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And Gladly Did They Teach:
Nuevomexicanas in Rural Education(s)

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As I collaborated with Diana Rebolledo on a series of projects on mujeres, I became convinced that the story of Hispanic women who devoted their lives to teaching the rural children of New Mexico was one that had to be documented. The fact that my own elementary education had taken place in a rural school under the tutelage of my mother and that, for years, I listened to her tell stories of her experiences as a rural teacher also contributed to my interest in the topic of education in the proverbial "one-room schoolhouse." We knew, of course, that Fabiola Cabeza de Baca (1995) had in effect begun the formal process of documenting this experience. In her autobiography, We Fed Them Cactus, she wrote:

It had never occurred to me that schools in rural areas were different from those which I attended. I had not been home very long when I began to learn that the children around us had from five to seven months of school and that many of the teachers in the country did not have even an eighth grade education. Education in our family had always been mandatory; that other children did not have the same opportunity as I, did not seem fair to me. When one of the school directors came to solicit me to teach school in our school district, I felt privileged (154).

Another Nuevomexicana who had contributed to the documentation of Nuevomexicanas in rural education was Dora Ortiz Vázquez. In her Enchanted Dialogue of Loma Parda and Canada Bonita, Ortiz Vázquez describes her first day of teaching:

children with me. I soon found myself with a room full of children, small and big boys and girls. The two big girls were my 8th grade students followed by 7th, 6th, 5th, 4th, and 3rd grade students. My smaller children were beginners through 2nd grade. Also among the students were two boys, Timoteo Paiz and Bennie Baca. These two had come to see how hard they could make it on the teacher (9).

Inspired by the works of Ortiz Vásquez and Cabeza de Baca, Diana Rebolledo and I applied for a grant from the Center for Regional Studies at the University of New Mexico to fund a project that would allow us to continue the work of these two women. In due time, María Dolores Gonzales joined us in this undertaking. While the three of us collaborated on the interviews, I alone am responsible for this project report.

Background

Originally, we envisioned this as an oral history project. However, as we began the early stages of the research, we decided that, in addition to learning about our selected historians' unique and personal lives, there was specific information of a broader socio-cultural nature that we wanted to know. We were fascinated by the fact that these women, coming from what we supposed were very traditional families and backgrounds, were able to accept jobs outside the home, leaving their familiar surroundings to take positions in isolated villages far from the tutelage and protection of family. We were interested in knowing what in their own private constitutions or in those of their families accounted for their ability to build and maintain careers at a time when Nuevomexicanas/os were rapidly being pushed to the margins. How did they make the transition from family control to independence at an age when it was believed that women needed to be protected by family? What subsequent difficulties did they encounter in maneuvering the demands of career and family? In view of the fact that they were among the first Nuevomexicanas in their communities to assume such highly visible positions, how did their communities view them? Were they seen as agents of change or as role models? Were they discriminated against in terms of teaching assignments or

placement? How did they cope with students who were near their own age? We were also curious to know how these women had reconciled whatever contradictions might have emerged as they carried out the mandate to teach English, to Americanize Hispano and sometimes Native American children, even if this meant repressing their own mother tongue or cultural values.

Methodology

Through loosely formatted interviews, we then sought to tease out information related to these general areas of interest. This procedure made allowances for the conversation to take its course, though we did prompt informants with additional questions that grew out of the conversation itself or led it in the direction of the above topics discussed. I would like to point out that this approach placed us in a position of authority vis-à-vis the women; this placed some constraints on their ability to control the conversation, which in effect was supposed to be about their lives. Nonetheless, the interviewees were able to move in directions that were important to them, and we—interviewer and recorders—frequently interpolated questions plucked by the informants' statements, or designed to help them flesh out their topic. These questions were spontaneous and differed for each interview. As such, we can not claim consistency in the interviewing process, but given the fact that our intent was to generate a qualitative rather than a quantitative study, we were satisfied with a semi-structured approach that fell somewhere between "oral history" and "interview" and left room for accommodating individual styles and stories.

