define my own ways to perceive and understand the world. The present study offers some insights related to my personal experience and my own search for this “Mexicanness” thus, I can say that the heuristic process began prior to the interviewing phase. The six stages that form part of Moustakas’ (1990) methodology were meaningful in that they existed initially in my own un-awareness. As the research unfolded, each stage became clearer and I was able to incorporate the knowledge from each stage into the natural flowing rhythms of this research. As a result, I embarked in the heuristic process when I started experiencing the world through different lenses as I established my self here in Canada.

The method for organizing and analyzing the data was done in an orderly fashion by gathering notes, observations, and transcriptions that told each participant’s story. Field notes were taken to identify the themes and qualities of the data; these were later clustered into patterns, which organized the presentation of the findings expressed in the form of thoughts, clustered ideas, narratives, and a poem. Polanyi (1969) remarks that the relationship between knowing and being yields to change. “Having made a discovery; I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes have become different; I have made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently. I have crossed a gap, the heuristic gap, which lies between problem and discovery (p.143).

### **Conclusion**

The use of my grandfather’s explanation in this introduction and in subsequent chapters is deliberate not only to set a tone about the importance of the dimensions of worldview but to give the chapters in the dissertation a thematic tone that incorporates

the past. I have organized my dissertation in the following manner. In Chapter 2, I examine the literature with respect to the diverse foundations and principles on worldview in general, and its relevance to multiculturalism, in particular. Chapter 3 presents a brief account of the characteristics of the place in Mexico where the research took place and introduces the participants. Chapter 4 describes the methodology I used in my research study “An Examination of Worldview in Northeastern Mexico”. In Chapter 5, I present the collected data clustered in themes according to the five existential dimensions that were the basis of this heuristic study. Finally, in Chapter 6, I present my conclusions, limitations of the study, the implications for multicultural education, areas for future research, and my personal discoveries.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Exploring Worldview: Review of Relevant Literature**

#### **Personal Rationale**

#### **Dissentions**

Life was difficult in the days of corn and grapes. In the fields, life for my grandparents was about surviving and having enough rain for the crops. When my father was born, they decided to move to a small town wishing that life might offer him more opportunities and hoping that one day he would move to a place where rain would be a minor concern. After many stormy days and sunny nights, my father became a surgeon; a heart surgeon. Performing the first heart transplant in the Northern part of Mexico has been one of his major achievements and the fulfillment of a lifetime dream, and with the constant endurance from my mother, this and many other dreams have come true. Through the years, dad and mom have been strong and supportive of each other and their four children.

My father says that a transplant of any given kind is only feasible if there is a very close correspondence between the receiver and the donor; otherwise, the body has difficulty adjusting to the new and foreign member and the greater the gap in the affinity, the greater the rejection. When a transplant is to be performed, both the donor and the receiver must undergo careful examination to assure success. Once this is attained, the surgeon is ready to carry out the transplant. Quality of life and its expectancy after the surgery, depends on many contingencies; among these is the patient's desire to adapt to a new life style that must comply with certain conditions specified by the doctors.

### **Contingencies**

Having four children has been another fulfilled lifetime dream for both of my parents; now they see us have dreams of our own, dreams that are possible as a result of their love. Very early in my life I noticed that I paid attention to my mom's words in the form of songs, proverbs, and stories. My dad's narrative ways (anecdotal yet as loving as my mother's) were particular and interesting. These were the first life lessons I received and, through my parents' experiences and stories, I learned to see the world and I started developing my own stories and my own experiences. I began developing my own view of the world. At first, it was my own view enmeshed in theirs. Later, it was my own. My way of being and being in the world was initially shaped by them. Later, my worldview expanded and acquired shades of red and tints of blue. I have come to the realization that, by constant negotiations, my understanding of the world and being in it, is modified on a day-to-day basis and that being present in the world means facing the dissensions and contingencies that arrive hand-in-hand with changing worldviews.

### **The Honoring Within**

I was 21 years old... I was a schoolteacher, a married woman, a wife, a follower of rules, I was in Mexico; I was a dreamer....

I was 26 years old... I was a schoolteacher, a married woman, a wife, a follower of rules, I was in Mexico; I was a dreamer....

I was 30 years old... I was a schoolteacher, a married woman, a wife, a follower of rules, I was in Mexico; I was a dreamer....

I am 35 years old, I am a young Mexican woman; a divorced woman. I live in Canada, I am a doctoral student and I have decided to make my own rules in regards to my life. *(I am still a dreamer...)*

It is due to the new awareness and the understanding of my changing worldview as a Mexican, that I look forward to encourage the use of this framework in the field of Multicultural education.

### **The Margins of the World: Framing Worldview**

#### **Historical Framework**

Worldview translates from the German word: *Weltanschauung*. Martin Heidegger (1988) explained Worldview or *Weltanschauung* as a word derived from German not from Greek or Latin roots. Although ingrained in a philosophical tradition, *Weltanschauung* is essentially a modern concept related to the values of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment period in Western intellectual history (McKenzie, 1996). Immanuel Kant (1973) first used the word and his usage referred to a beholding of the world, a perception of the world, an apprehension of nature in a general sense. Schelling (1994) introduced a shift in the word's meaning by assigning it the sense of observation and intelligence. According to Schelling (1994), intelligence is influenced at the unconscious level through experience. It is in this way that a worldview becomes a conscious way of apprehending a universe of things. For Heidegger (1988), a worldview always includes a view of life. It grows out of an "all inclusive reflection on the world... and this happens in different ways, explicitly and consciously in individuals or by appropriating an already prevalent Worldview" (p.3). He argues that it is a way of being that requires conviction if the worldview is to guide the person in

times of pressure. A worldview is built piece by piece as one makes a way in the everyday world; it is constructed through and as the result of our interaction with others; through self-reflection, exploration of lived experience, and inquiry. Therefore, it is genuine to attest that a worldview takes its shape, texture, and substance only in the truthfulness of lived experience.

Heidegger's (1967) notion of truth -or *aletheia*- understood as an active process of unveiling reality through the sharing of personal interpretations of the world and the resulting fusion of individual horizons, invites to the exploration and understanding of worldview construction. Etymologically, *aletheia* means unconcealment (McKenzie, 1996); thus, to attempt to discover the truth of anything means to be authentic. In other words, it means to eliminate whatever distorts the view of one thing. In order to do this, each person must analyze their own worldview and the understanding of what it means to be in this world, fully engaged with responsibility and opportunities for personal realization.

### **Philosophical Perspectives**

A worldview originates out of a natural standpoint of the world, out of a range of conceptions and personal understandings of the world; understandings that arise out of life experiences and the experience of developing a conceptual system about the world. It is the result of the possession of a particular horizon, which expands as one becomes more knowledgeable of the world and experiences life in all its dimensions in a unique way. According to McKenzie (1996), when we come into the world we arrive in a particular context and at a particular moment in history where those around us speak a particular language, express religious and philosophical beliefs, and have preferred

ways of acting socially and ethically; a moment in time where people share meanings and values, which may or may not be environmentally defined by ethnic or national standards. When we are born, says McKenzie (1996), we arrive in a physical place and in a tradition that is being lived by our family members and their friends. In learning the "patterns" of tradition of the significant others in our lives during our formative years, we lay the founding grounds for interpreting future experiences, we define ourselves, and prepare ourselves for future learning and understanding. In other words, we prepare for constructing a view of the world.

Tradition can be recognized as a form of experience because it is lived; it is apprehended and "caught" in the same way language is. Gadamer (1986) declares that tradition is not learned but it is, rather, an experience that occurs as the result of social interaction; it is a particular style of carrying oneself in life, a unique way of possessing and interpreting one's being-in-the-world. Tradition is "always a part of us, a model, or example, a recognition of ourselves" (Gadamer, 1986, p. 250). Tradition determines its power because of the connection that habitually occurs in the family of origin, which makes it a form of privileged experience. While people are influenced by the power that tradition exerts on them, it is also true that in the same way, people are able to influence tradition and change it to the extent where it is almost completely transformed by new experiences. But, how does tradition weaken allowing new experiences to become so more vivid and having more impact on a worldview? Tradition may gradually lose its force in a meaningful way or it could become more influential throughout life as people are confronted by powerful new experiences and develop more understanding about the world in different ways, with different people in new situations and new environments.

Notions of tradition are constantly repositioned, corrected, modified, reviewed, and/or renewed, and throughout life traces of tradition will remain because, as humans, we continuously strive for a sense of belonging which the sharing of traditions provides. It is within this sharing of what is "familiar" and "known" that one on the construction of a view of the world.

### **Socio-cultural Definition**

The concept of worldview deals with a culture's orientation and relationship to concepts such as God, man, nature, the universe, and other philosophical issues that are concerned with the concept of being to help us locate our place and rank in the universe. Every individual's worldview is determined by different aspects of their cultural environment such as folkways, system, race, lore, class, and stage of culture (i.e. family history and specific culture, social expectations, working habits, and so forth), which influence beliefs, values, attitudes, uses of time, and other aspects of culture that are tied directly to the ideological, historical, philosophic, and religious dimensions of that particular group. It is through the interaction of these countless events that culture provides people with a view of themselves, the rest of the world, the universe, and the relationship they hold with each of these qualities.

It is necessary to define culture (as a construct) since it will be mentioned throughout this study. Culture has been defined as a set of implicit norms, values, and beliefs that influences the attitudes, behaviors, and customs of a group of individuals (Gushue, 1993). The culture of a family, for example, affects individual behaviors, child-rearing practices, discipline, and the importance of achievement and education. Such sets of norms often determine its form and functioning including the type of

family, its size, and shape (McGill, 1983; McGoldrick, Giordano, & Pearce, 1996), and culture defines boundaries, rules for interaction, and communication patterns between family members and within the community (Falicov & Brudner-White, 1983; McGill, 1997; McGoldrick et al., 1996; Preli & Bernard, 1993). The roles of family members and the ways of defining problems and outlining specific coping skills are defined by culture (Schwartzman, 1983). Falicov (1995) defined culture as a set of shared worldviews, meanings, and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a variety of contexts including language, age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, education, and sexual orientation. Both definitions of culture indicate that cultural values define behaviors and therefore establish norms for attitudes and actions that take place within families and in the larger cultural groups (e.g. religious affiliation, academic community, and so forth). Families serve as the primary agent for transmitting cultural values and worldview to their children and it is the parents and extended family who help them learn, internalize, and develop an understanding of the culture through both covert and overt means (Preli & Bernard, 1993). By means of cultural socialization, families must convey both positive and negative messages of their particular cultural group as well as those of other cultures (Preli & Bernard, 1993).

Because worldview also refers to the physical world encompassing other subjects, it includes the worldviews of others, and one's own subjectivity and its contents; thus, it modifies the way in which we understand and make sense of the world as we experience it. The worldview takes on a definite texture and shade in that one projects upon it some features in the very act of viewing, interpreting and/ or making sense of it.

This is accomplished principally through the analysis and interpretation of life situations that include themes such as what it means to be human, how people perceive their socio-political history, gender, ethnicity, race, culture, religion, age, life stages, values, and beliefs.

Worldview, however, goes beyond ethnicity understood solely as one's racial background and manifests itself in the psychological, sociopolitical, and technical aspects of a society influencing its social organization, its behavior (life-style) and even its language. Worldview as conceptualized, provides a mechanism to understand how these variables affect people's life choices and decision-making ability. This is the mediating variable that makes knowledge of a specific cultural group and knowledge of culture-consistent and culture-specific techniques meaningful. Without worldview as a mediating variable, such knowledges can be misapplied, leading to ethical violation and cultural oppression particularly within a multicultural setting (Ibrahim, 1991).

Sire (1976) stated that our worldview consists of the presupposition and assumptions that we hold about the world, while Horner and Vandersluis (1981) maintained that because worldviews are culturally-based variables, they influence the relationship between people and the way in which they interact. Our worldview directly affects and mediates our belief system, assumptions, modes of problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution (Ibrahim, 1991). Furthermore, worldview is defined by Montgomery, Fine, and Myers (1990) as "...a structure of philosophical assumptions, values, and principles upon which a way of perceiving the world is based" (p.38). Seltzer, Frazier, and Ricks (1995), in their review of multiculturalism, race, and the educational system, indicate that knowledge of differences in worldviews can enhance

one's ability to effectively manipulate an environment inclusive of others from diverse cultures.

### **Worldview Construction**

Worldview construction involves the ongoing development and maturation of diverse understandings: understanding of the world, of others, and of self. According to McKenzie (1996), a worldview is configured in two senses:

1) It is a standpoint given by a person's experience from which the world may be seen and interpreted. "Seeing" is used metaphorically to signify "experiencing" the world. Therefore, "seeing is believing" becomes the maxim that addresses the validation of truth, which implies that one can trust only his or her direct experience. Thus, the standpoint is a location determined by a particular time in history, a particular time in culture, and a person's individual orientation toward reality. It is a historic-cultural personal environment that provides a range of viewpoints and horizons.

2) It is an interpretive understanding of the relationship of different aspects of the world to each other. Such understandings arise out of reflecting on one's experience of the world in a global sense. We experience the world because it is there in a particular mode of being for each of us. Each of us attaches meaning to the world as we experience it in terms of personal worldviews.

Worldview construction is a process that is related to experiencing the world throughout life. Each new experience is organized and interpreted in relation to the existing worldview and prior knowledge. Therefore, if new experiences are compatible or at least non-contradictory, they can be accepted as meaningful and incorporated into the existing worldview repertoire. If, on the other hand, experiences are rejected as

meaningless, they are dismissed. In any case, the existing worldview is re-organized and re-interpreted constantly. Worldviews never remain the same; they are altered with the arrival of every new experience; they can undergo progress or regress, expansion or contraction, renewal or decadence. Some insight into the process of worldview construction can be achieved by examining Derrida's (1987) notion of deconstruction.

According to Derrida (1987), Western thought has been structured in terms of polarities: good versus evil, being versus nothingness, truth versus error, mind versus matter, and so forth. Moreover, he asserts that deconstruction is "affirmation rather than questioning, a sense which is not positive... this affirmation goes through some radical questioning but it is not questioning in the final analysis" (p.19). Therefore, deconstruction in the way Derrida (1987) describes it, is a form of interpretation that refers to contradictions, dissimilarities, and polarities between an existing worldview and new experiences. It reviews one's existing worldview in terms of significance, meaning, and truth. Derrida's notion is appropriate to describe the deconstruction of experience in order to accommodate the new ones, which will, in turn, influence an individual's worldview. Since most new experiences require adjustment before they can form part of our existing repertoire, we tend to pull them apart and analyze them to determine the degree of compatibility they might have with the perception of the world that we already have. It is essential to understand that two main points on the formation and structure of worldview are relevant to the conceptualization of the construct. First, worldviews are formed out of personal experience through interaction with members of an individual's culture (Schwartz, 1992; Wolcott, 1991). Although distinct cultural groups have developed particular modal patterns for understanding the world, there are

multiple sources of variation within cultures that influence the formation of a given individual's worldview. Second, research (Casson, 1983; Howard & McKim, 1983; Kearney, 1984) demonstrates that these sources of variation may be grouped conceptually into two general spheres: unique experiences and shared cultural experiences. Unique experiences are those that are particular to an individual accordingly to specific histories (e.g. particular parents, place within the family, personal attributes, and life circumstances) that influence their understandings of the world. On the other hand, shared cultural experiences are those we have in common with other members of groups to which we belong within our culture and which provide the common base of understanding that allows for communication to occur among members of particular cultures. Together, these unique and shared experiences merge within a person's "stream of experience" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 343) to form a worldview.

### **Anthropological Contexts**

Anthropological studies demonstrate that the cultures of the world can be arranged into two systems of thought according to the way in which individuals define, conceptualize, and articulate their worldview. this worldview is based on their understanding of broad domains of life such as self, autonomy, epistemology, logic, awareness of mind and body, and construction of morality (Agar, 1996; Bateson & Mead, 1942; Brown & Lundrum-Brown, 1995; Gaines, & Reed, 1995; Geertz, 1983; Kearny, 1994; Shweder, 1991; Wolcott, 1991), as well as on the perceptions that involve an individual's understanding and explanation of human nature, time, interpersonal relationships, nature, and activity (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). These

two systems (see Table 1) have two salient characteristics: Their contents may be differentiated by level of abstraction (Agar, 1996; Kearney, 1984; Rice, 1980; Spradley, 1979), and the worldviews within a system might be interrelated (Kearney, 1984). The given names for such classification are (a) *relational* or *high-context cultures* (Triandis, 1994; Matsumoto, 1996) and (b) *analytical* (Geertz, 1983; Shweder, 1991) or *low-context cultures* (Triandis, 1994; Matsumoto, 1996).

**Table 1**

<b>WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVES (Rodriguez, 2001)</b>		
<b>Value</b>	<b>Analytical/ Low context cultures</b>	<b>Relational/ High context cultures</b>
<b>Activity (psycho/behavioural)</b>	<b>Doing</b>	<b>Being</b>
<b>Relation to Nature</b>	<b>Mastery/ Domination</b>	<b>Harmony/ Communion</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Monochronic</b>	<b>Polychronic</b>
<b>Social Interaction (Ethos)</b>	<b>Independent/ Individual</b>	<b>Interdependent/ Collective</b>
<b>Human Nature (Ontology)</b>	<b>Objective/ Materialistic</b>	<b>Subjective/ Spiritual</b>
<b>Concept of Self</b>	<b>Individualistic/ Referential</b>	<b>Interdependent/ Extended</b>
<b>Logic (Ways of thinking)</b>	<b>Dichotomous</b>	<b>Circular</b>
<b>Epistemology (Ways of knowing)</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Affective</b>
<b>Axiology (Social values)</b>	<b>Competition</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>

Anthropologist Florence Kluckhohn and statistician Frederick Strodbeck (1961) concluded that there are three basic assumptions about the way in which individuals perceive, understand, and deal with the world and that the problems that are common to all human groups could be narrowed down to the five existential categories:

- What is the assessment of innate human nature? (perception of self and others).

There are three dimensions in which this category can be viewed: (a) human nature is good; (b) human nature is a combination of good and bad parts; (c) human nature is bad. The need to understand how the self and others are viewed provides insight into understanding the quality of one's own life and the meaningfulness of relationships. In some cultures the importance of the self is never emphasized so that the ego does not impose upon others nor interferes with an individual's pursuit of life (Kearney, 1984; Schwartz, 1992; Samovar & Porter, 1995). Since humanity is part of the universe, these forces are also naturally present in humankind. The view of the good and evil in humanity extends to the position that people cannot eliminate evil because it is a natural and necessary part of the universe.

- What is a person's relation to Nature?

This category addresses a person's relationship to nature; some cultures emphasize living in harmony with nature where the essence of such relationship can be perceived as one closely tied to the respect for the environment. Many cultures consider nature as a divine creation in which the spirit of God resides. Nature and all living things are sacred and no one has the right to destroy or be the master of nature. Binswanger (1962) declares that when the relationship between man and nature is

ignored, people fall prey to oversimplification and the relationship to nature can be one of domination and controlling nature; moreover, others recognize the power of nature and the frailty of humans where people are helpless and at its mercy. Nature is seen as an active, often capricious, force beyond human control that must be appeased. Such views lead to volcano worship, worship of the sun, and the like.

- What is the temporal focus of life? (Time orientation).

This category is discussed in terms of the perception and the value(s) that time has for people. Hall (1976) divides time into polychronic and monochronic. In the former, people are engaged in several activities at a time and are more spontaneous; the emphasis is on people and not schedules. In the latter, people experience time as a continuum fixed in nature, linear, and as something tangible. Metaphorically, it is said that time is lost, crawling, made up, accelerated, invested, slowed down, or running out. Different cultures perceive and understand the concept of time in different ways focusing on the past (tradition-bound), the present (situational), or the future (goal oriented). According to Ibrahim (1993) "...the capacity to relate to time is a uniquely human characteristic" (p.33).

- What is an individuals' principal mode of activity? (Forms of activity).

The way in which individuals describe their existence in the world is basically in terms of: *doing* or *being-in-becoming*; the latter is a preference that underscores activities where the goal is the spontaneous development of all aspects of the self as an integrated being including the spiritual dimension. This is a more passive, process determined, and focused orientation, contrary to *doing*, a preference for initiating activity in pursue of a specific goal. This is related with societies where reward and

status are given on the basis of productivity and accomplishment. This approach takes universal concerns into account before moving into the specifics of understanding a person as a cultural entity (Ibrahim, 1993). The way in which different views towards work and activity manifest themselves in different cultures is reflected in the following anecdote from Sitaram and Codgell (1976):

if you ask a Hindu why he got only ten bags of corn from his land while nearby farmers got much more, he would say it was the wish of God. An American farmer's answer to the same question would be: "Because I did not work hard enough" (p.51).

