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Chalane E. Lechuga

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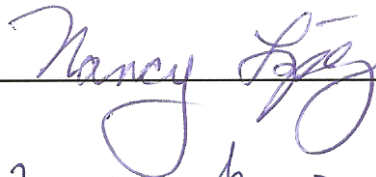
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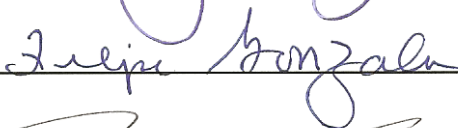
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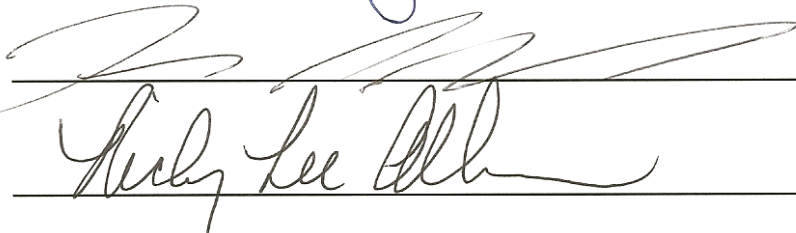
Sociology
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:


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***“THEY’LL EXPECT MORE BAD THINGS FROM US.”: LATINO/A YOUTH
CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES IN A RACIALIZED
HIGH SCHOOL IN NEW MEXICO***

BY

CHALANE ELIZABETH LECHUGA

B.A., Ethnic Studies and English, University of Colorado, Boulder, 1998
M.S., Sociology, University of Denver, 2002

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Sociology**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2010

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, without them none of this would not be possible. I would like to thank my mother and father, Bill and Carolina Lechuga, for their many sacrifices. They taught me to work hard, believe in myself, and never give up. Their love, guidance, and support have been invaluable. To my brother and sisters, Bill, Lorelei, and Stephanie, you have helped shape me and have provided more support than you can know. Thank you. I would also like to thank my family who have been a source of inspiration and have provided me with unconditional support and love: Marty and Mary Lou Lechuga, Kathy Lechuga, Abel and Linda Lechuga, Arlene and David Barcelona, Elaina Lechuga, Jeff Pena, Carlos Santisteven, Michael Casados, Maya Pena, Angelica Santisteven, Carlitos Santisteven , Marcos Santisteven, Mateo Lechuga, Ariano Lechuga, Dawn Gallardo Romero, Tiffany (Roger) Alvarez, Paola Santos, Siomara Santos, Tania Santos, the Santos Family, and Connie Valdez.

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It takes many sources of financial support to pull off a project like this. Thus I am grateful to the following organizations for their commitment to me, this work, the study of race and ethnicity, and the state of Latino/a education in New Mexico: University of New Mexico Graduate and Professional Student Association Student Research Allocation Grant, University of New Mexico Graduate and Professional Student Association Graduate Research and Development Grant, University of New Mexico Graduate Dean's Dissertation Scholarship, Mellon Doctoral Fellowship at the University of New Mexico, University of

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ABSTRACT

This research explores how Latino/a high school students in New Mexico constitute their racial identities in this particular historical moment, the post-Civil Rights colorblind era. I explore what their chosen nomenclatures and employed discourses suggest about the relationship between their racial identities and academic achievement. The research questions are: *How do Latino/a youth articulate their expressions of racial identity in the post-Civil Rights colorblind era? What discourses or nomenclatures do they employ? How are these discourses distinguished from one another? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What may their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement?*

This study reveals that Latino/as youth are negotiating their racial identities in the context of racialization and gendering processes at school. As part of that process, this study sheds light on the ways that phenotype influences the construction of race and the process of

assimilation. Specifically, for Latino/as, I found that phenotype played into their identity negotiation. Many of these youth employed discourses of “off-whiteness,” some embraced their ethnic heritage, many worked to deflect racial-stigma by distancing themselves from Mexicanness, while others “straddled” being “American, but still a little bit Mexican.” When examining the experiences of the multiracial Latino/as, I found that the multiracial white and Latino boys appeared to be assimilating into white society and that the multiracial Black and Latino/as youth were subjected to the one-drop rule as they were often racialized as Black.

I also found that understandings of race and gendered expectations worked together to create opportunity and barriers. That is, I found that the way in which schools mete out discipline is influenced by perceptions of *hegemonic masculinities and ideal femininities*. Most of the young Latino/as had been disciplined at school. The Latino boys were subjected to harsh forms of discipline and the Latina girls were disciplined when they engaged in behavior that was in contrast to *ideal femininities*.

These findings also suggest that there is no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement among these young Latinos.

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Chapter 1:

Mapping the Racial Identities of New Mexico Latino/a Youth

Introduction

Chalane: What race do you consider yourself to be?

Joaquin: American.

Chalane: Why is that?

Joaquin: I wish I could say I'm Mexican, but my skin is white. I'm born and raised [in New Mexico]. I can only speak English — I'm not Mexican. I think it'd be a privilege to be called Mexican, but I'm *white*.

Chalane: Is that because you were born and raised here?

Joaquin: I speak English, and I can't speak Spanish. I don't know about the Mexican culture, really. I want to become Mexican-American and say the Mexican part first.

Chalane: How would that happen?

Joaquin: I want to study the culture more, so I can truly understand it. Almost all my family, like my grandma, when I go to El Paso, she can only speak Spanish. My mom had five sisters and one brother, and everybody speaks Spanish in that household.

The above exchange occurred during an interview I, a medium/dark skinned Chicana, conducted with Joaquin, a ninth grader at Valdez High School in New Mexico. Joaquin, a (high achieving ninth grader) shared that despite the fact that his mother (second-generation) and father (third-generation) were Mexican American, he was “White.” For Joaquin, having “white” skin, being born and raised in New Mexico, not knowing Mexican culture, and not being able to speak Spanish meant that he was not “Mexican American,” but was “White.” He added that though others also saw him as “White or Italian,” he wanted to “become Mexican-American and say the Mexican part first” by studying Mexican culture and

speaking Spanish. Thus, his racial identity is tied to the unique sociohistorical and economic landscape of New Mexico, a majority minority state. Joaquin's perception of his racial identity is also tied to phenotype, particularly skin color. During the interview he made reference to his white skin several times, indicating that his identity was tied to notions of skin color. Joaquin's identity was also tied to notions of language and citizenship. Since he was born in the US, spoke English and his skin happened to be "white," Joaquin felt that he had no choice but to identify as white. It is also interesting that in Joaquin's mind Mexican and white are mutually exclusive categories; to be sure he asserts that he wishes he could be Mexican (like his parents) but his skin is white. To declare himself as anything other than white would mean that he was not American.

Joaquin's story provides a window through which we glimpse the processes by which Latino/a youth are constructing and articulating their racial identities in context of hegemonic ideologies about Latinos as "illegal aliens" and not American. Controlling images about what an American looks like are part and parcel of the ways in which youth frame their racial identities, particularly in schools. Among the paradoxes of the post-Civil Rights era is the hegemonic racial ideology of colorblindness where the salience of race and racialization processes in social life is minimized and it is framed as "illegitimate" (and even racist) to talk about race (Bonilla-Silva 2003, Lewis 2004, Hurd 2008). Moreover, the simultaneous ubiquitous images of Latinos and Mexican origin people in the United States as "illegal aliens" or perpetual foreigners who are never seen as American circulate. This research aims to extend the scholarship that looks at racial and ethnic identity formation among Mexican-origin Latino/as (Gonzales 1993, Dowling 2004, Pizarro 2005, Golash-Boza, 2006) and the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement (Akom 2003, Pizarro 2005,

Carter 2005). The research questions addressed by this study are: *How do Latino/a¹ youth articulate their expressions of racial identity in the post-Civil Rights colorblind era? What discourses or nomenclatures do they employ? How are these discourses distinguished from one another? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What may their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement?*

Why is this important? Examining the racial identities of youth in New Mexico is a fruitful endeavor given the historic incorporation of New Mexico in to the United States, New Mexico's majority-minority status (more than half of the population is minority of which Latino/as are the largest minority group), and the fact that New Mexico has historically experienced relatively low levels of immigration (compared to other Southwestern states). Examining how the racial identities of Latino/a youth in New Mexico is crucial to understanding their experiences (i.e. Are New Mexican Latino/a youth assimilating or retaining Latino/a identity).

Moreover, research shows that Latinas/os experience some of the lowest educational outcomes in the country (Pizzaro 1999, Lucero 2004). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported during the 2005-06 school year, the percentage of Hispanic public high school graduates was 61% compared to 76% for non-Hispanic Whites (Stillwell and

¹ I have chosen to use the term "Latino/a" to refer to the target population of this study, students who have at least one Mexican-origin parent(s) and who may cite historical claims to New Mexico or the New Mexico regional diaspora (Gonzales, 1993). Thus, Latino/a students with one Non-Latino/a parent are included in this analysis. When referring to a particular student, I use his or her preferred label. While one might be inclined to use the term Mexican or Mexican American, the work of Gonzales suggests that many New Mexicans do not identify with the term "Mexican," nor refer to themselves as such, but instead consider themselves "*Spanish*" or "*Spanish American*" (1993 and 1997). The literature on the schooling experiences of Mexican-origin students uses a variety of terms, including Chicano/a (Pizarro, 2005) and Mexican American (Valenzuela, 1999). In my field work, I found that the students often referred to themselves as "Hispanic," "Mexican," "White," "African American and Hispanic," etc. Thus, I use Latino/a as a neutral term (Gonzales, 1997).

Hoffman 2008)². The NCES also reported that Hispanics had a dropout rate of 5.9 compared to 4.5 non-Hispanic Whites (ibid)³. More recently, American's Promise Alliance (2009) reported that nationwide only 58% percent of Hispanics, 56%% of Blacks, and 51%% of Native Americans from the Class of 2005 graduated, while 78% of White students and 81% of Asian American students graduated.

In this chapter, I review the literature on Latino/a racial identity and schooling. First, I discuss the literature on the post-Civil Rights era and the dominant ideology of colorblindness that has emerged as a way to explain contemporary racial inequality as a consequence of non-racial dynamics. I discuss how the discourses of colorblindness (i.e. race no longer matters) circulate in the school setting and conceal the ways in which racialized school practices reproduce educational inequalities.

Second, I examine the literature on Latino/a identity and schooling. What might account for the low academic performance of Latino/as? Some have suggested that minority culture inhibits student achievement (Office of Policy Planning and Research 1965, Rubel 1966), while others assert that minority students' orientation towards school, influenced by their *cultural model*, leads to an oppositional identity that rejects school and devalues academic success (Ogbu 1991, Matute-Bianchi 1991). Other scholars posit that education

² The graduation rate "is an estimate of the percentage of an entering freshman class graduating in four years. For 2005-06, it equals the total number of diploma recipients in 2005-06 divide by the average membership of the 8th grade class in 2001-02, the 9th grade class in 2002-02, and the 10th grade class in 2003-04.

³ An event dropout number represents the proportion of students dropping out each year. According to the Common Core of Data definition, a dropout is an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year; was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year (accounted for on October 1 are considered); has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved education program; and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program; temporary absence due to suspension or school-approved illness; or death" (Stillwell and Hoffman 2008).

institutions “subtract” cultural resources from Mexican American students that lead them to reject the content and form of schooling (Valenzuela 1999, Meador 2005).

Still, others argue that racialized institutional practices collude in the creation of school failure citing racial hierarchies, silencing discussions of race, low expectations of minority students, the absence of the experiences of minority groups in the school curriculum, questioning the academic capacities of minority students, and the devaluing of the cultural capital they bring with them, as evidence (Datnow and Cooper 1998, Pizarro 1999, Hovart 2003, and Carter 2005).

Third, I discuss the ways in which minority students are reconstituting their racial identities in response to a racialized school context as a strategy for academic success. Scholars discuss the rearticulation of one’s racial identity in recognizing the role of race and racialization processes and argue that students can reconstruct their identities and look to their communities for strength and power in an effort to realize academic success (Pizarro 1999, Akom 2003, Carter 2005). Preliminary research indicates that minority students who develop identities that “combine positive beliefs about [their] ethnic group with skepticism toward the larger society...and vigilantly watch for instances of prejudice, but remain pragmatically engaged with larger society even as they criticize it” are likely to experience educational achievement (Glenn 2003). In other words, while some research suggests that minority students are subject to the constraints of culture and society that often limit their educational success, other research indicates that minority students are actively constructing identities that recognize these constraints and work against them in order to experience educational success.

Finally, I end with a discussion of the unique historical and social position of Latino/as in New Mexico and how they negotiate historic and contemporary ideologies in formulating their racial and ethnic identities.

Literature Review

This work is rooted in a number of theoretical frames as way to situate the experiences of Latino/a youth, namely colorblind ideology, segmented assimilation and oppositional identity, and racial formation theory.

Post-Civil Rights Colorblind Era. In his book, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) discusses a dominant ideology that has emerged since the Civil Rights era and professes that race no longer matters in United States, colorblindness. Colorblind ideology explains contemporary racial inequality as a consequence of nonracial dynamics. He argues, “Whites rationalize minorities’ contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomenon, and black’s imputed cultural limitations” (2). For example, color-blind racism “suggests that [minorities] are behind because they do not work hard enough” and that interracial marriage is “‘problematic’ because of concerns over the children, location, or the extra burden it places on couples” (3). In other words, colorblind ideology is a dominant paradigm that is used to mask racial inequality and shift the blame from racialized social and institutional practices to minority communities and individuals and serves to maintain white power and privilege, while obstructing efforts to address racial inequality.

Colorblind ideology manifests itself in micro-level discourses and process that whites (and some Blacks, Bonilla-Silva argues, and Latino/as, I would argue) use as a way to justify

racial inequality and avoid talking about racial dynamics. Bonilla-Silva outlines four pathways or frames that are used to justify racial inequality. The first frame, *abstract liberalism*, “involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g. “equal opportunity,” the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters” (28) .

Bonilla-Silva proposes a second frame that is used to discuss racial matters, *naturalization*. “The word ‘natural’ or the phrase ‘that’s the way it is’ is often interjected to normalize events or actions that could otherwise be interpreted as racially motivated (residential segregation) or racist (preference for whites as friends and partners)” (36-37). A third frame is *cultural racism* that “relies on culturally based arguments such as ‘Mexicans do not put much emphasis on education’ or ‘blacks have too many babies’ to explain the standing of minorities in society” (28).

Finally, Bonilla-Silva argues that individuals appeal to a frame of reference which minimizes the significance of race or “suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances (‘It’s better now than in the past’ or ‘There is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out there’)” (29). Bonilla-Silva argues that individuals often use these frames in combination and that abstract liberalism is the most important because it supports what he argues calls this new racial ideology. Moreover, he identifies speech mannerisms and “rhetorical strategies” as linguistic devices that buttress colorblind racism. Specifically, he talks about rhetorical incoherence or the way in which whites’ speech becomes stunted, stammered, and incomprehensible when talking about race.

The discourses of colorblindness (i.e. race no longer matters) have diffused into school settings and conceal the subtle ways in which racialized school practices grant access

and privilege to some, while creating barriers and challenges for others (Lewis 2003, Pizarro 2005, Staiger 2006, Barajas and Ronnkvist 2007, Hurd 2008). As Barajas and Ronnkvist (2007), in their analysis of the schooling experiences of Latino high school and college students at a large US research university, found, “schools appropriate an organizational perspective of being a racially neutral space...[that]...effectively conceals the taken-for-granted meaning of race” (1534). For example, they found discrepancies in the ways that seemingly neutral school policies were applied differently for Latino students. School authorities made English as a Second Language (ESL) placements based on racial markers, such as skin color and Hispanic surnames. They argue that the school attendance policy was based on white middle class cultural norms and did not always allow Latino students to attend family events and emergencies.

Moreover, in his analysis of school practices in a suburban California high school, Hurd found that schools work to discourage “direct and critical engagement with the particular institutional and everyday practices that reproduce tension [and inequality] within the school [and] fail to acknowledge that race and ethnicity matter to students as much as [teachers and administrators] wish that it did not” (2008, 310). Thus schools are sites where dominant ideologies about race and racial difference circulate and play a role in education outcomes.

Oppositional identity⁴ and academic achievement. *Opposition rooted in culture.*
In trying to explain the low academic achievement of minority students, scholars argue that many have adopted an oppositional culture and developed oppositional identities that manifest themselves in poor educational performance (Portes and Zhou 1993, Ogbu 1991.).

⁴ When discussing the relevant literature, I use the ethnic nomenclatures employed by their authors.

Specifically, Ogbu (1991) argues that what differentiates successful minorities from those that are less successful is their type of cultural model. *Voluntary minorities* have voluntarily come to their present society seeking greater opportunities. Thus, they compare the conditions in their present society with those back home and find that they are better. They see their language and culture as barriers to overcome in order to achieve social mobility. They, too, experience racism and discrimination but are grounded in an ethnic identity that maintains and preserves their language, culture, and customs, and, therefore, actively “play by the rules” of the school system. As a result, they are academically successful.

Involuntary minorities, however, have been incorporated into the present society through “slavery, conquest, or colonization” (Ogbu 1991, 9). Thus, they do not have a “home” to compare their experiences to and instead compare themselves to the dominant society determining that their situation is worse solely as a result of their ethnicity. They see their language and culture as boundary markers to be maintained. Unable to rectify their experiences of discrimination and prejudice, minority students develop oppositional identities that reject school and achievement making it likely that they will experience negative educational outcomes. Minority students see a limited future and goals that are not within their reach because their frame of reference (US school systems) subtly reinforces their “exclusion and subordination” (Matute-Bianchi 1991, 240).

Expanding on the work of Ogbu, Matute-Bianchi found that 3rd and 4th generation Mexican American, Chicano, and Cholo students perceived “their economic position in the United States as a subordinated, stigmatized minority” (1991, 208) with limited opportunities for economic mobility and job prospects that do not require education. This perception was generated from a frame of reference that compared their experiences to those of dominant

(White) society. Consequently, Mexican Americans found that educational effort equal to that of Whites did not result in the same success. In response, Mexican Americans developed “an identity system in opposition to [the] American mainstream [that served] as a strategic tool of resistance to the systematic exploitation, both instrumental and expressive that people of Mexican descent have experienced in the United States” (1991, 209). Inherent in this opposition were a rejection of school and a devaluation of academic success.

However, not all Mexican Americans experienced underachievement in school. Matute-Bianchi (1991) also found that 1.5 and 2nd generation Mexican immigrants who asserted a strong “Mexican” identity when confronted with the same subordination and stigmatization developed accommodating identities. A strong “Mexican” identity implied maintenance of Mexican customs, traditions, and the Spanish language. Mexican immigrants may have also maintained physical ties to Mexico through relatives that continued to live there. The identities of Mexican immigrants were informed by a frame of reference that compared their experiences in Mexico to their perceived opportunities in the United States. Mexican immigrants found that their economic conditions and potential success were enhanced in the US. They, therefore, developed identities that included self-confidence about one’s future, a desire to try hard, and a perceived ability to direct that future. In other words, Mexican immigrants developed accommodating identities that facilitated positive assimilation and, thus, allowed them to experience positive educational outcomes.

Opposition as a response to “subtractive” schooling. Alternately, Valenzuela’s (1999) analysis of the schooling experiences of immigrant and US-born Mexican American Youth at Juan Seguin High School (pre-dominantly Mexican American) in Houston, Texas, challenges Ogbu’s assumption that oppositional culture emanates from the cultural models of

minority communities, but that “oppositionality...originates in , and [is] nurtured by , schools themselves” (17), which “strip away [Mexican American] students’ identities, thus weakening or precluding supportive social ties and draining resources important to academic success” (10). Utilizing three theoretical frameworks including subtractive assimilation, culture of caring, and social capital, Valenzuela terms this process “subtractive schooling.”

Valenzuela argues that Mexican American students are forced to assimilate to the dominant ideologies present in education institutions and that devalue “the Spanish language, Mexico, Mexican culture, and things Mexican” (26). Additionally, teachers and their Mexican American students tend to place a different emphasis on what it means to care about school that can create conflict. Valenzuela argues that “Schools are structured around an *aesthetic* caring whose essence lies in an attention to things and ideas” (1999, 22). For example, teachers tend to emphasize individual learning and achievement, regimented schedules, and impersonal relationships. Mexican American students tend to value *authentic* caring which “centers students’ learning around a moral ethic of caring that nurtures and values relationships” and is based in their cultural traditions (22). Valenzuela adds, “When teachers withhold [these] social ties from Mexican American youth, they confirm this group’s belief that schooling is impersonal, irrelevant, and lifeless” (22).

Adding to these challenges is that fact that Mexican American students often lack access to social networks and relationships with resources that could support their success. Valenzuela adds that “school and socioeconomic success are predicated on constructive ties characterized by reciprocal relationships” (1999, 27). Because Mexican American students have internalized the negative perceptions of “anything Mexican,” they strategically distance themselves from these things including recent Mexican immigrant students who have

academic resources that could be tapped. For example, research has shown that academically successful Mexican immigrant students have a pro-school ethos that buffers them from the structural barriers inherent in the school system. Academically successful Mexican immigrant students are able to transform this into social capital. However, Mexican American students are unable to “cash in” because they exclude Mexican immigrants from their social circles. Therefore, Valenzuela concludes that Mexican Americans “do not oppose education, nor are they uniformly hostile to the equation of education with upward mobility. What they reject is *schooling*—the content of their education and the way it is offered to them” (19).

Opposition as a response to racist racialization and racist school practices. Pizarro examined the identities of Chicano/a students at a major university, a community college, and a high school (pre-dominantly “Hispanic”) in Los Angeles, California and found that they were informed by their race/ethnicity⁵, gender, class, school, religion/spirituality, sexuality, and community, with race being the most salient (1999). He argues that this is due to their experiences with and observations of racism and discrimination, which are predicated on the basis of how they are racialized, or how race and its attendant meanings are assigned to them, not their ethnicity or cultural practices. Pizarro found that Chicana/o “students are forced to deal with their placement at the low end of the school hierarchy as a function of their race, and have few opportunities to understand the multitude of forces at work in this

⁵ Omi and Winant (1994) argue that race is “a mere illusion, a purely ideological construct...that is an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political structure...Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (54-55). Ethnicity is defined as the cultural traditions, beliefs, values, and practices of a given group.

process” (200). Thus, students “respond by lashing out [often resulting] in their own failure and denied access to opportunities for advancement” (200).

Similarly, Datnow and Cooper (1998) take on the idea of oppositional culture manifested in the phenomenon of “acting white,” or doing well in school implies that one is foregoing their cultural heritage and ascribing to whiteness. Thus, in opposition to “acting white”, black students reject schooling and ostracize their peers who are academically successful. Datnow and Cooper found in their analysis of the schooling experiences of African American high school students in predominately White elite independent schools in the Baltimore, Maryland area, that “black peer groups allowed for the development of an identity that was not oppositional and that promoted academic success” (69), thus it became “cool” to be academically successful. This was dependent on the strong bonds they had with one another where they could “reaffirm their racial identities and seek refuge from what could otherwise be difficult for them to fit in” (69). Student organizations which focused on Black culture and experiences provided a space for them where they could advocate for their own interests (i.e. increasing the number of books by black authors in the library, making the school aware of the accomplishments of African Americans) and dialogue about race. Still, these academically successful students had to contend with their African American peers outside the school.

Horvat and Lewis (2003), too, critique the idea of “acting white” in their analysis of two public urban high schools (one pre-dominantly Black and the other racially mixed) in California. Their work revealed that academically successful Black students developed strategies for “managing their academic success” that included code switching, “camouflaging” with unsupportive peers, sharing academic success with supportive peers,

and developing strong racial identities as young black women. They did so by maintaining strong friendships with black peers, talking about attending historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and maintaining ties to the black community. Thus, they were able to resist the label of acting white (sometimes placed on them by their black peers) by actively engaging in “acts of resistance to the dominant white culture’s placement of most black students outside the realm of academic excellence...[and resisting] both the dominant white culture’s conception of them and other black students’ expectations for their behavior” (267).

While Datnow and Cooper (1998) and Horvat and Lewis’ (2003) work identifies instances where black peer groups are formulating strategies for deflecting and managing peer accusations of “acting white,” they fail to address the impetus for the notion “acting white” and how institutional practices play a role in the development of “acting white” responses. Carter (2005) extends this work by further complicating the idea that “acting white” emanates from black peer groups. In her analysis of the schooling experiences of young Black and Latino students in Yonkers, New York, she did not find that “these students equated studying hard and excelling in school with whiteness,”...but that “minority youth often face social pressures to embrace cultural practices or “acts” associated with their racial and ethnic identities” (5). That is, minority youth resist “acting white” as a strategy for maintaining their racial and ethnic identities, not rejecting or devaluing achievement. Moreover, what some do reject is the ways in which school questions their academic capacities and devalues the cultural capital that many of these minority youth bring with them.

Reconstituting racial identity as a strategy for academic success. Pizarro (2005) offers an example of the active rearticulation of one’s racial identity through recognition of

the role of race and racialization processes as a potential strategy for academic success. His work draws on Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory, which suggests that one's racial identity is externally ascribed through a process termed *racialization* (1994). Racialization is the assignment of racial meanings to individuals. Racial meanings are constructed through a negotiation of *racial projects* at both the macro and micro levels. Racial projects (which can occur at the micro and macro levels) are "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular lines" (56). Micro-level racial projects exist at the intersection of our everyday experiences, identity, or "the many ways in which, often unconsciously, we 'notice' race" (59). Through a series of racial projects that are continuously constructed, inhabited, and destroyed emerges a racial categorization that is temporary and fluid (1994). Lewis (2003) argues that "racial categories are not merely sociological abstractions but are potent social categories around which people organize their identities and behavior and that influence people's opportunities and outcomes" (6).

Racial identity is also internally informed through cognition and personal or lived experiences of racialization. Building on Omi and Winant, Lewis' (2003) work suggests that racial identification incorporates language, culture, skin color, names (surnames, nicknames), and socioeconomic status. She does not explicitly mention gender, but this is also a critical piece. As Omi and Winant (1994) argue, "race is gendered and gender is racialized" (68). Similarly, Lopez argues that race and gender are intertwined and cannot be separated (2003). Thus the convergence of these external and internal dynamics works to formulate a racial identity that is not static, but constantly changing in response to macro and micro-level processes and within varying contexts.

In interviews with Chicana/o college students, Pizarro found that many of them “saw themselves as Chicanas/os with strong ties to their culture and community and with a clear understanding of the subjugated role of Chicana/os in the larger society” (1999, 200). However, that perspective alone was not enough to overcome the institutional forces that often relegate Chicana/o students to the bottom of the “school hierarchy.” It was when one student combined this perspective with a focus “on acquiring knowledge that is applicable to his interests” (207) and personal experiences that he was able to engage education. This allowed this student to create a space for himself in the educational institution and becoming academically successful.

Similarly, Akom’s (2003) work with seven young African American women in an urban high school in a predominately black neighborhood in West Philadelphia found that they were able to develop identities that were rooted in a black achievement ideology based on the religious teachings of the Nation of Islam (NOI). This resulted in their adaptation of a “studious orientation” that facilitated their school success. These young women were able to apply the goals of the NOI (self-determination, reconstitute the black nation by embracing blackness as an ideal, and achieving collective economic independence through individual achievement) to “resist the cultural and linguistic patterns of the majority culture, yet embrace educational achievement... Their response to schooling was transformative because the agency the students displayed came from a unique form of religious socialization that produces a social consciousness whereby students are encouraged to politicize their cultural resistance and develop counter ideologies, while they assess the costs and benefits of not playing the [education] game” (318). Akom’s work concludes that the NOI young women were able to engage in “structural assimilation (promoting traditional values, such as hard

work), separation (affirming their own racial and cultural identities), and resistance (challenging key tenets of the achievement ideology by not conforming or assimilating to school rules or social etiquette) and, at the same time, understood the importance of academic achievement” (319-320) as a strategy for success (See Gibson 1988 for a discussion on the concept of accommodation without assimilation).

Likewise, Pizarro concludes that students, who are equipped with an understanding of racial formation processes and how they are subject to them, can reconstruct their identities and look to their communities for strength and power in an effort to realize academic success. Thus, while some research suggests that Latino/as are subject to the constraints of culture and society that often limit their educational success (Office of Policy Planning and Research 1965, Rubel 1966), other research indicates that minority students are actively constructing their racial identities in response to recognized social and institutional constraints to work against them in order to experience educational success (Akom 2003, Pizarro 2005, Carter 2005).

Carter (2005), too, argues that students as “cultural straddlers” are able to “embrace the cultural codes of both school and home community... [and] vocally criticize the schools’ ideology while still achieving well academically” (30). Carter says that the “cultural straddlers” are similar to Gibson’s (1988) academically successful Punjabi Indian students who practice “accommodation without assimilation,” but that the “cultural straddlers” are well aware of their racial and social position.

Latino/as in New Mexico. New Mexico offers a unique historical and social context to examine the ways in which Latino/a youth are formulating their racial identities, the nomenclatures and discourses they use to define their identities, and the dominant ideological

discourses of race. New Mexico is a majority-minority state where in 2009 Hispanics comprised 45% of the population, American Indians 10%, Blacks 3%, and Whites 42% (US Census Bureau 2010). Moreover, New Mexico also has the nation's only Latino/a governor and a large number of Latino/as have historically held and continue to hold positions in elected-government and legal arenas⁶.

Moreover, New Mexico has historically contended with disparate racial narratives, first as part of the Spanish conquest in the eighteenth century and then during the incorporation of New Mexico into the United States, which brought an increase of Euro-Americans during the nineteenth century (Gomez, 2007). During this latter period, Gomez argues that there were two competing racial ideologies. One, the “dominant view,” characterized Mexican Americans as “unfit for self-government because they were of inferior racial stock (compared to Euro-Americans)” and the other, the “progressive view,” argued that “Mexican Americans were considered a more benign presence, largely because its proponents emphasized Mexican Americans ‘glorious Spanish past’ as conquerors of Indians” (62). She argues that both perspectives were essentially racist and “assumed white racial superiority and Mexican racial inferiority” (62).

How might individuals in New Mexico negotiate these historic and contemporary ideologies in formulating to their racial and ethnic identities? Gonzales indicates that during the 1920's the “Spanish surnamed” individuals in New Mexico began using the ethnic referent *Spanish American* to refer to themselves in an effort “to establish birthrights to a

⁶ See Gomez (2007) for a historical discussion of the tenuous nature of these positions during the struggle for statehood in New Mexico during the nineteenth century.

New Mexico homeland” in response to Anglo encroachment, impending statehood, and as a “protest against the possibility that New Mexicans could be disenfranchised or excluded from the expanding institutions” (1997, 125). Nieto-Phillips, too, argues that Spanish American identity was a response to Nuevo Mexicanos increasing social, economic, and political marginalization (2004). The *Spanish American* identity remained salient even during the 1970’s when the *Chicano* nomenclature became a “nationalistic identity for people of Mexican descent” (Gonzales 1993, 172) and connoted a consciously assumed identity that implied a political awareness, resistance to complete assimilation into American culture, and a commitment to reclaiming the lost mestizo, mixed, heritage (Martinez 2000).

Spanish American identity continued to persist even in the face of the “Decade of the Hispanic,” in the 1980’s, when “Hispanic” became a popular referent. Though accounts of its creation and promotion differ, the general consensus was that it allowed for the categorization of a growing population and served as a mechanism for political participation (Gonzales 1993; Gomez 1992). Gonzales argues, “The label ‘*Spanish*’ continues to be expressed as private, casual, and nonpoliticized term of reference among ordinary Spanish-surnamed citizens” (1993). However, some individuals who employ the term “*Spanish American*” do so as a way to distinguish themselves from Mexican immigrants and other groups, but may not be able to articulate an ideological construct in support of the chosen label (Gonzales 1997).

Mapping the racial identities of New Mexico Latino/a youth. This research explores how Latino/a high school students in New Mexico constitute their racial identities in this particular historical moment, the post-Civil Rights colorblind era. Do they continue to identify as “Spanish” or “Spanish American,” as Gonzales’ work might suggest (1997) or do

they adapt the terms “Chicana/o,” “Hispanic,” or “Latino/a.” I also explore what their chosen nomenclatures and employed discourses might suggest about the relationship between their racial identities and academic achievement. Thus, the central research questions are: *How do Latino/a youth articulate their expressions of racial identity in the post-Civil Rights colorblind era? What discourses or nomenclatures do they employ? How are these discourses distinguished from one another? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What may their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement?*

Research on racial identity and academic achievement has primarily focused on Mexican and Mexican American youth in Texas (Valenzuela 1999) and California (Matute-Bianchi 1991, Vigil 1997, Pizarro 1999) with little attention paid to what is happening in New Mexico. Some argue that Latino/a students in New Mexico may be unlike the subjects in the work of Matute-Bianchi (1991) and Valenzuela (1999) whose students were 3rd and 4th generation Mexican American. Others suggest that New Mexican Latino/as have a distinct historical and social position given the predominance of Spanish American identity in New Mexico and nativist claims to the New Mexico territory prior to its annexation to the US in 1848 such that New Mexican Latino/a students may not share have the immigrant experience. Thus, it is important to treat them as distinct analytical category.

This study reveals that these young Latino/as are negotiating their racial identities in the context of racialization and gendering processes at school and that schools are sites where our understandings of race and gender are continuously contested and negotiated (Omi and Winant, 1994). As part of that process, this study sheds light on the ways in which

phenotype influences the construction of race and the process of assimilation. Specifically, for Latino/as, I found that phenotype played into their identity negotiation as they worked to traverse racial boundaries. Many of the young Latino/as employed discourses of off-whiteness, some embraced their ethnic heritage, others worked to deflect racial-stigma by distancing themselves from Mexicanness, while other “straddled” being “American, but still a little bit Mexican.” When examining the experiences of the multiracial Latino/as, I found that the multiracial white and Latino young men appeared to be assimilating into white society, as they easily passed as white (they reported that they were racialized as white) and in the case of one young man, only identified as white. I also found that the multiracial Black and Latino/as youth were subjected to the one-drop rule (Davis, 2006), in that they were often racialized as Black, which was a critical part of their identity.

I also found that understandings of race and gendered expectations worked together to create opportunity for some and barriers for others. That is, I found that the ways in which schools mete out discipline is influenced by “hegemonic masculinities and ideal femininities” (Lee 2005, Hill Collins, 1990, Pyke and Johnson 2003). Overall, most of the young Latino/as had been disciplined at school. The young Latinos were subjected to harsher forms of discipline when engaging in disruptive behaviors similar to their female peers. However, when the young Latinas engaged in behavior that was in contrast to “ideal femininities,” they were subjected to discipline, as well. Together these findings also suggest that there is no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement among these young Latinos.

Chapter 2:

Researching Identity: Research Design and Methods

Introduction

This study examines the way in which Latino/a youth articulate their expressions of racial identity in the post-Civil Rights era and what it may suggest about the relationship between identity and academic achievement. To explore these questions, I employ qualitative data based on field observations, administration of student surveys, and life history interviews with students. The target population for this study is Latino/a high school students in New Mexico. This includes students who have at least one Mexican-origin parent(s) and who may cite historical claims to New Mexico or the New Mexico regional Diaspora (Gonzales, 1993). Thus, Latino/a students with one Non-Latino/a parent are included in this analysis. When referring to a particular youth, I use the racial and/or ethnic terms they used to identify themselves.

Conceptualizing racial and ethnic identity. Racial identity is defined as a malleable construction that involves both external and internal processes. Racial identity is externally ascribed through racialization or the assignment of racial meanings to people according to phenotype. One way to understand the racialization process is through Omi & Winant's (1994) concept of a racial project⁷ where names and attendant meanings are continuously constructed, inhabited, and destroyed (Omi and Winant 1994). Racial identification incorporates language, culture, skin color, name (surnames, nicknames), and socioeconomic status, and gender (Lewis 2003, Lopez 2003). Racial identity is internally informed by one's lived experiences and the meaning one makes of these things. Thus, the

⁷ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of racial projects (Omi and Winant 1994).

nomenclatures that are employed are a manifestation of these external and internal processes and are subject to change in a given context or time period (Gonzales 1993 and 1997). I purposefully asked students: What race do you consider yourself to be as well as what ethnicity do you consider yourself to be in order to assess whether these were interchangeable terms or if they made distinctions. I am interested in Latino/a achievement at a predominantly white school, but with a critical mass of Latino/a students as a way to assess how race and racialized practices manifest themselves in this context.

