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"Oye Mi Voz!" (Hear My Voice!): The Perceptions of Hispanic Boys Regarding their
Literacy Experiences

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
Chapter One: Rationale and Context for Study	
Introduction	1
Background of Researcher	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Retention of Hispanic Boys	10
Literacy Rates of Hispanic Boys	11
Significance of the Study	13
Questions Guiding the Study	15
Definition of Terms	16
Culture Journals	16
Discourses	17
Gender	17
Hispanic	17
Literacy Experiences	19
Masculinity (Machismo)	19
Perceptions	20
Limitations of the Study	20
Summary	21
Chapter Two: Review of Literature	23
Introduction	23
Research Methods	25
Hispanic Boys and Literacy	27
Language and Culture	28
Observing Hispanic boys in Literacy Situations	31
Reading and Gender	31
Reading and Boys	33
Writing and Gender	34
Writing and Boys	35
Learning Masculinity (Machismo)	36
Educational Impact of Hispanic Machismo	41

Critical Pedagogy	43
Critical Literacy	44
Conclusion	46
Chapter Three: Methods	48
Introduction	48
Philosophical Orientation to Inquiry	48
Phenomenology as a Method of Inquiry	49
Design of Study	50
Focus Group Approach	50
Responsive Interview Approach	51
The School Site	53
Participants	56
Data Collection Methods	57
Phase I	57
Phase II	62
Data Analysis Methods	63
Limitations of Study	64
Chapter Four: Research Findings	67
Introduction	67
Review of Methods	68
Proposed Study vs. Actual Study	69
Review and Intention of Focus Groups	70
Review and Intention of Responsive Interview Approach	71
Impact of the Responsive Interview Approach	72
Classroom Observations	78
Observations of the Developmental Language Acquisition Class	79
Observations of the Intensive Reading Class	80
Observations of the Regular English Class	81
Focus Groups and Individual Interviews	84
Invitational Conference	84
Focus Group Sessions	86
Individual Interviews	89
The Boys	90
My Role as Researcher	95
Role of Researcher	95
Role of Teacher	97
Role of Mother	97
Role of Daughter	101
Other Connections	101

Findings	102
Data Analysis	103
Family	105
Mother as caretaker	106
Father as disciplinarian	108
Respect within and for the family	108
Dichos and consejos	110
Language – “ <i>No, no mas son ellos</i> ”	112
Language linked to cultural identity	112
Language in school setting	114
Racism - “ <i>Who is “They?”</i> ”	121
Discrimination and inequity – Julian	123
Inquisitive and curiosity – Emmanuel	124
Resentment and anger– Gustavo and Oscar	124
Machismo – “ <i>I let him lose!</i> ”	126
Impact on role of men and women	127
Clash between the old and new machismo	134
Discourse of fighting	135
Education - “ <i>He’s already lost.</i> ”	140
What does it mean to be educated?	141
How have schools helped you get educated?	143
How can school literacy be changed to fit the needs of Hispanic boys?	144
Moral Literacy - “ <i>Hispanics have the advantage of... of ourselves</i> ”	149
Moral development	149
Morality of Hispanic boys	150
Impact of morality on behavior	155
Summary	159
Chapter Five: Research Implications	164
Discussion of Results	165
Strongly Value their Cultural Identity	165
Disconnected from their Educational Setting	169
Self-prescribe their Personal Educational Needs	172
Lack of Institutional Knowledge	173
Have Little to No Opportunity to Rebuild Their Identity	177
Role of Critical Literacy	178
Implementation of Critical Literacy	180
Recommendation for Educators	181
Implications and Extensions for Further Research	184
Language	184
Dichos and Consejos	185
Moral Literacy	185

Machismo	186
Discourse of Fighting	187
Further Reflections on Role of Researcher	187
Impact of Roles on Data	188
Epilogue	189
References	192
Appendices	207
Appendix A: Educational Research Consent Form	208
Appendix B: Research Participant Information Sheet	212
Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol	215
Appendix D: Personal Interview Questions	216
Appendix E: Interview Framework	217
Appendix F: Definition of Literacy Presentation	218
Appendix G: Riverside Class Rotation Schedule	220
Appendix H: Themes and Concepts	221
Appendix I: Responses to Traditional Literacy	222
Appendix J: Recommendations for the Educating of Hispanic Boys	224
About the Author	End Page

List of Tables

Table 1	Hispanic Graduation Rates	8
Table 2	Riverside High School Graduation Rates	54
Table 3	Riverside High School Student Achievement Levels	55
Table 4	The Boys	92
Table 5	Pan-ethnic Labels	94
Table 6	“Quien son ‘ellos?’” [Who are ‘They?’]	122

List of Figures

Figure 1	Proposed Study vs. Actual Study Timeline	69
Figure 2	Classroom Seating Charts	79
Figure 3	Model for these <i>Public and Private Literacies</i>	161
Figure 4	The Day of Unity by Lorenzo	193

“Oye Mi Voz!” (Hear My Voice!): The Perceptions of Hispanic Boys Regarding their
Literacy Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to uncover the perspectives that pertain to the literacy experiences of young Hispanic boys. Hispanic boys will be asked to describe, feel, judge, and make sense of their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). This phenomenological study embraces two methods of data collection, participant focus groups and individual interviews. The primary question guiding this inquiry was: What are the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys who are considered low level readers (by state achievement tests) regarding their literacy experiences?

In order to help provide background information and set the stage for future work when considering this specific population other supporting questions were added. These include: 1.) What have researchers reported about Hispanic boys in literacy situations? 2.) What is the role of masculinity (machismo) in the literacy lives of Hispanic boys? 3.) What teaching methods do Hispanic boys consider most responsive to their literacy needs? and 4.) What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population? After sorting and analyzing all data sources, the themes that evolved as considered most relevant by this group of Hispanic boys were: a). Family, b). Language: its role of language in building identity, c). Machismo: to include male discourse when dealing with gangs and violence, e). Education - public literacy, e). Literacy: reading,

writing, and f). Moral Literacy. Several major implications of the study include: (a) strong value for their cultural identity, (b) disconnect from their educational settings, (c) could self-prescribe their personal educational needs, (d) lacked institutional knowledge, and (e) had the potential to rebuild their identity. It is imperative that we listen to the voices of this marginalized population in order to gain insight to how Hispanic boys live *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) in the hope that our educational system can respond to their personal and academic needs.

CHAPTER 1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys regarding their literacy experiences. In order to listen to the voices of this marginalized population, it is imperative that educators hear their perspectives on how the current educational system supports and/or negates their personal and academic goals. This study grew out of my experiences as a migrant Mexican American in a Euro-centric educational system; as the daughter of an illiterate mother; as well as my concern for my own three Hispanic boys.

Background of Researcher

Raised within a Mexican American migrant family that followed crops throughout the United States, the five children in my family were always encouraged to recognize the importance of education. My childhood memories included long trips, state to state, never knowing where I would go to school, never knowing where I would wake up. This constant movement helped me appreciate the stable home base my loving parents struggled to provide. Despite their hardships, these experiences pressed me to seek a future outside the rigid, harsh fieldwork my parents knew all too well. Not having been educated past the third grade, my parents stressed how education and opportunity went hand in hand, and they always encouraged me to dream well beyond our means.

Through the eyes of a child, one cannot see the ultimate value of literacy. However, as my mother's guide, interpreter, and reader, I had the privilege and burden of

a first hand look at the consequences of an illiterate life. As I watched and listened, I cannot find the words to express the magnitude of the shame and frustration felt by my mother as she struggled with illiteracy. Her courageous journey, often dependent on me, her young daughter, who had the most basic of literacy skills, was long and hard.

I remember the day I found out my mother could not read. I was in second grade, running home with a friend from school with my report card in hand. She, my mother, was sitting on the porch after a hard day of working in the strawberry fields, her knees padded with a light layer of dirt smudged with red jam. Her smile greeted us both as we ran up with anticipation. It was report card day! With a gust of great desire, I handed her my report card expressing to her that I had done well. She smiled and said, “Si hija!, (“Yes, daughter!”) I see that!” My mouth dropped as my friend snatched the paper out of her hand and blurted abruptly, “It’s upside down, stupid! Can’t you read”?

A frozen look slowly engulfed her face. My mom’s secret was revealed. Her face fell to her hands as she began to cry. Her shame, the vulnerability, her raw identity were all revealed. I stood there in disbelief. Although, I knew that so many times I had been her voice and her reading eyes, it had never been painted so clearly, never been spoken aloud. It was at this moment that I internalized the pain of an illiterate person, my mother. That day is engrained in the very soul of my desire to teach. Since she could neither read nor write in Spanish or English, I had promised her I would one day become a teacher so I could teach her to read. This promise became the impetus of my journey toward understanding literacy.

Even with an illiterate mother, literacy was still a small, important part of our lives. Like most Hispanic families, my parents entrusted the education of their children to the teachers and schools. The misplaced trust they had in a monolithic educational system was immeasurable. The school's migrant program gave the illusion of advancement for me. This began in a migrant classroom with individually enclosed desks all facing the walls. Students worked quietly and isolated in their individual cubicles as the teacher strolled around the room and visited each space like one would at the local zoo. This cultural segregation was obvious to me and not only elicited, but also instilled, emotions of shame and degradation. I persistently begged my father to remove me from this program and help me escape this marginalization. Begrudgingly, he met with the principal who agreed that I should have a two-week trial in a regular Language Arts class. On the drive home, my father emphatically stressed the fact that he had placed his word on the line for me and demanded I be successful in mainstream reading. Failure was not an option! I feared the wrath of my father driven by his Mexican masculinity and my new ground with a different set of expectations. Little did I know this move would begin a relentless urge to prove myself worthy.

As we traveled through different states, following the fieldwork, some of the most memorable moments for me are those connected to schools and living conditions. Without fail, we lived in boxcar-like barracks made of small concrete rooms typically 10 x12 feet with only a door and one window. These rooms had no plumbing for running water, nor bathroom facilities, just bare concrete walls and concrete floors. The communal bathrooms were located in the middle of the two lines of concrete block

barracks. It was important for each room to sustain their tenancy by providing a quota of working hands. If rooms were allotted and not enough workers showed up, families might face eviction. In the eyes of the farmer, our faces were invisible. He only saw the space we took up, the time we could work, and the money he could make. My family was entitled to two adjacent rooms because we had four people who could be hired as field workers. We set up one room as a kitchen and bathroom. The other room became the bedroom for my parents and all the children.

Another memory is of a time when we lived in an old Victorian two-story home with many rooms. Each room was allocated to a different family with the crew leader living in the section of the home that included the main kitchen and bathroom area. Since we had four or five possible working pairs of hands, we were given a big room on the second floor. My mother very creatively delineated each section of the top floor into a living space that would create the illusion of a home. There was a corner for the shower, which consisted of a huge metal pail that provided ample room for the average adult and also plenty of splash room for us children. Beside the pail was a red tomato bucket filled with heated water used to rinse off after bathing. This corner was closed in by a hanging sheet or curtain to secure the impression of privacy. There were boxes for each category of clothing stationed underneath a pole wired horizontally against a second corner used for dresses and shirts to be hung. The foyer of the house downstairs was the kitchen for our family and one other family that consisted of a couple with a small baby. The kitchen cabinets were made up of old wooden tomato boxes stacked upon one another which gave the foyer a kitchen-like look, even down to the short curtains that hung across the

wooden rim with a string and nail to hold them delicately in place. This problem-solving mentality was driven with no written directions, yet made our home run smoothly and systematically.

The one element that is most vivid of this part of my childhood was that the farmer held full control of how we lived and how we worked. I never got a glimpse of the keeper. Yet, I knew he was white and in charge. Everyone who worked for him lived within his rule would only hear rumors of his demands in the field. This was another false impression of who was allowed to make decisions. My memories of these places and others like them instilled a deep appreciation for simple living luxuries, like running water and air conditioning, and a rich understanding of equity and inequality.

At the age of 15, I became engaged to a Mexican-American ten years my elder. This is typical of the Mexican culture. On the day that he asked for my hand in marriage, my father's only request *of him* was for me to be *allowed* to complete my high school education, which, to my father, was a cultural milestone. It was only due to my father's request that my, then, husband *allowed* me to finish high school and achieve the distinction of a diploma recipient. Education was considered by my traditional Mexican fiancé to be a privilege for a Mexican woman. As a teenage wife, my identity was defined by what I was *allowed* to do. This list of privileges included having a checkbook, learning to drive, visiting my parents, and choosing my female friends (no male friends). The oppressor, who was also called my husband, dictated this list.

As I grew into a married young woman, fieldwork continued to be a major part of my life. Yet, within me a desire to break away from this life was swelling. I took on a

part-time job at the local junior college and began taking undergraduate courses. As I began to look at my career options, the promise I made to my “*mamasita*” when I was eight years old resurfaced. After working at various jobs following my high school graduation, I was finally able to begin my journey out of the life that I had grown to resent. It took me six long years of working and attending classes, but in 1991, I graduated a Suncoast Area Teaching Training program (SCATT) honors student from the University of South Florida with a degree in Early Childhood/Elementary Education. Although the road was long, I became the first in my immediate family, and the second of 105 grandchildren, to graduate from college. Most importantly, I realized that by achieving these educational goals I was breaking the links of migrant life, the role of illiteracy in my family, and the system of oppression for one line of Hispanics. Having lived and worked both sides of the road, I know the limitations of living without an education and the endless opportunities an education provides.

As I look back at my beginnings, I see themes and patterns that emerge from the reality of oppression in the lives of people of color. As my three Hispanic boys, Christopher-19, Alexander-13, and Matthew-8, navigate the educational system, I now see, firsthand, that the marginalization of individuals continues from a society that seeks not to acknowledge those who are different. Seeking liberation of oneself comes at the expense of self, culture, and complete, or illusion of, acculturation into the majority.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most profound crisis confronting our white-dominated educational system in the United States is how to be authentically responsive to students who are

culturally and linguistically diverse (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1995). During the last decade, Hispanics have become the fastest growing population, rising from 12% in 2000 to an estimated 14.2% of the total U.S. population in 2004 (Bureau of Census, 2004). Furthermore, between 1993 and 2003, the growth rate of Hispanic children in our public schools increased from 12.7% to 20% (NCLR, 2007). Even more surprising, according to a Hispanic Statistical Brief (2007), is “the increase in Hispanic children under 18 years of age has made them the second largest group of students after Whites” (p. 1) and that number is expected to increase. Yet, it is Hispanics who are lining up at school’s exit door to drop out at alarming rates (Lee & Burkam, 2003). With this growing tidal wave flooding our schools, can we afford to fail so large a population destined to overtake our work force? Is anyone noticing as this marginalized population silently falls through the cracks?

Only 49 percent of Hispanic males graduate from high school (NCES, 2004; Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 2006). Under further scrutiny, state graduation rates of Hispanic males are startling. New York, the home of the largest school system in the United States, ranks last in Hispanic male graduation rates with only 29% receiving their diploma. States such as California, Florida, and Texas, which each house a huge Hispanic population, barely breach the midpoint averaging 51.6% of their total male Hispanic student population graduating (see Table 1). Without recognizing gender issues, unique beliefs, values, and ethnic traditions of Hispanic boys, no amount of well-intentioned systematic education will help us save this population from ultimately becoming part of the alarming statistics that are collected to represent these young men

(Jimenez, Moll, Rodriguez-Brown, & Barrera, 1999; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; NCES, 2003).

Table 1. Hispanic Graduation Rates, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research (2006)

State	Hispanic Male Graduation Rate	Average Graduation Rate
National	49%	70%
Louisiana	74%	63%
Texas	55%	69%
California	51%	65%
Kansas	50%	76%
Washington	50%	69%
Florida	49%	61%
Illinois	49%	73%
Connecticut	48%	82%
New Mexico	48%	59%
Colorado	46%	72%
Pennsylvania	45%	81%
Massachusetts	38%	72%
New York	29%	58%

Research that focuses on the risk factors causing students to drop out can be “grouped into three categories: (a) *social background* (e.g. race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, family structure, inner city residence); (b) *academic background*

(e.g. ability, grade repeating history, test scores); and (c) *academically related behaviors* (e.g. engagement with school, school grades, truancy, school disciplinary encounters)” (Lee & Burkam, 2003, p. 355). These factors become significant when analyzing drop out rates among males.

“It is boys who are slower to learn to read, more likely to drop out of school, more likely to be disciplined, more likely to be in programs for children with special needs” (Connell, 1996, p. 207). In fact, half of the students within the nation’s public school system are boys and the issues they experience have a definite impact on their achievement. As Hispanic boys make their way through middle and high school their struggles and disconnection from the white walls of education cause them to cling to their family environment where success “is rooted in *familism*” (Valdes, 1996). This value revolving around relationships between extended family, parents, and siblings involve “notions of success, ideas about good jobs, and opinions about what is attainable and at what cost” (Valdes, 1996, p. 169). Supported by this deep-rooted *familism*, Hispanic boys soon realize that they can contribute more to the family and support trans-generational bonds by being a co-provider whether of financial support, emotional support, or socio-cultural support. This simplifies the decision to leave school, a place laden with experiences of failure, only to embrace feelings of pride and success within the walls of their home and community.

What personal characteristics of Hispanic males contribute to this high drop out rate? Valdez (1996) states that “the issue is one of cultural clash / differences with schools expecting a blueprint of a prototypical family based on mainstream middle class

white Americans” (Trueba, 1993, p. 415). Valdez (1996) and Ginorio and Huston (2001) found that although Latino culture values education, the commitment to family overrides most educational decisions. For example, during his senior year in high school, my brother, Eddie, chose to drop out because of our father’s sudden heart attack. Being the only male in the house, the family needed him to be the provider. Therefore, he drove my father’s semi-truck. Although he had only a few months left to graduate, my brother was obligated to help support the family. This experience is further supported by researchers Torres, Solberg, & Carlson (1998) who claim “being in school was never an excuse to shortcut family duties” (p. 174).

Therefore, it might be safe to say that Hispanic boys drop out of high school, perhaps not with a disregard for education, teachers, and literacy. Rather, their purpose is to stay *true* to their culture by doing the *right thing* for the family. Holding fast to cultural capital, Hispanic males face life with little to no literacy skills only to be marginalized further by the majority. Our democracy, then, quiets his voice, takes his vote, ties his hands, and hushes his influence. The voices of his head conflict with the convictions of his heart. Yet, we meet a strong, valiant, confident family provider who perpetuates this conflicted, yet honorable cycle.

Retention of Hispanic Boys

Chances of dropping out of high school are increased for every year a Hispanic boy is retained (NCES, 2003). At the forefront, retention factors in American schools are “being male, young for the grade, or a minority; having health problems/disabilities or poor school readiness (as measured by achievement of behavior); larger family size, low

parent education and income, and high rates of residential mobility” (NCES, 2003, p. 124) (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Karweit, 1999). Retention issues that stem from data collected from the NCES (2003) highly support that a Hispanic boy has a 13% chance of being retained as he moves toward his projected graduation year. Allington (2006) has argued for many years that retention has proven to have a negative impact on the individual child. Considered by some to be a discriminatory act against impoverished children, Allington (2006) also contends that retention can have ill effects on a child’s self concept, self esteem, and heighten his chances of dropping out of school. Furthermore, students who are retained may foster lower academic achievement and motivation, and many may conduct themselves in ways that undermine their efforts when it comes to school and their social well-being (NCES, 2003). Even though the purpose of retention is to provide more time for children, Hispanic or not, to master the skills of a grade, the impact of retaining students can be devastating. Retention of struggling students has been consistently reported to have negative impacts of achievement (Holmes, 1984). This poor achievement is most often reflected for Hispanic boys within literacy rates.

Literacy Rates of Hispanic Boys

Hispanic boys enter school facing one of the most important tasks of their life. They will be given the opportunity of learning to read. They will face a different language, conflicting syntax, and concepts that may be considered strange by their Hispanic culture. Many researchers stress that Hispanic parents do, in fact, value education and seek to further educational opportunities for their children. These strong

families have high hopes and aspirations for a better life through education (Trueba, 1993; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Yet, we find many Hispanic children enter classrooms only to feel isolated and disenfranchised.

At school, students' energies are placed into decoding words, reading fluency and attempting to understand and deliver the written page. Hispanic and other disadvantaged students may return in the afternoon to a home deprived of books and human resources available to adequately overcome learning obstacles (Cooter, 2006). Literacy and learning become a strange world directed, expected, and punished by a mostly white, English-speaking majority (Trueba, 1993; Valdes, 1996). Eventually, Hispanic boys live up to the expectations set forth for them around literacy which ultimately lead them to feel marginalized, disenfranchised, and shamed (Trueba, 1993; Valdes, 1996). Having been the voice (translator) for my illiterate mother for many years of my childhood and having experienced first hand the marginalization of being a Hispanic student, I have experienced the inequities that confront people of color.

Before entering schools, 69.3% of Hispanic boys report being read to, compared to 86.6% of white boys being read to, a difference of 17.3% (NCES, 2003). Also, National Center of Educational Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2003) reported that by as early as third grade the literacy rift between white and Hispanic student reading scale scores begins to show. Mead (2006) supports this discrepancy by stating that the difference between white and minority scores on the main NAEP are significant. She further states that minority boys' academic performance is

alarming low, yet it is the gap between the majority and the minority that is widening which is even more concerning, specifically in high school.

Taking all these factors into account, issues surrounding Hispanic boys are compounded by the lack of research willing to perceive these individuals as a legitimate voice within our society. Well-intentioned researchers are quick to report the many challenges of Hispanic individuals, while others seek to present an alternative perspective or heightened awareness by delving deeper into issues impacting this population. This missionary mentality seeks to save these boys by assimilating their position in our white dominated society. Yet, this emotional response leads to a stereotypical perception that Hispanic boys are victims of their culture. Therefore, I assert the juxtaposition that either Hispanic boys are honorable assets to our society, or slated for failure unless they assimilate into the dominant culture.

The purpose of this study is to uncover the perspectives that pertain to the literacy experiences in the lives of young Hispanic boys. It is imperative that we listen to the voices of this marginalized population in order to gain insight to how Hispanic boys live literacy, in the hope that our educational system can respond to their personal and academic needs.

Significance of the Study

This study will prove to be significant in several ways. Current research often focuses on Hispanic boys as part of larger subgroups, whether based on gender, class, or ethnicity. Subsequently, these studies offer little insight specific to Hispanic males. In a formal review of research trends on men and masculinity conducted by Whorley and

Addis (2006), the representation of men of color was found to be quite low, once again, underpinning the trend that our Hispanic boys are ignored and marginalized. Additionally, studies involving Hispanic males have not been conducted from a perspective that would value the characteristics of the individuals as they relate to a specific time and place (Patton, 2002). All too often, research is centered on external factors that have led to Hispanic boys' underachievement and have squelched the voices of the individuals who we are trying to understand. In fact, many of the research findings that are currently available hold a deficit mentality seeking only to find the causation of their poor performance as a group and value their perspectives within the whispers of their individuality.

At the intersection of gender and literacy, there are many pedagogical articles and research studies exposing the underlying motives of today's classrooms. Yet, when digging deeper into one side of the gender issue, we find Hispanic boys are often left out of the limelight. Many times Hispanic boys fall by the way side because of a prevailing focus on race as a dichotomy between black and white (Perea, 1997; Conchas, 2002; Martinez, 1998). At other times, they may also be partially represented as males in gender studies in literacy (Gurian, 1996; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Studies are needed to close the research gap of what is the most effective method in educating the fast growing minority while considering the population most likely to dropout of school, Hispanic boys.

Educators know the value of understanding an individual's needs and strengths. This study will provide insight to Hispanic boys *private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) and

help build the bridge to their *public literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). In doing so, educators and school systems will be better equipped to meet the literary needs of Hispanic boys and help them become part of the collective voices among society.

The few studies that do focus on specific male students (which include a small percentage of students of color) and literacy include: *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002), *Boy Writers* (Fletcher, 2006), and *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males* (Tatum, 2005). Like most research in this area, these studies embed the focus on Hispanic boys deep within the analysis of all boys, of all ethnic groups.

Questions Guiding the Study

The primary research question that guide this inquiry is:

What are the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys who are considered low level readers (by state achievement tests) regarding their own literacy experiences?

Secondary research questions include:

- What have researchers reported about Hispanic boys in literacy situations?
- What is the role of masculinity (machismo) in the lives of Hispanic boys?
- What teaching methods do Hispanic boys consider most responsive to their literacy needs?
- What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?

The qualitative inquiry method employed to address these questions was phenomenology.

Collection of data occurred at a local high school via classroom observations, focus groups, and individual interviews with four to ten adolescent Hispanic boys.

Definition of Terms

To assist readers in understanding the use of specific terms in this inquiry, I provide the following brief definitions:

Culture Journals: During Phase II of gathering data, participants were expected to write in culture journals. These composition books were a place for participants to elaborate on their thinking, experiences, teacher interactions, and reactions to classroom activities. More specifically the boys elaborated and/or interrogated their ideas and questions behind the topics that evolved from preceding focus groups. The journals were intended to be an adaptation of a writer's notebook (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher, 2006). Writer's notebooks were intended to capture topics and ideas that allowed the writer to experiment with various forms of writing (Calkins, 1986). For the purpose of this study, I encouraged participants to add ideas, sketches, photos, and any artifacts that would represent their perceptions of literacy. I hoped that participants would jot down their noticing, wonders, and most intimate thoughts on how their literacy experiences impacted or not impacted their lives.

D/discourse: Discourses are differentiated as 'big D' discourses and 'little d' discourses (Gee, 2005, p. 7). The discourses described with a 'little d' are the specific language used in the moment "to enact activities and identities" (Gee, 2005, p. 7). When describing Discourses 'big D,' it includes "one's body, clothes, gestures, actions, interactions, symbols tools, technologies, values, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions" (Gee, 2005, p. 7).

Gender: After a baby enters the world, the norm is for the parents to categorize male and female by examining anatomy, biology, hormones, and physiology of the infant (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This is, at most, a very basic view of gender. “Gender is a thick stew, with sex, biology, popular culture, and power bubbling just beneath the surface” (Fletcher, 2006, p. 21). For the purpose of this research paper, I use the term gender to reference the instructional differences between girls and boys. My intention is not to exclude any gender or fuel the gender debate. My purpose to shed light on what I believe is a tragedy: a throwing away of lives and talent that lie within our Hispanic boys.

Hispanic: The struggle to define the Mexican-American population left in the United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe lasted many years and even became more complex with other Hispanic groups finding their way to American soil (Alvarez, 1973; Gomez, 1992). As Latin American, Cuban, Spanish, and Puerto Rican populations began to increase, the Hispanic label slowly evolved to include these groups. Many of these new citizens also favored the term Hispanic to preserve the all-encompassing political umbrella that would protect and “trump other identities like gender, class, political preference, or occupation”(Trueba, 1999, p. 572). This line of thinking is also reflected by government offices such as The National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) and the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) which define Hispanic as a “person(s) of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Bureau of Census, 2004, p. 2; NCES, 2003, p. 1). The term Hispanic has slowly emerged to be the label most Spanish-speaking individuals identify with either for cultural or political purposes.

Although the definition of Hispanic has attained much consensus, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics, Bureau of Census does not recognize Hispanic as a one of the official race categories. It does, however, consider race and Hispanic origin to be two separate and distinct concepts. According to the Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin, Census Bureau Brief, there are only five official race categories defined by the Census Bureau; White, Black or African-American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and some other race. Hispanic, the term used by the majority of Mexican-Americans, which make up 64% of the Hispanic population, would fall into the category of “some other race” (Bureau of Census, 2006, p. 28). Individuals are asked to designate themselves a minimum of two ethnic identities “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino” (Bureau of Census, 2000, p. 2). This was surprising, considering the sky rocketing number of Hispanics in our county. So, when looking to define a pan-ethnic label, like Hispanic, as a race it is important to look beyond the boundaries of the U.S. Census Bureau.

As a Mexican American who is comfortable with either label, Hispanic or Latino, I found it difficult to decide which pan-ethnic label to use. I also did not want to assume that these specific young boys were as comfortable as I was using Hispanic and Latino interchangeably. Therefore, I used this opportunity to ask which of the two labels Latino or Hispanic was the most comfortable for each student. In reference to research reviewed for this dissertation, I used the term Hispanic to represent the participants, yet

interchanged with the term Latino to be consistent with any study or article used in the research inquiry.

Literacy experiences: Faulkner (2005) defines *public literacies* as literate practices combining language and texts valued inside the classroom. These range from working with print, visual, digital, audio, and oral texts. *Private literacies* are those personal, social, and individual literacies that are valued out of school which influence different aspects of a students' life. In order to support my sociocultural approach to language and literacy, it was vital that I emphasized the relationship between text and context. The interaction between text and context helps set the stage for meaning making processes that are acquired and embedded in specific experiences (Gee, 2001). Freire (1983) beautifully describes his childhood memories in the form of "text, words, and letters of a context incarnated in a series of things, objects, and signs" (p. 29) that paint the picture of his experiences. These *texts, words and letters* provided the meaning to his memories. Similarly, I defined literacy experiences and those where the participants read, interpret and recreate *texts, words, and signs* to make meaning situated within their specific context or situation.

Masculinity (Machismo): This inquiry referenced machismo as the form of masculinity that is prevalent within the Hispanic culture. Views on machismo hold that *real* Hispanic men are "strong, virile, *valiente* (valiant), stubborn, *fuerte*" (Stevens, 1965, p. 848) ... good drinkers, lovers, singers, and fighters. They are brave, promiscuous, oppressive, responsible, aggressive, fearlessness, authoritarian, and willing to defend

what they believe (Stevens, 1965; Torres, et. al., 2002). Gilmore (1990) asserted that traditional machismo holds three imperatives – to impregnate, to protect, and to provide.

Perceptions: My goal is to have participants question their perceptions by interrogation of their sociocultural identities. Perceptions, I define as the awareness of results, cumulative understandings, and/or insight reached via reflection on ideas, opinions and assumptions around their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). I intended that the process of reflective inquiry would provide a clear perception about what Hispanic boys value and practice in regards to literacy.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study revolve around researcher bias and the generalizability of findings. Researcher biases included my experiences as a migrant, Hispanic student that may have influenced my perspectives toward the educational situation of the participants. Of equal importance, my mother was marginalized by her inability to speak English and her inability to read or write in both Spanish and English. Having witnessed first hand the inequities that being a part of a marginalized population allowed me to reflect within my own culture journal. This reflective journal captured the interrogations of my own perceptions and helped maintain my balance as a researcher.

I needed to be careful not to impose my value of education nor my belief that education can bring about positive change. I continually reminded myself that although my parents were not formally schooled, they were honest, successful contributing members of their community and successfully changed the course of action for their children who also included two Hispanic boys.

Since this group of Hispanic boys will be self-reporting their perceptions on their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005), the final results of this inquiry will not be generalizable to Hispanic boys in other situations. Further, the validity of self-reported data is a point of caution due to the ability of participants' to be honest and accurate when responding to the complex relationships among ideas, beliefs, values, and the interaction among them, (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Yet, the findings may provide insight to Hispanic boys in similar conditions and circumstances.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to uncover and report the perspectives that pertain to literacy experiences in the lives of young Hispanic boys. It is imperative that the voices of this marginalized population are heard in order to learn their perspective on the educational system's support for their personal and academic goals.

This dissertation discusses many factors that impact the academic success and/or failure of Hispanic boys. Overall, I have found that the Hispanic male has a higher probability of low reading achievement, high-grade level retention, and even higher drop out rate. His culture and masculinities are expressed by Hispanic characteristics that put him in conflict with the educational system. For example, the focus on a strong family orientation, where he may be a provider and leader may be in conflict with an educated individual who seeks his own advancement (Valdes, 1996; Conchas, 2002). The family focus places the Hispanic males in a position of leadership toward ensuring he tends to family issues before individual success. At the end of the day, he confronts the daily frustration of a world that sees him as an outsider. He does not fit the norm. He speaks

differently, lives differently, believes differently. These differences, although they retain inherent value, tend to increase his chances of academic failure. The fact that he is a male, Hispanic who seeks dominance, pride, and provision for his family will pull him away from the education that will make a difference in his life and that of his children. The role that literacy and education play in a Hispanic boy's life is far from being determined at any stage of the his educational career.

The primary research question that will guide this inquiry is:

What are the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys who are considered low level readers (by state achievement tests) regarding their own literacy experiences?

Secondary research questions include:

- What have researchers reported about Hispanic boys in literacy situations?
- What is the role of masculinity (machismo) in the lives of Hispanic boys?
- What teaching methods do Hispanic boys consider most responsive to their literacy needs?
- What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

“By the year 2020, 46% of the students in public schools will be children of color and 20.1% will be children who live in poverty” (Stone-Henley, 1999, p. 2). These children enter our classrooms and bear the hearts of many cultures. Sadly, this is often not recognized, appreciated, and sometimes even met with veiled antagonism. In fact, much of the “covert conflicts about race, ethnicity, social class, and gender in the U. S. are based on the mythology of a superior culture into which all others must be assimilated” (Stone-Henley, 1999, p. 1). This marginalization of other cultures and social classes bleeds into our classrooms, enveloped in silence. The rift becomes more apparent when we explore how our Hispanic boys calmly rankle in the stagnant rows of public education.

