

Land Loss Among the Hispanos of Northern New Mexico: Unfinished Psychological Business

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ABSTRACT. There has been little exploration of the psychological impact of land loss and displacement on American minority populations. What little there is, is evident in research on Native Americans. Virtually absent from the mental health literature is research on the psychological processes of land loss and the coping strategies employed by the Hispanos of Northern New Mexico. Hispanos received land grants by the Spanish and Mexican governments beginning in the 17th century. Living in Northern New Mexico for many years, this author observed

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This study was conducted as a pilot with the intention of testing a hypothesis based on observations and a literature review. Some of the findings in this study were presented at the Western Social Science Association on April, 2003, Las Vegas, NV. This study also comprises the foundation for a current grounded theory dissertation in clinical psychology.

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negative emotions regarding land loss within the Hispano community. Such observations were reinforced by the continued appearance of local and national newspaper articles on land grant activism and litigation in Northern New Mexico and annual commemoration of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, a document drafted at the end of the Mexican American War in 1848, upholding the rights of Hispanos to the possession of land grants. Such observations led this writer to initiate a pilot survey that would capture current Hispano feelings regarding land loss. The hypothesis guiding this investigation was that Hispanos in Northern New Mexico would express negative emotions when discussing land loss. Six Hispanos were purposefully recruited. Some claimed fifth or sixth generation of Hispano Northern New Mexican ancestry. A survey questionnaire in English was generated by the researcher and normed with a local Hispano. It included demographic items and open ended questions on acculturation, language, land grants, and land loss. Overall findings described sadness, anger, loss, resentment of outsiders, and dishonor. Responses also elicited feelings of injustice, loyalty to the land and domination by the Euroamerican culture. Collapsed responses revealed two concepts, encroachment by the Euroamerican culture and the Federal government, and class conflict within the Hispano community. Implications for such findings include various coping behaviors needing more investigation and future research that will generate relevant clinical theory and motivate public policy in the interest of Hispanos. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Mental health research has been uneven and sporadic in exploring the impact of negative historical experiences on American minority populations, e.g., cultural genocide, land loss and displacement. Investigations in these areas have generated data that could theoretically assist mental health clinicians to understand the special circumstances of these populations, the impact of these experiences, and the need to address these within the therapeutic context. However, many gaps still ex-

ist within the literature with some groups receiving significant attention while others little. This is evident in the number of studies on the impact of American Western Expansion on Native Americans (Kirmayer, Brass, Tait, 2000). Yet, one area that has not received attention is the impact of land loss on the Hispanos of Northern New Mexico, despite the brutality (Parsons, 2002) of land seizures that dot the historical experiences of Hispanos in the American Southwest before and after the Mexican-American War ending in 1848.

The topic of land loss and its impact on Hispanos is the focus of this pilot study. The idea to explore the issue of land loss and the emotions it elicits among Hispanos arose from this investigator's experience of living in Northern New Mexico for ten years. During this time, interaction with the Hispano community helped to form the impression that negative emotions persisted regarding land loss. Expressed sentiments were reinforced by the appearance of articles in local and national newspapers regarding land litigation in Northern New Mexico and, events-conferences and commemorations that focused on the issue in both current and historical contexts. Combined, this data reinforced the investigator's observation that the issue of land loss for Hispanos is still unresolved and as such presents a concern for this regional community.

MENTAL HEALTH AND HISPANO LAND LOSS

Psychology has taken two approaches to problematic issues, the evil-is-inside-the-person approach and the evil-in-the-system social reform philosophy (Albee, 1980). The former is synonymous with the medical model which perceives the person as needing of change. The latter focuses on eradicating the evil-in-the-system, similar to Szasz's (1964) description of mental illness as a reaction to social problems.

History has shown the great personal and communal risks of challenging an established political and social system. During the 1960's Tijerina's (1978) Hispano grass roots movement in Northern New Mexico, the *Alianza Federal de las Mercedes*, challenged the American Federal Government's failure to honor the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo between Mexico and the United States, designed to protect the rights of Hispanos to their land. The Alianza also challenged the Federal Government's incorporation of Hispano land grant holdings in Northern New Mexico into the National Forest Service, a strategy based on the president's power to withdraw lands from the public domain, setting them aside as Federal Forest reserves (deBuys, 1985). Tijerina's radical

activism ended in a manhunt for Alianza members, court trials and prison terms for some. Since then, Hispanos have not seen a more fiery activist.