Ten women were selected from a list of references secured through social networking. All interviews were carried out in the teachers' homes. Eight were recorded on a video camera, and all were also recorded on a cassette recorder.⁽²⁾ One person did the interviewing, one recorded on the video camera, and the other on an audio recorder. The recorders intervened occasionally in the interviewing process by interpolating questions that prompted the interviewees to flesh out a particularly interesting point. The interviews lasted between one and a half and two hours and language moved naturally and comfortably from Spanish to English and vice versa. The interviewer and re-

corders came from the same cultural background as the teachers, but our own stations in life—all of us university professors—positioned us as both insiders and outsiders. Our insider status was accentuated by the fact that the interviewer and one recorder were daughters of a Nuevomexicana teacher from a background very similar to that of the interviewees, and thus were able to relate to the women in a comfortable Spanish register. In general, the ambience was very relaxed, as was the entire process. In fact, we often felt as if we were just having coffee, which felt a lot like a “remember when” plática (conversation) with our abuelitas.

The small number of informants narrows the scope of our findings, and the lack of procedural uniformity discussed above limits our ability to draw broad generalizations. The advanced age of the informants presented attention span and continuity problems in only one case. Regarding the reporting of the information gleaned from the interviews, it is important to stress that our findings were never meant to be quantified. Consequently, the discussion below seeks to reconstruct the teachers' experiences primarily through narrative, which is a style appropriate for a scholar trained in the humanities rather than the social sciences.

Informants' Backgrounds

Our interest in the history of New Mexico immediately before and after statehood prompted us to focus our study on women who had taught in the first half of the twentieth century. As such we interviewed only women in their late seventies and eighties who had become rural teachers early in their lives and had made teaching a life-long career. All of the women interviewed were born and raised in Northern New Mexico, eight in small rural villages, and two in larger towns. Three of the women were from middle-class families, two of which had a history of political influence in the state. The rest came from families with very limited resources, most of them subsistence farmers and/or seasonal wage earners.⁽³⁾ All were brought up in communities that were fairly segregated, and for all, Spanish was their native language. Nine began teaching before attending college, though they all pursued a college education after beginning their teaching

careers. Of the ten, seven received Bachelors of Arts degrees, and one of these a Master of Arts degree. Three served as principals, and one was elected to the State Board of Education. All but one married and had children. One divorced early in her life, and another became widowed at an early age; both of these women remained single. Five more women had become widows by the time of the interviews, and three were still married. Since the time the interviews were conducted, three maestras have died.

On Becoming Teachers

For most of our interviewees, the desire to become a teacher came at an early age. Rafaelita Chávez reported that while her siblings often chose to stay home in inclement weather, she would not dream of missing school. Her love for school soon earned her a nickname at home, La Maestra (the teacher). Josephine Córdova from El Prado, recalled how at a very early age she and her siblings played school, and she always took the role of the teacher, “O, sí yo enseñaba a los niños chiquitos, allí andaba entremetida haciéndoles que hicieran así, que lo hicieran de otro modo. Y me obedecían muy bien.” (Oh, yes, I taught all the younger children; there I was, a busybody, having them do this or do that. And they obeyed me.) Carlota Gonzales reported that her decision about a future career was made by the time she was nine years old. Her third grade teacher, a young Euroamerican woman “who played the piano and was kind to my mother,” inspired her childhood dream to become a teacher. And it was indeed at an early age, 17-18 years, that these women took their first jobs. A high school education was all that was needed in order to become certified for teaching. Thus, diploma in hand, they left the shelter of the family home on an adventure that would test their mettle.

We were somewhat surprised to learn from several of our informants that the person who most encouraged each one to become a teacher was their father. Mothers were often reluctant to see their young daughters leave home to take jobs in isolated communities. In fact, it was not uncommon for them to follow their daughters and live with them until they settled into their new jobs. It is likely that fathers had more exposure to life beyond the village and were more aware of

