

Living and Learning in the South Valley: A Path to Self-Identity

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Introduction

Who am I? What do I believe and why? Where do I come from? What defines that place? Who are my parents? What do they stand for? What do I stand for?

As adults we have constructed our individual identities by asking ourselves these questions as they apply to our political, psychological, familial, social, and neighborhood cultures. The information that is gathered then becomes integral structural matter for what ideally will be an accurate self-identity and awareness. For an eighth-grade student in the throes of forming an identity, beginning such an odyssey only further plunges them into not one, but layered abysses of confusion rather than singular clarity. Add components of poverty, socio-political issues, and ethnic and geographic isolation into the mix, and deeper difficulties present themselves.

Most educators would agree that an important goal of teaching is to help students become independent and confident learners. One strategy for accomplishing this is to encourage students to value education; to feel that school is where they belong. But rarely does education succeed in filling the gaps left as adolescents pull away from parental structures of support and identity in order to create their own. Instead, they find the sense of belonging they crave in sports, friends, the mall, video games, or less fortunately in more negative "support" structures like gangs. Public education is not geared toward attracting student belonging. Such failure is caused by an inadequate focus on the psychological process of self-discovery that is at the core of adolescent development. This unit will focus on facilitating the development of individual, cultural, and political awareness of my eighth-grade students by providing them the means for a self-directed inquiry into the conditions, ideas, and issues that shape their communities, families, and lives.

Student Background

The students of Ernie Pyle Middle School are affected by poverty, a singular ethnicity, high mobility (movement in and out of the school's district), and low achievement. Eighty-five percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, 90 percent are Hispanic, 33 percent of those who begin middle school at Ernie Pyle do not complete the eighth grade there, and test scores are the second-lowest of all Albuquerque middle schools. Many students come from broken homes and extended families with members who are incarcerated, drug users, absent, or dead. Ironically, it is precisely these family structures that pervade the South Valley, on which students have come to rely, and through which they construct a web of emotional, psychological, and intellectual support. I hope to exploit this reliance and provide students with methods to delve into their families, learn from them, and eventually create stronger, deeper, and more lasting ties.

In fact, familial associations are the first avenues through which students connect with the social and political communities around them. The sense of community is very strong in the

South Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Students aren't complete members of this community, but they often demonstrate a strong sense of it, for example, when they identify with the South Valley as opposed to the Heights and other, predominantly Anglo, parts of town. Only after students were told that they represent the South Valley and that the rest of the city was looking at them, did standardized test scores go up 31% in one year.¹ When being interviewed, residents often speak of particular ideals associated with the place, people, and culture of the South Valley: "What brings people together in the Valley? The want to be there; the happiness to be there (Tom Chávez, in the NMEH South Valley Oral History Project, 1995-1996)."

Life in the South Valley is often distinctly separate from life in the city proper.² This disconnection stems from several perceived and concrete factors that exist in the relationship. Such geographical, political, socio-economic, cultural, and psychological boundaries create in the South Valley identifiable cultures and ways of thinking that exist in many ways outside of the mainstream belief system of greater Albuquerque. Such an environment allows the valley to retain a very strong and vibrant individuality.

Bordered on the south by Interstate 25, on the east by Interstate 25 and the Rio Grande, on the north by Interstate 40, and on the west by the volcanic cliffs of the West Mesa, the South Valley is geographically isolated from the city.³ Most residents live in a rural setting on 1/2 acre of land or more in houses their families may have occupied for several years, if not generations (Gonzales, 1993). Farm animals such as horses, llamas, and even peacocks are not an uncommon sight. These facets of life are part of what defines the valley and the state of mind of those who live here; a state of mind that is rural rather than urban, relaxed rather than stressed, and familial rather than individual. Students at Ernie Pyle are necessarily shaped and influenced by these surroundings and local cultural systems.