Few non-Hispanos have taken a firm stand against the injustices that have historically been leveled against this cultural group. Exceptions are Ebright (1994), historian and land grants attorney, Knowlton (1973), sociologist, and deBuys (1985), a writer living in New Mexico. Since there is no evidence that within the mental health literature land loss as an issue for Hispanos has been explored, this pilot survey was undertaken with the intent to present, through a small purposeful sample, the emotional perspective of Northern New Mexican Hispanos regarding land loss.

The hypothesis that guides this pilot survey is that Hispanos in Northern New Mexico will express negative emotions when discussing the issue of historical and current land loss. The problem statement "How do Hispanos respond to the topic of land loss in Northern New Mexico" was explored by questions in four areas: acculturation, language, land grants, and land loss.

The results of this pilot survey suggest that Hispano residents experience negative emotional reactions when they speak about land loss and, that there are some major areas of concern regarding this loss. The findings complement the hypothesis. The implications of such findings are overarching.

A Little History

Land and water are traditionally important to Hispanos, not only to sustain life, but also as concepts around which the culture evolved (deBuys, 1985; Ebright, 1994). Land loss either through annexation, confiscation, poverty, monetary gain, or real estate and environmentalist designs, constitutes a loss of the very essence of the Hispano culture. Loss of one's culture is injurious and disempowering to the self.

Between the years 1530 and 1800, Spanish and Mexicans in the interest of the Spanish crown explored and settled the American Southwest inclusive of New Mexico. The Spanish held these territories until 1821 when Mexico won its independence from Spain and its territories came under the control of the Mexican government until the Mexican-American War² after which approximately 50 percent of Mexican territories came under the jurisdiction of the American Union (Ebright, 1994). As a result, land grants given to Hispano settlers by the Spanish and Mexican governments were seized not only by the American government,

but also by Euroamerican³ homesteaders. Although Hispanos resisted these encroachments, a vast majority of Hispano land grant holders were displaced. By 1900, only 30 percent of pre-annexation Hispano landholders retained their original lands (Acuña, 1988; Aragon y Ulibarri, 1999). Moreover, the American Government did not honor two points specified in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 which guaranteed to the Mexican descent populations, “all the rights of citizens of the United States,” and, the protection of property “as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States” (Weber, 1973, p. 157). In his novel *Centillo del Diablo*, Aragon y Ulibarri (1999) gives a popular, fictional account of this devastation, or what some Hispanos currently perceive as a “holocaust” (A.O. Korte, personal communication, November, 1999).

A psychological profile of victimization among this population was created by Western Expansion in the form of confiscation of lands, the imposition of the Euroamerican linguistic, political, social, and economic system, and anti-Mexican violence. Later victimization continued in the confiscation of ancestral lands in Northern New Mexico by the National Forest Service (Reichelt, 2001; Weber, 1973). Essentially, the Hispano population in the United States had become a conquered, colonized people (Almaguer, 1975).

The Alianza Federal de Mercedes and the U.S. Forest Service. About 1890, Congress began the task of protecting lands in the public domain, “. . . in order to preserve their resources and natural integrity” (deBuys, 1985, p. 236), with the scope of forest work including range and timber management. This impinged on the Hispano traditional cutting of firewood, the harvesting of piñon, grazing, and the collection of rocks and *vigas* (wood) for home construction. The restriction of resources incurred Hispano resentment of the rangers who regarded the traditional use of the mountains as trespassing.

The conflict between the Forest Service and Hispano villagers over the traditional use of lands peaked between 1965 and 1966, encouraging the activism of the Alianza Federal de Las Mercedes. This union, whose charismatic spokesman was Reies Lopez Tijerina, demanded the restoration of the old land grants to the descendants of original landholders. In 1967 the Alianza raided the Rio Arriba courthouse while attempting a citizen’s arrest of District Attorney Sanchez, who was attempting to thwart their efforts. During the raid, several policemen were seriously injured and a manhunt for Alianza members, including Tijerina, ensued. Following the Tierra Amarilla courthouse raid, the Alianza split into several rival groups, but the issues that were the basis for the pro-

tests have never died. The issue of land continues, “at the heart of every argument over resources and every discussion of how to best conserve the integrity of village culture lies the question of who, by rights, owns the land and water . . . as long as large numbers of rural Hispanos are poor and embittered, and as long as they have meager prospects for a better future, the issue of land tenure will flare again and again” (deBuys, 1985, p. 277).

