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Interview no. 162

Frank Parga Jr.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Frank Parga, Jr.
INTERVIEWER: Richard Estrada
PROJECT: _____
DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 3, 1975
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TAPE NO.: 162
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 162

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Insurance agent in El Paso.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biography; experiences at Texas Western College, 1961-1965;
Chicanos in business; experiences with the National Guard;
views on assimilation.

Length of interview: 45 minutes Length of transcript: 25 pages

FRANK PARGA, Jr.
by Richard Estrada
June 3, 1975

E: Mr. Parga, where were you born?

P: In El Paso.

E: When?

P: August 22, 1941.

E: Who are your parents?

P: Francisco and Sofia Parga.

E: What is the occupation of your father?

P: My dad is a serviceman with Texas Appliances.

E: And your mom?

P: Housewife.

E: How many children were there in your family?

P: Five.

E: Where did you fit in?

P: I was the oldest one.

E: Where did you attend elementary school?

P: I went to Burleson Elementary, and then from there I went to Jefferson High School.

E: About what years were these?

P: Started school in 1947, and I graduated from high school in 1960.

E: Were there any teachers or authority figures in elementary school that you recall especially well and who may have had a positive or negative influence on you?

P: I don't know about elementary, I can't remember anybody in elementary. Junior high I did.

E: Did these people influence you in a positive manner?

P: I would have to say in junior high, yes.

- E: Okay. Did you ever experience any ethnic discrimination as a child, either in elementary or junior high school?
- P: Well, this is difficult to say 'cause schools that I went to were strictly Chicano. We had maybe one or two Anglo students at the most. For me at the time, I really wasn't aware.
- E: So as a child you weren't aware of it?
- P: I can't say I was aware of it.
- E: Is this true through junior high school?
- P: Yeah. I did notice that teachers would...again, we had a language barrier. We weren't fluent in English, they weren't fluent in Spanish, and we had a very difficult time communicating.
- E: You had a difficult time communicating with the teachers?
- P: With the teachers, right. And it seemed to me, looking back now, that they never really bothered to try and understand what our problems were, what type of culture we came from.
- E: Did you speak Spanish in school at any time?
- P: Strictly. It's the only thing I knew.
- E: That was all you knew?
- P: That's all I knew.
- E: When did you start gaining confidence in English, a proficiency in English?
- P: Perhaps high school.
- E: You attended high school at Jefferson High School. What years were these?
- P: Okay, I was there from 1956 through 1960.
- E: How did Anglos and Mexicans get along at that school, or was it mostly Mexican back then?
- P: It was I would say 99.9 percent Chicano.

E: So you didn't have any problems?

P: None.

E: Okay. Did you get along well with your teachers back then?

P: I would say with most of them I did. There was a few that we had some problems with.

E: Were most of the teachers Anglos or Mexican American?

P: Most of them were Anglos.

E: Did you attend college?

P: Yes.

E: Where did you attend?

P: Okay, freshman year was at Fort Lewis A & M, Durango, Colorado, and then the last three years were at UTEP.

E: Mr. Parga, why did you attend college? What motivated you?

P: Well, perhaps 'cause I felt that this was the only way I could possibly amount to more than just a common laborer.

E: Do you recall about how many Mexican Americans or Chicanos were going to school at Fort Lewis when you were there?

P: There was two others besides myself.

E: In the entire school?

P: In the entire school.

E: What were the relations between you and the rest of the people in the school? Were they good?

P: I would have to say they were very, very good. I can't, I really can't complain. For the first time in my life I was getting away from home, I was exposed to a different type of person, and I really can't say that...I'd have to say it was good.

E: Did you date Anglo girls when you were there?

P: Yes. I was turned down several times but I really can't say that, yeah, it was because I was a Chicano.

E: Do you recall about how many Mexican Americans there were at Texas Western when you were there?

P: I would say about maybe 15, 20 percent.

E: Fifteen, 20 percent?

P: Yeah.

E: What were the relations between Anglos and Chicanos there?