- What is the modality of the group's relationship to others? (Social relations).

This classification pertains to people's relationship to others and can be described as (a) *collateral-mutual*, in which primacy is given to the goals and welfare of lateral extended groups, and the self is enhanced through mutual relationships based on the patterns of organization within a society, its hierarchical system, and the groups to which one belongs; and (b) *individualistic*, in which the individual's own goals are primary to the fulfillment of those of the family, a group or society. For example, Americans tend to be joiners, to be members of many groups based on form of activity. However, the depth of commitment to these groups and their members is very weak, and the memberships and people move freely from group to group. In Eastern cultures, people belong to only a few groups and it is virtually a lifetime commitment.

Additional to these outlooks, other researchers (Agar, 1996; Bateson & Mead, 1942; Brown & Lundrum-Brown, 1995; Gaines, & Reed, 1995; Geertz, 1983; Kearny, 1994; Shweder, 1991; Wolcott, 1991) have described the remaining three categories. In the epistemological realm, it could be affirmed that there is a philosophy behind the way of life of every individual and of every relatively homogeneous group at any given

point in their histories. The ways of thinking (logic) are seen as dichotomous/circular. Almost every cultural group agrees that their culture follows natural processes and that human nature, if not essentially rational, possesses rational dimension. However, the image or concept of what is rational is subject to cultural variation. The term refers to reaching logical and valid conclusions from the information at hand and from the metaphysical assumptions prevalent in the culture. To understand the rationality in any culture, we must understand the premises upon which it is based.

However, these classifications should not be interpreted as opposing or definitive. According to Kearney (1984), worldview systems consist of dynamic, interrelated views. This relationship is one of inclusion in which specific worldviews fall within the larger domain. For example, within the general domain of interpersonal relationships, specific views might include understandings about marriage, commitment, companionship, emotions, and interpersonal conflict (D'Andrea, 1992; Quinn, 1985; White, 1983). Therefore, it is my belief that they may exist in a continuum, as cyclical, within each other, or even "in fragments". In a continuum, we could propose that, as cultures change, high-context cultures could come to be low-context ones (as paradoxical as it might seem). As cyclical, the latter description would apply followed by a "return" to the original state or mode of being. Existing within each other would imply that a high-context culture could exist with in a low-context culture and vice-versa. To illustrate this point, let's take the example of a poor area in a developing country in contrast with an area (in the same country) where technology, health services, jobs, and education opportunities are available for most people. This is highly possible particularly in developing countries where economy (the main condition to

access education, health services, and the like) is unequally distributed. There could be a clash of preferences in terms of the above classifications. High-context and low-context cultures can also exist as "fragments"; this means that a particular cultural group might exhibit a "mixture" or a combination of preferences that will vary depending on changing variables according to circumstances. Therefore, characteristics of both categories (high/low-context cultures) will be present in some specific populations. Such an interpretation could give shape to an extensive combination or amalgamation of possibilities in the way people understand the world.

It is important to point out that the ideas presented here are fairly recent perspectives within anthropology (Schwartz, 1992). Traditionally, worldview has been viewed solely as encompassing the broad, general understandings of the world. Within contemporary anthropology however, culture is viewed as intricately related to all aspects of personal experience, within both general and specific domains of life activity.

### **Cross-cultural Foundations**

Hall (1976) states that, in the past, individuals did not need to be aware of the structure of their behavioral system because their interactions occurred in limited settings with people who possessed similar outlooks on life. However, more recently because of broader interactions and expansion, it has become necessary for individuals to transcend their own culture by making explicit the rules by which it operates. Interactions across cultures can enhance and/ or lessen the perceptions one has of one's self and others as the result of the fusion of the values, beliefs, and traditions inherited from our parent culture. Value orientations and worldview are so much a part of what we perceive to be "the real life" that the philosophical division between existential

postulates and normative acceptances becomes blurred. Therefore, it would be too ambitious to attempt to scrutinize the value orientations of other cultural groups without first begin to accept one's own. In a multicultural society, cross-cultural encounters are inevitable and they require the understanding of, or at least the ability to conceptualize, cultural variables in order to hinder prejudice. Since multiculturalism is rooted in philosophical views of human nature and peoples' place in the universe (Atkinson, Maruyama, & Matsui, 1978), worldview is a significant contribution to multicultural education.

To understand culturally diverse individuals who might interact in a number of cross-cultural situations, worldview was first introduced into the literature on cross-cultural affairs by Sue (1978) who defined it as an individual's perception of his or her relationship with the world (i.e. nature, things, institutions, and people) and asserted that the knowledge of an individual's sociopolitical history, racial, cultural and ethnic background can be helpful in identifying the ways in which the world is perceived. Later, it was Ibrahim (1984,1985) who acknowledged the relevance of the construct of worldview and proposed a broader conceptualization in order to clarify basic human concerns that are pancultural. The theory uses worldview and cultural identity as mediational forces in people's life to accomplish an understanding of the specific beliefs, values, and assumptions that form part of a worldview given that this is in direct relationship with their cognitive, emotional, and social perceptions and their interactions with the world (1985a; Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990). The Scale to Assess Worldview (SAWV) developed by Ibrahim and Kahn (1984, 1987) taps the same five existential categories found in the Kluckhohn-Strodbeck (1961) research model and according to

Ibrahim and Kahn (1987) its use assists in clarifying an individual's worldview as compared with that of his or her primary cultural group (Ibrahim, 1985; Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990).

Ibrahim (1984, 1985a), Ibrahim and Schroeder (1987,1990), and Sue (1978) have offered three major suggestions to ease the process of multicultural encounters. Such recommendations include an understanding of worldview, the knowledge of specific cultures, and the knowledge of culture-specific verbal and non-verbal skills to facilitate such encounters. At the general level, worldview dimensions that are helpful in cross-cultural encounters meet three criteria: a) the dimensions are comprehensive (they capture a broad range of human experience); b) they are applicable across cultural groups; and c) they are relevant to encounters across cultures. Examples of dimensions that generally adhere to these criteria are those developed by C. Kluckhohn (1951, 1956); thus, they have been adopted by Ibrahim (1984, 1985) and others (e.g., Beutler & Bergan, 1991; Carter, 1990; Chapman, 1981) in the multicultural field.

### **Conclusion**

What we make of people, and what we see in the mirror when we look at ourselves, depends on what we know of the world, what we believe to be possible, what memories we have, and whether our loyalties are to the past, the present or the future. Theodore Zeldin (2001)

Yes, life was difficult in the days of corn and grapes...sometimes, the meaning of life was gained or lost in the empty fields. My father always reminds me that everything in this world of existence is relative and circumstantial, and the more I learn about myself and others, the more I am inclined to believe this is true, for the way in which one perceives, experiences, and makes meaning of life's driving forces, varies

**from individual to individual over a life span. It is undeniable that direct, meaningful, and comprehensive lived experiences cannot be substituted nor can these be identical for any two human beings since it is only directly that we may experience the everyday world with all its changes and accommodations; with all its revolutions and evolutions.**

**This chapter has examined relevant literature about the construct of worldview from various perspectives seeking to bring forth some insight about the way in which worldview is defined, understood, and constructed.**

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Research Background**

It was at my grandparents' house in Coahuila where I learned how the land was cultivated, its power to change the crops, and the hardship of hard work. My grandfather used his tools to plant the seeds; my grandmother, her common sense to harvest.

### **The Setting**

Mexico is the largest Spanish speaking country in the world with a growing population rapidly surpassing 100 million. According to estimates from the Consejo Nacional de Población (Conapo, 1998), (National Population Bureau), Mexico's population in mid-1998 numbered 96.3 million inhabitants and it is estimated that by the year 2003, the population will have reached 108 million. Mexico city, its capital, gives shelter to more than 20 million people being the world's largest metropolis but not just recently; it has been the longest continually-occupied capital in the Western hemisphere, which for more than seven centuries, has dominated the political, economic, and cultural life of the nation. History is alive everywhere in Mexico. Colonial churches and government buildings adorn the downtown areas of most cities. The remains of two thousand year-old indigenous sites are not preserved as relics; Indians ruins serve as weekend playgrounds and colonial structures are used as administrative centers, offices, hotels, and places of worship. Mexican Catholics attend Mass on the same sites where their ancestors worshiped Indigenous gods on impressive pyramids. This attests to the fact that Mexico has not only preserved its past but it inhabits it.

Mexico's cultural identity is one of fusion where no cultural group is excluded. Mexicans concerned with identity often have thoughts about what it means to be Mexican; what are the values and forces that drive Mexican people as a *mestizo* cultural group, the result of the fusion of Spanish conquistadors and Indigenous civilizations? Is Mexican worldview a relic of past cultures or is it a symbol for the future where diverse peoples and cultures fuse in one race? The indigenous cultures of Mexico reflect the fusion of many different influences mirrored in the amalgamation of artistic displays and expressions all over the country. Religious beliefs of Mexico's Native American cultures were complex, comprehensive, and coherent. Indigenous theology dealt with the same ultimate questions every human being must confront: the nature of good and evil, the origins of creation and human beings, the nature of life and death, and human beings' hope, individually and collectively, to manipulate those forces beyond his/her control. The purpose of theology was one of renewal and re-creation. Similar is the purpose of this research study.

### **Rationale**

Being that Mexico is a very diverse country, it seemed both prudent and reasonable to limit my study to the geographical and distinct area of the Noreste not only because it would have been too ambitious to offer a single definition of Mexican worldview but also, because the history, the cultural influences, and the regional development vary extensively within the country. The way in which the Noreste differs from other areas in the country might be clearer and more evident in this saying passed on to me by my mother: "People in Northern Mexico produce; people in Central Mexico consume; and people in Southern Mexico, dream." Hopefully, the knowledge of the way in which

people from the Noreste perceive and understand the world, will help those who find themselves in the midst of cross-cultural encounters better understand the nature of this group of Mexican people.

### **The Noreste**

Together, the states of Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas comprise an area of 1,000 kilometers shaping the Northeastern part of México, which lacks impressive pre-Hispanic ruins, charming colonial towns and palm-fringed beaches found elsewhere in México. However, it does possess a geography unlike any other place in the country and a unique emerging culture. In this region, the Rio Bravo, or Rio Grande, is vital for irrigation in the arid regions. The coastal areas have lagoons, beaches, and wetlands, which are home to many diverse marine specimens. Inland, the impressive and majestic Sierra Madre Oriental offers breathtaking views and spectacular scenery. Moreover, the cultural and economic boundaries between Northeast México and the United States remain much less distinct. There is so much Mexican influence in southern Texas that Spanish seems to be more widely spoken than English, while cities such as Monterrey, Nuevo León's capital, represent the most "Americanized" parts of Mexico.

### **Nuevo León**

Nuevo León shares borders with the United States to the north, to the east with Tamaulipas, to the south with San Luis Potosi and Zacatecas, and with Coahuila to the west. According to the Conapo (1998), Nuevo Leon had 3,096,466 inhabitants. The state is divided into 51 municipalities with the majority of its people concentrated in the capital city, Monterrey. Manufacturing and trade combine to account for over half of Nuevo Leon's economic output, making the state one of the most industrialized and

technologically advanced in Mexico. Among the most important industries are crystal, beer, metallic products, electrical appliances, and transportation equipment. Eight industrial parks (for steel, chemical, and cement production and processing) provide modern services and have an adequate infrastructure to accommodate international corporations. It is an important agricultural, mining, and educational centre hosting many major colleges and universities, including the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo León, Universidad de Monterrey, Universidad Mexicana del Noreste, and the Instituto Superior de Cultura y Arte de Monterrey, just to name a few.

Monterrey, the capital and principal urban centre of the state, was built in a valley surrounded by extraordinarily beautiful mountains and some natural spots, including the Cola de Caballo (Horsetail) Waterfall and the Grutas de García (García Caves). It is also one of the most important cultural sites in the Noreste where interesting museums and cultural centres display relevant facts of the state's history. The climate of Nuevo Leon varies greatly from region to region. In the mountainous regions, it is generally cold most of the year and moderate with rains during the summer. In the south, the climate turns mild, while the Gulf region is arid and desert-like.

Nuevo León has a very distinctive gastronomic culture. The state's "trademarks" are dishes prepared with different types of meat, mainly roasted kid goat, charcoal broiled spare ribs, kid goat stew, and dried meat (similar to beef jerky), which was learned from the Tlaxcaltecas, an indigenous group which once inhabited these lands. Other important dishes, which are now consumed throughout the country, such as flour tortillas and "empanadas" (sweet pastry turnovers), were brought by the Spanish Jews who came to settle in the state. Delicious candies and sweets are also made here: fruit

preserves, candies made out of cow's and goat's milk, and the unique "turcos" which are made out of flour, molasses and stuffed with pork.

### **Coahuila**

In the immense territory of México, Coahuila occupies the third place in extension, with 151,571 square kilometers. Beautiful mountain ranges, expanded deserts, extensive mining sites, orchards and rivers, agricultural fields and cattle, contribute to its contrastive and vigorous organization. Coahuila occupies the seventh place in population density and it is an important centre for economic development in different areas: mining, agriculture, leather products, metallurgy, assembly companies (such as General Motors), among many others. The state's capital, Saltillo, has helped transform Coahuila's infrastructure by constructing boulevards, great commercial centres and modern buildings, without losing the wealth that the colonial architecture bestowed. Its buildings, many of which were constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, are reflections of the different times and architectonic taste that have appeared in the country. Saltillo, is an interesting city and an important educational centre with higher education institutions such as the Ateneo de México, and the Autonomous University of Coahuila, the Autonomous Agricultural University Antonio Narro, among others.

The landscapes, like the climate conditions vary from region to region. Coahuila's soil is mostly dry throughout the year; however, the areas that are benefited with rain, supply enough crops.

### **Tamaulipas**

Tamaulipas is a relatively new state that shares borders with Nuevo León to the northwest, with Texas to the northeast, with Veracruz to the south, San Luis Potosi to

the southwest, and the beautiful Gulf of Mexico to the East. In the northeast, it is perhaps Tamaulipas that is the most diverse with respect to topography. The physical characteristics of the place include jungle, tundra, savannah, desert, and rainforests. Tamaulipas occupies 4% of the national territory. Widespread agricultural activity and development of *maquiladoras* or assembly companies also represent important economic sources in the north. The central area where the capital, Ciudad Victoria, resides, hosts the majority of the population most of whom are dedicated to agricultural activities. This city is also known for being an excellent centre for higher education with important universities and colleges such as the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, the Instituto Tecnológico Regional de Cd. Victoria, and the Universidad Valle del Bravo.

It is the magnificent Sierra Madre Oriental that bestows Tamaulipas such an impressive physiognomy. From rivers to beaches, to jungles, and biospheres, the variety of climates and landscapes in the state make it one of the most impressive and diverse in all Mexico.

### **The Participants**

This study explored the experiences of 9 young Mexican citizens (2 male and 7 female) between the ages of 25 and 34 who live in the Noreste (three from each state). The purpose to examine young people's worldview was based on what I see as "the changing face of Mexico"; a country whose population is mostly comprised of youths between the ages of 20 and 28 for whom present changes (i.e., access to education, international trading, expanding economy, and globalization in general), are the foundations for the promising transformations that will impact the way they will

experience and understand the world. According to Moustakas (1990), the heuristic researcher is intimately related to the question posed, therefore creating a thirst to discover and to understand crucial dimensions of knowledge and experience. As a result, the rationale behind this research was intertwined with my own interest as a young Mexican woman trying to define the ways in which I perceive, understand, and experience the world. Beyond this intention, this research study also pursued the goal to outline some implications for the field of multicultural education.

### **Selection of the participants**

To request people's participation in my study, I distributed and posted ads in diverse universities, grocery stores, colleges, bakeries, drug stores, and banks. The criteria for participation required that individuals were: 1) Mexican citizens (male or female); 2) Between the ages of 20 and 35; 3) Living in the Northeast region of Mexico (Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, or Tamaulipas). The advertisements invited those who might be interested to contact me either by phone, or email. Five initial contacts were done over the phone and the rest, via email but eventually phone calls were made to contact the latter group of potential participants.

There were three main elements that facilitated the completion of the selection process while simultaneously restricting it in a way: money, time, and distance. Since the study was to be conducted in three different states in Northern Mexico, I was not in the position to misuse any of such elements and I recognize that these restrictions could have affected the overall study in several ways: First, there was more female than male representation. Although one more male showed interested in participating, he did not return the consent form and it was difficult to set up a time that would satisfy him. I was

satisfied with the people who responded to the ads and I must confess that I did not pay much attention at the time, to any additional aspects. Second, when I started contacting people to arrange a time and place to meet and explain the details of the study, I realized that I had a group who not only complied with the above established criteria but who additionally shared the following characteristics: they hold a university degree (bachelor's or higher) and their socio-economic status is middle or high-middle class. Third, all the participants lived in the capital city of the researched states. Given the characteristics of the group, I can only begin to speculate on the possible implications and limitations that the study might have. This is detailed in the final chapter following the analysis of the data.

### **Profiles**

Even though three individuals expressed they would like their names used in the dissertation, all the names used from now on are pseudonyms. To differentiate the participants' voices from my own paraphrasing, their contributions have been italicized throughout this study. It is also important to indicate that even though the participants answered all the questions individually, the similarities allowed for me to merge their responses when I considered it valuable and appropriate. I would like to acknowledge their priceless contribution to this dissertation and I invite you to meet them.

Alicia is 34 years old and has been married for 12 years to a businessman with whom she has 3 children. She is a kind and open person; she is a physician who has chosen not to work at this point since she is completely involved in her children's lives. Alicia lives in the state of Coahuila in a house that used to belong to her husband's grandmother.

The house looks like a hacienda with furniture that is valuable and antique. It is located on a large piece of land and she takes great pride of living there and takes care of it.

Teresa and her husband are lawyers who have known each other as friends for many years. She is 28 years old and the mother of a little boy. Teresa is a very open, honest, natural, and spontaneous young woman who worked at a lawyer's firm until she got pregnant. She has decided not to work now to take care of her family. She describes herself as ambitious with established and definite goals for her life (i.e., she plans to go back to work once their children are in school).

Gloria is 34 years old; she is a divorced woman, mother of an eight year-old boy; her father is Argentine and her mother is Mexican. She describes herself as someone who likes music, movies, likes to swim and play with her son and spend time together. She is a high school teacher at a University in the state of Nuevo León and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Education.

Diana was born in the city of Reynosa in the state of Tamaulipas where she lived until she was 7 years old. She is now 34. Her family first moved to Nuevo León and then back to Coahuila but this time to the city of Saltillo where they have established. She is a businesswoman who works part-time and is the mother of 3 children. Diana is married to an Argentine man and although they have spent some time in Argentina, they have chosen to live in México.

Carla is 32 years old, has been married for nine years and has 2 children She is university trained with a degree in marketing. She worked as a financial planer at a bank for 10 years but has now decided to devote herself to her family. She feels proud to be

Mexican and to have Italian heritage from her maternal side of the family and Arab decent from her father.

Roberto is 26 years old; he is not married and works at the Centre for Academic Excellence at a university in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas. He likes fishing, hunting, dancing, and spending time with his family.

Alfredo is 32 years old and lives in Monterrey. He has an Engineering degree specializing in Electronic Systems. He thinks of himself as an open-minded person, receptive to changes and attitudes, and problem resolution. Alfredo is married and has two young children. He enjoys reading about Mexican history and culture and spending time with his family.

Natalia is a 28 year-old single woman who was born and raised in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas. She holds a Master's degree in Development of Human Resources. Natalia has worked for two years in the area of Human Resources and Graduate studies at a university in Ciudad Victoria. She likes to swim, read classical literature, and listen to music in English (from the 80's).

Marina is 25 years old. She is single and has been working for three years at a university in Ciudad Victoria. She is an area coordinator with a Master's degree in Academic Communication, which is the area that explores the different ways in which people communicate in academia. She has three siblings. Her main interest is educational technology. She says to have been involved with technology "since I was born".

The following chapters contain the analysis and discussion of the data collected in these settings from these participants. these data attempt to explore their understandings

**and definitions of themselves as young Mexican people and the factors that affect those perceptions, which reflect the integration of present and past and influence their loyalties to traditions and communities thus shaping their worldview.**

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Methodological Path**

In trying to define and understand the way in which people from the Noreste perceive the world and make meaning of it, this research study posed the question "*What is Mexican worldview?*" The aim however, was not limited to a definition or an understanding of a construct, but it is my intention to utilize and extend the research findings to the arena of multicultural education. The starting point of this inquiry was my own aim to capture the shapes, textures, and substances found only in the truthfulness of lived experiences that help formulate one's worldview; textures contained in the cultural legacies that affect the understanding of the systems that constitute the life worlds of the members of a cultural group. Cosmovisión embraces the wisdom, the learnings, and the emblems of a culture giving concrete form to a set of beliefs and traditions that link people living today to ancestors from centuries past. While some of these connections might prevail, other views and perceptions of the world develop and unfold as the result of an ever-changing existence.