the political and economic changes that were rapidly transforming life in Nuevomexicano villages. If so, they may have viewed a career in teaching as a way to ensure their daughter's—and by extension, the family's—entry into the “modern world,” or perhaps as a way of bringing prestige to the family at a time of increasing social discrimination against Nuevomexicanos. The fact that fathers were this supportive belies the idea so frequently propagated in sociological and anthropological literature regarding the supposedly “fatalistic” and “passive” nature of “tradition-bound” Nuevomexicano villagers during the first part of the twentieth century (4). Not to be overlooked is the fact that, by entering the market at early ages, daughters were able to contribute to the sustenance of the family. Considering the scarcity of wage labor opportunities in Northern New Mexican villages during this time, the importance of the economic contributions of these enterprising young women to their families becomes even more significant. And these were not isolated cases. Sarah Deutsch (1987) observes that by 1919, in Río Arriba County, “Hispanic women provided over 30 percent of all teachers and over 40 percent of Hispanic teachers. With a dwindling land base, Hispanic women, like the men, sought a livelihood from the Anglicized aspects of the economy, but they did so within the villages instead of outside them” (115).

Noteworthy is the fact that because Nuevomexicanos continued to maintain a foothold in the political arena and were able to wield a significant level of power in most northern counties, it was possible to fill teaching positions with Hispanas/os. Networking, frequently based on family connections, was an important feature of Nuevomexicano strategies and negotiations for representation in civic and institutional organizations at the local and state levels. One teacher, for example, told about an uncle who served on the Taos County School Board, who recruited her for a teaching job more than one hundred miles from her home. She was seventeen and had just graduated from high school the week before. While outsiders have frequently criticized this aspect of Nuevomexicano politics, the truth is, it was part of an array of self-conscious tactics and acts of agency without which Nuevomexicana/os would have been excluded from public life and possibly altogether disenfranchised.

Big Boys and Little Money: Facing the Challenges

Two of our interviewees, Elba C. de Baca and Anita Chávez, blithely recalled that an immediate challenge was having to ride horseback to get to school. But a more serious challenge presented itself on the first day of class in that some of the male students who were almost the teacher's own age, towered above them. Dora Ortiz Vásquez, whom we were fortunate to interview before her death in 1993, recalled, “The first day I stood—you had those cowbells—to ring the bell, and my knees were just shaking. I didn't know how I was going to get started. There was nothing in my schoolroom. Like I say, there was nothing. There was an old man, Don Cosme C. de Baca. He lived across the street and he looked at me and he told his wife, ‘Oh, that teacher is too young. Es una muchachita, muy jovencita. Los muchachos van a hacer sopa con ella.’ (She's just a girl, too young. The boys are going to run her through the mill.) Notwithstanding the little confidence this muchachita inspired, she took charge and proceeded to teach these children and others like them, carving out a career that took her from Loma Parda, Taos, Socorro, and Valencia Counties to Presbyterian Mission schools in Santa Fe and Utah. Carlota Gonzales also took charge the day her older boys, at least three of them taller than she, went out for wood to stoke the fire but decided to skate at the iced-over pond instead. When they returned several hours later, she took a switch to their bottoms, and then proceeded to give a lesson on long division. Were parents upset because she had used physical discipline? “No. As a matter of fact, they gave them another licking at home to show them they agreed with la maestra.” And Virginia Gonzales really took charge the day her principal accused her of playing games—he was referring to the activities she used to teach English to her children—rather than teaching. “You're going to join my class,” she told him, “because I'm going to teach you English like I'm teaching these children. I want you to know what it's all about.”

As these women began their teaching careers shortly before the Great Depression, challenges related to dearth and privation, conditions which prevailed in many of the communities to which these women were assigned, were the norm rather than the exception.

(freezing) with purple little hands, because they had no gloves." She also remembered that in 1929 there was not enough money in the county coffers to pay teachers' salaries, and her own family would not have survived had her father not helped her out. She was by then divorced and solely responsible for supporting her family.

Rafaelita Chávez, assuming her first teaching assignment in a logging community composed primarily of Euroamericans, was alarmed to find that no children showed up the first day of school. The second day she hit the trail to search the children out. She found families huddled in one-room huts, barely able to meet their basic necessities. She had to talk long and hard to parents to convince them to send their children to school. In due time, thirty children showed up regularly to a building that leaked by the bucketfuls. Then there were problems of a lack of pencils, paper, and books. She immediately sought permission from the school board to organize school dances in order to gather funds for purchasing books and school supplies for the children. While their initial reaction was one of doubt, they soon found that under Mrs. Chávez's leadership, anything was possible; the dances drew people from surrounding communities, proving to be a popular form of entertainment for the community and a lucrative enterprise for the school.