P: Awful. It was the worst thing I've ever experienced. I don't have anything but unpleasant memories from UTEP. It was Texas Western at the time. I felt that the relationship between ourselves and some of the Anglo students was bad.

E: Was it your relations between you and some of them, or most of them?

P: I would say most of them. And professors was the same.

E: It was the same with professors?

P: I really can't say that, I can't...with the exception of maybe one or two professors I can't say I really got any help, even though I asked for it.

E: What years are you talking about?

P: '61 through about '65.

E: '61 to '65?

P: That's when I was there.

E: Did you ever witness or experience any discrimination during your college years at Texas Western?

P: It's difficult to pinpoint any one incident.

E: But you do feel that...

P: Just a general feeling that you got when you started talking to some of these people.

E: Could you be more specific?

P: Well, it's just the reaction that you would get--the fact that you wanted to be one of the guys, you wanted to belong to fraternities and you were never accepted. You applied but you were never accepted.

E: Did you ever apply to a fraternity?

P: Yes, I did, yes.

E: Did any of your friends ever apply to fraternity?

P: Yes, the same deal. They applied and all of them were turned down. We were told beforehand not to apply 'cause we wouldn't be accepted anyway.

E: By whom were you told this?

P: By some other Chicano students that had experienced the same thing prior to us being there.

E: During the time that you were at UTEP, did any of the Chicanos whom you knew ever get accepted into these fraternities?

P: Not a one.

E: Did you know of any Chicanos that ever joined a fraternity?

P: None. As a matter of fact, later on in life I talked to a couple of friends of mine, Anglo friends of mine that are professional people now, and they told me that they had put in names of some good friends of theirs that were Chicanos and they were turned down. And at the meetings they were told they were going to turn [them] down because of the fact that they were Chicanos. This is first-hand information that I got, this is later on after several years that I was told that the reason they were not accepted is because they were Chicanos or Mexican Americans.

E: How about with regard to campus jobs, did you ever notice any discrimination in that respect?

P: I never applied for one so I really _____.

E: You never applied for one, so you would have no knowledge about that.

P: No, I can't say.

E: You talked about poor relations with teachers. Could you be more specific? Was it an attitude, was it a general feeling? How would you describe it?

P: Well, the thing is that you'd go up there, you'd ask for help, and I was told several times that if I didn't learn it by the time I got to UTEP that I would never learn it anyway.

E: Do you feel that this was perhaps a personal trait on the part of the teacher, or do you feel it was an attitude against Chicanos in general?

P: I think it was just an attitude in general.

E: Against Chicanos?

P: Yeah, I think it was just an attitude more than anything else.

E: Do you feel that they took more time out with Anglo students to help them?

P: I can't say, 'cause I really don't know whether they devoted any more time to Anglo students than they did to us.

E: Is there one department more than any other in which you had this kind of experience?

P: Yeah, I'd have to say in the English Department more than anything else. That is where I really needed the help and that is where I went for help, and I really can't say I was helped out at all.

E: Did you take courses from various teachers in the English Department?

P: Oh, yes. I never had the same teacher twice.

E: You thought this was a general attitude prevalent throughout the department?

P: Well, again, I can only say of the teachers that I had. I really can't say whether it was this way throughout the department or not.

E: Okay. While you were at Texas Western, was there much dating between young men and women of different ethnic backgrounds?

P: Very, very little. This is why it amazes me now when I go back to UTEP once in a while and I see, you know, whether it be Chicano or Anglo girls or vice versa dating, because we didn't have any of this. I know I asked several girls out, and again, I can't really say, well, this is the reason I was turned down, because of the fact that I was Chicano. But I really can't say that they were as liberal or as broad-minded.

E: Do you think attitudes have evolved or become more liberal since?

P: I think so. I definitely think so.

E: And this was only about 10 or 15 years ago.

P: Right.

E: And you think there has been a significant evolution here?

P: Definitely.

E: When you were going to U. T. El Paso, what courses did you enjoy most during your college years?

P: Well, I have to say the business courses that I had.

E: Business courses?

P: [Yes.]

E: Did you ever take any language courses?

P: Yeah, I took some Spanish courses. That was the only one I took.