#### **Rationale for utilizing a qualitative approach**

Since the foundation of this research study is based on lived experience, a qualitative phenomenological approach to this research was pertinent. According to Gale (1993), what is important is to understand the data within the context in which they occur. To better understand the rationale for using a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative methodology in this research study, an exploration of the basic epistemological fit between qualitative research and multicultural approaches is vital.

### **Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

Quantitative research paradigms are based on a Euro-centric or European conceptual system, defined by Jackson and Meadows (1991) as one that emphasizes a material ontology, with an axiology placed on the acquisition of objects. Furthermore, external knowledge is assumed to be the basis of all knowledge and one knows through counting and measuring. The logic of this conceptual system is fixed on dichotomy (either/or), and the process is technology (all sets are repeatable and reproducible). Quantitative research is based on this positivistic-reductive conceptual system that values objectivity, linearity, cause and effect, repeatability and reproducibility, predictability, and the quantification of data. Although the positivistic-reductive methods of quantitative research may fit the European conceptual system, they have a lacking in investigations on the basis of more holistic and nonlinear worldviews. The positivistic and reductive traditions of quantitative research paradigms may not lend themselves to studying the dynamic and often cyclical nature of some lived experiences because often times, the issues that concern them are highly influenced by cultural and social changes of the times in which they are studied, making it even more problematic to use such approaches.

On the other hand, while qualitative approaches are not new methods of conducting research in the social sciences, what is new is the growing use of alternative research paradigms by various disciplines. Within such a context, there are many definitions of qualitative research. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), qualitative research emphasizes processes that are inductive, generative, constructive, and subjective. Qualitative research focuses on description rather than explanation, and

it attempts to represent reality as seen through the eyes of the participant (Gale, 1993). In other words, research is called qualitative if it examines "what things 'exist' rather than determine[s] . . . how many such things there are" (Walker, 1996; p. 3). Unlike quantitative research, which is based on a priori hypotheses, qualitative research focuses on understanding a complex social situation without previously defined parameters. Furthermore, qualitative research examines what people are doing and how they interpret what is occurring rather than pursuing patterns of cause and effect by replicating experiments in a controlled setting (Morse, 1997).

Qualitative research methodology in studying multicultural issues has been advocated by several researchers (Helms, 1989; Hoshmund, 1989) even though research methodology taught in counselling and psychology programs focuses primarily on positivistic and reductionistic experimentation (Hoshmund, 1989). Traditionally, the use of ethnographic and qualitative research paradigms has been widely accepted in anthropological cross-cultural studies. More recently, various other disciplines, such as education, sociology, family therapy, and family studies (Gale, 1993), nursing (Leininger, 1985), feminist studies (Seibold, Richards, & Simon, 1994), and the like have embraced qualitative research methods. It is interesting to note that the utility and significance of qualitative research methods have undergone a slow recognition process in the area of multiculturalism (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). As Helms (1989) noted, the use of such methods has been slow to gain recognition even though they may be an exciting way to access what goes on within the person interviewed. Qualitative research methodology accommodates the interrelatedness of environmental, social, and individual conditions by emphasizing the context-bound nature of the research process.

Collection of data through multiple sources such as participant observation, interviewing, and artifact collection provides a richness otherwise inaccessible through the reductionistic methods of quantitative research.

To fully embrace the use of qualitative approaches in cross-cultural research, it is necessary to understand that some cultural conceptual systems value non-linearity, holistic approaches, interrelatedness of sets such as the cosmos, body, mind, and spirit, interpersonal relationships, knowing through experiencing, symbolic imagery, and rhythm. The various aspects of qualitative research that address multicultural paradigms include recognizing nonlinear causality and interrelatedness, making social and cultural contexts explicit, and valuing interpersonal relationships and subjectivity. Therefore, the philosophical methodologies of qualitative research may provide alternative tools for research on experiences of non-European cultures such as the Mexican culture. According to Stiles (1993), qualitative research accommodates nonlinear causality and chaotic systems. Hoshmund (1989) advocated the use of qualitative or naturalistic designs as one of the methods that allows for processes that are organic, emergent, and subjective. Qualitative research gives importance to the context in which events are understood and reported. Stiles (1993) suggested that the context includes investigators' and participants' cultural and personal histories, as well as the immediate setting of the observations. This is particularly important in the context of multicultural research, as understanding of the relevant personal, cultural, and social contexts entails many assumptions. Qualitative research allows for making explicit the cultural assumptions that were implicit by recognizing and acknowledging such assumptions up front.

### **Selecting a Research Question in a Qualitative Study**

In any research, the decision regarding methodology is dictated by the research questions that are asked. Qualitative investigations usually focus on areas that have not previously been researched or have not been researched in an exploratory manner. The ability to ask relevant research questions about the experiences of culturally different groups rests with the knowledge that the researcher has about a given group. Meaningful research questions are drawn from a contextual understanding of a particular group or an individual's experience within a given society. This includes asking questions not conceived of in one's own worldview and conceptualizing and articulating questions and responses in a style or language different from one's own. This skill appears to be related to the researchers' awareness of their own worldview and context, knowledge of others' worldviews and context, and their ability to creatively question, explore, and respond to differences. In qualitative research, the tension created by holding one's own beliefs and another's beliefs in mind at the same time generates a psychological space for discovery, understanding, and wisdom.

### **Relationship Between Researcher and Participant**

One purpose of qualitative research is to generate knowledge about an individual's experiences within context and the goal is to describe in rich detail how they perceive the experience. To gather this type of (often very personal) data, the relationship between the researcher and participant must be based on trust. The researcher becomes an empathetic, interactive listener with the focus remaining on the research participant's story (Stiles, 1993). The qualitative research relationship asks participants to share personal experiences in return for their contribution to the advancement of

understandings about human experiences. In the process of participating in the research, the participant may come to some deeper understanding of their experience even though this may not be the major focus of the relationship. Qualitative research often involves personal contacts with participants and familiarity with many aspects of their lives (Stiles, 1993). Participants are often invited to join the researcher in the exploration of a given phenomenon, creating a co-researcher style of relating to the participant's story. This relationship suggests a decrease in the power differential between the researcher and the participant that is often achieved by acknowledging the expertise of participants regarding their own experiences. One possible outcome of the co-researcher model is a sense of empowerment in the participant (Stiles, 1993) created by articulating and clarifying his or her life context and experience.

#### **Confluent Components in Qualitative Studies**

Among the many components that converge in qualitative studies, the issues of data collection, analysis, validity, generalizability, control, and reliability appear to be fundamental. Data collection and analysis in qualitative research are seen as an ongoing flow of activity throughout the research project. Miles and Huberman (1994) described these concurrent, ongoing activities as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and certification. The strategies used to enhance validity are also part of these activities. Because one purpose of qualitative investigations is to generate rich descriptive data from the participant's perspective (Miles & Huberman, 1994), issues of validity are paramount in qualitative studies. Validity is established by the lack of plausible alternative hypotheses. The quality of qualitative research is grounded in the results themselves. It can be assessed by its impact on the "consumers" of the research,

on the participants, and on the investigators (Stiles, 1993). The repetitive and cyclical nature of the research process provides the researcher with several different views of the same phenomenon. Strategies to enhance validity often include asking the participants for their feedback on interviews, analysis, and conclusions. This further emphasizes the co-researcher relationship described earlier.

Other aspects of conclusion drawing and validity include checking the data for representativeness, looking purposely for extreme examples or cases within the data, and checking for researcher effects and biases. The process of making meaning out of often large amounts of sometimes contradictory data in qualitative research studies involves the ability to hold conflicting ideas in mind at the same time, a high tolerance for ambiguity, and a faith in the process of relating with and learning about differences. These abilities are at the core of qualitative investigation. Qualitative research provides an interactive process that involves inviting feedback and engendering trust within the relationship between the researcher and the participant; the relationship is interactive, and trust is imperative to the successful implementation of qualitative research.

In quantitative studies, generalizability refers to the results of a particular study, which are interesting only to the extent that they might apply to people other than those in the study. In qualitative research, the preferred term is applicability, which refers to the quality of the researcher's interpretations in the context in which the investigation took place. Context is intrinsic so results have no meaning outside of their context, thus cannot be generalized to another context. However, the results can and should have importance to others because the findings, which are grounded in a specific context, give a rich description of the situation, at the same time, tapping the many voices of the

participants. Given that qualitative research is inseparable from the participants' life, the results will have significant implications for their actions in helping shape their understanding.

Since there is no "real truth" in qualitative research, there is no analogue of reliability as understood in quantitative studies. Lived experience portrayed in people's stories is in itself, the reliability sought after in qualitative research; researchers discuss the importance of findings rather than some correspondence to a hypothesis (a described reality). Finally, research studies include the variable of control. This being a reductionistic, atomistic, and linear element in quantitative research in terms of the possibility to delineate parameters and manipulate the context and the surrounding elements, it is genuine to assert that qualitative studies have no room for it because control can never be understood by isolating some small aspect of life and examining it alone since experiences have multiple determinants acting in a complex, nonlinear way.

### **Breviary of Research Methods Within the Qualitative Field**

#### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, as part of the qualitative methods, seeks to obtain the typical essence or structure of a range of experiences in order to better understand their variations (Giorgi, 1999); it sets the possibilities to build on the essence of various lived experiences, to stumble upon their variations, and to learn through differentiation of the experiences. Thus, "we might say that phenomenology is the philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, or the social" (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). According to van Manen, (1990), "The essence or nature of an

experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner” (p. 10). Phenomenology values a strictly qualitative approach to the problem of learning; insists that comprehending the perspective of the learner is critical; acknowledges that there are varied ways in which humans can perceive or understand a situation and claims to be descriptive in orientation. (Giorgi, 1999; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Examples of approaches that could be understood as qualitative include various phenomenological methods such as ethnography, participant observation, artifact data collection, interviews, history and biography, and case analysis. Additionally, phenomenological studies also include interpretative or hermeneutic research, autobiographic, narrative, and heuristic all of which are fundamental to human knowledge and culture.

### **Ethnography**

Ethnographic approaches study the origins of meanings based on human interaction and the pattern in which interaction takes place (Horn, 1998). Ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system where the researcher examines the group's observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life (Horn, 1998). As a process, ethnography involves prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day life of the people or through one-on-one interviews with members of the group. The researcher studies the meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of the culture-sharing group.

### **Hermeneutics**

The hermeneutic process aims at the disclosure of meaning. Interpretive or hermeneutic research is an approach to the interpretation of reality that is not confined to the tenets of rationalist doctrine, to the limits of a particular methodology, nor to the mere critique of ideology. In hermeneutic processes according to Palmer (1969), "...something foreign, strange, separated in time, space or experience is made familiar, present, comprehensible; something requiring representation, explanation or translation is somehow 'brought to understating' -is interpreted" (p.6). In recent times, hermeneutic methodology had been applied to the interpretation of art and symbols, and as a method in phenomenological and philosophical investigations; this process is directed towards making the word intelligible, in its totality or in its separate aspects. The world has something "to say"; the world discloses messages to those who are alert to what it communicates, even when we account for the "messages" we project into the world in the act of viewing it. We can read what is "there" in the world but in the act of reading we 'read into' the world meanings that reflect our personal values and previous experiences. We do not read the world, as it is in itself but as it stands at the intersection between its own objectivity and our subjectivity. In experiencing the world we never capture what it is in itself but we do grasp it sufficiently to enable us to claim that the world is not only a mirage of our minds.

### **Heuristic Research**

The word heuristic comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which means to discover or find (Tyson, 1992). Heuristic research is another approach within qualitative inquiry, which allows the researcher to discover lived-experiences within a

phenomenon, reflect upon these experiences and bring information about the phenomenon to the world. The focus of this kind of study is on advancing the understanding of the complex, changing, and diverse realities of the participants. An interesting aspect of heuristic research is that throughout the investigation, self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery are involved; "the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration" (Moustakas, 1990; p. 5). In heuristic investigations, declares Moustakas (1990), "I may be entranced by visions, images, and dreams that connect me to my quest. I may come in touch with domains of new regions of myself, and discover revealing connections with others. Through the guides of a heuristic design, I am able to see and understand in a different way" (p. 11).

A heuristic is a problem-solving strategy that organizes experience, guides the research, and allows researchers to refer to their lived-experiences. With heuristics, the researcher can simplify the infinite range of variables, prioritize information, and speed up the trial-and error search entailed in problem solving (Tyson, 1992). This method enables researchers to uncover patterns in experience and to integrate diverse and apparently unrelated information; therefore, in heuristics the organizing of information reformulates the original problem or question in order to make it solvable. As a tool that provides access to the cross-cultural significance of lived-experience, this research study utilized the strategy and principles of heuristic methodology. In many ways, it could be argued that the phenomenological approach, specifically the heuristic methodology, can bring out more depth in a cross-cultural context because the emphasis is not on finding out specific answers but on discovery.

### **Heuristic Research: A Method That Highlights Stories and Discovery**

The rationale for utilizing this qualitative research approach among all others was based on what Douglas and Moustakas (1985) identified as qualities of heuristic research: First, it must allow the researcher to discover and reflect upon lived-experiences within the studied phenomena; second, heuristic research allows for the involvement and the interdependence of self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery throughout the investigation. Third, this methodology emphasises connectedness and relationship, leading to depictions of essential meanings of personal significance. Fourth, it involves the reintegration of derived knowledge that is an act of discovery in itself. Finally, heuristic research portrays the participants as whole persons throughout the investigation retaining the essence of the persons in experience.

These characteristics were salient for me as a qualitative researcher, specifically in the selection of the research question, the researcher as instrument, and the relationship between research and data collection, analysis, and validity. It would appear that the shared worldview of qualitative research and multicultural encounters lent itself to training and research implications. First, competencies identified to be culturally sensitive are skills that are necessary for the qualitative researcher. Pedersen (1994), outlines such competencies in the following way:

a) Awareness of attitudes and beliefs - Culturally skilled helpers (researchers) are aware of how their emotional reaction toward others (participants) might interfere in the process (research); additionally, they are aware of the stereotypes and preconceived notions that they might hold about others (participants).

**b) Knowledge - Skilled helpers (researchers) possess and develop specific knowledge and information about the group they are working with (i.e., life experiences, cultural heritage, and background). They understand how culture, race, and ethnicity affect identity formation, life choices, behaviours, and decision-making ability. Furthermore, helpers (researchers) have the knowledge of the potential bias in assessment instruments and therefore must interpret findings keeping in mind the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the (researched) individuals.**

**c) Skills - Helpers (researchers) should familiarize themselves with relevant information and research regarding the group that is being studied. Helpers (researchers) are able to engage in verbal and non-verbal interactions sending and receiving appropriate, accurate, and respectful messages to the individuals (participants). Since skilled helpers (researchers) are able to recognize that styles and approaches may be culture bound, they can anticipate and lessen their potential negative impact on the (research) process.**

**These competencies could be incorporated into teaching objectives in both multicultural education and qualitative research courses. Second, qualitative methodologies provide research tools that may complement the experiences of non-European cultures (and subcultures in the United States and the Western world). Specifically, the holistic, nonlinear epistemology may provide an alternative understanding to positivistic and reductionistic ways of knowing in a multicultural context. Many aspects of cross-cultural research may be best approached using culturally sensitive phenomenological research strategies. According to Lonner and Ibrahim (1996), the best way to understand an individual's worldview is by considering**

qualitative factors such as cultural and social identity, ethnic background, level of acculturation and language proficiency, socio-economic status, and socio-political history. This provides a phenomenological experiential context for the held assumptions, beliefs, values, and overall perspectives about cultural groups in particular and about the world in general.

### **Preparatory Activities**

Since the process of conducting the research was open-ended, there was no blueprint as to how to do it. However, methods of preparation were envisioned and constructed as guidelines in order to facilitate the overall process and the analysis of the accounts. These methods demanded me to be alert to expressions of the phenomenon and open to discover meanings in my observation of and my conversations with the participants. The value and power of this inquiry lay in recognizing personal knowledge and self-search as essential requirements for understanding human experiences. Throughout the process, I collected depictions of the experience as accurately as possible being attentive to stories, analogies, anecdotes, metaphors, and exchanges.

### **The Interviews**

The selected format for these conversations took the shape of extended interviews, which were recorded in Spanish and later translated to English. As a result, I was concerned that the study could forfeit some important discoveries, conclusions, remarks, stories, significance, and/or meanings. Knowing that language itself is sometimes an encumbrance even amid people who share the same mother tongue, it is thus understandable, that when different languages contemplate to depict the same experiences, the meaning(s) that these experiences hold and embrace have the potential

to be misconstrued. According to Moustakas (1990), the conversational interview is most clearly consistent with heuristic inquiry and the search for meaning since dialogue encourages expression, elucidation, and disclosure of the researched phenomenon. Furthermore, dialogue involves cooperative sharing, which might lead to avenues that will explicate the phenomenon. During the interviews, dialogue was spontaneous allowing space for a calm and natural flow of information in the form of stories between the participants and myself. Proxemics and chroemics were important components of the experience since they both are elements of non-verbal communication that can bear essential messages that form part of the interaction. The former, because it reflects the trust and level of comfort with the use of interpersonal space during the interview that allowed the natural flowing of stories and anecdotes; the latter, because the pacing of speech and length of silences often conveyed more meaning than direct, literal answers. My heuristic research journey included moments of meaning, understanding, and discovery that I dearly hold and savor. Feelings, thoughts, ideas, and images have been awakened and will return again and again. Recognizing the significance of self-searching and the value of personal knowledge as essential requirements for the understanding of common human experiences allowed me to delve into meanings that make the experience what it is and not something else. As I recognized the universal nature of what an experience is and what it means, I created a space for self-understanding.

### **The Six Stages of Heuristic Research**

The methodological approach for this study followed the six stages suggested by Moustakas (1990) for heuristic research; this allowed me, as a researcher, to engage

with the participants and to analyse their experience in order to appreciate and have a better understand of Mexican worldview in cross-cultural and multicultural domains.

### **Initial Engagement**

The first phase within heuristic research was to discover an intense interest that held important social meanings and personal, compelling implications; a stage where self-dialogue was invited through inner search and where the emergence of a topic brought forth significant relationships within a social context. This occurred when I started to identify the elements that make me different from the people with whom I was interacting. I wanted to find what makes me Mexican... beyond a geographical location. What aspects of my identity are shared by other Mexicans; how do I understand my world as a Mexican...how do others?

My inquiry was always genuine; it was personally and socially significant, both intellectually and emotionally. I found that, the more I interacted with others, the more I wanted and (to some extent) needed to know. There was that part of me that was seeking for reassurance, identification with others with whom I could share my worldview...my Mexican worldview. So this search transformed into this research study where I found some of the things I was looking for. Douglas and Moustakas (1985) say that the researcher finds him/herself "...crawling inside the self and eventually making contact with the tacit dimension, the basis for all possible knowledge" (p.44). I found the internal, tacit awareness and knowledge that Mostakas considers fundamental for this stage to evolve.

### **Immersion**

According to Moustakas (1990), once the research question has become solidified, it becomes the researcher's task to define and clarify the terms that explicate the subject. At this stage "anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus and concentration" (Moustakas, 1990, p.28) with the topic.

In trying to narrow down all the questions that I had asked myself, I found the grounds to establish my research questions, which were directly related to my own personal search. The framework for worldview exploration, although based on Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) model, evolved and came into view as a qualitative study that utilized conversational interviews (Moustakas, 1990) as a working frame.

Once the interviews were completed, I examined the notes I had gathered and proceeded to arrange them. The translation and transcription of the interviews was done simultaneously in order to better capture the complete ideas and "raw" data. The shifts in language and thus the interpretation of the data, demanded that I immersed in it in order to define and clarify the terms that explicated the phenomenon. Every environment in which the research took place, offered a possibility for understanding the phenomenon. I remained persistent, constantly self-searching and reflecting in order to perceive and appreciate themes that could be relevant.

### **Incubation**

The third phase required a period of incubation, in which I had to withdraw from intense focus on the question and allowed "the inner tacit dimension to reach its fullest possibilities" (Moustakas, p. 29). The data was set aside for a while in order to

facilitate the awakening of perspectives. This stage came about in a natural way in order to separate myself from the participants' responses and allow space for some objectivity to emerge. I recognized that, because I had been so close to the process, the people, the place (my birthplace, my country), I needed to let the data "breathe" and "mature". I experience both aspects: the "breathing" and the "maturation" of my own views. I did not want to "pollute" the study because of the emotional and intellectual involvement that had taken place as I conducted the interviews. without being too aware of it, new knowledges started to take place as I moved away from the intense focus on the question allowing its "ripening" thus, leading to the unfolding of new perspectives from which to behold the wealth that was now part of the study, and somehow, part of me.