Allington (2006) reported that “being a boy, and being a minority places you further at risk” for educational difficulties (p. 22). Education sector senior policy analyst, Mead (2006) outlines in the report, *The Truth about Boys and Girls*, how gender has played into the achievement of boys and girls. Although this report recognizes the dual success of both genders, Mead (2006) highlights that there is no doubt that some groups of boys – “particularly Hispanic and Black boys and boys from low-income homes – are in real trouble” (p. 3) due to racial and economic factors. This trend is further supported by the American Council on Education that cites that, whereas, “90% of white and African-American 25 to 29 year olds have attained a high school diploma, only 60% of

Hispanic men” (2006, p. 18) have met this educational milestone. Given this data, it is apparent that being both Hispanic and male creates a dangerous, and possibly fatal combination. While there are various instructional approaches that claim that to ensure educational equality linked to gender and students of color, the hazards of Hispanic boys’ lives may outweigh the impact of these approaches. If these trends are maintained with no change in instructional philosophy and/or approach, then our Hispanic boys will continue to flounder in this societal blind spot. Therefore, I asked what methods and understandings are necessary for educators, administrators, and research scholars to gain in order for the nation’s Hispanic boys to retain their ability to pursue a literate life and its accompanying liberty?

Reviewing research literature is always challenging considering the vast amount of politically motivated research and findings that have supported or negated public educational initiatives. Considering this, I have taken a broad and critical approach when developing guiding questions for my research. In this investigation for pertinent research around the topic of Hispanic boys, I have structured my collection of research and data around specific guiding questions. These include:

Primary Research Question:

What are the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys who are considered low level readers (by state achievement tests) regarding their own literacy experiences?

Secondary Research Questions:

- What have researchers reported about Hispanic boys in literacy situations?
- What is the role of masculinity (machismo) in the lives of Hispanic boys?

- What teaching methods do Hispanic boys consider most responsive to their literacy needs?
- What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?

The pedagogical articles and research studies gleaned from this search had to meet certain criteria to be included in my research. These criteria include: (a) relevance, (b) expert scholars, and the (c) quality of the research itself. I cannot assert that I have included all current research within the growing field of boys, literacy, and critical pedagogy. Yet, I have attempted to include all works that have made significant influence to this specific field of study.

Research Methods

To determine the *relevance* of the research I have included only those selections focused on Hispanic boys, literacy, and achievement as they had immediate implications for my study. In my research, I avoided culturally oriented studies that proved to be too broad for this review, such as those specifically looking at multicultural education, gender, or race (specifically addressing the black/white paradigm). Within my search I did find that there were other literature reviews around the same area of study, for example, gender. These were useful only to find older, yet relevant, research and to examine works that were published in the interim. In this case, I carefully analyzed the bibliography to compare my list of researchers, titles of articles, and cited books to set up the framework for this literature review.

To assess the *scholarly* nature of the research collected, it was imperative that the scholar be cited in various research studies, journals, and/or books. The journals and

organizations searched were those with well-established peer-reviewed processes. In addition, professional journals, such as *Language Arts* and *Research in the Teaching of English*, both by the National Council of Teachers of English, and *Reading Research Quarterly*, the *Journal of Adolescents and Adult Literature*, and *Reading Teacher*, all by the International Reading Association, were considered valuable due to their research orientation and affiliation.

Finally, with regard to the *quality* of the research, I only selected those articles, research studies, and books that followed the generally accepted standards for quantitative and qualitative research. I avoided those articles and studies that painted broad, opinionated stripes throughout their findings.

With these key criteria in mind, I then performed electronic database searches of ERIC, JSTOR, NCREL, and NAEP, followed by searches in government agencies that report statistical data, such as the U.S. Census Bureau. Additionally, I combed the table of contents, bibliographies of book chapters and journal articles for published works, and/or prominent authors in the area of Hispanic boys, literacy, and critical pedagogy. Key terms used to conduct this literature review were: Hispanic boys, Hispanic literacy, masculinity, machismo, culture and literacy, and critical pedagogy for English-language learners. Finally, I perused journals on multicultural education with a tight lens for studies focusing on Hispanic boys.

After I had collected and reviewed the accumulated literature, I categorized the research into three main strands that stemmed from the research questions. These strands represent the areas of investigation for this dissertation. The first area I will discuss will

be *Hispanic boys and literacy* where I examine the sociocultural perspective to provide a lens for the many gifts Hispanic boys bring to U.S. classrooms. The second area I will discuss is masculinity, specifically the culture of *machismo*, and its impact on Hispanic boys. The final strand will be the role of *critical pedagogy* and the potential it has on educating marginalized populations who find themselves disenfranchised from the majority population.

Hispanic Boys and Literacy

The current educational research on boys is frightening. It exposes some of the inherent challenges of being a boy in today's society. Social, educational, and gender issues that have evolved within the past 35 years have developed into a generation of males, many of whom cannot or choose not to read or write at expected proficiency levels (Gurian, 1996; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Newkirk, 2006). To deepen this sense of disparity, students of color, specifically boys, can "feel a sense of isolation more strongly if they are struggling with issues of racial and ethnic identity" (Nieto, 2004, p. 102). The review of current literature specifically addressing the needs, perspectives and educational challenges of Hispanic boys is limited and unbalanced. Researchers cite many reasons for the lack of studies oriented toward Hispanic boys, some may include: (a) the lack of their representation within specific areas of research (Gay, 1994; Whorley & Addis, 2006); (b) the black/white paradigm (Perea, 1997; Conchas, 2002; Martinez, 1998); and (c) the many ethnicities under 'Hispanic' on the U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau of Consensus, 2000) as the main reasons for this discrepancy. Therefore, I found no specific pedagogical articles, research studies or book chapters devoted to the teaching

and learning of Hispanic boys. Although there were studies that included Hispanic boys, their primary purpose was geared toward: (a) Gender, comparing girls vs. boys or Anglo boys vs. minority boys where all minorities were combined; (b) Multicultural, once again where all minorities were combined, yet the focus was on African American culture; and/or (c) Class, the focus was on the socioeconomic factors that impede a students' learning at home and school. Studies targeting the Hispanic population were those focused on multiculturalism, parent involvement or socioeconomic factors – specifically in the context of generational lack of education. These studies very often portray Hispanic boys as victims of our society. For the purpose of this dissertation, I chose to pull strands from various research projects or studies that indirectly align with literacy development of Hispanic boys. Additionally, I looked for strands and patterns of consistency in hopes of reconstructing the findings and retaining the focus on Hispanic boys. In review of these findings around Hispanic boys, I found it necessary to first uncover how culture plays into the development of language and literacy.

Language and Culture

Language and culture, our lived experiences, are inseparable (Trueba, 1990; Gee, 2001). Language revolves around subjective information and communicating “perspectives on experience and action in the world, often in contrast to alternative and competing perspectives” (Gee, 2001, p. 716). Societal expectations around culture include surface concepts like food, holidays, and dress. These superficial interpretations are understood and more than likely accepted by most members of society from outside the particular culture. Yet, culture, at a deeper level, includes the practices, beliefs,

customs and social behavior of a group of people. People within the culture group develop value orientations, beliefs, habits, language styles, and patterns of behavior (Smedley, 1999). These are displayed on a daily basis via “socialization patterns, childrearing practices, and sociolinguistic patterns” (Trueba, 1990 pg. 2). These cultural experiences that are constructed from birth through adulthood provide each person with the lens to perceive and interpret the world around them. This sociocultural knowledge becomes the basis for an individual’s way of thinking which many researchers relate to a child’s literacy development and to the learning process in general (Trueba, 1990; Delgado – Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Trueba (1990) writes:

Language and culture are inseparable in the process of mediation between social and mental process that constitute the instructional process...Language and culture play a key role in the organization of cognitive tasks, the development of critical thinking skills, and the process of creative thinking (p. 2-3).

The challenge becomes more apparent when a child’s first language is different than the language spoken by the mainstream.

Often the language barrier may be the first obstacle Hispanic boys encounter when entering the door of any American classroom (Valdes, 2001). The vast majority of English-Language Learners (ELL), approximately 85%, sit in monolingual English U.S. classrooms where there is limited or no support for learning a new language (Neufeld & Fitzgerald, 2001; Valdes, 2001). Regardless of one’s position on the great debate regarding language in this country, what is not understood by teachers, administrators, and educational scholars is how to effectively teach English and what programs, if any,

are to be implemented to facilitate the learning process for non-English speakers (Valdes, 2001). Yet, we continue to educate our children of color, who are English Language Learners, with only partial success. This is evidenced by the substantial lack of longitudinal research and extensive literature around effective practices within the educational arena (Nieto, 2004). What is also neglected from the discussion is that even when programs are implemented in English, non-English speaking children have little access to practice English. English language learners are isolated and barred from exposure to large amounts of English throughout their day. These students are exposed to “bits and pieces” (Valdes, 2001, p. 13) of an artificial sounding language from teachers who use simplified English or scripted programs that are intended to give students access to academic language.

In addition, our current educational system is based on Euro-centric values that have the effect of minimizing language differences and cultural beliefs, which cause linguistically and culturally diverse children to be disenfranchised (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000; Brown, 2003). This leads to an undercurrent of teacher bias against linguistically diverse students who require further instructional consideration and additional teaching effort (Nieto, 2000; Valdes, 2001). Brown (2003) purports that the influx of students from many cultures has added layers of challenge to American classrooms. Although there are many factors that can ensure teachers’ willingness to manage the academic successes of culturally diverse students, it is essential that teachers recognize their soft biases toward these students and work to develop student/teacher relationships, honor the students’ culture, and most importantly recognize and adhere to

students' language differences (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Brown, 2003).

The process of demystifying success with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds cannot be attributed to one single factor. This complex analysis must take into account the personal experiences, societal context, and political factors in current mandates that are individual to each Hispanic student (Trueba, 1990, Nieto, 2000, Valdes, 2001). Many researchers who have studied Hispanics and the many factors of their failure contend that Hispanics who are well acquainted with failure can discover how to integrate their linguistic and cultural heritage into the world of school if attention is given to the social context of their learning (Delgado, Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Huerta-Macias, 1998). Yet, once again we are asking this disenfranchised population to stretch and bend to a non-responsive system.

Although there were many articles, studies, and book chapters devoted to teaching methods that would provide the sociocultural context and ease the language barrier, the qualitative or quantitative evidence leading toward a theory for specifically teaching Hispanic boys is non-existent.

Observing Hispanic Boys in Literacy Situations

Reading and gender.

Males throughout America consistently are less prepared for and less apt to gain the literacy skills that schools expect compared to their female counterparts (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Even before they are given their first lesson in class, boys are read to less, told stories less, and exposed to libraries less than the girls who sit next to them

(Martino & Berrill, 2003; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). As they begin primary school, boys are outperformed by girls in overall reading achievement in grades kindergarten through third grade (NCES, 2004). Research confirms that from the beginning of their schooling through high school boys score significantly lower than girls on standardized measures of reading achievement (Pottorff, Phelps-Zientarsky, & Skovera, 1996; NCES, 2004). Male achievement scores reflect conclusions that boys see literacy as feminized, and since males define their maleness 'as not female,' literacy must in fact, be rejected (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Martino & Berrill, 2003).

How much more will literacy be rejected with the shadows of Hispanic machismo engulfing the reading? Even before Hispanic boys enter school they are read to less than their White male counterparts by a difference of 17.3% (NCES, 2003). Additionally, in a teacher survey presented in the *Status and Trend in Education of Hispanics Report*, kindergarten teachers outline that first-time Hispanic kindergartners pay attention 62% of the time, are eager to learn 70% of the time, and persist at tasks 67% of the time. These characteristics align with qualities needed for formal reading instruction (Calkins, 2000; NCES, 2003). However, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that by as early as third grade the literacy rift between White and Hispanic student reading scale scores begins to show (2003). By the ages of nine, thirteen, and seventeen, the differences in reading scale scores between these two racial groups are twenty-eight points (28), twenty-three points (23), and twenty-four points (24), respectively (NAEP, 2003).

So, if Hispanic students are entering school ready and eager to learn, why is the discrepancy in reading performance maintained throughout their schooling? This question is one that researchers have yet to answer. It is known, however, that there are still many outside factors that contribute to the academic failure of Hispanic boys.

Reading and boys.

Researchers consistently support that, nationally, boys fall behind in reading (Young & Brozo, 2001; Newkirk, 2006; Gunzelmann & Connell, 2004). Scholars further assert that nearly half of all boys consider themselves non-readers by the time they enter secondary school (Beers, 1996; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Gunzelmann & Connell, 2004; Newkirk, 2006). A few scholars cite that boys will find many excuses to hide the fact that they are not readers. While, this fake reading behavior catches up with them eventually, these boys also miss the richness of stories that may help build their identities as they stumble through school (Brozo, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Newkirk, 2006). When looking even deeper at minority boys, researchers purport that literacy issues are associated with educators' perceptions of inferiority, lack of intellect, and inability to handle challenging material. The intersection between ethnicity, poverty, and schooling is also believed to propel minority boys to fail within their educational setting (Tatum, 2005).

Additionally, researchers claim that when boys are not given an authentic purpose and meaningful connections for reading they are more likely to disconnect from the process (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). How important would it be for minority boys whose social world and language are so different from the norm to be given an authentic

purpose and meaningful connection to reading so they can more easily connect to not only reading but the entire U.S educational system (Calkins, 2000)? Also, adhering to students' reading level is essential for reading success and most low performing [minority] boys are mismatched with their appropriate text level, which in turn evokes feelings of defeat and frustration (Beers, 1996; Calkins, 2000; Gunzelmann & Connell, 2004; Newkirk, 2006). More disturbing than any of this research is the conclusion based on several years of classroom observations from leading Hispanic researchers which is considered the "greatest problem...is that of no literacy instruction" (Jimenez, et al., 1999, p. 221) is conducted with this marginalized population. Lack of instruction is followed by inappropriate or nonexistent literacy assessment for linguistically diverse students (Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996). This conclusion is upheld by statistics that show 40% of teachers in the U.S. had limited English proficient students (or English language learners) in their classrooms. Yet, less than one third (29.5%) of these teachers had *some* degree of ESL training (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1994). These factors only perpetuate the low literacy rates, rising retention, and staggering drop out rates of Hispanic boys.

Writing and gender.

Writing is another aspect of literacy where Hispanic boys under perform (Mead, 2006). Boys are known to consistently fall behind girls in writing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). According to a report by the Educational Testing Service (2002), the writing gender gap between adolescent males and females is over six times greater than the differences in mathematical reasoning (Cole, 1987). In fact, by high

school graduation the gender gap in writing is as broad as the current writing achievement gap between whites and students of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002; Mead, 2006). Looking beyond test scores, boys and girls are often considered to be different within many literacy practices especially when reviewing their choices in verbal and written expression (Millard, 1997; Newkirk, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Researchers contend that girls' conversation and writing is often intimate, reflective, and exploratory while having a social and moral context (Barrs, 2000; Anderson, 2003). In contrast, boys' writing is confrontational, assertive, and independent and often reflects violent, action-packed themes (Barrs, 2000; Newkirk, 2000; Anderson, 2003; Fletcher 2006). Furthermore, Pollock (1999) and Newkirk (2000) both contend that this aggressive nature shown via writing is often a venue for expressing affection. Additionally, researchers purport that boys' writing typically expresses the traditional struggle between good and evil, friendship, and action, which are key elements of the fantasy genre (Anderson, 2000; Newkirk, 2000; Fletcher 2006). Gender expression in writing achievement and writing content is further revealing when solely looking at boys.

Writing and boys.

In 1973, Donald Graves found that gender does play a role in the writing process. Currently, other research supports this assertion (Dyson, 1993; Calkins, 1986; Fletcher, 2006). In fact, by the end of a young male's high school career, the gender gap in writing has widened (Graves, 1973; Dyson, 1993; Newkirk, 2006). This gap reflects a general male attitude toward writing that is "turned off," "disengaged," and "disenfranchised"

(Fletcher, 2006). Recent work has identified behaviors that range from “staring into space” to rushing and turning in sloppy and/or incomplete writing (King & Gurian, 2006). When boys *do* write, they script about battles, war, and heroes which support a whole set of behaviors that are typically considered antisocial and not tolerated within school systems (Fletcher & Newkirk, 2006). These interpretations grossly simplify the major impact of what our current classrooms have on the literacy achievement of Hispanic boys.

Learning Masculinity (Machismo)

As our young Hispanic boys grow up in traditional Hispanic culture, they are surrounded by the attitudes, mannerisms, spoken and unspoken language that are all mediated by the tools and artifacts of their culture that will begin to form their ethnic and societal identity around masculinity (Gillmore, 1990; Connell, 1996; Lloyd, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Kane, 2006). Their fathers, uncles, and male *compañeros* are the models for the rough play, aggressiveness and dominance that these young Hispanic boys experience around work and play. These purposeful and subliminal messages will capture nuances that will forever influence how they adapt to life and its varied situations. Boys begin to adopt patterns of behavior and inherit beliefs that will drive and direct their life in a different way (Cole, 1987; Gillmore, 1990; Connell, 1996; Lloyd, 1998; Nieto, 1999). Within the barrage of input, these boys will receive messages about what it means to be a man in the traditional Hispanic culture. By learning from each day in their particular worlds, the boys will be exposed to images and ideas about what is appropriate and desirable behavior for a Hispanic male. This social construction of gender is a dynamic

process that is a continuously “looping in constructing and reconstructing” their masculinity (Connell, 1996; Gillmore, 1990; Gurian, 1996; Nieto, 1999; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Intertwined with cultural traits will be the toys, clothes, language responses, and television shows their parents will use to promote or negate the social impressions they are each expected to adopt when considering this ever-changing male perspective. These messages regulate what is appropriate for these Hispanic boys within the realm of their Hispanic world.

Many researchers assert that masculinity in the United States has multiple definitions and differs depending on race, culture, class, socioeconomic level, and community social structure (Connell, 1996; Martino, 2001; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Smiler, 2006; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005; Torres, et. al., 2002). Therefore, the notion of a unified definition or a common way to “do” or “think” of masculinities is far from being documented in current research (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Connell, 1996; Jackson & Salsibury, 1996; Young, 2000). Whorley and Addis (2006) reviewed one hundred and seventy-eight articles on men and masculinity published in the U.S. mainstream journals between 1995 and 2004. The research found that out of the one hundred fifteen studies that included ethnic groups, the findings revealed that only 5.87% of populations studied were of Hispanic men, which were represented in only seven studies. This lack of representation leaves a huge gap in understanding masculinity as it relates specifically to Hispanic males and opens up questions as to how in a postmodernistic era can researchers generalize findings surrounding masculinities machismo.

Researchers purport that with the diverse nature of all students of color, populations in the U.S. characteristics of machismo go far beyond any brief definition (Gay, 1994). Statistically these experiences can be understood more deeply by analyzing the Conformity to Masculine Norms Index (CMNI). The CMNI measures conformity to twelve masculine norms: winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, dominance, playboy, self-reliance, primacy of work, power over women, disdain for homosexuals, physical toughness, and pursuit of status. The development of this measure was grounded in clinical psychology in the attempt to analyze individual men's conformity to male characteristics and how it impacts their relationships (Ludlow & Mahalik, 2002; Smiler, 2006).

Researchers have concluded that men develop and interpret their own masculinity within a particular and personalized cultural framework (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Davis & Jordon, 1994; Connell, 1996; Martino, 2001; Pollock, 1999; Peyton -Young, 2000; Torres, et. al., 2002; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Tatum, 2005; Smiler, 2006) In support of this, West and Zimmerman's (1987) foundational study on gender claims that society perceives gender as part of any sociocultural encounter. They go on to argue that gender is outwardly expressed and also establishes self-accountability to how we decide to express gender in social situations. Martino & Berrill (2003) asserts that any analysis of boys must be undertaken with a critical sociological perspective. Martino (2007) further emphasizes the danger of hegemonic masculinities and how they will further oppress the socio-cultural masculinities inherent in men of color. Additionally, Pollack (1999) identifies the "boy code" that guides boy behavior through culturally formed

myths of masculinity. Yet, Connell (1996) holds that there are even more differences in how we actually perform masculinity in any workplace, neighborhood, classroom, or peer group. Therefore, the “expression of masculinities” (p. 208) is diverse in nature for all men, specifically among Hispanic and Anglo men (Connell, 1996).

There are many traditionally held perspectives that delineate the characteristics of Hispanic expressions of masculinity, or machismo. Historic views on machismo hold that *real* Hispanic men are “strong, virile, valiente (valiant), stubborn, *fuerte*” (Stevens, 1965, p. 848) ... good drinkers, lovers, singers, and fighters. They are brave, and willing to defend what they believe even it includes an act of violence (Stevens, 1965; Connell, 1996). A landmark study conducted by Gillmore (1990) claimed that traditional machismo holds three imperatives – to impregnate, to protect, and to provide. These male traits, Gillmore asserted, were evident in many cultures and although prevalent, they are not isolated to the Hispanic culture. Oddly enough, Gilmore’s (1990) research was conducted primarily with men from his native country of Spain.

In another study, Torres, Solberg and Carlstrom (2002) investigated the multidimensional, multifaceted construction of machismo which indicated that there is evidence that Latino men (term Latino used as referred to in original study) who were flexible in their perceptions of gender roles did, in fact, adapt to cultural norms within the dominant U. S. society. This study included one hundred and forty Latino men who were interviewed and surveyed over a ten-month period. These men represented a variety of ethnic identities that included Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Interethnic/racial Hispanics and Americans. They found that there was an alternative

view to machismo that researchers neglect to inquire about or often times “gets lost in the translation” (p. 165). This alternative view was manifested in positive traits that stem from machismo such as the expectation for men to be family-oriented, hard working, brave, honorable, moral, responsible, proud, and interested in the welfare and honor of their loved ones. They go on to assert that Latino males provide for, protect, and defend their families and the less fortunate members of society. Among the findings, this team of researchers found that Latino men embraced many dimensions of machismo. These multiple dimensions of machismo fell under five factors that included contemporary masculinity, machismo, traditional machismo, compassionate machismo, and contemporary machismo. This study contends that Latino men perceive and subscribe to several different types of machismo. It goes on to emphasize that Latino men do “embrace the negative and positive elements of machismo, not necessarily exclusive of each other” (Torres, et. al., 2002, p. 175). The findings of this study indicate that when “defined within its ethnic and cultural parameters, contrary to its stereotypical negative image, machismo is a normative cultural value and set of behavioral indicators that define public and private gender roles and family relationships for Latino men” (Torres, et. al., 2002, p. 175). Although the findings have major implications for multicultural mental health issues, knowing that Latino men have the potential of constructing and deconstructing machismo has major educational implications. Therefore, it is evident that there is no simple way to describe or generalize the characteristics of Latino machismo.

The studies mentioned above show both faces of machismo and how culture molds the specific characteristics that are found to be both positive and negative.

Although, society has captured the negative attributes of machismo and attached the stereotypes to the Hispanic male, there is a lack of research in this area (Torres, et. al., 2002). The big question is: How can both sides of the machismo be harnessed to empower Hispanic boys to cultivate the positive aspects of machismo while reconstructing the negative implications that will help transform years of tradition?

Educational impact of Hispanic machismo.

A Hispanic boy's machismo is accepted within the invisible borders of his culture, yet his cultural expression of this type of manhood may become a liability within the '*feminized*' walls of the classroom. Boys end up negotiating a path between the stereotypical Hispanic male dominance toward women (teachers, classmates) and trying to adhere to their machismo traits like sexism, oppression and control (Penalosa, 1968; Hawkes & Taylor, 1975; Torres, et. al., 2002). The Hispanic perception of the role of women impacts the boys' experience in a female-dominated school system.

My own experience as a Hispanic female growing up in a traditional Mexican home would concur with the more traditional definition of machismo. Christian-Smith's (1991) critical research details a women's role as "incomplete without a man, that motherhood is women's destiny, and the women's rightful place is in the home" (p. 192). One only has to read the short narrative by Rita Flores Carignan to understand this stereotypical mindset. Carignan was chastised by her father for having dreams of attending the local university. This verbal mutilation for dreaming to be more, know more, and desire to change is something that I have heard from many daughters, wives, and women from the Hispanic culture. All too often women are made to feel out of line

or guilty for having a thirst for knowledge (Flores-Carignan, 1999). This negative element of machismo, carried by many Hispanic men, is the culmination of generations of male dominance. We need to acknowledge this history of male dominance and explore how the construction of machismo during the formative years can be deconstructed to embrace affirmative machismo traits that will help our young men respect teachers and therefore, embrace the message of education for themselves their sons and daughters (Valdes, 1999; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Torres, et. al., 2002).

Studies stress the importance of access to positive academic interactions through the curriculum, teachers, and other school activities; that these are vital for minority students who are already marginalized in the educational system (Irvine, 1990; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Finn & Cox, 1992). With more Hispanic boys being removed from class for disciplinary purposes, the only result will uphold research behind Hispanic boys such as lower student achievement, higher retention rates, and higher drop out rates.

So a multifaceted Hispanic male identity may be in conflict with the educational environment he is required to attend. Hispanic boys may feel the tension of walking the line between two distinct worlds with two distinct value systems. Seeking comfort within this internal struggle will likely lead him to embrace the Hispanic roles he has observed and experienced since his birth.

To conclude, research would support the dichotomy defining the role of Hispanic boys in our society. One role is the stereotypical macho Hispanic male, who exhibits excessive dominant behaviors, is a reluctant learner (reader), and a drop out who displays attitudes against being educated. The other is the dedicated, loyal, hardworking Hispanic

male who steps up to be the primary translator and embraces a leadership role in his family. These two lines of thought lay the foundation for the juxtaposition of machismo in this dissertation. It is difficult for most teachers and administrators to understand the language barrier, this machismo, and the assets these boys carry into the classroom. It is essential that we understand the deployment of machismo and learn from their strength and leadership. It is vital that the voice of this disenfranchised population be heard and validated.

Critical Pedagogy

Expert scholars agree if we are to be responsive to the needs of Hispanic boys we must examine our current trends of educating and meeting their academic needs. Researchers claim that time for movement, hands on learning, infusion of technology, healthy competition, supportive risk free environments, options for writing topics, high interest reading materials, and attention given to the cultural background of the individual, are all vital for the success of Hispanic boys (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Connell & Gunzelmann, 2004; Fletcher, 2006; Newkirk, 2006; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). Regrettably, examination of these basic instructional methods suggests that they are essential, yet insufficient. They are insufficient because our Hispanic boys can be schooled within their current life situation; yet, they find themselves without the tools to transform their lives in spite of thirteen years within our American educational system (Freire, 1983). Vasquez (2001) claims that the purpose for educating the citizenry is to help people analyze their current life situations and “help learners envision the possibilities in life” (p. 1). In order to change the current educational rhetoric and practice

around students of color, it is essential to utilize a pedagogical stance that promotes discourse around analytical thinking, questions power relations within contexts, and empowers individuals to change their conditions of living within their world (Freire, 1983; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Valdes (2001) envisions a critical pedagogy that does not merely involve students to “make it” (p. 158) but rather involves changing the ways students understand their lives and the possibilities with which they are presented. Although Kincheloe & McLaren (2005) stress that researchers to not treat critical theory as a “universal grammar of revolutionary thought...reduced to discrete formulaic pronouncements or strategies” (p. 304), educators must seek to embrace the philosophy behind critical pedagogy in their classrooms if they are to have students question and challenge current paradigms within our educational system.

Critical literacy.

There are many researchers who have taken a different angle in regards to critical literacy and the many instructional practices that their specific definition embraces. To synthesize the many definitions and theories of critical literacy would be to synthesize these into four dimensions: “(1) Disrupting the commonplace, (2) Interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) Focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) Taking action and promoting social justice” (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys 2002. p. 382). Many would interpret these dimensions to mean deconstructing ordinary situations and interrogate their current meaning to envision new possibilities (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Dyson (1997), like other researchers who adhere to critical theories, acknowledges a student's life outside of the classroom door. She stresses that teachers must tap into a child's *multiple worlds* and *multiple identities* to emphasize that literacy is carried through the various venues that make up the child's life. This line of thinking is also echoed and further explored by the work of other researchers, like Newkirk (2000), who examined gender and writing which expressed multiple worlds as an avenue to broaden literacies. Smith & Wilhelm (2002) also found that literacy was expressed in multiple venues (multiple worlds) throughout the lives of forty-nine individual males. These authors offer critical literacy as the avenue through which to interrogate how literacy is positioned in the lives of their participants (Newkirk, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). When the critical literacy lens moves to students of color Foss (2002) foresees a need to "take a critical stance so these students are armed with tools to identify and problematize the systems" (p. 394) of power within which they live everyday.

Many researchers will verify that looking through a critical lens helps students become more involved in conversations about their life experiences and move beyond the surface into deeper reflection, which deals with perception, values, beliefs and transparent understandings of everyday life situations (Peyton-Young, 2000; Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Gee (2005) calls this conversation Discourse (with a capital D), which is defined as our interactions with our own world. Peyton-Young (2000) explains Discourse as the rules and values of a specific club. These tactical rules of membership include "the way we speak, listen, act, value, think, read, write, feel, dress, and gesture" (p. 316). Therefore, for Hispanic boy participants in this

study, critical literacy will emphasize the experiences of the participants and the Discourse will include quotes from membership from their world.

In order to be responsive to the guiding questions of this dissertation, I will follow the definition set forth by Peyton-Young (2000), which states that critical literacy involves “an understanding of how social contexts and power relations work together in and through different contexts to produce unequal social practice.” While analyzing the literacy practices of four adolescent boys, Peyton-Young (2000) found critical literacy as a viable way for participants to gain insight into their personal and social beings as well as establishing a place to think about “multiple possibilities for how they could think, feel, and act as males” (p. 333).

Within this inquiry, I will seek to guide participants as they “step out of the personal to interrogate how sociopolitical systems and power relationships shape perceptions, responses, and actions” (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002, p. 383) so they can come to a space where they can also create new and exciting possibilities (Peyton-Young, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Conclusion

Within the course of this literature review there were many questions not addressed specifically regarding the perceptions of Hispanic boys’ literacy experiences in and out of school. If we are to determine what is the most effective way to empower Hispanic boys we must support any and all findings with a strong theoretical base that is founded in real classrooms with a keen ear on the voices of Hispanic boys. It is essential that we expand our research to include Hispanic boys and “increase efforts to understand

the cultural issues that may impede research with minorities and specifically men of color” (Whorley & Addis, 2006, p. 657).

As a staff developer, curriculum specialist, adjunct professor and mother of three Hispanic boys, I have seen first hand the plight and disregard for Hispanic boys throughout the educational community. Based on the research reviewed for this dissertation, curricular options must be broadened to allow for the linguistic and cultural needs that would lead to the self-expression of Hispanic boys. *Turning Points* (1999), a reform report on inclusion of ethnic and cultural diversity, “warns that continuing to allow minority youth to face extraordinary risks of failure is a direct threat to our national standard of living and democratic foundations” (Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development, p. 27). Ensuring these understandings and methodologies will require professional development for teachers and administrators alike. There is still much to learn about teaching Hispanic boys with the intent to make them vital, active voices in our democracy.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The study of gender, class, and race are issues that must be brought to the discussion table in schools throughout the United States. When looking at gender and literacy, there are many pedagogical articles and research studies that expose the underlying issues of today's classrooms. Many times Hispanic boys are folded in with other students of color so they become invisible on the research page (Gay, 1994; Perea, 1997; Whorley & Addis, 2006). More specific study is needed to close the research gap concerning the most effective methods for educating this fast growing minority, a population most likely to dropout of school, Hispanic boys. This research study provides a lens to uncover the perceptions, thoughts, and ideas regarding literacy experiences and help hear the voices of Hispanic boys.

Philosophical Orientation to Inquiry

Berg (2007) defines qualitative research as research that seeks “answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings” (p. 8). Qualitative research is conducted by looking at and listening closely to individuals who organize themselves within a social context. The researcher then seeks to make meaning of their environment via specific concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, with descriptions of people and things. Overall, qualitative research is in search for the meaning of an individual's reality within their current environment. Given these key ideas, qualitative research seeks to understand the humanness of being

an individual. My goal is to expose the real life definition of literacy within the lives of Hispanic boys. Emotions, symbols, motivations, values, beliefs, and behavioral routines can be observable behaviors that may help educators glean crucial understanding of this marginalized population.

Phenomenology as a Method of Inquiry

In order to hear the voices of the individual Hispanic boys who I interviewed during this study, it was vital to “capture the meaning structure, and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon,” (Patton, 2002, p. 104) their literacy experiences. In order to utilize a phenomenological framework, it was essential for me to conduct rigorous, in-depth interviews (Patton 2002) during the final phase of this research inquiry to reflect the real meaning of literacy in the lives of these Hispanic boys. The interviews drew attention to how these Hispanic boys describe, feel, judge, perceive and make sense of their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). My role of researcher was to collect detailed descriptions of these literacy experiences via field-notes, audio transcripts, video recordings and nuances pulled from culture journals taken during focus groups and one-to-one interviews. Following the focus group and interview process, it was necessary to guide the participants through a reflection on their thoughts and experiences taken from data collected. My plan was to get their perspective on their lived experiences which transpired by reading back from field-notes, prior video and/or audio transcripts, and journal entries that will help capture the meaning behind each experience. These were continually reviewed and analyzed so as to cluster common themes and patterns to help identify the essence of the phenomenon.