Celina Salazar, assigned to a school in an isolated canyon, recalls that much of her small check went to buying supplies for her students. When asked why she stayed in the profession despite the difficult conditions she frequently had to endure, she answered that she did it so she could afford to send her four sons to college (three of whom, by the way, became teachers). This response sums up the primary motivating force for these women. In order to ensure better lives for their own families, it was necessary for them to work.

Attending college during the summer presented particularly difficult challenges.⁽⁵⁾ Just finding time to study was a daunting maneuver. Guadalupe Baca Vaughn told us, "It was very hard studying at night. After you would put them to bed was the only time. *Había veces que me moría de sueño.*" (There were times when I was so sleepy, I just could have died.) Summer study also presented a financial burden for the family. Much of what these women earned in the winter was spent moving their families to town — usually Las Vegas — and

paying tuition for the summer session. Then there were politics, and politics meant that jobs were not always secure. Local boards made all hiring decisions, and board members were not beyond using their position to keep alive the adage, "Democrats in; Republicans out" and vice versa. Anita Chávez best sums up the role politics played in the hiring and firing of teachers when she explained why she had to change jobs so many times, "*O sí, la política era lo que me traía a mí pa'riba y pa'bajo.*" (Oh, yes, it was politics that kept me on the move.)

Another facet of politics—one we had anticipated hearing about a great deal—was ethnic conflict. Surprisingly, the topic arose in only one interview.⁽⁶⁾ Mary Merino Sánchez, one of the first Nuevomexicana Principals in Albuquerque, recalled being opposed by one teacher who tried to "get a little group from the community against me saying there was more catering to the Spanish." After several problems with this individual, she succeeded in having her transferred. The janitor reported to Sánchez, overhearing the soon-to-be-transferred teacher comment, "Look who came to chase me out of my own school after so many years. An old Mexican." Given what we know about ethnic relations in New Mexico, we can speculate that there must have been more incidents of cross-cultural tensions in the lives of these public servants. However, we also know that this is a topic previous generations relegated to the private sphere.⁽⁷⁾ As early as 1920, when Octaviano Larrazolo, a staunch defender of the Nuevomexicano community, was accused of "fanning the racial issue" for personal gain in his unsuccessful bid for governor, Nuevomexicanas/os learned that to speak publicly about the issue was to transgress a social taboo. This reticence is in part responsible for sustaining the entrenched myth of tri-cultural harmony in New Mexico. New scholarship is beginning to tell another story; under the thin veneer of this myth, a favorite of the tourist industry and entrepreneurial sector, lies a long history of unequal distribution of resources and power.

Despite the difficulties and challenges discussed above, these women were thoroughly committed to their profession and would not have had it any other way, as is attested to by the following statement by Anita Chávez, "It was the most wonderful experience. And now that I'm alone, I think, How did I do it? How did I do this thing?" Prepare lesson plans; teach all day; take care of the needs of three,

four, or five children; study every summer until the age of forty or fifty; write books as did Dora Vásquez and Josephine Córdova; earn a Master of Arts degree and become principals as did Mary Sanchez, Josephine Córdova, and Virginia Gonzales; lobby the State Legislature and serve on the State Board of Education for twelve years as did Virginia Gonzales; I too ask, how did they do it?

