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Challenges Faced by Female Mexican Pre-Service Teachers
in Balancing Their Career and Motherhood

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Senior Capstone

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Abstract

Female Mexican pre-service teachers make up the largest percentage of the overall number of student-parents that are currently enrolled in community college and university. In particular, the Mexican student-mothers face many challenges, ranging from finding and scheduling childcare, and unwelcoming school climate, to limited institutional support programs and services, as well as cultural expectations. This senior capstone research project examines the challenges faced by six female Mexican pre-service student-mothers while balancing their career and motherhood at a university on the central coast of California. The result findings indicate that their challenges include the lack of resources within the university, inflexible expectations from the university and judgment within their community to support them. Given these challenges, there is a need to reform policies, so that resources would be available to support female Mexicana pre-service teachers.

Introduction

Becoming pregnant in the middle of my undergraduate studies is one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. However, it was also one of the most challenging times of my life and continues to be, albeit now as mother of an infant boy. In short, countless difficulties come with becoming and being a mother. I was enrolled in school throughout all my pregnancy. For the first few months, until I “showed,” I appeared just like a “regular” student, just like all my classmates. However, I was nauseous to the point of almost not being able to function, let alone attend class. But missing class was not an option because of the limited absences allowed during the four weeks. Thus, I made sure to participate in every class session, even though I was unable to pay attention because of nausea. This does not include the newly acquired intricate feelings of responsibility, pressure, and anxiety that a new mother experiences once she finds out she carries a life in her womb. The fall semester was more difficult due to all the body changes, hormonal changes, and lack of sleep that happened during the second trimester of pregnancy. For days on end, all I remember is having a sharp stabbing pain in my lower back. This pain, ligament pain, is one of the most common complaints during pregnancy. Unable to obtain a doctor’s note due to the commonality of the symptom, I was unable to be “medically” excused from class and was, once again, required to attend class, though I was ill. Fast forward to the beginning of the spring semester when I gave birth. No one prepared me for what was to come. Aside from labor, physical complications, and caring for a newborn, I dealt with a debilitating and crushing postpartum depression that clouded my reasoning. Throughout this process, I felt like motherhood was an entity that was separate from my education.

Female college students who become pregnant are faced with not only the risk of childbirth but also the accountability of their education and childcare (Brown & Amankwaa,

2007). I am interested in bringing awareness to this topic because there is little research currently addressing the challenges that female pre-service teachers encounter in balancing their education and motherhood. The main motive behind my interest in researching pregnancy and motherhood among pre-service educators is that I experienced this life transition myself, and I want to use my experience to help other women in their journey. Through my studies, and especially since I started this capstone project, I have interacted with multiple classmates that became mothers during their pre-service teacher education, either at community college or the university level or who enrolled in school already as a mother. Like myself, these student-mothers suffered and continue to struggle to balance their roles. Some dropped all their classes, some took time off school, some took longer than their non-parent peers to graduate, and some gave up altogether. Given my own racial, ethnic, and cultural background, I decided to focus on the challenges that Latina, specifically Mexicana pre-service teachers encounter in their journey as student-mothers.

Latina student-mothers face challenges ranging from finding and scheduling childcare, and unwelcoming school climates to limited institutional support programs and services (Caballero, Martinez-Vu, Perez, Telles, & Vega, 2019). From my observations and discussion with other Mexican pre-service teacher mothers, universities offer little to no support for students who currently identify as parents or as expectant parents. Mexicana students also encounter struggles that stem from cultural beliefs and expectations. The centrality of the mother-child relationship in Mexican families situates mothers as experts in their children's upbringing, development, and education (Durand, 2010), even if they are first-time mothers. Similarly, a Latina/Chicana mother is viewed as a person without further identity (e.g., student, professional), but as one who should find her chief gratification in being all day with small children (Goergen & Smith, 2013). These are but a few of the traditional cultural beliefs that affect the educational

progress of Mexicana mothers. Cultural values that limit educational growth combined with non-existent support from educational institutions hinder success for many Mexicana pre-service student mothers.