For the purposes of this study I define ethnicity as the cultural traditions, beliefs, values, and practices of a given group (Omi and Winant 1994). I am also interested in examining how racial and ethnic identities intersect with gender. Lopez (2003) found that gendered differences were key in understanding on the schooling experiences of Latino/as in a predominantly Latino/a school. I define gender as the set of behaviors, appearances, mannerism, and social practices that have been associated with masculinity and femininity and are ascribed onto human bodies (Pyke and Johnson 2003, Hill Collins 2005).

The Latino/a youth in this analysis employed a series of discourses to define their racial identity vis-à-vis how they see themselves, and how others see them in relation to larger macro-level racial constructs. The nomenclature they selected was not always consistent with the racial meanings ascribed by others (i.e. one may see themselves as “White,” but their experiences suggested that they might not be viewed this way) (Frank, Redstone, and Bo Lu 2010). These youth are well aware of the racial meanings that ethnic nomenclatures can imply (i.e. Mexican, White, Hispanic, Chicano/a). The terms that they selected are a product of their positionality (language, culture, skin color, name, SES, and gender) in the social contexts in which they are embedded (their school, their neighborhood,

New Mexico, etc.) and their response to racial ascription and meanings (i.e. racist or privileged) that are applied to them. Thus, I argue that their racial identities, and attendant nomenclatures, can be a form of resistance to racist racial meanings and assumptions applied to them.

Academic achievement. Academic achievement is defined as High (mostly A's and B's), Middle (mostly C's), and Low (mostly D's and F's) with grades in core academic courses (math, science, and English) slightly weighted.

Data Collection, Sample, and Setting

Valdez High School.⁸ The data collection for this study took place at an urban, public high school in New Mexico, Valdez High School (VHS or Valdez), which is part of the Santos Public School District. Valdez is located in large urban center, Santos, New Mexico. New Mexico is a majority-minority state where Hispanics comprised nearly half of the city's population and were a numerical majority. Thus, New Mexico has the highest percentage of Latino/as of any state in the US. There are nearly as many Whites with a significant population of Native Americans, and a smaller portion of Asians and Blacks. The median household income is just over \$43,000, well below the US median of \$52,000. Nearly 14% of New Mexico families live below the poverty, which is also greater than that of the US (13%). Thus, New Mexico is one of the ten States with the lowest median household income. The percentage of "Foreign born" residents is 10% compared to 10% for Colorado, 15% for Arizona, 16% for Texas, and 27% for California. Moreover, a large percentage of residents (28%) speak Spanish at home. Moreover, New Mexico also has the

⁸ Valdez High School is a pseudonym used to protect the anonymity of the school. All names of the locations and participants in this study were also changed.

Nation's only Latino/a governor and a large number of Latino/as have historically held and continue to hold positions in elected-government and legal arenas⁹.

Santos, New Mexico is one of the oldest cities in New Mexico and mirrors the demographics of New Mexico in that the majority of the population is Latino/a. The median household income (\$46,000) is slightly higher than the state average with 11% of families below the poverty line (compared to 14% for the state). Eleven percent of the population was born in another country and 24% speak of the population speaks Spanish. Like New Mexico, Santos has a history of Latino/a elected-officials, and Latino/a mayors.

Situated in a part of Santos where three economically and racially diverse census tracks converge is Valdez High School. Valdez was founded in the early 1960s and sits in a community that is nearly two-thirds white and a third Latino/a, with smaller numbers of blacks, Native Americana, and Asians. Moreover, the median household income was just over \$40,000/year. The two other census tracks which Valdez serves include a poorer section of town (median household income of nearly \$36,000) where whites constitute nearly half of the population, Latino/as one-third, and larger numbers of Native American and blacks. The final community is located in a mountainous part of town where residents enjoy a higher median household income of \$56,000 and where whites constitute nearly three-fourths of the residents, Hispanic constitute one-fourth, and where few, if any, Native American, blacks, and Asians live.

⁹ See Gomez (2007) for a historical discussion of the tenuous nature of these positions during the struggle for statehood in New Mexico during the nineteenth century.

Valdez High School is a four-year comprehensive high school that offers college preparatory and vocational courses. It also provides Special Education programs and bilingual classes. During the year I spent at Valdez, which was the 2006-07 academic year, the school was comprised of almost two thousand students of which a little more than half identified as white, one third as Hispanic and the remaining were equally divided among students who identified as Black, Native American and Asian.¹⁰ Moreover, in the year prior to my arrival, 2005-06, the last year for which the percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch was recorded, one-third qualified. The percentage of students who are in English as a Second Language (ESL) is not often reported, but the most recent data from 2008-09 indicates that 6% of students were designated ESL. That same year, 17% of students were designated as non-gifted Special Education.

The familiar achievement gap was also evident at Valdez. During 2005-06, only 36% of Hispanics scored proficient on the math portion and 46% on the reading portion of the standardized test exam compared with 57% of Whites on math and 70% on reading. During 2006-07, of the 431 students enrolled in AP classes, 74% were White, 16% Hispanic, 7% Asian American, 2% African American, and 1% Native American. Moreover, the graduation rate for that year was 95% for Whites, 97% for Hispanics, 89% for African Americans, 88% for Native Americans, and 100% for Asian Americans.

The graduation rate, however, cannot be taken at face value. Graduation rates are calculated based on the number of students who are 12th graders on the 40th day of their

¹⁰ There may be a number of mixed-race individuals in any one of these categories because the school district reports the first ethnicity listed by the parent/guardian of an individual at time of enrollment.

senior year and the number who graduate on the last day of the school year. A percent of students who graduated is then calculated. Thus, students who have “dropped out” prior to their senior year are not included. Scholars have argued that a more accurate way to capture graduation rate is to examine the graduation status of cohorts (Fine, 1991). That is, schools should track 9th grade student cohorts from their first year in high school through the fourth year to determine how many 9th graders graduated four years later.

In fact, the Santos Public School district has recently started requiring schools to calculate graduation rates based on cohorts. When we examine cohort graduation rates for Valdez, in 2008, three-fourths of Asians and three-fourths of Whites graduated compared to two-thirds of Hispanics and a little less than two-thirds for both African Americans and Native Americans.

I selected Valdez High School because much of the literature on the racial identity of Mexican-origin students has focused on schools with predominantly Latino/a student enrollments (Vigil 1997, Valenzuela 1999, Lopez 2003, Pizarro 2005). While some studies have looked at the experiences of other minority groups in predominantly white schools (Gibson, 1988; Zhou and Bankston, 1998; Lee, 2005), there is a dearth of studies that examine Latinos students in predominantly white school settings (Bettie, 2003; Lewis, 2003). Staiger (2005) found that race was the key variable in a predominantly white school. Valdez High School is a predominantly white school as just over half of the student population identified as white and one third as Hispanic. Also, Valdez was selected because it was the only school, of the five I invited, that agreed to allow me to conduct this research.

A triangulated research approach was used to collect the data. During the 2006-07 academic year, I conducted classroom based participant observations and drafted field notes,

provided students with take home student surveys, conducted follow-up, in-depth life history interviews with students in their homes, conducted semi-structured interviews with parents, and did individual interviews with teachers, school staff, and administrators (see Appendix D for the Student Survey Questionnaire and Appendix E for the Follow-Up In-Depth Life History Interview Guide). The field notes, student surveys, and follow-up, in-depth life history interviews with students are utilized in this analysis.

For the purposes of this analysis over 700 pages of field notes from the classroom based participant observations are used. In addition, only student surveys from twenty of the twenty-five Latino/a students are used in this analysis, as twenty-five of the follow-up, in-depth life history interviews with these same Latino/a students are analyzed (see Appendices A and B for profiles of the twenty-five Latino/a high school students).¹¹

Classroom based participant observations. Omi and Winant argue that “racial formation is the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (1994, 55). Racial categories are constructed through a series of racial projects whereby human bodies are socially ordered, categorized, and imbued with meaning. Racial categories are constantly in flux, evolving and changing as groups within society construct, inhabit, contest, and discarded them. By examining the racial projects that exist in the school context, the present research can uncover the ways in which students are racialized in the classroom and at school, including the assumptions that are implied and significations made with regard to race (and gender).

¹¹ Only twenty of the Latino/a students who were interviewed completed the survey. Thus, only twenty surveys were analyzed. The decision was made to limit the analysis of the survey data and follow-up life history interviews to the Latino/a students as a way to focus on their lives through their *lived experiences* and as a strategy for managing the scope of this dissertation.

The classroom based participant observations allowed me to observe interactions between students and teachers. For example, I noted which students raised their hand to answer questions or provide ideas and whom the teacher called on. I also observed the ways in which discipline was carried out and enforced. I noted if students were overly scrutinized for their form of dress, as there was an official dress code at Valdez. I noted if teachers make assumptions about the abilities of Latino/a students. In terms of opposition, I noted if Latino/a students disengaged in the classroom in response to classroom dynamics or treatment by teachers and administrators. I also observed interaction among students. Though the focus of this research is not on the curriculum itself, I noted the content discussed in classes and if discussions of race and ethnicity were encouraged or stifled.

Additionally, by observing in classrooms, I was able to build rapport with students and invite them to participate in the survey element of this research. I asked all students that I meet both in classrooms and around the school for their contact information (i.e. name, race, ethnicity, telephone number, cell phone number, e-mail address, and this same information for a parent) on a contact sheet and to obtain parental permission to complete the survey (See Appendix C for the Contact Sheet).

Through observations, I noted the racial and gender composition of the school and individual classes, including remedial, regular, and honors classes. Oakes and Guiton (1995) indicate that race, ethnicity, and social class can influence the decision to place a student in a particular track. They argue that placement into a higher academic track, like honors, can provide students with advantages over those placed in lower tracks, including well-defined curriculums, high-quality courses, well-qualified teachers, and higher expectations of students. Moreover, research shows that poor and minority students are overrepresented in

lower curriculum tracks and underrepresented in gifted programs (Oakes, Gamaron, and Page, 1992).

In the fall of 2006, I met with the school principal, Mr. Parker, a white man in his middle-50s, who been an educator for over 31 years, and had been at Valdez for nearly as long. I apprised him of the research and tell him that I was interested in observing ninth grade students.¹² Ninth grade is a key transitional year for students who are coming from small middle environments to large high schools and by the time student cohorts reach their senior year many students have dropped out (Fine 1991, Valenzuela 1999). I also informed him that I wanted to observe the core academic courses, English, Science, and Math, because achievement is often measured in these subjects on standardized tests (i.e. The New Mexico State Standards Based Assessment) (NAEP 2005). The principal suggested I invite teachers in one department first and then move to the other departments (See Table 1. for a list of classes observed and the length of observations).

Table 1. Classes Observed and Length of Observations

Classroom	Length of Time
9 th Grade English	Fall semester, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
9 th Grade Science	One year, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
9 th Grade Math (regular, not honors or remedial)	Fall semester, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
9 th Grade Remedial Math	Spring semester, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
9 th Grade Honors Math	Half of Spring semester, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
Geography (mixed-grade class)	Half of Spring semester, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
In-School-Suspension	Six non-consecutive days in the Spring semester
Final Exams	Three consecutive days in the fall and spring at the end of each semester

¹² This research was approved by Principal Parker and the Santos Public School District.

Following Mr. Parker's suggestion, I found my way to one of the academic departments and spoke with the first teacher I encountered, Ms. Rogers. Ms. Rogers, a light skinned woman, was a younger math teacher, in her twenties, and had been teaching less than 10 years. She agreed to allow me to observe her ninth grade class (not gifted or advanced classes) every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of the fall semester (approximately 50 minutes each day). She also suggested another teacher I could invite because she believed he would allow me to observe his class, Mr. Rendon. Ms. Rogers indicated that many teachers are leery of outside observers and I may encounter apprehension. After a few weeks her class, I invited two other ninth grade teachers in her department and both of them declined to participate. I observed Ms. Rogers' class until the end of the fall semester. Ms. Rogers subtly declined further participation indicating that she believed that the semester I spent in her class was sufficient. I agreed because I had an adequate amount of observation data and I had met several students who I would see in another class I observed or who I would see around the school.

Mr. Rendon, a young English teacher in his twenties, identified as Hispanic, and been teaching less than 10 years, was a member of Ms. Rogers' three person teaching team the school assigned to a designated number of freshmen. In an effort to transition freshman from middle school, which tends to have a relatively low number of students compared to high school, into the high school, the high school created small learning communities. The learning communities consisted of one math teacher, science teacher, and English teacher who rotate the same 100 or so students through three class periods over two semesters. The teachers collaborate on teaching methods and make an effort to create cross learning opportunities. For example, a student was assigned an essay in English and the content had

covered a topic from science class. They also addressed student issues (i.e. behavior) collectively. The teachers also provided activities with the entire learning community once or twice a semester designed to introduce students to one another and make students feel that high school is manageable. I invited Mr. Rendon a week after I began observing in the Ms. Rogers' class because I wanted to gain familiarity with the school before I asked another teacher to participate. He readily agreed to allow me to observe his classroom for the fall and spring semesters (approximately 50 minutes each day) every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

When I initially began asking teachers to participate, I intended to observe three ninth grade classes in Math, Science, and English (not gifted or advanced). I was able to secure the participation of both Ms. Rogers and Mr. Rendon from the same learning team, I thought it might be interesting to observe the third member of the teaching team, Mrs. Calvert. Mrs. Calvert was a middle-aged, mixed race woman who could pass for white or Latina. This would allow me observe some of the same students in different class rooms with different teachers, and further my rapport with students by seeing them throughout the day.

Wanting to further familiarize myself with the school and the classes I was already in, I waited until halfway through the fall semester to invite the third member of the teaching team to participate. I invited the Mrs. Calvert who readily agreed to allow me to observe her class (approximately 50 minutes each). I continued to observe her class Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. At the end of the semester, I asked her if I could continue to observe her 6th period class. She suggested that I observe her 4th period class because there were a number of students who were not doing well in that class and it might be interesting to observe. Not wanting to strain my relationship with her, I agreed. I began observing her 4th

period remedial class in the spring of 2007. These students were also part of the learning community. However, they were enrolled in the remedial class because it is presumed they were lacking the skills to perform in the regular class.

Throughout the entire fall semester and continuing through the spring semester, I observed the lunchroom, common areas of campus, the administrative offices, the counseling center, the nurses office, the security office, the in-school-suspension (ISS) room, and the library in addition to meeting, talking, and “hanging out” with students, teachers, staff, administrators, school police officers, and the occasional visitor to the school. I also attended early morning, evening, and weekend activities outside of the normal school day. I attended academic assemblies, music assemblies, evening school plays, the talent show, academic award ceremonies, and graduation. I also attended “Ethnic Night,” which was a one-time event in the spring. It featured student performances by the Valdez High School ballet folklórico group, a ballet folklórico group from the local community, and Navajo dancers, in addition to a presentation by Miss American Indian for the Santos Public School District. During the second half of the spring semester, I often attended weekly Black Student Union (BSU) and Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) meetings. The goal of MESA is to prepare low-income and would be first-generation college students for college majors and careers in mathematics, engineering, science or technically related fields.

I recorded when issues of race were discussed and the nature and content of these discussions. I noted interactions among students, teachers, staff, administrators, and parents. I made a note of which students participated in student government, athletics and other

extracurricular activities. I recorded if peer groups were racially segregated.¹³ Staiger argues that physically mixing racially diverse students is not enough to ensure that meaningful interaction and dialogue about racial difference occurs. Students are often re-segregated through various school practices such as partial-site magnet programs, which can lead to racial conflict and “a perpetuation of negative stereotypes about non-white students” (2004, 1). By examining the racial projects that permeated the school context, I tried to come to some understanding about how race is conceptualized and acted on and how it influences school actors’ perceptions of race and their actions.

While at school, I did carry a backup with a spiral notebook to take field notes. I jotted down notes, direct quotes, events, and even drew diagrams (i.e. the arraignment of classroom furniture, the student seating chart) as I tried to capture as much of the information that was streaming at me as possible. My notes were, however, minimal because I did not want to disrupt the normal course of activities by taking copious notes. I did collect class worksheets, handouts, brochures, pamphlets, newspapers, the official school planner, and any other documents. Occasionally, I was able to elaborate my notes between classes, before school, and after school, in the library, where I felt it would not be a distraction to the normal course of activity. However, I often found that there was much to observe in the library, as well, and added to my notes. I then typed up my notes and recollections on my computer

¹³ If I had knowledge of a student’s racial identification from their contact sheet, survey, or interviews (see these sections discussed later in this chapter), I used this to determine how a student would be racialized. If a student did not complete the contact sheet, survey, or interview, or did not previously indicate their racial identity to me in our everyday conversations, I made an assessment of how an individual might be racialized. Thus, I could determine if there were racially segregated peer groups. Moreover, many students who I did interview discussed the racially segregated peer groups at Valdez and, thus, I was able to verify my assessment of racially segregated peer groups with the students’ assessments.

every night after the observations were made (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). I used the notebook and any documentation I collected that day to jog my memory and ensure an accurate account of the day's activities and events. I accumulated over 700 pages of typed single-spaced field notes.

Take Home Student Survey Questionnaire. By observing in classrooms, I was able to build rapport with students and invite them to participate in the survey element of this research. The take home Student Survey Questionnaire was a brief two-page survey that asked students about their age, racial and ethnic identity, family background, grades, extracurricular activities and future plans. The survey provided a detailed profile of students allowing for differentiation between high, middle, and low achieving students, as well as their socioeconomic status based on their parent(s) income, occupation, and education (Fine 1991). High achievers were identified as those students who reported they had mostly A's and B's, middle achieving students who reported they had mostly C's, and low achievers as those students who reported they had mostly D's and F's. Grades in core academic courses (i.e. science, English, and Math) are weighted slightly higher. While self-reported grades can be suspect, students often shared their grades with me during our interview when their parents were present (and a parent often attested to their validity). Students also sometimes showed me their report cards with me.

The survey asked students to identify their race and ethnicity. I used these variables to determine which students identified or who identified a parent as Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, Latino/a, Hispanic, Spanish, or Hispano. While I have chosen to use the term Latino/a as the term of referent for Latino/as in New Mexico, I realize that individuals may not use the same terminology. Therefore, in order to initially identify participants who could be included in

the sample, I relied on their self identified nomenclatures, which might include Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, Mexican American, Latino/a, Hispanic, Spanish, or Hispano. Initially, the survey was going to be used as a sampling frame for the life history interviews because I could have used it to determine who would be included in the sample. I had hoped to collect at least 60 surveys before I began selecting students for the follow-up, in-depth life history interviews. However, because it often took students two to three weeks to return parental consent forms, I felt that it was necessary to interview students who returned their parent permission forms shortly after I received their consent forms to capitalize on their parents willingness to allow their child to participate and their familiarity with the project having recently signed the parental consent form. I was also concerned that I might not have many more encounters with students if I was not allowed to continue observations in the spring semester.

Utilizing this strategy, I was able to interview about ten students, but I continued to have difficulty getting students to take the parental consent forms home and return them even though they expressed great interest in participating. I decided that after obtaining a student's contact information from the contact sheet they completed and providing them with the parental consent forms, I would call their parents, introduce myself, and discuss the research project and their child's participation. On the contact sheet, students indicated their race and ethnicity. I used this variable as a way to identify which students could be included in my sample. I called the parents of the students and invited their participation. I found that this strategy worked well and I was able to set up interviews with students at which time I asked their parent to complete the consent forms and asked the student to complete the survey. The challenging aspect of this new approach was that students didn't always

complete the survey. However, I continued to use this strategy to invite participation in the research throughout my time at Valdez High School. As a result, I was able to survey 46 students (See Tables 2-5 for demographics of these students) of which twenty of these are with the Latino/a students included in this analysis of the follow-up in-depth life history interviews.

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents¹⁴

Race/Ethnicity	White	Latino/a	White/ Latino/a	African American/ Latino/a	African American	African American/ White	Native American	Asian American
46 Students	9	21	4	3	1	1	3	4

Table 3. Gender of Survey Respondents

Gender	Female	Male
46 Students	15	31

Table 4. Socioeconomic Status Based on Parent Income, Education, and Profession of Survey Respondents

Socioeconomic Status	High	Middle	Low	Not Reported
46 Students	5	16	23	2

Table 5. Academic Achievement of Survey Respondents¹⁵

Academic Achievement	High	Middle	Low	Not Reported
46 Students	22	18	5	1

¹⁴ A student's race/ethnicity was determined from their answers to two survey questions. One asked, "What race do you consider yourself to be?" The other asked, "What ethnicity or cultural background do you consider yourself to be?"

¹⁵ Students indicated their grades on their survey.

Follow-up in-depth Life History Interviews. As a result of my challenges with getting students to return parent permission forms, I initiated a new process for ensuring that I targeted the follow-up, in-depth life history interviews with students from different levels of academic achievement, class backgrounds, race/ethnic identity, etc. After getting to know the students and talking with teachers, I was able to identify students who were high achievers, middle achievers, and low achievers. Also, since the students often told me their race and ethnicity in our everyday conversations, I was able to use this information to target follow-up, in-depth life history interviews with students from different race/ethnic identity groups.

I was able to conduct life history interviews with a total of thirty-nine high school students. Each life history interview lasted between two and three hours, was digitally recorded, and asked several questions about politics, racial and ethnic identity, school performance, teacher-student relationships, religion, and citizenship. Critics may suggest that the use of interview data is suspect to bias and a singular interpretation, others argue “there is not a more effective way to understand the lives and identities of students than to ask them to discuss these things” (Pizarro 2005, 37). Moreover, Noguera (2003) advocates “studying schools through the perception and experiences of students” (347). Thus, that is this study’s aim.

The following tables provide brief characteristics of the thirty-nine students:

Table 6. Race/Ethnicity of Interviewees¹⁶

Race/Ethnicity	White	Latino/a	White/ Latino/a	African American/ Latino/a	African American	African American/ White	Native American	Asian American
39 Students	7	19	3	3	2	1	2	2

Table 7. Gender of Interviewees

Gender	Female	Male
39 Students	24	15

Table 8. Socioeconomic Status Based on Parent Income, Education, and Profession of Interviewees

Socioeconomic Status	High	Middle	Low
39 Students	9	14	16

Table 9. Academic Achievement of Interviewees¹⁷

Academic Achievement	High	Middle	Low
39 Students	14	12	13

The analysis of the follow-up, in-depth life history interviews was limited to the twenty-five Latino/a students as a way to focus on the lives of the young students through their

¹⁶ A student’s race/ethnicity was determined from their answers to two survey questions. One asked, “What race do you consider yourself to be?” The other asked, “What ethnicity or cultural background do you consider yourself to be?” In addition, during the interview, they were asked, “What race do you consider yourself to be?”

¹⁷ Students indicated their grades on their survey or during their interview.

experiences and as a strategy for managing the scope of this dissertation. Table 10 gives a brief description of the twenty-five Latino/a students¹⁸.

Table 10. Basic Demographics of the Twenty-Five Latino/a High School Students

Gender	Females 14	Males 11	
SES	Upper 1	Middle 20	Working 5
Academic Achievement	High 9	Middle 10	Low 6

Table 10 indicates that of the twenty-five Latino/a students, fourteen were female and eleven were male. In terms of socioeconomic status, one was upper, five were working class, and most of them (20) were middle class. Recall that at Valdez during the 2005-06 academic year, 30.2% of students qualified for free/reduced lunch.¹⁹

Data analysis. The data from the take home student surveys was used to describe the research sample as well as to initially locate students who identified as Latino/a or who had a parent who identified as Latino/a. The survey data was also used to verify or “double-check” the information provided in the in-depth interviews, as I often asked the same question on the survey (i.e. What race do you consider yourself to be?). Occasionally, students would provide a different response in the interview than on the survey. For example, they may have reported their family income differently. If I was able to catch this discrepancy in the interview, I asked the student to verify the information from the survey. However, if I

¹⁸ Detailed information about these youth is given in subsequent chapters and in Appendix A and B.

¹⁹ The original goal of this research was to include the voices of the students’ parents, as well as those of the teachers, school staff, and administrators. In an effort to focus on the lives of the young Latino/as through their experiences, and to manage the scope of this dissertation, the decision was made to incorporate the perspective of the parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators through the field notes and the interviews with the students. The interview data with the parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators will be used for future research. Consequently, I conducted one-hour interviews with 35 teachers, staff members, and administrators and one-hour interviews with 18 parents.

noticed the contradiction after the interview was already completed, I defaulted to the interview because in the interview students were able to explain their answers, and, on occasion, verify with a parent, if they were present during the interview. These contradictions were few and did not have a significant impact on the findings. In the instances where the student did not complete the survey, I was dependent on their interview responses. No information that was on the survey was not asked in the interview and, thus, was included in this analysis.

Data analysis of the field notes began in the field as themes often emerged while in the field or when I was typing up my notes. I keep a list of items, issues, and themes I needed to follow up on when I was next in the field. This was a useful process as it allowed me conduct member checks with individuals in the field, as well as pursue additional data (Lewis 2003). For example, in order to increase the validity of my findings I found it necessary to observe additional classes in the spring semester and varied my observations by teacher and subject. I also found it necessary to interview students outside of the classes I was observing, thus I targeted the second semester interviews to students outside of the classes I was observing. I was also able to follow up on incidents that occurred in school. For example, when students would discuss racially segregated peer groups and where they “hung” out, I could follow up and observe these patterns for myself.

After leaving the field, I conducted a systematic qualitative analysis of the field notes utilizing qualitative analysis software (NVivo²⁰). I coded them for themes and topics related to race, gender, and identity and their relationship to academic achievement. I first identified large-scale themes such as, “identity,” “race in school,” “gender in school,” “gender at

²⁰ NVivo was only used to code the field notes. Interview transcripts were hand coded.

home,” “racial ideology,” etc. within the data. I then looked for more specific dimensions within these large-scale themes such as “muted conversations of race,” “assumptions about the roles of women,” “colorblind ideology,” “social critique of racism,” “assumptions about what is ‘Latino/a’,” “liberalism,” etc. This method allowed me to assess the strength and prevalence of these themes and suggest relationships that existed among them. This method also allowed the salient themes to rise to the surface (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Maxwell 1996).

The twenty-five follow-up, in-depth life history interviews with the young Latino/as were transcribed and I conducted a systematic qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts. The transcripts for the young women and men were analyzed separately as a way to focus on the gendered nature of race (Omi and Winant 1994, Lewis 2003, Lopez 2004, Staiger 2005). That is, I analyzed all the interviews with the young women together and then analyzed the interviews with the young men.

The analysis of both sets of transcripts proceeded in the same manner. Transcripts were hand coded (read and notes taken in the left margin) in the same way by looking for key themes related to race, gender, and identity and their relationship to academic achievement. Identified themes included, Schooling, Tracking, Parent Involvement, Peers, Discipline, Academic Achievement, School Orientation, Future Plans/Expectations, Political Participation, Immigration, Language, Racial Discourse, Racial Identity, Ethnic Identity, Identity, Race, Racialization, Gender, Religion, Class Identity, Social Class, Social Capital, and Meritocracy. I then organized and typed the hand coded notes from each transcript into a Microsoft Word document by theme. Direct quotes from the students were also included in the document. In the process of hand-coding the transcripts and organizing and typing the

coding, dominant themes emerged from the data evident in the number of students talking about them (i.e. discipline). I was then able to determine the strength and relevance of a given theme based on the number of students who discussed them. Throughout the writing process, I was able to use the word documents to “double-check” the accuracy of the findings as well as follow up on any new issue that emerged. I also found that I often returned to the original transcript to ensure the accuracy of findings and quotes (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Maxwell 1996).

A Note on Positionality, Methodology and Analysis

My observations, interactions, and assessments were inevitably influenced by my social location as an upwardly mobile Chicana with medium/dark skin from Denver, Colorado. I am at least a fourth generation Mexican American (that I know of, as I have not been able to trace my family history to Mexico, but have traced it to Southern Colorado and New Mexico), who is in her mid- thirties, and who is working toward an advanced degree. At once, I was a cultural insider because I shared a similar cultural background with the New Mexican Latino/a students (Adler and Adler 1987; Vera 1998). As one Latina student said to me, “you’re like us, huh.”

During my interviews with the twenty-five Latino/a students, the last question I asked them was, “What race do you consider me to be?” The responses I received were consistent with a few exceptions. Most (18 of 25) students indicated that they saw me as “Hispanic.” They most often cited my skin, hair, and eye color as the reason for their assessment. As William, a dark-skinned young man shared, “[You are] Hispanic...because of your skin color. You look Hispanic. Like your hair’s dark.”

However, they also made their assessment from my cultural knowledge (i.e. “[you know] about being Hispanic”), my use of Spanish (despite my limited skills) or my “accent,” my last name (i.e. “Lechuga sounds Mexican” though Consuelo said she never met a Mexican with this last name, so she said I would be Hispanic) and my demeanor (“Just the way you present yourself”). One young Latina said that I was “Hispanic,” because “you kind of have an accent, but you’re not dark complected, but light complected like me,” which was quite interesting as I have never considered myself “light complected,” and of the students who mentioned my skin color being a factor in their assessment, they said I had “dark skin.”

Three other students saw me as Latina, but used the terms “Chicano [sic].” Emily, a light skinned young woman with dark brown hair, said I was Chicano, “because of the way you said Chicano (Spanish accented), if you were White you would say Chicano (English accented).” Paola, a medium skinned young woman with light brown hair, said that I was “Spanish” because I have the “features of a Spanish girl.” These youth, too, used markers of language and skin color to make their assessments, but selected different nomenclatures. Emily’s assessment was based on the way I was “able” to “properly” accent the word Chicano, and Paola’s selection of the term “Spanish,” I would argue, is related to the fact that she identifies herself as “Spanish” (see Chapter four for more details on Emily and Paola). Thus most (21 of 25) of the young Latino/as saw me as Latina.

Two other students thought I could be Native American. Vincent, a light skinned young man who identified as White and could easily pass as such said, “I would say, like, not Indian, not like from India, but like Navajo or something, and then like, maybe a little bit of Hispanic. [It’s] just a guess because I can kind of tell...Like, you have straight hair and your eyes are a dark color and pretty much that’s it.” Given New Mexico’s relatively large

population of Native Americans (10%), it is no surprise that Vincent might racialize me as Native American (US Census Bureau 2010).

Joaquin, the young man quoted in the epigraph of the first chapter and who was a medium/dark skinned young man who identified as White, complicated his assessment of me in the following exchange:

Chalane: What race do you consider me to be?

Joaquin: Can you speak Spanish?

Chalane: Not so well.

Joaquin: Do you like Mexican food?

Chalane: Yeah.

Joaquin: I don't know. It doesn't matter what I think you are.

Chalane: Well, I'm interested in what you think.

Joaquin: You can't speak [Spanish] that well?

Chalane: I'm like you. I have similar experiences to you.

Joaquin: Are you catholic?

Chalane: Mhhmm [hesitant to answer].

Joaquin: Do you go to church or no?

Chalane: Not regularly, no.

Joaquin: Did you when you were little?

Chalane: Mhmm [not really].

Joaquin: Are you going to tell your kids that you're Mexican?

Chalane: Yeah, I think so.

Joaquin: You're Mexican American

It is clear from this exchange that Joaquin's assessment was based on the language and cultural information (eating Mexican food, being Catholic) I may or may not possess and that he was pressing me to make the distinction. He concluded that I would be "Mexican American," but that I could be "Italian" saying, "Well, you know, black hair and stuff, but you could be Italian." His assessment that I could be Italian mirrored the way he indicated that he was often racialized by others (This is further explicated in Chapter 5).

Finally, two students did not make an assessment. One student, Abel, a medium/dark skinned young man, did not want to make an assessment stating, "I don't really know. Like I said, I don't pay much attention towards that. I don't care, just as long as the person's okay to talk to; race shouldn't be an issue for somebody." He communicated a similar resistance when I asked him what race he considered himself to be (See Chapter 5 for more details). Jonathan, a medium skinned young man, said, "I wouldn't think of it."

I found that I was also a cultural outsider for many reasons. Many students did not see me as one of their peers and referred to me as "Miss" just as they referred to their teachers, even when I told them to call me by my first name. Also, my limited Spanish-speaking skills affirmed my outsider status among those Latino/a students who spoke Spanish, yet, I was similar to many of the Latino/a students with limited or no Spanish-speaking skills.

When interviewing white students and their parents, I expected that they might not feel comfortable discussing racial matters or disclosing their perceptions about people of color to me. I found, however, that many of them were quite candid with me. Perhaps, this was because my social class position mediated the stereotypes they held about Latino/as. In fact, one white parent told me that I did not sound like a "Hispanic" over the phone. When I

told her I was from Denver, Colorado, she remarked that she knew I wasn't from New Mexico.

The teachers in some respects saw me as an insider and often confided their anger, frustrations, and optimism. On more than one occasion I was asked my opinion on a number of topics, including the curriculum, teaching approach, and why there was a racial achievement gap. I often tried to give a neutral answer not wanting to upset or anger a teacher (I also did not want to jeopardize my ability to remain in the classroom or, even, at the school). Though some may argue with this approach, this was a compromise in an effort to complete this research project and bring to light the experiences of the youth in New Mexico. There were, however, a few teachers who I got to know well and with whom I could provide honest feedback. For example, I was able to have honest conversations with Mr. Williams, a “man of color” who was a social studies teacher. I was also an outsider as many teachers and administrators were skeptical of my presence and resisted interacting with me (See Chapter 3 for a brief discussion on the resistance I encountered from teachers.).

I managed my social position as best as possible and meet regularly with my dissertation advisor to seek her advice, guidance, feedback, and support, as she has conducted similar ethnographic research. Yet, I am well aware that what follows in the proceeding chapters is an analysis that is not free from my own subjectivity. Lewis (2003) advocates a “self-monitoring” in the field and an awareness of one’s own subjectivity. Thus, I often met with my dissertation advisor to discuss my observations and experiences in the field and share my typed field notes with her as a way to “self-monitor.” I also shared some of my preliminary findings and results with teachers, administrators, and parents in the field. Thus, I worked to manage and “keep-in-check” my social location.

Lay of the Land

What follows are four data chapters that describe the school context in which Latino/a youth students are formulating and articulating their racial identities. Specifically these chapters address: *How do Latino/a youth articulate their expressions of racial identity in the post-Civil Rights colorblind era? What discourses or nomenclatures do they employ? How are these discourses distinguished from one another? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What may their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement and gender?*

Chapter two examines the dominant ideologies about achievement gaps that circulate at Valdez High School. Thus, the central research questions are: What are the dominant racial ideologies at Valdez? Through an analysis of the participant observation field notes, I examine the discourses and ideologies that undergird understandings of student achievement. I found that the dominant ideologies of colorblindness, individualism and individual achievement, the hidden curriculum and racial lessons of the classroom, as well as the silencing of race talk work together to mask stark racial inequalities.

In an attempt to understand the varied experiences of the Latino/a youth in this context, the next two chapters discuss the ways in which these youth are constructing their racial identities. Chapter four focuses on the young women and chapter five on the young men as a way to learn about the gendered nature of racial identity formation. That is, gender as part of racial identification (Lewis 2003; Lopez, 2003) is given equal footing in these two chapters. I did find that their experiences were deeply gendered (i.e. males were more likely

targets of discipline and suffered harsher forms of punishment when compared to their female peers) and influences the ways in which these youth articulated their racial identities.

Using life history interviews conducted with fourteen young Latinas at Valdez High School, chapter four addresses how they negotiate their racial identities in the school context. I found that their identities were informed by their understandings of their ancestry and their experiences in the school setting. Four major identity repertoires emerged: “Hispanic not Mexican,” off-whiteness, Mexican, and “American, but still a little bit Mexican.” I also found that phenotype, specifically skin color, and did shape how these young women were racialized and how they saw themselves. I also suggest what these identifications may mean for their school achievement.

Chapter five focuses on eleven young Latinos with whom I conducted life history interviews. I found that the multiracial White and Latino young men were able to leverage their multiracial status and “choose” their whiteness over the Latinoness to access privilege and eschew the racial stigma associated with being Latino (Waters, 1990). For the Latinos, I found that they positioned their identities in response racial stigma associated with being male and being Latino. Like the young women who used discourses of off-whiteness, one young man accentuated a whitened identity, while another reluctantly claimed Hispanic heritage. Still another identified as White, but in name only. Two others embraced their ethnic identity one in response to negative experiences with school, while another was more ambivalent, but was moving toward a more assertive identity. Finally, the dark-skinned Latinos with a shared African American heritage identified as “African American” as a way to preserve their heritage of being “Hispanic” and “African American.”