### **Illumination**

This step required a return to the original data. I took additional notes as I went over the transcribed interviews trying to identify themes and traits to confirm that the individual depiction of the experience contained the qualities sought after in the study. The findings and discoveries emerged in interesting ways. I started to observe common threads in the responses; differences, and themes that were not necessarily pursued or anticipated. It was at this stage where I found some elements that would be part of my rationale for proposing the use of worldview exploration and for drawing implications for multicultural education.

The depictions of the themes and the analysis were shared with the participants afterwards for affirmation of comprehensiveness and accuracy as well as for suggested additions and/or deletions. This was not done following an interview format but rather,

utilizing electronic mail messages; accepted medium by the participants. It was at this point that I followed Becker's (1986) and Kvale's (1996) suggestions for confirmation, and asked:

- Does my analysis of our first conversation fit with how you described yourself as being Mexican?
- Are there any parts of my analysis that you would like to change, further clarify with me, or elaborate on?
- Having read my transcription of our interview; are there any additional areas of your experience that you would like to tell me about?

The responses from the participants were very positive regarding my portrayals of their realities and worldview; these were accepted in the format they were presented, which followed the form of summaries and themes. I received encouraging feedback to these questions. The nine participants expressed their agreement and conformity with the data the way it was offered to them.

A natural flow occurred at this stage when I was open and receptive to their knowledge and intuition. In agreement with Moustakas' (1990), I felt that, at this time, there was a "breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities into themes inherent in the question" (p.30). There were new understandings, new ways in which to perceive what I could have overlooked at other times. Misunderstood or distorted realities ultimately appeared as genuine as a result of the feedback from the participants adding something essential to the truth of the overall experience.

### **Explication**

The fifth phase in heuristic research is that of explication. Here, I was able to bring into conscious awareness the many levels and meanings unique to the research and I was able to organize in detail its main components. The themes, which were in some way, part of my working frame, seemingly appeared as I structured and analyzed the responses that were now, data. The unique and shared worldviews that Schwartz (1992) talks about, were present in the analysis. When this was completed, I pursued the depiction of the rest of the participants' experiences until each had been constructed. It was at this stage where themes began to emerge from the data and were clustered, helping organize the presentation of the findings. This stage allowed for flexibility and change as the process unfolded; it required that I attended to my own awareness, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and judgements creating a space for focusing and indwelling in order to discover subtleties, textures, and components of the phenomenon.

### **Creative Synthesis**

This last stage required that I became familiarized with the data (which was easy to do since I had worked with it in different ways: recording, translating, and transcribing the interviews), its qualities and themes, the possible meanings that derived from it, and the details of the experiences as a whole. This final step in the heuristic process was the creative synthesis of the experience, which invited the recognition of my own awareness to interpret and manufacture the overall experiences of the participants and present the discoveries. It was at this stage when I was challenged to gradually blend the different parts of the inquiry into a whole thus, creating and even transforming my own worldview and the connections between the self, others, and the

world. As a result, the participants' experiences are offered in this study in the form of forthright responses, narratives, and a poem, which attempts to reflect the all-encompassing nature of their shared worldview.

In terms of academic requisites, the heuristic process ended here making it easy to draw the proposed implications for multicultural education. However, the process of discovery did not find its culmination at this stage for it is my hope that I continue to pursue my quest for knowledge about myself and others throughout my life.

### **The Question of Validity in Heuristic Research**

Qualitative research methods have been questioned and criticized for lacking reliability, predictive validity, control and generalizability, but they represent a much better approach to understanding human experience than quantitative research methods. Heuristic research focuses on human experience and explores its meaning and how it is understood. This includes explicating how the text of my experience interweaves with the texture of human life as a whole, and how this happens in such a way that: "I do not reduce the texture of human life to 'my experience' and, at the same time, I do not reduce 'my experience' to simply a silenceable instance of 'human life in general' " (Jardine, 1992, p. 74) and where the interpreted structure obtained from one person can be found in the experience of other persons and not in statistical explanatory procedures (Giorgi, 1970). As stated earlier, since the question of validity in qualitative methodology is one of meaning, the researcher returns again and again to the data in order to review the experiences and to determine whether its qualities and/or components comprise the necessary and sufficient meanings. The constant and cyclical nature of the research process provided me with several different views of the same

phenomenon. Strategies to enhance validity often included asking the participants for their feedback on interviews, analysis, and conclusions. Polanyi (1969) maintains that "...the synthesis of essences and meanings inherent in any human experience is a reflection and outcome of the researcher's pursuit of knowledge. What is presented as truth...ultimately can be accredited only on the grounds of personal knowledge and judgement" (p.120).

### **Questions Explored in the Interviews**

The following general questions that guide the inquiry emerged from my interest in the construct of Worldview, my personal experiences as a Mexican woman (living in Canada), and from the review of the relevant literature on Worldview: *What is a "Mexican Worldview"?*; *Why is it important to know and understand a country's worldview?*; *What (if any) are some similarities and/or differences among people from Northeast Mexico and what do these make evident?*; *Finally, what are some implications for Multicultural education?*

From these generalized thoughts, more specific questions arose that shaped my inquiry. One general question guided me and smoothed the passage towards the shaping of my interviews: *What is "Mexican Worldview?"* Even more detailed questions emerged from my interest in the construct of Worldview and from Moustakas' (1990) "Method's for preparation in Heuristic research" (pp.45-46):

One question aimed at revealing the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience: *"What does it mean to be Mexican?"* The accompanying question aimed at discovering the qualitative aspects of the phenomenon: *"What are the values and beliefs that you hold and appreciate about being Mexican"*.

An in-depth exploration of Worldview using modified questions from Ibrahim and Kahn's questionnaire (1984) was used to uncover the experiences of the participants and to interpret the described phenomenon. These questions elicited responses from the participants and allowed the fullness of their experiences to manifest at times, in the shape of stories, anecdotes, simple statements, or even as ambiguous accounts. When the latter occurred, it was my responsibility as a researcher to clarify such statements and thwart possible contradictions or even inconsistencies. The process of making meaning out of often large amounts of sometimes contradictory data involves the ability to hold conflicting ideas in mind at the same time, a high tolerance for ambiguity, and a faith in the process of relating with and learning about differences (Stiles, 1993). This was done considering Kvale's (1996) principle advising that the researcher be cautious about ambiguity when conducting interviews.

As a way to invite responses from the participants and facilitate their accounts, I used diverse questions during the interviews. Some specific questions included: "What did you mean when....?" Or more interpretive modes asked: "You mean ...?" Other questions were directly aimed at eliciting specific answers: "Have you ever....?" I also asked people to carry on with their narration specially when they were not sure of how much they could expand their answers. This became evident to me when they asked: "Can this little story be part of the answer?" or "Is this OK to include?" There were times when the participants asked for clarification of the interview questions or wanted to ensure their understanding. Kvale (1996) proposed, as one of his principles, the need for the researcher to remember that the interview is an interpersonal situation in which both participants "...act in relation to each other and

reciprocally influence each other” (p.35). Additional questions derived from the five existential dimensions proposed by Kluckhohn (1961):

- ❖ **Human nature:** "How would you describe the idiosyncrasy of Mexican people as it relates to humane qualities?"; "Which of those qualities would you perceive as universal?/ which as 'typically Mexican'?"
- ❖ **Man-Nature relationship:** "Can you describe the way(s) in which you perceive your relationship with nature?"; "Has this relationship changed throughout your life?"; "Which of the qualities you have described have you maintained over the years?"
- ❖ **Temporal awareness:** "Which Mexican traditions do you observe and/ or follow?"; "Can you describe how you see yourself ten years from now?"; "If you could give qualities and /or characteristics to the construct of "time", how would you describe the concept?"
- ❖ **Activity orientation:** "Can you describe the value that spontaneity has for you?"; "Can you explain the constructs of 'being' / 'doing' and declare which has more significance for you? ; "What value do you give to achievement and success?"
- ❖ **Relationship to others:** "How would you describe your social life (direct family, extended family, work, and leisure)?"; "From the activities that you described, which ones have you exerted for a long time?"; "How would you describe your relationships with relatives and close friends?"

Although the collected stories and anecdotes that emerged during the interviews are rich in conveying people’s thoughts and feelings, I thought it would be best to abide by Kvale’s (1996) suggestion to cluster the data in order to facilitate its

reading and interpretation. The following chapter presents the clustered themes, which relate directly to the above questions and are listed accordingly to the mentioned order. However, the sub-classifications or sub topics for each set of questions have not necessarily been arranged in the mentioned order.

### **Conclusion**

Albert Einstein said that the most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious; I am drawn to the enigmatic nature of the statement. As a heuristic researcher, I strive to recognize, honor, and respect the mysteriousness in other people's experiences and more importantly, I aspire to arrive at the moment "...when I discover that I am accepted and loved as a person, with my strengths and weaknesses, when I discover that I carry within myself a secret, the secret of my uniqueness, [so that I can then] begin to open up to others and respect their secret (Vanier, 1998; p.82). The changes, however, are neither simple nor easy; they require that people possess a willingness to communicate and develop empathy and tolerance toward views, which are different from their own. This willingness to reach out, risk, learn and experience others is a challenge for everyone. If we have the resolve to adapt behaviors and attitudes with the desire to overcome ethnocentrism and develop an understanding of differing worldviews, then we may begin to know the feelings of exhilaration that come when we have made contact with those from other cultures far removed from our own sphere of experience.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Textures: The Data**

Prior to organizing and analyzing the data, I had been in a “latent period” which Moustakas (1990) calls Incubation. I knew I needed to move away from the stories I had heard and allow for the implicit to reach its fullest potential. Perspectives ignited and new scenes emerged. I listened to the stories on the recorded interviews and hoped that the feelings and meanings bound by language could be conveyed in English. Language, says Banks (1996), plays an important role in the construction of knowledge since it affects the perceptions of the world and others depending on the use and the familiarity that individuals and groups have with it. Language is not only a vehicle to communicate feelings, thoughts, yearnings, and aims; furthermore, it holds the possibility to express beyond conventionalisms and linearity. Stories, poetry, and songs, are only some examples of the gracefulness of language. As researcher and translator, I considered myself, at this point, an interpreter at work for I was lending my voice as the vehicle that would transport the words from one language to another. What I thought would be a limitation of my study was now an unexpected and gratifying reward; I wanted to respect the richness embedded in this experience and realized I had the responsibility to honour this position.

As I gathered notes, reflected on people’s narratives, and went over the transcriptions that told their stories, I searched for common threads in both languages and soon discovered there would be untranslatable utterances. So faced with the challenge that this amendment offered, I began to create imagery through description and depiction. This was apparent, in my attempt to translate the word for my study (Worldview), I

observed there was no Spanish equivalent. The word that came closest to its meaning was *Cosmovisión* or vision of the cosmos. It describes life encircling folklore, legends, philosophy, sky-knowledge, and myths and fuses all these elements with a culture's modes of subsistence, political ideas, values, attitudes, affective perceptions, modes of communication, and even technological advancement which constitute the building blocks of new worldviews. Mircea Eliade (1994) says that "To know the myths is to learn the secret behind the origin of all things" (p.20); and according to Malinowsky, (cited in Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984), myths are "not merely a story told but a reality lived...they are magic lenses through which we can glimpse social orders and daily life" (p. xv). In my own discernment, this new awareness was leading me towards the Illumination phase as I was experiencing a "breakthrough" and was open to emerging knowledge and intuition. In the words of Polanyi (1969), "Having made a discovery; I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes [had] become different; I [had] made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently. I [had] crossed a gap, the heuristic gap, which lay between problem and discovery" (p.143).

Given that my interview questions explored themes within a specific framework, I decided to fraction the interviews in such a fashion since I considered that the responses flowed naturally yielding to their understanding. Consequently, I revisited the transcriptions and the translations looking for patterns and feelings expressed through the conversations that would convey something deeper than solely an answer to my questions. The comments that best reflected the feelings of the participants and their overall experience related to the topic, were then extracted from the original transcription and clustered in separate documents with a given name that, in my view,

would reflect the most relevant expressions of the collection (e.g., “Versions of myself”; “Communion”; or “The spaces between us”). Throughout the organization I returned to the original interviews trying to encapsulate and summarize the full context of the statements and to consider whether or not there were missing elements in the initial stage of extracting and clustering. Kvale (1996) suggests various paths for meaning making that can be carried out at any given time at this stage. From the 12 recommended means, five were linked to the newly created documents: a) clustering; b) noting patterns and themes; c) making comparisons/contrasts; d) seeing plausibility; and e) making metaphors.

In the venture of organizing the data, I knew it would be convenient to illustrate and even describe the conveyed meanings with clear and specific words for practicality purposes. Analyzing experiences using language causes the foundations to exist in a state of apparent separation, for language will have the limitation and the difficulty of representing human experience in words and at the same time, it will be the vehicle that will turn such experiences into consciousness. The following pieces are the starting point of this journey. Thoughts and sentiments are the compasses that escort people’s stories and unearth feelings that reveal the essence of what it means, for them, to be Mexican.

### **On Being Mexican**

In my quest to find some elements that would reveal the essence of being Mexican, the participants were asked the initial question: *“What does it mean to be Mexican?”* Their responses enveloped a wide array of feelings and significance accompanied by the enunciation of beliefs and values that formed part of the second general inquiry: *“What*

*are the values and beliefs that you hold and appreciate about being Mexican?"*

Everyone had a very personal outlook, perception, and understanding about these two questions.

Gloria said to be Mexican means *"to be part of a culture with which I identify and with whom I share identities over similar symbols"*. Her values and beliefs have a foundation on the spirituality and religiousness of the family and in the traditions passed on from one generation to the next. For her, one of the most important values is the way families share, take care of others, and keep family relationships. *"Family, is an entity that unites and forms a society"*.

For Carla, being Mexican means being honest, frank, and open to accept other people. She feels that religion is a very important part of her as a Mexican woman; she feels an admiration for Catholicism and pride for it. Attending Mass is important as is explaining the Bible to her children. She values unity and family closeness.

Roberto says that to be Mexican is *"lo máximo!"* (common expression meaning the best). *"We are very 'familiar' [family oriented]; I feel proud to be Mexican"*, he adds. *"To feel Mexican is also to defend one's native state, to fight for Mexico by being a good citizen to be able to have a better country. It also means to have responsibility towards the country, to love it, and to develop a familiarity with it"*. The values and beliefs that he holds relate to the love for the family, roots for the motherland (he says that most Mexicans who go and live in a different country, end up coming back to Mexico...most of the times), respect for the elderly, the environment, love, friendship, and unconditional openness towards others. It is important for Roberto to retake things from the past and as a result, being able to

change and look forward to the future is a personal challenge. One additional value he deems important is being able to adapt to change, while being productive. Being Mexican means being participative and demanding with one self and others (i.e., if you start something you finish it), independent and loyal to the family, its values and principles. Loyalty to the family means not letting them down (expressed as fulfillment of expectations) and being in constant desire to overcome as well as finding support in one's success. Family relationships are important to him mainly, because they instill a sense of belonging, acceptance, and provide him with the knowledge (i.e., social skills, which involve notions of respect, loyalty, and trust) to form other groups in the future.

Alfredo thinks that *Being Mexican* is not only having been born in a specific geographical place but it also means to *feel Mexican*; not wanting to be anything else. *"To have been born in Mexico does not make you a Mexican"*, he adds. *"In high socioeconomic status people want to be somebody else (from the first world) and not accept or love Mexico. Personally, I feel a deep sense of patriotism and love for Mexico; to like and love my country even with its deficiencies; I feel a need to fight for Mexico and defend its roots. To be Mexican also means not wanting to change my nationality but to fight to change the things that are in my hands to change, to make the country a better place where to live. The values and traditions that I hold dearly to my heart are the history of my country, the struggles from people to improve, diversity of the culture and the different customs throughout the country. I believe in Mexico even though we have a history of 'Mestizaje' (blending, mixing); being conquered because of what Spaniards came for to America (different than from*

*the Portuguese, the French and the British). We inherited that attitude in Latin America thanks to 'Mestizaje'; we have a diversity of features, characteristics, and cultural beliefs. Our mix was not as homogenous as it was in Canada or in the United States (where Whites did not mix much with Indigenous peoples). In North America, Indigenous people did not document history since it was oral and (almost) everything was destroyed. In Mexico, people documented history (foundations, first kings, and so forth); the others (British and French) came to make a living and improve their life. The Spaniards came to rape, steal and spend the gold and silver; when it was over, they took other advantages".*

For Natalia, being Mexican is *"To know where I come from; how cultures developed; how people in different parts of the country speak different dialects and languages"*. Natalia feels great pride to have Indigenous ancestors as she explains: *"My family is Otomí (Indigenous group from central Mexico), and my Grandfather was the first person in my family who went to school to get an education; he was the first one who learned to speak and read Spanish. I feel proud to be Mexican. I like to tell others about our traditions. I like our language, our skin color, our music, and the diversity in the country since every region is unique. I like that! I like the fact that I was born in Tamaulipas. It is good that I was born on "this side" (of the border; not in the United States). I like to speak with an accent. I like others telling me I speak differently from the people from Monterrey or Coahuila. I like the fact that they say it and 'pick on' my accent. When I tell people (over the Internet) that I am from Tamaulipas, they make assumptions and immediately say to me 'you must be tall, slim, white, and you must speak with a 'heavy' Norteño' accent*

(strong inflection from Northern areas in Mexico). *“With respect to my education and formation as a person, my family is very traditional but very open; my parents have allowed me to decide. For instance, I did not have an ‘obligation’ to be Catholic but I feel confident and trustful; I’ve had freedom to choose. I like to think that God exists”.*

Marina said that to be Mexican is *“Everything! I could not have been born in any other place of the world. Even though the social situation in Mexico is disastrous and society is bad too, I don’t think I could be as happy had I been born in a different place. In my family, my father has always been the authority figure in my house and there is a lot of respect for him; he is the kind of person who does not intervene but is always there to offer support and advice”.* Marina adds that for her: *“...the sense of patriotism reflected in the way people sing the National Anthem in silence with respect and devotion is another value of being Mexican”.* The beliefs and values that Marina deems important as a young Mexican woman are based on her respect for others and her own beliefs. *“I have ‘broken’ traditional ways of life for myself as a woman; people ask me how old I am, if I’m getting married soon, if I’m having children in a near future, and so forth. I have been able to mark my own limits and my own routes”.*

These feelings, thoughts, reflections, and personal awareness mirror the way people see themselves in a specific context, time, place, and reality that has been constructed through experiences and unique individual journeys. Despite this individuality, there are similarities in the way they feel about being Mexican. Not just having been born in this country but more importantly, being able to describe

themselves as Mexican people. As I listened to their descriptions, I revisited this question trying to make it resonate with their accounts: Is Mexican worldview a relic of past cultures or is it a symbol for the future where diverse peoples and cultures fuse in one race? The following clusters relate directly to the questions in the previous chapter and are listed according to the mentioned order. However, the sub-classifications or sub topics for each set of questions have not necessarily been arranged in the mentioned order.

### **The nature of being human: human nature**

The idiosyncrasy of Mexican people as it relates to humane qualities was described by the participants as people being good, open, friendly, mediators who try to avoid conflict, who are generous by nature, and available (always looking for ways to connect). Connections are difficult if one is not open to others, show solidarity and compassion when something happens to others; there is a sense of unity; people come together for others. The essence of being human is a combination of good and bad nature depending on the environment or location; one must be cautious.

While some of these qualities were identified as universal to some extent, the interviewees also described which ones they perceived as “typically Mexican”. These were involved acknowledging that people having problems and owning and/or developing ways to solve them; because, as Roberto said: “...*we are social entities there is a strong need to connect and belong in order to succeed. People are generous, kind, and concerned for other people’s well being. However, it is also a universal human condition to try to get the most for the least (effort)*”.

The qualities that were described as typically Mexican were the tendency to have a defensive nature about many things due to the influence from the outside (foreigners). However, there is a sense of pride, love, and honour to have been born in this country. The following paragraphs illustrate a generalized feeling that people expressed; the words have been arranged to re-create this notion. It must be stated that no words were either added or changed. Only Gloria viewed Mexicans as people who underestimate themselves and have a need for more appreciation of themselves as a race and cultural group. She said that there is a lack of vision towards the future because people live more in the past than in the present. *"We live for today and not for what is to come"*. However, most interviewees expressed positive feelings about the values they think are typically Mexican.

**Of People:** *"In Mexico we are believers, striving for constant excellence; we know how to make friends, and we know how to solve problems in creative and ingenious ways. We are brave, courageous, trusting, and hardworking; influenced by other people's expectations of us. We are sociable, sincere, good, honest, affective, dependent, frank, outgoing, and earnest. In Northern Mexico, people do not take naps. We are a society of hard working people- 12 hours (or more) a day seven days a week. We are also good hearted, good spirited, and friendly. However, there is little sense of cooperation or help when one individually succeeds"*. (Author's note: This seems to be in accordance with the sense of interdependence and collectivity mentioned in research studies. For a more comprehensive review, see Brown & Lundrum-Brown, 1995; Geertz, 1983; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Matsumoto, 1996; Shweder, 1991; Triandis, 1994).