For my Capstone project, my primary research question is: *What are the challenges that Mexicana pre-service teachers face in balancing their education and motherhood.* Consequently, my secondary research questions include: *What does the research say about the obstacles Mexicana pre-service teachers face in balancing their academic development and motherhood? What are the cultural expectations Mexicanas face as mothers within their community? What are the academic expectations Mexicanas face as students in preparing to become teachers? What policies do universities have that support Mexicana students who are mothers? Lastly, given the challenges Mexicana pre-service teachers face, what can be done to support student-mothers to balance being mothers and students simultaneously?* To answer these questions, I will investigate past research done on this issue as well as interview Mexican pre-service teachers.

Literature Review

The number of women of color is increasing in the United States as well as in educational institutions. Currently, the percentage of women of color in the U.S. is estimated to grow from thirty-eight percent (38%) to fifty-two percent (52%) in 2050 (Caballero et al., 2019). The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) estimates that twenty-two percent (22%) of all undergraduates are parents (2019). This means that more than one in every five students is a parent, and out of those students, roughly seventy percent (70%) are mothers, the majority being mothers of color (IWPR, 2019; Caballero et al., 2019).

Despite their continuous growth, Latina students continue to face issues of access, remediation, affordability, retention, low expectations, and long-term success, among other factors in their quest for higher education. In addition to these struggles, Latina student-mothers face further challenges such as lack of financial resources, academic issues, family obligations, and expectations, lack of childcare, gender-role stereotyping, and limited institutional support (Rodriguez, Guido, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Caballero et al., 2019). The present inadequacies are troubling because pregnant and student-mothers' enrollment in higher education is higher than it has been in the past. Yet, degree attainment for Latinas continues to be low (Caballero et al., 2019). A successful education can better the future of Latina mothers and their families. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the challenges faced by this community to examine possible strategies that promote academic success. For that reason, this paper goes in-depth into the struggles that Mexicana student-mothers face within their respective educational and cultural settings.

Challenges in Educational Settings. Even though researchers have studied Latinas' involvement in higher education, there is scarce research devoted to Latina student-mothers. Nonetheless, this paper attempts to expose the barriers that madres (mothers) have to overcome as college students during and post-pregnancy.

As mentioned in the introduction section, pregnant student-mothers struggle with a lack of concentration, physical discomfort, failure to cope with the workload, and academic stress in the classroom (Nkosi, Makhene, & Matlala, 2019). While some universities permit pregnant students be medically excused from attending class or completing assignments, women feel obligated to fulfill their responsibilities and to lose learning time. As a result, they experience high-stress levels that negatively impact both their pregnancy and academic performance (Nkosi

et al., 2019). Those who receive medical absences often end up falling or behind failing, causing professors to give up on them. Another barrier is a lack of social support from peers and professors. Pregnant mothers often feel the assumptions made by their peers and professors about their perceived lack of commitment to their education (Caballero et al., 2019). When pregnant students lack a sense of belonging, they feel isolated and discriminated against, and this can lead to further challenges in their academic performance (Nkosi et al., 2019). The same struggles apply after childbirth. Mothers often return to classes as soon as they give birth, so they don't fall behind. Others in contrast, quit school because they feel as if they cannot keep up. Although the struggles mentioned in this section correspond to students in nursing programs, the findings still apply to pregnant-students in other disciplines, like education.