Content, Strategies, and Goals

- I. This curriculum unit is designed to assist students from the South Valley with their first forays into "self-hood" by allowing them to investigate their connections with their families, communities, and state. The unit's goals are to provide students with:
 - I. a knowledge of long-standing and recent political issues in the South Valley and New Mexico;
 - II. a knowledge of past and current local and state governmental institutions;
 - III. an examination of the history of social, political, and cultural involvement of their families;
 - IV. self-awareness through individual explorations of their own participation in political and cultural discussions; and
 - V. the ability to research information.

Phases I and II of the unit are closely linked and designed, when combined with phase V, to provide students with sufficient background information for them to complete the more personal aspects of phases III and IV. Though created for this specific group of kids, parts of the unit can easily be modified for all students based on their places of residence.

I & II: New Mexico and South Valley Politics and Institutions

In New Mexico, historic and current political themes are rife with issues that directly affect life in the South Valley. Land grants, water rights and contamination, and social and cultural identity all affect the way people live now and have lived for many years. Increased knowledge of subjects that are important to the state, their community, and their family will allow students to be more precise in identifying the issues that are important to them.

Instruction in this part of the unit includes readings and guest speakers on specific issues as well as a field trip to the Atrisco Land Grant on which some of my students live (Gonzales, 1993; Hain, Garcia, St. Clair, 1994).⁴

Land grants have been and continue to be important in New Mexico and national politics (there are two bills now before the U.S. Congress, one of which would create a committee to study the issue). Commonly, legal heirs to land claims have had their land taken from them illegally or extra-legally (Ebright, 1994). Topics to explore include property rights, cultural identity, ideas of place, Native American concerns, and a history of oppression. In one lesson, students will examine the "first come, first served" argument put forth by some heirs seeking recognition and restitution of their grants (See Example Lesson #1). Another analysis of place will center on an examination of recent ballot initiatives that, if passed, would have created out of the South Valley a new county (The Bureau, 1996).

Contamination of water is of paramount concern in Albuquerque's South Valley. Water pollution in the Albuquerque area has two causes: industrial and residential. Industrial contamination was created by an Air Force plant operated by General Electric and activities associated with Kirtland Air Force Base in the 1950's. These included dumping heavy metals, petroleum products, and other materials into the watershed of the aquifer under the city of Albuquerque. This site was designated an EPA superfund site and will take about 60 years to clean up. The areas affected include the Mountain View and San Jose neighborhoods of the South Valley (Western Water Consultants, 1985). Contamination of ground water due to widespread use of private wells and septic systems in the South Valley is less common. However, as water resources become strained and septic systems outdated, the problem could intensify (Keller and Gallaher, 1987).

Another factor in the discussion of water rights and contamination involves Isleta Pueblo, which borders the South Valley on the South. The people of Isleta routinely bathe in the Rio Grande as part of religious ceremonies. Because of this, federal courts have determined that the city of Albuquerque must help maintain the water quality of the river at a high enough level to allow residents of Isleta Pueblo to continue practicing their customs. Exploration of this topic will involve a review of the above publications. Connections will be made with the Science curriculum with a review of specific contaminants and the problems with each.

Finally, the topic of water in general will be introduced with a simple brainstorming activity on the roles and importance of irrigation ditches, which students experience in their daily lives. These canals were first created by pueblo peoples and then were enhanced by Spaniards seeking to establish farm- and ranch-based communities along the Rio Grande. The *acequias* are taken for granted in the valley: kids play or walk along them; people fish in the larger ones; and in the

past (before contamination) it was common to swim in them. Much of the land in the South Valley is still tied to the irrigation system in the form of water rights granted by Spain. These cannot be separated from the land. Another inroad into this information could be provided by a guest speaker from the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, the government agency that oversees the irrigation systems.

It is possible that many of the above issues will create a negative image of the South Valley as historically inferior, subjugated, and oppressed. For this reason, much of the instruction will be designed to highlight the fact that the people of the South Valley have persevered and thrived despite their hardships. And, mentioned above and elsewhere in this unit, emphasis will also be given to the many positive attributes of this community. It is important to keep in mind the goal of teaching students about themselves in a way that allows them to have pride in who they are and where they come from.