Chapter six, the final data chapter, shares stories of discipline in school. Utilizing the student life history interviews and field notes, I found that discipline practices were raced and gendered. Specifically, I found that young Latino/as were more likely to be disciplined and treated more harshly for school infractions. I also found that disciplining students by removing them from the classroom and sending them to in-school suspension (ISS), home suspension, or an outside facility (i.e. youth detention center or treatment facility) had negative consequences for the academic performance of both the young men and young women, and left them feeling angry and mistrustful of school (Weiss, 2009).

This project concludes with a discussion of the empirical findings, policy implications, and suggestions for future research. Namely, I argue for that colorblind ideologies need to be disrupted and challenged through school practices and anti-racism curriculum. In addition, I make suggestions for reconstituting the school curriculum such that it values and integrates the contributions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. I argue that students must be supported in the active rearticulation of identity in response to racial stigma. Finally, schools must examine how discipline practices are deeply raced and gendered in an effort to address the overrepresentation of young men of color who are disciplined. Taken together, these processes can work to ameliorate the educational inequalities in the Latino/a high school students' experience.

Chapter 3:

“Ultimately it is up to you to do the learning”:

Colorblind Ideology and the Paradoxes of Race in a Multicultural School

Introduction

4/19/07. As I walked into the gymnasium of Valdez High School and took my seat on the wooden bleachers surrounding the basketball court, I looked around as students filed in. There was a lot of chatter and excitement in anticipation of today’s occasion, the spring music assembly. I noticed a large scoreboard to my right with a message posted in large prominent white letters set against the darkness of a black background. It said, “Welcome to Valdez High School where our Diversity Shines and our Pride Howls.” “Were our diversity shines,” I thought to myself, as the recent statistics on academic achievement at Valdez encircled my mind.

During the year I was at the school, Valdez was comprised of just over 2,000 students of which half identified as white, one third as Hispanic and the remaining were equally divided among students who identified as Black, Native American and Asian. It is important to note that although there are many students who identify with multiple ethnicities and races, the school district accountability office only uses the first ethnicity or race reported by the parent when they first register their child in the school district; therefore, bi-racial students are collapsed into one of the school district’s pre-existing racial and ethnic categories. Additionally, though there were no official statistics on the racial diversity of Valdez’s teaching force posted on their website, many of people I spoke with indicated that there were few minorities among the nearly 120 teachers. During my time there, I met few minority teachers, staff, and administrators.²¹ The year prior to my arrival, just under a third of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Valdez High School’s student population is

²¹ Interestingly, the security office was staffed by two minority teacher, one white teacher, and one minority police officer.

somewhat ethnically and economically diverse. However, at the same time, I couldn't help but think about the stark racial gaps in academic achievement that were present.

For instance, during 2005-06, only one-third of Hispanics scored proficient on standardized exams compared with just over half of Whites. During 2006-07, of the 431 students enrolled in advance placement classes, three-fourths were White, not quite two-fifths were Hispanic, not quite one-fifth were Asian American, and there were only a handful of African Americans and Native Americans. Perhaps the most misleading statistic was the one that touted the school's graduation rates. According to the website there were no major disparities in graduation rates; for that year the school website reported the graduation rates as follows: 94% for Whites, 97% for Hispanics, 89% for African Americans, 86% for Native Americans, and 100% for Asian Americans.²²

The most recent four-year cohort report for the Santos Public School District, in which Valdez resides, reports that only 53% of students who began high school in 2000 graduated in 2004. Eighteen percent of students transferred out of Santos, 18% were identified as "dropouts," and 10% are still in school. For Latino/as, the situation is dismal with 45% compared to 65% for Whites graduating, and 24% of Hispanics "dropping out" compared to 12% of whites "dropping out" that year district-wide. Similarly, when we look at cohort graduation rates for Valdez's class of 2004, we see that only 57% of students graduated, while 14% "dropped out." Unfortunately, these data are not disaggregated by race at the high school level. However, given the percentage of Latino/as (33%) enrolled at

²² Recall that in Chapter 2, I indicated that the graduation rates are based on the number of students who were 12th graders on the 40th day of the 4th year of high school (the senior year). Students who completed the 4th year are counted as graduates. Thus, students who have left before or did not complete the 4th year are not included in the graduation rate. Scholars have argued that a more accurate way to capture graduation rate is to examine the graduation status of cohorts (Fine, 1991).

Valdez in 2004-05 and the fact that district-wide Latino/a four-year cohort graduation rates lag behind Whites, we can assume that Latino/as at Valdez are not doing well.

More recently, the Santos Public School district began tracking five-year cohort graduation rates arguing that some students need “extra time.” The most recent five-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2008 is 69%, compared to the four-year cohort rate of 63%. At Valdez, the five-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 70% with 67% of males graduating compared to 74% of females. In terms of race, 73% of Whites graduated compared to 77% of Asians, 67% of Hispanics, 64% of American Indians, and 60% of African Americans. Thus, it is clear that Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans are not doing as well as Whites and Asian Americans at Valdez, even when given an “extra year” to graduate. Given this academic context and the clear racial achievement gaps, it was ironic that at Valdez, “Our Diversity Shines,” yet real academic racial inequities are present. Was anyone talking about the masked inequality at Valdez?

This chapter examines the ways in which the dominant ideologies about achievement gaps circulate at Valdez High School, a predominantly White high school with a significant number of Latino students in a large urban city in New Mexico. While most of the research on Latino/a schooling has been conducted in predominantly Latino/a schools in urban settings (Valenzuela 1999, Lopez 2003, Carter 2005, Pizarro 2005), this work fills a void in the literature by examining these issues in a school context where Latino/as were a numerical minority in a large southwestern city where Latino/as are numerical majority. Specifically, through an analysis of participant observation field notes, in this chapter I examine the discourses and ideologies that undergird understandings of student achievement. I found that the dominant ideologies of colorblindness, individualism and individual achievement, the

hidden curriculum and racial lessons of the classroom, as well as the silencing of race talk work together to mask stark racial inequalities.

“Ultimately it is up to you to do the learning” Individualism & Cultural Deficiency

Frames to Explain the Achievement Gap

Many people at Valdez talked about the “achievement gap” and why students of color do not do as well academically as their white peers. The nature of these conversations, however, took on one predominant form evidenced in the comments Mr. Staples, a tall, white, male teacher who had been teaching over twenty years and who taught honors science, made during a freshman class awards assembly. The account follows:

11/21/06. Today’s assembly took place in the school auditorium during 4th period. The auditorium was located on the west side of the open air campus. The campus building was situated in a square with a large, open courtyard in the middle where students gathered before school, during lunch, and after school. The teacher parking lot is located on the west side of the school and the student parking lot is located on the east side. The building to the north, and sitting next to a busy street, houses the administration offices. We were in the buildings on the west side of the square and just east of the teacher parking lot. Since it was not my “normal” observation day, I meet the classes in the auditorium.

The auditorium looked dated, but was kept up, much like most of the school, with the exception of the new English building just to the south of the auditorium that was built just a few years ago. The auditorium seated about 200 and the seat upholstery was intact. The stage faced the west. I walked in to the auditorium and noticed that the seating chart for each learning community was posted on the door. The learning community that I had been observing was to sit in the middle section of the auditorium. There were a total of three learning communities at this awards ceremony. There was another awards assembly this afternoon for the other three learning communities (a total of six).

The awards are given out at the end of the fall and spring semesters to students who have excelled academically, improved, had perfect attendance, and achieved in various other “humorous” ways to warrant teacher attention and recognition. Mrs. Calvert presented these awards to the learning communities I knew well, as I observed their classes. Jennifer, a petite, light skinned young woman, received the most improved award. At this point, I realized that Mr. Rendon’s speech in his class yesterday was a foreshadowing of today’s awards because he talked to the class about

Jennifer's improvement and Christian's inquisitiveness. Jennifer "worked real hard...great attitude...really determined." Veronica, a light skinned young woman, won the best attitude award, but was not in school today. Next, the highest achieving female award was given to Christina, a young woman who identified as Hispanic, but indicated she was racialized as white. Mrs. Calvert said she's "wonderful...works hard...organized...fabulous notebook, studies, does her homework." As she was walking up, Lilly called her shoes Eskimo shoes. They were white boots with furry balls at the end of the laces and fur flowing over the top. Lilly then called her name and made fun of her shoes. I wonder if this was the way that Lilly healed the hurt that was written on her face. The next award for highest achieving male went to Joaquin, a medium/dark skinned young man who identified as White. Admittedly, I was a bit surprised given all his interruptions and outbursts in class. Also, he uses his classmates to help him complete his work by asking them for the answers or copying their homework. Mrs. Calvert said that Joaquin is "proud, very bring, capable, comes to class ready to learn and asks inquisitive questions.

Next, Mr. Staples, a white male, gave out the award for his learning community. Before giving the awards, he lectured the students that "you are very lucky to have us [teachers]...Ultimately it is up to you to do the learning. It's a personal think. It's your attitude and effort." After he presented the awards, Mr. Shue then took the mic and told students that this concluded the awards. He said "may this be, perhaps, a provocation for next semester." He then led the freshmen in a chant designed to incite pride in being a freshman.

These awards were all about recognizing individual achievement and as a "provocation for next semester." As Mr. Staples said, "You are very lucky to have us [teachers]...Ultimately it is up to you to do the learning. It's a personal thing. It's your attitude and effort." Most teachers I spoke with indicated that academic achievement was an individual endeavor and educational outcomes were the result of a student and their parents' efforts. When presented with the fact that students of color do not do as well as their white peers, some teachers were reluctant to address the racial disparities in structured academic opportunities and relied on individualist arguments to explain this result.

Ms. Rogers, a math teacher who was white and had been teaching less than 10 years, held this same perspective. The following account exemplifies her position on achievement when asked why there was a racial achievement gap in Santos Public Schools:

9/6/06. Ms. Rogers conjectured that student achievement was heavily influenced by parents. She said that some parents really care about their child's achievement, while others do not. If one of her students is doing poorly, she will call the parent. Some of the parents "really get on the child" while others try to explain away their child's behavior. She said that "some families care, others don't." She also really stressed that achievement is related to a student's "personality" and maturity. Some students work extremely hard and do well in her class well others don't care. She said that some "classes" are just horrible and some are good. She said that three years ago she had a 9th grade class that was "just horrible" and it was very difficult for her. Another teacher had this same class the next year and they were horrible with him, too. They were also horrible the third year, as well.

For Ms. Rogers, student achievement is heavily dependent on "families [who] care" and on a student's "personality" and "maturity." In my conversations with Ms. Rogers she shared that the achievement was dependent on their family, the individual student (i.e. "It's a personal thing. Maturing a little bit and realizing 'I can do this, I can do better in school'"), and peers (i.e. peer groups that are academically competitive and push each other to excel versus peer groups that value failure, "who's cool who has the lowest grade." She shared, "In my family, it was never 'are you going to college?' It was, 'you are going to college.' I know in some families it is not quite the same." Thus, Ms. Rogers also emphasized the role of the individual and their family in achievement.

Interestingly, though Ms. Rogers recognized that there was a racial achievement gap, her explanation could not account for these disparities. When I asked her directly about the racial achievement gap she shared,

12/4/06. What's valued, what's taught in different cultures [matters]. I know that it's not true, you know, that certain cultures like, [for] all white kids college is valued or whatever, but I think sometimes -I've seen it a lot in kids that come from, like, English as a second language backgrounds, it seems like their families, maybe [education is] not as valued. Also, in the Native American kids I've noticed that, again I don't want to generalize and stereotype cause it's kinda racist, but I've noticed a lot of times they don't seem like they really value education, because I can think of at least four [Native American] kids that just didn't do well, their attendance was horrible, and it was like their parents didn't really seem to care. So, I think that might

be part of it, the background that they come from. What's stressed in their background and at home. Then again, we live [here] rather than closer to a reservation. I'm sure that they probably have different values than living on the reservation, but I think that's part of it, their cultural background, where they come from, again, what's valued in their culture. I think that's a big part of it.

She also indicated that social class background may play a role and the fact that Valdez's district boundaries cross upper, middle, and working class communities. She said that those in the upper class communities are more likely to be highly educated and thus push education with their children.

Ms. Rogers' explanation of the racial achievement gap relies on cultural deficiency arguments that suggest that the culture of English as a second language students [read: Latino/as in ESL] and Native Americans does not value education. She discounts the influence of racialized opportunity structures, such as tracking, on academic achievement and relies on cultural deficiency reasoning, which suggest that an individual's cultural habitus runs counter to the school's practices (Office of Policy Planning and Research 1965, Hanushek, 1994).

Evident in the rationale Ms. Rogers provides for the racial achievement gap, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues that a new racial ideology has emerged as a way to justify racial inequality like the educational inequity I observed at Valdez High School (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). He identifies four frameworks or "pathways" individuals use to understand racial phenomena. Notable among these is the frame of *cultural racism* that "relies on culturally based arguments such as 'Mexicans do not put much emphasis on education' or 'blacks have too many babies' to explain the standing of minorities in society," (28) reflected in the comments of Ms. Rogers. Also, Bonilla-Silva outlines the frame of *abstract liberalism* which "involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g. "equal opportunity," the

idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters.” Thus, an abstract liberalist frame would argue that one’s educational fate is highly influenced by one’s own decisions and choices, and ignores power and social structure.

Teachers, like Mr. Staples used the frame of abstract liberalism to explain away the racial achievement gap. Other teachers blended the abstract liberalism frame with the frame of cultural racism as is Mr. Rendon, a young English teacher who identified and would be as Hispanic and had been teaching less than 10 years, blended individualist arguments with arguments of cultural deficiency in the following encounter:

9/20/06. Mr. Rendon said that the key difference in students who are successful and those who are not as successful is “parental involvement.” He said that the white parents are more “responsible” for their students than the minority parents. If a white student goes home with an F, the parent usually calls him to determine why. When a minority student has an F, the parent rarely calls. When he holds advisory meetings the white parents always attend, whereas the minority parents often have to reschedule, do not show up, or fail to even set up an appointment in the first place. I asked him if there were minority students who were successful in his classes. He said that there are some and that they do not “*act like minorities.*” He gave the example of his wife who is from a small town in Northern New Mexico (and who I assumed and later learned was a person of color). She came from a family where there was little parental involvement in her schooling and her siblings did poorly in school. She had the personal motivation and drive to be successful and is.

When explaining the racial achievement gap, Mr. Rendon relies on hyper-individualist arguments and cites his spouse as an example of overcoming “cultural” odds. He suggests that minority students are less academically successful because the parents of minority students “don’t care.” Mr. Rendon describes “successful” minority students as those who disavow their ethnic heritage and take on characteristics that he has associated with being white, such as parental involvement and individual responsibility. Bonilla-Silva

argues that *cultural racism* uses culturally based explanations as rationale for the social position of minorities.

Interestingly, Bonilla-Silva found that few blacks “wholeheartedly” subscribe to the frames of color blindness, but that for some blacks (and Latino/as, I would argue), the frames have an “indirect” effect on them. That is, “the abstract liberalism [frame] has shaped the way many blacks [and Mr. Rendon] explain school and residential segregation” (2003, 171). Bonilla-Silva suggests that their use of this frame is part and parcel of the diffusion of colorblindness and the way in which it has set the “terms of debate” (ibid). Like the few black respondents²³ in the work of Bonilla-Silva, many people at Valdez, like Mr. Rendon, relied on colorblind frameworks, particularly the frame of abstract liberalism and cultural racism, to explain racial matters, including people of color who I found were just as likely to appeal to these frameworks when explaining racial matters.

While at Valdez, teachers and administrators often sounded the anthem of individualism and hard work as the basis of academic achievement. Scholars have argued that education is a non-neutral process and that there are social forces outside of the individual influencing achievement. More specifically, a number of social scientists who write about race argue that race and racism are critical components in the process of education (Fine, 1991; Lopez, 2002, 2003; Lewis, 2003) and that race is significant (Ladson-Billing and Tate, 1995). Moreover, there is a dearth of scholarship that examines the ways that schools produce and reproduce educational inequality (See Valenzuela, 1999; Lewis, 2003; Lopez, 2003, 2003; Morris, 2005; Lopez and Lechuga 2007).

²³ Though the sample size is small (17), Bonilla-Silva did find that some blacks did employ the frames of colorblindness and that they likely to use the frames of abstract liberalism, cultural racism, and naturalization of racial matters. See Chapter 1 for an explanation of each frame.

Tracking, the Hidden Curriculum and Racial Lessons of the Classroom

Many social scientists who write about race argue that racist assumptions and stereotypes influence the ways in which educators transmit a hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1980; Valenzuela, 1999). The hidden curriculum consists of social lessons on student behavior and school orientation. Students internalize these messages and either engage in conformity or subversive resistance. Edward Morris found in his work on school discipline at a predominantly minority middle school, that young Latinos were viewed as aggressive, dangerous, gang members based on the assumptions educators made about their race and gender (2005). He argues that “race, class, and gender profoundly alter each other in framing perceptions of different students, which translates into different methods of regulating and shaping their behaviors” (2005: 44).

While at Valdez, I bore witness to a similar hidden curriculum when examining the grade honors science class, which consisted of slightly more white students (14) than students of color²⁴ (10), of which Latino/as constituted six, and a 9th grade remedial science class, which was packed with Latino/a students (19), fewer White students (9), and even fewer non-Latino/a students of color (5).²⁵ Both of these classes were part of two different ninth grade “learning communities.” Recall from the previous chapter that the freshman

²⁴ In order to protect the anonymity of students in a given ethnic group with fewer than five students, their identities are reported in a combined category called “students of color.” “Students of color” includes students who might identify as “Black,” “African American,” “Indian,” “Asian,” or “Native American.”

²⁵ In order to categorize each student into a given racial category, I took the terms **students** used to identify themselves when completing a contact sheet that asked their “race” and “ethnicity.” I was able to get a completed contact sheet for every student in the class though they may not have completed a survey or interview. For students who identified as “as Chicana/o, Mexican, Mexican American, Latino/a, Hispanic, Spanish, or Hispano,” I used the term Latino/a to refer to them collectively (see footnote #1 in Chapter 1 for further explanation). Instances where students identified with one ethnic group, but might be racialized as belonging to another racial group are noted throughout the text when relevant.

learning communities consisted of one math teacher, science teacher, and English teacher who rotate the same 100 or so students through three class periods over two semesters.

The honors science teacher, Mr. Lesh, was a white, younger man, who had been teaching nearly ten years. He was charismatic and often joked with students comfortably using phrases that students might use among themselves like “What’s the dilly-yo,” or “what up.” There was a laid back approach to his teaching and an underlying current of trust and admiration of his students. The following account represents a typical day in Mr. Lesh’s class that exemplified the ways in which pedagogies differ by school track:

04/04/07. There was a quiz today and students began to quietly complete the quiz. I was surprised by the lack of side conversations as students went about completing their quiz. They completed them rather quickly and again quietly walked up and turned them in. Mr. Lesh told them to prepare their homework and they quietly did. The students had a number of word problems for homework. Lesh had students grade their own work as he quickly went over the answers while walking around the room casually glancing down at the students’ papers ensuring that students did complete the assignment, though he did not closely examine the homework.

He then asked students questions and due to time said that he only had time to answer questions. He called on the first three hands that he saw. Mr. Lesh told another young man that he choose these three because these were the first hands he saw, but maybe the questions they had were the same as the questions he and others had. Speaking in a casual, friendly, non-threatening, voice, he tells Jim, “What’s the deal-y-o,” when asking him why he didn’t get the problem correct. I am struck at how quiet the class is as we work through the problems. I can hear the buzzing of the overhead fluorescent lights in the background as Mr. Lesh fluttered around up front excitedly completing the problems. Mr. Lesh wrote on the chalkboard using white and blue chalk, the blue to accentuate pieces of the lecture.

Later, we work on a number of problems. The room was silent as Mr. Lesh talked. When he asked questions, the students replied with a collective voice. Students took notes, their heads bobbing up and down as they jotted notes and looked up at the chalkboard. I was still surprised by the quiet, and lack of note passing and distraction. The room seems so large with lots of space. The back two rows are empty. There is plenty of room to walk down the rows and space between the desks. Mr. Lesh’s desk sat off to the side, very innocuous in the upper right corner. I wondered if this room was larger than all the rooms in this part of the school, including Mrs. Calvert’s, the remedial science teacher, room.

Mr. Lesh continued to write on the board and told students, “if the bell rings, just go home, go to 4th period,” giving students the independence and liberty to take responsibility for leaving class and getting to their next period. Mr. Lesh’s students aren’t anxiously awaiting the bell; they continue to write. Students focus and take notes right up until the bell rings. Only when the bell rings do they pack away their things. Mr. Lesh tells them that the substitute should let them work together tomorrow if they don’t give “them” a reason not to. This indicated to me that he entrusts students to leave class on their own and work together, reaffirming their independence.

Mr. Lesh’s approach in the classroom was easy-going and non-threatening. Students were treated with respect and given the independence to carry out their academic responsibilities.

There were a number of times when students were given class time to do their homework while Mr. Lesh played the radio in the background. During my time at Valdez, I did not observe this privilege occurring in any other classroom during the school day. Students were also allowed to grade their own work with minimal monitoring by Mr. Lesh or double-checking to ensure that students completed their work. Though the practice of students grading their own work occurred in a number of other classes I observed at Valdez, most teachers did a “double-check” having students submit self-graded homework or the teacher walked around the room and consciously inspected its completion. In Mr. Lesh’s honors science class, students were allowed to work in groups cooperating to complete class assignments. Moreover, students were given the liberty to dismiss themselves from class when the bell signaled its completion. Students in this 9th grade honors science class had many freedoms and privileges that many of their 9th grade peers did not. They were trusted and treated as young adults versus children.

This account is in a sharp contrast to my account in Mrs. Calvert’s remedial science class. Mrs. Calvert, a middle-aged, mixed race woman who could pass for white or Latina, often coddled students continuously correcting their classroom behavior with a smile. Her

classroom was average sized with a door on the front right side and back right side of the room where student enter and exit. The desks were arranged in rows of about six desks. There was a chalk board in the front and back of the room. On the back chalkboard were the week's activities for her three classes. On the right side of the room in the front was her desk. She sits on a stool behind a lectern, which takes the place of one of the desks and, thus, sits in with the students when she lectures and talks to them.

Though she had prior experience teaching middle school, this was her first year teaching high school. In Mrs. Calvert's remedial class, there was an emphasis on order and social control. When students were late to class, even by a few seconds, they were forced to stand in the back of the room for the entire period. There were many times when a handful of students were standing at the back of the room through the end of the period. Though Mrs. Calvert was certainly not the only teacher to practice this form of discipline, there tended to be more students in this class that suffered this fate due to their tardiness. I noted that when subjected to this form of discipline students often did not pay attention to the day's lecture and often distracted themselves with what was written on the chalkboard behind them or engaged in non-verbal communication with their seated peers or those standing in the back with them.

Students were strongly encouraged to raise their hands and often reproached for speaking "out of turn." Christian, a tall, thin, dark, young man of color, often was the subject of such reprimands. Christian was a spirited young man who frequently took pride in his classroom success. He often shared this delight with the class, as well as his frustration when he did not understand a concept. He would exclaim "I got it!" or "Ah, man!" Mrs. Calvert did her best to encourage his enthusiasm, but often told him to "raise his hand" if he wanted

to contribute to the class. Over time, Mrs. Calvert's approach to dealing with Christian's non-conformist participation was to ignore him by talking past him or moving on to the next question or topic. Mrs. Calvert would announce when class was nearing its end and prompt us to collectively pack our things as we waited to be dismissed, assuming that we hadn't lost the privilege to leave when the bell rang due to excessive talking and distraction during class time. As punishment, there were many times when the class was held a few minutes past the bell cutting into the lunch period, which in turn may have made students late for their next class.

In their review of the literature on curriculum differentiation, or the practice of making "different knowledge available to different groups of students" and organizing "school systems so that students who appear to vary in their educational needs and abilities can be taught separately," Oakes, Gamaron, and Page (1992:585) found that there tends to be an "overemphasis on control processes and a concomitant deemphasis on educative processes in lower-track as opposed to upper-track classrooms." This can be as a result of lowered teacher expectations or as a response to "unskilled, unruly, [and] uninterested students" (ibid). The consequence of such negotiation is lowered academic achievement in lower-track classrooms.

In conversations with Mrs. Calvert at the end of my year at Valdez, I learned that of the 33 students in her remedial science class, she would identify only four students as high achievers, or students with an A or a B. She said that about one-third of the class, or roughly thirteen of the students were mid-level achievers, or had around a C, while the nearly half of the students (about 16) were low achievers with a D or a F. In contrast to Mr. Lesh's honors class, Mrs. Calvert's class was much more structured and rigid and students were given fewer

privileges and disciplined more often. Though she conveyed that she sincerely “cared” about her students and believed many of her students did not live up to their “potential,” many students (13 of 33) in the remedial science class were only doing well enough to pass the class with a C, while almost half (16 of 33) were failing with a D or a F. Few were excelling. Of those students with a D or an F the majority of were Latino/a. When comparing the academic performance of Mrs. Calvert’s ninth graders to that of Mr. Lesh’s, there were large disparities. In conversations with Mr. Lesh, I learned that of the 24 students in his class, all but two of them had an A or a B, thus the majority of the class were high achievers.

As I indicated previously, Valdez is somewhat racially and economically diverse. However, when comparing enrollment in both classes, it becomes clear the remedial class was packed with a majority of students of color, specifically Latino/a students. In this one class, Latino/as constituted 58% of the remedial students (19 of 33), while Latino/as only accounted for about one-third of the student population at Valdez High School. When combining Latino/a students with the other Non-Latino/a students of color in the remedial class, together they constituted 72% of the class, while only comprising nearly half of the student population at Valdez (see Table 1.).

Table 11. Student Enrollment in Mrs. Calvert’s Remedial Science Class

	White	Latino/a	Non-Latino/a Students of Color	Totals
Female	6	12	3	21
Male	3	7	2	12
Totals	9	19	5	33

Alternately, in the honors science class, Latino/a students constituted 6 of the 24 students, or 25%. When combining Latino/a students with the other students of color in the

class, they combined for 42% of the honors students, slightly under the overall percentage of students of color at Valdez High School (49%) (see Table 12). Oakes, et.al (1992) found that disproportionate percentages of poor and minority students, principally Black and Hispanic, are found in curricula designed for low-ability or non-college bound students. These students are also underrepresented in gifted programs. This occurs independent of test scores, counselor and teacher recommendations, or student and parent choice.

Table 12. Student Enrollment in Mr. Lesh’s Honors Science Class

	White	Latino/a	Non-Latino/a Students of Color	Totals
Female	7	2	3	12
Male	7	4	1	12
Totals	14	6	4	24

Similar to the findings of Oakes et. al. (1992), I found in these two classes clear overrepresentation of Latino/a students and students of color in the remedial class and underrepresentation in the high track class. Thus, it is no surprise that when we look at the official advanced placement enrollment for that year, 74% of students were White, 16% Hispanic, 7% Asian American, 2% African American, and 2% Native American. If Latino/a students and students of color are underrepresented in a 9th grade honors classes, in which admission is not as restricted as it is in gifted and AP and which often require an ability exam and/or teacher approval, it is no surprise that their underrepresentation is exacerbated by the time students reach 11th and 12th grade, the year’s when students typically take advanced placement courses. Though these limited observations are by no means comprehensive, they are telling nonetheless.

In addition to the marked inequality observed in classroom enrollment and achievement, every desk in Mrs. Calvert's remedial class was occupied with her thirty-three students (down from thirty-seven at the beginning of the semester), including a study table that was off to the side of the room. The honors classroom felt bigger, more open. In Mr. Lesh's honors science class, the back two rows of desks sat empty and there was plenty of room between the rows of desks for Mr. Lesh to move comfortably around the room. There were bright bulletin boards with the school day's announcements. In contrast, the remedial class had bulletin boards boasting the benefits of being in the US Navy and the importance of practicing the 5 P's, which were being "prompt, prepared, productive, polite, and positive" (Anyon 1980).

The disparities between the two classrooms were stark and conveyed subtle messages to students about their placement in the school hierarchy. Though there was no formal curriculum differentiation in place, in practice there were apparent differences and the academic disparities between the two classes were clear. In fact, one teacher shared that in her opinion, "I shouldn't be telling you this, but [the ninth grade learning communities are] kind of like tracking." Oakes, et. al. (1992) found no overall benefit of curriculum differentiation, but that tracking *widens the achievement gap* between the higher and lower track. They found that students in the upper track were more likely to graduate, enroll, and attend college. These students also had access to the most qualified teachers and best academic resources. Clearly, the upper track is advantaged, but this advantage leads to an equal disadvantage to students in the lower track and no overall improvement.

“We are not going to talk about it!”: Silencing Race Talk

During my time at Valdez, I witnessed a general resistance to discussions of race in the classroom and around the school. At times, teachers and administrators sidestepped these conversations by ignoring racial discourse, changing the “subject,” or rewording mid-sentence to avoid using terms (i.e. “discrimination”) that might evoke conversations on race. At other times, there was a conscious effort to silence discussions of race by announcing “we are not going to talk about it,” or that issues of race were not relevant in certain conversations. The following account exemplifies the ways in which racial discourse was ignored and silenced. The exchange occurred in a regular 9th grade class (neither honors or remedial) taught by Mr. Wheeler, who was a younger teacher in his late twenties, who had been teaching less than ten years, and who identified as a person of color:

1/31/07. The students focus their attention on what Mr. Wheeler is saying as he talks to them about genetics. Mr. Wheeler began telling the class we are going to talk about the “big picture” for a minute and why genetics might be useful to us. I have not heard him try to relate class content to the big picture before and wondered if my comments earlier about knowledge for knowledge sake influenced him. He asked a male student why genetics might be useful and the student said he didn’t know. Mr. Wheeler said that it might be useful if we want to know how different genetic traits, like cancer, get passed from one generation to another. The students seemed engaged and they were looking at Mr. Wheeler as if they were paying attention.

Christian, and tall, thin, young man of color, said that we may be interested in genetics because if two white people had a black baby then you know something’s not right. The class laughed and Wheeler did not respond, but look surprised and searched the faces of other students for a response. Jesse, an outgoing, talkative young man, who identifies as Asian American, said so we can understand Hector’s accent. Hector was a quiet young man who moved to New Mexico from Mexico four years ago. Hector said that a white person and a black person could have a brown baby. Mr. Wheeler did not engage any of these comments, but simply continued talking about genetics and cancer as if the conversation never happened.

Mr. Wheeler rarely, if at all, challenged students' assumptions that race is genetic. In this instance, he remained silent preferring to ignore these discussions. In another interaction in

Mr. Wheeler's classroom the following lengthy exchange occurred:

01/17/07. We then talked about asexual reproduction. Someone asked about cloning individuals and them being exactly alike. Mr. Wheeler said not necessarily. While a clone may be an exact genetic copy, "*you are who you because of your life experiences.*" I thought this was an interesting point, which Mr. Wheeler should have elaborated, but may not have been able to because Christian blurted, "*Why do Chinese people look alike.*" Joaquin then chimed in, "*I talked to my friend and he said all white people look alike.*" Mr. Wheeler, I think afraid where this conversation was headed, cut off the conversation and told Christian that he was moving on.

Christian objected and said, "*God, doesn't like Chinese people?*" Mr. Wheeler said, "*I didn't say that,*" and attempted to answer Christian's initial question about Chinese people looking alike and ignore Joaquin's comment and Christian's rebuttal. Mr. Wheeler said, "If you live in a geographic area then the chances of you carrying on a gene are great." Christian resisted Mr. Wheeler's response and attempted to ask a follow up question, but Mr. Wheeler cut him off afraid where the conversation might lead.

Mr. Wheeler reiterated the geographic area explanation and Christian tried to ask a question, again. Mr. Wheeler continued to cut him off, again, seemingly afraid where the conversations might lead. Christian would raise his hand and tell Mr. Wheeler he had a question, but Mr. Wheeler told Christian that we were not going to go there.

Mr. Wheeler said that this conversation was about genetic variation and crossing over and we were not going to talk about [human] cloning and hate. Mr. Wheeler reiterated this same logic over and over, and Christian resisted over and over trying to ask his question telling Mr. Wheeler that he's not going to ask *that* kind of question. Mr. Wheeler did not want hear it. Chris laughed at this exchange and the rest of the class watched.

Kevin then tried to rephrase Christian's question telling Mr. Wheeler what he thought Christian was trying to ask, but Kevin, too, was cut off. Mr. Wheeler then said, "*We are talking about genetics, not hate. We are not going to talk about it.*" He then ignored student's protests and quickly told students to get a piece of paper out as we were going to do the warm up quiz. He read the first question without taking a breath.

As we were doing the warm up, Joaquin asked about hermaphrodites and if they can sexually reproduce. Mr. Wheeler said they could not. Christian raised his hand and Mr. Wheeler almost called on him. Mr. Wheeler said the first syllable of Christian's

name, but then called on Beth. Christian then raised his hand and called Mr. Wheeler's name to ask a question. Mr. Wheeler yelled Christian "quiet!"

Mr. Wheeler then asked the second question about the advantage of sexual reproduction over asexual reproduction. Jesse asked Christian what he was going to ask Mr. Wheeler. Christian tried to tell Jesse, but Mr. Wheeler cut him off saying, "*I am not gonna answer any questions about hating people.*" Christian began talking to those around him, including Jesse, about not being able to ask his question.

Mr. Wheeler, clearly upset and annoyed, yelled, "*Jesse, what is so funny? What is so damn funny!*" Mr. Wheeler then angrily said, "*Christian, stop talking!*" The room got quiet. Mr. Wheeler then moved on to class notes. The room was very quiet as students took notes from the PowerPoint slides. Mr. Wheeler sat at his desk working on his computer as students wrote down notes. Slide after slide, we took notes. We finished one final slide and Mr. Wheeler told us that that was all the notes we were going to take. The bell was about to ring and students gathered their things.

Mr. Wheeler's response to the students' questions was swift and silencing. Perhaps, Mr. Wheeler worried that engaging the conversation would have led into uncomfortable territory. It was also possible that he was worried about repercussions from parents and the administration for addressing issues of race. Either way, it was clear that this was a missed opportunity to disrupt the students' essentialist understandings of race (demonstrated in the comments about Chinese and white people looking "alike") as biologically based (Omi and Winant, 1994), as well as address racist stereotypes. This was a classic example of avoidance, students wanting to talk about race, but teachers avoiding and silencing it, a hallmark of the colorblind era, which has made direct talk about race nearly impossible.

I later had a chance to ask Mr. Wheeler if issues of race often came up in his class. He said that issues of race "don't really come up." I couldn't help but recalling how in the classes I observed, issues of race did come up, but he stifled them or ignored them. Mr. Wheeler said that every now and then there is a "knucklehead" who will make a racist comment, but that he is quick to reprimand the students and tell them that it's not acceptable

to make those kinds of comments and encourages them to be sensitive. I asked if he felt comfortable addressing issue of race in his class. Again, he stated that they rarely came up.

I asked Mr. Wheeler if Valdez High School gave teachers guidance on how to deal with issues of race. He said no. He had learned how to manage discussions of race in the coursework he took for his teaching certification and that it was similar to his own approach, but there wasn't any on-going training or official school policy. In my conversations with other teachers at Valdez, many of them indicated that they did not feel prepared to address issues of race or presented a colorblind ideology that "we are all the same." They indicated to me that they were never taught how to discuss issues of race in their education program, nor was there any kind of training or support from the school. Students did share that on occasion teachers did talk about race and racism, but that the nature of these conversations were either placing racism and discrimination in the past (i.e. Rosa Parks and the bus boycott) or as the consequence of the actions of ignorant individuals rather than the result of racialized social and institutional practices (a la Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Conclusion

While at Valdez, many people talked about the "diversity" at the school and touted it as a unique quality within the larger school district. They talked about how despite such diversity, "race [was] not an issue," as Mrs. Williamson, dark skinned woman of color, who worked at the school, shared. The front page of the student newspaper, *The Wing*, quoted a Hispanic teacher suggesting that such diversity might bring challenges, particularly as they related to school discipline (i.e. detention referrals). He said, "This is the best start to a year I've had so far, in my 11 years, [as few referrals have been given]. The diversity of VHS is one issue that many people who are not in the school daily would see as problem-causing,

but at VHS, diversity is not an issue, it's who we are. 'Every year it amazes me how such a diverse student population can co-exist in a school environment.'

However, when asked about the racial achievement gap and the educational disparities evident at Valdez, many school administrators and teachers relied on individualist arguments to explain student failure or success and the racial achievement gap. I was continuously reminded that achievement was the responsibility of the student and, thus, I should look to them for some understanding. They rarely questioned the disparities in institutional practices (i.e. tracking, curriculum differentiation, silencing race talk, etc.). Bonilla-Silva argues, "by framing race-related issues in the language of liberalism, Whites [and others who employ this frame] can appear 'reasonable' and even 'moral,' while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality" (2003: 28).