After birth, student-mothers deal with additional strains. These include inadequate lactation spaces, lack of childcare, lack of educational support, and stigma. A study addressing breastfeeding and lactation found that out of 139 colleges, only 54% of the schools had a designated lactation room available for students (Albrecht, Wang, & Spatz, 2017). However, a more in-depth investigation showed that within the schools that did provide the space, there was an average of only 0.39 spaces per 1,000 students (Albrecht et al., (2017), making this an insufficient resource for student-mothers. In regards to childcare, less than half of the more than 1,000 community colleges in the United States offer on-campus childcare for students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (AAUW, 2014). Mothers have to schedule childcare around class schedules, which can differ every semester. Finding a suitable childcare service presents a challenge because it takes time and research, especially when considering things like cost, location, and availability (GoGrad, 2018). This is relevant because student-parents are more likely to drop out of school due to caregiving responsibilities and limited

financial resources (AAUW, 2014). On top of inadequate scheduling options, student-mothers struggle with "time poverty." Students with preschool-age children only have about 10 hours per day to dedicate to schoolwork, sleeping, eating, and leisure activities, compared to the 21 hours that childless students have (Wladis, Hachey, & Conway, 2018). Yet, professors continue to hold student-mothers to rigid assignment deadlines and attendance requirements. These factors contribute to pregnant-students and new mothers having a much harder time completing their degrees than their childless peers (Wladis et al., 2018). Moreover, student mothers are subject to stigma. They are often categorized as "bad students" who are not serious and care more about their family than their performance within the university (Caballero et al., 2019). The combination of being a student and a mother creates a unique set of adversities. The explained challenges form a hostile environment in educational settings that do not support student-mothers success.

Challenges within the Mexican Community. As Mexicanas, student-mothers face culturally-specific family roles, beliefs, values, and goals that differentiate them from mothers of other cultures. Mexicana mothers and women, in general, are tied to traditional gender-role expectations. The Mexican culture emphasizes a strong allegiance to an idealized form of motherhood and patriarchal ideology that frowns upon working wives and mothers and does not encourage girls to pursue higher education or employment options (Segura, 1991). In this notion of idealized motherhood, women are viewed as experts in their children's development and education (Durand, 2010). And in more traditional families, the Latina/Chicana mother is considered to be a person without further identity (e.g. student, professional), one who can find her chief gratification in being all day with small children (Goergen & Smith, 2013). Additionally, women are viewed as *amas de casa* (homemakers) who are in charge of all the

home duties. Activities that take mothers out of the home, in this case, school, are less important or "secondary" to their domestic duties (Goergen & Smith, 2013). Therefore, when Mexicana women spend time away from home to pursue higher education, they are perceived by their families and community as "bad mothers" for abandoning their children (Caballero et al., 2019). Of course, Mexican culture also values education and offers support systems to mothers. But as mentioned, education is secondary to childrearing. Those students-mothers that do receive support in the form of childcare from their families nonetheless often feel guilty for leaving their children with their parents for long periods. This is due to the values that they have been raised with. This may act as a distraction from their education and prevent them from fully participating, which leads to sub-par performance in their college endeavors (Powell, 2016).

While some universities have adopted student-parent policies, many others do not have formal policies even as student-parent numbers continue to increase (Pare, 2015). As such, student-mothers who attend universities without comprehensive policies must navigate the existing realities of their academic lives and motherhood without any "protections" (Pare, 2015). Similarly, even though Mexican beliefs continue to change in favor of education for mothers, student-mothers are still negatively impacted by cultural norms that act as barriers. To make matters worse, Mexicana student-mothers have to balance both roles while attempting to obtain a career. Colleges, universities, professors, researchers, and education policy-makers should prioritize factors that promote Mexican mothers' successful adaptation and academic performance. The evidence provided supports the existing need for access to resources for student-mothers.

Research Design and Methods

Research Design

A qualitative and contextual research design was used for this project. Qualitative methods were utilized to collect and examine the in-depth interview data of six Mexicana student-mothers. The research was also contextual as it was conducted at a university on the central coast of California.

Procedures

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in a semi-structured manner. The participants were interviewed as a focus group. The conversation of the focus group was centered around the questions in Appendix 1 and lasted approximately two hours. The items in Appendix 1 were constructed in a way that would yield the necessary information to answer the questions posed by this project. The data was gathered from common themes that arose from the participants' answers.