In order to understand the role of community in their lives, students will investigate state and local agencies, their functions, and how they fit into more neighborhood-oriented institutions like health clinics, community centers, churches, etc. Study of these issues and institutions will begin with texts (Hain and Garcia, 1994) and pamphlets from local service providers. Once informed of some public services and policies, students will hear more detail from two guest speakers about functions and purposes of those policies. Also, students will examine their or their families' experiences with one of these agencies. Experiences could range from dealings with the courts or police, working at a job, to going to a health clinic. Experiences for each class will be compiled into giant webs showing the overall structure of local government and community institutions and their connections to each other. Students will analyze their experience with the institutions of community in expository form and will then begin to describe their experiences with the cultures of the community.

III & IV: Student and Family Political Involvement, Ideology, and Culture

Knowledge of New Mexico and South Valley politics will allow students to delve into the next aspect of the unit--exploration of the political and cultural history of their families. Families in the South Valley are most often deeply-rooted, close-knit, non-nuclear, and extended. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins are a common presence in the lives, and often households, of many students. For many children, grandparents or aunts and uncles are the only caregivers because of absent parents. In other cases, extended families assist with childcare after school if the parents work nights or have two jobs. Such close contact with past generations provides the students of the valley with a unique opportunity to delve into the beliefs held by their families, the history of these beliefs, and how they fit into the paradigms of the South Valley, Albuquerque, and the larger world. Such perspectives are in constant interaction with one another and help create the cultural and political expressions of communities. It will also be emphasized that these communities have existed for hundreds of years and were originally settled in the Spanish and Mexican periods long before New Mexico became a territory of the United States in 1848.

A community's cultural expressions are nearly boundless. Art, music, the look of a neighborhood, food, religion, attitudes, and other factors all help bring those boundaries into focus. Students will choose one aspect of their culture to observe and then participate in. Before

this, they will create a list of questions to ask themselves as they are experiencing this event. Answers to these questions will help guide them in producing a narrative of the experience, which, along with the expository piece mentioned above, will later be expanded and integrated into the culminating project.

In addition to this self-selected topic, students will read poems (Vergara, 1975; Anaya, 1987), folk tales (Hayes, 1992; Ulibarri, 1977), and a short story ("The Birthday Party," Sedillo, Michelle; in Anaya, 1987). We will analyze standard elements of fiction such as tone, voice, setting, narration, etc. However, another important focus of their analyses will be the students' ability to identify social, political, and cultural elements of each piece and how these and their interpretations affect meaning (See Example Lesson # 2). Helping students see the cultural and political themes in their own narratives described above will be integral to this lesson.

The fundamental project of this segment of the unit involves two interviews of grandparents and other family members about their social, religious, and political beliefs and activities (See Example Lessons # 3 and # 4). How and why were they created? How and why have they changed? What are they now? In addition to hearing a guest speaker on the process of interviewing, each class will observe a realistic in-class interview. Students also will read excerpts of interviews from magazines and newspapers (Ritchie, 1995). Historic narratives and products of interviews of New Mexicans will also be used to give students an idea of how to let their subjects tell a story (Elasser, MacKenzie, and Tixier y Vigil, 1980; Griego, 1985). These interviews will provide a broad base of information from which the students can explore in more detail not only the political and cultural experiences of their families but also their own. Students will also use information they discover to describe aspects of their specific family culture and will write a narrative depicting a cultural experience important to one member of their family. Examples include *matanzas*, *quinceñeras*,⁵ fiestas, music, weddings, food, language, etc. Students will also respond to the social and political content of their interviews by providing their own opinions of these matters in written form as addenda to the interviews.

After exploration of these specific events, students will define a cultural category their event fits into (food, art, dance, etc.). They will then extend their narratives into more detailed research of the cultural milieu they've identified. Students will then connect their individual experiences with the agencies, issues, and cultural foundations that are integral to their, indeed any, community.