E: How did you do in the Spanish courses?

P: I think about average, about a C. I wasn't exceptional.

E: I'd like to ask you some questions about your employment. What kinds of jobs have you held since you were a teenager?

P: Well, I worked as a lifeguard for about four years, I worked in several department stores here in town, and I've had a couple of jobs where I was a...strictly office work.

E: Were any of your employers particularly helpful or encouraging with regard to your progress during these years?

P: Yeah, I'd have to say that some of them really helped me out. They would really go on a limb to help me out.

E: Were they Anglo or Chicano or both?

P: No, both. They were both.

E: What do you consider to be the most important job you ever held?

P: This is difficult to say about being the most important. I guess the one I've got now. It has to be.

E: Why do you feel that way?

P: Well, 'cause I feel that I've accomplished something. I own my own agency.

E: That leads us to your area of expertise. What is the exact nature of your business?

P: Insurance agent, all lines of insurance. State Farm.

E: How did you get into this line of work?

P: I have an uncle of mine that's a State Farm agent, and some years back I went to him asking him what line of work I could get into where I could perhaps become self-employed eventually. And not having too much money to work with, he recommended perhaps going to the insurance business.

E: So it was the advice of your uncle that got you to this position?

P: Right. This is what it was.

E: Where is your uncle from?

P: He's from El Paso.

E: How old is he?

P: He's about forty-seven.

E: When did he start selling insurance?

P: He's been an agent for State Farm for 15 years.

E: During that time, has he been satisfied with his job?

P: Yes, he has. And as a matter of fact, he was the first Chicano agent in the state of Texas for State Farm.

E: What is his name?

P: Manny Morales.

E: He was the first Chicano agent for State Farm Insurance in the state of Texas.

P: Right.

E: Has he ever spoken to you about problems he may have encountered with regard to being Chicano in an Anglo dominated society?

P: Are you referring to business, State Farm?

E: Yes.

P: No, I don't think we've ever discussed this. I've never really gotten together with him to discuss some of the problems he might have had 15 years ago when he came in with State Farm.

E: If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Morales has held some political positions.

P: Right. He was a city alderman.

E: He was a city alderman?

P: Right.

E: Could you tell me what his party affiliation is?

P: Democratic.

E: He's a Democrat?

P: Right.

E: You yourself seem to have had some success here in your business. To what do you principally attribute that success?

P: Hard work.

E: Hard work. Is your clientele mostly of one ethnic group or is it of various ethnic groups?

P: It's various.

E: Various?

P: Various.

E: One does not predominate over the others, numerically speaking?

P: Numerically speaking, probably the Anglo.

E: More Anglo than anything.

P: We have more than 50 percent.

E: That's very good. Are you satisfied with your business today?

P: I have to say yes.

E: Overall, do you believe...?

P: Overall, it has been good.

E: Do you believe that you're doing about the same or better than people you associated with as a youngster?

P: No, I have to say much better.

E: You think you're doing much better than most of the people that you grew up with.

P: That I grew up with, right.

E: Mr. Parga, why have local Mexican Americans had such little representation in large businesses? Have you developed an opinion in your dealings with the business community about this?

P: Yeah, I have to say that one of the reasons has been perhaps financial. The Mexican American or Chicano did not have the money that it takes.

E: You think that they need an initial capital to start off with to get into business?

- P: Right, definitely, this is what I feel. I feel that going back several generations, generally, the Mexican American does not have the money or wealth that, say, the Anglo families would have over a period of generations.
- E: During the last 10 or 15 years, do you think that this condition has been improved?
- P: Oh, definitely. There has been a big change as far as the Mexican American businessman is concerned.
- E: Do you think the Small Business Administration has helped in this regard?
- P: Definitely. I can't see where else they would get their money. I know of several businesses that this is the only way that they are in existence now, is because of the fact that the SBA was able to help them out.
- E: Do you think that if they are to improve in the future that programs such as the SBA would be necessary for them to do so?
- P: Well, I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but there are groups of strictly Chicano or Mexican American businessmen that are financing, with federal funding, that are financing other businesses of Chicanos.
- E: How many of these groups are there?
- P: Well, I know of two here in town.
- E: You know of two?
- P: Yeah.
- E: Is there a possibility that there are more?
- P: It's possible, yeah.
- E: Do you have any idea what the figures we're talking about, what financial figures, the amounts of these loan, perhaps?
- P: Well, I've known of some loans for a hundred thousand. They were financed

by...partially by the group and with some federal funding.