Castagno (2008) found a similar culture of silence around issues of race in two, demographically diverse, urban middle schools. She argues that this practice serves to "create and perpetuate an educational culture in which the status quo is maintained" and that "by denying race, educators are able to also deny the way in which [they] participate in the legitimization of Whiteness," which she defines as "the ignoring of race and racism, the embracing and rationalizing of meritocracy, the denying of institutional oppression, and the protecting of and investing in privilege" (329, 320). Bonilla-Silva (2003) further argues that colorblind ideology has made it illegitimate to talk about racially based feelings or viewpoints and that this serves to maintain White privilege and support the status quo.

Similarly, when I approached a white, male, honors science teacher, Mr. Shue, and asked if I could observe his class, he indicated that there were few "minorities" in his class and that it might not be a suitable location to examine the racial achievement gap.

Frankenberg (1993) has documented the ways in which Whites and whiteness are unmarked categories of race and that the white women in her analysis saw racism as a “Black” issue. Similarly, this teacher believed that because there were few students of color in his honor class, race was not an issue.

Another young, white, female honors teacher, Mrs. Larrabee, who was also a doctoral student, resisted participation, as well, which was surprising given that she shared that she had taken graduate-level course in race and ethnicity and indicated that she had knowledge about the racial disparities in education. Both teachers were concerned that their students might be overwhelmed with the amount of school work they had as honors students and participating in a survey or interview about the achievement gap. Staiger (2005) found a similar resistance to addressing issues of race veiled as efforts to “protect” or “shelter” honors students from these issues.

This chapter adds to the growing literature (Fine, 1991; Lewis 2003; Castagno, 2008) on the ways in which colorblind ideology manifests itself in the diffusion of meritocracy, the hidden curriculum, and silencing. It demonstrates that colorblind ideology is pervasive and works to mask racial inequities in schools and maintain the status quo. Specifically, this chapter addresses, what are the dominant racial ideologies at Valdez? How do teachers’ ideologies explain or justify the racial achievement gap? How do colorblind ideologies manifest themselves in school practices? How does colorblind ideology mask academic racial inequities? I found that colorblindness was the dominant ideology that circulated at Valdez, and that school context matters. A context which sounds the anthem of hard work and individualism, silences discourses of race, and conveys subtle messages about race and

racial hierarchy serves to reinforce the status quo and limit opportunities to address the racial achievement gap. How to address these “blind” spots is addressed in chapter seven.

The next chapter focuses on fourteen young Latinas with whom I conducted life history interviews. We learn about the ways they negotiate how they see themselves and their *race-gender experiences*,²⁶ particularly their schooling experiences.

²⁶ Lopez argues that that “race-gender experiences are the social interactions that take place in a give social sphere, such as public spaces, schools, work, and the home in which men and women undergo racial and gender processes” (6, 2003).

Chapter 4:

“We’re not Mexican!”: Mapping the Racial and Ethnic Identities of Young Latinas in a New Mexico High School

Introduction

Tatiana’s quote, included in the title, strongly asserts that she is “not Mexican” and conveys the importance given to defining one’s racial self in the social world. Tatiana, a dark skinned young woman, identified her racial and ethnic identity as “Black,” despite sharing that father is “Black and Native American” and her mother is “Hispanic and African American.”²⁷ For this young woman, her racial/ethnic identity is tied to ancestry and the way in which she reports she is racialized. Recent work on Chicana/o identity has shown that “racial and ethnic identities were the core of [Chicana/o] students’ identities,” (47) and that their racial identities were informed by their racial-political experiences of “racial difference, bias, and/or discrimination” (Pizarro 2005, 56). Moreover, their ethnic identities were affected by their ethnic-cultural lived experiences (Hill Collins 1990).

Using life history interviews conducted with fourteen young Latinas²⁸ at Valdez High School, this chapter discusses the ways in which these young women are constructing their identities in the context of racialization and gendered dynamics at school. Specifically, this chapter addresses the following research questions: How do young Latinas in a

²⁷ Students were asked “What race do you consider yourself to be?” on the survey and in the interview and “What ethnicity or cultural background do you consider yourself to be/?” on the survey. After interviewing these young women, I typically jotted down summary notes indicating my assessment of their skin, hair, and eye color and how I would racialize them. I compared this to their self description and how they racialized themselves. (See Golash-Boza 2006).

²⁸ I have chosen to use the term “Latino/a” to refer to the target population of this study, which are students, who have at least one Mexican-origin parent(s) and who may cite historical claims to New Mexico or the New Mexico regional Diaspora (Gonzales, 1993). Thus, Latina (female) students with one Non-Latino/a parent are included in this analysis. When referring to a particular young woman, I use the term she used to identify herself.

predominantly white high school in New Mexico negotiate their racial identities in the school context? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What, if any, relationships exist between their racial identities and academic achievement?

Omi and Howard Winant (1994) have suggested that racial identity can be externally informed through racialization, or how society ascribes race to an individual and acts upon it, as well as internally informed through one's understanding of racialized lived experiences. Extending Omi and Winant's frame, others argue that it is at the intersection of race, gender (Lopez 2003), and class (Hill Collins 1990, Bettie 2005) the identity negotiation occurs. Lopez found that due in part to their lived experiences with race *and* gender processes, second-generation Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian young men were unsure, while the young women were "hopeful" about their future (2002). Lopez argues that the young "men's ambivalence and women's optimism towards education were products of their differing and cumulative *race-gender experiences*²⁹, their responses to these experiences, and their perceptions of their prospects for social mobility" (2002, 83).

Moreover, in 2006, the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center reported in their Education Counts database the national graduation rate for Hispanic males was 49.9 compared to 59 for Hispanic females and 63 for white males³⁰. Not unlike the national trend, EPE reported that Hispanic males in New Mexico graduated at a rate of 48

²⁹ Lopez argues that "race-gender experiences are the social interactions that take place in a give social sphere, such as public spaces, schools, work, and the home in which men and women undergo racial and gender processes" (6, 2003).

³⁰ "Graduation rates are calculated using the Cumulative Promotion Index. Based on enrollment and diploma data, the CPI estimates the percent of public high school students who graduate on time with a standard diploma. It does this by representing high school graduation as a stepwise process rather than a single event. Specifically, it captures the four key steps a student must take in order to graduate: three grade-to-grade promotions and ultimately earning a diploma" (Editorial Projects in Education 2006).

compared to 55 for Hispanic females (2006). While Hispanic females may be doing well relative to their male co-ethnic peers, when we compare them to white females there are stark inequities. Forty-one percent of Latinas fail to graduate from high school on time with a diploma compared to only 22% of white girls (National Women's Law Center & Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund 2009).

The National Women's Law Center & Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund report (2009) also documented that ways in which Latinas challenges related to intersection of their ethnicity and gender. They found that Latinas often face stereotypes of them as "submissive underachievers and caretakers" (16). Latinas also "face significant challenges to balancing school and family responsibilities, particularly because the rate of teen pregnancy among Latinas is so high (they have the highest national birth rates for 15 to 19 year olds of all racial groups) (23). Thus, given the unique challenges Latinas must face in the context of their schooling experiences, I consider the their identities separate from their male counterparts as a way to understand the gendered lives of these young Latinas at Valdez High School in New Mexico (Lopez, 2003; Bettie, 2005; Mendoza-Denton, 2006).

In this chapter, we hear young women speak about gendered racial hierarchies in school in ways that differ from the young men. Specifically, this chapter addresses how Latina high school students in New Mexico are constructing their identities in the context of racializing and gendering processes. I found that young their racial identities were informed by their understandings of their ancestry and their experiences in the school setting. While all the young women identified as Hispanic, this meant different things for the young women. Four major identity repertoires emerged: "Hispanic not Mexican," off-whiteness, Mexican,

and “American, but still a little bit Mexican.” I also found that phenotype, specifically skin color, shaped how these young women were racialized. In contrast to segmented assimilation theories, I found that there was no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement.

Schools as Racialized Social Contexts

[My classmates] are all, ““So you’re just a ghetto girl.’ ‘Spanish and little Chicano and chola’.

-Tania, a medium/dark skinned “Hispanic and Spanish” Student

Tania, a “Hispanic and Spanish” young woman at Valdez High School shared with me the “names” her white female classmates sometimes called her including “*ghetto*,” “*Spanish*,” “little Chicano,” and “chola.” In response, Tania told me, “I didn’t care what anyone said because I’m not really afraid of anyone. I don’t really care.” It was clear to me that these names did hurt and her response that she “didn’t care” was her way of managing these microaggressions. Unfortunately, pretending not to “care,” was ineffective for her as the taunts continued. Tania felt that her only response was to fight, saying “I tried fighting this one girl, but she wouldn’t fight me.” Tania’s attempts to confront the racist assumptions that underlie her peers’ use the terms “ghetto,” “Spanish,” and “little Chicano and chola,” could have netted negative consequences for her at a school, but did have a lasting and painful impact on her. Tania’s story is one of many stories I heard from these young Latinas who are often forced to confront the sometimes explicit (i.e. name calling) and often implicit racial stigma that permeates a racialized school context.

Scholars argue that schools are one of many racialized contexts (Lewis, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Lee, 2005). Amanda Lewis (2003) analyzed the schooling experiences of youth in three elementary schools in Southern California. One was a predominantly white suburban

school. Another was a predominantly minority urban school, and the third was a Spanish immersion school that was “a bicultural and nonwhite space” (9). She found that racialization processes indeed pervade the school context and that the school curriculum teaches many racial lessons and that race is present in the “hidden curriculum,” in history lessons, interpersonal interactions, and the ways in which discipline was meted out. Lewis found that in at the predominantly minority, urban school, race was seldom discussed despite the reality that there were many racial tensions. She also found that whites were tired of hearing about racism and blacks were tired of dealing with racism. There was a discourse of black inferiority reformulated as cultural deficiency and social inadequacy. Lewis also found that at the predominantly minority school, Black males were particular targets of discipline, while Latinos received little attention, particularly girls.

Similarly, Stacey Lee’s (2005) work on second-generation Hmong American students at University Heights High School examines the ways in which the “culture of whiteness” is celebrated and privileged, while Hmong culture is cast as culturally deficient. She examines how Hmong American high school students negotiate and transform their identities in response to these dominant messages. She argues that “racism -the blackening of Hmong Americans and the image of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners- informs the way Hmong American identities are understood by members of the dominant group” (22).

Like the schools examined by Lewis and Lee, I witnessed the racialized dynamics present in the school context, and, like Lee, found that youth are situating their identities in relation to these dynamics. Table 13 provides a description of the fourteen young women I met at Valdez. The table indicates that most (10 of 14) young women identified as

“Hispanic” to some degree. Four young women identified as Hispanic only, Carolina, Dawn, Christiana, and Lora. As Carolina shared,

Hispanic because my dad, his family is Hispanic. His mom and dad, my grandma and grandpa. My mom’s mom and dad, my mom’s mom is white and my mom’s dad is Hispanic and Indian. I just consider myself Hispanic more than Indian or white.

Speaking in essentialist terminology, Carolina states that her paternal heritage is Hispanic and her maternal heritage is a blend of “white,” “Hispanic,” and “Indian” (read: Native American), but that she considers herself “Hispanic more than Indian or White.”

Similarly, Dawn said that she considered herself “Hispanic” because she speaks Spanish and engages in “Hispanic traditions.” She said,

[I consider myself] Hispanic because I’ve grown up in like Hispanic traditions and stuff. Like we do a lot of like Matanzas and Baptisms and stuff like that. Mostly because of language too, Spanish.

For Dawn, speaking Spanish and engaging in traditions associated with being “Hispanic” factor in to her self-identification.

One young woman, Emily, identified as herself as “Hispanic” and “Chicano [sic],” using these terms interchangeably. Emily shared that to her Hispanic and Chicano meant the same. The following exchange occurred during my interview with Emily.

Chalane: So how would you describe your physical appearance, you said “I’m light complected.” How would you describe your physical appearance, I mean skin color, facial features your hair, texture, other physical characters?

Emily: I describe myself as tall, light complected, long hair, Chicano, like.

Chalane: What does that mean, Chicano?

Emily: Like Hispanic, like Hispanics.

Chalane: What’s the difference between the two?

Emily: There is no difference, like you know how you asked me, what's your background or your...

Chalane: Ethnicity?

Emily: Yeah, that's how you would say Hispanic, Chicano. Yeah.

Chalane: So are all Hispanics Chicano?

Emily: Yeah.

Chalane: And all Chicanos are Hispanic?

Emily: Yeah, they're just the same thing

When I asked Emily why she identified as Chicano and Hispanic, she said, "because my whole family is Hispanic, like my grandma's Hispanic and my dad's Hispanic, well my dad's is Mexican, but I don't know him." Emily thus relies on familial connections to define her ethnic identity, using Chicano and Hispanic interchangeably, but distinguishing these terms from "Mexican," as she qualifies her answer sharing that her paternal grandfather is "Mexican" and that she did not know him. Incidentally, Emily was the only young woman to identify herself as "Chicano." One other young woman, Tania, has been called "Chicano," but does not use this term to identify herself.

Three young women identified themselves as "Hispanic" and "Spanish," Siomara, Tania, and Paola. When asked directly, Tania said that she was "Hispanic, because that's what I mostly am. My mom's full Hispanic and my dad's half Hispanic and half Native American, so I consider myself more Hispanic." Tania referred to herself as Hispanic or Spanish, and used these terms interchangeably. She also distanced herself from her Native American heritage by considering herself "more Hispanic," and only referencing her Native American heritage in the context of discussing her father's heritage.

Table 13. The Multiple Identities of the Young Latinas at Valdez High School

Student	Place of Birth	Racial/Ethnic Identity*	Racialized by Others As	High School Achievement**	Parent Race & Education***	Parent Occupation
Carolina	Large Urban City in Nevada	Hispanic	Sometimes White, but most of the time Hispanic.	Lower Middle	Mother (Hispanic) and Father (Hispanic) completed high school.	Mother worked in a retail store for many years, but is currently unemployed. Father works in construction.
Dawn	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic	Hispanic	Middle	Mother (Hispanic) completed 11th grade and Father (Hispanic) has his high school diploma.	Mother is a manager of a check-cashing facility. Father was a supervisor, but is currently unemployed.
Christina	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic	White (When others learn her Spanish surname, they racialize her as Hispanic.)	High	Mother (Hispanic) completed high and is working on nursing degree at community college. Step-Father (Hispanic) completed high school and one year of college.	Mother works as an operating room technician and Step-Father is a fireman.
Lora	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic	Hispanic and sometimes White	Middle	Mother (Hispanic) obtained diploma. Father (Hispanic) did not complete high school and is now completing GED.	Mother is a cashier at a retail store. Step-Father works. Father is disabled and doesn't work, but previously worked in construction.
Emily	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic/ Chicano (Uses Interchangeably)	Hispanic	Lower Middle	Raised by her paternal grandmother (Hispanic) who completed 8th grade. Mother (Hispanic) has her diploma and her Father (Hispanic) his GED.	Grandmother does not work and is on disability. Mother works as a cook in a restaurant and father is the supervisor of the kitchen cleaning staff.
Siomara	South America	Hispanic and Spanish	Hispanic (When she was younger she was racialized as White).	Lower High	Mother (South American) completed high school and Father (South American) has a bachelor's degree from his home country.	Mother works as a manager for an assisted living facility. Father teaches at a daycare center.
Tania	Small Town in Northern New Mexico	Hispanic and Spanish (Uses Interchangeably)	Hispanic	Low	Mother (Hispanic) is currently attending community college. Father (Hispanic and Native American) completed 10th grade.	Mother is currently unemployed. Father is in construction.

Student	Place of Birth	Racial/Ethnic Identity*	Racialized by Others As	High School Achievement**	Parent Education***	Parent Occupation
Paola	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Spanish and Hispanic (Two distinct categories with an emphasis on Spanish)	White or Japanese (rarely)	Lower High	Mother (Spanish) obtained bachelor's degree. Father (Spanish) completed GED.	Mother is a court reporter and Father is a school bus driver.
Inés	Large Urban City in California	Hispanic and Mexican (Two distinct categories, with an emphasis on Hispanic)	Hispanic, some say she looks white.	Middle moving towards Low	Mother (Mexican) completed junior year of high school and Father (Mexican) completed middle school.	Mother cooks in a restaurant and Father works in construction.
Kelly	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Mexican and Hispanic (Uses Interchangeably)	Half-Black and Half-Mexican	Lower Middle	Adoptive Mother (Mexican) received her GED, while adoptive Father (Chicano) attended an upper tier university for four years, but did not complete his degree.	Mother works in customer service for a major retailer and Father is a repairman for a major retailer.
Stephanie	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Mexican	Mexican	Middle	Mother (Mexican) and Father (Mexican) completed high school.	Mother works as a movie theatre manager and Father is a mechanic.
Consuelo	Medium Urban City in California	Mexican	Mexican	High	Mother (Mexican) completed 8th grade and Father (Mexican) completed 6th grade.	Mother works at a fast food restaurant and Father works in construction.
Tiffany	Mexico	Mexican	American (meaning from the US) and Mexican	Low	Mother (Mexican) completed high school and Father (Mexican) completed the 9th grade.	Mother is a dishwasher at a local fast food restaurant and Father is in construction.
Tatiana	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Black (Father is Black and Native American and Mother is Hispanic and African American)	Black	High	Mother (Black and Hispanic) has her bachelor's degree and Step-Father (Black) has some college. Her Father (Black and Native American) has completed high school.	Mother is a dental hygienist and Step-Father is a producer.

*A student's racial/ethnicity identity was determined from their response when asked about their racial and ethnic identity in their survey or their interview.

**Academic achievement is defined as High (mostly A's and B's), Middle (mostly C's), and Low (mostly D's and F's). Grades in core academic courses (i.e. science, English, and math) are weighted slightly higher.

***Parent's racial/ethnic identity was provided by the young women on their survey or in their interview.

Unlike, Tania, Paola saw “Hispanic” and “Spanish” as two different terms clarifying that she was “Hispanic, Spanish, a mixture of the two.” In addition, Siomara identified as “Spanish” even though her teacher told her that if you speak “Spanish” you are “Hispanic.” She said that she prefers to call herself “Spanish” because,

Well, because one time our teacher was telling us that Spanish comes from, like you speak Spanish, okay you’re Hispanic, but Spanish comes from Spain. And then [South America] is, I don’t know, more over there I guess and then it’s – I don’t know. I like to consider myself Spanish rather than Hispanic; I don’t know why that is, but I just say Spanish.

Siomara, isn’t quite clear the difference between “Hispanic” and “Spanish,” but makes it clear that she prefers to be called “Spanish.”

Two young women identified themselves as “Mexican” and “Hispanic” and used these terms interchangeably, Kelly and Inés. Kelly said that she identified as “Mexican and Hispanic.” When she spoke about herself, she used “Hispanic” and “Mexican” interchangeably. Though she did distinguish between the two terms saying that Mexican means “mostly [speaking] Spanish.” She added that she considered herself Hispanic “because I come from a Mexican family and my dad’s American. And I can understand Spanish really well but I can’t speak it as good as I do understand it and that’s about it.” For Kelly, nationality factors in to her self assessment, because she was adopted by an “American” father, who identified as “Hispanic” and “Chicano.” Her biological mother and her adoptive mother, who is her biological grandmother, are “Mexican.”

Inés, too, identified as Hispanic and Mexican, yet emphasized that she was “Hispanic.” Inés, who was born in the US, but grew up in Mexico and came to the US when she was around ten years old, shared, “My mom and dad are Mexican, and I was born here, so I guess I’m just Hispanic.” Throughout our interview she never referred to herself as

“Mexican,” though she used “Mexican” to indicate her ethnicity and when describing cultural traditions she engaged in (i.e. she shared her quinceañera photos with me).

Of the fourteen young Latinas I got to know while at Valdez, five of them identified as “Mexican” to some degree. All five of these young women were either 1.5 or 2nd generation Mexican American. Two identified as “Mexican” only, Stephanie and Consuelo. Two used Mexican and Hispanic interchangeably, Kelly and Inés, and one young woman said “Mexican and American,” Tiffany.

Stephanie shared that she considered herself “Mexican,” because “I mainly grew up where Mexicans were and my parents are both Mexican. So, they told us we’re half Mexican American. I’m bilingual, too. I’m not forgetting who I am either. I’m just getting to know and learning more about who I can be, and who I want to be. It’s fun being bilingual. I like being Mexican. It’s pretty fun.” For Stephanie, being “Mexican” is tied to her parents, not forgetting who she is, and being bilingual.

Similarly, Consuelo stated she was “Mexican” because “My mom’s Mexican, my grandma’s Mexican, everybody’s Mexican.” She continued that being “Mexican,” meant, “I don’t know, just having the background of being brown. Not brown, but like doing Mexican things like Mexican food, speaking Spanish, I consider that Mexican.” For Consuelo being “Mexican” is being “brown,” eating Mexican food, and speaking Spanish. Both Consuelo and Stephanie defined Mexicanness through their parents and speaking Spanish.

Finally, there was only one multiracial young woman in my sample, and she identified as “Black.” Tatiana shared that her mother was “Black and Hispanic” and her father was “Black and Native American (Yaki Indian)” and she added,

I know I'm Hispanic and everything, but my mom knows more of the, I know like more of the black culture. I'd say maybe I do know equally, but my stepdad, he's black and like his family's black. I think I fit in more with the black people because I like the same music as they do like, and everything else.

Though Tatiana recognizes her Hispanic and Native American heritage, she sees herself as black and feels more connected to black culture. Surely, her identity was also tempered by the dominant paradigm that one-drop of African black ancestry defines one as black, the “one-drop” rule (Davis, 2006). Tatiana shared that she is often racialized as “Black,” but is sometimes racialized as Native American “because Native Americans know when someone's Native American.” Thus, Tatiana's phenotype may also compel her to identify as “Black.”

In terms of socioeconomic status, there was limited variation. Most of the parents of the young women have a parent who completed high school (12 of 14). Six of the young women have a parent who was unable to complete high school. Moreover, two of the young women do not have a parent who completed high school. Six of the young women have a parent who has had some college. Of those six, three have a parent who completed college. Many of the parents work in low-paying, less stable occupations (i.e. restaurant cook, fast food, retail). Many of the fathers work in construction. Five of the Latinas had a parent who was unemployed or on disability. There were six Latinas whose parents had relatively secure, higher paying jobs. Thus, about just over half (8) of the young women came from “hard-living” backgrounds characterized as “supported by low-paying, less stable occupations that lack health care benefits and make home ownership impossible-self employed, non-union labor, service work” (Bettie 2003: 13). Just under half (6) came from “settled-living” backgrounds characterized as “supported by jobs that have relative security, higher pay, and, at times, health benefits” (ibid: 13).

“We’re not Mexican!”: Distancing from “Mexicanness” as a Way of Negotiating Racial Stigma

Ten of the fourteen young Latinas distanced themselves from “Mexicanness.” This included Carolina, Christina, Paola, Tatiana, Inés, Tania, Emily, Lora, Dawn, and Stephanie.³¹ Some did so very subtly, while others made it very clear that there were “not Mexican!” Three of these young women had at least one great-grandparent from Mexico (Lora, Emily, and Dawn) making them 3rd generation on that one side. One young woman, Tatiana, had a great-great grandparent from Mexico, or making her 4th generation on that one side. Four of the young women (Paola, Carolina, Christina, and Tania) did not have or could not identify a relative from Mexico. Of the last two Latinas, Inés, was born in the US, moved back to Mexico when she was just three days old, and then came to the US when she was ten, while Stephanie was born in the US and her parents were born in Mexico.

Carolina, who identified as Hispanic, did not make a direct disassociation from “things Mexican,” but did so subtly in her description of her “Mexican” neighbors in the neighborhood where she grew up. Carolina said that, “the Mexicans, they were pretty nice at first, but once you got to know them they were mean.” She did not see herself as one of “the Mexicans.” Similarly, Christina, who identified as Hispanic, verbally distanced herself from “the Mexican, the immigrant people” in her discussion of how “Hispanics” are seen in the US. She replied, “I don’t know because there’s so much of us, I just think it’s normal, but I

³¹ Dawn and Stephanie employed strategies of embracing and distancing themselves from “Mexicanness” in different contexts. This is discussed later in this chapter under the section, “‘American, but still a little bit Mexican.’” Others employed both strategies of embracing and distancing themselves from “Mexicanness” in different contexts.”

think more of the Mexican, the immigrant people, they're, I think a lot of the people look down on them.”

Earlier, I discussed how Paola also sought to distance herself from her Mexican heritage. Recall that Paola said that she was “Hispanic and Spanish” and that “My grandma’s side comes from Spain and Mexico, and then my grandpa’s side comes from mostly Spain.” Paola never used the term “Mexican” to identify herself, instead preferring to use the term “Spanish.”

Like Paola, Tatiana, who was born and raised in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified as “Black” and clarified that her maternal grandmother is Hispanic saying, “Like my grandma is Hispanic, and we always used to say Mexican, and my mom would go, ‘We’re not Mexican!’ And my grandma would get mad and say, ‘We’re not Mexican!’” Tatiana added that, “my grandma’s mom was from Spain and her dad was from Mexico, so we’re Hispanic, not Mexican.” Tatiana was careful to make the distinction that being “Hispanic” is not synonymous with being “Mexican,” but is a result of her maternal great-grandmother being from “Spain,” and her maternal great-grandfather being from “Mexico.”

I asked Tatiana how she came to know that her maternal grandparents were from Spain and Mexico. She shared, “I just kinda put it together because I remember [my mother] saying that – how her grandma was always whiter with green eyes, and then her grandpa was darker with dark eyes and dark hair, and then I was like ‘okay’.” Thus, Tatiana “kinda put it together” that her light-skinned maternal great-grandmother with green eyes must have been from Spain and her dark-skinned maternal great-grandfather with dark eyes and dark hair was from Mexico. Laura Gomez (2007) challenges such claims to Spain arguing,

By the early nineteenth century, very few of [those who lived in what is now New Mexico] were born in Spain or had parents or even grandparents who were Spanish...In terms of ancestry, the vast majority of these people were more indigenous than Spanish, and some of their religious, cultural, and political practices had indigenous origins (12).

Thus, Tatiana's claim that she "kinda just put it together" is suspect. Moreover, despite her Mexican heritage via a dark-skinned great-grandfather, Tatiana's, like her maternal grandmother, mother, makes it clear that "we are not Mexican," thereby distancing herself from Mexicanness.

Four of the young women were quick to employ stereotypes of Mexicans as foreigners, criminals, welfare recipients, and those who take US jobs all while maintaining national allegiance to Mexico. Inés -who was born in the US, moved back to Mexico when she was just three days old, and then came to the US when she was ten- was not quite convinced of the stereotype that Mexican immigrants "come here to cause trouble," but expressed that there may be some truth to it saying, "Yeah, because people say that mostly all Mexicans just come to cause trouble. It's true for some people, but most of all the time they just come to work hard. I guess they deserve to be treated like all the other people." Inés is critical of those who stereotype Mexican immigrants, yet she distances herself through the use of the term "they."

Three of the four young women who used stereotypes of Mexicans as a distancing device did so with vitriol and anger. Tania, who identified as Hispanic, made it clear that there is a difference between being "Mexican" and being "Hispanic." She said that "Mexicans" are from Mexico and that Hispanics, "they're not from Mexico. Well, maybe way back in the day like probably before everyone was born, but I don't notice." She added that "we (Hispanics) don't get along with them (Mexicans). We're both Spanish in the same

way, but we're from different – we just don't get along.” Though Tania admits that “we're both Spanish” and that Hispanic may have come from Mexico “back in the day,” she is clearly distancing herself from Mexicans.

Tania solidifies this separation by engendering stereotypes of Mexicans as those who take jobs and educational opportunities, maintain patriotic allegiance to Mexico, and refuse to learn English. She says,

Like I'm sick of all the Mexicans coming here. Well, I mean I don't hate them, it's just they're taking all our jobs. And education... When they bring their flags here and hang them up. That bugs me so bad, because it ain't their country. It bugs me. They'll tell me Mexico's better, but then yet they're here. I'm like, 'Well go back.' It bugs me so much. I don't like Mexicans – I mean I like Mexicans, I just don't like how they act. And I don't think they should come here if they don't know English.

Tania tried to qualify her statements by saying “I mean I like Mexicans,” but her pronouncements reflect the racist rhetoric that is often used to denounce undocumented Mexican immigrants by anti-immigrant organizations like the American Immigration Control Foundation, California Coalition for Immigration Reform, and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2001).

In my conversation with Emily, she also distanced herself from Mexicans through her stereotypically conclusions that all Mexicans are “not even from the US” and that they unfairly get “welfare.” Emily said,

Like I don't think it's right because my grandma, she's [on] disability and she's not getting help, she's not getting much help. And like I'm not just trying to point, or I'm not trying to be racist or anything, but like Mexicans, they're not even from the US and they get a lot of welfare and they have a job, and they're doing, they get everything paid and they're still getting welfare and like for my grandma, her husband is paying for everything, like everything, and all they look at is like the light or how much rent is or how much he gets paid and he's getting paid too much, but they don't look at everything he pays for and that like, I don't know.

Similarly, Lora argued that Mexicans are getting something US citizens are not. She adds that they are taking advantage of US sympathy. Lora shared,

A lot of people have worked for what they've done and they just come right in, they don't do anything. I'm not racist or anything, not to be judgmental, but I noticed that the Mexicans, when they come in here – Bush let, I don't know, 11,000 in here a long time ago – I notice that, nowadays, when I see them, they are driving these big fancy trucks, they have these nice cars and house and everything, and here we are. Personally, US Citizens are fighting for it, while they go off driving nice cars and have nice houses. Some of us are living here in apartments and we want to get on with our lives, and there they are just living it up and we're here struggling. We're dangling on the bottom of the food chain. How does that happen? They're not even legal citizens here... they should just stay where they came from.”

Inés, Tania, Emily, and Lora rely on stereotypes of Mexicans as foreigners, criminals, welfare recipients, and those who take US jobs all while maintaining national allegiance to Mexico, in order to set themselves apart from Mexicanness.

I would argue that ways in which Inés, Tania, Emily, and Lora discuss their racial identity in opposition to Mexicanness and the vehemence with which they do is related to their gendered experiences with racism at school and is a strategy for deflecting racial stigma. Recall that Tania suffered racialized bullying from her white, female, classmates who called her “ghetto” and “Spanish and little Chicano and chola.” I asked her how she responded and she said, “I [said to them], “You’re just jealous.” I didn’t care what anyone said because I’m not really afraid of anyone. I don’t really care...I tried fighting this one girl, Veronica, but she wouldn’t fight me... they would never fight me. I’d push them, and they wouldn’t even push me back. I’m not going to fight if they’re not going to fight because then it’s just pointless.” Thus, Tania’s position as a “Hispanic and Spanish,” young woman was used by her classmates as race-gender slight and in response, Tania, tried to “fight” them.

Though Tania did not fight these young women, she did share that she got in a few fights in middle school defending a friend who was called names and because a classmate was writing “stuff” about Tania on the bathroom wall. The first fight resulted in Tania being placed in In-School-Suspension (ISS) for four weeks, and for the latter offense she was suspended for two days and then placed in ISS for one week. Additionally, teachers recommended that Tania be placed in a residential facility to address her “behavioral problems,” while she continued school instruction at the facility.

Emily shared that she got in a fight with a classmate in middle school and as a result was sent to the local youth detention center for a week and then a community custody program where she was allowed to take classes, but was still in custody. Emily added that the harshness of her punishment could have been the result of the severity of the fight and because she had a prior shoplifting charge, but was unfair nonetheless. After completing her month-long adjudication, Emily had to petition the school district to get back in to school. Unfortunately, the principal did not allow her back in to her old school and she had to go to another school. Emily felt that the severity of the punishment was unjustified and the ban from her previous school unfair.

Mendoza-Denton (1996) argues that when young girls engage in behavior that runs counter to gendered expectations, they are subjected to greater scrutiny, discipline, and melioration. Thus, Tania and Emily’s transgressions were viewed in light of the *race-gender expectations* of them as a young and Latina, and because they did not conform, she was subjected to discipline and behavior modification.

Ten of the fourteen young Latinas distanced themselves from “Mexicanness” either subtly or very clearly. Gonzales (1997) found that many blue collar New Mexicans

differentiated themselves from Mexicans. Recall that four of these young women were at least 3rd generation Mexican origin, four could not identify any familial connection to Mexico, and two were 2nd generation. The disconnection exhibited by these young women can be partially attributed to their schooling experiences as Latinas, particularly those who shared stories of racialized and gendered discipline (Emily and Tania). Their distancing may be a strategy for managing the racial stigma that can be associated with being Mexican.

Furthermore, Valenzuela (1999) found that differences between US-born Latinas of Mexican origin and Mexican immigrants (1st and 2nd generation) were exacerbated by school practices. She argues that historically schools “devalue the Spanish language, Mexico, Mexican culture, and anything Mexican” (26). During my time at Valdez, I did witness one school-wide effort to celebrate “things Mexican” and other ethnic group. The ESL coordinator, a Hispanic woman, organized an “Ethnic Night,” which was a one-time event in the spring. It featured student performances by the Valdez High School ballet folklórico group, a ballet folklórico group from the local community, and Navajo dancers, in addition to a presentation by Miss American Indian for the Santos Public School District. Those in attendance appeared to be the family members of the performers. There were mostly brown faces in this full crowd few people who I would racialize as White sprinkled in. When the event ended, I heard the principal, Mr. Parker, say “El-Done-O,” in a sarcastic tone. While his presence sent a message about his investment in and the importance of the event, his sarcastic comment, “El-Done-O” mocked Spanish and, I argue, conveyed a negative message about its value.

Moreover, the one “Multicultural Assembly” that was scheduled to take place in the spring was cancelled due to an unforeseen snow day and was never rescheduled. The event

“celebrates” Valdez’s “culture” diversity. The student newspaper at Valdez stated, “Every year at Valdez High School our student body demonstrates its diversity of "Americana" in the multicultural assembly." It says, "In past years, the multicultural assembly has many organizations, from Black Student Union (BSU) to Mexican dance demonstrating their cultures and diversities." It adds that "the BSU organization usually does a unique type of dance called 'stepping.' Stepping is a type of dance involves rhythm and coordination." "The multicultural assembly also consists of Mexican genre of dance. The dancers usually are in couples of one boy and one girl. They are dressed in unique Mexican attire consisting of elaborate dresses and great suites, and sombreros."

Thus, there were few occasions when the experiences of Latino/as (or African Americans) were centered, and when they were, it was done in a benign form of multicultural tourism (Lee 2005). As one young Latina, Consuelo, who identified as “Mexican” pointed out, “We don’t hear nothing about – we would like to learn – I would like to learn more about Mexico, or about another country. What is it? What’s another country? South America. I would like to learn about other places, not just the United States!”

Though I did not witness any overt devaluing of “anything Mexican” at Valdez, on three separate occasions I did see derogatory statements about Mexicans written on the bathroom stall in the ladies restroom and in the in-school-suspension (i.e. “Fuck Mexicans”). I promptly reported both of these instances to one of the assistant principals and the ISS teacher, respectively. They both said that the racist profanity would be quickly removed. Interestingly, in my discussions with the security staff (three teachers and a city police officer assigned to the school), I told them that I knew that the district policy required “Written material or speeches with racial overtones” to be reported to district police department. I

asked if there were any reports of this occurring and they indicated that there had been none. Thus, while my “discoveries” were promptly removed, they were never reported in accordance with school district policy.

Moreover, it what might be considered an overt act of racism and racial profiling of Mexicans occurred on the grounds of one local public school in the Santos Public School District. Three students were detained by school police officer because he questioned the validity of their identification cards. The US Border Patrol was called and the young men were detained, questioned, and transported to Texas. Ultimately, these young men signed a voluntary departure form, which would allow them to immediately apply for a visa and possibly re-enter the US (had they been given a deportation order, it may have been more difficult to re-enter).

Understandably, the community protested the actions of the Border Patrol, as the US Border Patrol policy has been not to enforce immigration laws at schools. Moreover, the US Supreme court has ruled that citizenship cannot be sued to deny public school admission to school age children and New Mexico does not require citizenship for school-age children to attend public school. Thus, images of Mexican identity as a stigmatized identity were reinforced by these actions.