The Current State of the Land Grant Issue in Northern New Mexico. Currently Hispano efforts toward a resolution of the land grant issue include litigation against the Federal Government, the maintenance of *mercedes* (land grants) by communities, activism by land grant organizations, and legislative efforts. Land grant committees exist in various areas of Northern New Mexico, e.g., Las Vegas, Lower Gallinas, and Taos. They manage existing *mercedes* and support land grant efforts. Legislative efforts include a bill introduced to Congress in 2001 by New Mexico Representative Udall that would establish the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty Land Claims Commission to assist in determining “the validity of land grant claims arising out of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo” (Thomas, 2002, p. 1); a report generated by the United States General Accounting Office (2001) identifying 295 land grants in New Mexico; and, the approval by the New Mexico House of Representatives of a measure sponsored by Democratic Representative Benjie Regensberg that would pardon land grant defenders posthumously (Santa Fe New Mexican, 2003).⁴

While legislation and pardons will not restore lost land in their entirety, more tangible solutions have been proposed. In 1973, Knowlton suggested several strategies, e.g., the formation of government committees to study the land grant issue, the impact of annexation, and the cause of continued land loss; that returned lands should be added to the remaining communal lands, with titles to be vested in the villages and communities but not to individuals because, in doing so, land would be lost again; that inquiries should be made into the land acquired by the National Forests, giving villages and communities priority in the use of the National Forests; when land could not be returned, making adequate compensation to the heirs; and recruiting community organizers to assist in overcoming apathy and factionalism.

More recently Snider (1999, p.1) suggested “. . . deeding other land from the inventory of state and federal land holdings in the area to the local land grants, or putting aside federal and state funds so that whenever land which was originally part of a land grant is sold, the land grant board would have the opportunity to buy it. Another solution would be

to allow an existing merced the first option to pay delinquent taxes on land which was part of the land grant, rather than putting it up for auction nationally.”

The Concept of Land Among the Hispanos of Northern New Mexico

Land has a multiplicity of meanings for Hispanos. Attachment to the Northern New Mexican landscape whether in a past or present context is symbolically linked to the history and culture. Six linkages that form attachment between people and land or place are genealogy, linking “land through history or family lineage”; loss or destruction of communities; economy, “through ownership, inheritance, and politics”; cosmology, “through religious, spiritual, or mythological relationship”; religious or “cultural events”; and narrative “storytelling and place naming” (Low, 1992).

Genealogically, some Hispanos trace their familial roots to the early settlers of Northern New Mexico and to land grants. Some residents live on remnants of the original grants, can recall incidents connected to these grants, or have been involved in litigation regarding these. In addition, Hispano families are connected to other local families through marriage and familial obligations such as *padrinazgo* (godparents) and *compadrazco* (close family friends).

Land loss and destruction of older mountain communities, either through land grant seizures or the selling of land to non-Hispano *outsiders* are a part of this population’s legacy (deBuys, 1985). Such events have accelerated the breakdown of social and family ties and with the process of assimilation have contributed to the erosion of the Hispano culture. Land loss is evident in personal documents, for example, letters that have been inherited by younger generations reflecting the pain experienced by elders at the loss of ancestral land (A. O. Korte, personal communication, November, 1999). Oral history recalls disinheritance, “My grandfather relates the story that one day they got a notice that the land grant was being taken away . . . The land grant residents went to San Miguel County Courthouse to resolve the problem, but weren’t able to. They found people in suits and neckties speaking nothing but English and all they could do was to say ‘Yes sir, yes sir.’ It just overwhelmed them” (Snider, 1999 p. 1).

Economic ties to the land are evident in generations of Hispanos that still hold land parcels, developed the *acequias* (water ditches) for irrigation, maintained the *ejidos* (communal plots within the land grant), and use dwindling natural resources to construct their homes. Presently,

some families live alongside ruins of ancestral homes and maintain agricultural (Rodriguez, 2002), livestock, and land division practices inherited from past generations (Shadow, Laumbach, & Rodriguez-Shadow, 1997).

Cosmological linkage is evident in the religious and spiritual traditions that have played a central role in the history and development of Hispano Northern New Mexico, the Catholic tradition from Spain and Mexico, the Presbyterian church which settled in this area in the early 1900's, and the Penitentes, a popular spiritual expression that developed in the absence of the Catholic Church (deBuys, 1985). Moreover, the land of Northern New Mexico is spotted with *santuarios* or *moradas*, small community or family churches that were constructed generations ago. Some are still used today and are reminders of the deep spirituality that was and still is an integral part of this culture.