E: You talk about partially. Are you speaking in terms of one half each?

P: Well, I don't know what the percentage is.

E: You don't know the percentage?

P: No, I don't know what the percentage is.

E: Okay. Do you believe that Mexican Americans in El Paso have enjoyed opportunities in business equal to those of Anglo Americans?

P: Definitely not.

E: Could you elaborate on that? Why do you feel this way?

P: Well, again, don't forget, a lot of the business that are in existence now are family-owned, they go back to several generations. And the Chicano just didn't have this type of connection, going back several generations.

E: What do you think accounts for the fact that their forefathers never established companies such as this? For instance, there were well-to-do Mexican Americans in El Paso at the turn of the century. Why haven't their businesses been continued or expanded? Do you have any idea?

P: Well, again, you're talking about numbers. I'm pretty sure there were wealthy Mexican American families, but they were very, very small in numbers in comparison to the Anglos. So you really can't...this is not a fair comparison I don't think.

E: What factors influenced you most in going into the business field? I have some possibilities here for you, you could choose the one you think is most pertinent. Was it family, was it the neighborhood you grew up in, the environment, or was it schools or was it church or some other?

P: I'd say perhaps family.

E: How old were you when you got married?

P: I was twenty-four.

E: How many children do you have?

P: We have four.

E: You have four children?

P: [Yes.]

E: Do you perceive any basic differences in the manner in which Anglo Americans conduct their business in comparison to the procedures or approaches of Mexican American businessmen?

P: No, I think that basically, basically it'd be the same.

E: You think business is business?

P: Business is business [is] what it amounts to.

E: Do you feel that the role of the Mexican American in the El Paso area's business community will tend to get larger or diminish or stay the same in the future?

P: I think it'll continue to get larger.

E: To what do you attribute this projected increase?

P: I think there are several factors. For one thing, the Chicano or Mexican American is better educated, much better educated than they were a few years back.

E: When you talk about better educated, precisely what are you referring to? What fields of study are you talking about?

P: Well, here we're talking about advanced education. I'm not talking about strictly just a high school education. I'm talking about a college education and beyond that--graduate school, medical school, dental school. This is something that we didn't have too much of before, but we do now. I think mainly the reason for this is the fact that there are so many federally funded programs that helps out the Chicano that there was no way he could have done this before.

E: What is your reaction to the statement of many Anglo Americans that this is in itself a sort of reverse discrimination when you try to help one ethnic group at the expense of the majority of the people who may be better qualified academically?

P: Well, we go back to the same old thing here. I've come across this several times before. The thing is that we were deprived of so many things for so many years that I feel that the government owes what they are doing for us now, owes it to us, because of the fact that we never had any programs before to help us out. So I really don't feel that it is reverse discrimination. It is something that should have been done for us many, many years ago.

E: Why should it have been done for the Mexican Americans?

P: Okay, because for one thing we've got problems which are unique that the Anglos didn't have.

E: How so?

P: One thing, the language barrier. We had so many people coming across, say, from Mexico, first generation. These people were unable to communicate. And unless schools were set up to help them, they could never amount to anything. They had to be given some kind of special type programs to help them out because of the fact that they were coming over, it was the first generation.

E: You seem to place a lot of emphasis on the language barrier. Do you consider that to be a primary factor in helping the Mexican American assimilate himself in American society today?

P: Well, I feel that it's very basic. If you're not fluent in English you can't learn how to read, you can't learn how to write, and this is where your basis is for education. Again, education leads to other things, but

I feel that the education is very basic.

E: What do you feel are the prospects for the economy of the El Paso area in the near future?