V: Research

During this phase, students will employ research strategies using the internet, school and public libraries, and community resources. Planned as a fourth-quarter unit, students will have had much practice in these skills. Also, prior to creating and giving interviews, students will have instruction and practice making and doing them. A professional interviewer, perhaps a journalist or social science ethnographer (Carlos Vasquez, director of the NMEH South Valley Oral History Project, for example), will be utilized as a guest speaker, and any students working on the school newspaper can give pointers. Interviews of family and community members will then become primary sources of information which students can add to related secondary sources. By sharing available school- and student-owned tape-recorders, students will be able to

perform accurate and professional work. Investigation of that which is close and important to them will supply inherent self-motivation for students to construct specific, intelligent, and creative interviews of their families (Ritchie, 1995).

Timeline

The length of time for the whole unit will be six to seven weeks. Parts one and two will last seven to ten days depending on the knowledge students bring to the class. Because New Mexico History is required in seventh grade and most students have grown up in the South Valley, it is assumed that prior knowledge will be significant. At 13 to 15 days, parts three and four will take the bulk of time in the unit. This will be needed for students to write narratives, interviews, and final projects and also so students can schedule time with interviewees. The research phase will take no more than three days, including a guest speaker on interviewing. As a fourth-quarter unit, much time will have been spent over the year on how to search for, find, use, and cite information.

Final Unit Project

In keeping with the self-directed nature of this unit, the student's own interests and creativity will help determine the selection of format for the final project. Examples of formats include making a comic book, magazine, or newspaper, performing an original play or a group of poems, rewriting or fictionalizing historic events, and even a standard research paper. In a sense, students will be creating a historical fiction; a fiction not about some distant and possibly meaningless event, but one about themselves and their families.

The culminating activity will be a presentation to the class by each student that integrates all other products of the unit. Presentations will be designed to teach the class about the one issue/agency/topic that has been the focus of each student's work. Audience members will be required to ask intelligent questions about each presentation. Likewise, presenters will be expected to be prepared to answer these questions appropriately. Using their work, students will then educate each other about their belief systems and those of their families.

This project requires students to use their relatively new knowledge of New Mexico and the South Valley to focus inquiries into the social, political, and cultural histories of their families. From this information, students will narrow their focus onto themselves and decide what some of their opinions are about current and past political issues, their families, neighborhoods and cultures. Such self-examination will lead to an awareness grounded in many different contexts that will provide a broad scope of knowledge but also feed into the narrow purpose of self-definition.

Example Lesson # 1: Land Grants: first come, first served?

Objective

To expand student knowledge of New Mexico land grants and the complex issues surrounding them.

Background

This lesson is based on the idea that there have been two colonizations of New Mexico. The first began in the late 1500's with the arrival of Spanish Conquistadores who settled New Mexico as a territory of Spain. Included in this settlement was an imposition of social and political structures on Indians who lived here. The second period of colonization began in the 1800's with an influx of Anglo settlers. Since many of the political and social systems had already been Europeanized by the Spaniards, Anglos focused on acquiring political power and capital in the form of land. The effects of both periods permeate the issues surrounding land grants (Ebright, 1994).

Preparation # 1

Divide students into three groups representing Anglo Settlers, Spanish/Mexican Settlers, and Native Americans. Give each group a posterboard map of New Mexico that is colored to indicate fertile and arid lands. Tell each group they can have approximately one-third of the land and they get to choose it. Using ten pieces of construction paper (these can be identical or of differing shapes) and thumbtacks, each group marks off the land they want. Each piece of paper represents an area of land. To make the lesson more meaningful/emotional for the students, each piece of paper also represents two Hershey's Kisses.

Presentation and Discussion

Each group will present its map and explain why it chose its land and what it plans to do with it. Discussion of fertile vs. arid land, water sources, climate, and animal food sources will help define issues involving land and what makes it desirable, not only as a resource, but as a place to inhabit.