Design of Study

This nature of this inquiry into the perceptions of Hispanic boys' literacy experiences framed the choices in design for this study. It was important for me, the researcher, to set the stage for deep discussion and disclosure of issues that can lead to the unveiling of Hispanic boys' viewpoints regarding what they believe around their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) and how these literacies affect their world. Therefore, this search for intimacy of their inner literate world on how they build, use and extend language lead me to the approaches that sought to deepen understandings. This ten-week study began with classroom observations and lead to inquiry methods that helped delve deeper into the Discourse around literacy and Hispanic boys. The two inquiry approaches selected were participant focus groups and individual interviews.

Focus Group Approach

Focus group interviews typically involved a homogeneous group of individuals who shared similar experiences and backgrounds. Focus group expert, Krueger (1994) suggests no more than eight to ten participants should participate at any one time. The goal of my six to eight participants was to discuss major issues that impacted their *private and public literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). One of the disadvantages of focus groups is that it may limit the number of questions asked due to the number of participants in the session responding. Therefore, during the six-week focus group sessions it was vital to narrow the questions that would help achieve the purpose, which is to evoke at least five important issues related to the literacies of Hispanic boys. My goal for conducting focus groups was to collect a variety of perspectives that would support whatever patterns

emerged from data (Patton, 2002). Although it was hard to expect confidentiality within focus groups, it was essential that participants have a clear understanding of the purpose of this inquiry. For this reason, I established a protocol to be presented to the group at our first session (Appendix C). Together, we reviewed and refined the protocol to fit the needs of this specific group of individuals. Patton (2002) cautions researchers who use focus groups to be careful that focus groups do not become problem-solving sessions or feel responsible for making decisions to rectify current circumstances. To ensure that all voices were heard, I established ground rules upfront and presented the Focus Group Protocol that served as the conversational structure that was implemented during all sessions (Appendix C). As Patton (2002) points out “the power in focus groups resides in them being focused.”

Responsive Interview Approach

Berg (2007) describes the responsive interview approach as an “interpretive constructionist philosophy mixed with bit of critical theory” (p. 30). This approach to data collection recognizes that both the interviewer and interviewee must have some kind of relationship during the interview process. Like any other human interaction it relied heavily on the authenticity and sincerity of the human element. The most enticing element of this style of responsive interviewing was that the design remains flexible and dynamic throughout the project (Berg, 2007). The goal of the responsive interview is to acquire interpretations from the participants’ regarding their experiences and their understandings of their world in order to construct a deeper understanding of that world. Therefore, I met with each individual Hispanic boy during a six-week interval. I listened

carefully and selected questions to help elaborate and support my emerging interpretations of their thinking captured during focus group sessions. Depth was achieved by ongoing review of information so that follow up questions could be created and adapted to new information. This process would help deal with the “complexity of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting themes” (p. 35) and allowed me to focus on the specifics of meaningful situations (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

I took on the role of interviewer and developed a style of questioning that was comfortable, while gradually building the relationship that would ease conversation into sensitive, weighty topics. It was important for me to remember to be responsive to the needs of the participant while concurrently paying close attention to ensure that a conversational partnership was maintained. In preparing for the interview, participants completed a personal information form that would help form a backdrop for the interviews following focus group sessions. The research participant information sheet (Appendix B) was developed with questions that are broad in nature and would help establish a general direction for the subsequent interview. I also audio-recorded each interview to extend and verify information from field-notes. Following each interview session, I reviewed guiding questions (Appendix D), audio recordings, and any field-notes taken in order to develop purposeful, strategic next steps to help conversations delve into perceptions. After each interview, I reflected on my own biases so that I would not influence each interview with my own perceptions of literacy. Berg (2007) advocates for self-reflection, which is needed to examine researcher biases and reactions to research content.

The School Site

The study took place in a mid-size school district with approximately 42,000 students housed within fifty-five (55) elementary, middle, and high schools. The specific school campus was a local, suburban high school that is located on 30 acres in a small residential community. Riverside High School housed approximately 1735 students. Classrooms at Riverside High School reveal the richness of its diversity. The school population has remained at 58% white students, 22% Hispanic students, 15% black students and 5% other. Classroom observations affirm the diverse cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of this particular campus. In regard to socioeconomic status, the percentage of students considered to be economically disadvantaged has grown from 40% in 2006-07 to 45% in 2007-08. This category is based on the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, which compares annual income to family size. Since 2002-03, this high school has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as it relates to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Under No Child Left Behind, each state has developed and implemented measurements for determining whether its schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Concurrently, the academic data reported for this high school revealed that once again it failed to meet the state accountability system. For the fourth consecutive year, this struggling school has received the school grade of a “D” in a range that mirrors the traditional grading scale of A to F (Florida Department of Education, 2008). However, the most recent graduation

rate shows a sharp percentage increase in Hispanic students who graduate (see Table 2).

Table 2. Riverside High School Graduation Rates

School Year	Percentage of Hispanic Students Graduating
2003-04	39%
2004-05	48%
2005-06	40%
2006-07	41%
2007-08	59%

Although graduation rates are on the rise, the 2007-08 reading test scores on the statewide assessment reveals that 85% of Hispanic students are not reading on or above grade level (Florida Department of Education, 2008). This data would infer that the Hispanic student population at Riverside High School, as a whole, is not making reading gains and are therefore, marginalized in their current educational situation. A closer examination of this data revealed that of the 1735 student population, 1,126 (65%) are Level 1 and Level 2 readers, of that, 583 (52%) are boys, and 145 (25%) are Hispanic boys. Level 1 and Level 2 students are those who scored within a range of 100 to 286 and 287 and 386, respectively. Level 1 and Level 2 students are both considered “not proficient” according to the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

When I closely analyzed the Hispanic population of Riverside High School, 20 % of the student body was considered Limited English Proficient as determined by a home

language survey completed upon entry to the district (Florida Department of Education, 2008). All high school students were assessed in grades 9 and 10 and if their scores were not considered “proficient” by state standards they were to retake the test in grade 11 or until a passing score is accomplished. Like much of the nation, the academic success of the Hispanic population at this high school was critically low (see Table 3). This data drastically affects graduation rates and the community perception of the school.

Table 3. Riverside High School Student Achievement Levels

Academic School Year	Total Hispanic students tested in Reading	Percentage of students proficient in Reading	Percent of Level 1 and 2 Students
04-05	197	7%	93%
05-06	211	11%	89%
06-07	208	6%	94%

Riverside High School schedule of classes also reflected the academic demographics of its struggling population. The high school offers 29 intensive reading classes for students who scored Level 1 or Level 2 on the statewide high stakes reading assessment. These reading classes are typically taught by teachers who are certified or are state endorsed to teach reading, as recommended by the district job description. The curriculum is an intervention program that was adopted by all secondary schools for use with low-level readers (Voyager Passport, 2008). This scripted program offers instruction in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These components are supported by videos, a classroom library, and technology that are intended to help meet the needs of all struggling readers.

Additionally, 10 Developmental Language Acquisition classes (DLA) are available for English Language Learners (ELL), which constitute 20% of the student population. DLA is a reading remediation class for ELL students, which is taken instead of being in a mainstreamed intensive reading class. DLA is in addition to the English through ELL classes. Once students are mainstreamed into their regular English classes, they are usually removed from the DLA class. These classes are filled with students who have been determined culturally and/or linguistically diverse, and those ELL students who demonstrated a need for support in other content area classes. The Lead Teacher at this site, who has come into education as a second career educator, developed the curriculum that is taught in the DLA classes. She has worked extensively with various textbook publishers to create a curriculum program that is intended to meet the urgent needs of these linguistically diverse students. Unfortunately, both intensive reading classes and developmental language classes took the place of any electives that could possibly have enriched, deepened, or supplemented other areas of interest which typically enhance a student's high school experience.

Participants

For the sample and population of this study, I conducted initial classroom observations in three intensive reading and content area classrooms for approximately two weeks equaling six visits total. During these classroom observations, my goal was to observe classroom interactions, classroom engagement levels, and other academic behaviors of Hispanic boys. Potential candidates met the following criteria: (a) scored Level 1 or 2 on the reading portion of state assessment; (b) have attended Greenbridge

District schools for any portion of each school year for grades K-9; and (c) considered bilingual based on the state Home Language Survey (Florida Department of Education, (2008). Therefore, I used purposive sampling, which provided for this specific population (Patton, 2002). I also researched student records and conducted teacher interviews to assist in the selection process. These young Hispanic boys were selected to reflect the two worlds in which they live, a world where they cling to childhood, while courageously reaching into young adulthood which makes them open and insightful into the two worlds that seem to be at conflict (Foss, 2002).

Data Collection Methods

This research study had a scheduled timeline of ten weeks. This time period could have been expanded, if necessary, in order to gather data to meet the purpose of the research questions. Data collection for this study was proposed in two distinct phases to be contingent on student, class, school, and district schedules.

Phase I

The purpose of Phase I of the inquiry was two-fold: (a) to observe reading and content area classrooms and help select potential research candidates, and (b) to conduct focus groups that elicited themes that Hispanic boys considered the most relevant in their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). For the first two weeks, I conducted classroom observations in intensive reading and content area classes at Riverside High School. The classes selected for observation were determined by the reading coach and school administrators. Students from grades nine through twelve who scored Level 1 or Level 2 on the reading portion of the state assessment, which is used to determine

retention and ultimately graduation, populated the classes. These six ninety-minute observations allowed me to observe Hispanic boys in their regular classroom settings. The objective of these observations was to record their classroom interactions, classroom engagement level, and other academic behaviors. Teachers introduced me as a research student from the local university studying high school students. While observing from the back of the classroom, I took field-notes to document details noticed about specific Hispanic boys' classroom practices that may have been related to students' perceptions and/or definitions of literacy. The two-column notes held a place for student actions and student language. These field-notes also helped to refine the list of questions and prompts (See Appendix D) that helped in aligning or supporting perceptions that could arise during subsequent focus groups or interviews.

I also used information gleaned from these observations to select potential focus group candidates. For these reasons, I included field notes on potential candidates, while I researched student records and conducted teacher interviews to assist in the selection process. Hispanic boys selected to participate in focus groups met the previously stated criteria: (a) scored Level 1 or 2 on the reading portion of state assessment; (b) have attended Greenbridge District schools for any portion of each school year in grades K-9; and (c) considered bilingual based on the Home Language Survey. These criteria, along with field notes from classroom observations, helped me further narrow the list of potential candidates to move into the next part of this study, focus groups. Once potential candidates were identified, I invited each potential candidate to be part of the study.

During an invitational conference, I provided the research objectives, a proposed timeline, the consent forms, and discussed participant roles and responsibilities.

The second part of Phase I commenced with focus groups and a timeframe of six weeks, which could be adapted to meet the needs of student, class, school, and district schedules. Focus groups met three times a week with the purpose of analyzing themes that could potentially impact the *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) of Hispanic boys. The focus group approach was purposefully selected as the initial data gathering method to use with participants due to its potential for gathering a variety perspectives and while verifying patterns. In the school conference room, our first focus group session was devoted to gathering background information and to build and ensure participant comfort level (Berg, 2007). The round table planted in the center of the conference room provided a dinner-like environment, promoted interaction, and encouraged conversation. The overall purpose of this time was to uncover the “conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics” (Berg, 2007, p. 144) of what Hispanic boys perceive as the themes that impact both their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005).

In order to set the stage for this inquiry, I had to frontload the purpose of the study, share roles and responsibilities of participants, privy participants to the working definitions of literacy, and finally, set a comfortable common ground. I shared my migrant experience so participants could feel a connection with me and to set an open tone that facilitated the sharing our lives with each other. In the suburban town of Riverside there are three large tomato-packing houses, therefore, even if these boys are

not migrant fieldworkers, they know the limitations this lifestyle may impose. Originally, I struggled with the idea of sharing my background with my participants. For many years, I was embarrassed and afraid that others would either judge me or secure their impressions when uncovering my migrant, Mexican background. Yet, it is only within the past decade that I present the entirety of who I am with pride for my culture and security in knowing that my Mexican traditions have developed a determined, hard-working, honest woman. Therefore, sharing my personal background served to help establish a sincere relationship that Burgess (1991) claims is vital between researcher and participant.

In order to build the platform for Phase I, it was important to prompt the focus group for content. The following steps were followed to elicit the initial themes relevant to the literacy experiences of Hispanic boys:

Step 1: Built common definitions for literacy via PowerPoint presentation (Appendix F).

Step 2: Brainstormed topics that impact upon the education of Hispanic boys. Captured topics on blank PowerPoint slide projected on whiteboard screen.

Step 3: Reviewed the brainstormed list. Using the bold feature of Microsoft Word, participants prioritized the list by placing an adhesive dot beside topics they believed had the most impact on their educational lives. Participants were given a total of five adhesive dots to help narrow list of topics. This method of silent voting recognized all voices and helped narrow the list of topics.

Step 4: When all participants completed prioritizing their top five topics, we reviewed topics selected by the entire group. (Appendix H)

These steps were intentionally designed to be open-ended, yet also give structure while embracing all voices and opinions. Once themes were selected and agreed upon, participants spent approximately six weeks in focus group sessions discussing and analyzing each theme to create a unified understanding and definition. As the moderator of the focus groups, my goals were to keep the conversation moving forward and encourage participants to speak freely and completely about their behaviors, attitudes, and opinions as a Hispanic boy within the educational system. As a novice researcher, I found it necessary to prepare the protocol that was used as a moderator's guide (see Appendix C) to provide a safe, reliable format (Berg, 2007). Data collection consisted of field notes and both audio and video recordings to help capture ideas, themes and nuances that helped filter out what the most prevalent themes are to these Hispanic boys.

Transcription of video and audio recordings was completed while the focus group sessions were being conducted. The video recording of the focus group sessions was viewed and aligned to the audio transcripts. This ongoing alignment was done in order to identify trends and patterns among the candidates conversation. When discrepancies arose between the audio and video transcriptions, it was brought back to the focus group and debriefed for clarification.

At the conclusion of these focus group sessions, I followed up with a conversation with each member to verify the reliability of information stated during the session. This process was specifically planned to help sift out themes Hispanic boys would write about

in their culture journals, during Phase II, in hopes that these would provide insight to their literary perceptions.

Phase II

Phase II of this study consists of the Hispanic boys analyzing the themes most prevalent to their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). The goal was to deepen the understanding and impact of the themes that emerged from within focus groups conducted in Phase I. The purpose was also to analyze the content and role of each specific theme by using writing as a tool for triangulation (Patton, 2002) as well as a mode of expression. Phase II began by asking for volunteers to continue to Phase II of the study. The goal was to carry over at least four participants from Phase I to Phase II. If there were more than four volunteers, I planned to carry over all participants who volunteered and highlight the participants who have provided the most insightful perspectives to the research questions.

For the first session, all twenty two participants who moved into Phase II met for a mini-orientation to review and confirm the information from the focus group discussions and preview the Individual Interview Framework (see Appendix E) to be utilized in Phase II. This tool helped with structure and predictability and also provided uniformity and consistency to all interviews. Each participant was given a composition book at the orientation session that was called a Culture Journal framed by the writer's notebook (Calkins, 1986; Fletcher, 2006). It was given this title to help participants with the impression of collecting pieces that represent who they are as Hispanic males. These culture journals were to be written in a minimum of twice a week. Following this preview

session, I met with individual participants a maximum of twice a week for a six-week period. I formed random partnerships from all participants who wished to continue to Phase II. The goal was to pull participants during their daily academic schedule.

Interview sessions took place during the participants' fifty-minute lunchtime at Riverside High School.

Each interview session began with a review of recent entries in the participant Culture Journal. This initial sharing time was followed by an introduction of the new theme, followed by a time to write in their Culture Journal. This written piece was intended to capture participant's reactions to each theme and help uncover deeper personal perceptions. It was during these discussions that I probed and asked participants to elaborate on current understandings of the themes and used the personal interview questions (see Appendix D) to help guide these conversations.

After writing, interviewees had a chance to discuss the issue to recognize personal implications, and help refine thinking among us and within the culture journals. These journals were taken home by participants, where each participant could write, draw, or collect items they thought were relevant to the current topic of discussion. This process was repeated for a total of six weeks were participants were analyzing and self-reflecting on at least five themes.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were collected via field-notes from initial classroom observations, video and audio transcripts from focus groups and student interviews, and writing samples collected from participants' Culture Journals. To triangulate data, audio and video transcripts from

focus group sessions and individual interviews were compared and analyzed for consistency and accuracy with the intent of understanding inconsistencies in findings across all data sources (Patton, 2002). Writing samples were also aligned with video and audio transcripts to help determine validity of triangulation.

Initially, data was sorted by initial themes elicited from participants. When transcripts were completed, data were organized into separate categories for *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005), which helped in examining perceptions of literacy experiences as they related to each theme. To analyze data, qualitative software would be implemented to assist with data storage, categorizing, coding, and linking concepts. I was responsible for naming categories, depicting patterns, and synthesizing outcomes related to research questions.

Limitations of the Study

In qualitative research there is always a concern for external validity beyond the parameters of this research inquiry. First, the generalizability of findings must be restricted to this population of Hispanic boys from this local high school. Perceptions of prevalent themes regarding the *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) described in observations, video, and audio transcripts are personal and represent the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of this group of individuals. It is also vital to recognize that the level of education and proficiency with writing of these individuals may impact their ability to express themselves verbally and/or in written format. Additionally, we can conclude that while this sample size can provide valuable information to help us glean into the world of Hispanic boys, the quantity of participants can only provide a glimpse

into the perceptions of Hispanic boys. Future research in this area should include Hispanic boys from around the United States to examine what themes may further impact the educating of this marginalized population.

When looking at weaknesses that may have impacted this study, time and location may have played into information given by participants. High school students can be easily influenced by the perceptions of their peers and expectations from school personnel. Responses and individual comments can be skewed to either agree with the group or take a stand against other group members. In collecting the perceptions of these adolescent males, it was difficult to discern when participants were responding to group dynamics, or to thoughtful reflections. Conducting this study at Riverside High School could have also added incongruity to the verbal and physical expressions of the participants since these young males are veiled with their public persona. Additionally, this small suburban town is populated with Hispanics of Mexican decent, which are typically migrant farm workers. The stereotypical portrait of this hardworking population added to the male identities formed within this community.

Finally, I have specific biases that impacted the implementation of this study. My Hispanic (Mexican-American) upbringing definitely had bearings on my relationship with participants. I envisioned relating to many issues that affect students of color such as, tracking of classes, low student expectations, and feelings of marginalization. I turned to Hertz (1997) who suggested that as a reflexive researcher, I must be continuously aware and self reflect on my role as a researcher. My own social, cultural, and political

perspectives served to help probe and analyze data that was collected during the entire process.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study liberate the voice whose time has come to be heard and validated. Our young Hispanic boys hold promise in leadership and vision to the ever-changing diversity of this nation.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

There are many factors that impact the academic success and failures of adolescent Hispanic boys. Researchers have found that Hispanic males have a great probability of low reading achievement (NCES, 2004), high-grade level retention (Heubert & Hauser, 1999), and even higher drop out rates (Lee & Burkam, 2003). These barriers increase their chances of academic failure, which lead to economic, societal, and personal disconnections to the American dream. These challenges, faced within a Euro-centric middle class educational system, adversely affect the culture and masculinities expressed by adolescent Hispanic males. They are confronted daily with obstacles that continue to situate them into a perspective and role that renders them outsiders. The role that literacy and education play in Hispanic boys' lives can be determining factors at any stage of an educational career. Therefore, it was the intention of data collected to answer the following questions posed in this dissertation.

The primary question that led the inquiry was:

What are the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys who are considered low level readers (by state achievement tests) regarding their own literacy experiences?

Secondary Questions included:

- What have researchers reported about Hispanic boys in literacy situations?
- What is the role of masculinity (machismo) in the literacy lives of Hispanic boys?

- What teaching methods do Hispanic boys consider most responsive to their literacy needs?
- What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?

In addressing these questions, this chapter will focus on a brief review of research methods, introduction to the participants, and findings within the focus groups and individual interviews.

Review of Methods

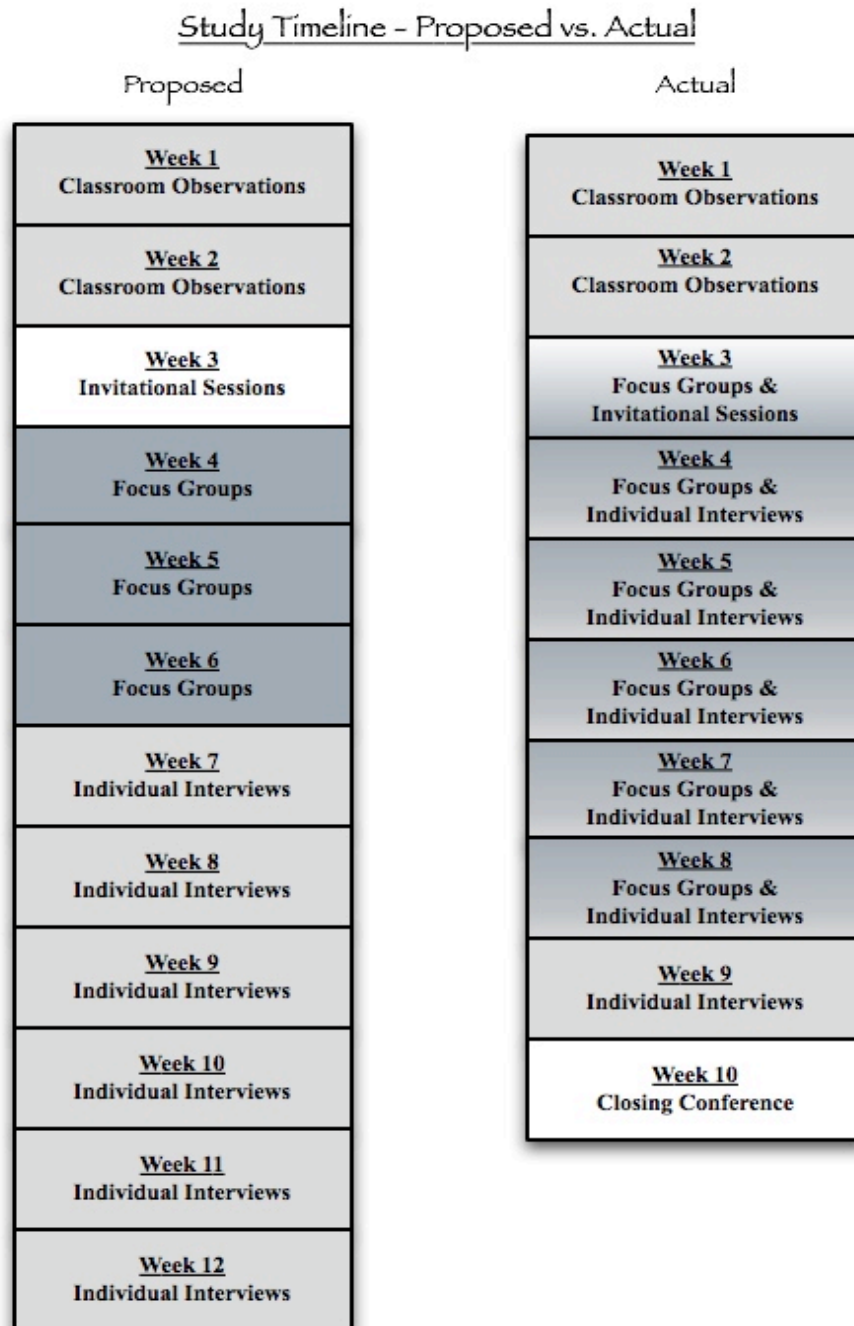
The purpose of this inquiry was to analyze the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys' literacy experiences. This underlying intention framed the methodological design, which created the opportunity to tap into the world of Hispanic boys and capture their voices.

Proposed Study vs. Actual Study

In order to better proportion school credits for students, all high schools in Greenbridge School District were moved to a modified seven period school day (see school schedule Appendix G). During a typical week, students had first period (59 minutes) everyday and attended ninety-minute classes for the remainder of each day the entire week. Each day alternates between odd and even, each with their separate set of classes and lunchtimes. This schedule was interrupted by a modified Wednesday schedule where students attend seventy-nine (79) minute classes to accommodate a half-day for teacher planning and professional development. This complex schedule made it impossible for me to conduct Phase I and Phase II in chronological order. Therefore,

Phase I (6 weeks) and Phase II (6 weeks) of this research inquiry were conducted simultaneously with a five-week overlap (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Proposed Study vs. Actual Study Timeline



As proposed, the two inquiry approaches selected were participant focus groups and individual interviews. These two approaches fostered the level of intimacy necessary to reveal perceptions regarding what these particular Hispanic boys believed around their *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005), and how these literacies impacted their current and future world. Following, I present a brief overview of the both methods of inquiry, focus groups, and responsive interview, with the intent of fully developing them as the inquiry unfolds within this chapter.

Review and Intention of Focus Groups

Focus group sessions were conducted with six to eight participants as recommended by Krueger (1994). The intended outcome was to elicit and make public to the group a list of at least five major themes that impact the *private and public literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) of these Hispanic boys. The purpose, as proposed, was to collect a variety of perspectives to form themes and patterns that would ultimately emerge from and subsequently influence each group. As predicted by Krueger (1994), one of the disadvantages of focus groups was the limited number of questions asked due to the number of participants in each session. Yet, the nature of these particular conversations did develop a natural flow and did allow several topics to be discussed during each focus group. Even when working within the ground rules and the proposed protocol (Appendix C), which was introduced at the inception of focus group sessions, the conversation remained focused and moved easily from one topic to the next. It was only during a few silent moments that I posed a question to steer the conversation in a new direction. These questions were based on both recapping the conversation and asking for more input or

providing a new topic in question format if the conversation at hand had exhausted itself. Overall, the participants were engaged in their sharing of stories, experiences, and insights, which made it difficult not to follow each digression. It was clear that the participants were vested in the conversation, which was driven by their own collective engagement. This was evidenced by them leaning into the table, looking at each other as they shared, nodding their heads, and frequently saying “That’s right, Miss.”

Although I proposed focus group sessions to take place during Phase I, school schedules and end of year activities forced modification of the three-week time-line (See Figure 1). Therefore, during the six-week focus group sessions, I reviewed discussions and selected questions that would expand the themes related to the literacy of Hispanic boys (See Appendix H). After analyzing focus group conversations, there were five, themes that surfaced to be more prevalent or expressed by this group of Hispanic boys. Convergence of emerging themes was achieved by ongoing review of information gathered during classroom observations, focus groups and individual interviews. Follow-up questions were developed as new information was gleaned which helped solidify complex issues or conflicting themes that required clarification. The other important research protocol used was the responsive interview approach. It was used to deepen the conversation around these five topics and issues that address Hispanic boys.

Review and Intention of Responsive Interview Approach

This interview approach was introduced at the invitational conference which was conducted at the inception of the research study, where I provided participants with research objectives, proposed timelines, consent forms, and discussed participant roles

and responsibilities. Along with focus groups, the responsive interview approach was presented as one of the main methods of data collection that would help me clearly appreciate participants' individual perceptions. The responsive interview also provided the time necessary to build relationships and deepen my understanding of their personal thoughts surrounding specific responses captured during focus group discussions. As concluded by Berg (2007), responsive interviews presented an opportunity to help develop the researcher-participant relationship, which elicited individual stories full of trials and tribulations. Due to the nature of the conversations, it was necessary to develop a level of trust that would create, not only an environment for risk taking, but also a venue where these Hispanic boys could openly share their thoughts and beliefs with no potential for negative recourse. Therefore, I came into the study with the perspective of sharing school stories, sharing life-experiences, and, at many times, treating the boys as if they were guests in my home. I was inquisitive, frank, and sincere. The responsive interview approach also afforded me the opening to be a witness to the humanity behind these distinct individuals. These moments relied heavily on a combined authenticity of researcher and participant, my willingness to know and their willingness to give. It became a trusted space for me to listen intently and select questions to help elaborate on interpretations of their thinking. It also helped me to clear interpretations on behaviors seen during classroom observations and focus group interactions.

Impact of the Responsive Interview Approach

To illustrate the value and impact of the responsive interview approach, I introduce Oscar, a 9th grade participant, who unknowingly called on me, the researcher,

to respond to his story. When presenting this and other transcripts, I have chosen to validate the language used by each participant as it was revealed to me as a result of developing a relationship founded on trust and openness. When applicable, unnecessary conjunctions were omitted from beginning of conversational exchanges. Also, as with most translations presented within the study, be aware as the reader that the “act of translation may cool the passion of the thought” (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p. 12).

I met Oscar the first day of my observations in his Developmental Language Class. He sat in his seat staring at the wall. He interacted with another student who was showing him a drawing of a character face drawn in the language workbook. He glanced back at Oscar with a smirk. The character was creatively drawn in the crease of the blank pages of the workbook. The face had big eyes with the mouth tilted to the side. Oscar smiled and gave him a thumbs-up. This type of encounter took place several times with other students in the class. All appeared to be looking to Oscar for support. These interactions seemed to show how Oscar was well accepted by his peers. He later engaged in a class grand conversation (Eeds & Wells, 1989) by leaning forward and responding to questions in this whole group setting. Later, during the focus groups, he participated with great intention, leaning in, smiling at others as they share, and even raising his hand while waiting to speak. Once again, he was always willing to respond and add his thoughts to the discussion. It was not until the individual interview that I learned about Oscar’s life.

Excerpt from Oscar’s Individual Interview	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Meaning may be lost in translation)
R: ¿Vives con tus padres?	R: You live with your parents?
O: No, con mi hermana.	O: No, With my sister.

R: ¿Y donde están tus padres?	R: Where are your parents.
O: En México.	O: In Mexico.
R: ¿Y que edad tiene tu hermana?	R: How old is your sister?
O: Veinteuno.	O: Twenty-one.
R: Y por que están tus padres en México?	R: Why are your parents in Mexico?
O: No tienen papeles.	O: They don't have papers (legal immigrants).
R: ¿Y como llegaste a dar tu aquí?	R: How did you end up here (in the U.S)?
O: Yo soy nacido aquí...en California.	O: I was born in California (U.S citizen).
R: Entonces, tu mamá vino, tu naciste aquí, ¿y ella se fue para México?	R: Then your mom came over, you were born and she left to Mexico?
O: Yo nací y al año regrese a México con mi mamá ...y a pasaron diez, once años y regrese a California. Y de California me viene para Florida.	O: I was born and we all went back to Mexico with my mother...ten, eleven years passed and I came back to California. From California I came to Florida.
R: ¿Y con quien te llegaste de California?	R: Who did you come with from California?
O: Con me tía.	O: With my aunt.
R: ¿Y por qué te decidiste venir aquí solo?	R: Why did you decide to come here all-alone?
O: Mi papá me mando porque es mejor estudio. Es mejor estar aquí que en	O: My father sent me because it is a better place to study. It is better to be here than in

México...hay mas oportunidades.	Mexico...many more opportunities.
LONG PAUSE....	LONG PAUSE....
R: ¿Y cuáles oportunidades quieres buscar aquí en los Estados Unidos?	R: What opportunities do you want to find here in the United States?
O: Una carrera de enfermero.	O: A career as a nurse.

During the long pause in this part of the interview, I was staring at this small-framed adolescent young face whose chin was slightly shivering as if ready to cry. I was not sure of how to respond to this situation. My mind raced to my own son, Matthew, who is eight years old. Could I send him to another county, at the age of ten, in the hopes that he would find a better life? I'm not sure. The courage and strength of a mother who would agree to send her son to a distant country that is envisioned as "a better place to study" to seek a career as a nurse was astonishing. The blinded faith placed into *chance* is not known by many, but fully embraced by Oscar's parents. I continued with the interview questions and held close my emotions. Yet, later in the interview we returned to the conversation when asked, "What makes you different from the other Hispanic boys?"

Excerpt from Oscar Individual Interview	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Some meaning may be lost in translation)
R: ¿Qué mas te hace diferente?	R: What else makes you different?
O: La forma de hablar...mi familia es diferente...mí historia de como vine aquí es diferente.	O: The way I talk...My family is different...my story of how I came here is different.
R: ¿Y qué piensas tu de tu historia?	R: What do you think of your story?