P: I think they are good, very good. In relation to what the economy is like nationwide, really here in El Paso we haven't been affected as _____.

E: Do you think El Paso is unique in this respect in not being affected by a nationwide recession yet, or is going to be a delayed reaction?

P: I don't think we'll be affected as badly as some other parts of the nation.

E: To what do you attribute that specifically?

P: Well, it's difficult to say why we don't.

E: But you do discern a difference between El Paso and the rest of the nation?

P: Yeah.

E: On what basis do you _____ this?

P: Well, I'm not trying to give you the impression that I'm trying to say that El Paso is unique from the rest of the nation. That is not what I'm trying to imply here. All I am saying is that we have not been affected as badly as some other parts of the country.

E: And you're not sure why this is so?

P: No, no. But I'm not trying to say that El Paso is unique from the rest of the nation.

E: Would you encourage young Mexican Americans to go into business in the El Paso area today or would you advise for them to go somewhere else?

P: Well, business is good, or the opportunities are good here in El Paso now.

E: You believe the opportunities are good?

P: I really, really believe they are good.

E: Mr. Parga, which do you believe to be the chief economic institution in the city of El Paso today?

P: I'd have to say it's the clothing manufacturers.

E: The clothing manufacturers?

P: [Yes.]

E: Do you think that they will remain in this position of prominence for some time to come?

P: I think so, yes.

E: How did they achieve this prominence? To what do you attribute that?

P: Well, they were able to sell a product where labor was not that expensive, and the El Paso area provided them with cheap labor.

E: Cheap labor had a lot to do with it?

P: Right. This is one of the main reasons why they grew as fast as they did.

E: Okay. Of what ethnic origin are the directors of these clothing manufacturers for the most part?

P: Syrian.

E: Syrian?

P: [Yes.]

E: And their laborers are mostly of what ethnic origin?

P: Mexican Americans.

E: In the El Paso business community today, have you perceived any friction between Anglo American and Mexican American businessmen?

P: I haven't seen any of this, not directly.

E: You had not seen it?

P: No, I have not.

E: Have you ever heard of any?

P: I really can't say I have, no.

E: In the El Paso business community today, is being a Mexican American an asset, a liability or a neutral factor? Which would you say?

P: Probably an asset.

E: You believe it's an asset?

P: The way things are now, it definitely is, it's an asset, yes.

E: Why do you say this?

P: Well, I can just give you a personal experience. The fact that I'm bilingual allows me to operate both in the Anglo and the Mexican American societies, so I feel this is an asset to me. I insure a lot of people that perhaps an Anglo could not insure or vice versa.

E: Mr. Parga, I'd like to ask you some questions with regard to the upcoming bicentennial of the United States. How do you relate to the principal historical figures in the American Revolution? Do you believe you understand the ideals that motivated them?

P: I think I do, but I really can't say that I feel that I'm a part of it.

E: You don't feel that you're a part of it?

P: Not really. I don't think enough emphasis is put on the fact that the, say, the Spaniard was here long before the Pilgrims were here.

E: Do you resent the fact that there's been a neglect of the Hispanic influence in the American southwest?

P: Yes, definitely.

E: You do resent it?

P: Yes.

E: How do you feel about the use of the term "forefathers" when Anglo American educators talk about Washington and Jefferson and Hamilton?

P: Well, I feel that these people were very important in the birth of our nation.

E: Do you consider them your forefathers, your political forefathers?

P: I never did really, say...I never actually felt that way, no. But then it's not because I never felt that they were important enough, it's just that I could never relate to what they were trying to accomplish.