Valenzuela further argues that school practices like ESL programs foster the separation of US born and Immigrant Mexican-origin Latina/os. Valenzuela writes,

The “track” within the regular track program subdivides ESL and non-ESL youth, creating a “cultural track” that separates Spanish- from English-speaking students...Curricular divisions between student populations not only reinforce each group’s misperceptions of the other; they deprive US-born students of potentially positive school experiences, including enhanced social ties (1999, 31-32).

Though there were few ESL students at Valdez High School, there was an ESL program. ESL students were only “pulled” out of “regular” classes for English and were integrated into “regular” math and sciences courses with “sheltered or supportive instruction. Despite being integrated into “regular” classes, it was clear who was in ESL, as they were often pulled out of regular classes for meetings with ESL tutors and counselors. In addition, the “sheltered” instruction often amounted to busy work like reproducing pie charts, while other students were completing more complex assignments. Most of the time they did not receive “sheltered” instruction. Also, in my observations at Valdez, I noticed that the “sheltered” instruction assignments often required the ESL students to work together separate from the non-ESL students, thus fostering their separation. I noted that the separation extended into social spaces (i.e. hallways, the lunch room, and common areas), as Mexican students often sat together at the same lunch table.

Given these powerful social forces, it is not surprising, then, that these young women sought to distance themselves from “Mexicanness” either through subtle references to “us” and “them,” differentiating between “Hispanic” and “Mexican,” or outright reiteration of racist stereotypes of Mexicans as foreigners, criminals, welfare recipients, and those who take US jobs all while maintaining national allegiance to Mexico. In the conclusion, I address the problematic nature of this identity orientation. While on the surface it may serve as a strategy for these young Latinas to deflect racial stigma (though it really doesn’t work for the young women who continue to experience racialized and gendered stigma), it does little to disrupt the racial stigma associated with being Mexican and serves to reinforce it.

“Well, like I’m not, I don’t look like I would be Hispanic, but with my last name...”:

Discourses of “Off-Whiteness”

As I sat down to interview one of the young Latinas I got to know while spending time at Valdez High School, I was struck with how honest and candid she was in her responses to my questions. She was initially shy and smiled to hide her unease, but as we got further into the conversation she opened up. Christina was a ninth grader at Valdez and lived “out of district,” but used her grandmother’s address to access Valdez. She identified as “Hispanic,” when I asked her “what race do you consider yourself to be?” but was unsure what I meant because she initially responded “You mean Hispanic and all that?” I asked her why she considered herself “Hispanic” and she responded, “Well, because that’s what my family is and that’s how, that’s how our, well that’s just our culture and that’s who we are.”

Christina provided responses that described her ethnic identity, one that encompassed family and culture, but also relied on essentialist explanations, such as “that’s who we are.” Conversely, earlier in our interview I asked Christina about her middle school experiences. She shared a story where she tried out for the volleyball team, but did not make it. She and her mother felt she was not selected because she was not “white.” She relayed the following:

We noticed that a lot of the girls that they picked, they were, White, I guess. Well, like I’m not, I don’t look like I would be Hispanic but with my last name - like most of the girls, even some girls that were Hispanic but they had White last names, they were picked -all of them, and so we thought that was kind of suspicious because there were a lot of – there was some Black girls who tried out, and there was Hispanic girls who tried out and they didn’t make it.

Embedded in this complex response is Christina’s assessment that to outsiders she looks “White,” but this appearance is trumped by her “Hispanic” surname, and as a result she

was left off the volleyball team. Thus, in one instance she may be seen as “white,” but in another she is seen as “Hispanic,” and views herself as such.

Throughout my interview with Christina, she made subtle references to her light complexion and her ability to pass, as evident in the following exchange:

Chalane: What race do other people think you are?

Christina: They think I’m white (she says with a laugh).

Chalane: Why is that? Give me an example.

Christina: Like because of my skin color.

Chalane: So give me an example of how you learned that is what they thought?

Christina: Well, I don’t know. They just don’t know. Like if it comes up in a conversation or something. People, if I tell them I’m Hispanic, or I say something like I’m Hispanic, they don’t believe me.

Chalane: So do they say, “You are?”

Christina: They say “no, you’re not,” or “are you really” and I was like “yeah” (she says with a laugh), but then also like, I don’t know, like I know I am, so I don’t [know].

I was struck by Christina’s descriptions of herself as “light” [complexioned] and her assessment that a lot of her friends think she is White. She said this to me and motioned to her “light” skinned arm at least three times during our interview. When she talked about her friends thinking she was White, she conveyed a sense of apprehension as if she recognized the contradiction in being “proud to be Hispanic,” knowing cultural traditions, like making “enchiladas,” she said with an intentional Spanish accent, yet she understands the benefits that may accrue in a school context that values whiteness and compels her to strategically use her “light complexion” to manage her surroundings.

Moreover, when asked if she felt she was treated differently than other students, in the context of talking about Hispanics and the racial achievement gap, Christina said no because a lot of people don't think she's Hispanic. She had light/medium skin, dark hair with highlights of blonde streaks or other tones. She had dark brown eyes and a carefully manicured appearance often dressed in the latest fashions. Perhaps, her light/medium skin, in the context of New Mexico, creates enough ambiguity that she is racialized as White, yet, doesn't always prevent her from being treated differently (because she is sometimes racialized as Hispanic). Consequently, Christina did quite well in school in was a high achiever. Recall that in chapter three Christina received the highest achieving female award for her freshman learning community.

Christina was not the only young Latina to indicate that they had been racialized as White. Five additional Latinas, Paola, Siomara, Inés, Carolina, and Lora, indicated that they had been racialized as white at some point. Lora shared that friends of her friends have said that they thought Lora was a "white girl" saying,

"Who's that white girl you were hanging out with yesterday?" And they'll be like, she ain't white, she's Hispanic or Spanish, and they're like, "what, she looks white." I think it's just my light complexion and stuff that they could mistake me for because of course, you know that Hispanics are really dark or brown, or whatever they consider them as. So that's why.

Though relying on essentialist ideas about race, whites only have "light complexion[s]" and Hispanics or Spanish, have "really dark or brown" skin, Lora explains why she thinks she is sometimes racialized as white. Despite being racialized as white, Lora did not identify as white (she identified as Hispanic) and did not make the same claims to whiteness as Christina did. This was also true of Carolina who shared,

Sometimes [people will] think I'm white, but most of the time they'll think I'm Hispanic or Mexican. Sometimes I'll be whiter than them. So they'll be like, "Oh, you're white." Or sometimes I act like a blonde. They'll be like, "Oh, you act like a blonde. You're white."

Carolina later explained that "acting blond" meant acting "stupid" and "goofy," a stereotype that is often played out in popular media. Though Carolina did not have "blond" hair, but had brown hair, she said she was sometimes "mistaken" for being "white" based on her skin color and the way she "acts," she did not identify as white, instead identifying as "Hispanic" in name.

Inés, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicated that she was sometimes racialized as white. She shared "some people tell me I look white" and described herself in the following way: "My hair's brown. My skin's like white, but not really light – like brownish, not really. My eyes are brown. I'm kinda tall a little. A little chubby. I guess that's it." Inés describes her skin color as "like white" and "not really brownish." Inés, who came to the US from Mexico when she was 10 years old, identified as "Hispanic because my mom and dad are Mexican, and I was born here, so I guess I'm just Hispanic," though throughout our conversations she emphasized that she was often "mistaken" for white. She said that when she speaks Spanish, others question their racialization of her telling her that they didn't know she spoke Spanish and, thereby disrupting their initial assessment of her. For Inés, her identity is tied to US citizenship, language, and phenotype. She seems to be positioning herself toward whiteness, due to her emphasis on being racialized as white and her self description as "like white," but she seems unable to fully commit due to other racial markers, speaking Spanish and her Mexican heritage.

Another young Latina, Paola, shared that she is often racialized as white, and occasionally Japanese, though she identified as "Hispanic and Spanish." The following

exchange occurred with Paola when I was asking her how she came to know that others racialized her as white.

Chalane: And so at school, the people that you sit with when you were filling out the survey [which asked for race and ethnicity], they said they didn't know that you were Spanish?

Paola: They're like, "You're Spanish?" I'm like, "Yeah." And they're like, "Wow, I thought you were white."

Chalane: Why do you think they thought you were white?

Paola: Because I normally, like Spanish and Mexican, they have that kind of look. I don't have that, that really obvious look that says, like tan skin and long, dark brown hair. I have regular colored skin and I have brown hair and I have glasses and brown eyes, but it doesn't really seem to – it just doesn't point out the obvious. It's just – you see girls with long brown hair and dark skin and you know right away they're Spanish.

Chalane: And that's not your characteristics.

Paola: I don't have those, and I don't have an accent. I speak complete American. I don't speak Spanish. And I actually speak some Japanese, so I can also see that.

In this exchange, Paola is setting herself apart from being "Spanish and Mexican" by relying on stereotypes of them as having "tan skin and long, dark brown hair" and not having "glasses." Paola says that she has "regular colored skin" and "brown hair." She said that she speaks "American" (which she equates with speaking English) and doesn't speak Spanish.

Moreover, Paola emphasized that she was Spanish saying that she's "Hispanic and Spanish, "Hispanic, Spanish, a mixture of the two...but I think I'm Spanish." She went on to tell me that "My grandma's side comes from Spain and Mexico, and then my grandpa's side comes from mostly Spain." Though Paola shared that her heritage is Spanish and Mexican, she never used the term "Mexican" to identify herself and, instead, preferred to use the term

“Spanish.” Underlying Paola’s selection of the term “Spanish” is a strategic claim to whiteness that is rooted in New Mexico history and emerged during the mid 19th century as a strategy for Mexican elites to move up in the racial hierarchy that was being established and placed Whites at the top (Gomez, 2005). Gomez argues,

Mexicans’ ability to claim whiteness and the inherent instability of that very claim both stemmed from their mestizo ancestry, as a people that resulted from the sexual and social mixture of Spanish and indigenous...[thus they] could make a claim of whiteness grounded in their European ancestry and, especially, European culture (2005: 27).

Moreover, Gomez adds that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,

Promoted a *legal* definition of Mexicans as “White” [and that] tension around Mexican Americans’ racial status arose because this legal whiteness contradicted the *social* definition of Mexicans as non-white. As a result, Mexican Americans came to occupy a position in the American racial hierarchy that was between white and non-white, or what I have termed “off-white.” My adoption of this term connotes Mexican Americans’ in-between status, rather than their status as more white than non-white (ibid: 83-84)

In trying to further understand the process behind Paola’s distancing herself from being Mexican and using the term, Spanish, I probed further asking, “How important is what you look like to what you think of yourself?” She passionately responded,

It impacts other people, but to me, it’s just the outer shell of who you are. But the inside is what matters most. What you want to be and who you are and how nice you are depends on who you are, but not “oh, she’s Spanish, don’t hang out with her,” and stuff.

She went on to share,

Some people, they look at themselves and they say, I’m Spanish, why can’t I be like that pretty white girl with blue eyes and blonde hair and everybody likes me. Sometimes they want to be like that. And I don’t really understand why you would want to change yourself. I can understand a little bit, but why go to the extremes to change who you are?

Sometimes, the education thing comes back again because if you’re white, then you have better education or something like that. And they’re like, oh, I wish I was that

white girl with the rich dad and the perfect, beautiful, stay-at-home mom and sisters and brothers that don't bully you around.

There is much happening in these complex responses. While Paola identifies as “Spanish,” she is critical of the negative assumptions that may ensue in the process of racializing her as “Spanish” and the premium value that is placed on being a “pretty white girl with blue eyes and blonde hair.” She is engaging in critique of idealized forms of femininity that privileges being white with blue eyes and blond hair by arguing that one’s physical appearance may influence how one is treated, but that she focuses on the “inside” and “what you want to be and who you are.”

Paola was one of the few Latinas enrolled in honors courses. While at Valdez, I observed fewer Latino/as enrolled in 9th grade honors courses than in regular and remedial courses. Annegret Staiger (2006) found that the few Latinos in an exclusive gifted high school magnet program tended to assume a whitened identity as “a rational choice, a haphazard outcome, or a consequence of class status” rationalizing their giftedness as whiteness (55). Paola’s identity, manifested in the use of the term Spanish, seems to be a negotiation of her resistance to the racial stigma associated with being Mexican and Spanish (two distinct categories) and a strategic positioning toward whiteness, without identifying as white, perhaps as away to understand her location as one of few honors students and as a way to manage her surroundings at Valdez.

Similar to Paola’s claim to whiteness was Siomara, who claimed that she was “Spanish” because,

Well, because one time our teacher was telling us that Spanish comes from, like you speak Spanish, okay you’re Hispanic, but Spanish comes from Spain. And then [South America] is, I don’t know, more over there I guess and then it’s – I don’t

know. I like to consider myself Spanish rather than Hispanic; I don't know why that is, but I just say Spanish.

Siomara, isn't quite clear the difference between "Hispanic" and "Spanish," but makes it clear that she has settled on the term "Spanish" and, thus, prefers to be called "Spanish." Siomara, shared that she is now often racialized as "Hispanic," but that in middle school (which was the year before I met her) she was racialized as white and that "everybody thought I was white." She said that when she was little she was "really white, really white," but then came to the US and "I got suntanned," thus giving her the "typical Hispanic look." While Siomara may have been talking about becoming physically tanned, it is also true that she became metaphorically "tanned," as well, as she was now subject to the racialized social structure in the US (Bonilla Silva and Glover, Forthcoming). Siomara also shared that when speaking Spanish, she has been told, "You're in America. Speak English...Speak English or else go back to your country." Thus, Siomara's claim to whiteness via her identity as Spanish is fostered by her introduction into a racial structure that places "whites" on top (Bonilla Silva and Glover, Forthcoming) and the racial stigma associated with speaking Spanish.

“[I’m] Mexican...the way I talk, the way I see things, the things I do, the things I eat”:

Counterhegemonic Identity Frames/Repertoires/Discourses

Not all the young women I spoke with made efforts to distance themselves from Mexicanness or their Mexican heritage. Three young women embraced their Mexican heritage, Kelly, Tiffany, and Consuelo. Kelly, a medium/dark skinned young woman, was born and raised in a large urban center in New Mexico. She was adopted by her biological maternal grandmother and her partner. Kelly's biological grandmother and mother were

born in Mexico and her adopted father was born in a large urban center in New Mexico and identified as Chicano. Consuelo, a medium skinned young woman, was born in southern California. Both of her parents were born in Mexico with her mother coming to the US when she was ten years old and her father coming when he was a teenager. Tiffany, a medium skinned young woman, was born in Mexico, but came to the US when she was only a few months old.

Kelly identified as “Mexican and Hispanic.” When she speaks about herself she uses “Hispanic” and “Mexican” interchangeably. She shared that this was her identity “because I come from a Mexican family and my dad’s American. And I can understand Spanish really well but I can’t speak it as good as I do understand it.” For Kelly, her identity as Mexican and Hispanic is tied to her Mexican and “American” (read: United States) heritage, and to language. Kelly also shared that she spent an entire summer in Mexico. Kelly said that she thought of herself as Mexican because “of my family, where they come from and stuff.”

Interestingly, Kelly said that she is often racialized as Black and Mexican. She said,

They think I’m half-black and half-Mexican [because] how I dress and because I used to have curly hair, and they thought I was half-black because they don’t really see that many Mexicans with curly hair.

When I asked how she dresses she replied, “Like I dress like most black people do because how I listen to their music and I hang out with a lot of black friends.” She added that the form of dress she is referring to means “they have like, they match with everything. They match with their hats and with their shoes and everything. Ironically, Kelly employs the same stereotypes of African Americas as having “curly” hair and coordinating their clothing that are used to racialize her as “half-black and half-Mexican.”

Kelly's father shared with me that he was concerned about the way she dressed. While he wants her to dress the way she wants, he recognized the assumptions and judgments that are associated with her urban style of dress. Kelly resisted adding, "I like the style, but my mom and dad don't like it because there's a lot of problems with kids that dress like this." She went on to say, "A lot of the people that are in gangs dress like this, and I guess they think that – when people look at me, they think that – they look at me because they think I'm in a gang or something. And [my parents] think that's the reason why I got beat up that time."

Morris found that "the combination of race and gender with dress...could signal the difference between a potentially dangerous student and a harmless one" and that school officials often interpreted the form of dress of young Latino and African American boys as "gang related" (2005:37, see also Bettie 2003). Similarly, Kelly's form of dress in combination with the way in which she is racialized ("half-black and half-Mexican") converges such that others believe she is "gang related." What is interesting is that Morris found this pattern among young Latino and African American boys not among young Latinas. In this way, Kelly is also disrupting gender norms, which dictate that "the ideal female is white, middle-class, able bodied, Christian, and heterosexual" (Lee 2002:89) and dressed in socially sanctioned clothing. Her gendered transgression, however, was not without consequence because she got "beat up" by school peers.

Moreover, though she did not mention being subjected to accusations that she was "gang related" by school officials because of the way she dressed, I suspect that there were negative assumptions made about her (Bettie, 2003). In fact, I observed that she was regularly singled out by one teacher for failing to complete assignments. While failing to

complete class assignments is not conducive to doing well, the manner in which she was publicly ridiculed in class did not seem to motivate her to complete them and only served to embarrass her, as she often slunk down low in her chair when yelled at, and rarely participated in class unless called upon.

Ironically, Kelly does not seek to distance herself from her Mexican heritage or “Mexicanness,” nor does she distance herself from being racialized as “half-black and half-Mexican.” On the one hand, she resists the racial stigma of being Mexican that her co-ethnic peers are unable to by continuing to identify as Mexican. This could be related to her continued connection to Mexico through her mother and her time spent in Mexico. She also resists the assumptions that coincide with the racialization of her as “half-black and half-Mexican” and “gang related,” as a result of the convergence of race and form of dress, by continuing to dress in a form that she “likes.” The consequences of this orientation, however, seem to be mixed. While she may have a strong Mexican identity that resists racial stigma, she has been “beat up” and she was subject to public ridicule that did little to support her academic endeavors.

Another young woman, Tiffany, also embraced her Mexican heritage. Tiffany, was born in Mexico, but came to the US when she was only a few months old. She identified as “Mexican, because my parents are from Mexico.” She went on to add that,

[Being Mexican in the US is] the same culture even though we’re here. It’s the same things my parents used to do in Mexico, like the parties, the family reunions and things like that.

Tiffany’s parents have passed on Mexican customs and traditions that they participated in while in Mexico “like parties and the family reunions.” She also said that speaking Spanish was very much a part of being Mexican “because I grew up with it and because my parents,

that's the only [language] they know." For Tiffany, being Mexican is tied to her parents being from Mexico, speaking Spanish, and carrying on Mexican "culture."

In addition, Tiffany is also quite passionate about and supports the rights of Mexican immigrants, unlike some of her co-ethnic peers who sought to distance themselves from "Mexicanness" through the use of racist stereotypes. She said, "I think Mexicans in any kind – Hispanics that come from other states over here are not doing nothing bad but just coming to work. I think we all deserve a chance here." Beyond demonstrating Tiffany's use of "Hispanic" as an umbrella term that encompasses Mexicans, she strongly advocates for the right of Mexican immigrants to come to the US to work, while also aligning herself with them in her use of term "we". Tiffany's connection to Mexico through her parent's provenance, maintenance of Mexican customs and traditions, and her alliance with Mexican immigrants sustains her identity as "Mexican."

Further reinforcing her Mexican identity, Tiffany shared that she went to an elementary school that was highly supportive of bilingual education and that in her first three years of elementary school she was enrolled in ESL and that "it was okay because I got to learn more." Unfortunately, in fourth grade, she switched to another elementary school that was not as supportive of bilingual education and where most of the teachers did not share her ethnic background. She was also removed from ESL, which she found supportive of her learning, and placed in mainstream courses, which she said "was kind of hard sometimes" and that "I didn't know how to pronounce the words and stuff." Incidentally, her grades began to decline.

She went back to ESL classes when she transitioned to middle school and found that "it was better...because I got more help and most of the teachers there knew Spanish and

English,” though her grades continued to decline, only passing with C’s and D’s. She shared, “at the beginning [of the year], I always have bad grades, but the teacher used to give me chance like for extra credit and things like that [and] I always passed with like a D at least.” By completing extra credit assignments, Tiffany was able to pass with a D. However, it was unclear whether she was learning anything substantive. When Tiffany transitioned to high school, she continued to be enrolled in ESL English, but was mainstreamed into all her other courses. As I mentioned earlier, I rarely observed sheltered instruction occurring in the mainstream courses for ESL students. Thus, given the academic deficits she seems to have incurred as the result of being transitioned in and out of ESL classes and the uncertainty of the level of substantive learning she did receive while in ESL, it is not surprising that at the time of our interview she was failing most of her academic courses, and passing her electives with C’s.

Paradoxically, Valenzuela (1999) found that first and second generation Mexican-origin students tended to do better in school than their third and fourth generation co-ethnics. Her findings confirmed that first and second generation Mexican-identified students had a dual frame of reference that acknowledged “just how difficult life is for the working poor in Mexico” and that “the conditions of schooling and life, generally, are tolerable because the economic well-being of students’ families is more secure than it otherwise would be ‘back home’” (260). Thus, this frame of reference “propell[ed] their present [educational] efforts and aspirations” (260). Though Tiffany maintains a strong Mexican identity and may have a similar dual frame of reference, it seemed no match for the institutional forces (i.e. placed in and out of ESL, placed in regular classes with ineffective sheltered instruction) that contribute to her poor academic performance.

Consuelo, sees herself as “Mexican because my mother’s Mexican, my grandma’s Mexican, everybody’s Mexican.” She added that she’s racialized as Mexican saying, “Mexican. I don’t think they consider me being white. I don’t think Chinese, I don’t think so, and black I don’t think either because maybe Mexican, maybe my accent. The way I talk, the way I see things, the things I do, the things I eat.” For Consuelo the markers of race are her accent, perspective, “things” she does, and “things” she eats. She later added to her conception of what it means to be Mexican by adding being Mexican meant,

Just having the background of being brown. Not brown, but like doing Mexican things like Mexican food, speaking Spanish, I consider that Mexican. Yeah, being like that. And – I don’t know. I don’t know, I never thought about that what I considered Mexican being because some are Mexican, but don’t speak Spanish, so I don’t think that.

Expanding her definition of what it means to be Mexican, Consuelo talks about being “brown,” not in the phenotypic sense, but as a term that encapsulates her ideas about Mexicanness. She momentarily adds speaking Spanish to that conception, but recognizes that not all Mexican speak Spanish, thus language is an integral part of being Mexican, but does not preclude one from being Mexican.

Throughout my interview with Consuelo, it was clear that she embraced a strong Mexican identity. She talked about participating in “Mexican” traditions like making tamales and celebrating Cinco de Mayo. She also shared her loyalty to Mexican American boxer Oscar de la Hoya, who was fighting the weekend after our interview.

Unlike the Latinas who distanced themselves, Consuelo grew up in California in communities with large Mexican immigrant populations and continuous stream of Mexican immigrants. She is also still very much connected to Mexico as she travels to Mexico every summer. When asked if she considered herself American Consuelo resoundingly responded,

“I’m not an American. I’m a citizen, but I’m not from the United States of America. Like I was born here, but then my mother and father are Mexican so I consider myself being Mexican,” thus Consuelo separates birthplace and citizenship from national identity when she recognizes that she was born in- and is a citizen of the US, but tied to Mexico.

Taken together these factors foster a resilience that allows Consuelo to contest the racial stigma of being Mexican, of which she was well aware. When I asked her how individuals like her were seen she said, “They will expect more bad things from us.” Thus, even in the face of racialized (negative) expectations Consuelo was resistant and even actively engaged in formalized resistance through her participation in a rally for immigrant rights on May 1, 2006. Consuelo shared, “we felt important,” “It was bad [in a good way],” and “We felt like we were supporting everybody, everything.” Contrasted to the searing comments of the young Latinas who distanced themselves, Consuelo was adamant in her support for immigrants saying,

They’re saying that we’re taking over their jobs. I don’t see like – there’s like – if there are immigrants working, they’re working for a reason because they need the money, but they’re not taking [jobs]. How are they taking over their jobs when the other persons isn’t doing it? Maybe they fired the other person because they weren’t doing it right, and maybe this person does it better...I’ll see just like more Mexicans working in yards, doing things like that – construction, I’ll see a lot of Mexicans. And they say – I don’t like that when they say, “Well, they’re taking over the jobs.” Well, if they don’t wanna do it, who else is gonna do it.

These comments are in sharp contrast to the comments of her co-ethnic peers and are a verbalized resistance to the racial stigma (i.e. “who else is gonna do it”), as well as reaffirmation of her identity (i.e. includes herself by saying “we’re”). Moreover, Consuelo’s strong Mexican identity is oriented in way that allows her to be successful in school. As one of the few Latinas in honors classes at Valdez, Consuelo shared that was doing well in school

because she wants to be a lawyer so that she can defend “Mexicans” against police brutality.

She passionately shared,

Like a lot of people don't like [the] police because they're unfair to a specific race, and they prove that from people that they were hitting for no reason. No, that's not right. And then, the police don't get nothing back for it. They just get suspended, and that's it. They don't get fired or put in jail. Put the police in jail. They don't get anything, just, “Oh, I'm sorry.” How is that gonna fix the beating up of those people. That's not right. They should get something else, put in jail.

Thus, Consuelo's academic pursuits are about more than just individual achievement, but a means to empower her community to fight back against unjust police treatment.

Kelly, Tiffany, and Consuelo convey strong Mexican identities grounded in their parental connections to their Mexico and a continuous influence of “things Mexican,” including traveling to Mexico, maintaining Mexican customs and traditions, alliances with Mexican immigrants, and, for Kelly and Consuelo, as a form of resistance to negative racializations. The interplay between the strong Mexican identities and school achievement, however, is varied. For Consuelo, her strong Mexican identity propels her to do well in school so that she can become a lawyer and defend “Mexicans.” Kelly's identity seems to have mixed results. On the one hand, she deflects the racial stigma associated with “things Mexican,” but on the other she is subjected to racist racializations of her as “gang related” and academically indifferent. Tiffany has a strong Mexican identity that may be no match for the institutional forces (i.e. placed in and out of ESL, placed in regular classes with ineffective sheltered instruction) that contribute to her poor academic performance.

“American, but still a little bit Mexican.”: Others employed both strategies of embracing and distancing themselves from Mexicanness in different contexts.

Interestingly, Dawn, a medium/dark skinned young women, who is third generation Mexican-American on her mother’s side and at least fourth generation New Mexican on her father’s side was clearly conflicted about her Mexican heritage. In one sense, she recognized and embraced her Mexican heritage. When I asked her what it meant to be “Hispanic,” the way in which she identified, she said Hispanic was “American, but still a little bit Mexican.” Thus, for Dawn, being Hispanic did involve recognizing her Mexican heritage and embracing cultural traditions she associated with being Mexican. She talked about quinceineras, speaking Spanish, attending baptisms and needing to “know about your history.”

At the same time, however, she also distanced herself from her Mexican heritage and from Mexicans. When I asked Dawn, if she considered herself “American” she said that she did because, “I have no idea, maybe just the way I am, like, would be different from like somebody from Mexico. Like we care more about the laws and stuff. [Also,] because of how good we speak our English and stuff and we don’t have like an accent and we say all the words right.” Dawn is distinguishing herself from “somebody from Mexico” arguing that they don’t “care” about “laws and stuff,” “don’t speak *our* English,” “don’t have an accent,” and “say all the words right.” Moreover, when I asked Dawn what she thought about immigrants in New Mexico, she immediately talked about undocumented Mexican immigrants stating,

Sometimes I think its okay, but then sometimes I don’t. I think like, poor things, they should be able to come to the United States for a nice life. Yet at the same time, it’s like, they come over here and sometimes they do like things that are against the law and stuff. Like, sometimes it’s good and sometimes it’s not.”

Dawn is also ambivalent about undocumented Mexican immigrants saying that the “poor things” should be able to come to the US, but then reiterates stereotype that once in the US immigrants commit crime.³²

Just what contributes to Dawn’s ambivalence may be learned from her schooling experiences. Dawn grew up attending a dual–immersion elementary school becoming fluent in Spanish, learning about Cesar Chavez in a Latino/a culturally infused curriculum, and dancing ballet folklórico. When she transited to middle school and then to high school, these things were absent, as she attended traditional schools. Also, Dawn went from a predominantly Latino/a elementary school to middle and high schools that were predominantly white. Dawn shared that she was in honors classes in middle school and as we know, students of color tend to be underrepresented in honors classes. I would estimate that the transition from a school context that values and actively integrates Latino/as culture to one that espouses a colorblind ideology (as presented in chapter two), and possibly privileges “whiteness,” contributes to her distancing from things Mexican.

Stephanie, who was born and raised in a large urban center in New Mexico and whose parents were born in Mexico, also engaged a strategy of embracing and distancing herself from “Mexicanness” in different contexts. When asked, Stephanie identifies as Mexican saying so because,

I’m mainly grew up where Mexicans were and my parents are both Mexican [and were born in Mexico]. So, they told us we’re half Mexican-American. I’m bilingual, too. I’m not forgetting who I am either. I’m just getting to know and learning more about who I can be, and who I want to be. It’s fun being bilingual. I like being Mexican. It’s pretty fun.

³² There is mounting evidence that immigrants do not increase community crime, and may, in fact, decrease crime. See Wadsworth (2010) for details.

Though Stephanie uses “half Mexican American” to refer to herself, she clarified that being “half Mexican American” meant being Mexican, but born in the US (versus being Mexican and some other ethnicity). Stephanie often visits her grandmother in Oaxaca, Mexico and shared that learning about Mexico was important and that her father “always taught me how to cook, and then he tells me stuff about Mexico” and that she would “go on the internet and look up [Mexican history], too.” She talked about the importance of speaking Spanish as part of being Mexican adding, “if you can talk and read and write Spanish, than you’re considered Mexican, but if you can’t then you’re Chicano.” Thus is making a distinction between being Mexican and being Chicano. She also distinguished being Mexican from being Hispanics arguing, “The way I was taught was that the Hispanics come from Spain and the Mexicans come from Mexico. [People from Spain] talk differently. They have some different words. That’s about it.” Thus, Stephanie is very clear about what it means to be Mexican and that as such, she is Mexican.

Though resolute about her Mexican identity, it was also clear to me that at times she distanced herself from “the Mexicans” and the racial stigma that can be associated with being Mexican. Stephanie shared her frustration at the group of “Mexican” students who she said did not always do their homework and prompted the teacher to take away class privileges.

She shared the following story:

Stephanie: Now in biology, since we all failed our last test, [the teacher] kind of got mad at us and he took all our privileges away. We don’t get as much time as usual with our homework. So, now he’s piling up a bunch of homework in one night and we have to have it done by tomorrow morning. Yeah, like our home[work]notes are due tomorrow, section review, two worksheets and we have to read the chapter. We’re doing all that in one night.

Chalane: What do you think about that, taking away all the privileges?

Stephanie: It's what we get, too, because most students — I kind of get the dorky ones that don't care — they're just there just to be there. [It's] mainly the Hispanic ones, like *the Mexicans*, they use the little thing that, 'Oh, I don't know English, so I'm not going to do our work.' But they really do know English 'cause we hear them at lunch....It's Inés, Tiffany, Gladiola and I think another two girls that do it just for doing it. They'll just sit there and act like they don't know what they're doing, and we get in trouble for it. He's always kicking them out of class, and we're always getting yelled at when we know it's not our fault; it's really theirs 'cause they don't do it.

Stephanie relays a story of “the Mexicans” not doing their schoolwork and using the excuse that “Oh, I don't know English” as a reason to forgo doing their homework. Perhaps, not wanting to be lumped in with “the Mexicans” who do not do their homework and thus subject the entire class to limited privileges and verbal discipline from the teacher, Stephanie separates herself by othering them. Unfortunately, Stephanie fails to understand that these young women may be unable to complete assignments due to the challenges associated with English being their second language. These young women are designated ESL students and, thus, entitled to “sheltered” instruction, but as I indicated previously, I never observed this occurring in this class, where I spent an entire year. Moreover, their academic challenges are compounded by their continuous removal (i.e. “always kicking them out of class”) from class.

Adding to the racial stigma of being Mexican, are questions of Stephanie's citizenship from her school peers. She shared,

Everybody thinks I'm from Mexico because I talk Spanish, and I look Mexican and because my parents are from Mexico. They think, 'Well, oh, Stephanie's from Mexico. So, what part of Mexico are you from?' I was born in the United States. Usually, everybody's like, 'Do you have a green card, Stephanie, because the border patrol is coming?' I say I was born here and they're like, 'Oh, OK.' Everybody just thinks I was born in Mexico and came here.

Moreover, racist stereotypes of Mexicans as “lazy” have been projected on her. She shared, “I’ve been told, ‘You look lazy. Are you lazy? What do you do?’ [I respond], ‘Nothing,’ [and they respond], ‘You’re lazy.’” Stephanie clarifies that her “nothing” response is that “There’s nothing [at home] to do, so I’ll just sit at home and watch movies.” Thus, normal, everyday, teenage boredom is racialized by her peers as evidence that Mexicans are lazy.

Given the everyday racial stigma (i.e. questions of citizenship and subject to racist stereotypes) that Stephanie must deal with, it is understandable that she distances herself from “the Mexicans,” and the racial stigma associated with being Mexican. Not only does she verbally distance herself from “the Mexicans,” but she also physically distances herself. She noted that she does not socialize with the young women she labels “the Mexicans,” but instead hangs out with White students or those who employ the same strategy of distancing and embracing (i.e. Dawn) Mexican identity (Getrich, 2008).

What about Chicana/o? Few students used the term Chicana/o

Finally, curious about the maintenance of the term Chicano/a, I queried its use among these fourteen Latinas. I found that six used the term Chicano/a, but only one young woman, Emily, used the term “Chicano [sic]” to identify herself. None of the young women talked about the use of the term Chicana/o³³ in the context of the political identity it connotes (Gonzales, 1993). Recall that Emily identified as herself as “Hispanic” and “Chicano [sic],” using these terms interchangeably (she did not say Chicana). She shared that, to her, Hispanic and Chicano meant the same, but did not elaborate on what that meant. Stephanie talked about the importance of speaking Spanish as part of being Mexican adding, “If you

³³ “Chicana/o” is defined as a consciously assumed identity that implies a political consciousness, resistance to complete assimilation into American (United States) culture, and a commitment to reclaiming the lost mestizo, mixed, heritage. This definition was influenced by the work of Jacqueline M. Martinez (2000).

can talk and read and write Spanish, than you're considered Mexican, but if you can't then you're Chicano." Lora shared that because she draws teddy bears with bandanas, her drawings are labeled "Chicano." She said, "For some reason, [others] call this Chicano drawing. You know the little stickers that have the little teddy bear with the bandana on it and the baggy clothes? The Chicano guys wear the [same] glasses, the bandanas, and the Dickies pants...it's called, the Chicano style drawing." Despite engaging in "Chicano style drawing," as labeled by others, but she doesn't consider herself Chicano [sic].

Consuelo also used the term "Chicano" saying that she's heard others identify themselves with this term, but that "I'm just Mexican." She said that she "consider[ed] [being Chicana] being Mexican[and] that means that your parents are from Mexico, and you're born in the United States." Given this definition, she indicated that could be defined as "Chicano," but never used the term to describe herself. She added that she hears that Chicano's "have more trouble with everything, so I'm just, oh, I'm just Mexican." Thus, for Consuelo, there is disincentive to identify as Chicano, as it may invite "trouble."

Like Consuelo, Siomara used the term to refer to Latino/as who have a Mexican parent, but were born in the US she said there her friend was "Chicano" because "her dad is from Mexico but then she's from here, so I don't know what that is. Well, just put white." Siomara, however, decides a Latino/as who have a Mexican parent, but were born in the US is ultimately, "white." Also like Consuelo, Tania also talked about negative connotations applied to the term Chicano. Recall that her classmates used the term to degrade her saying "So you're just a ghetto girl. Spanish and little Chicano and chola."

Conclusion

These young Latinas are negotiating their identities in the context of racialization and gendering processes at Valdez High School such that their identities are fluid and situational. In contrast to segmented assimilation theories, these findings suggest that there is no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement among these young Latinas. These findings reflect the work of Stacey Lee (2005) who found that the Hmong American high school students in her analysis transformed their identities in response to dominant messages that celebrate and privilege a “culture of whiteness.” These young Latinas are also articulating their racial identities in response to these hegemonic paradigms and must also contend with dominant messages that are indifferent or hostile to “things Mexican.” Most young Latinas distanced themselves from Mexicanness, while a few embraced their Mexican heritage. Some Latinas employed discourses of off-whiteness, while others employed both strategies of embracing and distancing themselves from Mexicanness in different contexts.