Preparation # 2

After presentations and discussion, students will return to their groups. The Spanish/Mexican group will be given a small amount of fake guns and money in secret (in the hall) and will be told in private that they are to use these to acquire three pieces of construction paper from the Native American group. The Anglo group will be given a large amount of fake guns and money in secret and will be told in private that they are to use these to acquire nine pieces of construction paper from the Spanish/Mexican group and four from the Native American group. The Spanish/Mexican group will be told in private that they will be asked questions by the Anglo group and that they are only allowed to say 'yes' or 'OK.' The Native American group will be told that they will be asked questions by both of the other groups and that they are only allowed to say 'yes' or 'OK.'

Colonization

Once all groups are reassembled in the classroom, the Spanish/Mexican group will take land away from the Native American group. This will be followed by the Anglo group, which will take land from both of the other groups. All newly-acquired pieces of "land" will be added to that group's map. Groups that have had land taken away cannot rearrange their pieces. Finally, according to how many pieces of land each group has, Hershey's Kisses will be distributed.

Discussion/Assessment

After a pause allowing for the activities to sink in, the teacher will lead a discussion focusing on the feelings and thoughts of those who have conquered and those who have been defeated. Why do things like this happen continually in world history? How is what you are feeling, particularly the conquerors, related to why domination continues? What can be done to end these ways of behavior or prevent them from occurring? Can you compare this experience to similar situations in the world that have happened or that are happening now? Examination of these questions and the emotions and thoughts they analyze will be done in a journal due the next day.

Example Lesson # 2: Identifying social, cultural, and political aspects of poetry, folk tales, and short stories.

Objective

Students will create personal connections with their culture through analysis of Chicano literature.

Brainstorming

What are those things that define society, politics, and culture? How do your narratives of experiences with public agencies deal with culture and politics? How has art you have seen in public (murals, paintings, etc.) included elements of politics and culture?

As these questions are posed and others arise, the teacher writes responses on the board or overhead. The teacher then groups these into categories which are labeled by the students.

Discussion

The above process and its product will be discussed to further enumerate any hidden nuances.

Reading

Read aloud a poem or very short story to the students. This piece should have overt political and cultural content so students can start off well while easing themselves into a new way of thinking about art. Perhaps begin with "Heart of the Great Southwest," "Immigrant," or "Acoma (1610)" (Vergara, 1975) or "Once A Man Knew His Name," "Grito With Hope," or "Grand Slam" (Anaya, 1987).

Discussion

With the categories and listing on the board, have students identify aspects of politics and culture in the piece. As they do this, check off those that are included. Once this is done, press students to extract meaning from their analysis. It is less important to know what aspects of politics and culture may be included in a work of art than it is to be able to articulate what that presence means to the piece. Questions such as What does it mean that Vergara used 1610 in the title? What happened then? and Why does Vasquez switch from Spanish to English to Spanish? may aid students. An important aspect of this and similar lessons is imparting a sense of respect for multiple languages, including Spanish.

Activity

Students will produce their own work of art and include several cultural and political elements that are important to them. These will be exchanged in groups and group members will try to identify the cultural and political elements in these works.

Assessment

Assessment will be limited to observing how well students can include identified cultural and political elements into their art and how well they identify it in the works of others. Creating a worksheet which students could use when analyzing other's work might be useful

Example Lesson # 3: How to interview a subject (a close relative): A Handout of General Guidelines for Students, adapted from Ritchie, 1995.