Context

A university on the central coast of California was analyzed to provide more information on the participants' experience. The university's student racial demographics are made up of 39% Hispanic or Latino, 32% Caucasian, 8% two or more races, 7% Asian American, 6% other/decline, 1% Native American, and 1% Pacific Islander. 63% of the students are female, and 37% are male. Within the education department of the university, which is part of the focus of this project, approximately 46% is Hispanic, or Latina and 85% are female, and 15% is male (Institutional Assessment Research Data, n.d.).

Participants

For the present investigation, the researcher analyzed qualitative interview data from six Mexican student-mothers who are currently enrolled in Liberal Studies coursework pursuing a teaching career. These women were purposively selected for their backgrounds. All participants

identify themselves as student-mothers, as Mexican and have one or more children, as described in Table 1. Four of the mothers became pregnant before finishing their college education. Two of the mothers enrolled in the university as mothers. The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. The participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Table 1. Participants by number of children.

Pseudonym	Pregnant in College	No. Children
Isabella	No	3
Mirna	No	1
Celia	Yes	1
Mayeli	Yes	1
Marisol	Yes	1
Cristina	Yes	2

Results and Discussion

The data confirmed that Mexican student-mothers faced challenges while balancing their education and motherhood. This section answers the questions posed by this project. Literary research helped reveal what research says about the difficulties that Mexicana student-mothers face. Interview data answered the questions about the expectations that the Mexican community and the University place on student-mothers. The main themes that emerged from the interviews, as well as the discussion below, are the cultural expectations, academic expectations, and university policies and resources. The contextual research data answer the question of resources and policies offered by the university. These data also reinforced the participants' responses. Moreover, the qualitative data also records several aspirations that act as possible solutions. The

women expressed how they hope the educational journey of future student-mothers will be more conducive to the success as mothers in the classroom. These collective findings document the harm that student-mothers face in completing their educational journey. The answers to the research questions are described in detail in the next few paragraphs.

What does the research say about the obstacles Mexicana pre-service teachers face in balancing their academic development and motherhood?

Literature research does not include studies focused on the obstacles that Mexicana pre-service teachers face in balancing their academic development and motherhood. A search in Google Scholar or any other database for research on "Mexican student mothers" or "pregnancy and teacher preparation" only elicited research on teen pregnancy and what high school teachers can do to prevent teen pregnancy among other topics that had very little in common with this topic. Although there is some research on pregnant students at the college level, it ignores the cultural aspect. This is important because this project argues that culture can contribute to the challenges that student-mothers face. The researcher compiled research from the different aspects of the topic, such as the Mexican culture, Mexican mothers, breastfeeding, pregnancy in college students, and university policies, among other issues. The results allowed the researcher to form a cohesive argument. A summary of the outcomes is described in the next paragraph.

In regards to policies, the research found that a now invalid act called Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act attempted to bring services that encouraged student parents' success in 2007 (Brown & Nichols, 2013). In that same year a bill proposed by representative Marcy Kaptur was the first federal recognition to assist student- mothers but it died in committee. In 2009, President Barack Obama increased Pell Grants, created a \$4000 refundable tax credit to help students and families pay for postsecondary education, and created a

grant called "Moms Return to School" (Brown & Nichols, 2013). Finally, the National Collegiate Athletic Association built a policy surrounding the treatment of pregnant and parenting student-athletes (Brown & Nichols, 2013). Despite having these policies, Brown and Nichols (2013) found that daycare on campus, financial aid, scheduling and classes, and transportation are resources are lacking and hinder academic success (Brown & Nichols, 2013). Daycare on campus and financial aid being the most challenging. Consequently, areas that need targeted efforts to help ensure the success of parenting students in higher education include: delegation of current policies, analysis of existing policies and programs that have worked in other areas, and creation of new programs and policies (Brown & Nichols, 2013). Another study describes how being a parent and a student is negatively associated with persistence in higher education because parent's college commitment is often secondary to family and work (Berkner & Horn, 2003).