O: Es triste.	O: It's sad.
R: ¿Por qué?	R: Why?
O: Porque tener que dejar a sus padres, ir a un país, estar solo aquí...solamente con me hermana.	O: Because leaving your parents, and going to a different land, all by yourself...only with your sister.
R: ¿Y le hechas menos as tus padres?	R: Do you miss your parents?
O: Si!	O: Yes!
Late bell rings...a few moments pass.	Late bell rings...a few moments pass.
R: ¿Piensas tu qué tu historia esta triste..y si es...Que piensas siendo qué tienes una historia tan triste?	R: You think your story is sad... and it is...What do you think being that you have such a sad story?
O: Me siento bien y a veces mal....porque tengo que seguirle adelante como dice mi papá. Ellos quieren a ver me a mi con una carrera. Por eso me mandaron aquí a los Estados Unidos.	O: I feel o.k. ...And sometimes feel bad...because I have to move forward like my dad says. They want to see me in with a career. That's why they sent me to the United States.
R: ¿Es un sacrificio..?	R: It is a sacrifice?
O: Si, es un sacrificio...	O: Yes, it is a sacrifice...
R: ¿Y qué de dar entender de tus padres?	R: What does it tell you about your parents?
O: A veces mucha gente me dicen...tus	O: At times many people tell me...your

padres no te quieren porque te mandaron aquí solo. Pero yo se qué me mandaron para algo bueno. Es lo qué debo de hacer.	parents don't love you that's why they send you here all by yourself. But I know why they sent me here...for a good reason. It's what I'm supposed to do.
R: ¿Y sientes tu una obligación?	R: You feel like you have an obligation?
O: Si, seguir estudiando y hechar le <i>ganas</i> a la escuela.	O: Yes, keep studying and put <i>ganas</i> (to put forth effort and push forward with passion) into my schooling.
R: Muy cierto..Ganas! Eso es lo qué pienso yo qué necesitan todos los muchachos del grupo...Ganas! Porque parece qué no..perro hechando le ganas a cual quiere cosa...sales adelante.	R: Very true...Ganas! That's what I think all you guys in the group need...Ganas! Because believe it or not...putting forth ganas in anything you come out ahead.
O: Si, sales adelante.	O: Yes, you come out ahead.

The reality of the goals, dreams, and hopes placed at the doors of our educational system weighed on me as this young man's parents placed his fate, his youth, his future in the hands of American schools. Oscar reminder me of how, beyond the borders of this country, our education is seen as the liberator, an emancipator. He revisits the conversation and shares sincere thoughts and feelings about how he is handling this sad yet, inspirational situation. There are small tears in the corners of his eyes. Oscar is no longer the smiling young man I saw in both classroom observations and focus group

sessions. It was times like these that the responsive part of the interview called for a sensitive ear whose intention was to acknowledge the interviewee as a partner in developing and leading the research conversation. The responsive interview approach served as the main vehicle for rich, intimate conversations.

Classroom Observations

In order to begin the observation process, I first met with the school registrar who assisted me in researching the names of all Hispanic boys who had scored a Level 1 and 2 on the state assessment at Riverside High school. This list was extensive and consisted of 138 Hispanic boys.

Classroom observations were initially planned to look specifically for Hispanic boys who took an active part in classroom interactions, engaged in classroom activities, and exhibited concrete academic behaviors. In-class participation behaviors were targeted with the thought that these active participants would more openly articulate their perceptions and also their willingness to share their thoughts. A total of six classroom observations were proposed and conducted during a two-week timeframe. Involved in these observations were one intensive reading class, one regular English class and one Developmental Language Acquisition class for English Language Learners (ELL). The classrooms were selected under the advisement of the school principal and reading coach with regard to teacher willingness and objectives of the research proposal. Each individual classroom was observed for two classroom periods for a total of six observations and 180 minutes of classroom instruction. When I observed these classrooms, I first drew a seating chart on which I labeled each Hispanic boy's location

amongst the students. Although each classroom teacher had a similar instructional purpose in regards to seating arrangement, each classroom was set up in a different manner (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Classroom Seating Charts

2A. Developmental Language Acquisition Class Seating Chart				2B. Intensive Reading Class Seating Chart						
HB1	F	HB 4	HB 6	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	
	AAM	WF	HB 8	HF	-	WF	WM	WF	-	
	-	HB 5	HF	HB1	WF	WF	WF	HB3	-	
	HB 3	WF	HB 7	WM	WM	-	-	HB2	-	
HB2	HF	AAM	HB F					HB4		
		AAM								
2C. Regular English Class Seating Chart				Key for Seating Charts						
HB1			HF	R1 – Row and Number T1 – Team and Number HB# – Hispanic boy and identifying number AAM – African American Male WM – White Male HF – Hispanic Female WF – White Female AAF – African American Female						
HB2			-							
HB3			AAM							
HF	-	WF	WM							AAM
	AAF	WM	WM							
	AAF	-	-							

Observations of the Developmental Language Acquisition Class

The Developmental Language Acquisition course, located in one of the main buildings, was arranged in four rows of seven chairs with the traditional right side desktop (Figure 2A). These were placed in this position to allow for student-to-student interaction, according to the teacher. The room was filled with motivational posters, writer’s checklists, editor mark reminders, and a world map indicating students’ home countries. The physical environment of the room seemed intentionally geared for students

to use as a resource. There was a small classroom library filled with textbooks, current adolescent literature, and language dictionaries to meet the academic and linguistic needs of the students. There were four different languages, other than English, represented in this class - Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Creole. A former paralegal, the teacher was bilingual, in both English and Spanish, and encouraged students to read aloud as a way to learn and practice English. There was also a paraprofessional who supported these English Language Learners in other content area classes by attending classes with students and assisting them with content classroom assignments. The teacher stayed in the front of the room for a large part of the class and shared many examples and non-examples of content presented.

Observations of the Intensive Reading Class

The intensive reading class was organized into five teams of three traditional right-sided desktop chairs placed together to form a pseudo-triangle (See Figure 2B). Chairs were positioned in this manner to facilitate peer-to-peer conversations, according to the teacher. The room was outlined with ten computers on the perimeter to support the computer-based intensive reading intervention program. Each student had a notebook, which held student program forms and assessments. The teacher used an overhead projector to introduce a story of the week to the class. There was also evidence of literature circle roles displayed on a bulletin board in the back of the room. Further lining the walls were motivational posters dedicated to diversity, respect, and dedication. A veteran, this educator moved about the room while conferring and discussing student

work. She carried a clipboard, which outlined where students were in regards to the intervention program and wrote down anecdotal notes after each conference.

Observations of the Regular English Class

The farthest classroom from the center of the school held the regular English class, which was conducted in a white portable classroom. The seating arrangement in this classroom was set up in a “U” shape to allow for discussion, according to the teacher (Figure 2C). The classroom walls were bare and reflective of the four-week timeframe since the teacher had been hired. This new teacher utilized cooperative learning teaching methods as a means for students to work with partners and also provide support for his struggling students. During our initial discussion, the teacher described this class as a self-segregated class. This was evidenced by clusters of like races sitting within close proximity of each other. It was this class that *welcomed* me with a student fight and a subsequent fire drill within one class period.

Armed with student schedules and the list of Level 1 and Level 2 Hispanic boys, gave me a starting point for going into classrooms and beginning the search for possible participants. For each observation, I positioned myself in the back or left side of the room in order to see and hear the classroom behaviors of all, or most of, the Hispanic boys and to remain unobtrusive. During my time in each classroom setting, field-notes were taken in my research journal as I monitored the interaction and engagement surrounding the academic behaviors of each Hispanic boy. After each classroom visit, I concluded with a brief conversation with each teacher to discuss the names of specific Hispanic boys who “stood out” due to low or high engagement levels and/or positive or defiant attitudes,

individuals more likely to contribute to the conversation related to this inquiry. Teachers, at times, did recommend specific students or elaborated on particular behaviors or attitudes that they themselves found to be unique. Furthermore, they often were eager to share many narratives about students and/or they also provided justification for their personal teaching methods. Listening to teachers' discussions about individual students also gave me insight into the teacher's perceptions of specific social and academic characteristics of Hispanic boys. For example, while sitting in the Developmental Language Acquisition class, a science teacher came in to discuss one of the boys and said with great frustration,

“I am sick of him. He doesn't do anything. He is lazy and unwilling to learn English, just doesn't want to learn it. He never turns in anything. All he does is sleep...just comes in and puts his head down. I'm just sick and tired of it!”

As soon as the teacher left, I knew I wanted to seek out this student as a potential participant in order to hear counter-perceptions. Although this was the most extreme, details around conversations like this augmented my observations and made it possible for me to have a total of twenty-two potential candidates. This list of twenty-two candidates was narrowed down after reviewing my detailed field notes on the specific actions of the boys and notes from teacher recommendations and conversations such as the previous example. Therefore, participant criteria, student behaviors, teacher insight, and my professional and personal experiences guided participant selection. Although this list was extensive, I was cautious as to leave room for participant attrition. Once the list of twenty-two potential candidates was complete, I met, once again, with the school

registrar to investigate if the potential candidates met additional criteria required for this research inquiry. These criteria included: (a) had a score of Level 1 or 2 on the reading portion of state reading assessment; (b) have attended Greenbridge District schools for any portion of each school year for grades K-9; and (c) was considered bilingual based on Home Language Survey. When considering all criteria, only seven of the twenty-two potential candidates actually met all proposed criteria. Therefore, I found it necessary to modify the participant criteria from “must have attended Greenbridge District schools for portion of each school year for grades K-9” to “have attended Greenbridge County Schools for any portion of any school year in grades K-9.” This modification opened up the selection of participants to a more educationally diverse group of individuals. I then returned to ensure that each student met the modified criteria. All twenty-two potential candidates fell within a Level 1 or Level 2 as indicated on the state reading assessment and bilingual based on their Home Language Survey, therefore, making it possible for me to move forward with all twenty-two potential candidates. With the list of Level 1 and Level 2 Hispanic boys in hand and anecdotal notes from classroom observations, I refined the list of potential research candidates. The intended outcome of classroom observations was to target potential candidates that would move into focus groups.

At times it was difficult for me to capture student behaviors exhibited in the classroom due to traditional question/answer type teaching methods found in the high school classrooms that were observed. This method of teaching contrasts the teaching methods I employed as a fourteen-year veteran primary teacher and a district staff

developer in instructional best practices. Teacher-directed instruction necessarily limited the amount of student participation I was able to observe.

Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

Teacher comments and anecdotal notes from classroom observations helped develop an academic profile for each Hispanic boy highlighted as a potential candidate for this research study. In order to accommodate the students' schedules, I divided the twenty-two (22) potential candidates into three groups, which would ultimately become prospective focus groups. When assigning students to these groups, I first considered school and class schedule, students' grade level, and lunch assignment (Lunch A, Lunch B, or Lunch C) due to them being the least flexible aspects of scheduling. In order to disperse and diversify these prospective focus groups, I also considered linguistic abilities and academic behaviors. In the end, what resulted were three formal focus groups, which were diverse in regard to language ability, grade level, social etiquette, and academic behaviors each with seven to eight Hispanic boys. To initiate data collection, I proceeded to the proposed invitational conferences that would be the formal request for potential candidates to participate in this inquiry.

Invitational Conference

The invitational conference took place in the high school conference room across from the administrative office, which was at first interpreted by potential candidates as an "Am I in trouble?" walk. The potential candidates came in slowly, sitting down hesitantly far away from me. I tried to comfort the moment by reassuring them that they were not in any trouble. The first invitational conference sessions were more formal than I had

expected. As a former primary teacher, I tried to make them feel at ease by providing small conversation like “Hey, how it’s going, come on in. Don’t worry you’re not in trouble.” I also provided breakfast items, which included doughnuts from the famed local bakery and orange juice boxes to lighten the tension and build familiarity among the students. I invited them to eat while we waited for others to join us. Some were very hesitant looking at others to initiate conversation or even partake in the food items. During all three invitational conference sessions, I presented my personal information and educational background, which lead to the intention of my research study. The three major experiences shared were: (a) My migrant field work background until the age of 21, (b) My educational journey which led to teaching at the local elementary school, and finally, (c) My interest in literacy and boys due to my teaching experience and my own three sons. Then, as a group, we reviewed the research timeline, participant expectations, and answered any questions presented to me by the participants. I was surprised and amazed when, at the end of each invitational session, all twenty-two Hispanic boys eagerly reached for the parent permission forms. Their willing nods and positive slanting of the mouth put me at ease and gave me confidence that I would have an adequate number of permission slips returned and have sufficient research participants. Participants were given one week to return signed permission slips, therefore, providing ample time to begin focus groups sessions. The school secretary in the student center agreed to be the contact person for those returning permission slips while I was off campus. It took a total of one week to collect student permission slips and three weeks to

retrieve all parent permission slips. Eighteen of twenty-two participants returned their parent permission slips.

Focus Groups Sessions

The initial focus group session, which followed the invitational conference, was facilitated using the proposed protocol in Chapter 3 (Appendix C). I created a multimedia presentation (Appendix F) where the definition of literacy was presented and expanded to encompass the definition of *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). This was done by utilizing a movie clip that discussed the multiple meanings behind any given sign or symbol with the intention of showing how we attach meaning to a sign or symbol depending on our own experiences and perspectives. I then presented the definition of traditional school literacy as that of making meaning between text, paper, and pencil. This definition was then expanded to show how signs or symbols carry with it a way of talking, behaving and using language. This lecture was followed by a discussion, which was framed by the questions, “What are the literacies in our lives?” or “What are the areas in our lives we add meaning to?” This initial focus group session was concluded with the brainstorming of a list of topics thus presenting the content that would move forward for further interrogation (See Appendix H). These topics were then prioritized by each focus group according to the steps proposed in Chapter 3. It was at the end of the first initial focus group that I introduced the Culture Journals. The boys expressed an eagerness to take a journal and begin to draw, take notes, and collect items that represented their culture.

Over the next six-weeks, students were pulled from their classroom periods to attend focus groups. I met with each focus group once a week during this time, each following the intended protocol (Appendix C), with the intention to fit the needs of the conversation at hand. As indicated in the protocol, participants were given the chance to identify one of the selected topics from those prioritized as most prevalent (Appendix H) to begin the focus group session. My role was then to prompt conversation by asking clarifying and open-ended questions. When setting up the focus group schedule, I made sure to alternate classes the participants would miss as to not pull them from the same class period every week. This was done to ensure that participants were able to keep up with classroom and homework assignments.

In addition to the weekly focus groups, participants were provided the option of meeting during their lunch break on Fridays. The purpose of the lunch meeting was to debrief topics discussed during the week and share in regular *'kitchen table talk'* across a meal. I brought in food for the participants who had chosen to give up their lunch break and join in the conversation. The boys who attended the lunch sessions were comprised of all three focus groups since lunch schedules varied according to each participant. I selected food items that would entice them to join in on the discussion: tacos, pizza, Cuban sandwiches, and ham or turkey sandwiches. Typically, a range of 4 to 8 participants would come to share in discussion and food. It became a popular time to share stories, laugh, and finish conversations that were interrupted by the school and student schedule time constraints. This was evidenced by participants' quiet invitation of other Hispanic boys to join in on the conversation. At three different times, we had

unexpected guests join in on the food, conversation, and community that was so vividly coming to life. Boys giggling and laughing, sharing thoughts while bantering over who had eaten more pizza expressed the culture of this crew openly. It was interesting to find that these first time guests were also open and willing to share their stories and opinions. Each guest made himself at home by eating and did not hold back on injecting their voice into the group so that it too was heard. These boys found comfort in the culture that had developed within each lunch period as well as each focus group. This, in itself, was evidence of this populations' eagerness to have their voice heard. Data from guests was not analyzed nor was it included in any part of this study.

When presented with the dilemma of phasing out the focus groups and intensifying the individual interviews, all participants wanted to continue to be part of the research study. This discussion was carried out in a grand conversation (Eeds & Wells, 1989) manner with the boys all talking over each other, eager to be heard and included in the entire study. During the initial invitational conference, I started with a total of twenty-two participants with the intention of finding at least four volunteers who would move onto Phase II, for individual interviews. Since these two research methods were conducted simultaneously, many of the participants were eager to continue being part of the study, therefore, I decided to include all volunteers who were willing to continue. This type of eagerness was seen once before when participants were presented with their culture journals at the first official focus group.

Once again due to time constraints, culture journals were not completed within the focus group time allotment as proposed but given as outside extensions of our focus

group discussions. Throughout the focus group sessions, I continually reminded them to extend their thinking in their culture journal. Statements like, “Remember, if you think of anything about what we discussed today, write in your journal!” and “Keep the conversation going in your Culture Journal.” were continually repeated. When returned, these journals were mainly used for doodling and simple note taking. It was interesting that the note taking was sketchy and random yet, participants’ carried journals with them at all times during the research study. The few who did turn in their Culture Journals were very remorseful that they did not live up to the expectation. Comments like, “I’m sorry, Miss.” and “Can I keep it for one more day, so I can write in it for you, Miss?” were expressed. It was then that I told them not to worry about the completion, it was not to be taken as an assignment. As a result, there were only two culture journals turned in by the end of the study. These were included when analyzing the text from focus group and individual interview transcripts.

Individual Interviews

Interviews began one week after focus groups sessions. As mentioned earlier, there was a five-week overlap due to school, lunch, and classroom schedules. The first individual interview was a one-to-one session where I asked the questions from the Research Participant Information sheet (Appendix B). This conversation was the first time I could privately ask each individual student questions that pertained to his background experience, family life, and personal ideas and impressions. Participants were interviewed at least two times during the total six-week timeframe. This intimate, one-on-one, time ranged from 30 minutes to hour-long interviews. Total data collected

equaling 16.8 hours of interview time transcribed into 320 pages of focus group and 155 pages of individual interview transcriptions. With the fragmented class schedule whenever possible, interviews were structured in partnerships as proposed in Chapter 3. Each individual or pair was presented with topics that were discussed during the focus group session and asked to share or elaborate by continuing the conversation. These conversations were at times conducted in the middle of the school courtyard, the media center, or under the art class pavilion. The conversations called for me to use a unique strand of responses coupled with an empathetic ear, which added another dimension to my role as responsive interviewer. The final week of conducting interviews was used as an opportunity to ask participants to share closing comments and perceptions. These were conducive to the students' class schedules. Participants were given an opportunity to revisit any topics and give reactions to the project.

The Boys

Of the twenty-two research participants who began the focus group sessions, one asked to withdraw and another continually asked to come and showed interest yet, never brought back his student or his parent permission forms. Three others showed little commitment by attending focus groups sporadically, thus, they slowly phased themselves out. Ultimately, a total of seventeen continued through the entire study completing all necessary requirements.

Looking at all seventeen participants reflected a cross section of grade levels. Three were freshman. Five were sophomores. Four were juniors. And five were seniors (See Table 4). Although all participants were bilingual, according to their responses on the

Home Language Survey or the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), thirteen spoke enough English to adequately manage school life and navigate the educational system. The other four participants were Level B English speakers, which according to the Home Language Survey classified them as “speaks mostly the language other than English but, speaks some English” (Florida Department of Education, 2008). The survey itself contained three guiding questions:

1. Is a language other than English used in the home?
2. Did the student have a first language other than English?
3. Does the student most frequently speak a language other than English?

Answering yes to any of these questions establishes whether a student will be given a separate assessment to determine ELL (English Language Learner) classification, support by annual academic monitoring, and outside classroom academic support by qualified personnel. As part of the Greenbridge School District this survey is given to (a) Students not born in the U.S. and whose native language is other than English, (b) Students born in the U.S. but who come from a home in which a language other than English is most relied upon for communication, (c) Is an American Indian or Alaskan Native and comes from a home in which a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English Proficiency, and d.) Students who as a result of the above has sufficient difficulty reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny him or her the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms in which the language of instruction is English.

Table 4. The Boys

Name of Participant	Grade Level	Attended a portion of school year for grades K-9 in Greenbridge School District	Home Language Survey	FCAT Level 1 or 2 *Scale Score	Family Origin M=Mother F=Father	Parents' Educational Background
Oscar Born in MX	9 th	U.S. Schools for 3 years	YYYB	Level 1 ----	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – 9 th or 10 th F – 3 rd Grade
Rogelio Born in MX	9 th	U.S. Schools for 5 years	YYYB	Level 1 226	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – Primaria F – Primaria
Gustavo Born in MX	9 th	U.S. Schools for 2 years	YYYC	Level 1 210	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – Primaria F – Primaria
Edgar	10 th	K-10 Greenbridge County Schools	NNN	Level 1 209	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – Primaria F – No Schooling
Guillermo	10 th	U.S. Schools for 9 years	YYYC	Level 2 314	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – 6 th Grade F – HS Graduate
Jose	10 th	K-10 Greenbridge County Schools	NNN	Level 1 169	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – Accountant F – 2 years college
Ruben	10 th	K-10 Greenbridge County Schools	YYNC	Level 1 268	M – Florida F – Mexico	M – HS Graduate F – HS Drop out
Juan	10 th	K-10 Greenbridge County Schools	NNN	Level 1 273	M – Texas F – Mexico	M – HS Dropout F – 3 rd Grade
Eliseo Born in MX	11 th	U.S. Schools for 2 years	YYYB	Level 1 231	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – Primaria F – Primaria
Eduardo	11 th	K-5 Greenbridge 5-9 Texas 9-11 Greenbridge	N/A	Level 1 216	M – Texas F – Mexico	M – HS Drop out F – 5 th or 6 th
Oscar	11 th	K-3 Greenbridge 3-9 Texas 9-11 Greenbridge	NNN	Level 1 266	M – Texas F – Mexico	M – HS Dropout F – HS Dropout
Julio	11 th	K-9 Greenbridge County Schools	NNN	Level 2 291	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – College in Mexico F – K-2 in Mexico
Lorenzo	12 th	K-6 Greenbridge 6-10 Texas 10-12 Greenbridge	N/A	Level 1 215	M – Texas F – Mexico	M – HS Drop out F – 5 th or 6 th
Emmanuel	12 th	K-12 Greenbridge Schools	NNN	Level 2 308	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – 2 nd grade F – 2 nd grade
Martin	12 th	K-12 Greenbridge Schools	NNN	Level 1 280	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – 2 nd grade F – 2 nd grade
Josue	12 th	K-12 Greenbridge County Schools	NNN	Level 2 290	M – Mexico F – Mexico	M – Accountant F – 2 nd years college
Julian	12 th	K-6 Greenbridge 6-9 Georgia 9-12 Greenbridge	YYNC	Level 2 300	M – Columbia F - Columbia	M – HS Graduate F – HS Graduate (Columbia)

*Passing scale score of 300 to graduate
Level 1 - 100 – 286; Level 2 – 287 – 386

The four Non-English Hispanic boys had been provided with an extra period of English acquisition support in a Developmental Language Acquisition class which each mentioned as a favorite class due to the supportive teacher. Assessing the level of a students' native language ability is not part of the process in Riverside District Schools. The expectation is that ELL students begin to acquire the English language by complete immersion into mainstream classrooms. Even with this extra academic support, the boys often spoke of the difficulties of navigating a system that they found oppressive and complex.

Almost all participants had at least one parent from Mexico and most considered themselves to be first generation Mexican-Americans. Mobility in this community tends to be more within the Greenbridge district, between schools, than from outside the district, between districts. Therefore, it was surprising that only six participants attended Greenbridge District Schools for the entirety of grades K-9.

Four participants selected Latino and four selected Hispanic as their preferred ethnic label, each for varying reasons. Two participants were adamant about keeping ties to their Mexican roots and insisted being labeled as Mexican even when this label was not initially presented as an option. There was one participant who was of Columbian descent who preferred to be called Hispanic. Five participants had no preference with either label, which would agree with using a pan-ethnic label for all Hispanic groups (Garcia, 1986). Most participants were also adamant about the fact that no one term can define who they are as individuals. The comments that were collected during individual interviews and that supported each perspective are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Pan-ethnic Labels

Label	Comments associated with preferred label.
Latino (4)	La palabra Latino representa mas los Hispanos, Mexicanos, Sur Americanos Puerto Rícenos, Cubanos, todos iguales (Oscar A.). Igual a todos (Eliseo). I guess Latino...My mom's white so I guess, Latino (Ruben). Latino is a category for everyone. White people call you Hispanic (Guillermo).
Hispanic (4)	Latino is more down south..South America (Juan). Sounds more formal...more educated (Martin). I prefer Hispanic...it covers more people from other cultures, races (Julian). La de Hispano (Gustavo).
Mexican (2)	I prefer it because, I don't want to be mistaken as Puerto Rican, Cuban, you know? Dominican, Honduran (Lorenzo). Mexicano, por que soy Mexicano (Rogelio).
Either (5)	I don't see it as a word (Emmanuel). To me it's the same (Jose). It's mostly the same thing (Edgar). It really doesn't matter to me (Josue). It doesn't matter to me...if it means the same thing, then I don't really care (Julio).

To look at these results, is to confirm that the debate on the use of a pan-ethnic label is far from over. Yet, when analyzing the specific responses, nine out of the fifteen (60%) of those asked included the thought of others within their responses. Whether they selected, Latino or Hispanic, they still saw the pan-ethnicity of each label (Gomez, 1992; Trueba, 1999). Quotes from the boys like “category for everyone” or “it covers more people from other cultures, races” seemed to embrace those outside the position of the individual. Only two of the Mexican boys really held close their desire to keep and hold on to their Mexican identity. In contrast, it was interesting to hear Martin’s response, he stated that Latino “Sounds more formal...more educated” which seems to call for the label and identity of a more educated person.

When considering the education levels of their parents, there were only three sets of parents where both, mother and father, had completed high school. One set of parents had completed at least two years of college while three mothers had actually attended college in Mexico, two attained a degree, one in accounting and one teaching, neither worked in their respective career.

Computer access was another variable that impacted their educational situation. Nine boys had computer access at home, yet only five of the nine had internet access that worked effectively. Another ten had access to computer and internet resources via library, relative, neighbor, or friend.

My Role as Researcher

During the study, my role slowly evolved into a convergence of researcher, teacher, mother, and daughter, with each role driven by a unique group of thoughts, ideologies, and biases. Although these roles were difficult to discern during each phase of data collection, they were each clearly evident after analyzing audio transcripts. Therefore, my adoption of multiple roles during this research inquiry brought its own set of cautions and insights, as asserted by Denzin (1989). What follow are my reflexive insights experienced during subsequent discussions and journaling. I present the roles that were reflected within the data and how I oriented myself within each identity.

Role of Researcher

As a researcher, it was important for me to remember to be objective and responsive to the needs of participants. Due to my own history and experiences as a Mexican American, it was challenging to maintain this impartiality. I became aware of

my positioning as a researcher and its influence on my personal revelations. These young boys evoked stories from my own experience, which made clear my desire to support this population. To limit the influence of my perceptions, I collected data on my own biases via a digital recorder and a research journal, which captured many feelings of empathy for these individuals while seeking the courage to empower them. For example, within the transcripts of my reflections, I state many times, “I want to save these boys” quickly followed by “they are not mine to save.” This type of reflection allowed me to capture my thoughts and keep me grounded in my research intention. It urged me to step out of this role and be an advocate for the boys. This turmoil also prompted me, at times, to move beyond my empathy and insistently prompt participants to justify answers and expound on the thinking behind their quick responses. I am confident that this persistent approach impacted the outcome by producing deeper conversations, richer data, and ultimately providing evidence for the reader of voices struggling to be heard.

As a researcher, I also paid close attention to ensure that a conversational partnership was maintained among all participants, including myself. The research Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) provided me with the preliminary questions to elicit the background information and deeper insight behind the student’s persona. Adjusting the agenda for the focus group sessions was at times necessary to accommodate the developing community of learners. The ‘*kitchen table talk*’ atmosphere that was ultimately created prompted a distinct culture among the group similar to that of a classroom community. Therefore, I found, as a researcher, moments within focus

groups and individual interview conversations where I was prompted to comfort and advise as many teachers do with their students.

Role of Teacher

Having worked in the primary grades as a classroom teacher, and intermediate grades as a reading coach, my identity and role of educator clearly defined my manner of talking, thinking, and breathing. Based on these experiences, I found it easy to clear up closely held misconceptions about various subjects, institutional knowledge, and content within the discourse of this dissertation. It was this teacher mindset that made it easy for me to respond to children playing roughly on any public playground or speaking disrespectfully to any adult in a grocery store. Therefore, it was not surprising to find myself changing voice tone from the request of “Could you please sit down and join the conversation?” Firmly stating, “Either sit down and join us or return to your room. The choice is yours.” My role as teacher may have given the boys a sense of formality to the informal conversational setting. This also may have positively impacted the data by allowing the boys to feel secure in this informal community yet, affirm it was bound by the rules of an educational setting. This security and assurance of equality might also have allowed the boys to be more honest with their responses. However, I am well aware that this semi-formal stance may have pushed away a few of the Hispanic boys who removed themselves from the study due to previously stated reasons.

Role of Mother

I also found that at times the situation called on me to take on the role of mother, which involved nurturing the child, the boy, the human side of the adolescent while

taking a peek into the uniqueness of their life experiences. These moments reminded me of the many conversations I have with my nineteen-year old son, Chris. Late night conversations full of stories, questions and debates about young life experiences that together we tried to translate into life changing meaning. For instance, when deconstructing a conversation about respect during a focus group session, several participants mentioned the treatment of women. The conversation took a turn as the boys began discussing girlfriends. Some of the participants stated during the conversation that they call their girlfriends, their “*viejas*” (a derogatory word that describes promiscuous women). Without even thinking I bulled myself right in and asked, “Why would you call your girlfriend a *vieja*? Do you not have more respect for them or yourselves for that matter?” The conversation continued as follows:

R: I’m telling you this guys qué piensen ustedes la clase de mujer qué ustedes quieren [so all of you can think, what kind of woman are you looking for] look for. No es una *vieja*. [It’s not a *vieja*.] Do you want la mamá de tus hijos [Do you want the mother of your children], do you want una *vieja* to be la mamá de tus hijos [the mother of your children]? Think about that. Your hijos [children] are going to be your pride and joy. Y decir, “Yo tengo una *vieja*.” [And to say, I have a *vieja*.] I mean that’s not the way you respect the mother of your children. So, if there’s one thing... una cosa qué se lleven de este project [one thing that I want you to

take from this project]. I mean... take a little bit more respect for yourself. Don't... don't be seen or be with a *vieja*.

Oscar: A girlfriend.

R: Your girlfriend, call her by her freakin' name. That's why she's got a name.

Ruben: Her name? (Laughs)

R: She is not "una *vieja*" and not "MY" girlfriend. She's got a name and that's why you call her by her name. That make sense?

Oscar: Yeah.

R: So what do you guys think about that?

Martin: She is my girlfriend, not a *vieja*.

All: Ha, ha.

Ruben: It sounds better when you say it a different way.

R: What do you mean? Tell me what you mean?

Lorenzo: Bullsy (nickname of HB).

R: Tell me what you mean? Se oye mejor cuando... cuando se dice diferente? [It's sounds better when...when you day it differently (use her name)?

Oscar: Yeah.

R: Why? (pause) Why does it sound different when you, when you ah... cuando [when] you say it, different? Y por qué... es representante de tí también? [And why...is it representative of you

too?] I mean... you know? People are going to look at you different when you say “this is mi esposa [wife]” or “this is my girlfriend. Her name is...” you know “...Julie.” People are going to look at you different because you’re respecting somebody and when you give respect you don’t get it always... all the time... you don’t get it back. But that doesn’t mean that you don’t continue to give it. That’s a huge, huge, huge lesson guys. That’s a huge lesson. Huge lesson. I feel like your mami now. I think I’m preaching to you guys. !I better stop preaching! Ha, ha, ha. Okay. How’s it going out there? Is it going okay?

The personal reciprocity of my study became fully evident during this interchange. I felt like a mother to the boys, trying to adjust a forbidden line of thinking. Along with placing my values and beliefs on the table, this conversation speared into my own identity as a Hispanic woman to see these young men talk about women in such a casual manner with no consideration for its implications. As Denzin (1989) stipulates, the researcher has many “dimensions of self and complex aspects of selfhood” and these were, no doubt, present in many aspects of this research study (p. 57). Their use of the term “vieja” is the line of thinking which continues to place women as subordinate possessions in our Mexican American culture. Hitting home was my perception that these young men carried the seed of emotional, verbal, and physical abuse. Although these may be the first conversations of there kind, my hope is that these boys walked away with a different line of thinking not only in regards to women but also in regards to self.

After reflecting on the many roles as a researcher, I found my stance, at times, to be messy and convoluted. These three roles, researcher, teacher, and mother were also intermingled with many other connections tied to my own history as a Mexican-American woman living in a marginalized culture. The boys brought me face to face with my own biases toward men who see women as something less than an individual who carries hopes, dreams, and wishes to build a full self-directed life.

Role of Daughter

Our discussions around isolation as a non-English speaker in an English-speaking world evoked strong memories of sympathy, urgency, and frustration related to my illiterate mother. It was during these conversations that I was emotionally driven into my role of daughter, walking side by side with a strong, courageous woman who yearned to be understood and heard by the non-Spanish speakers around her, this yearning seething in self-doubt and insecurity. Of the many times I translated for my mother, I remember walking away from several conversations where she would share her thoughts. “Quien fuera tu, hija? Poder darme entender con otra jente.” [What it would be like to be you, my daughter? To be able to express myself with other people.] This insight into her thoughts made it possible for me to empathize with the boys who were experiencing the same muted situation. It seemed that the non-English speakers of the group also yearned to be heard as an individual and to become visible in classrooms at Riverside High School.