*“In some cities in northern Mexico, people are still conservative (particularly in small towns or pueblos where people leave their doors open, unlocked). People are amiable, courteous, and trusting of others; we open ourselves to them. We have respect for the elders, for others, for friendship. Unconditionally, we give ourselves to others”.*

**Of Family:** *“We like socializing with the family because this instills a sense of belonging, acceptance, and provides us with the knowledge of how to form groups later in life. There is a deep sense of respect, dependency and loyalty to the family, to its values and principles; ‘you don’t let your family down (disappointed)’ and there is support in your successes”.* The sense of responsibility and respect for the members of the extended family is reflected in the way people talked about them: *“My great grandfather had a mill but when he died, it became garbage. My grandfather rebuilt it and I feel a moral responsibility and a personal obligation to keep it [although] it is hard work”.* Diana said that she and her family had the choice to go anywhere in the world due to her husband’s job; however, they decided to live in Mexico *“...because of the values. We could have gone to Mexico, Canada, USA, or Italy, where we have relatives. We lived in Argentina for a year, but it wasn’t good for us. In Mexico, the children can have an identity (we wanted our children not to live in a place like the USA where identity is not national, but ethnic)”.*

Mothers seem to display a sense of duty in terms of “sacrificing” for their children even beyond childhood. Parents are aware of their children’s needs all the

time (spiritual, economic); they always lend a helping hand. Extended and nuclear families are equally important as the nuclear family.

**Of Mexico:** *"We feel loyalty for Mexico with its pros and cons. It is a high honour to be Mexican; we are basically good people who love the land. We would give everything for our motherland but sometimes we just don't know how to do it. In Northern Mexico, people are hard working, participative, strict (demanding) with themselves and others; if you start something, you finish it, even if it is not the best, we finish what we start. We like challenges (that must be why we are creative). We like to celebrate and have fun (party) as a form to remember our successes; that we have overcome difficulties and struggles historically. There are also bad people in Mexico or anywhere in the world; people who do not like to work or struggle; they like things done in an easy way. Working demands a certain kind of behaviour and not everyone is prepared for it. Mexicans try to get the most for the least (i.e., effort, money). In the North, the culture is different; we have learned to work hard because of our geographic location and hydrography: we have deserts and mountains so we have developed a greater sense of productivity and hard work. Punctuality, seriousness about business, and being straightforward are valued.*

**In communion: Relationship with nature**

Yo quiero perdurar junto contigo, en la savia profunda de la humanidad, en la risa del niño en la paz de los hombres, en el amor sin lágrimas. Por eso, como habremos de darnos a la rosa y al árbol, a la tierra y al viento, te pido que nos demos al futuro del mundo...  
(Sabines, 1997; p.76)

I want to transcend along with you, in the profound sap of humanity, in a child's laughter, in the peace, amongst mankind, in love without tears. That is why, as we shall give ourselves to the rose and the tree, to the earth and the wind, I ask you to give ourselves to the future of the world...  
(Sabines)

### **Absence**

Four participants expressed that their feelings, thoughts, and reflections about an existing relationship with nature manifested during their high school years where the curriculum started to include courses dealing with ecology, ecosystems, and “bioethics”; and by reason of their children who now oblige them, in a way (with the help from schools), to take care of the Earth from a very young age and understand the consequences that these actions convey. For these interviewees, the relationship with nature exists in a “learned” way; they are aware of it by means of the consciousness brought about by “external” influences (i.e., school, advertisements, media, and the like). Deep unaware connections are almost non-existent.

- Nature was not considered an important element of life and was taken for granted; it had no value. Had never reflected on it (relationship) in the past.
- A relationship as such was not even considered. There was no awareness in younger years; it was an “unconscious” connection.
- Alfredo remembers: *“No one talked directly about these behaviours or actions to take care of nature. My parents taught their my siblings and I to respect nature and keep places clean but there wasn’t an understanding that we are part of nature”*.
- Carla says: *“My relationship is not intimate but more conscious. I like taking care of it by not polluting, not using sprays. When I was in high school, the teachers tried to create a conscience and it had an impact on me. We were told about the ozone layer. I get upset with cars and bus drivers when they pollute with the gases, factories too with fumes”*.

## **Presence**

The other five participants recalled that because this connection has always been part of their lives, they couldn't remember when they began to feel and know that they are "one with nature":

- Natalia describes her experience: *"I grew up in Ciudad Mante (Tamaulipas) where there were a lot of watering canals. We chased trucks that carried the "despeinadas" <sup>1</sup> and we pulled some to suck. We learned to identify which ones were ripe and sweet because of the color, size, and the texture. We would spend complete afternoons like these...waiting for the trucks to come by... My father was always concerned about nature to the extent of adapting the house to the roots of a tree and not vice versa; I learned to take care of trees and be aware of their importance and the need we had for them. At the office I do simple things to honor this connection; I call people to come and see through my window the changing colors of the sky in the afternoon or the evening or the changing colors of the leaves. When it rains, I like the changing colors of the soil....the earth...I would love to buy a house near a mountain or the ocean. I love to watch the hummingbirds fly...Nothing can capture the beauty or the images of looking at the hummingbirds in flight..."*

- Alicia voices: *"Every week we go to the orchard and the children learn to water the trees; they learn which ones give fruit in each season and they help the gardener. The children like to go to the ranch and enjoy nature; they enjoy the animals and being around them to feed them and take care of them. They have learned how to plant trees, take care of them, and be aware of their importance"*

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<sup>1</sup> disheveled look-like sugar canes

*and the need we have for them. I have always been conscious of the contact and relationship with nature. Since I was a child, my parents took us to the very same orchard and I spent time with them and my grandparents and learned to appreciate nature. There has always been a connection that goes beyond memory; it has always been part of existence”.*

- Gloria reflects on her own relationship *“I enjoy the ocean, the sky, the dawn, sunset, touching the trees, walking; I’ve always enjoyed being in the outdoors, the sights, the smells and I never took it [nature] for granted. I have changed. Now, I feel it everyday, all the time and before it was only at specific times and places. I feel I have a relationship with nature: Harmonious and deep; a mixture according to nature’s way (behaviour). I feel connected; we are one”.*

- Roberto shares this connection: *“I have been taking care of the family orchard since I was 11 years old. I enjoy the outdoors and taking care of the orange trees. I also like to hunt and take care of nature because I learned this at a very early age. I feel a deep responsibility and pride in helping my father remake my grandfather’s old mill and making it work. I also feel certain melancholy for the loss of respect for those who sow the land; I think we must respect them and the land for this is where we come from and we depend on it to live. I remember picnics and fishing in the ranch with my family, my grandparents, and cousins. I believe that there is a need to make people understand and adapt to the changing world and the circumstances and respect the land as such. I am conscious of these changes”.*

- Marina describes her experience: *“I still like going to the river on Sundays and bathe like I have done since I was really young. I have always had this relationship and developed it through the years. In those years (and even now), I enjoyed nature and being around animals. I particularly liked taking care of stray cats and dogs; I used to pick them up and take them home with me or take them to the veterinarian and feed them. However, I feel we are far from developing a care culture for animals. I have always taken care of animals; they are part of me. The money I make is in part for them. When I was little, I would make sure that the bird that came to our garden everyday would have enough drinking water. In my high school years, this idea of taking care of nature became a subject called ‘ecology and the environment’ where they intended to create a conscience about the importance of taking care of the environment”.*

### **Changing Landscapes**

As the participants reflected on their own connection with nature and on the way such relationship has changed, they acknowledged that a transformation has occurred.

- *This relationship has changed over the years; it was not considered an important element of life; I spent many days at the orchard, but I don't recall as a child enjoying nature (I took it for granted). There is a recent feeling of connection to nature everyday, all the time.*
- *I never reflected on it. Feeling harmonious is recent for me. I've seen it (relationship) as close and yet, far. I did not have the connection when I was younger. I feel a part of the vast universe. I do not think it was a connection, it*

*was unconscious. I did not feel the need to connect with nature to feel alive or to renew my energy (for the last 5 years).*

- *I did not have an awareness or didn't reflect on the sky or the trees but since I had my son, I have learned to appreciate it more. He brings a rock or gets a stick, feeds the horses, sheep, picks up apples in the ranch...gets wet in the canal. He enjoys being in nature. Now, I can't miss going to the ranch every weekend because of him. It is very valuable for us now. Most people don't have a place to go to (outdoors) to be in contact with nature so I feel an obligation towards my son. I did not value nature before, I certainly did not think of a relationship with it as much as I do now.*
- *There is a learned awareness to take care of resources, to recycle for example, for our benefit. When I was little no one talked about these things including what would happen if we didn't take care of it. Now I read to educate myself, I go to seminars, and I am always aware of resources and other needs. Now we have more awareness but less time to enjoy nature because most of us lead a "hurried" life so the relationship is less experiential; it has become more of a learned thing.*
- *My parents taught us to respect nature by being clean, not making fires, not throwing trash but I did not have an awareness to say I had a relationship with the natural world. When we were growing up there was no conscience of taking care of the environment, we were very young. Now that I am responsible for my children's learning, I am aware and I have an interest more than seeing this as an obligation.*

### **After the Children...and For Them**

Apparently, for those who have children, the perception of the relationship with nature has become more apparent and conscious after the children were born (children are learning to take care of the land and nature in general and are aware of the repercussions and damage created by humankind on the environment).

- Regarding this, Alfredo says: *“I try to go places with my family and encourage my children to enjoy the climate and weather, camp, read about animals and their habitats, plants, and the use of technology to investigate (due to lack of time and places). We like going outdoors to parks and zoos. I teach my children all the time about nature. There should be a conscience in people (specially young children) to respect nature and the environment: not throwing trash, not smoking in closed areas, avoiding the use of sprays, not polluting the air with the cars, keeping the cities clean, using biodegradable products”*.
- Carla shares: *“Children are learning at an earlier age about it and they take care of trees. I’m happy that they’re learning now. They begin to ask about the changing leaves, processes, animals and other forms of life. I learned to appreciate animals because of my parents. I think I played similar games with my children like the ones I played when I as young”*.
- Diana expresses: *“At school there is an awareness to take care of nature. Schools encourage, promote, and stress the development and importance of this relationship through parades, contests, and other activities; it is a very valuable relationship. Consequently, there is an interest as parents on teaching the*

*children too; there is a feeling of obligation or “duty”, and responsibility towards the”.*

For the participants, the high school curriculum brought about a created conscience about the need to take care of the Earth; the call for courses that addressed such needs included environmental science, ecology, ecosystems, and bioethics. Relationship with nature thus started to become a conscious process. High school teachers tried to create an awareness to take care of resources, recycle, avoid pollution, and so forth. Presently, this relationship is more a learned thing than natural; one with more awareness, but ironically, with less experiential opportunities.

### **Sacredness**

Only four participants felt they had an intimate relationship with/in nature; their statements reflected almost a sacredness about it. Their words, gestures, and expressions mirrored such feelings and depth. My interpretation of their narratives is that, for them, this relationship is one of intimacy, understanding, and communion.

- Roberto declares: *“Because we come from the Earth, we need to understand and adapt to the changing world and respect the land as such”.*
- Gloria confesses that: *“I accept I need it to live; I let her “live”. It is powerful (in her right). I respect its power and the phenomenon it is. I fear it: not the sky, or the sun, or the trees, fear of its power (natural catastrophe), hurricanes, thunderstorms, tornados, because I feel so vulnerable and insignificant”.*

- Teresa feels this connection too: *“Nature is respected because of its power and the phenomenon it is. There are feelings of vulnerability and being insignificant in the presence of nature. We are part of the vast universe”*.

#### **Bonds to the past ..... images of the present: Time**

In my personal experience, the idea of time is relative... For the past 30 years, I have accompanied my parents to the place where my grandparents and other relatives rest in peace. It is an act of respect (towards my parents first and foremost), devotion (towards my gone relatives), and love... We bring fresh flowers, prayers, and our fondest memories of times present.... and past. After we allow a tender mortal to clean the tombstone, in silence we reflect and remember. We then leave and go about our duties for we know that time, unlike these souls, is not eternal.

In exploring time orientation as a means to understand a) how the construct is perceived, b) the representation that the participants made of themselves in a near future, and c) the type and level of connection that they have to traditions, I found that, although the participants had very personal views about the traditions they follow and how they carry them out, the similarities established were greater than the different ways in which they share and celebrate. This section recapitulates the above components and presents the type of traditions/celebrations that participants rendered as the most important, they being those with religious significance followed by events that are more a custom than a tradition. Finally, even though historical accounts were regarded as part of this exploration, they were related more to social conventionalisms or practices than to traditions as such.

### **About Time and Its Virtues**

**“Sabia virtud de conocer el tiempo...” (Renato Leduc)**

**“Wise is the virtue of knowing time...” (Renato Leduc)**

**The qualities endorsed to this abstract concept created images of movement and emotions in my mind as I listened to people’s interpretations.**

- **Time was described as something that:**

**Runs; flies; heals; measures life; moulds feelings; moves quickly/ fast; exists; does not wait; means growth and change; cannot be controlled.**

- **It was also perceived to be:**

**Limiting; perceived differently according to one’s state of mind and emotions; valued/important; infinite/eternal, tireless, subjective/difficult to understand and/or recover; uncontrollable; composed of: leisure, rest, and responsibility moments; dedicated/ offered to others.**

- **Finally, it seemed that time involved some responsibilities; it required that people:**

**Make good use of it; live it to do as much as they can; learn and know how to distribute it; learn how to dream in it; and be aware of it.**

### **Versions of Myself**

**The many roles people embrace throughout life fluctuate and acquire different shades as they transform with the years. It is in different and very personal ways that each individual leaves his or her imprints of their passing on this Earth. With the exception of Carla, who did not respond (she said that she was not able at the time, to create an image of herself in the future; “*this is food for thought for me*”),**

the yearnings and desires of the participants seemed to comprise similar aspirations.

They agreed that, ten years from now, they wanted:

- To be a better mother/father guiding [my] children; raising them to be good people;
- To marry/have a consolidated marriage with priorities other than children (for those who at present, have young children).
- To be working [productive], better prepared [learning], to achieve professional development
- To develop a better philosophy of life and be living in harmony (with friends and family; helping others; healthy; doing what [I] like).

**Among Virgins, Saints, and The Not Very Divine**

**“Dale, dale, dale, no pierdas el tino, mide la distancia que hay en el camino!”**

**“Hit it, hit it, hit it, don’t lose your aim, measure the distance that’s along the way!”  
(Popular song to hit the Piñata)**

With this chant, children are invited to break the piñata and enjoy the riches that come along with the bliss of being a child. “Childhood is a state of grace, a presence that never abandons humankind; a fundamental time in which Mexico is defined” (Henestrosa, 1995; p. 33). Piñatas are not only for children, and like tamales, tortillas, and tacos, they are essences of Mexican traditions and Mexican ways of life utilized in birthdays and during the “Posadas” (an eight day celebration ending the 24<sup>th</sup> of December). It was not a surprise to hear participants associate most of the described traditional practices with food whether religious accounts or historical occurrences since for many cultural groups, food is intimately associated with people’s daily life practices and it appears to become a much more relevant affair when it is tied to formal (or even

religious) events. The accounts from individuals appeared to be intertwined with other forms of celebration within Mexican ceremonies. Therefore, they have been organized into three main categories: 1) historical; 2) religious; and 3) other.

### **Historical celebrations**

Mexico is a country of living history. Its chronicles are alive and present today not only by means of the silent witnesses in the form of pyramids but also, in the ways people behold and honour their forefathers through remembrance, the school being the main contributor:

- Independence Day (September 16<sup>th</sup>)
- Revolution Day (November 20<sup>th</sup>)
- Pledge to the Flag (every Monday morning at school), sing the National Anthem
- Participation in parades
- Child Heroes (Niños Héroes; September 13<sup>th</sup>: War against the Americans).

### **Religious traditions**

Ten percent of Mexico's population professes religions other than Catholicism. There are Christians, Jews, Mormons, and people with other affiliations (Conapo, 1998). The interviewed people, with the exception of one (who does not relate to a particular faith), are Catholics by birth and by choice. In part, this was reflected in the statements made about religious practices, the rationale behind them, the emotions contained in their words, and the articulation of the level of commitment to observe and respect such traditions. The following statements do not necessarily reflect an order of relevance.

- Christmas (typical food included such as tamales, beans, guacamole; piñatas with candy such as colaciones<sup>2</sup> and sugar cane), going to Mass on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, praying with the family, giving/receiving gifts that night [Nochebuena]<sup>3</sup>
- Posadas. This is an eight day celebration around Christmas time when people re-enact Mary's and Joseph's pilgrimage looking for shelter. There are chants that accompany the reenacted pilgrimage. Some participants described how they get together in their neighborhoods to break a piñata and spend some time together.
- Easter (the celebration of Easter includes the preparation of typical food such as Nopalitos (cactus leaves); Romeritos (seafood patties); and Capirotada<sup>4</sup>; going to Mass on Good Friday and following the rest of the Catholic principles (i.e., taking ash on Ash Wednesday; fasting).
- Day of the dead. Only 2 of the participants said they go to the graveyard to pay respect to their loved ones by bringing flowers, fruit, candles, cleaning the tombstone, and praying. They do this with their family as a form of respect and honoring their loved ones. For the rest of the interviewees, this is only a day when they might go to the graveyard and clean the tombstone but apparently, there is no meaning attached to this action.
- New Year's Eve. This seems to be one more reason to celebrate being alive and share the joy with friends. None of the participants made remarks about special symbolisms related to this day.
- Prayers to the Virgins: To the Virgin of Guadalupe (The "Mother of all Mexican people"); pilgrimages to her Basilica on December 12<sup>th</sup> where there is a

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<sup>2</sup> Hard round colored candy with pointy ends with which piñatas are filled often times.

<sup>3</sup> Name given to the Night when Jesus Christ was born. Also the name for the Poinsettia flower.

<sup>4</sup> Sweet desert made of mixed bread, raisins, almonds, and other ingredients.

Mass and festivities; watching the “Matachines”<sup>5</sup> dance outside the Basilica; devotion to the Virgin Mary (praying the Rosary with the family). Only Marina, Natalia, and Gloria said they pray the Rosary with their families.

- Prayers to the Saints. Although people did not mention this as daily practice, they did say that praying to different saints was part of life under specific needs. For example, Gloria said that she sometimes finds herself praying for her son to do well in an exam or asking for help to get the job she is looking for.
- January sixth is special for some participants; it’s believed to be (in the Catholic tradition), the day when the Three Wise Men brought gifts to little Jesus. There is a special oval-shaped bread (Rosca de Reyes), which is shared with family and friends even at the workplace. For Gloria and Natalia, this is a more important date for exchanging gifts than December 24.
- “Santoral”. This refers to being greeted in a special way when the calendar shows the day of “your saint”. Sometimes, when people are born, they are named after the day of the saint in the Catholic calendar. At other times, people celebrate not only their birthday but also, the day of their “saint” which occurs on a different date (i.e., February 25<sup>th</sup> is my birthday and the day of the Virgin Del Carmen is July 16<sup>th</sup>).
- Attending Mass: on Sunday as a family or individually (when one is an adult); having a Mass said on one’s name celebrating one more birthday (as a way to be thankful for one more year); for the death (on the day they died or to remember their birthday anniversary).

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<sup>5</sup> Originally, a group of Indigenous dancers who were “allowed” by the Spaniards to perform outside the churches as a means to persuade them to join the Church.

- **Religious Sacraments:**

**Baptism.** This particular celebration is surrounded by many symbolisms since it relates to a new Catholic individual being born. After Mass is said, the guests usually receive the “bolo”, which is a symbolic amount of money given in a little pouch or sac or in a fancy container. This “bolo” is distributed by the godparents of the child and it symbolizes their commitment to take care of this person, look after him/her, and make sure that (s)he will be guided spiritually if the parents are not able to provide such guidance.

**First communion.** Again, godparents are chosen to take care and guide the person through the “good religious path”. In a similar way, all the sacraments share this peculiarity –to have godparents who become “compadres”. The word is a compound from the words *con* (with) and *padre* (father/parent). The Compadre becomes a second parent and it is usually close relatives who are chosen to perform such roles and duties since it is presumed that relatives will not be likely to deceive the family.

**Confirmation (in the faith) and marriage:** are also celebrations full of symbolisms and meaning, not only in religious forms, but also personal and sentimental. Similar principles apply regarding “compadrazgo” (the way of becoming Compadre) and being considered a “new member” of the family.