Most of the Latinas distanced themselves from Mexicanness. Ten of the fourteen young women distanced themselves by othering “Mexicans” or by utilizing racist stereotypes of Mexicans as foreigners, criminals, welfare recipients, and those who take US jobs all while maintaining national allegiance to Mexico. The disconnection exhibited by these young women can be partially attributed to their schooling experiences as Latinas, particularly those who shared stories of racialized and gendered discipline for transgressing *race-gender expectations* of them as a young and Latina.

While this discourse may work to verbally distance these young women from “Mexicanness,” most (7) of the ten Latinas were racialized as Hispanic and thus may be ineffective at shielding them from the racial stigma they seek to escape. Furthermore, their

distancing does little to disrupt the racial stigma associated with being Mexican and serves to reinforce it. Their distancing creates an “us” versus “them” paradigm that limits potential alliances with their co-ethnic allies between themselves and young Latinas who identify as Mexican or who present a strong Mexican identity (Valenzuela 1999). Consequently, not all of these young women were academically successful. Christina, Tatiana, and Paola were high achievers. Carolina, Dawn, Lora, Emily, Stephanie, and Inés were middle achievers, though Inés’ grades were rapidly decreasing. Tania was a low achiever and was failing most of her classes.

Though none of the young Latinas identified as White, six of them did indicate that they had been racialized as White (Christina, Paola, Siomara, Inés, Carolina, and Lora), of which four of the young women employed discourses of “off-whiteness”. Christina’s position as off-whiten was tenuous, however, as in one context she shared that she did not feel she was treated differently at school because, “I don’t really appear, like a lot of people don’t think that I’m Hispanic ‘cause of like my skin so (laugh) yeah.” Yet, in another context, she said that she felt she had been left off the volleyball team because she was “Hispanic.” Carolina and Lora seemed less invested in embracing whiteness saying that they were occasionally “mistaken” as white, but were racialized as “Hispanic” most of the time. Inés did not fully commit to off-whiteness though she employed discourses of off-whiteness. She emphasized that she was often racialized as white and described herself as “like white” and “not really brownish.” Her access was limited by other racial markers, like speaking Spanish and her Mexican heritage. Paola shared that she was racialized as white and set herself apart from the stereotype of Hispanics as having “tan skin and long, dark brown hair.” She indicated that she was “Spanish,” selecting that heritage over her “Mexican” heritage.

Finally, Siomara employed off-white discourses of in response to her new social location in the US racial structure, as well as racial stigma. Given the educational context these young women must negotiate, it is no surprise that some of them articulated discourses of off-whiteness or positioned themselves toward whiteness as a strategy for managing their surroundings and to, ideally, achieve success. Moreover, these claims do little to disrupt whiteness and serve to reinforce and sustain whiteness and white privilege. Interestingly, not all of these young women were academically successful. Christina, Siomara, and Paola were high achievers and Lora, Carolina, and Inés were middle achievers, though Inés' grades were rapidly decreasing.

A few young women embraced their Mexicanness. Kelly, Tiffany, and Consuelo conveyed strong Mexican identities grounded in their connections to their Mexico. For Consuelo, her strong Mexican identity propelled her to do well in school so that she can become a lawyer and defend "Mexicans." Kelly's identity seemed to have mixed results. On the one hand, she deflects the racial stigma associated with "things Mexican," but on the other she is subjected to racist racializations of her as "gang related" and academically indifferent. Tiffany has a strong Mexican identity that may be no match for the institutional forces (i.e. placed in and out of ESL, placed in ineffective ESL teaching) that contribute to her poor academic performance. The interplay between their strong Mexican identities and school achievement is varied and seems to complicate the findings of Valenzuela (1999) and Matute-Bianchi (1991) who both found that Mexican-identified students tended to do better in school than their co-ethnic peers.

Still, others employed both strategies of embracing and distancing themselves from "Mexicanness" in different contexts, thus, being "American, but still a little bit Mexican."

Both Dawn and Stephanie embraced their Mexican heritage in a context where it was valued and nurtured (Dawn in her dual-immersion elementary school and Stephanie at home). They were strategic in their separation in a context where being Mexican was racially stigmatized and brought assumptions of Mexicans as criminals, “the Mexicans” as disengaged in school, and Mexicans as lazy. Like the young women who distanced themselves from Mexicanness, the distancing that Dawn and Stephanie engaged reinforces the racial stigma associated with being Mexican and limits community building with their co-ethnics.

Taken together these findings support the work of Pizarro (2005), who also found that the racially stigmatized schooling experiences were a key variable in the negotiation of the identities of young Latino/as. However, unlike Pizarro, I found that gender was also a key variable in the construction of their identity, as in the work of Bettie (2003), Lopez (2003), and Staiger (2005). These young women also situated their identities in response to *race-gender expectations* of them as a young and Latina. Finally, I found that the relationship between racial identity and school achievement is not as clear as segmented assimilation theories might suggest.

The next chapter focuses on eleven young Latinos³⁴ I encountered at Valdez and with whom I conducted life history interviews. In asking these young men about their racial and ethnic identities, I learned that there were differences in the ways they experience gender and

³⁴ I have chosen to use the term “Latino/a” to refer to the target population of this study, which are students, who have at least one Mexican-origin parent(s) and who may cite historical claims to New Mexico or the New Mexico regional Diaspora (Gonzales, 1993). Thus, Latino (male) students with one Non-Latino/a parent are included in this analysis. When referring to a particular young man, I use the term he has used to identify himself.

race in the same school context. I also learned much about how they negotiate the way they see themselves and their *race-gender experiences*³⁵, particularly their schooling experiences.

³⁵ Lopez argues that that “race-gender experiences are the social interactions that take place in a give social sphere, such as public spaces, schools, work, and the home in which men and women undergo racial and gender processes” (6, 2003).

Chapter 5:

“[I’m] Hispanic and Anglo [though] I don’t really look that Hispanic”:

Young Men Negotiating the Dynamics of Phenotype and Racial and Ethnic Identities at Valdez High School

Introduction

I don’t really look that Hispanic, but I know in Mexico they could tell I was Hispanic. My brothers didn’t really get [that]. [Others] didn’t ask them if they spoke Spanish, but about twenty people in all asked me if I spoke Spanish...I think they could tell I was [Hispanic], but in New Mexico and stuff, I don’t really look like it.” (63).

-Marty, a “Anglo and Hispanic” student at Valdez High School

Marty provides a glimpse into the complex process of coming to some understanding about one’s racial and ethnic identity, and how that identity can be informed by social context. In the quote above, Marty indicates that he is “Hispanic and Anglo,” but doesn’t look “that Hispanic.” In this instance, Marty conveys that he has some perception of what Hispanics “look like” and in the context of New Mexico his physical appearance does not match. Marty does, however, indicate that once the social context changes, the way he is racialized changes. When traveling in Mexico, “they could tell I was Hispanic.” Marty is just one of the young men I met while at VHS.

Though limited, much of the research done on the identities of young, high school age Latino/as has discussed the racial and ethnic identities of young women alongside those of young men (Pizarro 2005, Valenzuela 1999, Matute-Bianchi 1991, Smith 2005). While useful, it is critical that the gendered differences in the construction of identity be explored and discussed in a chapter specifically focused on these young men. As Pyke and Johnson note (2003), gender is “culturally established sets of behaviors, appearances, mannerisms,

and other cues that we have learned to associate with members of a particular gender” (35). Moreover, Lee poignantly notes, the racial and ethnic identities of the first and second generation Hmong American high school students in her study were constructed in relation to racialized ideals of masculinity and femininity. In disentangling these complex identities, Lee argues that the hegemonic construction of maleness against which these students situate themselves involves whiteness, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, physical fitness, height, independence, Christianity, and economic success (2005). Similarly, Hill Collins notes that gender and race intersect in the construction of gender ideologies giving rise to patterns of “opportunity and barriers” (2005: 6).

Moreover, it is well documented that Latinos have some of the lowest educational attainment levels. As reported in the previous chapter, the national graduation rate for Hispanic males was 49.9, while the graduation rate for Hispanic females was 59.2 and the graduation rate for white males was 63.3. Similarly, in New Mexico, Hispanic males graduated at a rate of 48.4 compared to 55.4 for Hispanic females (2006). Thus, it is theoretically and empirically useful to understand how gender and race intersect in the lives of these young Latinos to create academic opportunities and barriers in their schooling.

This chapter focuses on eleven young Latinos³⁶ I encountered in my research and with whom I conducted life history interviews. Specifically this chapter addresses the following research questions that are similar to the research questions in the previous chapter: How do young Latinos in a predominantly white high school in New Mexico

³⁶ I have chosen to use the term “Latino/a” to refer to the target population of this study which are students, who have at least one Mexican-origin parent(s) and who may cite historical claims to New Mexico or the New Mexico regional diaspora (Gonzales, 1993). Thus, Latino (male) students with one Non-Latino/a parent are included in this analysis. When referring to a particular young man, I use the term he has used to identify himself.

negotiate their racial identities in the school context? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What, if any, relationship exists between their racial/ethnic identities and achievement?

In asking these young men about their racial and ethnic identities, I learned much about how they negotiate the way they see themselves and their *race-gender experiences*, particularly their schooling experiences (Lee 2005, Lopez 2003, Omi and Winant 1994, Carter 2005). I found that the multiracial White and Latino young men were able to leverage their multiracial status and “choose” their whiteness over the Latinoness to access privilege and eschew the racial stigma associated with being Latino (Waters, 1990). For the Latinos, I found that they positioned their identities in response racial stigma associated with being male and being Latino. Like the young women who used discourses of off-whiteness, one young man accentuated a whitened identity, while another reluctantly claimed Hispanic heritage. Still another identified as White, but described many social interactions where he was not accepted as white. Two others embraced their ethnic identity. One did so in response to negative experiences with school, while another was more ambivalent, but was moving toward a more assertive identity. Finally, the two dark skinned Latinos with a shared African American heritage were subject to the dominant paradigm that one-drop of African black ancestry defines one as black, the “one-drop” rule (Davis, 2006). Thus they were compelled to identify as “African American,” but also did so as a way to preserve their heritage of being “Hispanic” and “African American.”

Identity Negotiation in Relation to Racialized Constructs

Most everybody can think that I'm white because my skin's light colored, even though I'm not.

-Abel, a medium/dark skinned Hispanic student

In my conversations, with these young Latinos I glimpsed the processes by which these young men derived a sense of their “racial” selves in relation to the world they encountered. Specifically, I asked them what “race” they considered themselves and what “race” other people considered them, as a way to understand how they integrated these sometimes varying perceptions. As Abel shared, he is “Hispanic,” yet “most everybody can think I’m white because my skin’s light colored.” Interestingly, he describes himself as “a tanned skin person with dark hair and light brown eyes.”³⁷

I also asked how the racial group(s) with whom they identified was seen in the United States in an effort to learn more about what it might mean for their “racial” selves. Abel, in a candidly honest response shared, “Hispanics and Mexicans, generally, are seen as the low-class, two-bit, half-assed workers that don’t do anything,” yet he countered, “If you’re Mexican, heck, you can do a better job cheaper and in a shorter amount of time. Hispanics are the same way,” arguing that he firmly disagreed with this perception. He added that such generalizations are made based on limited observations. Abel continued,

Say you’re the first person to come into the United States, you’re the first immigrant ever, you act a certain way, and they base your whole race on that one person and nobody can change that fact no matter what you do.

The responses by these young men to these questions, as well as the stories they shared provided some understanding about identity negotiation in relation to racialized constructs. Table 14 summarizes their racial/ethnicity identities and how they are racialized by others. There is also information about the place they were born, their high school

³⁷ After interviewing these young men, I typically jotted down summary notes indicating my assessment of their skin, hair, and eye color and how I would racialize them. I compared this to their self description and how they racialized themselves. (See Golash-Boza 2006).

achievement, and two indicators of their social class status (parent occupation and parent education) to give a more nuanced insight. The table indicates that most (8 of 11) of the young men identified as “Hispanic” to some extent. Yet, two identified solely as “White,” while another young man identified as “African American.”

Table 14. The Multiple Identities of the Young Latinos at Valdez High School

Student	Place of Birth	Racial/Ethnic Identity*	Racialized by Others As	High School Achievement**	Parent Education***	Parent Occupation
Vincent	Large Urban City in New Mexico	White (Father is White and Mother is Hispanic)	White	Middle	Mother (Hispanic) reached 12th grade, but he's not sure if she graduated. Father (White) has high school diploma.	Mother works as a waitress. Father is a construction supervisor.
Joaquin	Large Urban City in New Mexico	White (Father is 3 rd and Mother is 2 nd generation Mexican American)	White or Italian	Lower High	Mother (Mexican) has a master's degree. Father (Mexican) has a master's degree.	Mother is a case worker for the mentally disabled. Father is a "high level" engineer where he's worked for 22 years.
Kevin	Large Urban City in Central California	White and Hispanic (Father is White and Mother is Hispanic)	White	Middle	Mother (Hispanic) left school in 9th grade, but received her GED. Father (White) left high school as a junior, but received his GED.	Mother was a secretary and is now approaching management. Father is a framer for construction.
Jonathan	Small Town in Southern New Mexico	Italian and Spanish/Hispanic (Mother is Hispanic with a great grandfather who is Italian and Father is Hispanic)	Hispanic or Mexican	Low	Mother (Italian and Hispanic) "dropped out" of high school, but went back to get her GED and completed 1 ½ yrs of college. Father (Hispanic) "dropped out" in high school.	Mother works as a clerk at a "bookstore." Father is a maintenance worker for the city.
Marty	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic and Anglo (Father is White and Mother is Hispanic)	Anglo	Lower High	Mother (Hispanic) has a master's degree. Father (White) has two Master's degrees.	Mother is an economist at the local electric company. Father is a retired engineer and now sells real estate.
Carlos	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic	Mexican	Low	Mother (Hispanic) completed high school. Father (Hispanic) completed high school.	Mother is a Special Education assistant. Father works in construction.

Student	Place of Birth	Racial/Ethnic Identity*	Racialized by Others As	High School Achievement**	Parent Education***	Parent Occupation
Jeff	Small Town in Northern New Mexico	Hispanic	White	Upper Middle	Mother (Hispanic) got her GED. Father (Hispanic) went to college for three semesters.	Mother is a caregiver for an elderly woman. Father works as an administrator for the local department of motor vehicles.
Abel	Large Urban City in New Mexico	Hispanic	White	Low	Mother (Hispanic) has a high school diploma and a beautician's license. Father is not present in his life.	Mother is a receptionist for a health service organization.
Hector	Mexico	Hispanic/ Mexican	Mexican	Low	Mother (Mexican) completed 8th grade. Father (Mexican) completed 5th or 6th grade.	Mother works at an elementary school as the head cook. Father repairs trucks and usually does construction.
William	Large Urban City in New Mexico	African American/ Hispanic (Father is Hispanic and Mother is African American)	African American	High	Mother (African American) has high school diploma and two years of college. Father (Hispanic) has a Master's degree in Financial Management.	Mother is a Master Sergeant in the military. Father is Chief Master Sergeant in the military.
Michael	Large Urban City in New Mexico	African American (Father is African American and Hispanic and Mother is Hispanic)	Hispanic or Mexican	High	Mother (Hispanic) completed three years of college and is currently completing her bachelor's degree. Father (African American and Hispanic) has a master's degree.	Mother is an administrator at a local company. Father is a teacher.

* A student's racial/ethnicity identity was determined from their response when asked about their racial and ethnic identity in their survey or their interview.

**Academic achievement is defined as High (mostly A's and B's), Middle (mostly C's), and Low (mostly D's and F's). Grades in core academic courses (i.e. science, English, and math) are weighted slightly higher.

***Parent's racial/ethnic identity was provided by the young men on their survey or in their interview.

Jeff, a medium skinned young man, identified as Hispanic. This young man was born in Northern New Mexico and is at least a fourth generation New Mexican. Jeff indicated that his parents, both of whom are also from Northern New Mexico, were Hispanic. Jeff said he is Hispanic because,

Everyone in my family from my mom's side, they're all Hispanic...you never hear my mom talking about other cultures. You hear her talking about church, and what I do – the Matachines.

For Jeff, being Hispanic is about family heritage and cultural traditions –the Matachines, a cultural and religious dance practiced among Mexican/Hispano of Northern New Mexico³⁸.

Carlos also identified as Hispanic because “like the color of my skin and everything, and that’s just kinda mostly who I grew up around with.” Hector, a medium/dark skinned student, identified as Hispanic and Mexican. He is a 1.5 generation “Mexican” who came to the US when he was nine years old. When asked what race he considered himself, Hector said, “Hispanic...because I am Hispanic...Because I’m Mexican.” Thus, he see Hispanic and Mexican as interchangeable and uses the terms as such.

Two young men, Kevin, a light skinned ninth grader, and Marty, a light skinned young man, identify as Hispanic and White and Hispanic and Anglo, respectively. Kevin, who’s mother was Hispanic and father was “Anglo,” indicated that he considered his race and ethnicity to be “White and Hispanic...I have a lot of different mix in me, but I know half of me is Hispanic.” Similarly, Marty said that he was “Hispanic and Anglo” or “Hispanic Anglo...Because my mom’s full Hispanic and my dad’s full Anglo.”

³⁸ For further information on the Matachines of Northern New Mexico, see Sylvia Rodriguez’s *The Matachines Dance: A Ritual Dance of the Indian Pueblos and Mexicano/Hispano Communities* (2009).

Interestingly, Vincent, a light skinned ninth grader, identified as “White,” despite saying that “I know that my grandpa – my mom’s dad is Mexican and my grandma, his ex-wife is – they were both Mexican...” Joaquin also identified as white though indicating that both his maternal and paternal grandparents are from Mexico and that his parents are second generation “Mexican.” Both Vincent and Joaquin identify their race/ethnicity as White, but for very different reasons that will be explicated later in this chapter.

One young man, Jonathan, a medium skinned young man, identified as Italian and Spanish or Hispanic because,

I like Italians better than the Hispanic because I have – I'm half and half...Then [my mother's] dad kind of ruined it with the Hispanic...I don't know. He just – the way he, every time we went over there – the way he acted and everything wasn't right for – we didn't think it was right...I just like [being Italian] because it's proper.

Jonathan couldn't articulate what it was that “ruined” it for him in terms of identifying as Hispanic.

Two young men indicate that “African American” was their racial/ethnic identity or part of their identity while indicating that one of their parent's was “Hispanic.” William, a dark skinned student said,

I think my race would be African American/Hispanic to me. Because my parents, one is African American and one is Hispanic. So that would be my race.

Michael, a dark skinned young man, relayed that he sees himself as, “African American. Just because I'm proud of my background and I don't want that to fade away.”

Finally, one young man resisted the notion that he had a racial/ethnic identity, except when he had to indicate his race/ethnicity on a form. In this case, Abel, a medium/dark skinned young man, wrote down that his racial and ethnic identity was “Hispanic.” However, in our conversation, Abel said,

I consider myself kind of a, how do I say it? I'm not just one race. Nobody is really just one general race. They consider them one hundred percent something, but they're not. Like, I don't care that I'm part Mexican, part Spaniard, or part German; I don't consider myself anything different than anyone else.

Incorporating Latinos with one Non-Latino/a Parent

Interestingly, a few of the Latino boys had one non-Latino/a parent in contrast to the Latina girls of which only one had non-Latino/a parent. Five of the young men in my sample had one non-Latino/a parent and identified as White, White and Hispanic, African American and Hispanic, or African American. As I indicated in the methodology section, I asked any student I encountered at Valdez High School to participate in this endeavor. Those who agreed and were able to gain a parent's permission were interviewed. As I worked my way through the research, I found that there were a number of Latino students with one non-Latino/a parent and, thus, I felt it important that their experiences be included and that my definition of Latino/as in New Mexico be flexible and expansive. Moreover, this was an opportunity to glimpse how children whose parents are Hispanic and non-Hispanic identify, particularly in light of the fact a large percentage of Hispanics tend to marry out of their racial group.

A recent analysis by the Pew Research Center (2010) revealed that nation-wide 26% of Hispanics married-out in 2008, and that “for all Hispanics who are currently married, about 17% are married to someone of a different race or ethnicity” (14). In addition, Hispanic men were nearly as likely to out-marry as Hispanic women. Hispanic women (19%) had a slightly higher percentage of out-marriages versus Hispanic men (16%). The study also indicated that in 2008 that vast majority of Hispanics (81%) married a white person compared to the 9% who married a black person, the 5% who married an Asian, and

the rest (6%) who married someone of mixed race, an American Indian or some other race. Of those who married a white person, eight-in ten Hispanic men (83%) did so, compared to 78% of Hispanic women. Interestingly, the number of foreign-born Hispanics marrying-out was 11.7% in 2008. Thus, there are heterogeneous differences within the Hispanic community in terms of out-marriage patterns.

Though the Pew Research Center (2010) did not provide much state-level, they did indicate that in 2008, 22% of all newlyweds in New Mexico married someone of a different race or ethnicity than themselves. For Hispanics, the percentage was also 22%. Historically speaking, Murgia and Cazares (1984) found that exogamous marriages in one of New Mexico's largest urban centers was at 48% in 1967 and then dipped to 39% in 1971. Though we cannot know for certain that the number of Hispanic out-marriages included in these percentages, given the large number of Hispanic residents in this city, we can assume that they, too, were out-marrying at high percentages.

Moreover, Gomez's work on the historical origins of the "making" of Mexican Americans as a racial group details the emerging racial ideologies in late nineteenth century New Mexico that shaped the parameters for who is and who isn't Mexican American, or more precisely who is and who isn't White. She argues, "The central paradox was the *legal* construction of Mexican as racially 'white' alongside the *social* construction of Mexicans as non-white and racially inferior" and that Mexican Americans became a "wedge" group that was not quite white, and not Indian, Pueblo-Indian, or Black (Gomez, 2007: 4). Given the historical trajectory of New Mexico, it makes theoretical sense to include Latino students with one Non-Latino/a parent in this analysis, as all these young men are constructing their identities in relation to these racial ideologies and how they see themselves.

Thus, given the empirical and theoretical reality that exists in New Mexico, it makes sense that Mexican-origin students who have at least one Latino/a parent(s) and who may cite historical claims to New Mexico or the New Mexico regional diaspora (Gonzales, 1993) are included in this analysis.

“I’m Hispanic Anglo...Hispanic, as in Spain”: Accentuating Whiteness as a Strategy for Accessing Privilege and Disassociating from a Racially Stigmatized Identity

As I indicated before, two young men, Vincent and Joaquin, identified as White, but for very different reasons. Vincent, a light skinned young man, was born and raised in a large urban center in New Mexico. His mother, who Vincent identified as “Hispanic,” was born and raised in Northern New Mexico and his father, who Vincent identified as “White,” was born in the Midwest. In my conversation with Vincent, I learned more about why he identified as White and what it meant to be White. The following exchange occurred during our interview:

Chalane: What race do you consider yourself to be?

Vincent: White.

Chalane: Why is that?

Vincent: Him (point to his father who is walking past). I get it from him.

Vincent’s Father: What?

Vincent: I get it from you (points to his father). I’m White.

Chalane: What do you mean you get it from him?

Vincent: Because I get my whiteness from him. He has a White background.

- Chalane: You were telling me a second ago your mom is Hispanic, but then you said...
- Vincent: Yeah.
- Chalane: Tell me about that. What you meant by that.
- Vincent: Well, I know that my grandpa, my mom's dad, is Mexican and my grandma, his ex-wife is, they were both Mexican. It's kind of in between there. My grandma, they're not Mexican. They're *New Mexican*.
- Chalane: So what does that mean New Mexican?
- Vincent: Like, not Mexican, like, not Hispanic like, in between.

The exchange above provides insight into Vincent's views about race. He understands race to be something that is inherited because he sees himself as White due to his father's "background." This is consistent with the definition he provided when I asked him, "What is race?" Vincent responded, "Your generation and background... Like, what country your ancestors came from." Interestingly, earlier in our conversation, Vincent shared that his mother was "Hispanic" and also indicated this on a pre-interview survey, yet he eschews a racial identification with this mother. When asked about identifying his mother as Hispanic, he added that his maternal grandparents were "both Mexican" and then clarified that they were "New Mexican," which gave them an ambiguous "in between" status. Both Vincent's mother and father were present during my interview with him. They were not sitting at the table where the interview was conducted, but were moving around the house engaging in their normal activities.

Wanting to further understand how Vincent sees himself in racial terms, I asked him how he was racialized by others. He said "white" adding, "well, I don't really look like someone who would be Mexican or Hispanic, so I would think that people would

immediately say, hey, ‘that guy’s White’.” Vincent’s way of making sense of his father’s “white background” and his mother’s “in between” status with his own understanding of race leads him to distance himself from his Mother’s “Hispanic” heritage and identify with his father’s whiteness.

Just what contributes to this disassociation can be gleaned from Vincent’s honest admission that he feels closest to “White[s] because I am White and [my father] has a whole bunch of, like fifty, family members more than my mom does.” He added that he felt most different from “Blacks and Hispanics” because “I’m not trying to be racist here, but, like, you know, how in gangsters and rappers usually they’re Blacks or Mexicans. I’m not like that.” Vincent is clearly distancing himself from the controlling image of “Blacks or Mexicans” as “gangsters and rappers.”

This light skinned young man with light brown/blonde hair and his father’s European last name emphasizes his White identity as a result of his experiences. He sees himself as a product of his father’s White “background” (not his mother’s “Hispanic” background), others seeing him as White, more members of his family being White, and that he is unlike the stereotypical images he sees of Blacks and Mexicans as gangsters and rappers. Interestingly, Vincent spoke very highly of his mom’s Hispanic family indicating that he was close with them, and had been influenced by them to learn Spanish, because his mother and maternal grandparents speak Spanish.

Patricia Hill Collins’ discussion of controlling images provides some understanding of Vincent’s whitened identity (2000). Like the negative images of Black women as mummies and matriarchs detailed by Hill Collins, the negative images of African American and Latino males as gangsters and rappers dominate our media and penetrate our

consciousness. Vincent associates being “Black or Mexican” with being a “gangster or rapper,” and thus may seek to distance himself from these stereotypes through the disassociation with his mother’s Hispanic heritage. Moreover, as discussed in the previous chapter, Lee argues that schools value and privilege white culture and marginalize non-white culture (2005). Thus in the halls of Valdez High, there may be benefits to claiming whiteness, an unmarked norm (Frankenberg 1993).

Understanding the privileging of one’s Whiteness over their Latinoness is further explicated in the words of another young man, who identified as “Hispanic Anglo.” Marty, a light skinned young man who was born and raised in a large urban center in New Mexico added that he was “Hispanic Anglo because my mom’s full Hispanic and my dad’s full Anglo.” Again we see that this young man understands race as something that is inherited from one’s parents and, thus, having a mom who is “full Hispanic” and a dad who is “full Anglo” means that he is “Hispanic Anglo.”

While Marty does not completely disassociate himself with his mother’s Hispanic heritage, he admits that his perspectives are shaped by his whiteness,

I think that my views have mostly been with the White, the Anglo people, but the Hispanics [I’ve met] haven’t told me really much but they don’t really know what they want to do in the future. They’ve said they wanted to go to college and all that, but they don’t really know the future. I’ve noticed the Anglo knows a little bit more of what they want to do... like how I’m pretty specific on what I want to do. Most of my Anglo friends are like that, but the Hispanics don’t know education wise what they want to do.

There is much going on in this response. Marty, operating under the stereotype that Hispanics have unclear educational aspirations, argues that he, unlike his Hispanic counterparts, knows what he wants to do with his educational future. Moreover, he assumes that the Hispanic peers who “haven’t told me really much” about their educational plans,

may not have educational plan or “don’t know education wise what they want to do.” Again we see another controlling image of Hispanics and their devaluing of education permeate

Marty’s consciousness and influence his perception, possibly explaining his distancing.

Marty further accentuated his white identity by qualifying his Hispanic heritage adding,

I don’t really look Hispanic. I mean some people have told me I do. What kind of annoys me is most people think Hispanic is Mexican. Well, I’m not Mexican. I’m Hispanic, as in Spain... Yes, and that just kind of annoys me. I know this girl in my class, you probably know her, Christina, she’s Hispanic too, but isn’t from Spain. She was complaining about that to me, and I agree with her because people always consider us white, and I have no problem with that, I am white, and I’m proud of that, but everyone thinks that Hispanic, especially just in this area, is Mexican, not Spain.

Underlying Marty’s clarification that he is “Hispanic, as in Spain” is a strategic claim to whiteness that is not new to New Mexico, but emerged during the mid 19th century as a strategy for Mexican elites to move up in the racial hierarchy that was being established and placed Whites at the top (Gomez, 2005).³⁹

Like the Mexican elites in the mid 19th century, Marty’s claims to whiteness are bolstered by his expressed connection to Spain. Marty adds that his mother’s family has “been in New Mexico and Arizona for hundreds of years, and then we were in Spain, and that’s as far as we’ve gotten back, and that’s a couple hundred generations I think.” Clearly overstating his direct connection to Spain and ignoring that New Mexico was once part of Mexico, Marty seeks to legitimize his claims to Spain and, thus, whiteness, perhaps in a similar effort to garner educational resources and distance himself from being Mexican (i.e. “Well I’m not Mexican”) and the negative stereotype associated with being Hispanic (i.e. “Hispanics don’t know education wise what they want to do”).

³⁹ See Chapter four for further details of the historical origins of Spanish identity.

Negotiating White and Hispanic identity and sexuality. Another young man, Kevin, a light skinned student, shared that he considered himself “White and half Hispanic.” Kevin said, “Does Hispanic count? [I consider myself] White and half Hispanic, because White kind of makes up the mix of what my dad is and then Hispanic is my mother’s side,” when I asked him was race he considered himself. The uncertainty contained in Kevin’s statement could stem from his experience as a light-skinned Latino who has had to manage challenges from his co-ethnic peers. Kevin shared,

[Growing up in California] there was a lot of – I guess you could call it discrimination for certain things. Like I was always seen as like the wannabe Mexican boy just because I was half Hispanic. Yeah, and I didn’t try to be a Mexican or anything like that, or act that way if you wanna be a stereotypical native Mexican, but I was always seen that way and kind of bullied [by] Hispanic students mostly.

Beyond entangling the terms “Mexican” and “Hispanic,” Kevin describes a common experience for many multiracial White and Latino/as that includes challenges to one’s Hispanic authenticity (Dowling, 1999).

Kevin also shared that he hasn’t made any special effort to learn his cultural history and that it is not really important to do so,

Because we’re all people and that just makes us all kinda connected because we’re all humans whether pure Black, or Asian, or White, or Hispanic, or Mexican, we’re all people. We’re just from different parts of the world and evolved in a different way.”

This apathy and colorblind perspective could stem from his ability to effectively claim whiteness because he is light skinned, with light brown hair, and light brown eyes. He also carries his father’s last name, which is European and non-Spanish.

Either way, it is interesting to note that Kevin’s sexual identity as “openly gay” seemed to be the focal point of his identity. He shared many stories with me about the difficulty he had coming out and the strained relationship he has with his mother as a result.

Kevin also told me stories of ridicule and teasing from school peers. He shared that peers would call him, “fag and queer and stuff” and that his strategy for managing these verbal assaults was to,

Walk by and they’d say something like, ‘Go run to your boyfriend, fag,’ and then their friends would crack up, [so] I was just really rude to them and eventually they stopped or they said, ‘Why are you picking on me?’ And I said, ‘Because you’re picking on me,’ and they said, ‘Okay, well I’ll stop now.’ I’m like, ‘Okay’.

Perhaps, it is a combination of these experiences intersecting with the unnamed category of whiteness that creates opportunities for Kevin to identify as “White and half Hispanic,” but to deemphasize his ethnic heritage, and emphasize his identity as “openly gay” in spite of the stigma attributed to gay identities.

Identifying as White in name only. In addition, to Vincent, Marty, and Kevin, another young Latino identified himself as White, but for very different reasons than have been explicated thus far. Joaquin, a medium skinned young man with dark brown, medium-length wavy hair, said that he was,

American...I wish I could say I’m Mexican, but my skin is white; I’m born and raised [in a large urban center in New Mexico]. I can only speak English. I’m not Mexican. I think it’d be a privilege to be called Mexican, but I’m white.

There is a lot going on in this quote. On the one hand Joaquin “wishes” he could be “Mexican,” but due to his assessment of his phenotype (which contradicted my assessment of him as “medium skinned”), birthplace, and language skills, he is “white.” He also conflates being “American” with being “white.” Feagin (2000) argues that the term “American” is often reserved for individuals of European heritage, as does Frakenberg (1993) who argues that the white women in her analysis often conflated Americanness with whiteness.

Joaquin also documented experiences of unfair treatment from one of his middle school teachers. Joaquin said,

[My teacher] was just a jerk. He's an absolute jerk. Everything I did to him was just completely wrong. I think he just judged me before he got to know me. I understand people would think I am different than I really act. If you're going to judge somebody, at least take the time to get to know them. The first day of school he compared me to the worst student he ever had. He's like, 'You're going to be my next Danny Johnson (not the real name).' And I'm like, 'Who's that?' And he was like, 'He *talks slow* and he's *always late*.' I said, 'Why are you saying that?' He said, 'I can just see it in you.' You shouldn't judge me. I think he walked into that having an attitude. I've always had a problem with people [like] that. So, I kind of talked back. Kind of like, 'Well, whatever.' I kind of blew him off. So, I can see how it's my fault, too. So, I had him and he just hated me. Then it kind of went on. I was getting in more trouble, bigger trouble.

Joaquin argues that he was “judged” by his appearance and in response he challenged this teacher and “talked back.” He also said that he worked hard in that class trying to do well and, perhaps, counter this teacher’s assumption, but with little result. Joaquin added,

You know, the first nine weeks that I actually got a C in his class, and I tried really hard. So, my parents were cool with that. But then, I can't let my parents deal with it. I dealt with it and didn't talk the second nine weeks. So, he was still kind of a jerk to me, telling me to pull my head out of my ass, but I got an A the second nine weeks. So then, we go into this parent-teacher conference. *This is like a war*. It's pretty cool. Basically, it's like my parents are like, 'I'm proud of Joaquin. We know he messes up. We know he's a jerk.' But my parents have always backed me up.

Likening his parent-teacher conference to a “war” and with the support of his parents, Joaquin challenged this teacher, but to no avail.

He basically kicked me out of his class three days before the semester ended. So, he's like, 'I don't want Joaquin in my class anymore.' And my grades were kind of like going down. They weren't bad. I remember I had a D that I had to pull back up. I got a C in that class, but, you know, it was just pretty bad. I think that was the lowest point I've ever been.

Joaquin ultimately finished the school year and moved on to high school, but it was clear in our discussions that this experience has stayed with him.

In trying to further understand Joaquin’s selection of the term, “White” to identify himself, I asked him additional questions about his family, cultural traditions, and how he is

racialized by others. Joaquin said that he is often racialized as “white” and that “some people think I’m Italian, some think I’m white.” At the same time, Joaquin says,

[Being Mexican is] part of my identity because, to truly say I’m Mexican, which is what my heritage would say, what my grandma, mom and dad is, I’m supposed to be what my parents are, but I’m not. I was raised different than my parents. I was raised speaking English. So speaking English is the American culture.

For Joaquin being Mexican is inextricability tied to speaking Spanish and to a lesser extent practicing and knowing cultural traditions, but, nonetheless, important to him. Thus, I would argue that at school, Joaquin articulates a discourse where he downplays his Mexican heritage at school, perhaps in an effort to avoid racist assumptions and discrimination; though, he may not always be successful.

Morris (2005) documents the ways in which Latino students “performed” middle class identity through their form of dress as a way to demonstrate, “their possession of cultural capital...indicating a middle-class or upwardly mobile background and mitigating the discipline they received,” which could “ameliorate the negative perceptions associated with being male and Hispanic” (38). Similar to the Latinos in Morris’ work, Joaquin seeks to “perform” a status that demonstrates that he is unlike the problem student his teacher compared him to, and using the term “White” to identify himself may be part of that performance. Thus, it is a combination of this performance and the cultural distance he feels from his Mexican heritage that may account for his use of the term White.

Reluctant Identification as Hispanic as a Response to Racial Stigma

In my analysis, there were two young men who reluctantly identified themselves as “Hispanic” despite sharing that it was part of their cultural heritage. I argue that this positioning partially stems from their schooling experiences of being racially stigmatized as

“gang members” and classroom “disruptions.” Jonathan, a medium skinned young man said that he sees himself as “Italian” adding,

I like Italians better than the Hispanic because I'm half and half... Then [his maternal grandfather] kind of ruined it with the Hispanic. Every time we went over there, the way he acted and everything wasn't right. We didn't think it was right.