Other Connections

There were other connections that augmented my role as researcher, teacher, mother, and daughter. There was Josue, a senior, who is the father of a 6 month-old little

girl. The choice of being a young father, like my own marriage at 16, was conflicted with being in high school yet living in a grown up world, and simultaneously bearing feelings of shame and responsibility. This young father, torn between the adult world of responsibility and his senior year filled with the freedoms of the weekend, the prom, or grad night. I sympathized with the reality of his young misguided decisions. Another senior, Martin, found it hard to fit into the expectations of high school as he attempted for the fourth time to pass the state test required for graduation. Feelings of doubt while listening to the voice come from the back of his head, “Will I ever be good enough?” echoed in my heart as I remembered my own college years. There was Emmanuel, who joined the ranks of academic success and popularity of the school’s white world, yet felt the wobble of the tightrope walking between both cultures. Like myself, he questioned whether he would ever really fit in. Finally, I connected with Eliseo whose strong desire to beat the system by becoming an attorney who would come back to his community and offer possibilities to others. These connections gave the researcher, teacher, and mother within me an insider perspective and personal connection to the lives of these young men.

Collectively, I saw very specific patterns and themes emerge as we dove deeper into these critical conversations.

Findings

In an effort to analyze the identified themes most relevant to these Hispanic boys, which include (a) family, (b) language, (c) racism, (d) machismo, (e) education, and (f) moral literacy, it became essential for me to review and analyze data collected from observations, focus groups, and interviews.

Data Analysis

When initiating data analysis, I also found it necessary to physically stay in direct contact with data collected in order to recall and retain conversations in their entirety, which often contained divergent voices. After transcribing all audio and video data, it was critical to search for other specific patterns that may have surfaced outside the identified themes. This was done by placing each full-length transcribed conversation into a table and then dividing it into pieces of dialogue revolving around the topic selected for discussion. For example, through this process I was able to compile all conversations surrounding family into one common stack. An outside doctoral student verified this process by me presenting an overview of each theme with the specific quotes to represent the theme. The end product then became sections of conversation around specific topics discussed in each research venue, focus groups and individual interviews. These tables were then coded and sorted into groups of like-discussion. Although there were other topics that emerged (See Appendix H for complete list), the focus was on the six identified themes. Once sorted, each theme then became a section to analyze for triangulation in regards to alignment and content.

After sorting and analyzing all categories, the five identified themes most relevant to these Hispanic boys included (a) family, (b) language, (c) racism, (d) machismo, and (e) education. There was a sixth identified theme that emerged from the data collected which I labeled moral literacy. Although the Hispanic boys did not identify this as a theme considered prevalent in either *public or private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) (See Appendix

H for complete list), moral literacy surfaced as a separate literacy after analyzing both focus groups and individual interviews.

When examining the identified themes, many could be considered to be the narrative scripts that one would expect this marginalized population to reiterate within the boundaries of an oppressed experience. Although these themes seem to reflect the chronicled narrative scripts of those oppressed, the private stories, personal memories, and unintentional behaviors shared during this research study made it difficult for me to interrogate them in a manner as to invalidate the individual stance of each participants' sentiment. In fact, I challenge the reader to set aside their own, presumed, possibly more privileged perspectives and allow the collective narratives of these individuals to provide insight into the value of their literacies.

In interrogating these local narratives that live and breathe among this migrant-rich agricultural community, I found that each participant had a distinct background, each embracing unique circumstances. As I present these themes, it is vital that readers bear in mind the definition of literacy experiences that pertain to this research inquiry. In review, Faulkner (2005) defines *public literacies* as literate practices combining language and texts valued inside the classroom. These range from working with print, visual, digital, audio, and oral texts. *Private literacies* are those personal, social, and individual literacies that are valued out of school which influence different aspects of a student's life. In order to support the sociocultural approach to language and literacy, it was vital that I emphasize the relationship between text, a person's words and actions, and context, the situation or experience.

In order to validate the authentic voice behind each participant, when presenting sections of transcripts, I have chosen to use the language used by each participant as it was revealed to me after developing a relationship founded on trust and openness. Therefore, the conversational language, when transcribed, may seem hard to follow. When, in fact, the spoken word was much easier to comprehend. When applicable, unnecessary conjunctions presented at the beginning of sentences were omitted.

As I present the perceptions of these Hispanic boys' literacy experiences, I begin with the most private of literacies and extend to the more public to show the variations of these themes and keep within the sociocultural approach of language and literacy.

Family – “I’m in school for my mom.”

Family was highlighted as one of the first three topics determined during the initial brainstorm of topics in each of the three focus groups (See Appendix H). It became evident that these Hispanic boys had a specific way of living and breathing into their unique world of family. Therefore, this very private literacy was shared and confirmed during our initial time together. The narratives discussed around family were most often expanded upon during the individual interviews. Their specific language, behaviors and attitudes around family helped construct the theme of family into a formal literacy to be recognized by this research study. The literacy of family expressed itself in the participants' appreciation and recognition of their parents' personal sacrifices and hardships. Furthermore, each participant vowed loyalty to their family even at the expense of sacrificing personal or educational goals, a stance which is reflected in research conducted by Guadalupe Valdes (1996). Several participants shared the choice

of surrendering or postponing their social or educational goals to enter the work force in order to supplement household finances. These stories were not laced with resentment or anger of a young man's deferred dream but told with the compelling pride one takes in an honorable act.

Several sub themes emerged as our discussions delved deeper into the subject of family. The view of the mother as caretaker and overseer, the father as heavy disciplinarian, respect within and for family, and the role of stories, or '*dichos*', that helped enculturate these boys surfaced as subordinate themes inside the idea of family. Each of these strands contributed to the specific voice and actions these Hispanic boys used within this private literacy.

Mother as caretaker.

It was apparent that these boys looked to their mothers as the caretaker and overseer of the family. This perception was evidenced by the way these boys showed reverence and dedication to their mothers' expectations and hopes. Mothers were also seen as the "*fire*" to keep them going in school. To my amazement, many participants echoed this "*fire*" in their mother's words "Hecha'le Ganas!" which loosely translated means *to drive forward with stubborn effort and intense passion* (some meaning lost in translation). This phrase was immediately recognized as a constant by each focus group and was met with positive affirmation of their mothers' influence. This motivating advice also became the central theme in one of the participant's graduation speech that was given at Riverside High School's commencement ceremony.

The value for their mothers became more personal as they shared their desire to please their mother and not to make the mom cry. Although they did not welcome the common lectures, scolding, and occasional thump on the head, they were still distraught when their mothers were driven to tears. One of the boys said it very well:

Julio: The only time it gets through is like when...my mom starts cryin'.
 That's when it gets through (the message). Nah, when my mom be
 cryin', it, it, be gettin' me too.

The tenderness toward mom was further affirmed when discussing the sympathy the boys had when their mothers worried about finances or issues with other family members.

Julio: “Like in my mind, I'm in school for my mom 'cuz she wanted me
 to, know what I'm sayin'? Graduate or whatever...I'm, I'm tryin,
 trying to do something, get some money for eh...for my mom,
 know what I'm sayin?”

R: Yeah!

Julio: Break her off, 'cuz she's been payin' for me all the time.

These boys shared a carefully placed sentiment towards how they talked and dealt with issues related to their mothers. Here, Julio uses the words, “Break her off” to mean give her a break from paying for him “all the time.” Once again showing the feeling of helping out with family finances, not out of a sense of obligation but a sense of pride in contribution. As a whole, these boys embraced the significance of their mother's role within their lives.

Father as disciplinarian.

In contrast, the collective perception of the father was defined by his role as the heavy disciplinarian who settled situations when they got “too heavy.” Julio expressed this sentiment clearly when he stated:

“Cuz, like if my dad’s talkin’ to me that’d be something serious right there, boy.”

“Yeah, ...when it’s somethin’ serious she’ll like...Luis (name of dad), talk to him. I’m like, ‘Aww, man. Must be somethin’ big goin’ on right here.’”

Although they did not share as much about their interaction with their fathers, they did see them as significant figures in their lives, as providers and disciplinarians.

In regards to the expression of maleness in the family, perceptions of what it means to be the leader of a family was discussed in the respective section below on masculinity (*machismo*).

Respect within and for the family.

Another sub-theme that emerged was *respect* within the family. The word respect was not used lightly and surfaced several times throughout this research study. Lorenzo clearly and boldly stated the definition of respect when he said:

“No cheating, No stealin’, No lyin’! Cuz how you gonna have a family, know what I’m saying’? They won’t see you the same...there’s a lot of different ways to see respect but, family –wise just be honest with ‘em.

Although this definition did meet the intention of most boys, one of the more reserved boys, Rogelio saw respect as an act of fear. Furthermore, Rogelio states:

Excerpt from Rogelio’s Individual Interview.	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Some meaning lost in translation)
Bueno, porque mi mamá cuando le hablas para tras te pega hacina. Te da cachetadas, y mi papá no.	Well, when you talk back to my mom, she will slap you around, but not my dad.

Like Rogelio, the notion of using fear to instill *respect* is one that is more descriptive and vivid since it’s how I learned to be *respectful*. My parents offered a continual reminder of what would happen if I ever talked back, expressed my own opinion, or decided to interject my own voice into a scolding. I’m not sure if instilling fear prompted more respect, but I found myself emotionally unavailable to my mother and father as a result of this fear. It was not until I began to be enculturated into mainstream America that I found that there could be a balance in the expectation of respect while acknowledging the voice of the individual. This mindset came after several childhood education classes, a tenure of fourteen years as a primary teacher, and my continued interest in critical pedagogy, which I also carried into my own family.

The boys’ collective perception of respect in the context of family retained its own voice. Whether it was honoring their parents, gaining the respect of the family, or maintaining their own value in the eyes of their relatives, the participants clearly shared the importance of taking care of their family and attempting to be like those in the family that are successful. Perhaps the boys’ perceptions of respect for family is best expressed when stated:

Guillermo: “I could never talk to my parents like the white friends do.”

This perspective acknowledges the significance of family in the lives of these Hispanic boys' in relation to the perceived middle class "white" student in the Riverside High School community. This Hispanic boy's impression seemed to suggest that white students are rude and disrespectful to their parents. It also attaches an identity of reverence toward parents by looking up to the role of parent, which is to be respected.

In juxtaposition to this expressed respect for family, was their struggle for adolescent individual freedom and peer influence. Four out of the seventeen Hispanic boys casually gave reference to being involved with gang activity, which conflicts with respect for family. One specifically came at it from a stance of "it's just part of what we do, Miss." Another, Lorenzo would say, respect your family, "just be honest with 'em." Yet, he often found himself fighting others and shared a time when he was waiting for someone to fight outside his family's front door. He was also fearful of a looming drive by shooting, possibly inviting gang action right to his front yard. As a whole, these boys did not see this disparity with this thinking and how this fit into their definition of honoring [respecting] the family.

Dichos y consejos.

The last idea that emerged from the literacy of family was the *role of stories*, *dichos* (cultural sayings) and *consejos* (advice in the form of idioms), and how these played into the enculturation of these boys' beliefs and values while living and breathing in their Hispanic world. This was a moving sub-theme due to the emotional connections it created among us when it emerged. The discussion around family was well under way when the boys began to discuss how both parents encouraged, disciplined, and shared

family history through personal narratives. The idea of *consejos* was casually mentioned in one focus group session and it was met with familiarity but little discussion. I brought it back to the group to prompt further conversation. The participants then took a deeper interest when I mentioned *dichos* and *consejos* as a specific topic to discuss. They acknowledged *consejos* as phrases that were “talked at them” when either parents were lecturing or scolding them. One member said, “Sometimes, we don’t even wanna listen to them.” Another commented, “I know it’s for your own good but, I hear it over and over.” Whether in the form of *dichos* or *consejos*, these Hispanic boys could finish mouthing these sayings before it even came out of their parents’ mouths. Which bought laughter and nods of affirmation to the entire group. They also acknowledged the role of their abuelita, or grandmother, in the passing on of these *dichos*.

The idea of grandmother sharing *dichos* was shared, and led to another key experience that made the theme even more pertinent to this group of Hispanic boys. Gustavo, who could not remember the meaning or interpretation, brought the *dicho* to the table. The *dicho* was “un clavo saca otro clavo” [one nail will take out another nail] and was new to most of us in the room. The boys prompted Gustavo to ask his grandmother so he could come back and share its meaning. His grandmother who retold this cultural idiom had passed on therefore, he could not ask for the meaning. It was left at that for the time being.

It was an outsider who came to intriguingly affirm this *dicho* and give us its meaning. The transcriptionist from a Miami based firm, who transcribed half of my focus group audiotapes happened to be Hispanic and in proofing this transcript emailed me the

meaning behind the *dicho*. She found the conversation very interesting and wanted to share her own world with us. According to Annie, this idiom was used to describe the recovering of a relationship breakup. “Un clavo saca otro clavo” [One nail will take out another nail] means that when you feel hurt by one person, another (person) will end the hurt.

By the end of our time together, we were all sharing which *dichos* we knew and on occasion would bring a different one back to the group to share. “Have you heard this one, Miss?” ”What about this one?” This intimate sharing brought laughter and became a defining moment of our community but more importantly it became a literacy we all shared as a culture. As in my own experience, these words of advice passed on from generation to generation helped develop a common text for raising children, choosing friends, and living within the Hispanic world for these young boys.

Language - No, no mas son ellos (No, not only is it them).

Language linked to cultural identity.

Language was another theme that emerged to be fundamental in the private lives of these Hispanic boys. Whether the boys were non-English speakers or had an academic command of both English and Spanish, it was evident that their language played a vital role in building their cultural identity within and outside of the school building. None shared better about the pride these boys took in their native language than Lorenzo who was asked, “How do you react when you hear, los que vienen aquí, those who come (to America), need to learn English...you need to forget your Spanish? How do you feel about that?” The dialogue followed...

Eduardo: I'm not gonna change for them.

R: Tell me more about that?

Eduardo: I'm not gonna disrespect my race like that, you know what I'm saying...my culture. Like that's from back in the day, even before I got here. Why should I change for them I know it's gonna to better me, don't get me wrong. It's gonna better me but...

R: To keep it or lose it?

Eduardo: To keep it and lose it at the same time. Cuz, my grandpa, everybody, that came from Mexico. I'm not gonna stop doing what they did [speak Spanish] especially for what they doing now [trying to strip away Spanish] just for them [non-Spanish speakers]. They tell me if I come here I gotta speak English. Nah.

The dignity that they held within language use was clearly fused with their sense of identity, family and culture. Further conversation about being bilingual and learning English prompted Julio to express his desire not to forget Spanish as he acquired the English language. He shared:

Julio: How I see it, like he's saying. I can't forget how to speak Spanish I do have to learn how to talk English at the same time. But, at the same time, they got to learn too. Cuz, you know what I'm saying. So, we both be better. Cuz, we both have two languages with some situations, you know what I'm saying.

They perceived that learning English would be better for their life but were not willing to disrespect themselves or their ancestors by surrendering Spanish. Additional collective perceptions asserted not only the boys responsibility to learn English but for others [American] to acquire Spanish. During a focus group one Hispanic boy stated:

Jose: Yeah, we both...you know what I'm saying. It's making me smarter and making him smarter as well. So we can talk to different people.

Julio: It's not only about them. They got to think about us, too. You know what I'm saying. Like how are they gonna think about them and like leave us out of it. No, no mas son ellos (*No, no only is it them*). Somos nosotros, dos. It's both of us.

R: That's powerful.

Julio's sentiment expresses an expectation of equality. The language used here brought forth a stance of entitlement - to be treated equal. The Jose states "They got to think about us, too...Like how are they gonna think about them and like leave us out of it." These boys have a sense of equality and want to be heard. The power that comes from the perception that "No, no mas son ellos [*No, not only is it them*]" overlaps with the worldly notion, "we are all in this together" and that by honoring one's cultural capital and sense of belonging, the boys claim "...we can talk to different people."

Language in school setting.

In contrast, participants consistently expressed that their native language was continually negated and/or ignored at school. The boys shared examples of classroom

teachers and other students ridiculing their use of English as well as attributing their misunderstandings of class assignments due to language interference.

Gustavo, a non-English speaking tenth grader, is proficient in reading and writing in his native language, Spanish, and was two years away from graduating from high school in Mexico. On coming to America, he was placed in ninth grade. His voice is frustrated and verges on anger when he talks about missing school in Mexico and those who make fun of his language and therefore his culture, here in America, especially from those he least suspected, his teachers. The following is a piece of his interview.

Excerpt from Gustavo's Individual Interview	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Some meaning lost in translation)
R: ¿Y por qué te quieres ir para tras a México?	R: And, why do you want to go back to Mexico?
G: No me gusta aquí tampoco casi por qué...Aquella escuela me gusta más por qué yo entiendo todo y aquí, como se llama, uno, cuando la maestra así como.... No es lo mismo qué allá en México. Allá en México como qué te sientes mejor por qué estas en tu país, y aquí como a veces te tratan también mal y eso.	G: I don't like it here at all...That [Mexican] school I like more because I understand everything and here, how do you say, one...when the teacher is like...It's not the same like over there in Mexico. Over there in Mexico like you feel better because you are in your country and here like at times they also treat you bad and like that.
R: ¿Específicamente, como te tratan diferente? Como te tratan mal? ¿Cuándo	R: Specifically how do they treat you differently? How do they treat you bad?

<p>dices tú qué las maestras te tratan mal?</p> <p>¿Como específicamente te tratan mal?</p>	<p>When you say, the teachers treat you bad? How specifically do they treat you bad?</p>
<p>G: Como esa maestra qué le estaba diciendo, qué, como se llama, trataba mal a los Mexicanos, pero unos qué hablaban Ingles ella no les decía nada y como uno no habla Ingles ellos empiezan a hablar y yo también como no entiendo a veces veo qué escuchan qué hablo... escucho, como se llama... qué hablan cosas de Mexicanos y eso y son maestros. Y como también la...</p>	<p>G: Well, like the teacher I was telling you about, like what I was saying, treats Mexicans, badly. But some who speak English, she says nothing to them and how one doesn't speak English, they start to talk. Also how I don't understand something I see that they listen to my talk...listen, how do you say...that they say things about Mexicans and that, and that's because they are teachers. I also like the....</p>
<p>R: ¿Qué les has oído decir?</p>	<p>R: What have you heard them say?</p>
<p>G: Yo estoy platicando y eso, y empieza a decirle, así como también, Por qué estas hablando o están así no más le dicen qué no me ría, y qué le dice a mi amigo qué me dijera a mí qué no me ría. qué esta trabajando uno...</p>	<p>G: ...I am talking, and like, (she) starts to say, like, Why are you talking? Or, they are there just like...they tell me not to laugh, or (she) will tell my friend to tell me not to laugh. And one (I'm) is working.</p>
<p>R: ¿Y qué quisieras qué ellas hicieran para</p>	<p>R: And what would you like her to do to</p>

ayudarte más?	help you more?
G: Coger la cosa de uno mismo, qué aprenda Inglés para qué aprendan y no te traten así también, por qué te quieren tratar mal no mas por qué eres Mexicanos y por qué no hablas Inglés y quieren ponerte más trabajo. También, esta bien a veces para qué aprenda uno pero....	G: To get the thing from oneself, to help me learn English so we can learn and they don't treat us like that too. Because they want to treat you bad just because you are Mexicans and because you don't speak English. And they want to give you more work. Again that is o.k. Sometimes so you can learn, but...
R: ¿So, qué especialmente tienen que ser ellas diferentes? ¿Qué pueden hacer? Pueden, para entenderte mejor? ¿Hablar Español, tener más lecturas en Español, tener libros en Español? Qué quisieras tú que ellos hicieran para que tú te sientas más aceptado, más, más conforme, más, más, um...	R: So, what specifically do they (she) have to do differently? What can they do? Can they...so they can understand you better? Speak Spanish, have more lectures in Spanish, Have books in Spanish? What would you like for them to do so that you feel more accepted, more, more comfortable, more, more, um...
G: Pues no sé también. Por qué unos maestros, también ellos quieren aprender Español para ayudarle a uno.	G: Well, I also don't know. Because some teachers do want to learn Spanish to be able to help someone.
R: Sí, sí.	R: Yes, yes.

G: Pero unos no quieren. Ellos dicen, “No por qué tienen que aprender Inglés por qué están en Estados Unidos y no están en México.”	G: But, some don’t want to. They say, “No, because you have to learn English because you are in the United States and not in Mexico.”
R: Sí.	R: Yes.
G: Y eso es lo que dice la gente. Como los maestros quieren que a fuerza uno ... como uno es Mexicano, le dicen “No ya, no estás en tu rancho ya. Tienes que aprender Inglés” y eso. Y eso también enoja. Y uno también tiene que aprender Inglés. También como unos maestros quieren enseñar a los Mexicanos por eso yo aprendo. Pero unos no quieren aprender. Unos quieren que ellos aprendan Inglés para qué...	G: And that is what the people are saying. Like the teachers want to force one...like one is Mexican, they say. “No, you are not at your ranch now. You have to learn English.” And that. And that too makes (me) mad. And one has to learn English. Like there are some teachers who want to teach Mexicans that is why I learn. But some don’t want to learn. Some want them to learn English because...
R: Unos son bien divididos.	R: Some are very divided.
G: Unos si quieren ayudar a uno y unos no quieren. Unos quieren que ellos aprendan así mismo.	G: Some do want to help and others don’t want to. Others want them to learn, at the same time.
R: A fuerzas.	R: To force (you).
G: Aha.	G: Aha (shaking head).

<p>R: ¿Y como te sientes cuando miras eso?</p>	<p>R: And how do you feel when you see that?</p>
<p>G: A veces me da, así... Ella es la única maestra que no nos quiere así... y esa no quiere a nadie de los Mexicanos. Siempre también... unas amigas que son mujeres también... ellas tampoco no pasaron. Se quedaron también conmigo. Mi amigo también, uno que se llamaba Dennis y venía el otro año también y le tocaba esa clase y réprobo y lo mandaron a la escuela esa de Life y va a allá. Y a, a mí, no me quieren tampoco mandar a allá, por qué todavía no aprendo bien Ingles, pero ya me íban a mandar el otro año.</p>	<p>G: Well, sometimes I feel, like...She is the only teacher that doesn't like us, like.... and she doesn't like any of the Mexicans. All the time...some of friends are women too.... they too did not pass. They stayed with me too. My friend too, one that is named Dennis and came [to the U.S.] the other year also and he had that class and was retained and they sent him to that school called LIFE and he goes there. And me, they don't want to send me there because I don't know English very well. But they were going to send me there the other year.</p>

Gustavo was clearly impacted by his perceptions of what it meant for him to be educated in this country. Their common voice around language reflected the extent to which this cultural capital was disregarded. The boys perceived that this gift of bilingualism also became an obstacle as they tried to maneuver through their academic lives. They voiced challenges such as spelling words in English, and their inability to

adequately express and verbally describe the mental pictures and ideas about subjects discussed in class. The boys agreed that not knowing English limited their ability in the classroom and affirmed that if you were a non-English speaker you often had double work, either directly or indirectly.

Conversely, those participants who held after school jobs in mainstream retail shops had their knowledge of the Spanish language embraced and highlighted in the economic setting.

Julio: Even at work, like some of the bosses be like man, I wish I knew Spanish so I could talk to the customers. Cuz, they be a lot of customers coming in don't even know English. They don't know how to communicate. That would make things better for them. But, if they think that, we the ones that got to learn English. Then they wrong, they got to learn Spanish at the same time. Just like us, we gonna learn something new and you learn something new. For we both learn. That will just make things better. I don't think we got to change...I ain't changing!

It is evident that by the end of Julio's comment he finds his voice and expresses his acknowledgement of the gift he has, "...I ain't changing!" These students were aware of the juxtaposition between the academic and the business worlds in regard to valuing bilingualism and how only one recognized their cultural capital. The majority of the group saw mastery of the English language as a cultural dividing line that separates who "owns America" and who does not. The boys referred to America as "not just belonging

to the White” but it “belonged to *nosotros* (us)...we all live here.” They continued to agree and express that America is not just “them,” referring to the English speaking population, but “all of us,” everyone included. Their voice yearning to be included. This made it evident that the theme of language was closely tied to their cultural identity.

Racism – “Who is “They?”

When revealing the literacy of racism, the participants expressed several messages (perceptions) that reflected anger, resentment and even inquisitiveness about the roots of discrimination.

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, this group of Hispanic boys spoke back to the infamous “they” statements that had been used throughout various research venues, focus groups and individual interviews. Statements such as “They treat us differently,” “They treat us like we are below them,” “They think we won’t make it,” and “They don’t respect us” reverberated as our conversation tried to make public the boys’ perceptions. In order to unveil the “they” behind their perceptions, I reintroduced the concept and directly addressed it. After our fourth focus group and mid-way through our interviews, I began the focus group by giving each participant an index card where they were to list out who is “they.” Each focus group was given a different colored index card to differentiate between focus groups. When asked for specific descriptions of who “they” are the responses were varied in nature, (Table 6) yet, represent the inequities that build and influence their identity as a member of the community, school and culture.

Table 6. “Quien son ‘ellos?’” [Who are ‘They?’]

Sociocultural Area	Participant Responses (Number represents total counted in both Spanish and English)
Political	Government, Gobierno (5)
Community	People who are not Hispanic White People, Los Blancos (4) Black and White people People I don't know Different kinds of people Older people Bad people
	African Americans (2) Black people, Los mollos (2)
	Americans Many Americans Los Norte Americanos
	Policeman Officer of the law
Educational	Teachers (4)
Identity	My own race
Social	My friends, Los amigos (2)
Individual	My family

In order to analyze these responses, I sorted and labeled them within areas encompassing social, cultural, and political arenas. An outside doctoral student verified these areas for rationality. When considering their significance, the perceptions of this group held that “they” could be anyone around them, placing them at the crossroads of fatalism and rebelliousness (Freire, 2001). This perception of continual interrogation by (trusted) individuals and groups around these boys impacts the formation of an identity that leads to self-empowerment. The boys who shared the following experiences expressed feelings of inferiority, inquisitiveness, resentment, and anger. These

expressions of racism are validated in light of how they perceive the worldviews Hispanic boys.

Discrimination and Inequity – Julian.

In an interview with Julian, a light-skinned Columbian born in Miami and the only non-Mexican Hispanic boy in the study, we discussed his perspective on how teachers treat Hispanic boys. He talked about his advantage of his fair skin and medium brown hair. “I look more Caucasian.” “I don’t look as much like a Hispanic boy,” he stated confidently. When asked, “Why is that an advantage?” he placed his palm down, close to the floor and shook it side-to-side and said, “I notice how they (teachers) treat Hispanic boys.” He continued by saying, “No one knows I know Spanish.” I asked him why he shook his hand like that side to side, close to the floor. “That’s how they (teachers) treat Hispanic boys. They don’t see, like that...I feel bad but I can’t do much about it.” Julian’s identity had taken a different stance. It was obvious that he did not fit the stereotypical look of a Hispanic boy. He watches these inequities behind his pale-skin mask enacting an identity that affords him the choice of sharing or not sharing his ethnic background.

While the other boys mentioned situations of feeling discriminated against, there were three Hispanic boys who intentionally brought up racism during their individual interview as a part of their daily challenges. While one brought it up as a means to understand his recourse, the other two brought it up in a manner that magnified their marginalized status.

Inquisitive and Curiosity – Emmanuel.

Although a Level 2, struggling reader, Emmanuel, was considered by the school principal to be a prized student. He was in honors classes, had a full scholarship for four-years of college, and was the first Hispanic student body president for this diverse high school. When asked what books he liked to read, he described being introduced to books on racism by one of his freshman teachers. “She gave me a list of books and those were the one I had read.” He goes on to state that he likes the “kinda books that are true...it has to do with, like racism. Like there are problems going on in the world. I like those kinds of books. Something that is real and happened.” Emmanuel went on to mention how he wanted to understand racism and reading about it made easier to handle.

Resentment and Anger – Gustavo and Oscar.

In contrast with Emmanuel’s text-based investigation of racism, Gustavo and Oscar experienced racism more intimately. They were both Mexican non-English speakers who had felt righteous rage when treated differently by teachers and other students. They were in the same first period Developmental Language class. Each of these boys was mainstreamed into regular classes for all other content areas, which magnified their language imperfections and feelings of discrimination. Their anger and resentment over being ridiculed for their “broken English” and lack of understanding of classroom activities was perceived by them as racism. This seemed to make them cling even more to their cultural identity as they each yearned to return to their native country and feel the comfort of belonging. Within their statements, these boys did not

differentiate between their native language and their identity as Mexican males. They found language and identity to be inseparable (Trueba, 1990).

These three boys brought up racism as a belief attached to their identity as a Hispanic boy and to the “otherness” attributed to those who acted upon them. Power was distributed unfairly among their relationships with others, which in turn took their value and self-worth to a distressing level. This disheartening experience gave significance to their perceptions of other students, classroom teachers, and/or administrators, who these Hispanic boys believed were entrusted by their positions within the school system with their emotional, social, and academic well-being.

The collective narrative behind racism is that it is alive and well in the lives of these Hispanic boys. They come face-to-face with the culture of power in our educational institutions and are fully aware that they do not “carry the codes or rules of (this) power” (Delpit, 1995). In the following conversation, another Hispanic boy talks about how race played into the goal of joining the football team after coming from Texas.

R: What do you do after school?

Oscar: After school stuff, I don’t really participate on per say ‘cuz, I don’t know. I played football over at the neighbor’s house where I came from.

R: Really?

Oscar: Yeah, but... ‘Cuz like over here... I tried that for here and I didn’t get a position. Cause I guess I wasn’t black; you know what I’m saying? I thought that was unfair and I was about the goodest

one on the team. But, still they ain't put me in. 'Cuz I thought... He's black and I ain't black. That's why I'm not in. It's hard trying to get into college for a football career; you know what I'm saying? I took up football (playing at neighbors after school) for a little while and then, you know? I didn't really like it, so that's when I just left it. After school, I would just go to the house and draw a bunch of pictures.

Although this example does play into race (Hispanic) against race (African American), to Oscar it was one more venue in which he saw himself against an educational system that places him in a marginalized position.

Machismo – “I let him lose!”

Machismo, the form of masculinity that is prevalent within the Hispanic culture, surfaced as a central literacy in the lives of these young men. This was not presented as a prevalent theme specifically stated by the participants, it was discovered during our focus group conversations on family and was clearly valued. The majority of these young boys were, according to their narratives, profiled as gang members, thugs; or conversely sellouts; and accused of being too white. These narratives were often intermingled with expressions of strength, aggression, and a desire to defend their beliefs. The aspects of machismo that were discussed during focus group sessions and individual interviews were basically defining machismo as it pertained specifically to women, family, and the Discourse of fighting. Other interesting voices were those avoiding or attempting to separate themselves from expectations of traditional machismo.

Impact on role of men and women.

After many conversations on family, an aspect of machismo surfaced as we delved into family discipline. Some felt the consistent hand from the central female, the mother, who was considered the daily disciplinarian. Yet, many also felt the heavy hand of the father who, when brought into a disciplinary situation, played a more serious role. This evoked issues surrounding the role of men in the family related to machismo.

When asked, “What is the definition of machismo?” one Hispanic boy stated, “Machismo es meter la vieja en la casa y dejarla allí. Ha, ha, ha. [Machismo is pushing the vieja (a derogatory word that describes promiscuous women) in the house and leave her there. Ha, ha, ha!]. Another participant thought, “I thought Machismo was like...the guy thinking he’s all big and bad.” Soon the conversation turned to the boundaries of sons and daughters within family situations. Sons were by far, according to two focus groups, given more freedom in regards to dating. One Hispanic boy stated, “la mujer...si anda con muchos hombres, la toman como una prostituta” [the women...if she goes with many men, they view her as a prostitute]. Fathers “quieren que estén en la casa muy cuidaditas” [want to keep them (their daughters) at home very safe]. One participant stated, it was believed that from a man’s point of view, “... el hombre...pues como quieras, no pierde nada” [...and the man... however, he loses nothing] if he dates many women. This was confirmed by another member, saying, “Yeah, That’s how my dad is with me and my sisters.” When asked, “What do you guys think about that?” The conversation continued as follows:

Eduardo: I think, I think that’s more of the... like the, back-in-the-day

culture...

R: Más antes [way before]. Old culture.

Eduardo: ...or más, like, yeah, like the generations because... like the new generation, ya... como like... they're more lenient. They don't... like... What he was saying... qué, they see her with another guy or whatever...

R: Right, right.

Eduardo: ...but like... (Clears throat) if you trust your daughter and you know your kids, you really don't have to worry about it, and I think they're [parents] more worried about what other people think, than what is actually going on. 'Cuz if it's just going out with a friend to go get ice cream, or take a walk, or play a game or whatever... like... that's not too bad. I don't know, that's just, like off. But I think back in the day, they're just more worried about los chismes [the gossip].