- Introduce yourself and explain why you are interviewing them and what it will be used for.
- Ask open-ended questions. What it was like when you went to school? instead of Where did you go to school?
- Your purpose is to gather stories, memories, and impressions.
- Start with general questions to allow the subject to become more comfortable. Once this is achieved, you can begin to ask more specific and detailed questions. But keep in mind, you are there to hear their stories.
- Ask questions about what they've told you; this is a good way to add detail. It will also make the interview seem more natural than if you just read questions off a script.
- Try to put subjects at ease--they probably feel just as nervous as you.
- Be attentive to the subject's needs. Are they uncomfortable? Are they only giving short answers?
- Be patient in letting the subject give complete responses. A pause may be just to catch their breath.
- As you interview, look for that key question that might get your subject to really open up and be comfortable with you.⁶
- Keep an eye on the tape. Don't let it run out!
- If you think the subject is comfortable with you but may be running out of things to say, ask to see any photographs they may have. These may spark their memory and lead to more information.
- Your interview shouldn't last more than an hour and a half.
- At the end of the interview, tell subjects that they were helpful and appreciated and they will be given a transcript of the interview.

Example Lesson #4: Brainstorming to create a list of questions all students will ask in the interview. Note: this will be added to students' individual question lists.

Objective

To create a baseline of information which can be looked at in scientific terms regarding individual interviews at a certain time and a broad scope of interviews over a long period of time.

Background Information

Remind students of the scope of the project and that their work could become part of a long-term historical document. Discuss scientific information-gathering procedures and the importance of being able to cross-reference different responses over a period of several years. In light of this and once students have begun to view the project more broadly, go on to the next step.

Preparation Questions

What information do we need to know? What is important about living here? Write down all responses and help select appropriate groups of questions. Possible questions include: How have traditional Mexican and Hispanic cultures changed? What are the primary differences now compared with 20 or 40 years ago? What is the role of grandparents in your lives? Who are and were the important community leaders?

Work

Students will be given 10-15 minutes to write down three to five questions for a common list of questions. If there is enough time, the list will be compiled on the same day. Otherwise, this will be their homework and the list will be compiled and distributed in the days following.

Assessment

A simple pass/fail determined by observation of whether they completed the assignment.

Unit Overview

Week One

- Information on the overall unit, the assignments, and how they fit together. Brainstorming and discussion of several key concepts of the unit: land and water rights, community and cultural identity, aspects of culture and politics, and family.
- Readings related to land grants (Ebright, 1994) and Indian, Chicano, and Anglo perspectives of them (Hain, Garcia, and St. Clair, pp. 187-205).
- First come, first served lesson on land grants (see Example Lesson # 1).
- Field trip to Atrisco Land Grant in the South Valley with a talk by heirs.
- Readings on other issues related to South Valley: new county proposals (The Bureau, 1996) and wastewater contamination (Keller and Gallaher, 1987). Journal writing: what does it mean to live in the South Valley?

Week Two

- Discussion of students' experience with local government and private service providers. Handout of an outline of the structure of New Mexico government, based on Hain,

Garcia, and St. Clair, 1994. Readings of pamphlets from health clinics, community centers, churches, police stations, etc.

- Students have a family member discuss an experience with one of the above community institutions. With notes from "interview," write an expository piece based on the experience.
- Continue expository writing. Discussion of experiences with interviewing such as note-taking, listening skills, comfort of both participants, major problems etc.

Week Three

- Students create a list of questions to ask themselves about a cultural item/event (food, religion, art, etc.). They experience this event and afterwards use these questions to write a narrative of their experience.
- Continue writing narrative and peer editing of narrative.
- Read poems, short stories and folk tales. Analyze standard elements of fiction.
- Read poems, short stories and folk tales. Analyze cultural, political, and social elements of fiction (see Example Lesson # 2).
- Analyze cultural, political, and social elements of student narratives. Students begin to schedule their interviews of family members for the end of Week Four. Interviews must be completed by Wednesday of Week Five. Interviews will be tape-recorded.