What are the cultural expectations Mexicanas face as mothers within their community?

As it is mentioned in the background section, in the Mexican culture, women are viewed as "amas de casa," which means homemakers. When the participants were asked, "What are the cultural expectations the Mexican community has for you as a mother?" All six-women expressed similar opinions. The two main themes that emerged were domestic responsibilities and judgement. Isabella simply answered the question by saying, "Zoila" (personal communication, October 16, 2019). When the researcher asked for clarification, she said, "Zoila la que limpio, Zoila la labo, Zoila la que cocina, Zoila la que plancha" (Isabella, personal communication, 16 October 2019). This statement translates to; "I am the one who cleans, I am the one washes, I am the one who cooks, I am the who irons." Similarly, Mirna said, "school was always a challenge because she had to meet the responsibilities of the home" (Mirna, personal communication, 16 October 2019). The rest of the women gave statements that resembled the

two above. This question also yielded answers regarding judgement. For example, "When I became pregnant, I felt inappropriate because of the stereotypes of Mexican culture, I was going to be looked down at because I was going to school and was pregnant" (Mayeli, personal communication, 16 October 2019). When asked if cultural expectations of the Mexican community created challenges for her, Cristina said, "I feel that I am judged if I am not doing what is expected of me. They give me glances of disapproval" (Cristina, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Celia offered a more direct response, where she mentioned that her in-laws are old fashion. She said, "They believe that my daughter should stay with the family when we are away but judge me when I spend too much time away, even if it at school (Celia, personal communication, 16 October 2019)." These responses show how the expectation that the Mexican community put of student-mothers create tension.

What are the academic expectations Mexicanas face as students in preparing to become teachers?

This section compares the before and after the participants became mothers. The most emergent theme is unreasonable expectations from both the school and their professors. Three of the six participants stated that before becoming mothers, they had more freedom to concentrate on their academics. Isabella said, "Before becoming a mom, I focused on my studies. I could do more" (Isabella, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Marisol stated that she "was able to stay at the library as much as needed" (Marisol, personal communication, 16 October 2019). On the other hand, when the students were asked what the academic expectations schools are. Isabella answered by sharing one of her experiences. She said the following.

Talking to professors is easy because they do not understand. One would ask why my assignments were late, and I would tell them that my kid was crying in the ER. Another

professor even insinuated that I was out partying. I was triggered, and I went into his office and went off on him and told him "you apparently don't have children and you don't understand" and was told "maybe you need to take fewer classes" as a parent it was frustrating (Isabella, personal communication, 16 October 2019).

Likewise, Mirna said, "I had a deadline, and my daughter was sick. I petted her hair and typed at the same time, but professors do not care about that kind of stuff. I was not able to give my best work by midnight because my child was sick" (Mirna, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Mayeli mentioned the University itself instead of the professors. She said, "The school started sending me emails to pay my tuition because I was two days past the deadline when I dropped my classes. I was worried and had to pay 3 thousand dollars out of my pocket. They kept sending me emails and expected me to come to campus, but I couldn't walk due to the c-section" (Mayeli, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Whether the expectations came from the school or the professors, they caused difficulties for the participants.

What policies and resources do universities have that support Mexicana students who are mothers?