The land still holds secular and religious memories embedded in ruins of structures that are connected to the mythology and history of the Hispano culture, e.g., the site where the *Gorras Blancas* (White Hoods), known for cutting homesteader's fences, met, as well as the bullet holes made by Tijerina and fellow activists on the outside of the Tierra Amarilla courthouse. Of a religious nature is the Santuario de Chimayo a pilgrimage site that has special meaning to Hispanos during Lent and on weekends throughout the year.

In Northern New Mexico, narratives, cuentos, or traditional legends and folktales represent a way of "preserving the rich cultural legacy of generations of Hispano presence in the American Southwest" (Atencio, 1991, p. xii). Cuentos preserve the Spanish language, Hispano values, cultural and religious practices, and specific places within the Hispano memory. Such multiplicity of attachments provide a background to the findings in this pilot survey.

METHODOLOGY

The hypothesis directing the pilot survey is that Hispanos will express negative emotions when discussing historical or familial land loss in Northern New Mexico.

The Sample. The sample was purposefully selected. Based on knowledge of the population, a purposeful selection of participants would reflect the Hispano resident concerned with land loss. Six respondents were recruited, three females ranging in age from 47 to 56, and three men ranging in age from 34 to 51. The average age for males was 42, for females, 52. The grand mean for age was 47. Four respondents were

from Las Vegas, a town in San Miguel County of which residents identifying as Hispano or Latino comprise 78 percent of the total population. One respondent was from Wagon Mound in Mora County and another from Taos, in Taos County. Here, Hispanos/Latinos comprise 82 percent and 58 percent, respectively (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The highest educational level for both sexes was a bachelor's degree; the average generational span of New Mexican ancestry for both sexes was five.

The Survey. Respondents were recruited through the *snowball effect*.⁵ Face to face interviews were conducted and recorded between December of 1999 and January 2000. A survey questionnaire written in English was generated by the researcher and normed with a local Hispano resident. The questionnaire collected demographic information, age, sex, educational level and in-depth responses in four areas, acculturation, language, land grants and, land loss.⁶ All questions were open ended except for demographic information and the section on acculturation, where participants check off the acculturation statement or statements that best described them. Statements were based on Berry's (1998) acculturation strategies that individuals and groups use when encountering a dominant culture.⁷ Overall, responses were in English with some Spanish dispersed throughout.

Analysis. Findings provided descriptive and conceptual data. The former is presented as frequencies and the latter as conceptual patterns of thought. Interview responses were read line by line and evaluated in two ways. First, frequency of responses were noted and reported as descriptive material; second, responses were again read line by line and a list of incidents was generated. Incidents were evaluated and clustered into categories according to similarity or differences. Categories reflected feelings and attitudes. This process was done for each section of the questionnaire. Categories were collapsed to reflect concepts. Validity was established by providing for an external check of the data analysis process through the use of a second coder, an individual not connected with the investigation. The second coder verified the researcher's interpretation of the data by reviewing the responses.

In general, responses matched the hypothesis that Hispanos would express negative emotion when discussing land loss. In addition to the descriptive material, two concepts were evident: (a) encroachment by Euroamerican culture and the Federal Government and (b) class issues, e.g., conflict within the Hispano community as it pertains to individual interests versus the common good.

Descriptive Data

Age. The grand mean of respondent age, 47, reflects a generation that were young adults during a time when the Raza Unida Party and the Brown Berets, components of the Chicano Movement, were active in Northern New Mexico (ca. 1960's, 1970's). The average age of the respondents also places them within the Mexican-American generation, spanning between World War II and the War in Vietnam and having "its cultural orientation and loyalties invested in the United States" (Alvarez 1973, p. 52). This perspective was challenged by the Chicano Movement, which confronted the illusion of equality in the face of racism, injustice, and cultural genocide of Hispanos since before the annexation of New Mexico, 1912.

Generation. Generation is the average span of time between the birth of parents and that of their offspring. Three respondents claimed fifth and sixth generations of Northern New Mexican ancestry, two claimed four, and one, three. Respondents described family roots in Santa Rosa, Las Vegas, Anton Chico, and Wagon Mound, all within proximity to each other and all in Northern New Mexico. La Junta, in Southern Colorado and Zacatecas, Mexico were also mentioned. Such demographics reflect Low's (1992) genealogical linkage to the land.

Acculturation. Acculturation is defined as the manner in which minority individuals cope with a dominant culture distinct from their own culture (Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989; Berry, 1998). Respondents' lack of response to the acculturation choice, "someone who let go of their Hispano culture stands out against three respondents who saw themselves as keeping their traditional culture while moving into Euroamerican society. Two respondents chose the strategy of keeping their culture and living outside of the Euroamerican culture, while one respondent stated that Euroamericans had imposed their culture on Hispanos, suggesting an effort to continue living within their culture. The single response, the imposition of Euroamerican culture on Hispanos, is reminiscent of the colonization concept described by Almaguer (1971) where the colonized is subject to the dominant culture.

