Research Paper Assignment 1 -- Choosing and Focusing Your Topic

Purpose:
To define an appropriately focused research topic and identify useful keywords for that topic.
Assignment #1 is due in class by _______________________.

1. Choose a topic from the following list or use a topic of your own choosing (approved by the instructor -- so see me as soon as possible!). At this point, you should be thinking of concepts or general topics, but if your topic is too broad, like “Mexican Immigration” for example, you should try to narrow it to a particular focus.
   a. Biography of a Mexican American
   b. Mexican American Organization
   c. A Mexican American Family History
   d. Mexican Americans & Work
   e. Mexican Americans & Culture
   f. Mexican Immigration since World War II
   g. Mexican American Women Roles
   h. ______________________ (your topic)

2. List some subtopics or different aspects of this topic that you might investigate. For ideas, review the course syllabus, skim the assigned readings, brainstorm with your classmates, or speak with the instructor.
   a. ________________________________________________
   b. ________________________________________________
   c. ________________________________________________
   d. ________________________________________________

3. Choose the subtopic listed above that you would like to research and type it below.
4. **What about this topic do you want to find out?** Be specific. Type a question that expresses your research focus. For example: “Why did Chicana members of Mecha decide to organize *las hijas de Cuauhtemoc* in the early 1970s? **Your question should not be a yes or no question, but an open-ended type of question.** If you are having trouble formulating a question, then see the instructor for help as soon as possible.

Type your research question here.

5. **Read the question you wrote in number four. Which key words from that question express the most relevant concepts in your question?** Which keywords would probably be present in the title or subject of a source that answered your question? (In the case of my question, “Chicana/as”, “Mecha”, “las hijas de Cuauhtemoc” would all be likely to be present in a source that really answered my question.)

List the two or three key words from your question that are the most relevant to your topic.

6. **Can you think of any alternative terms for your key words?** (In my case, I might search under “Mexican American women”, “Latinas”, or “Hispanic women” instead of “Chicana/as”, or “Chicano student movement” instead of “Mecha”.

List your alternative key words here.