- E: Do you feel that your feelings are shared by most of the Chicanos that you grew up with?
- P: Yeah, the ones that I grew up [with], yes. The ones that I grew up with. I can't talk about anybody else other than the fact that some of the kids that I was brought up with.
- E: What are your feelings on reflecting on the bicentennial of the United States? Do you have any feelings in particular?
- P: Well, you know, we got to be realistic. What these men did I think was great. We have had a tremendous growth in this country and we have to attribute part of it to some of these people, and we can't get away from that. We've got to be proud of the fact that we are a wonderful country. So we can't deny that. We got to be realistic.
- E: Do you feel it's important for your children to understand the ideals that motivated these men and to study about them?
- P: I think so, yes. Perhaps they can better learn what they were trying to do than what I did, maybe perhaps that I was never really told the real reason for some of the things they did. And I feel if my kids can learn it's an asset to them.
- E: Reflecting back on the history that you learned throughout your school years, do you think that you gained a proper appreciation for these men and for their ideals? Do you think you were taught well what these people did and accomplished?
- P: No, I can't say I was. This is why I was saying I hope that my kids can be taught a lot better than I was.
- E: You attribute it more to...
- P: Teaching in general.
- E: Poor teaching?

P: Yes, yes, [more] than anything else.

E: Your comment about not being able to identify closely to the revolutionary founding fathers is interesting when seen in light of the fact that you're an officer in the Texas Army National Guard. Could you tell us why you joined the National Guard?

P: Well, to be truthful with you, originally it was to avoid the draft.

E: Do you feel that this was a motivating factor for most of the people your age at that time?

P: Yes.

E: Do you feel that this had been true since then?

P: Yes.

E: Okay. Why did you become an officer?

P: Well, again, I feel that anytime you get involved in something, you've got to accomplish as much as you can, and I couldn't see myself being in there for six years and just being a regular guy.

E: Where did you receive your officers' training?

P: Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

E: About how many Mexican American officers were there in your Texas Army National Guard battalion when you joined?

P: There were three.

E: There were three?

P: Including myself.

E: This was in what year?

P: In 1967.

E: Has the number increased since that time?

P: Yes.

E: How many are there today?

P: Seven.

E: Have you ever witnessed or experienced any discrimination during your National Guard career?

P: I don't know if you'd call it discrimination, it's just the fact that favors could be done for Smith whereas they wouldn't be done for Martínez. But I don't know if you'd actually say it was downright discrimination.

E: You would call it favoritism?

P: Favoritism is what I would call it, yeah.

E: Favoritism for Anglos and nonfavoritism for Mexican Americans?

P: Right.

E: How long do you plan to stay in the National Guard?

P: Well, I've been in for 11 years now, and I'm just going on a month to month basis now.

E: What is your reason for this month to month basis?

P: Well, again, there are several things I need to consider, such as retirement, would this be something that I want at age sixty.

E: But there's no basic dissatisfaction with your National Guard?

P: None. I'm not dissatisfied.

E: About what percentage of the men in the El Paso unit are of Mexican descent?

P: Sixty-five percent.

E: Has this usually been true since you've been in?

P: No, definitely not. When I came in, I'd say about 10 percent were Mexican Americans.

E: And this was in what year that you came in?

P: 1964.

E: To what do you attribute the increase in Spanish surnames in the National Guard unit here in El Paso?

P: Economic.

E: Economic reasons?

- P: I feel that some of these kids nowadays feel that they can pick up some additional money by joining the Guard, whereas before this wasn't important.
- E: Have you been able to perceive what your fellow Anglo American officers' attitudes are towards Mexicans in the unit?
- P: There's been a tremendous change in the attitudes at the Guard since I was commissioned in 1967. The officers that we have now are younger, better qualified and more liberal-minded than the officers that were in the Guard back in '67.
- E: How were the officers back in the Guard in '67? How would you characterize them?
- P: I would have to say that they were anti-Mexican American to a certain extent. They were not as broad-minded as the younger officers.
- E: Were those officers from the El Paso area?
- P: No, I'd have to say...well, I'd say some of them were, yes. Some of them were from El Paso.
- E: And the others, where were they from?
- P: Well, we had some that I can remember from other parts of Texas [] and [] the southwest. Most of them were from the southwest.
- E: You have done some training in central Texas. How have Mexican Americans generally been treated there during your summer camp?
- P: Well, I'd say badly, 'cause I wouldn't want to go back.
- E: Why do you say this?
- P: I just feel that the attitude that people have is very different from some of the other areas that I've been in before.
- E: Do you think this is something that's subtle, it's not overt, it's not blatant?
- P: Yeah, it is subtle.
- E: Subtle.
- P: Yeah.