Week Four

- Review problems associated with "interviews" of family members during Week One. Provide handout "How to Interview a Close Relative" from Ritchie, 1995, and discuss. Read interviews and historic narratives based on interviews (Elasser, MacKenzie, and Tixier y Vigil, 1980; Griego, 1985).
- Brainstorming: since we want to know about the social, religious, and political beliefs and activities of family members, what kinds of questions do we need to ask? Use this time and handout to help students learn appropriate questioning strategies. Watch a video of interviews.
- Students come in with a list of five questions and expand it to 20. In groups, students read their questions to each other to check for appropriateness and quality.
- Guest speaker on the process of interviewing and a mock interview for the students to observe.
- Students come in with second set of five questions for second interview and expand it to 20 questions.

Week Five

- Instruction in the format of writing an interview. Begin transcribing and responding to interviews and writing narrative of a cultural experience important to a family member (due Friday).
- Continue work on transcribing and responding to interviews and writing cultural experience narrative.

- Continue writing as above. Read aloud to students "White Mice" (Author?) in eighth-grade literature textbook. Interviews due.
- Continue writing as above and include peer editing of narrative. Define cultural category (food, dance, art, politics, etc.) of family experience narrative. Begin research of that category (paper due Friday of Week Six with three drafts).
- Continue writing and editing as above. Continue research of cultural theme using library, internet, and student interviews of family as sources. Narratives due with one peer edit.

Week Six

- (All Week) Continue research and writing of cultural theme paper. Paper should be typed, but not required. Must have correct bibliographic information, even when citing your own interview as a source.
- Paper due Friday along with: expository piece about a family experience with institutions of community; questions about a cultural event and a narrative based on that experience; a narrative based on the cultural experience of a family member; and transcribed interviews of two family members. Note: although students have turned all these in previously save the research paper, I find having them compile several assignments so they can be turned in as one large work gives students a sense of pride in what they've accomplished.

Week Seven

- Presentations to class and discussion about each presentation.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this unit will empower my students by giving them access to their community. This access will provide ways in which they can create positive images of their lives which are not readily available from the media. Indeed, negative perceptions of the South Valley and the people who live there are held by most residents of Albuquerque, teachers in valley schools, and by South Valley communities themselves. These long-held perceptions serve to maintain the status quo of poverty and underdevelopment in valley communities and powerlessness, apathy, and underachievement in students of these communities. Only by changing the students' perceptions of themselves will they be able to change the perceptions of others. Helping students create positive self-identities will go a long way to accomplishing this. More importantly, a more positive self-image will begin to open students' minds to the possibilities before them and the wondrous things they can achieve.

Notes

1. Students in New Mexico are required to take the Terra Nova, a standardized test, in the sixth, eighth, and 10th grades. Students at Ernie Pyle received a percentile score of 24.5 in 1998. In 1999, their score was 31. A score at the 50th percentile puts one at the national average.
2. In fact, much of the South Valley is **not** part of the city, never having been incorporated and left out of annexations of other old, suburban, mostly Chicano and Hispanic neighborhoods in 1948 and 1949 (Gonzales, p. 158). Efforts as recent as 1996 have failed to pass ballot initiatives

in favor of making the South Valley into a new county.

3. For local flavor in distinguishing these boundaries, the manuscripts of the NMEH (New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities) South Valley Oral History Project have been helpful as well as entertaining. Transcripts of interviews reveal many varying viewpoints of South Valley boundaries, but all seem to have very specific ideas of exactly where the valley ends and the rest of the world, here represented by Albuquerque, begins.

4. Land grants have sporadically become hot topics in various areas of New Mexico, including the South Valley. Land originally given to Spanish and Mexican colonists by the King of Spain was legitimized with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 by the U.S. and Mexican governments. Many feel this treaty has not been honored and that land has been unjustly taken away from heirs of original land grant recipients.

5. A *matanza* is a spring-time celebration in which a family butchers a pig, goat, or both, often cooking them over several days in a pit dug in the ground and filled with coals. Its literal meaning is killing or slaughter. A *quinceñera* is a rite-of-passage celebration for girls who have just turned 15. It marks the movement away from childhood into womanhood.

6. This is modeled on the "home run question" attributed to Studs Terkel and his interviewing technique by Ritchie, 1995, p. 69.

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