The results from the contextual research are discussed in this paragraph. The educational institution that was analyzed for this capstone project is a university located on the central coast of California. Because the focus community of this project is Mexicana pre-services student-mothers, the researcher only interviewed student-mothers within the Liberal Studies (LS) major. As stated before, the education department of the university is approximately 85% female, and 15% male, making it female-dominated. It is crucial to note that 46% of the LS department is Hispanic or Latino and (Institutional Assessment Research Data, n.d.). This shows that there is a group of students (Mexicana student-mothers) within this institution that are or could potentially

be affected by the challenges in question, as well as the aspirations detailed below. Aside from the demographics, the researcher also examined the resources that this institution has available for student-mothers. The school's website counts with a section that informs students about expectant parenthood information, baby changing locations, childcare centers, and lactation space access. Students who are pregnant or experiencing related childbirth concerns are directed to Student Disability Resources. In regards to changing stations, there are two stations located in the restrooms of two different buildings found within the school's premises. It is important to note that one of the changing stations is inside the school's stadium; therefore, it is out of students' reach. While the school has approximately 80 buildings, only 0.025% of the buildings are equipped with a changing station, which is an essential resource for student-parents of infants and toddlers. The childcare center that is found on school grounds can serve 24 preschool children (3-5years), and 12 early-preschool children (2-3years), and 12 toddlers (1-2years). In total, only 44 children can attend the childcare center. As a result, there is a long waitlist for student-parents. Childcare cost varies at this location and varies depending on the number of hours the child spends there. The school has one lactation room found inside the school's library. Once again, only 1 out of the 80 buildings is equipped to serve student-mothers' breastfeeding needs, making it difficult for students to get access if they are not near the library.

Lastly, given the challenges Mexicana pre-service teachers face, what can be done to support student-mother s to balance being mothers and students simultaneously?

When the participants were asked, "if you could create a perfect world, how could the university support you as a mother?" They shared their hopes. These suggestions serve as possible solutions because they are resources that are currently lacking in the University. Cristina said, "I would be able to take my daughter to school for free. There would be a place where I

could go in and out to see her and spend some time with her while I am at school. I would get work done but also, I know that she is close (Cristina, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Cristina referred to a childcare center where she would be able to drop of her daughter without having to worry about having to pay and without having to worry about being judged (Cristina, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Marisol focused her answers on the difficulties she had when she was pregnant. She said, "I wish that there was designated parking for expectant moms because walking across campus with a handful of bags and a thirty-eight-week belly was very difficult" (Marisol, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Three of the participants mentioned that they would like to be able to bring children to class. Celia said, "I know that some teachers say that we could bring our kids to class but I feel like that is not a real option because other students will judge me for doing so" (Celia, personal communication, 16 October 2019)". When the researcher asked what she thought could solve this issue, Celia said, "creating welcoming spaces" where students were family-friendly and understood the importance of family (Celia, personal communication, 16 October 2019). Mirna's answer targeted class scheduling. She said the following;

As a student-mother, who has to commute on a daily basis, I struggle with the unreasonable class schedules. One semester, I had to take a class in the morning and a night class. I left my house before my daughter woke up and could not go back until my night class ended. By that time, my daughter was asleep. The school does not take into consideration that parents have to accommodate for childcare. If we had more options, I would be able to schedule my classes when she is at school. That way, I would be able to spend more time with her and also save on childcare (Celia, personal communication, 16 October 2019).

Mayeli and Isabella hoped for more support from professors. Mayeli said, "Professors expect us to perform as other students but we are not the same as regular students. I am not asking for freebies, I am asking for some understanding when I cannot meet a deadline or when I can't show up for class" (Mayeli, personal communication, 16 October 2019). And Isabella said, "Sometimes I think of the accommodations that students with special needs or disabilities receive, I feel like student parents would greatly benefit from them too. I know that our situation cannot compare but as parents we have additional responsibilities that differentiate us from independent students" (Isabella, personal communication, 16 October 2019). The researcher asked Isabella to further explain her answer and she clarified that student mother could use resources such as "assignment extensions and test accommodations. Overall, the participants' responses show that there is a lot of room for improvement in their University. Their aspirations correspond to the challenges that they have faced during their education. Implementing family-friendly resources would help student-mothers overcome their difficulties to succeed.