Education. Four respondents attended college, suggesting greater contact with the Euroamerican world and a recognition of the importance of education within Euroamerican society. It also implies an ability to tolerate the dominant society in the interest of greater personal and professional goals. This is evident in three respondents who saw themselves moving into Euroamerican society. Responses regarding accul-

turation and education are congruent to the description by Alvarez (1973) of the Mexican-American generation as attempting to participate in Euroamerican society. Participation is reflected in the professional occupations within the education, health, and mental health fields reported by five respondents, requiring contact with Euroamerican institutions of education and licensing. One respondent held a sales position which required contact with the general community.

Language. Language is the “basic conveyor of culture, and people are in general most readily connected to their emotions and intimate thoughts in their first language” (Kirmayer, Brass & Tait, 2000, p. 613). All respondents stated speaking Spanish, having learned it from family members, and having grandparents fluent in the language. This implies that efforts were made by the families to teach Spanish, or that the Spanish language for their parent’s generation was pervasive enough to be learned through modeling. According to the respondents, their parents may have felt more comfortable with Spanish as it may have been the dominant language at the time.

The effects of acculturation⁸ within the respondents’ generation is seen through the retention or abandonment of Spanish as it pertains to the teaching of Spanish by the respondents to their children. The reasons for not teaching Spanish includes Spanish having been discouraged during their school years ($n = 3$) and fluency difficulties ($n = 3$). Single responses also described focusing on English with the teaching of English described as important, “embedded” in the Hispano environment, and forced on Hispanos. These responses gave the sense that the respondents were struggling with a duality of cultures.

Feelings regarding the erosion of the culture as a product of the imposition of the Euroamerican culture were evident. For example, two respondents who chose the acculturation strategy of keeping the Hispano culture while moving into the Euroamerican stated that their own parents were not allowed to speak Spanish in school. Of these, one respondent stated that his own children were not comfortable with Spanish. Another respondent exhibited a paradoxical approach, that of maintaining the acculturation strategy of keeping a traditional way of life and living outside the Euroamerican society while emphasizing the importance of English and “not pushing Spanish” on the children.

Land Grants. Land grants are described as land distributed to Spanish and Mexican individuals in New Mexico beginning in the 17th century as rewards for exploration and an incentive to settle the land (United States General Accounting Office, 2001). Responses to the land grant question appear to have been conceptualized similarly to definitions of

land grants in the literature (Ebright, 1994; United States General Accounting Office). Three respondents viewed the land grant in a familial and cooperative manner, involving ($n = 2$) access to grazing and natural resources, ($n = 2$) as the focus of greediness and local disputes, ($n = 2$) as lost due to a lack of education, power, and a belief that the "outside world" was trustworthy. Others ($n = 3$) described land as "taken" from them.

Responses describing land grants as providing access to grazing and natural resources are congruent to the concept of the ejido, or "common lands"⁹ (Ebright, 1994, p. 105), which included the extension of family through marriage, inheritance, cooperation, and culture. Knowledge of land grants was evident. Five respondents learned about land grants through adult family members and four through political activism. The responses acknowledged the importance of the family in the maintenance and transmission of cultural knowledge, a perspective supported by the literature in which family and community are a protective haven and depository of cultural knowledge for Hispanos (Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1995). Responses are also congruent with Low's (1992) economic and genealogical links.

The land grant described as access to grazing and natural resources and promoting familial and cooperative efforts is in contrast to the outsider, environmental perspective which argues that overgrazing leads to poverty, and the use of natural resources to de-forestation. Because New Mexico Hispanos are charged with overgrazing, they are viewed as responsible for their own poverty and also as bereft of ecological credibility (Pulido, 1998). Such a perspective has been the basis of clashes between the traditional Hispano view of grazing and environmentalists. For Hispanos, the free use of natural resources and agricultural practices originating during early settlement days clash with the Euroamerican concept of preservationism; a conflict between outsiders versus insiders (Mirande, 1978).