- **Making the Sign of the Cross.** This is a religious sign that may occur as a conscious effort or as something that is so engrained in people that they are not aware of it anymore. Without being directly asked about this, the interviewed people said they

make the sign of the Cross in the morning before getting out of bed, when they hear ambulances, and before going to sleep. One more way in which they revealed that God was present in their daily life was when they acknowledged that they say phrases like “God bless you”, or “In the name of God”; “God willing...”; and “Thank God...”.

### **Other**

The participants expressed interest and emotion when they described the traditions and other celebrations they follow. Without necessarily being aware of making a separation, all the participants mentioned (in similar ways), the following as relevant dates in their life:

- Birthdays. This is a very important part of Mexican ways since it is a celebration of life. Young and old are greeted in a special way; children have piñata parties, and there is usually a gathering to celebrate one more year in someone’s life.
- Mother’s /Father’s day. All coincided in that these two were very important dates within the family celebrations. Only Marina declared that in her house, father’s day was more relevant than mother’s day (this has to do more with her personal experience of not having a close relationship with her mother). For the other individuals, mother’s day celebration is a means to embody the devotion and love felt for the “pillar of the home”, including grandmothers. It is important to mention that Gloria and Diana have Argentine influences in their families: Diana is married to an Argentine man and Gloria’s father is originally from Argentina. It was interesting to hear that for both, the male involvement in the family had to do more with the way they have helped raise their own family in terms of gender roles, which are not differentiated. However, they both recognized they possess little knowledge of

Argentine traditions and customs. For both of them, female Mexican ways of life along with beliefs, and traditions “won” over the Argentine practices. About this phenomenon, my father uses the interesting idea of foreign cultures as being “absorbed” by Mexican ways of life and customs. In some ways, this has been Gloria’s and Diana’s experience. Even Carla, whose father and mother are of Arab and Italian descent respectively, describes the reduced knowledge she has about such cultures. Since her grandparents on her father’s side had to change their name when they emigrated to Mexico, she says that part of their identity was lost.

- Although identified as a North American practice related to Christmas festivities, the idea of having Santa Claus bring gifts to children has become part of the Christmas celebrations amongst people from Northeast Mexico.

- Similar is Halloween; children dress in costumes and go “trick-or-treating”. This has no religious sentiment attached but rather, it is seen as an opportunity to collect candies and dress up.

- Certain nostalgia was felt in people’s words as they reminisce about their childhood days in which they played with what they called “traditional Mexican games”. They all expressed a certain longing for what they described as “the lost Mexican traditions” due to the influence of the United States in northern Mexico. Additional to the games like “rondas” (children’s songs), lottery, and toys such as the “trompo” (top), “valero<sup>6</sup>”, and the “pirinola” (small spinning top), they coincided in that children these days do not play with those toys or know little about traditional children’s songs.

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<sup>6</sup> Wooden toy with an oval-shaped top with a stick joined by a thread. The player must insert the stick into the oval shape.

- Some other “lost traditions” included ways to court a woman and the loss to address older people with respect, additional to the loss of passing on legends, myths, and stories about Mexican history and times. Although some of those “survive”, they were considered as good practices or traditions passed on from grandparents or through school. They are thought of as invaluable treasures.

- Mourning -Although not everyone talked about the way in which they dealt with mourning, people who articulated their ideas related to it in very similar ways. The elements that form part of this ritual were silence (that was maintained for at least a week with no music in the house nor television watching), dress in black (as a symbolism of sadness and loss), and thinking of it as a respectful time. However, there was a counterpart to these feelings of sadness; people described it as a paradox: the fact that Mexicans can also laugh at the death and make fun of the time when “it will come and get me”. (Author’s note: In Mexican history, this is a phenomenon that has Pre-Columbian roots. Indigenous people viewed death as a good thing; a time when their own would be reunited with the gods. It was a spiritual relationship. People offered sacrifices and celebrations for their dead. Until the Spaniards arrived in Mexico, the belief amongst Indigenous groups was that death was a natural part of life. However, during the colonization, the Spaniards, in their attempt to Christianize and convert people into Catholicism, persuaded and convinced the Indians to see death as something to be feared since we would all be judged and castigated after life. Indigenous people learned about the purgatory, the wandering souls, and punishment. Mexicans laugh at death because it is easier to do that than to accept the fear that comes with ceasing to exist).

- The nature of Mexican families is described as close where people live with their parents until they get married even if they are adults (it is not unusual to see people living with their parents even after marriage). Parents provide support to their children in many different ways: economic, spiritual, professional, and so forth.
- Migration, even within Mexico, was not an option at least for three participants who stated that people stay close to the rest of the family as a form of respect and a sense of duty and thus, do not move easily to a different place. Apparently, this idea was closely related to the social conventionalism (which was described almost as a responsibility) for the woman to have a son and name him after the father.
- Regional food was among what they described as being traditional since this is an important element that characterizes people in the different regions in Mexico. People felt proud of the gastronomical experiences and diversity in their home state. Meat, tortillas, beans, bread, rice, and candy were the fundamental components of the diet.
- In the life of these Mexican people, sports and other arts are also considered traditions or customary practices; sports such as playing soccer and baseball topped the list; hunting, bullfights, cockfights, and rodeos were also included.
- One last practice was wearing a school uniform. People described this as a norm related to school but a form of ritual, none-the-less.

### **Affiliations: Social Relationships**

The Latin word *filialis* meaning "of a son or daughter," relates or appropriates to a child's relationship with, or feelings toward, his or her parents (Encarta Dictionary, 2001). When the participants talked about socialization, they immediately referred to

their nuclear family as the main source of relationships. If siblings are close in age, there seems to be a strong bond that brings them together; not only because of their ages but also because of shared interests. Within their immediate family (parents and other married siblings), people either have lunch or dinner together once a week or twice a month and some even include their extended family (cousins, aunts, uncles, and even 'compadres'). For most of them, the relationship with members of the extended family was described as one of trust and companionship, even to the point where people seemed to prefer socializing with their family more than they do with friends. Only Diana said as a group they do not have extended family living in the same area of the country so they are not in touch with other family members. Apparently, the feelings for and about family members related first and foremost to relationship with parents. Even when these participants were young adults, parents and their opinions or parental influence was mentioned at different times in the interviews; furthermore, these comments were acknowledged and relevant to other aspects of the conversations.

### **The spaces between us**

**Parents and siblings** - One of the most significant elements in terms of relationships was that of loyalty to parents; a "loyalty to the blood". There is a perceived need to fulfill parental expectations to some degree. Many people are strict and demand a lot from others; the father demands a lot from the sons (more than they demand from their daughters). In the words of Roberto "*We try not to let them (the family) down. One cannot....*" He continues, "*you don't let your parents down, you try to please them and fulfill their expectations*". He articulates more on this idea when he describes: "*My grandfather said to me: 'I want someone to come and tell me*

*that you are the best engineer or the best teacher. I want to be proud of you". He concludes "This gives great satisfaction to the Mexican family". Roberto said that Mexican families adopt the extended family as their own including friends. "There is nobility in doing this. As a consequence, you accept others as they are, you feel free to help and ask for help, to give advice and to offer yourself to others". Natalia says that "...parents and siblings are perceived as advisors, friends, comfort, safety nets...there is a dependence that can be overwhelming; yet, it is preferred to loneliness and solitude". Gloria shares this idea and adds that "...even if it is complicated [the relationship with her family] it is preferred to loneliness". She continues, "There is "necessary" dependency and people live with their parents in the same house until they get married (regardless of their age). Family members support each other and there is understanding and the sharing of points of view and opinions". Most participants declared that they feel more trustful with their own family than they do with close friends. For Natalia, however, the relationships with friends are more intimate than with her siblings because she spends more time with her friends. Besides, her siblings are younger and so she does not feel the same closeness that she does with her friends. Through technology (i.e., ICQ on the Internet) she claims to be surprised about sharing things with people through this means of communication. "It is the strangest thing that has ever happened to me because I like physical contact, face-to-face communication and to touch people but it is amazing the things one tells others on the Internet that you would normally not share on a face-to-face conversation". She goes on to say, "I like solitude (controlled); I like to know that if I open my bedroom door, people are out there. I would not like to live by myself. Yet, I*

*am independent. My mom and I are not very close. There are things I do not share with my family. I am not very communicative". Despite this apparent detachment from her family, she adds, "I feel a deep and special appreciation for my family. We gather every Saturday with my grandparents and uncles for supper. My siblings and I know that we cannot have any other commitment. But I like this; these things are important to me". She concludes "My grandparents spoke Otomi (Indigenous language) and I learned it; I value this and consider it a very important part of myself".*

For Marina, family ties represent pressure (i.e., to get married and have children: fulfillment of expectations). *"My family is stable and we have overcome the difficulties in the communication between father-daughter and father-son. We respect relationships with others, there is trust, little collaboration but impulse to succeed, and there is an objective vision for the future. I am independent from my family (it is healthier, better) because of the way my family is, it is better to be independent. I am very demanding with myself and others", (sharing Roberto's view). She adds, "At work, I like to instill in people a sense of responsibility and growth. I like to establish my own limits".*

**Friends** – About his relationships, Roberto says, *"Friends become part of your own family; when they come for advice you give it with the heart! True friendships are based on trust, loyalty, support, unconditional love even from afar; honesty, and a sense of humor. Friendships allow you to search and pursue personal development not because others will give something back to you or because you want something in return but because it makes you feel good". Alicia declares that for her, "Socializing provides a certain freedom to look for your personal development that is*

*reflected on something different (e.g. sacrificing something for your children to see them succeed". In terms of intimate and close friends, all of them coincided in having many acquaintances but only a few (two or three) really good friends with whom they can share, talk, and "weep" with. The interesting thing about these friendships is that they have existed for more than 30 years as in Carla's case and it is similar for most of the participants. They all coincided in that their long lasting friendships are those that were formed in the childhood years before adolescence. "We are there for others to support and understand points of view and help friends. We see them as part of a family. It is possible to explain to your friends how you feel and what you are going through".*

**Partners** - Four of the participants are not married and at the time did not have a partner so they did not really express their ideas about this type of relationship except for Marina who did mention the importance of being respectful and loyal to the partner and consider him someone to talk to, share with, and develop one self. The rest of the participants seemed to agree that people stay together (in marriage) because they share; both families open themselves to the couple because nobility is rooted in Mexicans. Partners are also an important component of social life; those participants who have children, stated that spending time alone with their partner (at least once a week) is fundamental to the relationship. Those who have children agreed that being close to their children and partners is fundamental for the family life. They stated that they try to go out (movies, dinner) and meet with friends once or twice a week.

**Job acquaintances** – According to all of the participants, some relationships are job-related; they have to do more with socializing than with real friendship. In job

related aspects however, Alfredo, for example, said that people do not easily accept others who are not part of their own social milieu. The participants declared a need to have such relationships in order to maintain a “fresh” outlook on their jobs and because it is important to learn how to live and work with others. As mothers, those who take care of their children’s affairs at school and extra curricular activities said that socializing for these purposes was important specially if the children are going to spend some time in those activities. However, Carla, Gloria, Alicia, and Teresa agreed that these relationships are superficial and not very meaningful.

### **To exist and to do: Activity**

#### **Spontaneity**

As a quality, spontaneity was highly valued amongst the participants. An interesting observation from the researchers’ perspective was that their responses were very similar and almost uniform in that people seemingly had the need to establish a difference between *being* spontaneous and *doing* spontaneous things. The researcher did not establish this difference nor was the response sought after. However, this difference was established and required in relationship to the following question about the priority given to *Being* or *Doing* (in their personal existence as a whole). Being able to make such a differentiation, somehow facilitated the analysis of these two aspects of the data for it provided better grounds for its exploration and clarification; therefore, I utilized both notions being able to separate them according to the responses obtained.

### **Being spontaneous**

- Teresa describes this notion by saying: *“Being spontaneous characterizes your personality and defines who you are; it is your mind’s frame; the way in which you will do things. Being spontaneous means being “fresh”, not being programmed; it means you are not a boring/bored person. It is a very nice quality in people; it means to be sincere. One should be spontaneous and do spontaneous things. Children are spontaneous (they don’t think much about things or consequences).*

- Roberto shares this idea: *“Spontaneity describes your feelings (i.e., sincerity and genuineness), and your actions with yourself and others. It means one is sensitive to others. It is noticeable; it is a way to live. You can be spontaneous with yourself; you need nobody around. When you are spontaneous you surprise others; (it is like an inside-out form of feeling/action).*

- In the words of Marina: *“...there must be spontaneity to go out of the routine or to distract yourself. To be fresh, to enjoy what happens to you and those around you. “Spontaneity allows freedom to do and think; it means to be happy. It is not being conformist but being original. It means getting involved.*

### **Acting spontaneously**

- Alfredo feels that: *“Sometimes one must follow rules (social, job related, norms, etc); these are some times when one must plan, but spontaneity gives you a different vision about the things you do. You can surprise yourself often times in terms of what you can accomplish (i.e., capabilities, potential, abilities). It requires stepping out of your own comfort zone (which not many people do).*

- Alicia said: *"It is nice when you act spontaneously because it is enjoyable to look at other people's reactions"*.

**Non-spontaneity** -Some participants were not particularly enthusiastic about spontaneity. They said that they did not like to be spontaneous, but rather "live 'by the list', planning and having routines" They desire as much predictability as possible.

- Carla, for example, says, *"When I plan I am rigorous and I like to follow the plan. I am compulsive in some ways"*.
- Gloria thinks that: *"Spontaneity might be necessary to go out of routines but I like my things planned. I like lists and plans at work and at home. I do the same everyday I the same way, at the same times..."*
- Natalia shares a similar view, *"I like to plan things ahead of time and have control over situations and things I have to do. I eat the same breakfast everyday, get up at the same time everyday, my job varies (but that is fine with me), I like to watch the same TV programs and to know that at the end of my day, I will be doing these very same things day after day. I am a routinary person and some kind of loner"*.

### **Being and doing: Reflections from the participants**

- Being is reflected in your doing.
- Being is more important than doing; the former defines the latter. Being represents who and what you are: good and bad (interestingly enough, this person was the only one to declare that there are times when one cannot control the 'being').

- Being is 'hard work'; it means/requires to be honest, loving, happy, and to have personal fulfillment. It is important for me to: First be...then do.
- Being is formed by the qualities of a person. It is the set of personal characteristics that give a personality to human beings giving them an identity, which makes them different from others in their feelings, emotions, thoughts, and spirituality. It is a complex unit of elements.
- Being is a 'collection' of subconscious and abstract thoughts that influence the 'doing' which then become possibilities for change that in turn affect the being.
- It is the integrity of thought: it is an abstract, bi-directional relationship (to be-to do). They are interrelated, not isolated (Alfredo makes circular motions with his hands). As an individual, one has the power to change them and modify decisions and choices.
- One should not get lost between what one is and what one does. Being requires organizing your time and activities; being and doing have the same value (Diana and Marina agree).
- Doing is to perform something; it is what you carry on as a reflection of who and what you are. It is a function of one's being. Something that is in my hands, which I can change and be in control of. When you do, as you want to and what you want, you either create frustrations or enhance your spirit.

### **Life success**

### **Variations**

Teresa, Diana, and Alicia think that achieving personal success or personal development is important so that children learn its value. They agreed that, in the

past, they defined personal success by means of their professional achievements; they now coincide in thinking that:

- *“Because I’m a mother now, personal success means having well- educated children, a family in order, being a good wife, and succeeding in all the areas of my life. I don't feel unsuccessful in my job because I think that my personal development comes first for me. Had I not married, I'd be a very frustrated person. Life is a constant struggle when you have children” (Alicia).*
- *“One must be happy with what one does. Feeling good with myself to transmit my positivity to others. Success is an internal feeling. For me, it is important being able to achieve my goals. My desire in the future, in terms of success, is to have a good family and good children; to guide them well” (Teresa).*
  - *“Some years ago, having an important job or traveling were my priorities...doing this was my definition for success. Now, it is being useful, realizing that I study because I want something more. I want both personal and professional success for my children for I believe they will follow on the family steps being able to see the value that personal development has” (Diana).*
  - *“Achieving more at work helps me feel a successful person. If you don't pursue and fulfill your dreams you are wasting your life. You only inhabit the planet without purpose, or productivity. If you don't succeed, you never mature” (Gloria).*
  - *“I have a nice marriage, I love my children, I feel successful through them, because of them, by them, for them. I do not have any professional achievements now so they are my success” (Carla).*

- *“Success is being able to do what you want to do. With professional success comes money, which is an important incentive. Receiving an economic reward (having a job) encourages more development, knowledge, experience, and development of capabilities. Success also means to be a good father, provider of education and a better socio-cultural and socio-economic status for my family within our society through time” (Alfredo).*
- *“Success must first occur at the personal levels in order to lead to professional development and growth in other areas of one's lief. Having a good job, good health, a good family is success for me” (Natalia).*
- *“I like my job and I think I am successful at it. My students like me as a teacher and I think I am a good daughter and a hard working individual” (Marina).*

### **Conclusion**

The ground was fertile; suitable were the seeds, and precise the season. It is now time for reaping what was planted. This metaphor could be used in trying to understand how the various ways in which people define themselves, relate to their roots, their cultural affiliations, their past and the early experiences, and the mode in which they explore those experiences and make meaning of them. The responses to the interview questions, illustrated in this chapter, presented a variety of thoughts in relationship with the five proposed existential dimensions. These thoughts were assembled in ways that will depict their wealth and strength hopefully leading to the revelation of what Mexican worldview is and what it means to be Mexican.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Discussion**

I believe that the fundamental nature of my cultural rootedness in Mexico is the bond that I have forged in my experience with the land. Thanks to my ancestors, I have been blessed with skin the color of the 'sacred Mother Earth'.

Whether geographical, historical, or cultural, the existing diversities in Mexico have allowed for the creation of worldviews and perspectives amongst individuals who are as diverse as the assortment of folklore, music, food, and history, which characterize the country. Therefore, it would be a challenging chore to attempt to define and much less, describe a worldview that could be generalizable to every Mexican anywhere in Mexico. This qualitative study has delved into the lives of nine young, middle-class, educated individuals in an attempt to depict some of the idiosyncrasies, beliefs, values, attitudes, and affective perceptions they share as Mexicans, which constitute the sources of variation of worldviews giving shape to what Schwartz (1992) calls a person's "stream of experience". The focus of discussion in this chapter is centered around the summary of the analysis based on the individual profile of the participants, their unique and shared experiences and the five existential perspectives or dimensions. Additionally, the limitations of the study, implications for multicultural education, possibilities for future research, and personal discoveries are presented.

### **Making meaning of the findings**

#### **Worldview**

A worldview can only be defined in relationship to the ways in which individuals experience, understand, and act with/in the world as the result of fusing an array of cultural variables that are relevant to a specific time and place. This has become evident

in this research study given the participants' *positionality*: context, socio-economic status, gender, educational level, age, and marital status. The expressed feelings, thoughts, reflections, and personal awareness, mirror the way people see themselves in a specific reality that has been constructed through shared experiences and unique individual journeys. Despite this individuality, there are similarities in the way they define themselves and the way they feel about being Mexican. People's ways of being in the world stem from individual understandings but are "touched" and modified by those around them. As a result, worldviews and experiences transform and renovate, hopefully leading towards better knowledge and existence.

### **Human Nature**

With regards to the way in which the participants see the essence of Mexican people, the subjective/spiritual resonated in their account of experiences and general perception. First and foremost, they agreed that Mexicans are good hearted and good spirited people who know how to solve problems in creative and ingenious ways. They all expressed great pride and honour in being Mexican and described people as lively, happy, good, honest, trustworthy, open, and accepting of others. People are dependent, frank, outgoing, and earnest. They are brave, courageous, trusting, and influenced by other people's expectations of them (particularly, by the immediate family). This is the foundation of familial loyalty, which makes it difficult to disappoint family members. This principle is apparently related to several values generated within the family circle where such expectations instill in people a sense of duty towards them thus helping create self-expectations and demands that often times extend towards other areas of

their life. The sense and understanding of what respect means moves beyond the family and it includes the elderly, teachers at school, and authority figures, among others.

Mexican people were also described as sociable, sincere, affective, friendly, mediators who try to avoid conflict; generous by nature, and available (always looking for ways to connect), people who know how to make and maintain friendships that might last forever. Mexican people are believers and have certain affiliations with the Catholic religion so they are compassionate and helping when something happens to others. There is a sense of unity; people come together for others. Nevertheless, the participants also described how, in some ways, the sense of collectivity or community can sometimes hinder personal development. They mentioned that there is little sense of cooperation or help when one individually succeeds and this is mostly seen at the work place. As northern Mexicans, people perceive themselves as part of a hard working society working up to 12 hours a day seven days a week, always striving for constant excellence. Straightforwardness, punctuality, and seriousness about business are highly valued. Unlike many other places in the country, in northern Mexico, people do not take naps; this is related to the history of the place, the geographic location and a particular hydrography: there are deserts and mountains so people have developed a greater sense of productivity and hard work because the land is harsh.