This discussion clearly expressed the clashing of the old, “back-in-the-day,” and new “new generation,” mindset, behind the idea of machismo. This group also voiced their perceptions on which “personas” [persons], narrowed later to ninas (girls), were becoming more “liberales” (liberated), which impacted the boys’ ability to express machismo, whether in current or future situations. A few boys mentioned, “how mean girls are nowadays...they don’t take anything.” They all seemed unsure of the influence of this new wave of girl’s intolerance of traditional machismo.

After an initial conversation around a definition for machismo, the boys later envisioned treating their sons and daughters equally, which revealed how different their thinking was when compared to their current family structure. Martin shared:

Martin: I don't know. If I were ever to become a dad... I think... I would treat... the males and the females, like sons and daughters, the same.

R: The same?

Martin: I don't think I would treat them any different. You know 'cuz like say... "Oh if he [son] doesn't go out, you [daughter] don't go out." Like try for them both like to choose but, you know, like giving consejos [advice] and if... the consejos [advice] are only good if they take them.

R: That's right, that's right.

Martin: I'd try my best and... I don't know, but no sleepovers.

R: Yeah. Ha, ha, ha. No sleepovers. Ha, ha.

Additionally, one participant stated, "Ya las mujeres no saben cocinar... puro microwave, Ha, ha, ha" [Now the women don't know how to cook... only microwave, Ha, ha, ha]. It was clear that, to this group of Hispanic boys, the role of women was changing before their eyes, questioning the role of women and their inherent roles and responsibilities.

Interestingly, as the conversation unfolded, there was an underlying bantering of sexist remarks. For example in a different focus group when asked, "What is 'el machismo' to you guys now-a-days?" One Hispanic boy remarked, "No dejarse mandar

por la vieja” [Don’t let the *vieja* boss you around.]. Two others stated, “El hombre tiene la palabra...es el qué tiene los pantalones” [The man has the (last) word...(He) is the one who wears the pants]. This conversation continued as follows:

Excerpt from Focus Group.	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Some meaning lost in translation)
RUBY: Okay, now we’re getting somewhere. This is machismo coming up. It’s not bad or good, it’s just... that’s the way it is.	RUBY: Okay, now we’re getting somewhere. This is machismo coming up. It’s not bad or good, it’s just... that’s the way it is.
Edgar: Eso era malo. El machismo yo pienso qué era malo.	Edgar: That was bad. El machismo I think that it was bad.
Eliseo: Es malo.	Eliseo: It is bad.
Rogelio: Pegarles a las mujeres, sí.	Rogelio: To hit women, yes (it was bad).
RUBY: So hay cosas que son... del machismo... qué son buenas pero hay partes que son malas. Como la mujer no se le pega. Is that what you’re saying?	RUBY: So there are things that are... of machismo... that are good, but there are parts that are bad. Like, the woman is not hit. Is that what you’re saying?
Edgar: Sí.	Edgar: Yes.
RUBY: Pero ser hombre de la casa, si es okay.	RUBY: But, to be man of the house, is okay.
Eliseo: Ser responsable.	Eliseo: Be responsible.
Edgar: You’ve gotta work.	Edgar: You’ve gotta work.
RUBY: ¿Responsable? Ah, responsable.	RUBY: Responsible? Ah, Responsible.

Eliseo: Ser responsable de la familia. Ha, ha.	Eliseo: Be responsible for the family. Ha, ha.
RUBY: ¿De la familia? ¿Qué más? ¿Qué más?...This is a tough one.	RUBY: For the family? What else? Qué más?...This is a tough one.
Martin: Working.	Martin: Working.
RUBY: Working?	RUBY: Working?
Martin: Well I guess falls under responsibility, like bringing the money to the house.	Martin: Well I guess falls under responsibility, like bringing the money to the house.
RUBY: Mhmm. So hoy en día es el hombre que se todavía se... ¿Es responsable de sobrellevar la familia? ¿Financially?	RUBY: Mhmm. So now a days the man, he...Is responsible to maintain the family? Financially?
Eliseo: Sí pero esta... este... la mujeres también trabajan y antes no, no más puro hombres.	Eliseo: Yes, but there... huh... the women also work and before no, no only pure men.
RUBY: Right. ¿Y cómo ha cambiado las cosas eso? Si la mujer es mas...hoy en día...	RUBY: Right...And how has that changed things? If the women are more... now a days...
Rogelio: ¿Qué...? ¿Qué...?	Rogelio: What...? What...?
RUBY: ...they're working more, how has that changed machismo or how has it	RUBY: ...they're working more, how has that changed machismo or how has it

changed la familia Mexicana?	changed la Mexican family?
Edgar: Mhmm.	Edgar: Mhmm.
Eliseo: Ya está... bueno está ya... oh.	Eliseo: Now, it is... Well it is now... oh.
Edgar: No, go ahead. Está bien.	Edgar: No, go ahead. It is good.
Martin: Usted entiende, según dice la mujer, tiene que hacer la mitad, el hombre y la mitad la mujer.	Martin: You know, according to the woman, it has to be half, the man and the half for the women.
RUBY: 50-50.	RUBY: 50-50.
Rogelio: Aha, sí.	Rogelio: Aha, yes.
Eliseo: Cocinar (pointing to himself), y otro día tu cocinar, o sea, siempre como trabajan ya los dos, ya tienen que dividírselo.	Eliseo: Cook (pointing to himself), and another day you cook (holding hand out), I agree, like, since like the two are now working, they have to divide it.
RUBY: ¿Y qué piensas tú?	RUBY: And what do you think?
Oscar: Pues quién sabe. Ha, ha, ha.	Oscar: Well, who knows. Ha, ha, ha.
RUBY: What do you guys think (turning head to other members)?	RUBY: What do you guys think (turning head to other members)?
Martin: I, I think the way it's changed is that since the guy or the male always brought money into the house like	Martin: I, I think the way it's changed is that since the guy or the male always brought money into the house like

financially and all that... and now that the woman also does that... and back then they used to look at the woman like down...	financially and all that... and now that the woman also does that... and back then they used to look at the woman like down...
Martin: ...and I think how it has changed is that the woman... now they're equal like... she proved... or she's proving that she can do the exact same thing as the guy can... you know like... being responsibly-wise and financially-wise so...	Martin: ...and I think how it has changed is that the woman... now they're equal like... she proved... or she's proving that she can do the exact same thing as the guy can... you know like... being responsibly-wise and financially-wise so...
Oscar: ...I think...	Oscar: ...I think...
RUBY: So what does... what does that mean for... our traditions of... Hispanic men?	RUBY: So what does... what does that mean for... our traditions of... Hispanic men?
Martin: I think... in that case... machismo, like... kinda disappears. I don't know.	Martin: I think... in that case... machismo, like... kinda disappears. I don't know.

This and the similar conversations that followed reflected their developing perception on the dynamic relationship between men and women and how women are becoming more independent as a result of the demands and opportunities placed before working and

single women. Ultimately, the group was struggling with their perceptions about machismo and the definition of how machismo fit into their current world. As the new construct for machismo evolves within the probable context of enculturation, it will be interesting how this group carries machismo to the next generation.

Clash between the old and new machismo

When looking at the behavior and demeanor of these boys during these focus group sessions during this particular discussion, I was keenly aware of their facial reactions, posture, and other non-verbal cues. A few sat back and decided just to observe while others were quick contributors to the conversation. At other times there was a shift in the physical placement of the boys. They placed their hands behind their heads, some rubbing their arms. This shift in body placement created a subtle tension among the group, made it apparent of their struggle between old definitions of machismo and a newly revised societal definition.

Several times toward the end of this conversation, I found myself prodding their reflections on machismo with my own nine-year marital experience with a dominant, Hispanic male, who embraced the traditional roles of this identity. In reflection, this period of my life was overcast with fear and submission which defined what I was *allowed and not allowed* to do (Ex. shape my eyebrows, learn to drive, have a checkbook, have a career, etc.). This nudging encouraged the boys to reflect upon who they were and what this conversation, meant for them. I felt an innate need at this point of the conversation to share my thoughts and feelings with the boys.

R: It's hard. It's hard to think about, like all these little things. Porque [because] in our culture... no más lo hacemos porque no sabemos nada más, ¿verdad? [we don't only do it [act] because we don't know what else to do, right?] Miramos a como los hombres tratan a sus mujeres [We see how men treat the women]... las responsabilidades del hombre [the responsibilities of the man], and... uno no más... you just, you just do it because that's part of our culture. Pero [But]... to talk... to talk about it and say, "Okay, what do I believe? What do I mean?" Qué espero yo de mi mismo [What do I expect of myself] when it comes to machismo and my role as a man in a family?" It's... and then you start to think... "Well, okay what does that mean for me?" So it's, it's supposed to make you think. It's supposed to be hard.

My personal reflections on this moment noted my own desire for them to interrogate their own stance on machismo and its relevance toward women, family and their futures.

Discourse of fighting.

Another major area that evoked the literacy of machismo was our conversations around fighting. This literacy was best expressed when a participant, Juan, was anticipating his impending appearance in court. When asked about the events preceding the court appearance, he shared his story, which depicted a Discourse fully understood by these Hispanic boys, as the insiders. When asked why he was unique, Juan replied, "I'm not in a gang." Yet, coincidentally, he had an upcoming court date for fighting. Even

though this fight was off school grounds, it was during school hours and thus was considered a violation of school policy, as well as prompting a criminal misdemeanor charge. The fight was supposedly over a former girlfriend. Intriguingly, he shared his story casually and began by sharing his thinking as he drove off campus to meet for the fight.

“There were about five cars there, waiting for me. At first I thought, drive away man. If you die who will find you here...your mom will not find you. Then I thought, if I leave now I can never hold my head up. So, ok, I have to do this.”

His friends, who met him there, warned him about his opponent’s reputed health issue, which was a hole in his chest bone. “Be careful man, you can kill this, dude!” Juan went on to explain how he fought with the intent not to punch “this kid” in the chest. “I was very careful of where I punched him.” Juan said. As the other boys rallied around both fighters, the fight went on for about 15-20 minutes, according to Juan. The other kid was really “messed up.” “He was asking me to stop!” “So, I let him lose,” Juan stated. “We shook hands and got in our cars and headed back to school,” Juan concluded. The girl was never again mentioned throughout the sharing of the story.

The terminology used by Juan struck me odd. It was not my perceptions of the regular way a young adolescent boy touts that “I won the fight” or “I messed him up bad.” The idea of a young Hispanic boy letting another Hispanic boy “lose” made me question all I had learned and read about stereotypical Hispanic machismo. I had been exposed to the type of machismo the boys brought up earlier where the Hispanic male

retains all power at all costs. Here, this young man was winning a fight and yet, he states, “I let him lose.”

Juan went back to school and on to his next class, physical education, where the coach sent him to the clinic for the cuts he had on his face. They then called in the resource officer when it was obvious that this young man had been in a fight. Juan’s use of terms was specific and out of the norm when considering the media version of fighting, rivals, pounding each other for revenge.

Even though the boys made no reference to living up to an ideological definition of machismo, this literacy was understood by most of the participants in this study. They seemed to have an agreed-upon set of rules. Those who were privy to the meaning of these actions and words were insiders. Other boys spoke back to the Discourse of fighting yet, refused to be recorded. The boys either asked for me to turn off the recorder or waited until the end of the focus group, when all others had left, to share their experiences in regards to fighting. Collectively, they spoke of similar rituals around fights and how one had to be honorable and “hold your manhood” in regards to conflict, which meant to keep your honor. “Even if we hate each other, we walk away and leave it there.” Other Hispanic boys who mentioned fights that happened within or outside of the classroom expanded on this line of thinking. As mentioned earlier, during the regular English class observation, two boys “went at it” with each other. The actual fight lasted about three minutes, it ended with one boy sent to the office and one sitting in class for the rest of class period. According to the other boys, this kind of fighting happens among friends and enemies and can be planned or erupt with the same ending. Each walking

away asking the other “Are you alright?” or “Let it end here!” In my journal I write, “I want so much to debrief the conversation with the class.” To this primary teacher, the fight brought tension and confusion to the class and tainted the learning environment. I remember leaving this conversation thinking about Juan’s intentional word choice, “I let him lose.”

A final area that was expressed in relation to machismo was Hispanic boys’ association with peer pressure in relation to gang affiliations. It was interesting how this theme revealed itself with the only four members of the study. The oldest Hispanic boy, Lorenzo, was 20 years old and a getting ready to graduate from Riverside High School. He exerted his voice whenever possible at times making it hard to lift the level of interaction from other members of the group. He talked about his old way of thinking “back in the day” as if he were an older gentleman reflecting on his younger years. It was interesting to hear this young man talk about his choices and self-proclaimed empowerment. It revealed a paradigm shift from the very traditional stereotypical way of thinking about machismo to one of shifting the inner power to change the course of his life. He shared his insight and line of thinking about leaving his gang membership. He describes his views of about how others can do the same.

Lorenzo: They don’t go through it all the way. They don’t go through it. They can say, “Oh, I’m going to change. I want to get out.” Just, they don’t move away from it. You know what I’m talking about?

R: Yeah.

Lorenzo: Just like, if I want to move out of a gang, then go move out. But still, they'll come up to you. "Hey lets go, lets go!" I guess you budge in. Go, come out. I see a bunch of them every day, they be like "Come one! Come chill with us."

R: So they want to change but they really don't want to change?

Lorenzo: They want to change. It's just that they don't got that mentality. You know what I'm talkin' about? They got it stuck in their head...

R: What kind of mentality do you need? Like if you...like if there were 12 people here and they said, you know, "We want to change. Lorenzo: tell us how to change. Tell us how to get out of it." What would you... What's the mentality?

Lorenzo: Me? What I'd tell them is this... just leave all that... If you really want to change, just go and be like, "Hey bro..." Do like I did. "I'm done with you. I'm not hanging around all ya'll. Ya'll ain't cool. Ya'll ain't nothing but little kids fighting over some stupid thing that ain't yours and we're not going to work nothing to you..." You know? Yeah you might say, "Oh, I own this," but you really don't. Just chill. Just be by yourself. It's the best way.

R: Yeah.

Lorenzo: 'Cuz you can't get in trouble if you're by yourself. Just get a job. Just try to keep your focus and try to keep out of trouble. That's when I got a job.

R: So find something to keep you focused.

Lorenzo: Occupied.

R: Occupied. So that way you don't deviate.

Lorenzo's perspective at times seemed to be well beyond his years. Yet, there was a moment during our individual interview where a pair of Hispanic boys walked by as we sat under the courtyard pavilion. His face froze as his eyes turned to what reminded me of a pit bull fixed and locked, ready to attack. I asked, "Do you know them?" His response was evasive but his eyes stayed targeted as they walked well beyond our vision. I was taken back by his behavior, which was in conflict with his words. He quickly returned to the soft eyes that had continually shared during focus groups and individual interviews. This gave me insight to the internal turmoil between what some boys see as hope for their future versus the expectations of their present reality. I was left to wonder if the boys in this position are continually pulled back in to the former roles as gang member, on constant alert, or is it a wishful façade that needs to be waited out for the end result (end of gang membership) to be determined. Whatever the interpretation, this conflict continues to impact the decisions made by this marginalized population.

Education: "He's already lost."

The only public literacy that the boys prioritized through focus groups and interviews was education. This was voiced during our first focus group brainstorm

session in terms of *school, education, teachers, mentors, graduation, future – thinking ahead*, and being *successful* (Appendix H). Discussions around this concept were purposefully structured due to the complexity of their interconnected *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). Therefore, subsequent sessions began with guiding questions pulled directly from the Personal Interview Questionnaire (Appendix D) and are as follows:

1. What does it mean to be educated?
2. How have/have not schools helped you get educated?
3. What is the most difficult thing about reading/writing?
4. What is the most successful thing about reading/writing?
5. How can school literacy be changed to better fit the needs of Hispanic boys?

What does it mean to be educated?

The collective voice of the boys expressed their belief that being an educated person was an all-encompassing evolution. “You dress better, talk better, you live in a better house” and “ride in style,” which was acknowledged by many head nods around the table. They were also keenly aware that being educated was a mixture of “book-smart” and the ability to “know right from wrong.” These two ideas were clustered into and talked back to in two different ways. *Book-smart* was described as being “good at... like, books.” Yet, they acknowledged, “some people don’t really understand them [books].” Having a “good vocabulary” and mastery of “grammar” (Appendix I) was also met with affirmation, “you talk differently, like, smart like.” These characteristics were

seen as attainable for others but collectively, these boys, felt were not attainable by Hispanic boys.

The boys expounded upon this “book-smart” definition by constructing it with another dimension, this being the ability to make the right choices. Julio sums up this sentiment by stating:

You can be smart in school. But once you leave, you know what I’m saying; you don’t make the right choices out in the streets. Then, you can mess up and you can be real smart in the books. And that don’t make a difference on your choices and what you do.

Lorenzo further supports this idea by sharing the following:

Lorenzo: A lot of people are locked up. They’re not dumb. You know what I’m saying. They’re smart they got educated. It’s just that the wrong choices that they do. You know what I’m saying. People I know that are doing twenty/thirty years, right now, for one mistake that they did. Not cuz, they weren’t smart. They graduated. Like my cousin, he’s doing ten, right now. He graduated. But, he just didn’t make the right decisions. You know what I’m saying. That’s why; it’s just a lot of different things.

The underlying belief seemed to be that the mere act of graduation makes one smart, “booksmart.” And for this population, the act of making the right choices, a moral dimension of this literacy, is also an element when considering themselves and others as

educated. The boys also used words like “respectful, humble, and successful” when describing what being educated looks like, again linking morality to being educated.

Along with providing clear definitions for what being educated looks like, these boys shared hopes and dreams of where they see themselves when fully educated. Nine out of the 17 Hispanic boys claimed to have never even thought of their years beyond high school or were still undecided, yet within this group we had two aspiring architects, one attorney, a nurse, an optometrist, a landscaper, a mechanic, a police officer, and a construction worker. The fact that these particular boys articulate what they dream, aspire to become shows their idealistic views of the educational system. What remains to be seen is how these struggling readers will face the academic rigor these vocations will require.

How have schools helped you get educated?

When addressing how school helped them get educated, the boys stated that school added to their content knowledge specifically about History and English. School was also considered a means to an end. The boys reported how they felt that school prepares you for the world of work. During this discussion Julio stated:

Julio: I say school just makes us better. I guess it prepares us for a lot of things. You got to wake up early, you know what I’m saying to come to school that’s kind of preparing us for going to work and you know what I’m saying? It helps you out in a whole bunch of ways. It teaches you things, you know like he was saying, that you don’t even know. They will teach you things that you didn’t even

know that existed, people you didn't even know [about], unless you come to school to find out. I say it helps.

They also saw the value of what coming to school adds to the big scheme of life by entrusting that the institution of school prepares you for the world of work (discipline). These boys clearly articulated what it means to be educated, “book-smart (intellect)” and the “ability to make good choices” (morality).

How can school literacy be changed to better fit the needs of Hispanic boys?

Another question that addressed the area of education was “How can school literacy be changed to fit the needs of Hispanic boys?” Throughout all focus groups, the boys voiced their desire for mentor teachers and bilingual teachers. Mentor teachers to specifically “help with career choices, reading, writing, main areas of study.” Bilingual teachers, they believed, would help them with language, not for the sake of staying within the Spanish language, but for understanding the topic at hand. These teachers, they insisted, must understand you as an Hispanic and speak “real” Spanish. Josue explained the role of language and its impact on linguistically diverse learners. He stated:

Josue: I think it would be good to have bilingual teachers too...like we said last time. Cuz, some things, like I don't understand in English even if they explain it to me, I don't understand it. But like if a bilingual teacher comes to me and they tell me in Spanish, you know, esto, esto, y esto [this, this, and this]. Like I might be able to understand it more than if they told me in English. You know what I'm saying.

Josue was a fluent speaker of both English and Spanish who clearly thinks in both languages and articulated his need for the cognitive support of his native language, which he believes will come from bilingual teachers. In the article, *Preserving the Cultural Identity of the English Language Learner*, Sumaryono & Ortiz (2004) quote Peter Elbow who asserts that students must use the “language that is in touch with our [their] unconscious or we [they] lose half our [their] mental strength” (p. 18). It is evident that Josue unknowingly is aware of the value of having the support of his native language.

They were also very aware of which teachers they were willing to work for and which teachers they knew considered them “lost.” This was explained by Julio who stated:

Julio: One thing too, like teachers need to... start trying on you [keep urging you to do well]. Cuz, like me they be... They ain't even pushing me to do my work no more. Some people [other students] don't even come to class. There they go puffin around [skipping] and they don't even say nothin' to them no more. *He's already lost* and I guess, they don't even be having no faith in them no more. There just like go ahead, and leave them or go ahead, just go to sleep or listen to your iPod, whatever, and don't even pay attention no more cuz you ain't gonna pass no more. *They just give up on you*. I think that's one thing that they got to be workin' on, too.

This conversation shows a reciprocal relationship between the student and the teacher. Yet, their expectation is for the teacher to understand their needs and to have faith by not giving up on them and seeing them as, “He’s already lost!” These boys had endured multiple failures in classrooms as well as on state assessments. They saw their responsibility as students, yet held teachers equally, if not more, responsible for their educations. They collectively claimed they could fulfill their role of student if they had more support.

Jose: More one-on-one time. Like some people are scared to tell people, I don’t understand it. Most of them do [understand]. What I do is I just sit back, if I don’t understand. It seems like more people need to slow down or go slower. Not all people are at that speed, like they’ll be on the next chapter and I’ll be still stuck on same one. Need to slow down and give some more one-on-one.

This sentiment reflected his need to be seen, heard and recognized in the classroom. It is, after all, the teacher’s responsibility to meet the individual needs of each student. In this case Jose simply withdraws and is left with incomplete understanding of the information in the previous chapter. When teachers fail to differentiate instruction, they further marginalize this population.

Their perception of this reciprocal relationship often hinged upon whether the boys thought the teacher understood their needs and cared about them as individuals. They wanted educators who not only could speak both English and Spanish but who also understood their culture. Additionally, the participants expressed their desire for tutors

and one-on-one help. The voices presented here convey a clear message that if given more support or more teachers who believed in their ability, the boys would rise to the occasion.

The disparity between what Hispanic boys want in their education and what is provided was evident in the Intensive Reading class. Oscar was sitting in the back of the classroom and was observed reading the book *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman (1999). The teacher was giving details behind school announcements mentioned on the morning school news. This particular Hispanic boy was sitting in the back of the class intently reading this book, head down shoulders scrunched eyes moving from teacher to page, teacher to page. He continued to read even through the class discussion moved to Senior Skip day. With eagerness the teacher shared her senior skip day experience. Oscar looked up, giving the illusion of listening by sneaking a peek at the page when the teacher was not looking, yet continued to read intently. The teacher moved on to introduce vocabulary from a story in the class text workbook. Then, the teacher caught Oscar reading and firmly asked, “You need to put that book away!” He reluctantly walked to the front of the room and stated, “but Miss, this is the best book in the whole school.” Walking slowly, shuffling his feet, to the front of the room and he placed the book on shelf. The teacher replied, “Good, we will read it later!” As a primary teacher, I wanted to stand up and shout, “Do you realize what he is saying?” “It is the best book in the whole school.” The story stayed with me all day. As I shared this story with colleagues, I could hear my own judgment towards the teacher who missed an opportunity to help this linguistically

diverse Hispanic boy grasp the enjoyment of reading a book that captivated him as a reader.

These boys definitely saw education as a way of producing a better life. Lorenzo stated this quite clearly during the following conversation:

Lorenzo: You live life to the fullest; know what I'm saying?

R: Okay.

Lorenzo: Get as much education. To me how I see life, I see life as in, like I said a game. Know what I'm sayin'? But you could upgrade your level.

R: Learn how to play it [the game]?

Lorenzo: Know what I'm sayin'? Like your education level, your money level, your wise, streetwise. Just...get powerful with your brain, know what I'm sayin'?

Here Lorenzo clearly used the metaphor of a video game and linked it to life. He sees that “like a game” the advantages of “get[ting] as much education” as you can and how this equates to quality of life - “money,” “powerful with your brain” (intellect), and “wise, streetwise” (respect on the street).

As with most themes, these boys referred to their parents' desire to inspire them to gain a better life while responding to sacrifices from family to help move this generation forward. The public literacy of education may at times seemed daunting for this group of Hispanic boys, yet the continual encouragement coming from their parents, specifically mothers saying “Hecha le ganas” urged them to move forward.

Moral literacy - "Hispanics have the advantage of... of ourselves"

Moral development.

During both individual interviews and focus groups, another theme that emerged was moral literacy. This theme was not one that was mentioned as a topic that was discussed by these Hispanic boys, yet it emerged when analyzing focus group and individual interview transcripts as a continual line of thinking within specific language and behaviors. Moral literacy, here, is defined as "the mental capacity to determine how universal human principles should be applied to our values, goals and actions" (CORBA, 2001, p. 4). In the simplest terms, moral intelligence is the ability to differentiate wrong from right as defined by an individual's own principles. In the book, *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing*, Michele Borba (2001) recognizes that current societal issues like disrespect for authority, incivility, vulgarity, cheating, and dishonesty are becoming more abundant in our society specifically among youth. He contends that moral behaviors are guided by personal, social, mental, emotional, and moral skills which should be cultivated at home by a students' most powerful moral instructors, their parents.

The Hispanic boys in this study had a level of moral literacy that was evidenced with general patterns of thought, expressed in their use of language, which, according to Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development are the most crucial evidence of moral judgment (Crain, 1985). According to Kohlberg, the line of thinking and verbal descriptions put forth by these boys would place them in stage three which states, that morality is the act of living up to the expectation set forth by the family and community.

According to Crain (1985), Kohlberg conducted research heavily on the moral development of boys, later to include girls, from middle and lower class families in Chicago in 1958. Moral behavior means having good intentions based on feelings of love, empathy, trust, and concern for others. The debate over Kohlberg's model will be addressed later in this chapter.

Morality of Hispanic boys.

When considering moral behaviors, like those that carry good intentions based on feelings of love, empathy, trust, and concern for others, it was evident that these are in complete agreement with the accepted Euro-American ways of thinking, which most American families strive to instill. However, these Hispanic boys were grounded in their cultural stance when it comes to moral literacy and saw themselves as unlike their friends from the traditional Euro-American culture. This became evident in the personal narratives and the self-proclamations of being more respectful than their cultural counterparts. This point was made more poignant by a story told by Julio, who was informally mentoring a young Hispanic boy whom he had known since birth. He was a young impressionable ten-year old boy wanting to fit in, wanting to find a role model, and found it in Julio. He states:

Julio: To tell you the truth, I'm be going to school cuz I got a lot of little homeboys and they be looking up to me. So I gotta [go]...

R: Do you feel like a role model?

Julio: Yeah. I got to show them how it's done. Cuz, I be telling

them, cuz, I be seeing them. They be trying to do things that the other boys be doing. And I be telling them, that ain't cool. I be telling them yeah, 'You can have a little fun, do whatever, but stay in school. Do what you gotta do.' Cuz, the little boys they like sports and I be trying to make them do that all the time. Trying to keep playing. That's why I play basketball, soccer and do whatever. So just like [they might say]... 'O.K, he's doing it and people still respect him' and this and that.

R: Very cool, Julio.

Julio: Cuz, even his...the own boys little brothers they ain't doing nothing. One of them dropped out and one they ain't be doing good. One of them just having problems. I be like, you know what I'm saying...he don't even, he don't even like in his own brothers. That's like alright man, I'm gonna show these boys.

Julio felt responsible and privileged to take on the role of big brother for some of the young boys of his neighborhood. Julio took pride in his choices of staying in school and playing sports as a form of "a little fun" and as a way of "people still respect[ing]" him. This high school student had language and actions that served as a means to fulfill his own expectations for the young members of his community. It is apparent that, for Julio, the role of mentor is to be taken very seriously evidenced by the following:

Julio: Hmm..hm! I be trying to teach little kids a little

something, something. The other day we were playing basketball and two kids were going at it. He can't drop me, he can't drop me and this and that. I was like he can drop you boy so chill out. Homeboy came and dropped him and I guess he got all...

R: Embarrassed.

Julio: Yeah, so he started crying. Then he started swinging at him. I thought this little boy is crazy. Everybody be like laughing. Everybody busting up his head. He went home he came back he had a knife.

R: [Gasp]...Julio, oh my gosh. How old is this kid?

Julio: Like about ten.

R: So what did you do?

Julio: So I let him, you know what I'm saying, go after me. And like he was pulling at me a couple of times. I was thinking should I let him stab me so he could see that, so he could see me all bloody. So, he get scared.

R: So he could get shocked?

Julio: Yeah. So he could get scared. Then I was like, I don't know. Then, he swung and then I just want to see like what he'd do. And then, I just like. Then, I grabbed him and like I threw the knife. And then, I grabbed him and like sat him down. And started hitting him, but like I started, but like teaching him, "What you

doing that for?” You know boy that something serious. You know what I’m saying, homey for every little reason why you get mad then you gonna go home and bring a knife. Cuz, you know what I’m saying? Cuz, I would never say nothing something hand on a gun then something dumb gonna kill somebody for like a good reason like just to make him learn he learned from him the whole time that’s my little home boy too. He’s cool. He’s cool man, cool. I like the little man.

R: How long have you known him?

Julio: Man, since he was a baby.

R: So you know him...

Julio: That’s what I’m saying...that’s my little man. So I got to teach him.

R: And you, teaching him the right thing?

As I listened to Julio share this incredible story, I saw a young man determined to make a positive impression on this young boy. In my mind, I could clearly see and hear the irrationality of his thinking when he stated, “I was thinking should I let him stab me so he could see that, so he could see me all bloody. So, he’d get scared.” Yet, I also know the daily pressure for this young boy to be recognized, respected, not teased by the peers at the young age of ten, an understanding of traditional Hispanic male machismo. This kind of experience, some would argue, does need that “tough love” “scare it out of you,” mentality. Yet, it was one Hispanic boy’s way of making an impact on his community.

Through these actions, Julio expressed the responsible act of living up to the self-imposed expectations and those unspoken rules set forth by his community. He took pride in sharing his willingness to be stabbed as a way of embracing the responsibilities of mentoring this and other young boys in his ‘tough’ neighborhood. He courageously places himself in the role of older brother and seeks to make a difference in the lives of the young boys who look up to him.

Whether listening to Julio and his guidance of younger Hispanic boys who live on his block, or the story of how a fight is carried out by Juan – honor from wild, wild-west.... your word is your bond...” If I say I’m going to fight you. I’ll fight you.” This reflective view of what it means to be respectful is definitely an insider perspective. An outsider may not understand it in its entirety. There is an understanding among these Hispanic boys of how the literacy of respect is acted upon and enacted within their community.

Sixty percent, 11 out of the 17 of them were able to reflect on their own behavior and define themselves as respectful or having a deeper, innate interpretation of what it means to be respectful.

“We’re more respectful than white people” and “I would never speak to my parents like white people do.” “I am different in my manner of being...in how I dress...consider myself more respectful and more humble than others.”

The voices of moral young men attempting to live by an unspoken code was prevalent throughout my data collection.

Impact of morality on behavior.

Being a moral individual to these young Hispanic boys required a definition beyond knowing the difference between right and wrong. It dictates an individual's conscience to move past the simple morality of the situation and work toward the higher good, as irrational as it may seem. The positioning of the boys when they say, "I am more respectful!" than those around them in itself is an expression of this literacy. This self-expression also bred an ideology, which they embrace with pride for self and pride for culture. The level of responsibility that seems to be self-imposed also exhibits a sense of privilege and obligation. The following excerpt was taken from the end of one of our focus groups where Juan had chosen to stay back and open up for the first time. The following discussion was around the prompt, "What makes you unique?":

Excerpt from Focus Group.	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Some meaning lost in translation)
R: Yeah, yeah. And, in what way would you say you're most different, y most mejor?	R: Yeah, yeah. And, in what way would you say you're most different, and better?
JUAN: En... lo mejor, así hablando total de los Hispanos, somos más respetuosos.	JUAN: In...better, well in talking about all Hispanics are more respectful.
R: Okay.	R: Okay.
JUAN: You know, llegas, llegas a una casa... Es decir, como nosotros llegamos a la casa de mi grandma y la saludamos, you know, con el beso en la mano...	JUAN: You know, you get, to a house... It's to say, that we get to a house like that of my grandmother and we say hello, you know, with a kiss on the hand.