When I asked Jonathan to further elaborate on the ways that his grandfather “acted” that “ruined it with the Hispanic,” he said that he considered himself “Italian, just like it because it's proper.” I later learned that this great grandfather was from an Italian island and his maternal great grandmother was from Mexico. He also shared that his father was “Hispanic” and was born in Southern New Mexico, but that growing up he didn't often see his father and hasn't seen him in the last two year.

Throughout my conversation with Jonathan, he talked about his Italian heritage and how he had hoped to move to Italy, “Because we're Italian, and that's where we mostly want to be. It's our heritage. Our great-grandfather, he came from an island called Sardinia, so we want to kind of go over there too.” He added, “Our family kind of like the government over there.” Moreover, when Jonathan's mother shared that her maiden name came from her Italian heritage, and which is not the same as Jonathan's, who carries his father's last name, he quickly laid claim to the name adding, “it's still my name too,” perhaps in an effort to further connect to his proclaimed European heritage or because he is estranged from his father.

Interestingly, unlike the identity he professes, Jonathan shared that most often he is racialized as “Hispanic,” adding that “[people] said that to me. When a topic comes up or something they're like what are you? I'm like ‘half Italian,’ [and they're] like, ‘really? I always thought you would be Mexican or something’.” In this instance, he using “Mexican”

and “Hispanic” interchangeably, but clearly claiming whiteness and disassociating himself from his Hispanicness (by not claiming his Hispanic heritage).

Jonathan shared a great deal with me about how he understands racial difference and his schooling experiences, which can provide some possible insight into his disassociation with his Hispanic heritage. Jonathan said that Hispanics are seen as, “Being all [lower class] and they don’t really care about anything” and that Italians are seen as,

The way they talk, their accents, and the way they look because I could tell if they're Italian or not because the way they are. They wear clean clothes, not with holes on their pants or anything, but if they do have holes in their pants, they are – it does look like they're clean.

These disparate perceptions of Hispanics and Italians, a product of dominant ideologies and controlling images, influences how Jonathan sees himself and how he positions his identity in response.

Jonathan also shared that he was often the target of unfair discipline at school, particularly for his “violating the dress code.” In middle school, Jonathan was suspended one day for a dress code violation. He said, “I think I wore a color that they didn't like. They thought it was gang related. They sent me home, and I had to stay home the next day.” His brother and mother shared with me that Jonathan was wearing a white undershirt under a “blue dress shirt.” Emotionally fatigued, Jonathan added, “I was always getting in trouble for something stupid. Because once I went in, whatever, and there was other kids that came in with their pants sagging and everything, with the wrong shirt on and everything. They didn't tell them anything.” When I asked Jonathan how he felt about these experiences he said, defeated, “I'm sad. I don't even like [that] school. I hated it because of that.”

Sadly, Jonathan's experience is not unlike the schooling experiences of many other young men of color, who are overrepresented among students who are suspended, expelled, or removed from the classroom (Morris, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Noguera, 2003). Morris found that the form of dress (i.e. colored shoelaces, baggy pants, shaved or slicked back hair, etc.) of the young Latinos in his work was often interpreted as "threatening" and that "were the most likely to 'get in trouble'" (2005, 36). In this instance, as well as in the experiences of Jonathan, dominant ideologies at the intersection of race and gender inform the interpretation of Latinos' manner dress and lead to the conclusion that Latinos are "dangerous" and in need of discipline.

This was, by no means, an isolated experience for Jonathan as this form of discipline over dress code occurred well into his first year of high school. I often observed Jonathan being made fun of by one teacher for the way that he wore his hair and dressed. I would argue that the consequences of such racist practices, in the form of unfair discipline, contribute to Jonathan's disassociation with his Hispanic heritage, and thus, factors into his claim that he is "Italian."

Unfortunately, Jonathan was not the only young man to share stories of unfair discipline. In talking about his middle school experiences with me, Abel shared, "In the seventh grade, I had a teacher that kicked me out of class daily even though I didn't really do anything wrong." Abel admitted that he would "mess around" with friends in class, which would prompt his removal from class, but insightfully he added,

We'd get kicked out, we wouldn't be able to learn the material, we'd fail the test, and then because of that test you failed, you didn't know the material from that. You just kind of fell into this hole where you couldn't make it up.

He went on, “My last eighth grade year, I was in [In School Suspension] for about half the year.” Abel’s comments demonstrate the disastrous effect disciplining can have on a student’s academic achievement. Abel was kicked out of class “daily” in seventh grade and nearly half the year in 8th grade. “Messing around” in class can certainly be a distraction, but the cost for this behavior was extensive, cumulative and life-changing⁴⁰. Morris (2005) found that many young boys engaged in “disruptive” behavior (i.e. getting out their seats without permission, being loud), but the response by teachers to that behavior turned on their perception of the young man as school oriented, which was informed by their assumptions about race, class, and gender.

Abel, a medium/dark skinned young man, resisted the idea that he had to claim a racial identity. He passionately stated,

I consider myself kind of a – how do I say it? I'm not just one race. Nobody is really just one general race. They consider them 100 percent something, but they're not. Like, I don't care that I'm part Mexican, part Spaniard, or part German. I don't consider myself anything different than anyone else.

I would argue that his resistance, despite sharing his cultural connection (Mexican, Spanish, and German), stems from his racially stigmatized experiences. Hoping to gain further insight, I asked him how he was racialized by others, to which he responded,

It doesn't really matter what anybody else thinks what race you are as long as you're doing something to change your life, how your family's life is going, how you expect to live later on. I don't really care what they think I am as part of a race.

⁴⁰ I spent a semester sitting near Abel in class and did not observe him being overly disruptive in class. I observed that he failed to complete homework assignments on several occasions, despite honest attempts to do the work. He was often disengaged either drawing or sleeping. It is my estimation that at this point, Abel lacked some of the fundamental skills necessary to understand the current content. As a consequence, he failed the class, which was a graduation requirement.

Perhaps, as a form of resistance, Abel challenges the negative assumptions underlying racist racialization practices by arguing that “it doesn’t really matter” and that what you do matters. When pressed, however, Abel says, “They usually call me white because of my skin color, but it doesn't really matter about your skin color, just as long as you know who you are, who you want to be, and how you want to act,” again qualifying his response by resisting racialization. Perhaps, his reluctance to indicated how he is racialized and his final assertion that others see him as white are part of his strategy of resistance, knowing from experience that whiteness is privileged in school settings (Staiger 2004, Lee 2005).

Asserting a Mexican Identity or a Hispanic Identity in Response to Racial Stigma

Hector, too, experienced moments of racial stigma, but unlike his peers, Abel and Jonathan, Hector embraced and even asserted his Latino identity. Hector, a medium/dark skinned young man, a medium/dark skinned young man, referred to himself as “Mexican” and “Hispanic.” It was clear in our conversations that he sees himself as “Mexican.” Hector said that he is proud of his ethnic identity as a Mexican and that “I like to show it off, but not like [others] they’re like, ‘I’m Mexican, and I’m going to fight you.’ I’m not like that.” Moreover, throughout our conversation Hector referred to himself as “Mexican” and talked about attending quinceañeras, and speaking Spanish with “the Mexican accent.” Hector also told me that he was nine years old when he came to the United States from Mexico and was, thus, 1.5 generation Mexican.

In addition, Hector talked about being racialized as Mexican, “They see it in my face, the color of my skin and my accent.” He describes himself as “like brown.” He said that “Like, sometimes I’ll wear these shirts that say Mexican. That’s why sometimes they can tell or they’ll see guys with those pointy boots.”

Hector has also experienced the consequences of racist racialization practices that call in to question his citizenship status. Hector shared a frightening experience from elementary school. His teacher lost her keys and he was unfairly accused by the school police officer of taking them. Hector was taken outside of the school and placed in the back of the officer's police car. He added, "Maybe [the police officer] thinks that I am with no paper, but we do have papers because my dad he did it for us." Hector felt victimized because of an assumption that he was undocumented and, thus, could be threatened with that status. Hector also felt like he needed to point out his legal status. Hector was ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing, but the incident still weighs heavy on Hector.

In spite of the racial stigma Hector experienced, he asserted a strong "Mexican" identity and shared that in the future he'd like to go to college and be a police officer. Angela Valenzuela documents similar dynamics to those I observed. She found that the "Mexicanidad (or "Mexicanness) as a national, rather than ethnic minority identity" of Mexican immigrant students "contributes to the self-fulfilling expectations in both positive school orientations and high academic performance" (1999, 14). This dual frame of reference "not only informs their aspirations, but also mitigates their critique of schooling since the opportunity for schooling is "free," however unequal" (15). Like the Mexicano students in Valenzuela's work, Hector certainly demonstrated his resilience, yet his critique of his schooling experiences was not silenced, but was stridently voiced to school and the officer prompting the officer's reassignment. In addition, Hector's academic trajectory is not certain, as he is not doing as well as his peers and continues to struggle. However, he is persistent because, as he says, "I'm going to college!"

Carlos, too, shared numerous stories of being unfairly accused or singled out for offenses he said that he did not commit both in middle school and high school. A particularly egregious story Carlos shared with me involved him being accused of sexual harassment by a white female peer that he once “went out with.” In response, the police were called and as Carlos shared,

They came to the school. They called me out of my PE class. Security came and got me, told me to get changed, so I got changed and they escorted me down to the office. And there, there was a police in there with the counselor. And they started asking me all these questions and everything, then they were like getting ready to arrest me, they read me my rights and everything. And I told them, ‘I don’t want to go, I want my dad to come here first.’ So my dad came and they asked me the questions again, and my dad said, ‘No, this is bull. You guys are just harassing him.’ Because like the questions they were asking me, they were making it, like they were convinced like I did do it instead of listening to both sides. The thing that I found stupid, I had witnesses that said I wasn’t even near her when she claimed the time that it happened. And then they’re all, ‘Well, we’re going to check the security cameras.’ I was all, ‘Go ahead, check the security cameras. You’ll see I’m not doing nothing’.

Carlos’ dad took him home and additional witnesses were questioned. Carlos went on, “The cop called and said that I don’t need to get a lawyer [and] that they figured out that she was just making it up. They finally got her to crack that she was making it up.” This incident had negative consequences for Carlos’ connection to the school as he said that despite being cleared of any wrongdoing, administrators at the school treated him as if he was guilty and a school counselor stopped talking to him.

Despite this racially stigmatizing experience that might lead one to disassociate from a racially stigmatized identity, Carlos identified as “Hispanic” because “Like the color of my skin and everything, and that’s just kinda mostly who I grew up around with.” He also shared that he is often racialized as “Mexican” and that,

A lot of people think I come from Mexico. That’s pretty messed up crap right there. It’s like it don’t matter even if I did come from Mexico, what does it matter, I’m here.

And they ask, “Did you hop the border or what? I mean like I have no problem if they’re asking, but the way they put it on you it’s like they’re judging you, and it’s like I hate being judged. I don’t judge people, so why do people judge me?”

In this instance Carlos is distinguishing himself from Latinos from Mexico, but he is not doing so in a way which seeks to distance himself from being Mexican, but as a way to challenge the negative assumptions that can often be associated with being from Mexico.

Moreover, Carlos did claim cultural ties to Spain. Carlos, a medium/dark skinned young man, said that he wanted to go to Spain,

Because that’s where my family originally comes from. Or my family on my dad’s side originally comes from, so I wanna go see old family there because I still got family that lives there.

Carlos shared with me that his paternal grandparents were born in New Mexico, and that he is at least third generation New Mexican. When I asked Carlos about the family he had in Spain he replied,

I’m not sure of their names. I don’t remember their names, just the different stories my grandma tells me, and like I’m really bad at names.

He added that his paternal grandfather,

Told me that he was in Spain [and] it’s like really nice there and everything, and that our family is really well-known over there, and like back in ancient times there in Spain there was like four main families that were like really well-known. They were the Romeros (not his real last name), the Garcias (not his real last name), the – I think Ortizs (not his real last name), and one other I can’t remember. And I’m not so sure on the Ortiz (not his real last name), I think that was one of them. I’m not quite sure...[and that my grandfather] originally came from that bloodline.

In his analysis of the various ethnic labels used by blue-collar New Mexicans, circa 1983, Gonzales found that the term Spanish or Spanish American occurred most often (1997). He added that despite using these terms to identify themselves, many of these “Spanish surnamed people of the Southwest” did not espouse an “elaborated iconographic,

historical, or politicized conception” underlying the use of these terms, “nor were pure bloodlines and other elements normally associated with the nomenclature mentioned” (128). Thus, these individuals espoused a “categorical awareness” or defining one’s ethnic identity in relation to what one was not (i.e. from Mexico) and “lack of knowledge of one’s own ethnic culture and history” (133).

Unlike most of the respondents in Gonzales work, Carlos did not directly identify as Spanish, instead using “Hispanic” to identify himself. However, Carlos does make a familial connection to Spain through the stories of his paternal grandfather, which bolster the historical role of his namesake, and lay claim to Spanish “bloodlines.” Thus Carlos’ identity, in this instance, is moving toward an “ideological identity” or one that attempts to ground one’s ethnic identity in “historical and political dimensions” (Gonzales, 1997: 128). Moreover, despite challenges at school, Carlos is optimistic about school stating, “Now I’m happy, or kinda happy, [with] the way things are going. I have a really good feeling that I’m going to do a lot better in school now.”

There were only four young men (Vincent, Kevin, Marty, Jeff, and William) who did not share any stories of unfair discipline or treatment at school. One of them, Jeff, was also the only young man to assert a strong “Hispanic” identity in name and through cultural connectedness. Jeff, a medium skinned young man, a medium skinned young man, identified as,

Hispanic...because everyone in my family from my mom's side, they're all Hispanic. They believe in Hispanic. It's Native American and Hispanics, my family. You never hear my mom talking about other cultures. You hear her talking about church, and what I do, the Matachines and stuff, what's part of our religion. That's why I think [that I'm Hispanic]. All of my family is just Hispanic and Native American.

Jeff, who was born and raised in Northern New Mexico, proclaims an identity that is grounded in cultural and religious tradition. He talked very passionately about his participation in the Morada and the Matachines. Jeff detailed his participation in the Matachines by telling me about the dances that are ritualistically performed and that he has watched the Matachines since he was a “baby.” He also shared that the Morada were “Penitentes [that are] very religious and all we do is [pray and] speak Spanish. We just talk to each other. It’s just the boys in the Morada.” He also added that his maternal grandfather and mother encourage him to learn Spanish, because “it’s our culture so you pretty much have to learn.” He was one of few the young Latinos I interviewed who talked about learning Spanish as a way to preserve their culture. Most of the Latinos I talked to talked about learning Spanish because of the financial incentives that might ensue.

Identifying as “African American” as a way to preserve heritage and being “Hispanic” and “African American”

Two young men I met at Valdez had a shared “African American” and “Hispanic” heritage, but employed different terminology to identify themselves. William, a dark skinned young man, was born in a large urban center in New Mexico, but raised in Europe and on the East Coast because his parents were in the military. William considered himself African American and Hispanic “because my mom is African American and then my dad is Hispanic. And my mom’s from Mississippi and I’ve been there with her family. And my dad’s mom and dad’s family are Hispanic. I mean that’s why. I don’t know.” He talked about not being particularly culturally connected and that his parents didn’t make a special effort to teach him about his cultural background adding, “Like if I asked a question they had no problem answering it, but they didn’t have any like family discussions on it.”

William also shared that he felt closest to whites and then African Americans “because I mean, when I was young and everything I played mostly with white people. But then second would come in would be African American, definitely. I mean, I don’t really feel close to African American because I mean I don’t do stuff that is stereotypical stuff of an African American. But then I don’t feel real close to white people, either, because I don’t do stereotypical things of a white person, you know.”

Thus, William sees himself connected to Whites and doesn’t see himself as connected to African Americans because he doesn’t do “stereotypical stuff of an African American,” but then realizes that he doesn’t do “stereotypical things of a white person,” either. What he doesn’t mention is having any kind of connection to Hispanic co-ethnics. This could be related to his growing up in places where historically there are few Hispanics, and thus, now that he is living in New Mexico, could change.

The ambivalence that William demonstrates with his assertion that he is Hispanic and African American, but culturally and relationally disconnected is also tempered by the dominant paradigm that one-drop of African black ancestry defines one as black, the “one-drop” rule (Davis, 2006). Thus, William may be compelled to identify as Hispanic and African American. In fact, William shared that his most often racialized as,

African American because I look more African American than I do Hispanic. A lot of times like people ask me a question, just around the question like I know you’re half black, but what else are you? Or something like that. But it’s always like I know you’re half black so actually they already know that I’m African American.

William’s racial appearance does not lead others to question their racialization of him as African American, but does create a level of ambiguity such that he is asked “what else are you?”

Similarly, Michael shared that he had African American and Hispanic heritage and that his dad was “African American and Hispanic” and his mother was “Hispanic.” Unlike, William, however, Michael asserts a strong identity as “African American” saying that he does so “because I’m proud of my background and I don’t want that to fade away.” This runs counter to Davis’ argument that Hispanic Americans with black ancestry tend to resist the one-drop rule “if they can” and embrace a Latino identity (2006, 19).

It would seem that Michael might be better “equipped” to resist the one-drop rule because as he shared with me, he is often racialized as,

Hispanic or Mexican because most of the people that call me Mexican don’t really know it’s different to be Hispanic or Mexican. I think it is because of where you’re from. They say I’m Mexican because of my skin tone. [They say,] ‘You’re not dark enough to Black’ or something like that.

Moreover, in New Mexico, there are few African Americans constituting only 3% of the population (US Census Bureau 2010), thus creating a context where being Latino is not as phenotypically restricted and the one-drop rule is not as clearly delineated as they may be in other locations with a greater number of African Americans⁴¹.

Aside from distinguishing Hispanic from Mexican in the previous statement, Michael added that “During baseball season I’m considered Black because I’m in the sun and I’m getting darker, but during basketball not really because I’m not as dark [and people say] ‘You don’t look Black’. [He responds,] ‘I don’t have to look it to be it.’” Thus, how he is racialized is context dependent, and in this case, related to his exposure to the sun. Even when his blackness is challenged, he resists the idea that being black is only about a certain phenotype.

⁴¹While African Americans made up a smaller percentage of students at Valdez High School, they were twice the percentage of African American in New Mexico population.

Further complexity is added, as Michael, who was born and raised in a large urban center in New Mexico, attended a dual-language school, which allowed him to master Spanish. Michael shared that “when people hear me talk Spanish first, but they see my skin color, they think, a couple people asked me if I was Dominican?” Thus, Michael’s appearance and language skills intersect in interesting ways and influence how he is racialized.

Additionally, I would argue that Michael’s strong identity stems from his schooling experiences. Michael communicated that he has been accused of being “whitewashed” by his cousin’s African American friends, adding, “I hate it. I hate being called White. ‘Oh, you’re whitewashed,’ because you’re smart or you’re doing good in school. I think it’s just because I’m trying, and they’re not. You know, just because they have more problems than my life doesn’t mean that I’m not considered Black.” Despite, Michael’s attempt to understand why his blackness is called into question, it is critical that the statements of these peers be assessed in context and may stem from their own struggles with a school system that devalues them (Datnow 1998, Horvat and Lewis 2003, Harpalani 2005). At minimum, it’s fair to suggest that Michael’s response that they’re not “trying” and that “they have more problems” is a verbalized defense of his black identity. Michael seeks cultural preservation through his identification as African American and adds “I like having the skin color I do. I’m proud to be who I am. I don’t want anything to change.”

Consequently, both of these young men were high achievers and were enrolled in honors courses despite sharing stories that their academic capabilities were at times questioned by teachers. Michael shared that his academic focus was often questioned. He shared, “Like sometimes if teachers don’t know you, they’re like, ‘Oh, he doesn’t want to

learn,' and then they see that I want to and then they're kinda shocked, which they shouldn't be. Like the saying, don't judge a book by its cover." Thus, negative assumptions about Michael's commitment to academics were made based on his appearance. William shared that an elementary school teacher "didn't like me and didn't seem to want to help me do my work...I didn't want to go over there and ask her [for help] because I knew she wouldn't help me." William's relationship with this teacher made it a difficult year for him, but that he persevered.

Just what contributes to the academic success of these two youth might be gleaned from their parents' socioeconomic background. Michael's father has a master's degree in education and his mother was working toward the completion of her bachelor's degree. Michael's dad was also a teacher in the same school district during Michael's primary years, and was a teacher at Valdez the year I met him. William's father has a master's degree and his mother has some college experience. Both of his parents have attained professional success through their service in the military and are now high level military administrators. Socioeconomic background can have a powerful influence on academic achievement and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are advantaged (Coleman 1988, Lareau 1987, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). Moreover, Michael's father's position within the school provides him with an in-house resource who he can seek out for advice (I often observed Michael visit with his father during the school day) and who can directly advocate on Michael's in a way that other parents who are not "inside" the school cannot.

Conclusion

This discussion demonstrates that the identities of these young Latinos are shaped *vis-à-vis* their *race-gender experiences* in school (Lopez 2003). Three of the young men,

Vincent, Marty, and Kevin, articulated discourses of multiracial status as White and Latino to choose their whiteness over the Latinoness as a way to access privilege and eschew the racial stigma associated with being Latino (Waters 1990). In the case of Marty and Kevin, they could selectively choose when and where they might identify themselves as Latino, or in the case of Marty, qualify the admission with claims to Spanish ancestry. Vincent chose only to identify as white even when revealing that his mother was Hispanic. It is no surprise then that none of these young men reported instances of unfair treatment by teachers or school administrators equal to that of their darker skinned co-ethnic peers, which could have a negative impact on their academic achievement (All three of them are middle to high academic achievers). There is limited research that looks at the identities of multiracial white and Latino individuals (Stephan and Stephan 1989, Dowling 1999, Lewis 2003). Thus, this work makes an important contribution in that regard.

Joaquin identified as White, but in name only. Though conflicted because he cannot speak Spanish, was born in the US, and his phenotype is “white,” as he describes, Joaquin is connected to his Mexicanness. However, there may be a strategic advantage to identifying as White that plays into his performance that he is not a “troublemaker,” but is academically successful (which he is, as he is a high achiever). Herein lies another important contribution to the literature contained in the documenting of the hyperdisciplining of young Latinos by school teachers and administrators in New Mexico that adds to the growing literature in this area (Ferguson 2000, Lopez 2003, Noguera 2003).

Moreover, unlike their light-skinned, multiracial counterparts, who can choose to associate or disassociate themselves from their Latino heritage, dark skinned Latinos were less able to do so and were often subjected to racial stigma. Jonathan and Abel shared

numerous stories of being unfairly scrutinized and singled out for relatively minor offenses (i.e. dress code and “messing around”), while Joaquin, Hector, and Carlos were subjected to accusations (i.e. class troublemaker , stealing, and sexual harassment). These experiences certainly influenced their relationship with school, as well as the ways in which their positioned their identities in response. Jonathan accentuated a whitened identity (though not as successfully as his multiracial White and Latino co-ethnics), while both he and Abel reluctantly claimed Hispanic heritage. Coincidentally, both Jonathan and Abel did not do well in school and were low achievers. Hector and Carlos employed differing strategies in negotiating their identities. Hector asserted a strong Mexican identity, in response to his negative experiences with school, while Carlos was more ambivalent, but was moving toward a more assertive identity (setting aside for a moment the irony in claiming Spanish heritage).

In addition, the dark skinned Latinos with a shared African American heritage were not subjected to the same hyperdisciplining at school, but shared that they did have challenges with teachers. In response to his experiences of being “judged” and having to negotiate being a dark skinned young man in a state with few African Americans, challenges to his blackness, and his Hispanic heritage, Michael asserted his a strong African American identity and a high achiever. William, also a high achiever, did share a negative experience at school (he felt that an elementary school teacher didn’t like him), and identified as Hispanic and African American, but doesn’t seem to be culturally or relationally connected to these communities. The socioeconomic status for both of these young men provided access to resources that surely contributed to their academic success. Thus, the documentation of these ways in which these two multiracial African American and Latino young men negotiate their

identities makes an important contribution to the growing literature on identities of multiracial African American and Mexican-origin individuals (Stephan and Stephan 1989, Reynoso 2008).

Moreover, like the work of Pizarro (2005), I also found that the racially stigmatized experiences of these young men were a focal point of their identities, but unlike what Pizarro argues, they exist at the intersection of race **and** gender (Hill Collins 1990, Lopez 2003). All of these young men were active agents in negotiating their identities in relation to racialized ideals of masculinity that in some cases allowed them to access privilege, while others had to contend with being labeled as troublemakers, gangsters, thieves, and sexual predators (Lee 2005). The resultant terminology that is employed is a manifestation of that process. Finally, I found that the relationship between racial identity and school achievement is not as clear as segmented assimilation theories might suggest.

Chapter 6:

“My math teacher, she would send me to the office for every single reason”:

Raced and Gendered Nature of Discipline Practices at Valdez High School

Introduction

[My math teacher], I felt, [was] racist because like we had [to wear] a uniform over there [at school]. Not really like a big uniform, just we had to wear polo shirts. We could wear jeans or whatever, but they can't be black jeans or whatever. And like my math teacher, she would send me to the office for every single reason. Like if I had a stain, or if something looked like there was black on my pants, she'd send me to the office. But then there was White kids in there that were wearing something totally different than what I was, and they wouldn't send them, they'd give them a warning, but they sent me.

-Carlos, a ninth grader who identified as Hispanic

Carlos' narrative conveys experiences of increased surveillance and punishment not uncommon to students of color in our public school system (Ferguson 2000, Pizarro 2005, Morris 2005, Reyes 2006, Monahan and Torres 2010, Lopez 2011). Carlos talks about the increased level of scrutiny his teacher engaged to ensure that his form of dress was in compliance with the school dress-code. He felt he was regularly singled out over dress code unfairly because he was Hispanic and that he was sent “to the office for every single reason.” Utilizing life history interviews with the Latino/a youth as the primary data source, I examine the discipline practices that these young Latino/as experience and the ways in which these young Latino/as are negotiating their education. Specifically, this chapter examines how discipline practices reflect race and gendered understandings.

Edward Morris, in his examination of the reproduction of race, class, and gender inequality in schools, found that “many adults thought that teaching students ‘the rules’ of dress and manners, including adherence to the dress code, was an important way to prepare students for future success,” and that regulation “differed according to how perceptions of

race and class interacted with perceptions of masculinity and femininity” (2005: 33). As a consequence, the African American and Latino boys were subjected to stricter regulation than their Asian American and White counterparts.

Carlos’s experience is not unlike that of the young men in Morris’ analysis, and, sadly, he wasn’t the only young Latino/a to share that they felt like they had been treated unfairly. In fact, fourteen of the twenty-five young Latino/as I interviewed had a story to share where they felt they were unfairly singled out and/or disciplined at school. Some suggested that this was as a “consequence” of their racial status, while others were unsure. The variety of their experiences are explicated in this chapter and provide a window through which we can begin to understand what it means to be a young Latino/a in an urban, public high school in New Mexico.

The stories of these young men and women are the subject of this final chapter. This chapter discusses the schooling experiences of the young men and women at Valdez High School. I found that young Latinos were more likely to be disciplined and likely to be treated more harshly for engaging in similar school infractions than their female peers. When the Latinas were disciplined, it was for engaging in behaviors that were in contrast to “ideal femininities,” or the raced expectations of the behaviors young, brown women should and shouldn’t engage. Finally, I found that disciplining students by removing them from the classroom and sending them to in-school suspension (ISS), home suspension, or an outside facility (i.e. youth detention center or treatment facility) had negative consequences for academic performance, and left students feeling angry and mistrustful of school.

“Yeah, the girls were able to get a little more slack...”: Raced and Gendered Discipline Practices

In my conversations with the young Latino/as at Valdez, I learned much about their everyday schooling experiences. Most of the young men (7 of 11) and half of the young women (7 of 14) shared stories of being disciplined. Interestingly, much of the literature on school discipline demonstrates that young men (especially Black and Latinos) tend to be overrepresented at all stages of discipline (Noguera 2003, Monahan and Torres 2009). In a news article in the local newspaper, aptly titled, “Boys in Trouble,” the author cites an analysis of New Mexico’s educational discipline practices where they found that “boys were...1.5 times as likely to be written up for discipline than female classmates.” Moreover, the Denver Post reported that in the neighboring state of Colorado “black public-school students in Colorado are nearly three times as likely to face serious discipline as their white peers, a disparity that is growing despite efforts to curb it...[Moreover], 18 of every 100 black students and 11 of 100 Latino student faced serious discipline, compared with 6.5 out of 100 white students and 8.5 of 100 students overall” (Hubbard, 2010).

There is, however, emerging literature that looks at the ways in which Latina girls have become subject to greater and more frequent discipline. In fact, a recent report by the National Women’s Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund found that though “Latina girls are not suspended as often as Latino boys, they are suspended at a higher rate than White or Asian girls” (2009:15). Moreover, they cite a recent study in North Carolina that found that twelfth grade Latina girls left school (i.e. dropped out) for disciplinary reasons more than any other group. In addition, discipline rates for Black and White girls decreased over time, but they increased for Latina girls (ibid). Finally, they

indicated that their analysis “indicated” a connection between disciplinary actions, academic challenges and dropping out. Thus, Latina girls appear to be experiencing discipline similar to that of Latino boys, but in gendered ways.

Though this analysis was by no means exhaustive, I found that both the young Latinos and young Latinas were subjected to discipline, but the severity of the infraction and the level of discipline applied differed. Specifically, I found that the infractions for which the young men received discipline were less severe than their female counterparts. In other words, it took a lot less for the young men to be disciplined. When the Latinas were disciplined, it was for engaging in behaviors that were in contrast to “ideal femininities.” Table 15 summarizes the school infractions “committed”⁴² by the young Latino/as included in this analysis and the form of discipline that was applied in response. For example, while a young Latino might report that he received a stint in In-School- Suspension for not completing homework, a young Latina would report that she would receive an in-class reprimand for the same infraction. These findings resonate with Lopez’s findings in her analysis of the schooling experiences of second-generation Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian youth (2002). She found that while the young women were allowed to breach the school dresscode, the young men were quickly disciplined if out of line.

⁴² I use the word “committed” in quotations to illustrate that there were discrepancies in what students indicated occurred and what was officially reported.

Table 15. School Infractions that Warranted Discipline and the Discipline Applied for the Infraction

Young Men	Discipline Applied	Young Women	Discipline Applied
Wearing a hat or Dresscode violation	In-School-Suspension (ISS) or Home Suspension	Talking back to teachers	In-class reprimand
Not doing homework	In-class ridicule and ISS	Not doing homework	In-class reprimand or ridicule
Disrupting class by making jokes	ISS	Disrupting class by talking when not allowed	In-class reprimand
“Messing around”	ISS	Going off campus for lunch	ISS
Accused of stealing	Being detained and questioned by a police officer, as well as being placed in the back of a police car	Threatening to fight or fighting (Reported by four young women)	ISS, Suspension, or the youth detention center.
Accused of sexual assault	Suspension until proven innocent		

The stories that the young men and women shared elucidate the micro-level processes by which these discipline practices are carried out. Table 16 lists the students, including limited demographic information, who shared stories of discipline. Their stories illustrate the gendered nature of school discipline practices.

The young men found themselves subjected to discipline for infractions such as wearing a hat in school, not doing homework, disrupting class by making jokes, “messing around,” dresscode violations, accusations of stealing, and accusations sexual assault. Three of their stories are recounted here.

Table 16. Students with Stories of Discipline

Student	Place of Birth	Racial/Ethnic Identity	Racialized by Others As	High School Achievement	Parent Occupation	Parent Education
Joaquin	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	White (Father and Mother are 2 nd generation, Mexican American)	White or Italian	Lower High	Mom is a case worker for mentally disabled. Dad is a “high level” engineer where he’s worked for 22 years.	Mom has a Master’s. Dad has a master’s.
Jonathan	Small Town in Southern New Mexico	Italian and Spanish/Hispanic (Mother is Hispanic with a great grandfather who is Italian and Father is Hispanic)	Hispanic or Mexican	Low	Mom works as a clerk at a “bookstore.” Dad is a maintenance worker for the city.	Mom dropped out of high school, but went back to get her GED and completed 1 ½ yrs of college. Dad dropped out in high school.
Carlos	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	Hispanic	Mexican	Low	Mom is a Special Ed educational assistant. Dad works in construction.	Mom completed high school. Dad completed high school.
Abel	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	Hispanic	White	Low	Mom is a receptionist for a health service organization. Dad is not in the picture.	Mom has a high school diploma and a beauty license. Dad is not in the picture.
Hector	Mexico	Hispanic/Mexican	Mexican	Low	Dad fixes trucks and usually does construction. Mom works at an elementary school as the head cook.	Dad completed 5th or 6th grade. Mom completed 8th grade.
William	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	African American/Hispanic (Father is Hispanic and Mother is African American)	African American	High	Mom is a Master Sergeant in the military. Dad is Chief Master Sergeant in the military.	Mom has high school diploma and two years of college. Dad has a Master's degree in Financial Management.
Michael	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	African American (Father is African American and Hispanic and Mother is Hispanic)	Hispanic or Mexican	High	Mom is an administrator at a local company. Dad is a teacher.	Mom completed three years of college and is currently back in school. Dad has a Master's.

Student	Place of Birth	Racial/Ethnic Identity	Racialized by Others As	High School Achievement	Parent Occupation	Parent Education
Emily	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	Hispanic/ Chicano (Uses Interchangeably)	Hispanic	Lower Middle	Raised by grandmother who completed 8th grade. Mother has her diploma and father his GED.	Grandmother does not work and is on disability. Mother works as a cook in a restaurant and father is the supervisor of the kitchen cleaning staff.
Tania	Small Town in Northern New Mexico	Hispanic and Spanish (Uses Interchangeably)	Hispanic	Low	Mother is currently attending community college. Father completed 10th grade.	Mother is currently unemployed. Father is in construction.
Inés	Large Urban Center in California	Hispanic and Mexican (Two distinct categories, with an emphasis on Hispanic)	Hispanic, some say she looks white.	Middle moving towards Low	Mother completed junior year of high school and father completed middle school.	Mother cooks in a restaurant and Father works in construction.
Kelly	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	Mexican and Hispanic (Uses Interchangeably)	Half-Black and Half-Mexican	Lower Middle	Mother and Father received their GED's, while Father attended a upper tier university for four year (did not complete degree).	Father is a repairman for a major retailer and Mother works in customer service for a major retailer.
Stephanie	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	Mexican	Mexican	Middle	Mother and Father completed high school.	Mother works as a movie theatre manager and Father is a mechanic.
Tiffany	Mexico	Mexican	American (meaning from the US) and Mexican	Low	Mother completed high school and Father completed the 9th grade.	Mother is a dishwasher at a local fast food restaurant and Father is in construction.
Tatiana	Large Urban Center in New Mexico	Black (Father is Black and Native American and Mother is Hispanic and African American)	Black	High	Mother has her bachelor's degree and Step-Father has some college.	Mother is a dental hygienist and Step-Father is a producer.

*Racial/Ethnicity Identity indicates the response the young women provided when asked about their racial and ethnic identity.

**Academic achievement is defined as High (mostly A's and B's), Middle (mostly C's), and Low (mostly D's and F's). Grades in core academic courses (i.e. science, English, and Math) are weighted slightly higher.

Disciplining Young Latinos

Recall from the previous chapter that Joaquin, a dark skinned young man, who is third generation Mexican American, and who identified as “White,” shared the challenging experiences he had with one of his middle school teachers, Mr. Huff. Joaquin felt that Mr. Huff judged him to be a disruptive and “the worst student he ever had” before he got to know him. Joaquin shared that his teacher made unfair assumptions about his school orientation (i.e. “talks slow” and “always late”) based on Joaquin’s appearance stating, “I can just see it in you.” Resisting this assumption, Joaquin added, “If you’re going to judge somebody, at least take the time to get to know them.” Throughout the entire time Joaquin was in Mr. Huff’s class, Joaquin felt that “he [Mr. Huff] tried to always get me in trouble,” and that “he always told me to pull my head out of my ass.” Despite Mr. Huff’s preconceptions of Joaquin, Joaquin did try to disrupt these by working hard to do well in class, but to no avail as Joaquin was kicked out of class and passed with a “C”. Thus, it’s no surprise that Joaquin, who was a consistently high achiever, ultimately did not do well in that class and considered it his “lowest point.”