### **Relationship to Nature**

Whether it is a conscious and learned process or one that arose by way of being in the world, the connection to nature exists in different ways for the participants. There is a sense of existing within nature in a harmonious way even if this is an acquired behaviour. While most people expressed that they have become more

perceptive about the ways in which they relate to the natural world, they feel this connection is not about mastery or domination but on the contrary, a relationship that is nurtured by exchanges. Based on the responses given to this particular question, it seems that there is a strong correlation between having spent time in nature with grandparents and parents in the childhood years to have developed a “natural awareness” about nature. These participants have a sense of respect and reverence for nature. Feelings of vulnerability have always been present and the emotions associated to nature’s power, make them “feel vulnerable and sometimes, insignificant”. The depictions of a childhood spent among trees, wetlands, rivers, and orchards offered a pleasant respite during the interview. I was able to share my own childhood experiences in the summer at my grandparents’ house in Coahuila. The most revealing component in this part of the analysis has been the discovery of place association. This is, out of the nine participants, only the three from Nuevo Leon shared less profound experiences of being around nature and having a deep connection with the natural environments compared to the respondents from Coahuila and Tamaulipas. Although it was not stated this way, this might be related to the type of landscapes, activities, and environment, which are similar between Coahuila and Tamaulipas but differ from those in Nuevo León.

Although for most participants the “epiphany” of having a connection with nature came as the result of conscious efforts from high school teachers, they recognized that by developing such awareness they have been able to appreciate and value nature more. However, it seems that the innate awareness in the children (for those who have them), plays an important role in the preservation of their own consciousness as adults. It is

because of children that their parents keep the connection alive and want to convey a message of respect, admiration, and reverence towards nature and the environment. For all the participants, taking care of nature does not only mean keeping streets clean and maintaining the landscapes; moreover, it entails understanding, appreciation, and valuing its supremacy.

### **Time**

There were three main questions for this existential dimension, which intertwined past, present, and future. Although this was not stated as such in the interviews, I knew that the questions would lend themselves to such projections. Time is not linear for people in northeast Mexico; time is present, future, and past mirrored in the faces of the old... and the young. In the words of Henestrosa (1995), "Childhood is a state of grace, a presence that never abandons humankind; a fundamental time in which Mexico is defined" (p. 33). Perhaps, it is the result of lively and youthful faces that roam the streets of Mexico; or it might be the perceived notion that Mexican people live in the "here and now". However, according to people's responses, time is not fixed; it "moves". Time was thought of as a dynamic component of life that has the potential to contribute to people's growth (i.e., time "heals"), hesitations (i.e., time "limits"), and personal meanings (i.e., time is subjective).

For the near future, people have self-projections: For most of them, except for Carla, who found this to be an unexpected challenge and could not answer, describing themselves ten years from now apparently was not a difficult task. Their answers reflected easiness and confidence. It was interesting to notice differences among the participants based on their gender, marital status, and personal development. Five of the

seven female interviewees are married, have children, and they defined themselves in relationship to their children. Since one participant did not answer this question, the initial discussion will focus around the other four married women.

During the interviews it was easy to see that for these married women, the core aspiration for the near future is being able to raise good children (which would, in turn, imply they would be good mothers), be good wives, and have a good family. For women who are single, including Gloria who is a divorced mother, aspirations were similar in that their main goal for the near future was to get married and raise a good family with strong values. It was obvious that they all want to have children at some point in their life, even Roberto who is single says that in ten years he wants to have his own family and be able to transmit to his children the values he has learned from his grandparents and parents. This was similar for Alfredo who is married and has two children. His first response was directed towards being a good and loving father but without forgetting that as the “main provider” for the family, working hard, earning a good salary, and professional advancement are also part of this aspiration.

Mexican traditions that are followed by the participants varied accordingly to the degree of: a) closeness to or detachment from the nuclear family; b) embedded personal meaning; and c) religious affiliation.

Out of the nine participants, seven share close ties with their nuclear families. In the case of those who are married, their immediate family is also considered part of the nucleus where, the stronger the ties, the greater the commitment to follow rituals and traditions even if these lack personal meaning. Rituals, like going to the graveyard on the day of the dead or dressing in black to mourn somebody, did not seem to have much

meaning and people declared that their ways for doing this were much different than those of their parents. If relationships with them were not close or if there were significant differences amongst parents and offsprings, traditions were not well kept nor followed.

Apparently, the degree to which traditions and rituals are followed by the participants, reveals to some extent whether their relationship with their parents is a close or a distant one. The fact that only Natalia celebrates the day of the dead with her family because this has personal and spiritual meaning somehow reveals that perceptions are changing. Although the rest of the participants mentioned this day as an important one being Mexican, they did not reflect on any meaning that the ritual could have for them. The women who are married and have children would not like to inculcate this to them since they said that these practices are deprived of any personal meaning. Although most of the participants attend Mass and follow all the religious precepts and demands from the Catholic Church, their beliefs are more related towards developing to be good people and raise a good family than to follow religious guidelines (i.e., pray together, go to mass every Sunday). If familial and religious “duties” come together even when they might lack meaning, the sense of responsibility goes first and will win over personal ideologies about a certain practice.

It seems as though the historical celebrations in the Mexican calendar are left to the school. It is at school that the children learn about Mexico’s history and where battles and relevant events are re-enacted. Interestingly, it was the two male participants who said they liked to read about the history of Mexico and feel patriotic. Only Roberto, however, participates in parades and marches. The women, although similarly interested

in the history of Mexico, did not express the same level of patriotism. Only Natalia said she likes to go to the parades and participate in these historical celebrations. Despite the different feelings and view that people have about following or not following some of these rituals, it was interesting to hear them dwell on their ideas of what they saw as "the lost Mexican traditions". They all agreed that children do not play the same games they played when they were young; that children these days do not know how to use some of the typical Mexican wooden toys much less know how to make toys out of tin or wood. It seemed that, in their own hearts and minds, this loss was meaningful and difficult to understand. In contrast, when they thought about their own changes and development, it was easy for me to understand and for them to explain why they do not follow their parents' rituals or traditions anymore or why some of these celebrations have no relevance or meaning in their life. Variations in the notion of tradition are related to the type of relationship that individuals have with traditions and their values, and the degree of interaction and participation in such traditions, which in light of new conflicting experiences might be minimized or dismissed. This is the point in life when some traditions fade and new experiences become more vivid in respect to their impact on a worldview. Therefore, while notions of tradition are constantly retrieved, corrected, modified, revitalized, and/or renewed, throughout life their traces will remain because, as humans, we continuously strive for a sense of belonging which the sharing of traditions provides. It is within this sharing of what is "familiar" and "known" that one embarks in the endeavor of constructing a view of the world.

### **Activity**

Although the participants expressed pride in saying that Northeastern Mexicans are hardworking people who value time and are concerned with the future, when they were asked to define their understanding of *being* and *doing* and then declare if any of those notions had more importance over the other, they all declared that *being* was by all means more important than doing (even if doing is a big part people's of existence since it is important to be productive). Taking care of the family, being responsible, and looking after its members came before any other understanding of success. People are concerned with the idea of *being* good parents, friends, partners, and workers. However, in Northern Mexico people are also occupied with the idea of productivity. Proximity to the United States forces people to strive for excellence, advancement, and competitiveness. Being dynamic and responsible as well as responsive are major components of professional life for Northern Mexicans. Thus, their definitions of success varied; men defined themselves in relationship to their professional advancement and their ability to maintain a family (for example, Alfredo who has a wife and children). Whether they are working mothers or stay at home mothers, women defined success in terms of their children: if, as women, they were able to raise and maintain a close family with strong moral values. Definitions for single women were different at this point in their life since they define success in relationship to their professional advancement and academic development.

### **Social Relationships**

The word that might best define the kind of relationship that people in the Noreste have with others is "amigable". The participants described their relationships

with friends, family, and with others in various ways from strong and trustful to simply job-related and distant. Relationships with family members were, in most cases, described as warm and dependable, paramount to their personal and emotional development, and one where members are supportive of one another, understanding, appreciative, sharing, loyal, and proud of each other. People tend to work in groups and turn to the family for support and advice. Family serves as a refuge and haven; it is the foundation for learning about the world and about others. It is the repository of people's victories and happiness as it is of frustrations and failures. Family members help in the development of each other by nurturing, sharing, supporting, and helping each other. In Mexico, physical contact is important for such development: hand shakes, kisses, hugs, shoulder tapping, and other forms for showing affection are considered healthy and they enhance family relationships. This closeness was reflected in the allusion about the frequent family gatherings; people come together to celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Mother's and Father's day, baptisms, weddings, and the like. However, being dependent on parents, for example, was described both as a good and not so good characteristic of Mexican families for three female participants who expressed their uneasiness about the pressure that their families exert on them in terms of personal issues. The three of them said their relationships with friends and people outside their immediate families were better and more intimate.

In many ways, friends are seen as members of the family. True friendships are based on trust, loyalty, support, unconditional love (even from afar), honesty and a sense of humor that tend to play a very important role in social relationships for the participants. All of them expressed the view that although they like to socialize and

establish connections, apparently the relationships established before adolescence are the ones that have endured. The nine interviewees mentioned that few are the real, close, trustworthy friends with whom they can share their successes, breakdowns, and disappointments. All of them have maintained relationships with friends for at least 15 years and given that they all continue to live in the same place, relationships have grown stronger. But even at a distance, if relationships with friends have been founded on the above qualities, they transcend space and time. Partners were considered as friends and an important component of social life; those participants who have children, stated that spending time alone with their partner (at least once a week) is fundamental to maintain the relationship.

To reflect the overall conception of what is Mexican worldview as described by the participants, I have crafted a poem<sup>7</sup> that attempts to reiterate such conditions, hoping that the reader will acknowledge that a culture's worldview can be understood and appreciated through its texts.

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<sup>7</sup> Author's note: Words have not been altered in any way for the creation of the poem; they have only been arranged in a literary way. The reader may revisit the original data to attest to this statement.

## **Raíces**

**Of languages and dialects  
features, characteristics, and cultural beliefs  
Indigenous ancestors  
of skin color –variations- music, traditions, customs  
in every region unique**

**To know where I come from and how cultures developed  
taking things from the past, looking forward to the future  
adapt to change; change what I can  
(if)  
it is in my hands**

**Constant desire to overcome  
-struggles  
    To be productive, strive for success  
    Appreciate the history, the place  
where I was born (on “this side of the River”)  
        and not in any other space; not wanting to be anything else  
Believe in Mexico, be patriotic, respect others, the elderly, friends,  
the environment...myself**

**Be part of  
    a culture that shares similar symbols, values, and background  
    through generations conveyed  
    an entity that unites and forms society: a family  
that shares and takes care, that is loyal and makes me feel  
    that I belong, I’m accepted, I’m valued...loved**

**I like thinking that God exists**

**January, 2002**

## **Implications for Multicultural education**

### **Multicultural education and worldview**

Multicultural education is often defined in oversimplified terms as teaching about cultural differences, historical and geographical information, or as the examination of art and artifacts from different countries adding every now and then, the experiencing of culinary diversity (Wurzel, 1988). Such view runs the risk of perpetuating exclusion and reinforcing cultural stereotypes; it refuses and reduces the likelihood of the appreciation of diversity. School curricula (and university curricula for that matter) reflect and perpetuate Euro-centric knowledges that prevent the exploration and the development of alternative worldviews. Given that the latter is a complex construct that, in and of itself, carries the essential components of who one is as an individual (i.e., beliefs, values, cultural practices, traditions, ancestries, and so forth), it is imperative that multicultural education provides the space for self-reflection and worldview exploration, development, construction, and re-construction. Understanding one's own cultural reality is an emotional and an intellectual experience, which involves self-discovery and cultural expansion. Ibrahim (1991) declares that without worldview as a mediating variable such knowledges can be misapplied, giving way to ethical violation and cultural oppression particularly within a multicultural setting.

Therefore, I agree with Mukherjee's (1981) statement that: "... multicultural education is a state of mind, and attitude, an ideology that permeates every discipline" (p.85). It is a philosophy of teaching and as such, it should reflect all aspects of teacher education. It should involve the development of reflection and cultural self-awareness; the willingness to learn about one's own reality, and the willingness to learn from and

about others with differing standpoints and understandings of the world. It should not be a course or an added discipline; it is not appending information on different groups and their practices but a serious commitment aiming towards the development of awareness and consciousness in order to bring about authentic transformation.

While traditionalist groups may see multicultural education as a threat, teachers should enable students to see and understand multiculturalism as a challenge to established epistemologies and as a means to reduce and eliminate oppression and inequity. Banks (1995) says that "...the lack of recognition and identification of biases, assumptions, perspectives, and points of view have frequently victimized [minorities]" (p. 134). Multicultural education is one that empowers and encourages students by acknowledging them through the validation of their opinions and background and recognizing them as fully human and worthy of sharing their worldview with the class and the teacher.

Therefore, through the exploration of the existential dimensions proposed in this study, educators are to encourage individuals to reach beyond their own cultural boundaries, explore, analyze, and reflect on their own cultural values and biases in an attempt to enable students to cross cultural boundaries freely.

**Defining the "Self"**- In dealing with people from a different culture (Mexicans), it is important to understand that the definition and view of who they are as people is circumscribed to the family; this entity constituting the most significant building block of their existence. As explained earlier in the Worldview Perspectives Paradigm (Table 1), in relational or high context cultures, the self is described as extended and interdependent. In Spanish, the use of the word *nosotros* (we), which is

employed in the language more frequently than *yo* (I), reflects such condition (when people described themselves). The family is certainly an important component of people's life; in most cases, family members are first and foremost, friends; they are the best advisers, the more trustworthy people, and the most dependable. Families are also the nuclei where expectations are established and where children learn not to disappoint their parents. What an individual becomes in the future is determined to some extent by the influence that the family has had in the person's life. Therefore, those involved in education or other helping professions are required to consider the family as part of the individual; not because the family needs to be involved in every aspect of the person's life but more importantly, because people define themselves in relationship to their extended family circle. Women in the study defined themselves at the present time in relationship to their children; in similar ways, other members of the family define themselves taking into consideration all other members.

Additional to the understandings of how Mexican people interact within their families, it is important to appreciate how they establish, develop, and maintain other kinds of relationships. One must not forget about the importance of "respeto" (respect), which stems from the family (respect for parents and siblings) and extends to others (e.g., elders, authority figures, strangers). Respeto has a deep connotation, which acknowledges and embraces the full humanness of others, their right to be who they are, and gives others the place they deserve. Therefore, when interactions occur, the way Mexicans address others will vary according to that person's status, stage, or level of familiarity. This does not mean that people want to create a distance but that instead, respeto acknowledges such position.

- **Communication-** People in Northern Mexico value and rely, to some extent, on friendships and relationships. The notion of *compadre* (*con*-with; *padre*-father) is much more than having a simple association with someone. It has become so much a part of Mexican relationships, that in many cases, *compadres* are as close as siblings or parents. They are considered family members, people who will be as dependable and trustworthy as any other member in an individual's immediate family. Following the worldview perspective paradigm, autonomy or social relationship is defined by the familial or group context (collective). Therefore, when cross-cultural encounters occur, it is basic to know that Mexican people will unconditionally be open and accepting of others. For people in Northern Mexico, the increasing economic, educational, and political exchanges with countries like the United States and Canada have prepared people for this task assisting them in the development of empathy and making them receptive to other points of view (albeit not always accepting of them).

When communicating with Mexican people, it is important to bear in mind that proxemics and chroemics are important components of the experience since they both are elements of non-verbal communication that convey essential messages that form part of personal interactions. The former, because it reflects the trust and comfort level with the use of interpersonal space such as physical proximity, use of adequate language (e.g., referring to others by their first name if they are older or if they have authority over the person), and formal and/or informal ways for greeting others (e.g., hand shake, kiss, hug). For example, the way in which the interviews were conducted (described in more detail elsewhere in this study), revealed that people felt particularly at ease when answering the questions because I too, am Mexican so there was a certain

familiarity and informality in our interactions. Participants addressed me by my first name and their body posture, for example, was relaxed. Since chronemics, or the pacing of speech and length of silences, often conveys more meaning than direct, literal responses, paying attention to people's glances, facial expressions, body language, and the degree of self-disclosure informed me about particular feelings and emotions associated to their responses. For example, the hand gestures that accompanied paced descriptions of bygone times (i.e., the lost traditions) or the freedom in the way they moved and talked were indicators of the participants' comfort level during the interviews.

Perhaps these non-verbal signs were more than just indicators of the participants' comfort level but they might also be part of people's perception and understanding. Albeit its intriguing nature, the exploration and the relevance of the non-verbal elements that resulted from those interactions is not discussed in this study.

- **Loyalties** – The ontological understanding of people in Northern Mexico is based on the importance of being, for they recognize that it is primordial to know one-self before attempting to “go out into the world” and accomplish anything. Intimately related to their perception of time is the notion of ‘becoming’ or looking towards the future and taking from the past whatever is useful for their personal development. As a result, their loyalties are not only to the present (family and friends) but also, to their ancestors (history and heritage). Michael Burke (1999) says that history is alive everywhere in Mexico and that it matters. By considering this simple statement, educators and others who work with Mexican people will be able

to understand that bringing the past into the present does not mean that people dwell and are fixed in the past they occupy but rather, that people deem time as the vehicle that carries the cultural wealth and brings it back full circle. People in the Noreste are used to working hard to achieve their goals. Therefore, they are not threatened nor discouraged when faced with challenges. Perseverance and firmness are important components of their "life repertoire" and they like to finish what they start; this is possible by having the awareness of what others (i.e., family) expect from them as well as establishing high expectations for themselves.

Additional to seeking understanding of themselves and their relationships with the natural and social environments, relating to a Higher Being is also part of an individual's worldview construction. Accompanying these qualities of a fundamental nature for Mexican people, is the spiritual component, which unites them to their ancestors' past. Religious beliefs have their foundation in the merging of Mexican indigenous creeds and Catholic canons of European origins. To understand this position, it is helpful to remember that individuals profess devotion for the Catholic faith echoed in the many celebrations of traditions and festivities associated with religious endeavours. Because people feel the need to be connected to a Higher Spirit, it is important that educators become knowledgeable of this relationship, acknowledge it, and understand the significance it has for a Mexican individual. Most people follow these celebrations by choice because they find meaning in those religious connections, whether it is attending Mass, offering prayers to the Virgin, or simply by enjoying the merriment that these celebrations bring.

### **Differing opinions**

In the analysis of the data, it was found that, even when the participants share opinions and outlooks on what being Mexican means to them, individual differences also served as important components to this research study in trying to understand the way in which they merge with the shared experiences in order to conform a person's "stream of experience" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 343) to form a worldview. Essentially, because specific views, like general ones, capture a broad range of human experience, can be applicable across cultures, and are relevant to multicultural education. The areas in which the participants had differing worldviews, are presented in a brief summary as a way of acknowledging, accepting, and respecting, such differences.

Perhaps the most relevant discovery for me as a researcher, was the fact that, while some of these young Mexican people are starting to see some traditions as practices that belong to past generations and not as part of their present and future life (i.e., to dress in black as a sign of mourning), others considered them as fundamental to their definition of being Mexican. Also, there were some perceived differences in terms of the role that nuclear family plays in the participants' life. For those who experience a close relationship with family members including extended family (such as grandparents), the goals in terms of personal development were influenced to some extent by the expectations that family members have of them. For others, because family relationships are difficult and there is a degree of detachment even within the nuclear family, personal goals are related to individual perceptions and expectations. Additionally, there were differences in terms of how people define themselves according to their marital status. For those who have children, the definition of their

worldview includes this aspect of their life which is being a parent. Thus, the existential dimensions embrace not only the children, but also, the partner. One final thought with regards to differing worldviews is the notion of religious attachment or affiliation. Apparently, although describing themselves as believers, the participants' position of the function of religion in their life, was interesting. For some, faith more than religious practices, was described as the force that moves the spiritual aspect of their being. For others, having an active role in the Catholic practices (i.e., praying the Rosary, attending Mass, baptism, and so forth), is an important component in their definition of being Mexican.

Keeping these differences in mind, might help others realize that, despite the potential generalizations of Mexicans portrayed in books, films, novels, and other means of communication, individual worldviews and outlooks ought to be respected and acknowledged in order to expand one's own view and open one's self to achieve a better understanding of a person's perspective and personal experiences.