R: Right.	R: Right.
JUAN: Or you're just like, ya estamos...	JUAN: Or you're just like, we are...
R: Impuestos.	R: use to that.
JUAN: ...impuestos. Y a todos... everybody else it's, ah, like a todas las señoras, it's a kiss on the cheek y a los señores it's a handshake. That's how we are. Y luego you see...	JUAN: ...use to it. And to everybody else it's, ah, like a to all the women (elders), it's a kiss on the cheek and to the men (elders) it's a handshake. That's how we are. And, then you see...
R: We, your family or we, todos los demás, más así con las amigas?	R: We, your family or we, all the rest, more like all your friends?
JUAN: I'm guessing in Hispanics overall.	JUAN: I'm guessing in Hispanics overall.
R: Mhmm.	R: Mhmm.
JUAN: Y ha visto qué, like, se ven... Como los otros, I don't care where I see them. Ahí los saludo like if I was gonna see them at the house. Y si ves a otros like, other, otros, they're like, te saludan pero like cussing at each other.	JUAN: And I have seen that, like they see...Like the others (others outside of culture), I don't care where I see them. There, I say hello like if I was gonna see them at the house. And if you see others (others outside of culture), like others they're like, they say hello but like cussing at each other.

Juan sees the literacy of respect come through his actions when greeting others in his community whether at his house or in public. He has noticed the differences in regard to how elders should be greeted within a community. The conversation continued, as follows:

Excerpt from Focus Group	Translated for non-Spanish readers: (Some meaning lost in translation)
<p>JUAN: So that's, I mean, overall that's what I think us as hispanos have an advantage of, of ourselves.</p>	<p>JUAN: So that's, I mean, overall that's what I think us as Hispanics have an advantage of, of ourselves.</p>
<p>R: And do you think a lot of people know that about us?</p>	<p>R: And do you think a lot of people know that about us?</p>
<p>JUAN: A los hispanos right here nos miran qué...</p>	<p>JUAN: The Hispanics right here they see us as...</p>
<p>(Announcement on school speaker)</p>	<p>(Announcement on school speaker)</p>
<p>JUAN: ...no más son gangitas when there's like, yeah there is a lot of them pero they don't see that there's more better of _____ qué han tenido, no más a los hispanos overall. Or... And that's basically como nos ven ellos. Ellos ta... they don't, they don't see that, the, there's a good part of us pero, they see the bad one.</p>	<p>JUAN: ...nothing else as gangsters when there's like, yeah there is a lot of them but they don't see that there's more better of _____ that they have had, no matter all the Hispanics overall. Or... And that's basically how they see us. They... they don't, they don't see that, the, there's a good part of us, but, they see the bad one.</p>

This conversation was representative of the many statements, behaviors, and inferences that were expressed within each research venue. I'm not sure if Juan sees the power of his own beliefs. "Hispanos [Hispanics] have the advantage of, of ourselves." This statement clearly articulates his thinking around the pride Juan brings to his culture, the "advantage of, of ourselves." What was evident is that moral literacy was a theme that these Hispanic boys were well aware of and could justify in their lives as a form of language and action.

Finally, was the distinct collective stance that most of these boys believed in the positioning of entitlement taken by 'others', which, they felt was misplaced and misdirected. This group of Hispanic boys felt righteous and adamant in suggesting that America did "not just belong to the White" but it "belonged to *nosotros* [us]...we all live here." This powerful stance brought out the desire to break away from oppressive dependency and stipulate hope for a more united America.

There is much debate when applying Kohlberg's model of moral development to culture. For example, Sigelman (1999) purports that these stages are highly impacted by social learning experiences, which I contend reflects the life experiences of these Hispanic boys. Critics of Kohlberg's stages of moral development further claim that his theory holds a bias against more conservative individuals who adhere to strict principles of justice, cultural differences where the highest levels of morality reflect Western ideals, as well as toward gender due to females having a more feminine orientation to moral issues. However, there is no doubt that Kohlberg's theory on moral development is the most prominent and has the closest relationship to the findings in this study.

Summary

When reviewing the primary and secondary questions that guided the inquiry for this research study, it was evident that these Hispanic boys express several *private and public literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) each with a different identity that impacted their educational perspective and academic goals. The list of themes brainstormed during our first focus group session offered much insight into the cultural capital this group of Hispanic boys brought to their educational setting. The role that their *private and public literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) played was evident in their way of responding to, elaborating on, and reflecting around each theme. This group of Hispanic boys definitely revealed several literacies that, like Pandora's box, could open a new national dialogue.

The findings revealed the themes most relevant to this group of Hispanic boys. The very private literacy of **family** brought out how these Hispanic boys relate to their parents and how the role of *dichos* and *consejos* are carried from one generation to another, helping shape and mold the identities of these young boys. **Language** was expressed as a tool to fuse their sense of self, family, and cultural identity, which belonged solely to these Hispanic boys. **Machismo** was shown to evoke long held beliefs in transition for this unique group. Another theme was that of **racism**, which brought out issues of anger and resentment, which placed them at a moral crossroad. Finally, the public literacy of **education** elicited the most variety of responses yet, if considered, have the most potential in meeting the academic needs of this group of individuals. Lastly, the theme that was patterned throughout their comments and the actions was that of **moral**

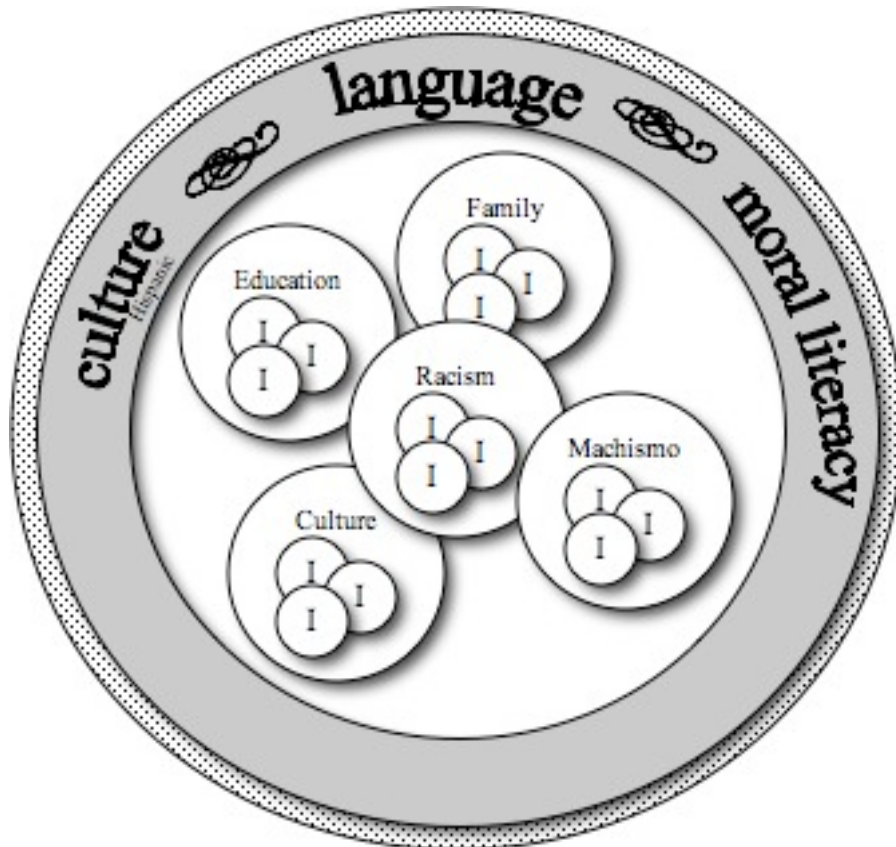
literacy. This theme carried nuances and habits of mind that brought out a sincere pride in this marginalized population.

These themes expose hidden perceptions to be addressed if we are to open this country to this marginalized population. It was also evident that this research inquiry was not only well received by the majority of these Hispanic boys but also help validate their narrative space.

It is important to recognize that, although the nature of this inquiry compartmentalized these *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) into single strands, these themes are, in fact, intermingled and are mutually constructed. These Hispanic boys shared perceptions around multiple identities and are situated within specific contexts and situations. The model below seeks to unify these literacies and show their interconnectedness and interdependability (Figure 3).

In the figure, the outer wall holds the dynamic of language, which serves as the medium for social interaction, and embraces the entire model. Language, in this model, represents the general patterns of thought that are expressed via specific choice of words, tone, and expression that give meaning to specific actions. The inner wall carries culture, in this case the Hispanic culture (habits, beliefs, values), which is expressed in their use of language. These two big constructs, culture and language, when combined cultivate moral literacy. The center space holds each literacy valued by this group of Hispanic boys. It's important to notice that each theme carries multiple identities each situated

Figure 3. Model for these *Public and Private Literacies*



within a different context and/or situation. Therefore, it is snapshot model that is in a constant state of change. Within the multiple contexts of a student's life, the identities formed within these different literacies often connect to other literacies to express itself in a given situation. For example, as previously discussed when Juan shared his discourse of fighting, it was machismo and culture that connect to construct that situated identity. Therefore, Hispanic boys unconsciously navigate this model producing once again multiple identities within multiple worlds (Dyson, 1997).

Most of the boys responded positively to the entire study, when asked, “What do you think about this project?” most mentioned, “Getting out of class, Miss, is cool!” Yet, what followed was the surprising voice that echoes the intent of this inquiry.

“Juntos vamos a ser algo [together we are going do something] so other people can see who we really are...,” “It sparked something in me” and we “have the advantage of ourselves.”

This was further expressed by Lorenzo who was a twenty year old (20) senior was the oldest of the bunch, describes his fervor for not only the project but for the other Hispanic boys he came to regard as friends.

Lorenzo: I love it!

R: Do you?

Lorenzo: Yeah.

R: Tell me why.

Lorenzo: I was hoping for something like this to break through, you know what I’m saying? I was trying to get that out. I thought about it a couple of times. Like what if somebody just came in and showed us, talked about, you know what I’m saying? Hispanic kids. You hear about the black kids all the time or little Billy Joe is prom king. What about us? What do we get? You know what I’m saying? So when you asked if I’d take it, I said yeah, in a heartbeat. I like it.

R: What do you think about the other guys?

Lorenzo: They're pretty cool. I'm trying to talk to people I ain't really talk to.

R: Good, good.

Lorenzo: That's why. I'm like... It brings like more sense to it, you know what I'm talking about? Like more knowledge. "Oh well look, I like what he said so I'ma start, or I like what she said." You know what I'm saying? Just like, everybody gets to spit out their own comments, their own...

R: Their own feelings.

Lorenzo: Their own opinion and stuff like that.

R: And it is respected.

Lorenzo: Yeah, it's respected. Nobody gets disrespected. Like the macho, they tease me. Everybody talks about that. Like comparing to what other classes say. Like other groups, they don't like to hear about these things.

All participants that contributed to these findings expressed similar sentiment.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to reveal and report the perspectives of Hispanic boys regarding their literacy experiences. I set out to explore this area because of my own personal experiences with illiteracy, educational marginalization, dominant masculinity, and my own three Hispanic sons. With research, data, and personal experience as evidence, it was clear that our educational system was failing to meet the academic needs of these boys. There was little research that equipped teachers with instructional methods or frameworks to support this population. My goal was to provide insight into this population that would help create possibilities for these and other Hispanic boys. This final chapter begins with a discussion of results based on the major findings followed by instructional recommendations for educators. The final question will then be addressed, *What role can that critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?* This chapter concludes with implications for further research, all which address the research questions guiding this study. These are as follows:

The primary question was:

What are the perceptions of adolescent Hispanic boys who are considered low level readers (by state achievement tests) regarding their literacy experiences?

Secondary questions:

- What have researchers reported about Hispanic boys in literacy situations?

- What is the role of masculinity (machismo) in the literacy lives of Hispanic boys?
- What teaching methods do Hispanic boys consider most responsive to their literacy needs?
- What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?

The research findings revolved around the six themes, which were identified and discussed within a ten-week period using focus groups and individual interviews. The six themes found to be most significant to these Hispanic boys included: (a) family, (b) language, (c) racism, (d) machismo, (e) education and (f) moral literacy. These findings offered a glimpse into the *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) of this group of Hispanic boys and also revealed what Dyson (1997) called their *multiple worlds and multiple identities*.

Discussion of Results

After reviewing the findings, it became imperative to situate them into concepts that educators can discuss, extend, and implement. Implications from the findings support that these Hispanic boys (a) strongly valued their cultural identity, (b) were disconnected from their educational setting, (c) could self-prescribe their personal educational needs, (d) lacked institutional knowledge, and (e) had little to no opportunity to rebuild their identity. These will be presented with the intent provide support for further discussion.

Strongly Value their Cultural Identity

These Hispanic boys took pride in and honored their cultural identity. They had a unique bond to their cultural understanding of what it meant to be a Hispanic male. They

conveyed confidence and pride in who they were and how they chose to behave. This was evident in their regard for their culture and language. These Hispanic boys revealed a fervent expectation to not disrespect their race by denying their native language and accept the English language as their sole source of communication. This stance revealed a keen awareness of self and what they are willing, and unwilling, to surrender. As set forth by Gee (2005), language was clearly fused with their sense of identity, family, and culture, which were clearly within the findings.

Having to defend their identity on both sides of this cultural strait between the English and Spanish worlds, Julio and Josue specifically shared how they are continually on the defensive against the basic question, “Who am I and where do I belong?”

Julio: Even your own people talk down on you cuz you’re from this side (U.S.). Like I went out there (to Mexico), it was way back, I went out there but I was...this may have nothin’ to do with it. But, like it does in a little way. I was gonna ride this little bull (mechanical bull) and they (Mexicans) say “Nah, cuz you don’t know how to do it. You’re from the other side (U.S.). I was like, “Man you crazy!” And I hopped on it and I showed them I could do it. “What makes me different from you,” you know what I’m saying? “My blood is the same!” You know what I’m saying? “I’m the same race as you!” Just cuz I’m over here (U.S) its gonna make me different? I don’t think so.

- R: When they say the other side, meaning...United States?
- Julio: The United States...yeah. That what they said...it got me so mad.
It's like, like they're trying to say that, you know what I'm saying?
I'm not a Mexican.
- Josue: That you forgot about them. They think that you think you're
better than them. Not just because you're over here (in the U.S.) or
porque eres del norte [Because your are from the north], you know
what I'm saying.
- Julio: All I know is they just mad cuz I'm over in the _____. But, it ain't
even like that.
- R: How does that make you guys feel? I mean have a lot of you
experienced that...where they think now that you're over here (in
the U.S.)...maybe some of you were born here....
- Josue: Some people, some people, like they're like that, but some people
on the other hand they're like good to you. O' si tas
bueno...salieron adelante [Oh, yes your better...you all came out
ahead]. You know. Yo quiero ser lo mismo [I want to do the
same]. But, some other people are just like they just put you down
cuz your from, your parents came over here and gave you a better
life.

This clearly reflects the cultural strait that these Hispanic boys daily navigate. This perpetual internal defending of who they are seems to solidify their cultural identity as

they defiantly assert, “What makes me different from you...My blood is the same!” This strongly held position clearly situates their identity and impacts how they behave in their two-sided world.

This firm stance also reveals itself in the educational setting. This set of Hispanic boys believed that education is a balance of schooling and the ability to make good choices, to “know right from wrong.” When these boys are confronted by educators with low expectations or they hit a wall of failure, they were not crippled by or fell victim to the identity of school failure. These boys often faced this failure with frustration and anger, feeling entitled that teachers should understand their needs, have faith in their ability, and not give up by saying “He’s already lost!” Many students might respond to multiple failures with helplessness but not these Hispanic boys. They took pride in their identity and would not be rendered powerless or accept cultural marginalization. With adamancy, when asked, they talk about their individual needs and their struggle to understand concepts in both English and Spanish. They do, however, in some situations or with some teachers, react with resistance or disconnection, which firmly places them at a crossroads of *fatalism or rebellion* (Freire, 2001).

McCarthy and Moje (2002) claim that current research around identity has moved into the “dichotomizing of possibilities for identity.” They claim that identities can show characteristics of both “motivated and lazy” (p. 230) and are contingent on the space the person is in, and the relationships situated within that space, that help an individual enact either end of the dichotomy. Therefore, this research supports the implication that these boys may be enacting a different identity depending on the teacher,

class, and situation. Furthermore, these boys may be enacting a different identity within and outside of school. Thus, they have the opportunity to embrace their cultural masculinity mostly outside of school where they are making what they believe are the right choices or select the cultural outlet where their identity is validated and confirmed.

I assert that this strong value for cultural identity, if not recognized and understood, will increase their chances to become high school dropouts. Research shows that they would rather drop out than be seen as weak, a characteristic which clearly resides in their cultural identity as a Hispanic male (Valenzuela, 1999). Researchers would also claim that identities are constructed in relation to other peoples' perceptions and built within social interactions with others (McCarthy and Moje, 2002). It was clear that these Hispanic boys strongly valued their cultural identity and it impacted every aspect of their *private and public identity* (Faulkner, 2005).

Disconnected from their Educational Setting

As a result of these findings, it was overwhelmingly evident that these Hispanic boys were disconnected from their educational setting. During the ten-week time period of the research inquiry, these Hispanic boys showed complete disengagement from classroom efforts. When observing classrooms during the initial stages of this research study, it was difficult for me to observe any classroom interactions, engagement levels, and other academic behaviors of the Hispanic boys due to this disengagement. This void created a disconnection between students, teachers, and content. The instructional method of all classrooms observed was a single voiced lecture or simple question-answer volley,

which both are considered least effective, according to research supporting the district's walk-through criteria (Schlechty, 2002).

The district walk-through process was implemented after administrators attended a three-day training where they reviewed videos of highly engaged, well-managed, and dysfunctionally managed classrooms. This training was implemented to ensure consistency on definition of practice and accuracy on scoring observations, which were completed on Palm Pilots to ease procedures and data collection. The administrator's weekly district walk-through data for Riverside High School showed that out of 1293 walkthroughs in 2007-08 approximately 60% (800) classes were well-managed which is described as having "passive compliance and retreatism" (p. 5) with students willing to be compliant (Schlechty, 2002). This data supports the complacent behavior and disconnect that these Hispanic boys experienced in classrooms at Riverside High School. It is equally important to consider the impact of these "compliant" classrooms as they affect all students at Riverside High. The critical difference is that Hispanic boys walk in to school, already silenced due to language and culture issues and may not have an outlet to interact outside of the walls of Riverside High. Thus, this data compounds the passivity and compliance of their classroom experiences.

To further punctuate this disconnection, when attending a focus group, these students rarely knew what class they were coming from, rarely knew the name of the classes they were taking, and rarely knew what content was being taught in that class. Along with carrying little to no school supplies, during our time together, they continually offered stories of boredom and detachment to the point of falling asleep in

class. This was further evidenced when pulling boys to conduct individual interviews. On four occasions, I pulled boys out of class who had their heads down, fully asleep. Teachers, who were teaching in front of their classrooms, would wake them by yelling their name and pointing to me, the guest at the door. Speaking directly to the teachers at Riverside High School, they shared narratives of why these boys were excused from meeting classroom expectations and allowed to fall asleep. Some shared stories like that of the young boy who worked 40-60 hours a week to help support the family. "That's why I let him sleep," said the teacher. Other teachers said, "He's not going to do anything anyway...so I let him sleep, at least he's out of my hair." This mentality, although possibly empathetic of the student's physical needs or easing a teacher's management issues, continues to marginalize and direct the quality of life for these Hispanic boys. These instructional considerations, according to Nieto (2000) and Valdes (2001), continue to lead to an undercurrent of teacher biases against poverty-stricken, linguistically diverse students and widen the disconnection of these Hispanic boys from their educational setting.

During reflection in my research notebook, there were numerous times when I described the boys as passive learners during my classroom observations. I observed simple question-answer type moves and traditional lecture delivery methods, which stood for the instructional infrastructure of most of the classes. For example, I noted that in the developmental reading class, I heard students speak beautiful Spanish and English yet, observed these students being asked to read-aloud simple passages along with a prescribed audio CD. Brisk (2006) suggests that English Language Learners should be

actively engaged in classroom instruction, listening to a CD is a passive activity that provides no opportunity to utilize language in authentic situations. Furthermore, this practice does not mirror authentic language processing skills, which these students need if they are to gain access to active languages processes. There was little to no opportunity to practice their language skills in either language, thus furthered the disconnection for these Hispanic boys.

Could Self-Prescribe their Personal Educational Needs

When considering the significance of the findings under the theme of education, these Hispanic boys were very aware of themselves as readers and writers. After several weeks of community building within the group, these boys were able to identify their personal literacy needs. It was during the focus group session on traditional literacy that they responded to the following questions:

- What is the most difficult/successful thing about reading/writing?
- What makes you feel successful about reading/writing?

The boys were neither resistant nor ashamed to voice their successes or struggles, as they shared their metacognitive thoughts regarding their literacy needs. They frankly shared simple surface examples like “It’s boring, I just sit there and stare at the book, and when there’s no pictures, I get bored.” Yet, these boys also exhibited deeper reflection, for instance, “I get distracted and can’t bring back my focus,” “It’s hard trying to translate (English to Spanish or vis-a-versa) it in my head,” and “It’s hard to describe something I see in my head.” These direct quotes reflect high-level metacognitive thinking stems that tell us exactly what these readers and writers know about themselves as learners. In an

article entitled, *The reading strategies of bilingual Latina/o students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles*, Jimenez, Gracia and Pearson (1996) cite theorists who contend that bilingualism may actually “enhance children’s capacity for conscious introspection.” They cite other researchers who assert that second language learning may bring about “greater awareness of cognitive processes.” These FCAT Level 1 and Level 2 Hispanic boys showed evidence of knowing which strategies were effective for them and when their cognitive processes broke down. In front of their peers, these boys shared when learning made them feel successful and when learning was difficult. These boys carried with them the ability to self-reflect on their learning. These boys were clear about their strengths and shortcomings and literacy needs.

Lack of Institutional Knowledge

During the focus group session on literacy, one Hispanic boy made the comment, “No, Miss they don’t give scholarships to Mexicans, especially....know what I’m sayin’?” I was taken back by this comment because I had first-hand experience of the numerous scholarships, fellowships, and grants dedicated to the Hispanic population as a result of my son’s recent graduation from high school. I remember thinking “if a Hispanic student doesn’t go to college it’s because they don’t want to.” Yet, this was one of the many indicators that proved this group of Hispanic boys lacked institutional knowledge.

Throughout the transcripts of our literacy focus group sessions and individual interviews, I found myself providing these boys with information on how the educational system works. At one point Oscar asks, “Are you in college to do all this, Miss?” I, then,

stopped and went through a mini-lesson on their post high school graduation options, which included vocational and technical schools. I went on to explain degrees all the way from an Associate of Arts through the Ph.D. It was apparent that these Hispanic boys lacked any roadmap to education outside of their already disconnected experience.

The bureaucratic organization of school may be perhaps more easily navigated by most Americans due to the fact that they personally experienced how American schools work and their many intricacies. Lacking, along with other factors, like language (Valdes, 2001) and fear (Brisk, 2006), places these boys at the mercy of gatekeepers who hold the power of essential educational information (Norguera, 2006). Due to the lack of experience and background knowledge of this population with regards to American institutions of education (Hill & Flynn, 2006), most Hispanic parents support is muted in the face of institutional oppression (Ogbu, 1992, Norguera, 2006). These students and parents are at a severe disadvantage, which adds serious obstacles to current or post high school academic success.

This institutional oppression, confirmed by researchers like Ogbu (1992) and Trueba (1999), became more clear when I was supporting one of the research participants who had failed the state assessment four different times and was quickly headed toward dropping out. After his fourth attempt and his confiding in me of his intent to quit, I quickly placed him in contact with a high school tutor that could help him study. The tutoring sessions focused his efforts on either passing the ACT, SAT or making another attempt at the state assessment. He and his counselor completed all the necessary paperwork for him to take the SAT on a Saturday morning. The passing of this alternative

assessment would determine if he was to attend commencement ceremonies and graduate with the rest of his senior class or be labeled a failure a fifth time and sadly watch his classmates walk across the stage. The Friday evening before this Saturday SAT assessment, I sent him a text, wishing him good luck. To my dismay, what came back was a phone call noting his lack of testing information. His counselor was not at school that day (Friday) and he did not know where to go to take the SAT the next morning. This prompted a moment of panic from me, “Who do I call?”...” “Where shall I send him?” I realized that he did not have internet access to visit SAT websites to obtain relevant details. After a few phone calls and some internet research, I was able to direct him to the local high school holding the SAT test administration, followed by a huge sigh of relief.

Upon reflection of this situation, I wondered what this Hispanic boy would have done. He had not the knowledge of who to call, where to go, or what resources could help. He was distraught and crippled by a lack of information, the result of which could have drastically changed his future. What we fail to realize is that for many Hispanic boys this tragedy bleeds into the expectations of future generations. I recalled the distressed, fraught sound of his voice. Yet, how could he have known where to go for help, he was one of the first from his family to graduate from high school.

Although removed from the study, another situation, which involved a girlfriend of one of the participants, clearly showed the lack of institutional knowledge for this marginalized population. She sadly found herself pregnant the summer before her senior year. She was devastated, yet determined to complete her high school requirements and

attain her high school diploma with hopes of attending college. When I spoke to her, she had no idea of any options open to her. I urged her to meet with her senior advisor and impress upon her the meeting the demands of her current situation.

Because she had all 21 credits as an incoming senior and a GPA higher than 3.0, she was able to modify her Fall schedule to complete two of her senior year requirements in the first semester and take her final requirement on-line during the Spring. Unlike her more privileged counterparts, she and her parents were not knowledgeable of the institutional workings to navigate questions around credits, classes, and alternatives for requirement completion. Although the district and school do not advocate this practice, it is an option, and was available as an option to help this young, intelligent women achieve her academic goals.

Throughout the time of this study, I found these boys needing information on current high school and future, post-high school opportunities. They were looking for an ally to navigate the system with them, as their *surrogate* counselor I was able to fill in some of the blanks. I did so respectfully considering that counselors at Riverside High have a minimum caseload of 500 students to every one (1) counselor. The impact of overburdened counselors and their availability to minority students is well documented (Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, Colyar, 2004; Young & Brooks, 2008). The disproportional student-to-counselor ratio leaves students to seek out scholarship applications, college entrance requirements, and other post-high school information within their own social networks or not at all. Furthermore, minority students report misgivings about counseling services due to lack of counselors' understanding of cultural needs or fear advisement

into general education and vocational programs (Young & Brooks, 2008). These Hispanic boys were no different.

When asked what information would help them navigate the system during a focus group, information around assessments like ACT and SAT, college applications, scholarships for college, opportunities to connect and network, and options for online courses, were among the requests for support. Yet, they are still at the mercy of the gatekeepers who hold power and have the intimate choice of who they endow with information, that for some impact destiny and/or quality of life (Norguera, 2006). This lack of institutional knowledge limits their options and further marginalizes.

Have Little to No Opportunity to Rebuild Their Identity

Despite social stereotypes, these Hispanic boys proved to have the potential to rebuild their identities, which often brings about personal transformation. Yet, within the current daily context of their academic life, there was little to no opportunity for this type of dialogue. This implication was built upon their disclosure of multiple identities that were revealed during the course of the focus group sessions. To support this, Dyson (1997) contends that student's *multiple worlds* and *multiple identities* assist in broadening their literacies. During each focus group, the Hispanic boys were asked to share their beliefs, values, feelings, thoughts, and ways of acting.

While sharing these, what was also revealed were nuances, gestures, and a specific use of language which Gee (2005) has collectively called Discourses. According to Gee (2005), each Discourse can involve "multiple literacies which take on situated identities different from each other and different within different activities" (p. 34). Since

focus groups were dedicated to a specific topic of conversation, this context called on the boys to consider their Discourse, which exposed their situated identities. It was imperative to consider that these identities be given the opportunity to be “actively rebuilt” (Gee 2005, p. 10) so new possibilities can unfold in their lives.

What is also important to consider is that the multiple identities made public during this research study could give educators an opportunity to engage in what could be significant, explicit conversations around gender, race, and social class. If our goal, in educating this marginalized population, is to create possibilities and open up opportunities of others ways to be, then we must find ways to help them reframe their identities. If McCarthy & Moje (2002), are correct, then these boys may have *clusters of stories* that are *performed and enacted*, not just told as narratives, which may provide insight into how reframing may shape itself within classrooms. My hope is that in stepping into the moment of their thinking and sharing these multiple identities each participant has the opportunity to construct, expand, or transform their Discourses and who they perceive they can become. These implications reflect the mindset of critical pedagogy, which, leads into my final question. *What role can critical literacy play in educating this marginalized population?*

Role of Critical Literacy

My intention to value critical literacy as a method to educate this population is both personal and sociopolitical. Having lived a migrant lifestyle, having experienced a troubled relationship with a dominant Hispanic male, and having lived within the marginalization of a dominant culture, I have a vested interest in taking action on behalf

of educating Hispanic boys. If we educate a population of Hispanic boys and they, in turn, are able to respect the multiple viewpoints of their sons and daughters, they will see the financial, emotional, and political benefits and transfer them to their future generations. Critical Literacy has the potential to help Hispanic boys see possibilities within themselves and can bring about social change while keeping their cultural capital intact.

As indicated in chapter three, we must look beyond the plethora of basic instructional strategies, which have been insufficient in educating our Hispanic students (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1999; Huetra-Macias, 1998). We must look beyond the standard tool kit of teaching strategies and seek methods that will not only educate this population but also, transform their lives. We must develop a pedagogical stance that promotes discourse around analytical thinking, that questions power relations within contexts, and that empowers individuals to change their conditions of living within their world (Freire, 1983; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Considering the findings of this research inquiry, these boys do have the ability to understand their current situations and have the potential to see the possibilities for their future.

Also, in chapter three, the many definitions and theories of critical literacy were synthesized into four dimensions: “(1) Disrupting the commonplace, (2) Interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) Focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) Taking action and promoting social justice” (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys 2002, p. 382). Through utilization of these four dimensions, these boys could have a firm understanding of the sociopolitical issues of power that play out in their social and educational settings. It is imperative that

we arm them with the tools to interrogate how power relations function in their lives, and more importantly, how power impacts the possibilities within the Hispanic male population.

Implementation of Critical Literacy

In order to implement critical literacy with Hispanic boys, they must be prompted to reflect on their current life experiences and envision the possibilities in their lives. According to Comber (2001), critical literacy is not a finite set of practices, techniques, or strategies; rather it is a philosophical stance on thinking and questioning. Critical literacy calls upon teachers to model and support students' critical examination of texts by interrogating characters, situations, and issues of power embedded within the text. It is equally vital for teachers to model purposeful questioning to develop and support transformational thinking, which encourages students to question their worlds (McDaniel, 2004). Freire (2000) calls this theory to classroom practice praxis, defined as the "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). This informed commitment to action is based on student experiences and reflections.

The findings of this inquiry also suggest that these boys have a firm understanding of the sociopolitical structures in their *public and private lives*. Studies like that of Peyton-Young (2000) who analyzed the literacy practices of four adolescent boys brought the gender (male) factor into critical literacy. She found critical literacy as a viable way for participants to gain insight into their personal and social beings as well as establishing a place to think about "multiple possibilities for how they could think, feel,

and act as males” (p. 333). Studies like this educate the student and empower them with tools to transform themselves, their families, and possibly their communities.

In order for this population to access the personal transformation of critical literacy they need to comprehend and expand their positions and perspectives of their social, political and academic worlds. (Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002).

Recommendations for Educators

This study grew out of a deep concern for the academic disparity in the social and educational lives of Hispanic boys. The findings and implications are both encouraging and complex. I recognize that Hispanic boys are marginalized when considering race, gender, and class. Allington’s (2006) recognition that being a minority, who is male, and of poverty, raises the likelihood of this individual falling academically behind as a result of language, retention, and/or reading ability, escorting them to the *drop out* door. We must recognize that we are failing our Hispanic boys and we must acknowledge our role in that failure cycle. Are Hispanic boys honorable assets to our society or are they slated for failure unless they assimilate into the dominant culture? How will they find their own path to assimilation while keeping the integrity of their cultural identity? My hope is that this inquiry has yielded additional insights, understandings, and interpretations that could amplify the desire to study this often invisible, marginalized population. I present four pertinent recommendations for educators that may introduce a line of investigation that would provide further insight into how best to secure the social and academic success of Hispanic boys.

First, we must further interrogate the multiple identities and perspectives brought into classrooms by Hispanic boys. We must adopt methods that shatter the stereotypical masks we place on these individuals. Instead of looking at the way they dress, way they talk, the darkness of their shell, we must look to meet the individual behind the brown face. Understanding the Discourses of Hispanic boys will allow us to find avenues to instructing this marginalized population. This introspection will call upon us, as educators, to look in the mirror and come face to face with our biases and assumptions.

Secondly, we must expand current definitions of literacies to encompass both *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005) as to substantiate other valuable assets Hispanic boys bring to the classroom. Once established, classroom dynamics will break the antiquated instructional methods and allow for learning “to be constructed around the stories people tell,” the meanings authored between learner and teacher, and the “experiences that shape” the voices of Hispanic males (McLaren, 2003). In support, of the centrality of voice, McLaren (2003) asserts:

“It is around the concept of voice that theory of both teaching and learning can take place, one that points to new forms of social relations and to new and challenging ways of confronting everyday life” (p. 245).

Thirdly, and in support of expanded literacies, it is also essential that we create possibilities for these boys to read and write in authentic ways. We must create an environment for them to freely share their literacies and metacognitive introspections, which emerged from the findings of this research study. Once institutionalized, this

supportive environment may allow our Hispanic boys to not only exhibit their traditional literacies but also support our own broadening definition of literacy.