- E: Have you ever witnessed favoritism on behalf of Anglo Americans and non-favoritism toward Mexican Americans, or prejudice or ethnic discrimination on the part of high-ranking officers in the Texas Army National Guard?
- P: You're talking about statewide or just...?
- E: Either statewide or here in the El Paso area.
- P: This is real difficult to answer 'cause I really can't say that there is definitely a...I can't come up with any one example where I could say that this actually happened. Once you get higher up it's very difficult to tell.
- E: But how do you feel, though? Do you feel that there has been favoritism or has there not been any?
- P: Okay, I can just give you my own personal opinion on this, I'd have to say that... none.
- E: None.
- P: Right.
- E: Would you encourage the young Mexican Americans to enter the Texas National Guard or military service today, any kind of military service?
- P: Again it all depends on what they want to do. I can't say that yes, I would recommend it to everybody. There'd have to be certain circumstances involved before I could say that I would recommend it.
- E: Okay. Mr. Parga, some people say that ethnic groups lose their cultural identity with the country from which their parents or grandparents came as generations pass. The younger generations also tend to take on the values and ways of thinking of the predominant culture, and it's Anglo American here in the United States. If this is true, what have been your thoughts or what are they today with regard to your children? Do you hope to see them become more assimilated into American society than you have been?
- P: Well, I think the answer there is yes and no.

E: Could you elaborate?

P: Okay, I thought that the type of upbringing that I had was beautiful-- the fact that we had the Mexican American culture, the fact that we had so many things [like] family unity, which is one of the main things that we used to have. But then this put me at a certain disadvantage in trying to compete against the Anglo. So I feel that my kids have got to be competitive, and the only way they can be competitive is to try and learn some of the things, try and make them learn early in life some of the things that it took me perhaps 20 or more years to learn.

E: Can you be more specific about what those things are?

P: Well, for one thing you've got to be, you've got to know the Anglo way of life.

E: What differences do you perceive between the Anglo way of life and the Mexican American way of life?

P: Well, I feel that, for one thing, the family unity, you don't have this in the Anglo that you have in the Mexican American family. This is one of the main things, the unity that the families have. Ideas are so different.

E: Do you think values are different?

P: Values are different, definitely.

E: In what respect?

P: The Anglo is more materialistic than the Mexican American is, much more materialistic.

E: Do you see this as desirable or undesirable, or do you see it as something that your children should be able to recognize and then make a choice?

P: I think that being materialistic is undesirable. At one time I felt that this was the ultimate--material things. But then as you acquire some of these things you find that they're not as important as you thought they were. And I hope that my kids are not materialistic oriented.

- E: In other words, it is in this respect that you hope that they don't become assimilated into the Anglo American way of life?
- P: We're talking about one idea. This is one we're talking about.
- E: Are there any other aspects which you would not want them to acquire?
- P: Yeah, the fact that you don't have the family unity that the Mexican American family has.
- E: You see that as something preferable. You want them to keep that family unity?
- P: To keep the family unity, right.
- E: To what do you attribute this lack of family unity in Anglo American society?
- P: Independence. I think they feel that the kids have got to become independent at a very early age. I am not saying this is bad. I am saying that I don't like this in my way of life.
- E: You don't want it for your kids?
- P: I don't want it for my kids, no.
- E: Would you want your kids to remain in the El Paso area or would you have them move somewhere else?
- P: Well, that in itself I don't think is that important. It would be entirely up to them whether they want to stay here or perhaps go somewhere else.
- E: Mr. Parga, I'd like to conclude with this question: How have you considered yourself and how do you consider yourself now when it comes to the question of patriotism toward the United States of America?
- P: I don't think there's any doubt about the fact that I am patriotic. I feel that we have a great country. There are some things that are wrong, but then you can't expect everything to be perfect. But I definitely feel that this is one country where you can make it if you want. You might be at a disadvantage in some respects to some parts of life; but if an individual

really wants to make it, he can.

E: Thank you very much, Mr. Parga.