Land Loss. For Hispanos, land loss occurred when the Northern Mexican territories were annexed into the American Union with Mexicanos¹⁰ finding themselves members of an "internal colony" (Almaguer, 1971, p. 7). In this section, five respondents describe land loss as Hispanos having been "taken," "dishonored," "swindled," "kicked in the ass." Three respondents mentioned "injustice," "atrocities," "violation of rights," and three described land loss as loss of "legacy." All but one conceptualized land loss as a violation. This sole respondent described land loss as being "good because a lot of land was turned into forestry, no fences, open to the public, with regulations." This same respondent

stated that Hispanos were *celosos* (jealous) toward one another, a reason why lands were better off in the hands of the Federal Government versus Hispanos fighting each other for it.

Emotions

The emotions that emerged in connection to land loss were, sadness ($n = 4$), and anger ($n = 3$). Single responses include loss, resentment of outsiders, infuriation toward Hispanos who had “let go” of their land, and having no strong feelings either way. The emotions of sadness and anger have, in the literature, been attributed to loss. Responses to land loss as an “atrocious,” “injustice,” “dishonor,” and “swindling,” present a picture of victimization and violation of rights. Statements such as “without the land you are nothing” and, the giving away of a “legacy” suggest a perceived devaluation, while the “bastardization of our culture” suggests encroachment and cultural disrespect by Euroamericans. Psychological theories of attachment and loss include the work of Bowlby (1973), who explained loss of the environment and its impact on individuals by discussing that safety lies in the experience of familiar companions and environment, underlying the “marked tendency for humans like animals of other species, to remain in a particular and familiar locale and in the company of particular and familiar people” (p. 146). Thus, individuals develop not only an understanding of a familiar and safe environment, but each individual develops a “distinct personal environment to which it is attached” (p. 147). Since the time of Bowlby’s writing, place psychology, cultural psychology and, psychiatry have examined the impact of one’s separation from their environment, manifested by anxiety, depression, substance abuse, the breakdown of the family unit, and a sense of victimization (Altman and Low, 1992).

In the psychology literature, victimization is regarded as traumatic, provoking the responses of outward and inward blaming. Allport (as cited in Al-Issa, 1997, p. 25) summarizes the effects of victimization as the blaming of oneself exhibited by self hate, self-destruction, and aggression against one’s own group; blaming external agents and suspicion of the outside world; fighting back, and an increase in group pride (Reichelt, 2001). Pettigrew’s perspective on reaction to oppression describes three types of responses: “moving toward the oppressor by seeking acceptance through integration”; “moving against the oppressor by fighting back”; and “moving away from the oppression through flight or avoidance” (as cited in Al-Issa, 1997, p. 25).

Historically, it appears that Hispanos have experienced the coping strategies described by Allport and Pettigrew. Hispanos have blamed the external, encroaching entities that began before annexation and, have moved against the perceived oppressor by fighting back, as illustrated in the activism by Las Gorras Blancas and Tijerina. Hispanos have also attempted to move toward the dominant culture through assimilation. In Northern New Mexico, particularly in areas like Rio Arriba County, self-destruction in the form of heroin addiction and substance abuse has been noted (Ferry, 2000; Reichelt, 2001).

Conceptual Data

Collapsed responses generated two concepts, encroachment by the Euroamerican culture and the Federal Government and, class conflict, class issues within the Hispano community. These concepts were evident throughout the interviews but were more prominent when answering questions regarding land loss. The concept of encroachment and class conflict inter-related with the hypothesis.

Encroachment: Euroamerica and the Federal Government

Euroamerican Culture. Euroamerican encroachment on Hispano lands began with the confrontation between Hispanos and Euroamericans as early as the 18th century,¹¹ later and more violently with illegal settlements on Hispano land (de Buys, 1985; Knowlton, 1973). Land seizures for Hispanos caused Hispanos psychological disruption and trauma, the impact of which can only be imagined by considering the explosiveness resulting from Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. The Hispano experience has been cataloged as ranging from displacement of Hispanos due to annexation and homesteading by newcomer non-Hispanos to New Mexico to the contemporary establishment of monied Euroamerican enclaves, e.g., Santa Fe and Taos. These events have created an environment where Hispanos can not wholly practice their culture and are unable to retrieve natural resources from the land as was tradition due to restrictions and fences. The survival of the Hispano culture has become precarious.

Responses ($n = 1$) such as the bastardization of the culture, acknowledge areas like contemporary Santa Fe which glamorizes once humble, Hispano homes, use Spanish names for expensive boutiques where most Hispanos cannot afford to shop, sell images of La Virgen de Guadalupe as secular decorations, and exclude Hispanos from the city by the sheer expense of living there (Korte, Rendon & Zentella, 1999).