Problems and Limitations

This study was focused on one campus within a larger university system. Therefore, the findings can not necessarily be generalized to other university or community college campuses. Also, this project does not investigate the university's and professors' perception of student mothers. Another limitation is that the initial number of participants was ten, but only five women were able to attend the face-to-face interview, in a great part due to limited child-care. The interview questions were sent via email to the other four women, but no responses were received. The biggest limitation was the lack of research done on the topic.

Recommendations

The results that emerged from the literature research and interviews show that there is a need for increased support for Mexicana student mothers. Educational institutions like the one reviewed for this project need to account for their students' needs. Some of the changes that could benefit student-parents are creating welcoming environments and revision of existing policies. Welcoming environments would entail allowing student-parents to bring their children to campus, offering affordable on-campus childcare, creating lactation spaces available in all buildings, adding changing stations to existing restrooms, offering designated parking spaces, and, more importantly, educating students and professors about student-parent needs. Adding lactation rooms would support women's' breastfeeding journey, given the importance of breastfeeding to both the mother and the child. Additionally, there are some policies and laws, like the ones mentioned in the results section, that seek to support and protect student-mothers' rights. However, they are only available to low-income student-mothers. In some cases, the individuals that could benefit from these resources are not aware of their existence. Therefore, they often go unused. This is a problem that calls for both revision and addition of new policies and laws. Making these resources available would create a family-friendly environment. The significant gap between the resources that are needed and the resources that are available for student mothers calls for immediate solutions. These recommendations are based on the challenges that actual student-mothers face daily. Implementing them in educational institutions would promote student-mother success and better family lives.

Conclusion

The initial research question presented in this project, "*What are the challenges that Mexicana pre-service teachers face in balancing their education and motherhood?*" is answered through the close examination of qualitative data, literary research, and contextual research. The women's

experiences are the pillars of this project because they provide in-depth information about the challenges that they have faced and continue to struggle with as they move through academic spaces. Problems were identified within educational areas such as community colleges or universities and within community spaces, in this case, within the Mexican community. These challenges included lack of childcare, lactation spaces, changing tables, and support from support staff like professors and counselors — other difficulties are stigma and judgment. Student-mothers are labeled as "bad-students" by professors for spending time meeting their children's needs and as "bad-mothers" by their families for spending extended amounts of time studying. Educational institutions do not take into account the challenges that student-mothers face within their community and vice versa. As a result, the struggles that students face during and after pregnancy cause tension and decrease success among student-mothers. They create delays in degree completion or make student-mothers fail to cope with their studies and, as a result, end up quitting. It is essential to address this issue because, as it is stated above, student-parents form the most significant percentage of non-traditional students, and this number continues to grow as time passes. Addressing the challenges would require modifications in resources, policies, and laws. The findings reviewed above make a case for increased programming and policy decisions that benefit pregnant and parenting students. The recommendations posted by this are creating welcoming spaces where mothers are allowed to bring their children to class, have access to lactation rooms and changing tables, and have increased support from professors. Both policy and programmatic efforts, along with the research avenue, must be pursued at once. Helping Mexican student-mothers to achieve their educational goals allows for their success, which in return helps their families and the university as well.

More importantly, it will enable student-mothers to become teachers. This is important due to the current racial gap in the teaching profession.

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Appendix 1

Mexicana Pre-Service Mother Survey Questions

1. Did you begin your college career as a mother? (what was it like before)
2. What was it like being just a student before becoming a mother?
3. How has motherhood changed your schooling experience?
4. How has motherhood changed your ideas about what it means to be a teacher?
5. What are the cultural expectations the Mexican community has for you as a mother?
6. Do the cultural expectations of the Mexican community create challenges for you as a mother while going to school?
7. What are the academic expectations schools have of you as a student?
8. Does the community college/university (CSUMB) accommodate if at all your motherhood?
9. Are you aware of any university policies that support you as mother?
10. If you could create a perfect world, how can the university support you as a mother?
11. If you could create a perfect world, how can the Mexican community support you as a student?