Juggling the Double Day: Coping Strategies and Support Networks

We found that a common strategy for reconciling the demands of family and career was for the women to stay home for several years while their children were infants, then to return to teaching when their youngsters entered school. When there was a need for day care, mothers, sisters, or mothers-in-law responded. Husbands likewise became important players in the success of these women in maintaining careers once children arrived. Only one informant indicated that her husband was opposed to her teaching because he believed, "it was a man's job to support his wife." This woman was not persuaded by his arguments, and he finally approved because as she said, "times were bad and we needed more money." It is likely that other husbands thought the same thing, but cultural ideals frequently gave way to material exigencies. As capital began to penetrate the villages, capital that was not readily accessible to Nuevomexicanos who found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet through small-scale ranching or farming, transformations were occurring in traditional modes of production and in socio-cultural patterns. Displaced heads of families crossed gender boundaries, assisting with housework and parenting. Anita Chávez, mother of four children recalled, "But you know everybody had their chores and everybody helped. We didn't have any washing machines. That was the hardest part for me. My husband used to come in the evening and put a great big tub of water to warm it up outside with wood. So, Dolores, Virginia, Carmen (their teenage daughters) would come and wash. They washed by hand, you know." In the case of my own family, it was our father who lined up his five daughters and made sure they each took their turn at the porta-potty before entering the rural church that had no plumbing. Dora Ortiz Vásquez emphasized that she could never have attended summer school had her husband not been willing to follow along to care

the only Nuevomexicano caring for the brood while his wife concentrated on pedagogical theory. Other interviewees reported similar circumstances.

The coping strategies reported by our respondents bear witness to a great deal of flexibility in these family units, calling into question the notion of rigid gender roles in Chicano families. However, the fact that several of the women praised their husbands for their cooperation, indicates an awareness that their situations were not the norm; in fact, they considered themselves fortunate to have husbands who were willing to share what traditionally was considered women's work. Their engagement in strategies that clearly went against normative gender roles of the time brings me to the same conclusions drawn by Adelaida del Castillo (1996) in her work on Mexican domestic relations, "Gender here is approached as a negotiated relation to be contested and questioned, never to be taken for granted as a rigid social role. In this sense, gendered relations are more like strategies which are culturally sensitive to sexed meaning and context, and as such are read, utilized, and negotiated according to changing circumstances and objectives" (217). Without a doubt, Nuevomexicanas were questioning and negotiating gender roles long before the advent of a women's movement.

Also put to the test in these testimonies is the long-held notion of Chicana passivity. These teachers were movers and shakers, and they were very aware of the central role they played in their communities. Dora Ortiz Vásquez recalled not only teaching children, but writing letters and filling catalog orders for their parents who neither spoke English nor wrote it or their native language. The rural teachers also served as janitors, coaches, cooks, and social directors. There were picnics, play days, Christmas programs, and dances, and it was the role of the teacher to organize and direct these activities and to mobilize the community. The school was the hub of communal life, and the teacher its axial figure. The community responded, within its means, to the teacher's requests for support because as Josephine Córdova nostalgically recalled, "Los padres de familia eran tan amorosos conmigo. Estaban tan contentos porque estaba enseñando a sus hijos" (The parents were so loving toward me. They were very happy because I was teaching their children.) She was never short on

invitations for dinner that she accepted despite the fact that the family she boarded with warned her that most of the people in the village were witches who could do her harm through the food they prepared.⁽⁸⁾ That teachers were indeed treasured by the community is borne out in Cabeza de Baca's (1995) recollection, "I soon became acquainted with the children, and by the second week of school I was receiving invitations from different ones to go and spend the night with them. I certainly appreciated that, although it meant walking several miles and getting up before daylight in order to get to school in time to sweep, dust, and haul water before nine o'clock. It was adventure and I was getting plenty of it" (157-158).

Nuevomexicana Teachers and the Language Question

The archival research related to this project has yielded fascinating information on the policies and the politics of "Americanization" through education. As part of these politics, the role of Spanish in education was a highly contested topic. After passage of the Public Education Act in 1891, and under the direction of Hispanic State Superintendents, the role of Spanish was privileged and protected. However, around the time that New Mexico was admitted to statehood in 1912, this role began to be questioned and heated debates were carried out in newspapers and education publications. While all citizens agreed on the importance of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children, there was little agreement on how this should be accomplished. Nuevomexicanos were very concerned about erosion of their native language and customs, but they were also eager for their children to learn English so they could enjoy the benefits of citizenship (Baca, 1915; Lucero, 1919). Educators and citizens alike agreed that Spanish should be emphasized in the curriculum in order to prepare Americans for trade with Latin America. However the emerging discourse of "one flag, one language, one nation" prompted by World War I and the consequent anti-immigrant sentiment, made educators and politicians cautious about privileging Spanish as a native language (Chávez, 1919). After several years of struggle over the status of Spanish in public education, a temporary resolution came by way of a statute stipulating that Spanish could be taught as a foreign lan-