Finally, we must incorporate the study of quality multi-cultural literature and texts that illustrate varied identities and cultures, which will expand the perception of Hispanic male identities. These texts must represent a variety of Hispanic cultures, to include Mexican, Puerto Rican, Spanish, Cuban, Columbian, and a multitude of voices and possibilities. Teachers must then interrogate these books with students to help Hispanic boys envision the possibilities within themselves. Teachers also need to reflect on their own cultural biases and identify a means to deal with biases that impact the emotional, social, and academic well-being of their culturally diverse students (McDaniel, 2004). These approaches will help students, specifically Hispanic boys, “develop, maintain, or challenge their sense of cultural identity” (Harris, 1992).

When further looking into the role of books that may enhance the multiple identities of this marginalized population, we must also look into the role of *dichos* and *consejos* as a literacy that embraces the world that these boys know all too well.

It is my hope that this study establishes the foundation to develop a cache of effective instructional practices, which will eventually lead toward a framework for teaching Hispanic boys. These recommendations for educators constitute an initial step in conceptualizing this framework (Appendix J). I also hope this framework further prompts the discussion of how to support the development of institutional knowledge among Hispanic boys. It is my fervent desire that this work provides another step toward closing the cultural and achievement gaps for Hispanic boys.

Implications and Extensions for Further Research

Language

The data from this study affirms that language and culture are inseparable (Trueba, 1990) and that social beliefs, behaviors, and child-rearing practices are filtered through language (Smedley, 1999). Additionally, this study supported the belief that for English Language Learners (ELL), perceive that there is little to no effective support within content area classes (Valdes, 2001). This study also captured a negative reaction from the boys when their language was denied and disrespect. Given this, further research must identify to what degree Hispanic boys guard their cultural identity in respect to language enculturation? Finally, what is the cost to the individual, family, and community when we devalue the language of Hispanic boys, which asks them to choose, between who they are as individuals, and who the educational expects them to become. What tends to be misunderstood by teachers, administrators and educational scholars is how to effectively provide English instruction and what programs, if any, can be executed to support the learning process for non-English speakers (Valdes, 2001).

In regards to effective language programs, it has been reported that by the year 2030, our schools will need to meet the challenge of having 40% of their children be linguistically diverse learners (Center of Research on Education, Diversity, & Excellence, 2003). A current study on the long-term achievement of linguistically diverse students' claims that two-way immersion programs and one-way developmental programs, which focus on scaffolding a student toward full English while using their native language as the base, assist students in reaching the 50th percentile or higher. Considering this, it is

imperative that we adopt programs that conclude a firm theoretical stance, which values the social and cultural capital of Hispanic boys while respectfully enculturating (ELL) them within our school system (Brisk, 2006; Souto-Manning, 2007).

Dichos and Consejos

This portion of one of the focus group sessions was by far one of the most exciting. This study brought out this cultural literacy in a literate way. Seeing the vigor and enthusiasm when these known cultural proverbs laced with rich meanings were discussed could be a bridge for Hispanic boys to share their cultural identity, moral literacy, that would ultimately enhance their cultural identity and seen as valued in the school system. In a simple Google search with the word “dichos” brought up 15,100,000 sites. These sites ranged from simple lists of “dichos” where the literal English translation is listed to blogs with various dichos with stories attached of their generational passing. Language Arts classes could bring in what Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, (1992) call Funds of Knowledge, which are defined as bodies of knowledge and cultural artifacts that uphold family discussions and activities. This is a critical area for further research due to the amount of excitement, motivation, and validation it brought to the identities of this group of Hispanic boys.

Moral Literacy

The most surprising finding from this study was that these Hispanic boys consistently and unknowingly expressed a deep moral literacy. This group of Hispanic boys considered themselves to be morally grounded much more than their non-Hispanic classmates. In the book review written by Neil Kressel on *Ethnic Ethics: The*

Restructuring of Moral Theory, written by Anthony Cortese, the author claims that Hispanics and African-American students “generally base their moral reasoning on principles of caring, love and responsibility,” (p. 155) as opposed to Kohlberg’s frame around principles of justice. Yet, Kressel (1991) claims that firmer data are required to validate this stance. I assert that further research must be conducted with predominant minority cultures, like Hispanic and African-Americans, to uphold or dismiss this claim.

Machismo

The current literature on masculinity, as it relates to the Hispanic culture, is narrow and limited. This study found that these adolescent Hispanic males were open and honest when it comes to sharing their current view of the changing roles of men and women within traditional Mexican families. It was curious to note that they could speak back to the “old day” machismo and even spoke of new actions geared toward future liberated working wives and daughters. Many questions remain for future research to address. What is the changing outlook of new generations of Hispanic men about machismo and how it pertains to their roles? How do young Hispanic males’ words and actions differ in regard to their girlfriends? What specific views of school do they consider to be feminine and is being smart a sign of weakness? How much of their cultural identity is tied to Gillmore’s (1990) traditional view of machismo, which is to impregnate, to protect, and to provide? Work on these considerations will provide more insight to how machismo impacts the lives of Hispanic boys.

Discourse of Fighting

It was also interesting to note their literacy around physical fighting. I was definitely an outsider during these discussions and, therefore, I was left with many questions. Among these are: What are the specific rituals and ground rules? Are they different within cultural clusters of neighborhoods? Are their insiders from other cultures? Who is privy to this literacy and how does one learn it? Do they ever fight twice and when does revenge begin to develop? Further research must be conducted to fully understand the dynamic of this underlying literacy.

As further research is conducted it would prudent to remember that the literacies and identities expressed by this group of Hispanic boys often overlapped and intermingled with each other.

Further Reflections on Role of Researcher

In my reexamination of the transcribed data, I noticed that as the inquiry came to a close, my responses grew longer than those of the participants. I was taken back with a moment of denial followed by a gasp of shame. I had failed to maintain the line of respectful research honoring the voices of my participants, this being the entire thrust of this study. In disbelief, I quickly went back and reread what must have been “I know what you need to succeed,” comments. Being humbled and a little relieved, I found the intention of my words to be hopeful of making a difference. In the waning days of our conversations, I found myself positioned in a manner to share my own *consejos* (advice) with “my” boys. They had offered their personal stories, experiences, and fears to a

budding researcher, a veteran teacher, and a concerned mother. I shared my hopes and dreams with them as mother, teacher, researcher and, ultimately, oracle.

Impact of Roles on Data

It was evident that my background experience (migrant), ethnicity (Hispanic), gender (female), ties to community (vested, my children, teacher), bilingualism (fluent in Spanish and English), and insight into marginalization validated the boys in regards to “What has shaped their worldview?” (Patton, 2002). Together, we were able to relate to many experiences. I understood the footsteps they walked having had many similar situations both within my *public and private literacies* (Faulkner, 2005). This window, while open, may have afforded a unique space for the development of trust and unity between us all. This trust, granted as a perceived insider, may have impacted the data by allowing the participants to be more honest and expose specific perspectives only privy to insiders. However, they also saw before them a middle-class, assimilated, educated product of their own community. I am left to wonder if at anytime did any one of the boys position me in the role of “they?” (Table 8). It may have been evident to some that I was too far removed from the world that shaped both our marginalized position and current worldview (Patton, 2002). If so, could this have impacted those who chose to remove themselves from the study? Could they have shared negative stereotyping that would convey the message of marginalization while including me in the discussion? Whatever the intention, the participants shared voices around issues that impact the educating of Hispanic boys in hope that these voices would be heard. In reflection, it was my deepest desire to make a difference with this group of Hispanic boys.

EPILOGUE

The Day of Unity

One Hispanic boy spoke about a time and place where “there’s no gangs and no more, no more, notin’ like that.” This expression was reflected when depicting a drawing he had created in his culture journal entitled “The Day of Unity” (Figure 4). This was included to represent the collective voice of these Hispanic boys’ desire to find a location, a place to be themselves, both physically and metaphorically. The conversation went as follows:

Lorenzo: That’s why I want to make, like, a little thing for like people that don’t have nothing to hang out with, just to come with us.

R: And what would that look like? What does that look like in your mind?

Lorenzo: Perfect, you know what I’m saying?

R: Tell me what it’s... Tell me...

Lorenzo: Just like...

R: Picture.... Tell me so I can see it in my head.

Lorenzo: Just like saying like a building like, like that... Look, for instance...

R: Okay, a building.

Lorenzo: Okay, and we got like, artwork on the walls and on all four walls, of like the past history. It’s not just going to be Hispanics, you

know what I'm saying? You're going to have murals, whatever, whatever. All races, all races.

R: All races.

Lorenzo: And just like, I don't know. Just like a mural of just what they've been through and stuff like that. So like, if a new member comes in, then we'll give them like, a space for them to get their own mural but they got to be like the same thing from like where everybody came from, from the past, just to be on that same wall. So there, a picture can tell a thousand stories, as I see it. And that's why, just like, make a building like that. You know how they got little sections of 'em?

R: Right, right.

Lorenzo: Like that. Just, if they don't want a section, have somebody else draw it. Tell me what you think and I'll draw it for you.

R: And what would be happening at this building with all the murals that connect people?

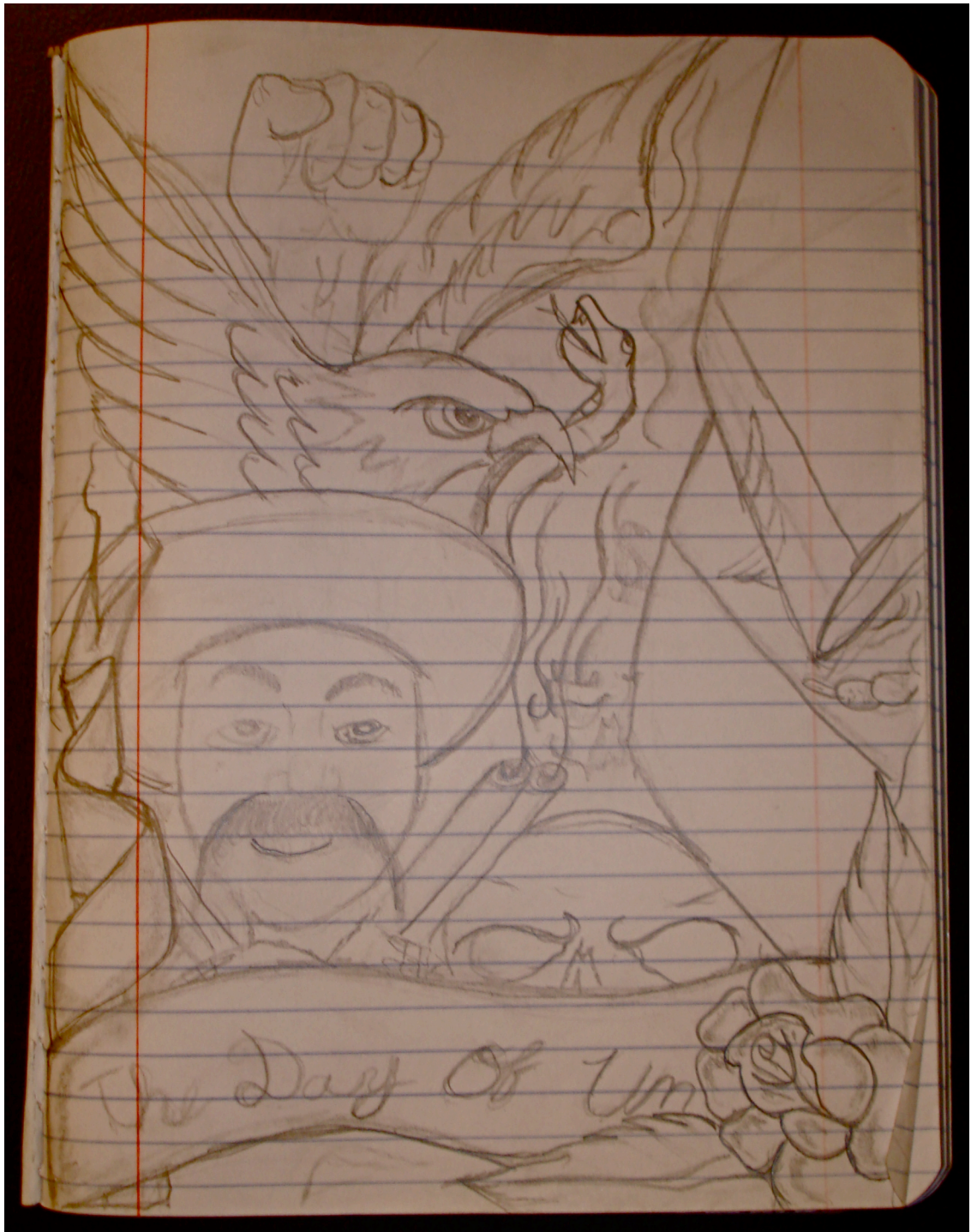
Lorenzo: Just to show that there is unity and, like I said, I'm waiting for that day to come.

R: A Day of Unity.

Lorenzo: That's what I want. That's what I want my thing to be called, "A Day of Unity." Just like, everybody, all races, people

together, nobody bothers nobody. You can go to the beach sit down without getting shot at. Just, uh, unity like that, together.

Figure 4. The Day of Unity by Lorenzo



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APPENDICES



Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called:

“Oye Mi Voz!” (Hear My Voice!): Literacy Experiences of Hispanic Boys

The person who is in charge of this research study is *Rubylinda Zickafoose*. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge.

The research will be done at *Palmetto High School, Palmetto, Florida*.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study

By doing this study, we hope to examine and analyze the perceptions of Hispanic boys’ *public and private literacy experiences* (Falkner, 2005). While a number of researchers have conducted inquiries around Hispanic boys, they typically are skewed toward an area of research such as gender, class, or race. These mainly focus on negative aspects of Hispanic boys in middle and high school populations, which result in a misrepresentation of this population. This study will expand on researchers’ current research strands by investigating the marginalized voices of Hispanic boys within our educational system.

The research findings may suggest opportunities for learning afforded to those of us who see Hispanic boys as a marginalized population.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to

Your son’s involvement in this study will include participation in focus group discussions and individual interview, which will be video and audio taped. The research will take place during school hours and begin in March 2008 to conclude sometime in May 2008. The total time of involvement will be approximately twelve weeks. School administration and staff has already given their support for this project.

Appendix A (Continued)

Alternative

You have the alternative to choose for your son not to participate in this research study

Risks or Discomfort

There are no risks to those who take part in this study.

Confidentiality

We must keep your study records confidential.

- *All audio and video tapes will be kept confidential and stored for at least five (5) years under locked secure file cabinets. This information will only be used for this research dissertation.*

However, certain people may need to see study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at these records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your son's rights and your son's safety.) These include:
 - the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.
 - the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your son's name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want your son to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the investigator. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw your son at any time. There will be no penalty if you stop taking part in this study.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call *RubyLinda Zickafoose* at (941) 812.0488 .

If you have questions about your or your son's rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with

Appendix A (Continued)

someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

If you experience an adverse event or unanticipated problem call *RubyLinda Zickafoose* at (941)812.0488.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want your son to take part in this study. If you want your son to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am giving permission to take part in this research study. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Parent Signature of Person Taking Part in Study
Date

Printed Name of Parent of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures and processes will be used.

I also certify that he or she does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research. This person speaks the language that was used to explain this research.

This person reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her.

This person does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

Appendix A (Continued)

This person is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix B
Research Participant Information Sheet

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Schools attended in Manatee School District (Grades K-9):

FCAT Information:

9 th grade score _____	Level 1	Level 2
10 th grade score _____	Level 1	Level 2
11 th grade score _____	Level 1	Level 2
12 th grade score _____	Level 1	Level 2

Current Reading Courses:

Would you rather be considered Hispanic or Latino? Please explain why?

Family Background (Where from?, Number of siblings?, Who lives with you?):

- Bilingual (Spanish) Y or N

Research Participant Information Sheet

Parents schooling information (What do they do now – employment?):

Names/ages of siblings attending Manatee school district:

Do you read/write outside of school...how often?

Do you read and write in Spanish? (How often and for what reasons?)

What life issues impact your education (family responsibilities, after-school issues, work, church activities, etc.)?

Research Participant Information Sheet

What books or magazines do you read?

Do you have a computer at home?

What are your favorite tech toys (phone...texting, podcasts, web-sites, wikis, etc.)?

What makes you unique from other Hispanic boys?

Other Information:

Focus Group Protocol

My Final Word

Purpose: To provide each person an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspectives enhanced by hearing from others.

Time: For circles of 5-10 participants: A total of 40-60 minutes if the time is followed religiously.

8 minutes per presenter

Presenter: 3 minutes

Response: 1 minute/responder: 4 minutes

Presenter: Final word: 1 minute

Steps:

1. Each participant will be given a chance to identify one of the selected ideas from topics previously prioritized that impact Hispanic boys. Have chart of brainstormed ideas from previous session posted.
2. The first person begins by reading an idea and then describes in detail what about this idea has had the most educational impact or lack of.
3. Each person responds to this ideas and comments. The purpose of the response is to expand on the presenter's thinking about the issues, to provide a different look at the issue, to clarify thinking about the issues, and to question the presenter's assumptions about the issue.
4. After going around the circle with each person responding, the first person has the "final word." In no more that one minute the presenter responds to what has been said: What is he thinking after other thinking has been shared? What is his reaction to what was said?
5. This process continues until everyone has had the opportunity to have their "final word."
6. Debrief the process

Guidelines:

- Conversation needs to be shared among group members.
- People are encouraged to challenge ideas, yet challenges are made with respect, and ideas, not people, are challenged.
- The success of the discussion is the responsibility of the entire group, not just the facilitator.
- The facilitator's task is to listen for patterns or repeated quotes in order to decide which themes should be clumped together for Phase II individual interviews.

Adapted from Colorado Critical Friends Group "The Final Word" protocol

Appendix D
Personal Interview Questions

Purpose: To provide each person an opportunity to share insights, understandings, and perspectives on themes that impact Hispanic boys literacy experiences.

Questions to be pursued:

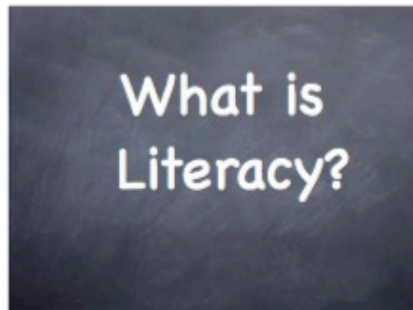
1. What is one word you would use to describe school?
2. Do you have favorite subjects?
3. What is your purpose in coming school?
4. What is the most difficult thing about reading? Writing?
5. What makes you feel successful about reading? Writing?
6. Name a person who is smart?
 - a. What makes _____ feel smart?
7. Define success in school?
8. Do you plan to graduate?
 - a. What would help you stay in school?
9. How does your mother help you with school?
 - a. Father?
 - b. Other brothers and sisters?
10. What do you notice about Hispanic boys?
 - a. How about those around you?
11. What do you think machismo is?
 - a. How does it impact your life?
12. Describe a man who embraces his machismo, “Que es hacer macho?”
13. What do you wish your teachers would ask you?
14. What do you wish your teachers would do differently?
15. How have schools you’ve been in helped you get to this point?
16. How do you express your culture at school?
17. How do you feel about the color of your skin?
18. Are you proud of being Hispanic?
 - a. What makes you most proud of being Hispanic

Appendix E
Individual Interview Framework

Structure	Content
Review & Sharing	<p>Participants - Review recent entries in the culture journal. (If partnerships exist - Turn and Talk with your shoulder partner to review new entries in journals.)</p> <p>Researcher – Collect field notes of nuances, impressions, and noticings.</p> <p>Debrief - Share out perceptions and questions that may arise from review and sharing.</p>
New Theme Introduction	<p>Researcher - Introduce current theme and discuss conversations or pertinent information from focus groups. Bring in transcripts and/or video clips that may pertain to new theme.</p>
Open Discussion	<p>Participants - Open discussion of new theme presented</p> <p>Researcher - Probe to glean information about participant’s thinking. See personal interview questions (Appendix D)</p>
Culture Journal	<p>All - Provide time for participants to write in culture journals</p>
Open Discussion	<p>All - Open discussion to share or refine thinking around written text or ideas that have come about in response to personal interview questions</p>
Closing	<p>Researcher – Conclude session by recapping discussion and reminding participants to continue conversation in culture journals.</p> <p>Confirm next session</p>

Appendix F

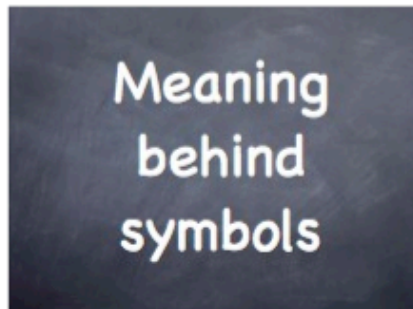
Definition of Literacy Presentation



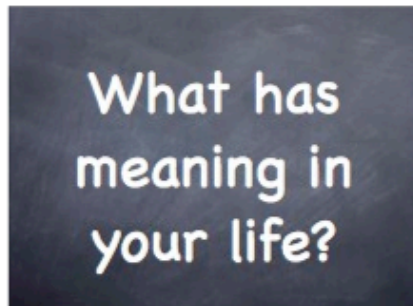
Before we begin the study, we have define Literacy.
What is Literacy?
So, how do we define literacy...(allow participants to respond
Let's first look at school literacy.



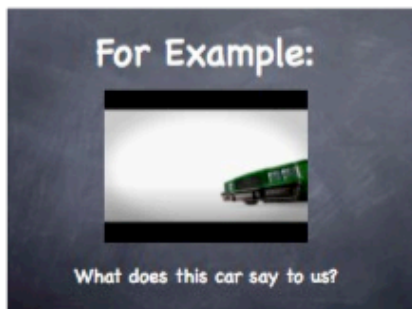
When we look at school literacy, we typically see a ourselves interacting with some kind of text. We make meaning from what we read or write. This is how we see literacy. Making meaning from both Reading and Writing. But, there are other forms of making meaning. The way we dress is a form of literacy. Think of this...show backward nod with both hands up gesture
What does it mean?...what's up, que pasa, orale' batto, threat (if an enemy) etc.



There are many things that we give them meaning to
Show clip from DaVinci Code - Symbols have meaning
Things in Hispanic boys lives that carry more meaning...



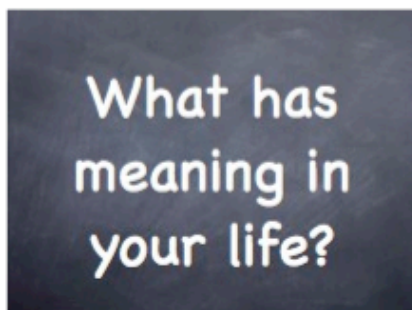
Appendix F (Continued)
Definition of Literacy Presentation



What does the imagine stand for?
Show low rider clip...What meaning do this have?
What do people think about me if I am driving this car?
Why is this important to him?
What meaning does this have for a Hispanic boy?



What meaning does a Hispanic boy make from the car?



Take a moment to think....
What has meaning in your life?



Brainstorm list...
Sand back prioritize list.

Appendix G

Riverside High School

Class Rotation Schedule
Current School Year

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Period One	7:45-8:44	59 minutes class
Period Two/Three	8:50-10:24	94 minutes class
Period Four/Five	Lunch A 10:30 – 11:00	A Class 11:06 – 12:40 (94 minutes)
	Lunch B 11:15 – 11:45	B Class 10:30 – 11:15 (45 minutes) B Class 11:51 – 12:40 (49 minutes)
	Lunch C 12:10 – 12:40	C Class 10:30 – 12:04 (94 minute class)
Period Six/Seven	12:46 – 2:20	94 minute class
Wednesday		
Period Two/Three	7:45 – 9:04	79 minute class
Period Four/Five	A Brunch 9:10 – 9:40	A Class 9:46 – 11:05 (79 minutes class)
	B Brunch 9:46 – 10:16	B Class 9:10 – 9:46 (36 minutes class) B Class 10:22 – 11:05 (79 minutes)
	C Brunch 10:35 – 11:05	C Class 9:10 – 10:29 (79 minutes)
Period Six/Seven	11:11 – 12:30	79 minute class

Appendix H
Themes and Concepts

This list was brainstormed during the first focus group session. These are listed in order as they were presented by research participants. Bold are those found most prevalent to this group of Hispanic boys.

Focus A	Focus B	Focus C
Bilingual teachers (learn English)	Family	School
Spanish Language	School	Family
Family	Job	Hobbies
Money	Race	Jobs
School (doing well)	Girls	Friends
Graduation	Money	Dress
Church	Religion (Church)	Teachers
Jobs	Respect	Mentors
Girls	Loyalty	Food
Trucks and Cars	Cars (and Trucks)	Faith Religion
Respect	Culture	Exercise - Working out
Racism	Education	Manners
Minority	Racism – Being judged	Culture - Racism
Culture	Sterotyped	Cars
Immigration (Green Card)	Friends	Where you live- part of town (poor or affluent)
Citizenship	Belonging	How we treat others around us?
Friends	Attention	Future – Thinking ahead
Sports	Part of something - known	Pets - Animals
	Belief in self – belief in you	Girls
	Lifestlye	Environment - Earth
		Successful
		Death
		Past - How my parents got here (How much they struggled to be where we are right now?)
		Food

Appendix I
Focus Group – Literacy

*Responses to Traditional Literacy

	How can school literacy be changed to better fit the needs of Hispanic boys?	What is the most difficult thing about...	What is the most successful thing about...
Focus Group A	<p>Language (Bilingual Teachers)</p> <p>Tutoring – personal tutors</p> <p>Support motivation – cheerleader to keep me going, help with goal setting, celebrating accomplishments</p> <p>See me as Learner – Visual, hands-on, help with reading/writing – practice</p> <p>Explanation/breakdown/give examples</p> <p>Discipline – provide due dates (late)</p> <p>Flexible with timelines</p>	<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boring – stare at a book – no pictures Distracted – can't focus Head hurts Sleepy Comprehending – words, sentence Motivation – trying to get self to read (time, lack of interest) <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not getting ideas Topic choice – no idea what teachers are asking Grammar – run on sentences Where to put my commas Time limits (more time than class period) 	<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ace a test Comprehending based on a book Learning new words (Expand – talk – new meaning) Learning more while reading Interesting book (personal) <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what you write about – topic Print instead of cursive Long paragraph – pride Get idea – flow DONE!!!! In Spanish
Focus Group B	<p>Mentors – help with career, choice, reading, writing, main areas of study</p> <p>Supplies – books, paper, pencils – as needed</p> <p>T who share</p> <p>Bilingual T</p> <p>T that will understand you – as a Hispanic</p> <p>How we live! – Culture</p> <p>Where we come from...place</p> <p>personality, take on things, learning styles</p>	<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pronunciation Meaning of words Focused on topic Understanding as a whole English/Spanish Visualizing it Translating in your mind <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling Grammar Making it sound better – flow- comes together (run on sentences) Punctuation Idea selection Describe something – see I in head Can't find the words 	<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding what you are reading focused understand what you read big words temp/flow <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> putting sentences together – punctuation grammar finish putting ideas – shore long use metaphors, similes, personifications

*Ideas are listed as they were captured on chart paper during focus group sessions.

Focus Group – Literacy
*Responses to Traditional Literacy

	How can school literacy be changed to better fit the needs of Hispanic boys?	What is the most difficult thing about...	What is the most successful thing about...	
Focus Group C	Translator – understand Support with assignments Help when you need it More girls in classroom – smart – impress girls After school programs – tutoring Chill out spot – place to hang out Flexible timeframes Hispanic T – speak real Spanish Motivator Technology Connections - scholarships	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading hard words – spelled, pronounce it • Speak English • Understanding – end of page – confusion • distracted 	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding • finish, complete • meaning, of words • Spanish text • Interesting topics • Reading-Ganas 	Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish • Spelled correctly • Short passage • Grade – feedback • Interest • timeframes
		Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling • topic choice • too long – full page • frustrating - stick to topic • writing in English • Leads to copy 		

*Ideas are listed as they were captured on chart paper during focus group sessions.

Appendix J
 Recommendations for the Educating of Hispanic Boys

Implications for Educators	Teacher Understandings/Expectations	Classroom Practice
<p>Educators must find ways to further interrogate the multiple identities and perspectives brought into the classrooms by Hispanic boys, which will create room for them to envision and reinvent possibilities for themselves.</p>	<p>Teacher's must understand how Hispanic boys: ~ value family – <i>familism</i>. (Valdes, 2001). ~ value culture & language (Trueba, 1999). ~ strongly link language and identity (Gee, 2005). ~ exhibit moral literacy and how it pertains to their <i>public and private literacies</i> (Faulkner, 2005). ~ live! - the culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build classroom community to elicit conversation that will bring about value for culturally diverse students and linguistically diverse students. • Provide opportunities to express their thoughts, ideas, and perceptions around topics, themes, or concepts they value outside of school. • Model and teach Hispanic boys to reflect and question their and others' beliefs while adhering to the respect and dignity of all.
<p>Educators must expand current definitions of literacies to encompass both public and private literacies (Faulkner, 2005).</p>	<p>Teachers must understand: ~ <i>public and private literacies</i> (Faulkner, 2005). ~ how multiple identities are exhibited within classrooms (Dyson, 1997). ~ their impact on identity construction and reconstruction (Gee, 2005).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for Hispanic boys to share specifics around what each values outside of school in a risk-free environment where judgment will be suspended or withheld. • Provide an anonymous venue for private literacies to be shared (podcasts, blogs, poems, journal entries, etc.).
<p>Educators must incorporate the study of quality multicultural literature that illustrates varied identities and cultures, which will expand the perceptions of Hispanic male identities.</p>	<p>Select multicultural literature that: ~ Represents all Culturally Diverse Students/Linguistically Diverse Students under the Hispanic umbrella (Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, etc.). ~ represents a continuum of Hispanic boy character traits (temperament, dominant attitude, personality, expressions of machismo); hobbies (art, music, sports, theatre, etc.); and careers (mechanics,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the use of multicultural literature by read alouds, grand discussion, questioning issues of power within text. • Use prompts for self-reflection to help student understand current identities (What does this text assume about your beliefs, values, or experiences?). • Allow time for possible self-interrogation and/or reconstructing identities (Ex. How will you read

Appendix J (Continued)
 Recommendations for the Educating of Hispanic Boys

<p>Educators must create possibilities for Hispanic boys to read and write in an authentic manner that speaks to their multiple worlds and identities.</p>	<p>architects, nurses, teachers, etc.) ~ address the true nature of personal, social, political issues around power within family, school, and community.</p> <p>Teachers must understand: ~ the four (4) major stages of Language Acquisition (Krashen, 1981). ~ the impact of culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum. ~ and seek to dismantle any personal soft biases. ~ Hispanic boys' ability to think in native language vs. level of English proficiently and/or reading ability.</p>	<p>or act differently because of this book?).</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement small group instruction in conjunction with any method of bilingual support (peer-to-peer, mentor, support staff, etc.) to clear up misconceptions and misinformation. • Develop assessment tools that value the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism (Santos, 2004). • Administer literacy inventories, which solicit ways in which Hispanic boys use reading and writing in their current lives. • Incorporate life journals that can be used to elicit important topics, themes, and concepts valued by each Hispanic boy. • Incorporate real world public literacies being utilized by each Hispanic boy (letters to relatives in Mexico, etc.). • Allow or recognize the use of a student's native language (both in speaking and use as transition to English language) while withholding judgment. • Support the development of discipline by providing due dates while scaffolding support. • Provide classroom support by offering classroom supplies (books, paper, pencils) while withholding judgment and reprimand.

Appendix J (Continued)
Recommendations for the Educating of Hispanic Boys

<p>Educators must create opportunities for students to learn how to navigate the American educational system.</p>	<p>Teachers must understand: ~ how to motivate and celebrate the differences among Hispanic populations. ~ options within own educational system to progress Hispanic boys without institutional knowledge (credits, vocational options, programs for acceleration, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an advocate for the success of Hispanic boys. • Provide information in native language and follow up with students to check for understanding whenever necessary. • Use of community resources to help educate parents and students of support. • Access to bilingual teachers and/or tutors. • Provide mentors to help with career counseling while offering choices for career development. • Equal access to technology. • Provide opportunities to network and connect with post high school resources (scholarships, technical institutes, etc.).
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About the Author

Rubylinda received a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood/Elementary Education and a M.S. in Reading both from University of South Florida. She started teaching at Palmetto Elementary School and continued as a primary educator while in her Master's program. As a Reading Coach and later a Curriculum Specialist, she ventured into the Ph.D. program at her alma mater.

While in the Ph.D. program Ms. Zickafoose was very active in her district with a teacher organization, Accomplished Teachers of Manatee County (ATOM), which provides profession development for district initiatives and community outreach. She has also coauthored two publications, *Steppin' into my Teacher Shoes* and *Steppin' up with my Reading Roadmap* both published by Beyond Z, Inc.