#### **The framework and its use in multicultural education: An evaluation**

The Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) model of existential dimensions is based on the perception and orientation that individuals have of their world and it offers the possibility for exploring personal assumptions and understandings of one's worldview. Given that an individual's worldview is in direct relationship with their cognitive, emotional, and social perceptions and interactions with the world, the framework is a significant contribution to multicultural education, which is rooted in philosophical and sociological views of human nature and peoples' place in the universe. Since value orientations and worldview are a substantial part of what we perceive to be "the real

life", it is easy to overlook other people's perspectives particularly in cross-cultural encounters, which require the understanding of (or at least the ability to conceptualize) cultural variables in order to hinder prejudice. This framework then, becomes a standpoint from which the world may be seen and interpreted from a location determined by a particular time in history, a particular time in culture, and the orientation toward reality. While the framework is presented (see Table 1) as an apparent dichotomy (either/or) of the ways in which ones perceives the world, it is important to remember that these categories can co-exist within individuals, communities, and the world at large<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, the use of worldview as socio-cultural framework, which examines five existential dimensions and value orientations, might assist in eliminating: a) the risk of oppression due to cultural misconceptions and misunderstandings; b) concerns regarding the potential stereotyping that occurs when intergroup differences are generalized to all members of a particular group (Myers, Spreight, Cox, Highlen, & Reynolds, 1991); and c) the perpetuation of cultural myths when applying culture-specific information, knowledge, and skills while interacting with others. The recognition of multiple causes of influence (e.g., ethnicity, gender, social class, religion) on the development of worldview as well as the examination, assessment, and understanding of individual and group worldviews will greatly enhance inquiry in multicultural education not only as a means to have a more in-depth understanding about individual differences but also, as a crucial variable to facilitate these processes.

The framework of value orientations developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck in 1961, has been adapted and adopted across disciplines proving its strength as a

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<sup>7</sup> For further explanation, refer to pp. 26-27.

research approach that calls forth the need to examine, analyze, and ponder personal standpoints in relationship to an individuals' worldview. While other investigators (Ibrahim 1984; Rohner, 1984; Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990; Mikaylo, 1991; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1994; Kohls, 1994) have modified the original research scheme, the five initial existential dimensions or categories continue to be the foundation for the perspectives that have evolved throughout the years. It is with a similar focus that the worldview framework as conceptualized in this study is proposed: as a tool for personal reflection and awareness development an also as a means to re-pattern one's personal belief systems, assumptions, modes of problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution, and, as a result, lead to similar processes in our interactions with others.

However, the framework, as consistent and employed as it has been, does not escape scrutiny. In its original format, the questions posed only refer to the dichotomized nature of values as conceptualized by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). The outcomes revealed the preferences from people with regards to the existential dimensions but what was absent were the underlying principles or at least the clarification about such choices. The subjective nature of experience that enriches qualitative studies was not present. Therefore, the data from their study is raw and reflects only partial realities. The foundations and the variations of this framework offer a perspective that was developed 40 years ago and yet, has expanded and evolved into different schemes that are being employed to this date. The framework posed in this study attempted to expand people's awareness and gain a better understanding and knowledge about young Northeastern Mexicans through the examination of their worldview.

Knowledge, says Banks (1995) is socially constructed and it reflects human interests, values, and action; but one must be cautious when attempting to take knowledge as absolute. Joseph Bronowsky, physicist and survivor of Auschwitz reminds us that "...there is no absolute knowledge [and] those who claim it, whether they are scientists or dogmatists, open the door to tragedy. All information is imperfect. We have to treat it with humility. That is the human condition" (Bronowski, 1973; p. 175). Furthermore, Freire (1970) says that "...knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire as cited in Shore, 1987; p. 141). Wurzel (1988) complements these ideas by stating: "...the multicultural person questions the arbitrary nature of his or her own culture and accepts the proposition that others who are culturally different can enrich their experience (p.10).

Within the multicultural curriculum, the use of the worldview framework could help educators and students learn about themselves, expand their cultural visions, appreciate the relativity of their own reality and acknowledge the validity of other frames of reference and standpoints. Additionally, it is useful as a foundation to inquire about one's own assumptions, traditions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and the ways of knowing, behaving, and thinking across cultures therefore facilitating the understanding and acceptance of differing value orientations. It is the awareness and the examination of personal perceptions and understandings that allows for constant organization or re-patterning of one's worldview thus, leading to an openness in the interactions with one another.

Seltzer, Frazier, and Ricks (1995), in their review of multiculturalism, race, and the educational system, indicate that knowledge of differences in worldviews can enhance one's ability to effectively manipulate an environment inclusive of others from diverse cultures. Additionally, McKenzie (1996) says that "when united in a conversation in which understandings and worldviews are shared, we stand a better chance of reducing the limitations and narrowness of our existing worldviews" (p.123).

As a process, worldview involves subtle and obvious diversities in understanding of how one's own cultural practices might look from a different vantage point. As a result, multicultural teaching should promote the examination of worldview development, construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction by providing students opportunities to investigate and determine how their cultural values, beliefs, assumptions, perspectives, and frames of reference influence such development and transformation.

Freire (1970) suggested that in order to create learning communities and encourage participation, dialogue should exist. He calls these bonds "cultural circles" and defines them as "...a live and creative dialogue in which everyone knows some things and does not know others, in which all seek together to know more" (Freire, cited in Shore, 1987; p. 41). It is through dialogue that knowledge is constructed. Dialogue, say Mc Carthy and Ingram (1996), begins with students' own personal experiences where they are exposed to others' viewpoints, experiences and interpretations that might differ from their own. Teachers should be prepared to utilize such experiences on a daily basis in order to challenge students to move beyond their

own comfort zones and question what other cultural frameworks bring to their own understandings and experiences of the world.

In this day and age, where the world is full of organizations that promote all kinds of “rights”, I am reminded of my mother’s words about claiming what is mine in order to be whole. She says that with every right, there is a responsibility that comes hand-in-hand and that if I only claim my rights, I am only claiming one half of what belongs to me. In order to be a complete human being, I must also claim the responsibilities that come along with such rights. Therefore, I feel a responsibility towards myself, towards my partner, my parents, my family, my community, the world at large and to the Higher Being. A strong responsibility as a person, as a woman, as a Mexican, and as an educator; a responsibility to teach others and also, to learn from them; a responsibility to raise people’s awareness about multiculturalism and diversity.

Unfortunately, the principle of responsibility is seldom heard of in any of these organizations; whether it is the school setting, the workplace, or the community. Therefore, my belief as a teacher is that multicultural education should be a responsibility that educators and students have towards themselves, towards each other, and the world at large. Adler (1977) defines the multicultural person as: “...[one] who is intellectually and emotionally committed to the fundamental unity of all human beings while at the same time, recognizes, legitimizes, accepts and appreciates the fundamental differences that lie between people from different cultures (Adler, cited in Wurzel, 1988; p.10).

### **Utilizing Heuristic methodology: Implications**

Heuristic methodology exists as a qualitative approach that aims to discover, reflect upon, and bring forth insights of lived experience not only from the participants but also, from the researcher. As a tool for exploring worldview in this study, this methodological process was effective from different perspectives:

1. From a personal perspective and from the participants' standpoint, it:

- Allowed for self-reflection on what it means to be Mexican.
- Allowed the emergence of new thoughts and ideas that were taken for granted.
- Contributed to personal growth and further understanding on the nature of being Mexican.
- “Unlocked” modes of understanding and perceiving the world (e.g., How participants “see” themselves in ten year).
- Permitted the sharing of experiences and stories acknowledging their legitimacy.
- Emphasized the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

2. From a methodological perspective, it:

- Allowed continuity for the examination of worldview because, in the same way that Moustakas (1990) describes the stages as inherently interwoven in the process and not separate from one another, the progression of this research study followed a path that unfolded naturally.
- Substantiated the advocacy of other investigators (Cheboud, 2001; Rodriguez, 1995) who have utilized it in cross-cultural studies.
- Allowed freedom of inquiry and exploration since there were no a priori hypotheses to be proved or rejected.

- Uncovered patterns of experience that are part of the principles (or expectations) of heuristics. As a result, this study met the heuristic challenge, which according to Douglass & Moustakas (1985), is "...to generate a new reality, a ...significance that embodies the essence of the heuristic truth" (p.79).

### 3. From a pedagogical approach:

- Heuristic methodology shares its qualities with multicultural experience in that both require similar qualities (awareness, knowledge, and skills) to be present in order to be transformational.
- It is a valuable instrument in multicultural contexts because, as Lonner and Ibrahim (1996) affirm, the best way to understand someone's worldview is by considering the qualitative factors that are part of his or her context: cultural and social identity, ethnic background, level of acculturation, language proficiency, socio-economic status, and socio-political history.
- Given that this particular research study focused on existential dimensions, heuristics is relevant to the learning process because it could "... serve as a model for a new perspective on human learning based on the creation of meaning; on the existential dimension of human experience" (Frick, 1990; p.70).

### Limitations of the Study

Some aspects of this study that might be rendered as restrictions are related to conducting the research in a specific region in Mexico where variables such as geological diversity, proximity with the United States, particular economic activities,

and historical background, set apart this region of Mexico from the rest of the country. The number of interviewed people could be another potential barrier in regards to being able to have a broader perspective of the results of this study beyond Northeast Mexico; additionally, the female/male representation was uneven as well as the socio-economic status of the participants, which was narrowed to middle and high-middle class. Because qualitative studies consider and value the wealth of lived experience, it is easy to understand that generalizability is not a distinctive characteristic of this type of study when it means trying to accommodate experiences and make them “fit” into specific models. Notwithstanding individual differences however, the results of the interviews show that some commonalities do exist among these people and that some of those outcomes might be useful beacons to better understand Mexican worldview.

The only remaining encumbrance relates to language. About expressing feelings and emotions in a language different from one’s mother tongue, Henestrosa (1995), in his book A Nation Scattered by the Dance, said: “One can speak twenty languages, but the mother tongue is the one you dream in, the one you think in, the one you weep with, the one you swear with” (p. 15). With this awareness, the fact that in translation something would be lost, did not arrive as a surprise throughout the study. As much as I tried to remain faithful to the stories, reminiscences, and spoken portrayals of specific realities, sometimes translation worked against me. When this occurred, I tried to become each participant’s voice and relay the stories as if they were my own. Finding a balance between being humble (trying not to see myself as “the knower” of the language) and knowing when I needed to “step back” and let the data speak for itself, was a responsibility I had not anticipated, but one that I became aware of after I had

interviewed the participants. Since qualitative studies speak to the condition and complexities of human beings by being human, it is good to know that studies of such nature will most likely forever carry the attribute of not being generalizable, entirely reliable, nor representative.

### **Future Research**

Many are the areas for potential future research in regards to the exploration of worldview as conceptualized in this study. Research needs yet to be unearthed for there is much to be discovered not in terms of cultural differences but more importantly, in terms of perspectives, understandings, and tolerance with one another.

One area for further expanding the concept of Mexican worldview, is doing similar studies in different regions in Mexico. Given the diversity of population and their literacy levels, the geography, customs, and historical heritage among many others, further studies would reveal people's worldview in different parts of the country.

Future research might involve having corresponding representation of male and female participants, which could grant insightful possibilities to better understand Mexican worldview. Additionally, comparative studies between Mexicans living outside Mexico and the results gathered from this research study could provide pointers to help develop awareness about this cultural group, assist in the development and/or improvement of school curriculum and multicultural education. This could be done by developing or improving instrumentation. Some worldview instruments have been extensively developed but not tested across cultures; for example, the Psycho-Epistemological Profile (PEP), is a quantitative instrument that has received the most extensive field-testing establishing reliability and validity (Jones, 1963; Royce & Mos,

1980; Schopflocher & Royce, 1978; Smith, Royce, Ayers, & Jones, 1967). However, it has not yet been tested across cultures thus its applicability across cultural groups remains an empirical question. Other instruments have been investigated cross-culturally but still need additional development and improvement. The SAWV, Scale to Assess Worldview, (Ibrahim and Kahn; 1984, 1987) was originally developed as a quantitative instrument; however, Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Wilson (1994) described an informal interview method consisting of a series of questions that capture each of the SAWV dimensions. The scale has been revised at least once (Ibrahim & Owen, 1994).

In conclusion, continued work is needed to utilize this framework as a viable construct for self-exploration and understanding and as a powerful paradigm for understanding others within cross-cultural/multicultural education. Its applicability could prove to be a powerful way to reduce unawareness, prejudice, and stereotypes, while at the same time help increase tolerance and acceptance of other points of view.

### **Personal Discoveries**

As a young woman from Northeastern Mexico, living at the time in Canada, I have recently begun to examine my own heritage, cultural beliefs and values, and the traditions of my country by gradually understanding, experiencing, comparing, and making meaning of an array of customs dissimilar to my own, unique in their own right, and indispensable to interact with others in a culturally diverse setting. In trying to understand "What makes *me* Mexican" and "What does it mean to be Mexican?", I have felt the need to raise other people's awareness about the way in which we, Mexicans, perceive, experience, and make meaning of the world. This need is not only related to folklore, customs, traditions, and rituals of a particular group; moreover, it goes beyond

such cultural legacies pursuing the understanding of the values, beliefs, attitudes, affective perceptions, normative standard modes of subsistence, and modes of communication, which materialize the interactional forms that constitute the life worlds of a population and its members. In essence, because the way in which we create, define, and validate social knowledge is determined largely through our cultural context.

Listening to other people's experiences and finding many more similarities than divergences in our stories as I intertwined my own understandings of the world with theirs, has helped me as a Mexican woman to confirm and endorse my own personal beliefs and cultural values. Furthermore, how these have helped me answer the questions I posed at the beginning of this study when I was trying to understand what is Mexican worldview and what it means to be Mexican; why is it important to know and understand a country's worldview; what (if any) are some similarities and/or differences among people from Northeast Mexico; what do these make evident; and what are some implications for Multicultural education. All this came gradually as I developed an awareness and as I learned to "read" the text of my own life. Perls (1969) said that: "Awareness exists by the very nature of change. If there is sameness, there is nothing to be experienced, nothing to be discovered" (p.125). I believe that in this re-search process, I have discovered as much as I have "uncovered" myself. I sincerely hope this is also true for the participants to whom I am forever grateful for granting me to the opportunity to look at these "parcels of their soul" and to whom I owe the elation of a wonderful journey.

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY ENTITLED:**  
**EXPLORING WORLDVIEW: A SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR**  
**UNDERSTANDING OTHERS**

Hello:

My name is Maria del Carmen Rodriguez and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Victoria in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I am currently conducting a study entitled, " Exploring worldview: A socio-cultural framework for understanding others". I am interested in exploring what is "Mexican worldview" to determine how people from this area of the country define this construct in order to outline some implications for the fields of Cross-cultural/Multicultural Education, Counselling, and Teacher training.

This letter is an invitation to participate in the study. I am looking for volunteers who will be willing to share their experiences of "being Mexican" and what this means to them. If you are a Mexican-born citizen living in Northeast Mexico (Nuevo, Leon, Coahuila or Tamaulipas), are between 20 and 35 years of age, and would like to examine your experience of what is your Worldview as a Mexican and what it means to you, I would be interested in speaking to you about your possible participation in the study. As part of the study, I will be interviewing participants using conversational interviews that will explore concepts of worldview as it pertains to Mexican people. There will be two separate interviews which will take about one hour each; however, the time schedule is flexible and can be shortened or lengthened as needed. These interviews will also be scheduled at your convenience and set up at a location that is most comfortable for you. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any explanation.

To assist in the accuracy of the data collection, the interviews will be tape-recorded. Transcription of tapes will be done after each interview. All participants will be provided copies of the transcriptions of their own tapes and an unidentifiable analysis of the transcribed tapes. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. All participants will be given a code name that will be used throughout the study and transcripts of individual interviews will not include personal identifying information, nor will names of participants appear in the dissertation, published articles, or material presented at conferences or workshops. All tapes and written data collected during the research process will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Why might you consider being a participant in this study? Even though research in Cross-cultural and Multicultural issues is extensive, very few studies have focused on the construct of

**Worldview (the way in which people experience and define the world) and its relevance to Humanistic fields (i.e. Counselling, Teacher training, Education, and Psychology); moreover, this specific type of research, has not been conducted in Mexico before. Therefore, this study might assist in the development, implementation, modification, and/or expansion of existing education programs concerning Multiculturalism; it might also allow the development of increased tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of Mexican people as well as aid in the elimination of existing stereotypes about Mexicans; and finally, it might assist in the increase of student exchange programs across cultures as a result of understanding and accepting others.**

**Thank you for your consideration of this research. If you would like to participate in this study, or have specific questions about the study, please contact me at (84) 78-39-97 or (84) 78-39-98 or by email: [mdcr@uvic.ca](mailto:mdcr@uvic.ca).**

**Sincerely,**

**Maria del Carmen Rodriguez, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Victoria**

**APPENDIX 2**  
**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY ENTITLED**  
**EXPLORING WORLDVIEW: A SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR**  
**UNDERSTANDING OTHERS**

You are being invited to participate in a study that is being conducted by Carmen Rodriguez, who is a Graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. If you have further questions you may contact her by calling (84) 78-39-97 or 78-39-98 or via email: [mdcr@uvic.ca](mailto:mdcr@uvic.ca)

As a GRADUATE student, this research is part of the requirements for a DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY and it is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Geoffrey Hett. You may contact the supervisor at (001) (250) 721-7783 or by email: [ghett@uvic.ca](mailto:ghett@uvic.ca)

The purpose of this study is to yield some insight concerning the way(s) in which people from Northeast Mexico (Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, or Tamaulipas) perceive, experience, and define their world. I am interested in exploring what is "Mexican worldview" to determine how people from this area of the country define this construct in order to outline some implications for the fields of Cross-cultural/Multicultural Education, Counselling, and Teacher training.

Research of this type is important because even though research in Cross-cultural and Multicultural issues is extensive, very few studies have focused on the construct of Worldview (the way in which people experience and define the world) and its relevance to Humanistic fields (i.e. Counselling, Teacher training, Education, and Psychology); moreover, this specific type of research, has not been conducted in Mexico before. Therefore, this study might assist in the development, implementation, modification, and/or expansion of existing education programs concerning Multiculturalism; it might also allow the development of increased tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of Mexican people as well as aid in the elimination of existing stereotypes about Mexicans; and finally, it might assist in the increase of student exchange programs across cultures as a result of understanding and accepting others.

You are being asked to participate in this study because, you are a Mexican born citizen between 20 and 35 years of age, you have indicated that you live either in Nuevo Leon, Coahuila or Tamaulipas, and would like to explore what is worldview and what being Mexican means to you.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include two personal interviews. You can expect the interviews to take two to four hours. You will also be given the opportunity to read the transcriptions of the interviews and provide me with the changes or points of clarification should you feel this necessary. This would take two or three hours of your time. The research will be conducted from June 2001 to August 2001.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you by way of the time commitment needed for the interviews. I will attempt to work around your work and personal schedules when arranging the interviews, which may be re-scheduled, should the need arise.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research, however, I would be glad to discuss any risks you might perceive. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the opportunity to reflect on personal cultural assumptions, values, beliefs, traditions, attitudes, behaviors, life principles and choices, and general lifestyle. It is also an opportunity to share personal understanding, thoughts, and personal meanings about being Mexican, possibly gaining new insights about cross-cultural issues therefore providing an opportunity to understand, appreciate, promote, and expand cross-cultural exchanges primarily in the fields of

**Education, Psychology, Counselling, and Teacher training. This research might lead to an understanding of what it means to be Mexican thus helping to eliminate possible stereotypes about Mexican people. It might also help to avoid generalizations (about Mexican worldview) that stem from the current research perspective on Hispanic or Mexican-American populations and their worldview.**

**Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in the analysis ONLY if you agree to this. You may choose not to answer any questions you don't wish to answer during the interview process. If you choose to complete only part of the questionnaire, partial data will be used only if you agree to do this.**

**To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this study, I will check with you each time I schedule an interview to see if you are still willing to continue with the research process. In terms of protecting your anonymity, I will be assigning code names to which all data will be matched. Transcripts of the audio taped interviews will not include any personal information and your name will not appear in the Ph. D. Dissertation, published articles or material prepared for conference or workshop presentations. If you decide that you do not want your interview taped, written observation field notes will be used instead.**

**Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by securing it in separate files locked in my house. No identifying data will be made available to anyone other than myself, the researcher, and by signing this informed consent from we have entered into an agreement with each other whereby I will guarantee that your confidentiality will be protected. All written data will be shredded through confidential shredding at the University of Victoria. The tapes used in the interviews will be erased at Computer User Services using the bulk magnetizer.**

**In addition to use of this data to complete my Ph. D., I will use the data for articles for publication, class presentations, and for conferences and workshop presentations. In addition to being able to contact myself and my supervisor, at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice President Research at the University of Victoria (250-721-7968).**

**Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND A COPY WILL BE TAKEN BY THE RESEARCHER.**