all other content areas.⁽⁹⁾ This mandate put an end to the agenda that called for the bilingual method or the use of Spanish as an avenue for teaching English. The "sink or swim" method supplanted policies that heretofore had accommodated Spanish as a heritage language. By the time the teachers involved in our project entered the profession, this agenda was very clearly defined. In fact, in those areas where there were a predominant number of non-Hispano students, repressive and punitive tactics were commonly exercised against the minority of Spanish-speaking students who perchance lapsed into their native language. Teachers engaged in practices that included levying fines, hitting children on the knuckles with rulers, sitting them in a corner wearing a dunce hat, and even washing their mouths with soap (Jensen, 1978-1979). These kinds of tactics are what led Gloria Anzaldúa to coin the term "linguistic terrorism," the effects of which have left their marks on the Spanish-speaking population of this country, "Somos los del español deficiente. We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic mestizaje, the subjects of your burla. Because we speak tongues of fire we are culturally crucified. Racially, culturally, and linguistically somos huérfanos—we speak an orphan tongue" (Anzaldúa, 1987, 58).

When queried about the language issue, the teachers' responses are uniform in one respect: their job was to teach children English, and they did whatever they had to do to accomplish this objective. No one reports having engaged in repressive acts. In fact most of our informants report that they accommodated to the children's needs, using Spanish when necessary to communicate. When asked if they ever believed it might have been a good idea to teach their students Spanish, the standard answer was, "No, because they already knew Spanish." They were adamant about the fact that what these children needed most was to learn English if they were to compete with Euroamericans for jobs, and they took a great deal of pride in their commitment to this endeavor and especially in their success. This pride is evident in their many richly detailed examples regarding their strategies for teaching English. The subtext here is always that they had to be, and in fact were, very creative and resourceful in this regard.

From our present vantage point, we can clearly spot the work

of hegemony. If viewed against the backdrop of the struggles waged immediately before and after statehood by Nuevomexicanos who advocated that the learning of English need not exclude literacy in Spanish, the position of these teachers bears testimony to the fact that the battle indeed had been lost. As displacement and marginalization increasingly became the rule of the day for Nuevomexicanos, politicians, educators and citizens alike singled out the lack of English language skills rather than structural factors as the cause of social stratification. The teachers in our project believed this to be true, and ironically, this creed is what motivated them to do everything they could for the "good of the children." When asked to compare their experiences with those they may have had after the institutionalization of bilingual education in the 1960s, all agreed that bilingual education as a method for preserving native languages is a good thing. In their days, however, it was out of the question because they believed it had not even been imagined. The truth is that it had, but memory of this facet of Nuevomexicano history had been buried (the record of struggle quelled by the prevailing Americanizing agenda discussed above). Noteworthy is the fact that Virginia Gonzales was a leader in the institutionalization of bilingual education in New Mexico, and a fair number of these teachers did in fact have the opportunity to teach in these bilingual programs in the late sixties.

Conclusion

From this study of a specific generation of Nuevomexicanas who played an important role in the elementary education of the state's rural children, we can conclude that their lives, while in some respects atypical, are also reflective of the strategies adopted by the general population of rural Northern New Mexico during the first half of this century. As Sara Deutsch (1987) points out, "living on the 'intercultural frontier' demanded the adoption of strategies that allowed Nuevomexicanos to embrace change without sacrificing cultural identity and their sense of homeland". Like their male counterparts who found it necessary to engage in wage labor and simultaneously strived to continue to practice traditional patterns of communal life, these Nuevomexicanas challenged their traditional gender roles and cultur-