Such events can be described as psychological oppression, as Hispanos have been displaced, no longer able to live where their ancestors once did; now existing in what can be described as a quasi-apartheid, barrios composed of trailer parks and tract housing (Freire, 2000; Korte, Rendon & Zentella).

Federal Government. Responses regarding encroachment by the Federal Government reflect a knowledge of land grant history. Based on the historical collaboration between the American Government and the monied interests of territorial Euroamericans and Hispanos, respondents perceive government policy as intertwining with the aspirations of rich and politically connected Hispanos who do nothing but focus on personal interests and make alliances with entities that represent money and power. Such collaboration supersedes the importance of loyalty to culture and the welfare of the commoner. The existence of land grant committees and the maintenance of fragments of mercedes demonstrate an effort to counter monied interests by continuing this tradition despite the massive loss of lands and accelerating cultural erosion.

Class Conflict Within the Hispano Community. Single responses regarding Hispano politicians and community leadership described politicians as “doing nothing,” “maintaining the status quo,” representing money and power, and “supporting their own interests.” Responses reflect a conflict of interest between poor and affluent Hispanos. During the confiscation of the land grants, rich Hispanos figured prominently in the illegal seizure of lands held by poor Hispanos (Aragon y Ulibarri, 1999; de Buys, 1985), illustrated in the activities of the Santa Fe Ring.¹²

Respondent views of Hispano politicians are contrasted by the majority of responses regarding Tijerina. Questions on Tijerina were included in the survey because he is a living historical Hispano figure, a contemporary symbol of the land grant issue in Northern New Mexico and active when the respondents were young adults. Four respondents mentioned their source of information on Tijerina as through the media, three through political involvement, two through family, and one through word of mouth. Two referred to Tijerina as the “talk of New Mexico” and one knew him personally.

Individual opinions on Tijerina described him as outspoken, radical and tenacious. There were also individual remarks about his tactics as being justifiable “[he] had to take the courthouse.” Four respondents described him as brave, a hero, a great leader, and “respected,” two as upholding and giving attention to, and fighting in the interest of Hispanos and their culture, while two respondents mentioned disapproval of his

actions. The general regard for Tijerina as upholder of poor Hispano interests points to a rift between grass roots and monied Hispanos.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this pilot survey describe a lack of psychological closure to land loss, and are a component of a broader psychological profile of Hispanos in Northern New Mexico. While such preliminary findings apply only to this particular sample, the implications for human behavior and consequently research, theory, and policy are overarching. One implication for human behavior is that as victims of American Westward Expansion, Hispanos have, similarly to Native Americans, experienced psychological colonization and developed coping strategies that range from hopelessness and self-injurious behavior to in-group conflict and activism. Drawing on the work of Fanon, Bartky (1990, p. 22) describes psychological oppression, "To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind: it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem ; the psychologically oppressed become their [own] oppressors." Tajfel (1981) has suggested that groups can be influenced by the concepts of separateness and that the interaction between imposed group boundaries and internal group dynamics can contribute to a variety of social and psychological adaptations to particular social realities.

Among Hispanos, negative and positive coping behaviors impact psychological closure to the devastating experience of land loss. Looming negatively over the Hispano community is substance abuse, often used by individuals to "take away the pain" of disempowerment. Other coping strategies are the abandonment of the Spanish language, an approach which may suggest the experience of racism and shame of one's culture of origin, and issues of low-self esteem, insecure feelings regarding identities, and a wish to assimilate. Such issues motivate psychological problems that may not be identified as such in therapy, its symptoms instead clustering under the umbrella of depression without delving into the historical source. Moving away from the Euroamerican culture and moving closer to the Hispano is an empowering and re-affirming approach, but not without the ramifications of developing a xenophobic perspective and isolation from the Euroamerican world that offers opportunities of a wider nature. Activism in the interest of land rights is a proactive and more positive aspect of human behavior that

lends itself toward the emergence of a collective self-esteem through empowerment. However, this approach has historically been tinged with suppression and defeat, e.g., historical executions of Hispanos by the Euroamerican government, contributing to depression, hopelessness, apathy, and self-destructive behavior. For Hispanos, factionalism may be an unconsciously displaced, less threatening coping strategy than confrontation with the Federal government.

Based on these implications, future research can focus on the development of theory applicable to the clinical arena and to public policy in the interest of Hispanos. In working among the Hispano population of Northern New Mexico, the acknowledgment of land loss and its psychological consequences as one factor in the broader picture of mental health issues for this population is relatively absent. Theory developed through grounded theory methodology could aid in addressing the historical disinheritance of the Hispano within the therapeutic setting. Theory may also offer insight to a current lack of awareness that historical land loss impacts the mental health of this culture's descendants and its hypothetical connection to collective depression and substance abuse.