ally defined space (and we, of course, are speaking here of ideal cultural precepts) to become career women and public servants. They, however, exercised their new roles in communities whose structures and values were not foreign to them. Accommodation to those elements of the Euroamerican culture that contributed to their ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment did not, however, preclude them from maintaining communal values, which ascribe seeking social support and the construction of identity from and in relation to one's ethnic enclave. Whether it was boarding with Hispano families, taking mothers or sisters along for company, calling on mothers or mothers-in-law for assistance with childcare, or sharing housework and childcare with mates, all of these strategies made it possible to leave the home in order to negotiate new roles and to engage in activities that contributed to the flourishing of their families and communities. While the work they did in the schools was moved by an Americanizing agenda, particularly as it pertained to language instruction, the mere fact of their presence in the lives of students spoke to autochthonous cultural preservation. Furthermore, these maestras served as respected role models and as examples of women who were both successful conservators of their ethnic culture and cultural innovators who took on the challenge to serve as community leaders and mediators between rural Nuevomexicanos and the world beyond; the world they brought to their students through books, language, and their own experiences in college and in professional organizations.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge that the conversations with "our maestras", and I say "our teachers" because these women indeed taught us lessons of service, dedication, and love of community, provided exquisite moments of insight into our cultural past, into processes of transculturation, and into struggles for personal fulfillment and communal belonging. While each woman had her own highly individualized story to tell, there were recurring motifs of poverty, supportive families, personal determination and drive, obstructive political structures, a sense of duty, community vitality and support, the very stuff of which our communal histories are made. There are many more such stories waiting to be told. It is up to us, we who tread the paths forged by our elders, to gather them and to insure their inscription in the historical record.

Endnotes

1. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Tey Diana Rebolledo for her work on the proposal and the interviews; María Dolores Gonzales for her work on the interviews and the transcriptions; The Center for Regional Studies at the University of New Mexico for funding the project; The Southwest Hispanic Research Institute for their clerical support; the Center for Southwest Regional Research at UNM Zimmerman Library for housing the project; the families of the teachers who helped us out in so many ways, and my dedicated research assistants: Tomás Pena and Jean Silesky.

2. Two of the women refused to be video recorded. A third teacher did not formally participate in the project, as she was suffering through the final stages of a terminal illness. We did, however, acquire a more intimate interview with her which was recorded on a tape cassette, transcribed, and included in the general study. One of the interviewees, insisted on talking about her interest in folklore and did not focus her attention on teaching for very long. We included the tape of this session in the materials submitted to the library, but did not transcribe her interview.

3. Several of the interviewees recalled their childhood as a time when every day was a struggle to meet bare necessities. Rafaelita Chávez, for example, told of her father wrapping her feet in burlap bags so she would not become ill trudging through snow to get to school. My own mother recalled her mother pouring boiling water between the cracks of the floor to discourage the snakes they could clearly see seeking shelter in the crawl space under their home. Josephine Córdova recalled working all through high school in order to support her widowed mother. In these cases, poverty was an important catalyst for these women's initiative and drive.

4. In her excellent treatment of life in Nuevomexicano villages, Deutsch cites George Sánchez, among others, as one who saw Nuevomexicanos as unable to adapt to change: "he (the Nuevomexicano) became self-sufficient in his crude way, having little trust in innovations and no

notion of a changing civilization." Sánchez, G. J., Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans. (1940), 10-11, cited in Deutsch (1987).

5. Because these women began teaching immediately after high school, they later were required to pursue advanced study in order to renew their certificates. Many of them recall finally receiving their Bachelors of Arts Degrees when their children were teenagers or even college students.

6. The fact that most of these women taught in villages that were composed primarily of Nuevomexicanos explains the lack of interethnic conflict. However, even in those types of villages, there were Euroamerican children in attendance.

7. This was clearly attested to when, after the interview, Mrs. Sánchez expressed doubt about this portion of the interview, indicating she might want us to edit it out. However, after seeing the video, she agreed to leave it intact.

8. For a more detailed treatment of this topic, see Córdova's Me Acuerdo, pero no Lloro.

9. I very deliberately use the adjective "temporarily" in this statement. The role of Spanish in public education continues to be as vital an issue today as it was during the first part of the century. However, today the scope is national as well as local. And while many of the same arguments pertain to the current conflict, it is important to acknowledge that in New Mexico, the issue was still very much linked to a discourse of domination. Today's debates are more likely to be linked to immigration than to the rights of a conquered population.

10. For a discussion of Nuevomexicanas as conservators and innovators, see Gonzales-Velásquez (1995).

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