Research is needed to address similarities in psychological symptoms of oppression between Native Americans and Hispanos. Currently, there is no evidence that cross-cultural research focusing on such similarities has been conducted. Instead, isolated research on these distinct populations serves to polarize recipients of Euroamerican injustice, minimizing the collectivism of negative historical experiences. Also needing address are other social justice issues and their impact on Hispanos, insider research, e.g., by Hispanos on Hispanos through the use of grounded theory methodology which generates substantial theory grounded in the data. Continued research on Hispanos can also provide credibility to land activism agendas, influencing Federal and State policy in their interest, e.g., land and water policies that give control back to the villages, and restrictions on environmental and land development encroachment.

This preliminary survey is an attempt to put the issue of land loss back under the research spotlight. It is hoped that this survey's limited findings will motivate social workers, therapists, and psychologists who work with the Hispano population of Northern New Mexico to begin considering the issue of land loss as part of the clinical picture.

NOTES

1. The use of the term *Hispano*, Anglicized as *Hispanic*, is an ethnic and cultural label that is linked to a group's identification with the Spanish conquistadors of Mexico and settlers of New Mexico (Comas-Diaz, 2001). Its use does not necessarily imply that all individuals who use this term identify in this way.

2. There were some Mexican territories that were lost before 1848, for example, Texas declared independence from Mexico and was annexed by the United States in 1845. Some historians believe that this act sparked the Mexican-American War in 1846 (Martinez, 1994).

3. The term *Euroamerican* is a collective description of the European descent population in America. It is used here in much the same way that the American Government uses *Hispanic* as an umbrella term for individuals of a particular descent for census purposes (Comas-Diaz, 2001).

4. *Hispano* settlers took up arms in the 19th century defending their lands that they perceived as being invaded by a foreign, American army (Santa Fe New Mexican, 2003). Representative Regensberg explained this effort, "In 1846 the United States declared war on Mexico. About 600 people were killed in 1847 in Taos, Mora and San Miguel counties. They were defending their lands against what they considered a foreign army."- They "were executed for doing so."

5. The snowball effect is described as the recommendation of prospective respondents by other respondents. These recommendations are based on the perspective that these individuals could add in-depth information due to their experience with the topic.

6. Questions addressing these four areas were (a) *Acculturation*—Which statement or statements describe you best?, followed by several choices, (b) *Language*—Do you speak Spanish?; How did you learn it?; If you have children are you teaching them Spanish?; If so, how?; If no, why not?, (c) *Land Grants*—What do you know about the land grants in Northern New Mexico?; How did you hear about this (land grants)?; What type of emotions do you experience when you think about land grant issues?; Have you or your family now or in the past been directly connected to a land grant?; If yes, what happened?, (d) *Land Loss*—How do you feel about the loss of land in Northern New Mexico?; Are you familiar with Reies Lopez Tijerina?; How did you learn about him?; What is your opinion of him?; In your opinion, do you think that *Hispano* politicians or community leaders in this area are doing anything about the land grant issue?; Whose interest do you think they have in mind?

7. *Acculturation* approaches identified by Berry (1998) are someone (a) who has let go of their culture and moved into the dominant one, (b) who is part of a group that has kept its culture, and also moved toward becoming part of the dominant culture., (c1) who has kept a traditional way of life, and lives outside of dominant society, coming from a wish to live independently, (c2) who feels that the dominant culture has imposed their culture on them, and (d) who has lost their traditional culture, and has also lost contact with the dominant society.

8. *Language* is included in the conceptualization of *acculturation*, as it carries significant weight on the variance of *acculturation*. Its importance as a factor is seen in some *acculturation* measurement scales focusing solely on language (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991).

9. Ebright (1994) describes common lands as owned by a community and providing natural resources for this entity.

10. In this context, the term Mexicano is used for individuals living in New Mexico when it was still a territory of Mexico.

11. Early confrontations between the two cultures are documented as occurring when French and Anglo trappers trickled into New Mexico to trap beaver. Many came from Tennessee, Illinois, and Missouri (deBuys, 1985).

12. This ring was an alliance between Euroamerican and Hispano entrepreneurs, and has been described as one which, "cracked the whip over the territory's dominant Republican organization. It controlled all local offices, the sheriff, assessor, treasurer, probate judge, representative to the legislature, and even the delegate to the congress" (Waters, 1973).

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