Another young man, Jonathan, shared stories about the unfair discipline he experienced from Mr. Rendon, a Hispanic math teacher at Valdez. Jonathan, a medium skinned young man said that he sees himself as “Italian,” shared the challenges he had with Mr. Rendon. Jonathan felt that Mr. Rendon would often signal him out for reprimand and ridicule. He shared that Mr. Rendon would discredit any attempt he made to complete his homework. Jonathan said, “If you don't do one problem he'll throw away your paper...I don't think that's fair because [I] got the rest of them down; [I] should get credit for the rest of it.”

Admittedly, Jonathan did not always complete his homework and often came to class unprepared. However, when he did try, Mr. Rendon often assessed his efforts with doubt and ridicule. Jonathan added,

I just want to get done with his class, but I can't do it if he's throwing away my papers and stuff. Then every time when I turn in a paper he's all like "Jonathan turned in his paper," and he starts clapping.

Mr. Rendon's approach to managing Jonathan's academic participation involved belittling and mocking Jonathan into submission.

In fact, Mr. Rendon's authoritarian pedagogy often played out in weekly lectures to the class on being good students and academically responsible. The following account demonstrates the strategies Mr. Rendon often used to try to "motivate" students to engage in class:

9/29/06. Mr. Rendon told the students to take out their homework so that they could grade it in class. He told the class to hold up their red pens, typically used to grade their own homework. He said, "Kids, hold up your red pens." Emily sarcastically rebutted, "Kids??" "Ok, Teacher." Mr. Rendon told the class that everyone should have a red pen. A student asked if they could buy one from him and responded, "I don't supply you guys. I'm not your parents." Mr. Rendon would not start going over the homework until every student held up his or her red pen. Most of the students did this, but both Marcos and Joseph did not. Mr. Rendon told the class to settle down and be quiet so that we could begin to grade the work. The class remained loud and Joaquin yelled to the class to be quiet because he wanted a grade. We continued to wait until everyone held up their red pen. Some students did not have them and Mr. Rendon told them to ask a classmate. I had a red pen and gave it to Hector who gave it to another student. Almost everyone had a red pen except Joseph (a medium skinned young man), whom Mr. Rendon yelled out to find one. Emily was visually upset at the delay and said that Joseph should just get a pen. Mr. Rendon told the class, "You are getting lax...falling into views that you don't have to follow the rules." He said that this was "not acceptable." Joseph finally borrowed a red pen from Jessica and we began to grade the homework. It seemed as if Joseph found the very last red pen in the room. I wonder if I hadn't given my red pen to Hector to give to another student how long we would have waited until every student had a red pen.

We began to grade the homework. Mr. Rendon began by asking for the answer to question one. He said that everyone who received a stamp on their work should have their hand in the air. Students received a stamp if they completed the homework regardless if it was correct. Mr. Rendon purposefully called on Marcos (a medium/dark skinned young man who later told me he was Latino), and Joseph because they had not done the homework. Mr. Rendon launched into a lecture yelling at the entire class, but directing his comments to Marcos, Joseph and others who did not do their homework saying “Why are you here if you don’t plan to work...this is your job...if you don’t have an expectation for yourself, that’s sad...” He then called on Abraham (a light skinned young man who I later learned identified as Hispanic and who dressed in tight jeans, plaid shirts, and often dyed his hair blue and wore eyeliner) who did not have his homework completed. He next called on Christian who paused before he responded to which Mr. Rendon asked him if he had done his work. Christian said he did, but that he couldn’t read his answer. Mr. Rendon moved on to other students who raised their hands and who completed the work. Emily provided a correct answer, as did Vincent. There seemed to be an equal mix of white and students of color who volunteered their answers as well as male and female students. What was noticeable was that the majority of students who did not do their work were boys (Abraham, Marcos, Joseph, and Christian) and all of which were students of color. Mr. Rendon continued his lecture by telling students “If you want to continue not having knowledge, that’s your problem.”

I looked over at Joseph and could see that he was just sitting there in his chair glaring at Mr. Rendon. He was not writing the answers to his worksheet in his red pen as he “should” have done since he did not do the homework. In fact, the red pen was rested behind his ear. I also noticed that Marcos was not writing in the answers in red ink on his blank worksheet either. Even if students do not do any of the worksheet, they can still write down the answers in red ink as the class is grading it and get half credit. It was my sense that Mr. Rendon’s lecture and singling out of Joseph and Marcos did nothing to motivate them to engage in the class, but made them angry, as they refused to work.

The students who did respond were positively reinforced by Mr. Rendon who commented, “Thank you for participating,” or “thank you for your answer.” Once we completed grading the assignment, students were told to give themselves 20/20 if they did the work and corrected their mistakes, 10/20 if they did not do the work, but wrote down the answers, and 0 if they didn’t do the work or write down the answers. Mr. Rendon commented “Add a zero to the other zeros you already have. Being a second-year freshman is not so bad.” A second-year is basically flunking your freshman year and having to repeat it.

After we completed the grading, Joseph gave the red pen back to Jessica. The class was then assigned their homework for the night which included reading and writing notes. They were also given two worksheets to complete. We were then going to write down class notes from the PowerPoint, but before this began Mr. Rendon called

Joseph outside the classroom to speak to him. Although I could not make out what Mr. Rendon was saying, it was clear that he was yelling at Joseph. I do sit nearer to the door, but the student next to me could hear and all the students in the class knew what was happening. The rest of the class started chattering as they got their notebooks ready to take class notes. Mr. Rendon was outside with Joseph for about five minutes and then they both came back into the classroom. Mr. Rendon was frustrated as he stood at the front of the room leaning against the board with his arms crossed over his chest. He proceeded to show on slide at a time and the students copied the notes. There was little discussion among the class and no explanation of the material on the slides. There was also little interaction between the class and Mr. Rendon.

Once we completed the class notes, the class was told to begin to work on their homework and that “you may not talk!” There was about five minutes remaining in class and some students started their work, but most passed the time by busying themselves with other things like whispering to one another. I noticed that neither Marcos nor Joseph took the class notes, nor worked on their homework. I heard Marcos talking about the recent grades he received saying to Emily, “I didn’t pass a lot.” Emily replied, “You’re going to be a second-year freshman.” Marcos retorted, “If I do, I’ll dropout.”

The bell rang for class to end and Mr. Rendon headed over to talk to me. He told me that he “called the students out” who did not do their homework so that I could see the demographics of the students who did not do their homework and who were mostly “minority.” He said that sometime you’ve got to call them out and yell at them. He said that it works for most, but some just don’t care. I simply listened to him and thanked him for his comments.

This account certainly demonstrates the challenges that teachers often face when students fail to come prepared to class (i.e. with a red pen) or do their homework. However, Mr. Rendon’s response to Joseph (i.e. yelling at him and singling him out for not having a red pen) did little to motivate him to engage in class, and may have pushed him to disengage (i.e. he sat back and did not correct his homework). Moreover, the semi-public ridicule that Joseph received out in the hall may have served to further alienate him from the class. Needless to say, Joseph left school half-way through the first semester, as I never saw him again in class or around the school. I asked around and was told that he “transferred” to another school.

During my interviews with the Latino/a youth, I often asked about these “lectures” that Mr. Rendon often engaged in and what kind of impact they had. For Jonathan, these “talks” did little to encourage him to do well and instead had a negative impact on him.

Jonathan added that he wanted,

For [Mr. Rendon] not to be that hard on us, and tell us we're never gonna make it because he's always telling us that we're never gonna make it. He's telling that we're always – we're just gonna fail, so who cares? Nope. He just doesn't care. He's like “you fail.” You fail.

Mr. Rendon's pedagogical approach to managing classroom challenges was to tell students that they were “never gonna make it” and that they would “fail.” These messages, along with the unfair treatment Jonathan received added to his perception that Mr. Rendon was a “bully.” Jonathan said,

He makes fun of me-the way I dress and everything, my hair...it makes me feel *sad*, like he's a *bully*. He does that to another kid in my class, too; Anthony. He does that to him just because he wears makeup. Just because of the makeup.

Given Jonathan's interactions with Mr. Rendon, it's not unexpected that Jonathan did not do well in this class and, in fact, he failed this class (as well as his math and science class).

Moreover, on my second day Mr. Rendon's class, which was near the beginning of the semester, I witnessed how his *race-gender discipline practices* were often exercised on the young men of color in the classroom, and later observed how young Latinas became the occasional target (discussed later in this section). Indicative of his discipline approach, the following occurred during my time in his class:

9/27/06. I asked Mr. Rendon if I could look at the class textbook. He told me to head to the back of the classroom where he showed me a cabinet full of last year's textbooks which were just one year old. He then proceeded to talk about the various “bad” students in his class. We were standing in the back of the room, barely two feet behind the last row of students, talking. And, although he was whispering, I sensed that students could hear him and they definitely knew he was talking about

them. He told me that if I was really interested in learning about the achievement gap, “you need to watch this kid” and pointed to Joseph, who was seated right in front of us, Marcos, Abraham, Christian, and Emily. He has said, “You need to watch this or that kid,” while pointing to each one. Joseph started the class two weeks late and had already been absent nine days. If students are absent for ten days or more they are kicked out of class, are withdrawn from class and given an “F,” and have to sit in the in school suspension room for the rest of the semester. He then mentioned the Emily was in in-school- suspension all day yesterday. Though, he did say that Emily turned in a very organized notebook and was only missing one assignment.

Mr. Rendon then proceeded to talk about Marcos. He said that Marcos never does his work and didn’t even turn in a notebook this past six weeks, which meant that he lost out on 200 points. He said that even if Marcos got all the points on the rest of the notebook checks, the highest grade he could get is a “C.” He said that he thinks Marcos is in a gang or something. Marcos had previously been in in-school suspension for fighting and skipping class.

In this instance, Mr. Rendon’s strategy for motivating the academic struggling students to do well was to point them out to me and “predict” that were “bad” or in a “gang.” Again, it is no surprise that of the student he pointed out one left the school in the middle of the semester, two did not pass the semester and, thus, were not in his class in the spring semester, and two others barely passed.

A final illustration on the discipline practices experienced by the young Latinos at Valdez was discussed in the previous chapter, and given its severity, bears repeating in the context of this discussion. Abel, a medium/dark skinned young man, but resisted the idea that he had to claim a racial identity, shared, “In the seventh grade, I had a teacher that kicked me out of class daily even though I didn’t really do anything wrong.” Abel admitted that he would “mess around” with friends in class, which would prompt his removal from class, but insightfully he added,

We’d get kicked out, we wouldn’t be able to learn the material, we’d fail the test, and then because of that test you failed, you didn’t know the material from that. You just kind of fell into this hole where you couldn’t make it up.

Abel's academic challenges seemed to begin in middle school. He was placed in and out of special education, as the school and his mother attempted to address them. Whether his "messaging around" was a manifestation of his academic challenges could be questioned, but what is clear is that his removal from the classroom had dire consequences for his academic performance.

Abel went on to share that during his eighth grade year he was in In-School-Suspension (ISS) for over twenty-five days. Incidentally, Abel had to repeat the eighth grade and, thus, it is likely that his "absence" from the classroom contributed. Moreover, in the process of repeating eighth grade, Abel said that he was in In-School-Suspension for "about half the year." Quite astutely, Abel shared that he was often sent to ISS because, "It was mainly because the teachers had lower expectations of me; they just kind of said I don't want this student in my class, so they'd send me in there." It seems that ISS became a dumping ground for dealing with Abel, which had dire consequences.

At Valdez, the student handbook had a set of discipline guidelines that list the type and severity of punishment for a given offense. The types of offenses ranged and included those committed on the school bus, computer use violations, contraband (i.e. phones, radios, permanent markers, skates/skateboards), controlled substances (does not list type but says paraphernalia and look-alikes), fighting/physical altercation (of which "group or gang related" garnered more severe sanctions), forgery/cheating, "inappropriate dress/highly distracting clothing and/or jewelry" (i.e. bare midriff, short shorts and skirts, muscle shirts, memory shirts, sagging, gang related attire, etc.), profanity/verbal abuse (and if directed toward a teacher sanctions were more severe), etc.

Discipline was dependent on the severity of the offense and whether this was a 1st offense or more. The only offenses that could garner discipline of In-School-Suspension included: controlled substance, fighting, disruptive conduct, inappropriate dress, profanity or verbal abuse, refusal to obey, theft, tobacco possession/use, truancy, vandalism/graffiti/pranks. Some of the offenses could potentially lead to arrest and contact with the juvenile justice system including using or distributing a controlled substance, a “group or gang related” fight, harassment/intimidation/sexual harassment, and weapons/explosives (i.e. blunt objects, pocketknives, look-alikes, etc.).

During my time at Valdez, I spent six non-consecutive days in the In-School-Suspension room and would often stop in when I checked into the office every day I was at the school. The ISS room was the only “classroom” located in the main administration building just around the corner from the main administration center where Principal Parker’s office was located. It also happened to be located just around the corner from the school security office and the school polices officer’s office.

The room was a larger classroom with old, dirty carpet and twelve make-shift cubicles that were constructed around the perimeter of the room. The cubicle walls were written on in ink and pencil. Some of the material covering the cube walls was torn, and a few of the wall were not stable and if given a good push could have toppled right over. The desks in the cubicles were facing the wall. There were three rectangular tables in the middle of the room. The cubes were usually reserved for students who were there all day or for more than one class period. The tables were usually reserved for students who had ISS for one period or had lunch detention. Students who were disciplined with lunch detention or ISS for school infractions were in ISS, as were students who had missed more than 10 days

of class and whose teacher “withdrawal failed” them from class.⁴³ Thus, the ISS room became a holding room for students who failed classes due to classes. There were two desks at the front of the room for the two ISS teachers who monitored and managed the room. As I indicated in chapter three, there were few teachers of color at Valdez, but, interestingly, both of the ISS teachers, Mr. Michaels and Mrs. Esquibel, were of color. Ironically, the ISS room had its own official name that used the school mascot and a term that conjured up images of an enclosed area that one could not escape.

The goal of ISS was to keep students in school and not at home when punished, thus keeping students engaged in school. Students were supposed to complete schoolwork or alternative assignments if school work was not available. In my time observing the ISS room at Valdez, I noted that students rarely received their missed assignments, nor were they regularly given alternative assignments. The one time I witnessed the ISS students completing an alternative assignment, it was a crossword puzzle. Students often passed the time drawing, applying make-up or grooming themselves, sleeping, secretly listening to their Ipods, or attempting to socialize with one another by whispering, gesturing, or mouthing words to one another under the “no-talking” policy. Occasionally, the teachers would allow them to socialize with one another, and even engage in conversations with them. The following short account was indicative of a typical day in the ISS room:

4/5/07. It’s second period and a white young woman walks in and tells us she’s in ISS today because she missed two days of her lunch detention and now as given ISS. There are twelve students already in ISS. There are already fifteen students here, of which thirteen of them are in here all day. She makes sixteen. Of the students here,

⁴³ The official school policy indicated that students needed a parent note for all absences. On the 3rd -5th absence, a note was sent to the parents notifying them of excessive absences. Teachers were required to contact the parent by phone or e-mail. On the 9th absence the student would get a final warning to be given to the parent. If there was no documentation after the 10th absence, teachers could submit a referral for a “withdrawal fail.” Though not all teachers followed through with the withdrawal on the 10th absence, some were very strict and immediately withdrew a student on their 10th absence.

there are ten boys and seven of them are girls. Of the girls three of them might be considered Hispanic, three of them white, and one black. Of the boys, six of them might be considered Hispanic and three white. Thus, given the population of Valdez, the Hispanic boys and girls are overrepresented in ISS today.

A bit after the second bell rang for second period, Mr. Michaels, a dark skinned man, stepped out and the students started talking to each other. Julie, a medium skinned young woman, and Will, a medium skinned young man, banter with each other. Mr. Michaels returns and Will has to do pushups as an assignment. Julie argues with Will about his pushup form and calls him a “faggot.” Billy, a light skinned young man, came in. Now there are seventeen students. I saw him her last time. P.J., a dark skinned young woman, sleeps with her head on her desk. Will gets back down to do pushups and someone teases him for “being on all fours.” Billy makes a remark that the comment constitutes sexual harassment because he just saw a video on it. Today during the morning announcements, a brief video on sexual harassment was broadcast to the entire school, but was not shown in ISS because there are no media facilities.

I noticed that maybe one-third of the students appear to be doing work. The others just sit and stare into space or pass the time sleeping, whispering to one another, or entertaining themselves. Mr. Michaels steps out again and Julie, Will, and Billy talks about Buddha because Billy had a gold necklace with a golden budda on it. Mr. Michaels comes back in and the talking stops. Then, Mr. Shue walks in and Will begins to talk and Mr. Michaels allows it. Will tells us about the time he had to eat a habanero chile in Mr. Shue’s Spanish class. He struggles to say habanero. Julie corrects him and accents the word. Billy tells her, “Ok, we all know you’re Mexican. You don’t have to remind us.” I don’t think she heard him because her attention was focused on Will who is trying to tell Mr. Michaels his story. Will then appeals to Mr. Shue for some attention, but Mr. Shue just ignores him. Will finally gets Mr. Shue’s attention and asks him to tell Mr. Michaels the story of the habanero. Mr. Shue says that Will was just trying to get attention and walks out. Billy then says about Mr. Shue, “I don’t want to talk to that white guy.” Julie then says, “That’s racist.” Mark then chimes in “It’s not White, it’s Caucasian. It’s not black It’s African American.” Billy then ignores the conversation and tries to do some school work.

At around 9:41a, we all go to the bathroom together for a bathroom break because were not allowed to go the bathroom alone. On the way there, DJ, a medium skinned young man, told me he got lunch detention for being tardy to class. He forgot to do his lunch detention, so they gave him ISS for the last two periods of yesterday and all day today. Paul, a medium skinned youth, said he got in a fight with Greg, a light skinned young man, because he was talking stuff. They met at the baseball field and fought. Paul got five days in ISS. Billy jokes with Mr. Michaels that if the lights were off he could not see Mr. Michaels [because he is dark skinned]. Mr. Michaels jokes back that if it were dark he would need a “that yellow light” to see Billy. We make our way back to the classroom once everyone has had an opportunity to use the restroom. Before I know it, the period is over.

While in the ISS room, I witnessed the overrepresentation of Latino/a students, particularly boys, in the ISS room. I learned about the strategies that students used to pass the time, noting that few completed homework assignments, some slept, and many of them engaged in interesting, honest, and sometimes racist, sexist, or homophobic conversations with one another.

My observations were quite in line with the way Abel passed the time in ISS during his second eighth grade year. He said,

I was done with my work in half an hour or so because it was [easily completed]. Since I didn't understand it, I wrote down some random answer and the ones that I did understand, I wrote down the right answer. So I would just either sleep in there or sit and lounge around. You couldn't talk, but for some reason, if some teacher that knew you was in there, they'd let you talk to somebody else or something.

Abel's academic challenges were not helped by his repeat visits to the ISS room. In fact, an ineffective ISS system which intermittently provides students with missed class work and leaves students to teach themselves, will surely result in poor academic performance.

Though Abel passed his second year in 8th grade and moved on to Valdez High School, it was clear that the form of discipline he received (i.e. ISS) has lasting consequences as he had D's and F's in most of his high school classes the year when I met him.

Disciplining Young Latinas

Young Latinas, too, were often targets of discipline. However, unlike their male counterparts, there were fewer reports and the severity of the discipline was less. In other words, minor infractions were usually "corrected" with an in-class reprimand or ridicule, while more severe infractions resulted in in-school-suspension, home suspension, or in them most severe cases, being sent to detention or treatment facilities. However, when the Latinas

were disciplined, it was for engaging in behaviors that were in contrast to “ideal femininities,” or the raced expectations of the behaviors young, brown women should and shouldn’t engage.

Lee (2005) argues that “a woman’s status is ultimately tied to her relationship with a male partner. The ideal woman must conform to a physical type in order to attract a man, and whiteness is central to the ideal of female beauty... White body aesthetic (e.g., blonde, blue-eyed, thin, long hair, voluptuous). Not insignificantly, women of color who are held up as icons of beauty often conform in some ways to White standards of beauty” (89). In her analysis she found that the ideal girl was socially popular, dressed in the latest fashions “that marked her middle-class whiteness,” recognized by others for her “beauty,” might play sports or be on the prom court, and “she gets along well with teachers and administrators, who she her as being smart, trustworthy, and sweet” (90). Thus, when the Latina girls dramatically diverged from this “ideal,” they were subject to discipline.

Of the fourteen young women, half (7) of them reported experiences with school discipline compared to 7 of the 11 Latino boys. Infractions included talking back to teachers, not doing homework, disrupting class by talking when not allowed, leaving campus for lunch, threatening to fight, and fighting. The young women who engaged in talking back to teachers, not doing their homework, or disrupting class by talking were disciplined with verbal reprimands and sometimes public ridicule. For example, Tiffany shared that she was in trouble “most of the time” for talking and that the teacher would respond by “send[ing] me to another desk [or] switch us around.” Inés said that she would get in trouble “a lot” in middle school. She said, “I guess I would like talk back to the teachers, and do stuff I wasn’t supposed to do.” Inés also attributed her disciplinary challenges to the principal adding,

“Sometimes I used to think that she was racist...Like, I don’t know. Like a lot of people used to get in trouble, and she wouldn’t do nothing to them. But when it came to me, she’ll give me referrals and all kinds of stuff.” Thus, for Inés the amount of “trouble” she got into was a consequence of her talking back to teachers and a principal who she said unfairly disciplined her.

As I indicated previously, Mr. Rendon often engaged in *race-gender discipline practices* and young Latinas were the occasional target when they engaged in behaviors that were in contrast to “ideal femininities. Kelly often traversed gender boundaries by dressing in sports jersey’s, baseball hats (when not in class, per school policy), baggy jeans and wearing her hair extremely short in a style that might be stereotypically associated with young boys. Moreover, Kelly said she was racialized as “half- black and half-Mexican.” I often witnessed the in-class reprimands she would receive from Mr. Rendon for not completing homework assignments. Her infractions, however, often resulted in less severe forms of punishment than her male counterparts who, when engaging in these behaviors, suffered in-class reprimands and ridicule (i.e. as was the case with Jonathan, Joseph, Marcos, and Christian) or were removed from the classroom (i.e. as was the case with Joaquin, Abel, Joseph, Marcos).

Emily also found that she was the subject of Mr. Rendon’s public ridicule when she came into class with hickey’s on her neck. The following occurred on my first day in his class:

9/25/06. When I walked in the room, Mr. Rendon immediately noticed me and said hello. Another teacher was talking to him and a couple of students wanted his attention so I stood in the background waiting for a chance to talk to him. Felicia was sitting in her assigned seat and motioned for me to come sit right next to her. I waited to see where Mr. Rendon wanted me to sit. As I waited a young girl walked into the

room her neck covered in hickeys. Emily, was a thin Latina with long brown hair. Mr. Rendon sarcastically remarked “she was attacked by a vampire don’t get too close.” He said this a couple of times. I think this was his way of telling her that it is not appropriate to come to school with a neck full of hickeys, but I think all he did was embarrass her. Emily just smirked, shrugged her shoulders and looked down at the ground.

In this vignette, Mr. Rendon’s approach to disciplining what he perceived as Emily’s sexual promiscuity (and for what understandably might warrant a private discussion with a school counselor) was to embarrass her. Unfortunately, singling her out for public ridicule did little to convey a message about healthy relationships and what is and isn’t appropriate.

The young women, however, were understandably subjected to greater levels of discipline when they engaged in behaviors that were in contrast to the raced expectations of the behaviors young, brown women should and shouldn’t engage. One young woman traversed the boundaries of gender in her form of dress. Another young woman came to class with “evidence” of what Mr. Rendon perceived as sexual promiscuity. Four young women reported that they received either in-school-suspension, home suspension, or in the case of one young woman, sent to the juvenile detention home. The most severe cases were discussed in chapter four, Emily and Tania. Emily shared that she got in a fight with a classmate in middle school and as a result was sent to the local youth detention center for a week and then a community custody program where she was allowed to take classes, but was still in custody. Another young woman, Tania, shared similar stories saying that she got in a few fights in middle school defending a friend who was called names and because a classmate was writing “stuff” about Tania on the bathroom wall. The first fight resulted in Tania being placed in In-School-Suspension (ISS) for four weeks, and for the latter offense she was suspended for two days and then placed in ISS for one week. Moreover, teachers

recommended that Tania be placed in a residential facility to address her “behavioral problems,” while she continued school instruction at the facility.

Inés recounted a fight she had with a class mate who she said, “Used to bug me a lot, and make up all kinds of stuff.” For that fight, Inés was suspended for two or three days. Lastly, Stephanie was suspended for four days, but “got out” in two days for “good behavior” for fighting. She shared, “We were at a basketball game and this one girl just spit on me, so I swung. A teacher saw, so we both got in trouble. I originally got four days of in-school suspension, but I got out on good behavior and I finished all my work for those four days.” The prison analogy that Stephanie uses aside, when these young women engaged in a behavior that did not conform to gendered expectations, they were disciplined.

There are several interesting findings in terms of discipline the young Latino/as experienced while at Valdez. I found that young men (7 of 11) were more likely than the young women (7 of 14) to be disciplined. When the young women were disciplined, they were treated with brevity. Their infractions had to be more severe (i.e. fighting⁴⁴) to prompt any form of suspension (in-school, home, or outside facility). When the Latinas were disciplined, it was for engaging in behaviors that were in contrast to “ideal femininities,” or the raced expectations of the behaviors young, brown women should and shouldn’t engage. My findings are corroborated in the words of Jonathan, the young man who had negative experiences with Mr. Rendon. He said, “Yeah, the girls were able to get a little more slack on their homework. The girls were able to go to the bathroom any time they want and

⁴⁴ It would have been a useful comparison to look at the punishment the young men received for fighting, but, interestingly, none of the eleven young men I spoke with fought at school and only two young men said they got into a fight out of school.

everything, and the boys had to wait until passing.” Thus, he, too, recognized the gendered discipline practices at school.

“I was never in class. I was either in ISS or in things like that.”: Consequences on Achievement When Removing Students from the Classroom

As I indicated earlier, many of the young Latinos and some of the young Latinas who were disciplined for school infractions received in-school-suspension, home suspension, or were sent to the outside facilities (i.e. detention or treatment center). While removing a student from the classroom may seem like a reasonable approach to managing “problem” behavior, the consequences of this practice were great. Many of the youth I spoke with talked about the inadequate academic learning and support they experienced while completing their time away from the classroom. Moreover, students who felt their removal was too harsh or unjustified often conveyed sentiments of anger and mistrust in the school.

Tania said that she got in a few fights in middle school defending a friend who was called names and because a classmate was writing “stuff” about Tania on the bathroom wall. The first fight resulted in Tania being placed in In-School-Suspension (ISS) for four weeks, and for the latter offense she was suspended for two days and then placed in ISS for one week. Moreover, teachers recommended that Tania be placed in a residential facility to address her “behavioral problems,” while she continued school instruction at the facility. Tania said that she stayed for about three months, but that, “they didn’t really teach us anything.”

Emily also shared that she got in a fight with a classmate in middle school and as a result was sent to the local youth detention center for a week and then a community custody program where she was allowed to take classes, but was still in custody. Emily added that

the harshness of her punishment could have been the result of the severity of the fight and because she had a prior shoplifting charge, but was unfair nonetheless. Research shows that minority youth tend to be overrepresented at every point in the juvenile justice system and that this can have negative consequences for educational outcomes (Piquero 2008, Lieber, 2002). There is much debate about whether this is attributable to differences in offending or that the juvenile justice system treats whites and minorities differently. After completing her month-long adjudication, Emily had to petition the school district to get back in to school. Unfortunately, the principal did not allow her back in to her old school and she had to go to another school. Emily felt that the severity of the punishment was unjustified and the ban from her previous school unfair.

Abel's repeated stays in in-school-suspension impacted his academic performance. He shared that he did try to do school assignment that were brought to him to complete while in ISS adding, "I was done my work in half an hour or so because it was easy. Since I didn't understand it, I wrote down some random answer and the ones that I did understand, I wrote down the right answer. So I would just either sleep in there or sit and lounge around. You couldn't talk, but for some reason, if some teacher that knew you was in there, they'd let you talk to somebody else or something."

Moreover, as Abel so poignantly states, "I was never in class. I was either in ISS or in things like that because I had gotten in trouble with a teacher or I had fallen asleep during class. So when you were in ISS, all you got was the material. You didn't have any help from a teacher; you couldn't talk to anybody or ask any questions. You had to, basically, figure it out on your own and if you couldn't figure it out that way, you had to just write some random number or word on your paper." He went on to say, "I never really had the time to learn

what they learned and I never had the chance to learn what I needed to learn. The teachers always treated me differently because I was never in class and things like that.”

These momentary (and sometimes long-term) departures from the classroom had negative consequences for these and other students’ academic performance. The transition in and out of class, combined with the intermittent receipt of “missed” class work and the responsibility on students to teach themselves combined to all but guarantee academic failure. Noguera is quite critical of removing students from the classroom, as a form of punishment. He states,

It is ironic and telling that schools typically punish children who are behind academically by depriving them of instructional time. Particularly if the misbehaving student is behind academically or missing school frequently, it would seem illogical that the punishment for misbehavior should be denial of school time. But more often than not, schools treat the removal of student as though it were the only form of punishment available. In so doing, the factors that give rise to misbehavior go unexplored, ignored, and unaddressed, while the penchant to punish proceeds with little thought given to the long-term consequences on student (345-346).

In addition, to stifling academic achievement and ignoring underlying causes of students “misbehavior,” after doing time in ISS, suspension, or an outside facility, students were often left feeling angry and mistrustful. Of her time in ISS, Inés said,

I didn’t really care because I was mad at the principal. So I just didn’t care, didn’t like to go into school...I didn’t care about getting in trouble, because I just wanted to get out of school I guess.

Emily was angry at the principal of the middle school who would not allow her to return to school after she did her time in the community custody program. She said,

The principal told [the school district administrator], he told him right in front of me, ‘I don’t think she should go to that school because she’ll hurt somebody there’ ... and I looked at him, like why did you have to say that, you know what I mean?

Emily felt that she had served her punishment and should have been allowed back in to her old school. Moreover, of his time in the in-school-suspension-like program, Joaquin says, “I actually got suspended [and sent to Altered Instruction in School or AIS]... I can’t remember exactly what it stands for, but kids call it *agony in school*, and that’s what teachers call it, too.” It is quite telling that Joaquin and other students see in-school suspension as “agony.”

Abel said of his experiences, “teachers don’t care...They seem like sometimes, if you don’t learn, the teacher doesn’t care as long as they keep getting their next paycheck.”

Similarly, and clearly angry at the way she was treated, Tania said of teachers, “I try to make them feel stupid. Like when they’re like, ‘You’re not going to do this.’ And then I’m like, ‘Watch me.’ And then it’s just like, I’ll tell them, ‘You’re an adult. You act stupid.’ I’ll make them feel worse. I’ll [verbally] bring a teacher down.”

Clearly angry and upset about over their experiences, these students verbally lashed out as their only means of resisting a practice they perceived as unfair and uncaring. Angela Valenzuela, in her analysis of the schooling experiences of Mexican American high school student in Texas, found that schools are structure around *aesthetic* caring (1999). That is,

Schools are structured around aesthetic caring whose essence lies in an attention to things and ideas...purs[ing] a narrow, instrumental logic...and privileging the technical over the expressive in discourse of education” (22).

She argues that for Mexican youth *authentic* caring is just as important. Mexican youth value meaning and reciprocal relationships with teachers and school personnel. These relationships are based on respecting and valuing the individuality of others. Valenzuela adds,

Misunderstandings about the meaning of caring thus subtract resources from youth by impeding the development of authentic caring and by obliging students to participate in a non-neutral, power-evasive position of aesthetic, or superficial caring.” (25).

Thus, similar to the youth in Valenzuela's work, the young Latino/as at Valdez were often left with anger and mistrust, and feeling as if school official "don't care" when subjected to suspension as punishment for school infractions. They responded by verbally lashing out stating that they, too, "don't care."

Conclusion

Though this endeavor started out as an opportunity to understand the schooling experiences of these youth, it quickly turned into an analysis of the raced and gendered nature of discipline practices at Valdez. The stories of discipline quickly rose to the surface and mirrored the findings in the research on school discipline. Research demonstrates that "students [who are] most likely to be suspended, expelled and removed from the classroom for punishment [are] minorities, males, and low achievers..." (Noguera 2003: 342).

Moreover, "students who are disciplined for misbehaving in school, students who have poor grades, student who are retained ("held back"), and student who believe their peers see them as trouble makers all have higher odd of dropping out" (NWLC & MALDEF 2009).

Similarly, Lopez (2003) found the following:

Notwithstanding the fact that men were generally more rambunctious than their female counterparts, teachers were generally less understanding of young men and were more likely to discipline them more harshly for the same infractions committed by their female counterparts" (88).

I, too, found that males (7 of 11) were more likely to experience increased levels of discipline when I compared the young Latinas to the young Latinos, and, thus, gendered discipline practices were evident at Valdez High School. Moreover, I found that the Latinas were disciplined when engaging in behaviors that were in contrast to "ideal femininities," or the raced expectations of the behaviors young, brown women should and shouldn't engage

(Mendoza-Denton 1996, Lee 2005). This work makes a substantive contribution to the literature that looks at discipline in public schools by documenting the ways in which young women are subjected to the same discipline processes as their young male counterparts. In addition, this work illustrates the intricate ways in which discipline practices are carried out at the micro level.

Of the twenty-five Latino/as I interviewed a little more than half (14 of 25) reported incidents of discipline. Though I cannot conclusively suggest that Latino/as were more likely to be disciplined compared to their white counterparts, it is telling when a little more than half of the Latino/as in my sample have a discipline story to tell given that they only constitute 33% of Valdez's student population. This could be attributed to social context, specifically the fact that VHS is predominantly White with fewer Latino/a students (half identified as white, one third as Hispanic and the remaining were equally divided among students who identified as Black, Native American and Asian) and has a smaller percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch (about one-third) Thus, race (versus gender) seems to be the most salient variable in terms of discipline practices in a school context where Latino/as are not the numerical majority.

Lopez (2003) examined a predominantly Latino/a high school (90%) where seventy-five percent were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Moreover, "only a quarter of students graduate within the traditional four years it usually takes to earn a diploma" (70), and the young women were more likely to graduate than males. Noguera doesn't give demographic information on the 10 high schools he examined in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, but these 10 schools do have high suspension rates.

Moreover, unlike Noguera's finding that low achievers were likely targets of hyperdiscipline, I found that high and middle achievers were just as likely to share stories of unfair discipline. Of the seven young women, two were low achievers, four were middle achievers and one was a high achiever. Of the seven young men, four were low achievers and three were high achievers. For both young men and women, six were low achievers, four were middle achievers, and four were high achievers. Given these interesting patterns of discipline where young Latinas were nearly as likely as the young Latinos to be disciplined, and high, middle and low achievers were nearly equally likely to be disciplined, it seems that context matters and figures into the discipline practices at Valdez.

Additionally, I found that removing students from the classroom as a consequence for their school infractions compounded their academic difficulties and led to poor academic performance. Moreover, students who were subjected to classroom removal (ISS, home suspension, or alternate facility) were left with feelings of anger, mistrust, and expressed that teachers "do not care," and they, too, "do not care" for the way they were treated.

Valenzuela concludes that "US-born [Mexican American youth] do not oppose education, nor are they uniformly hostile to the equation of education with upward mobility. What they reject is *schooling*-the content of their education and the way it is offered" (1999: 19). Thus in many ways, unequal school discipline practices that are gendered and raced, as a part of the content of their education, can contribute to unequal educational outcomes for Latino/as (Reyes 2006, NWLC & MALDEF 2009, Monahan and Torres 2010, Lopez 2011)

Chapter 7:

Negotiating Identities Amid Race & Gender Hierarchies: Resistance, Social Critique, and Student Agency

Introduction

“Because I’ll fight against [others] if they try to, like I’ll argue out my point that it’s not fair, that we all have rights, and it’s not fair for you to choose who passes and who stays just by on their race”

-Carlos, a ninth grader who identified as Hispanic

“I wasn’t all buddy buddy with [my teachers], but I wasn’t all like a bad kid, you know what I mean? I was just like, I don’t know, like how I am now, like I’m not a bad kid, but I’m not all like how there’s teacher’s pets and stuff, I just do what I have to do”

-Emily, a ninth grader who identified as Hispanic

“Well I didn’t really pay attention to [my teachers], they were just my teachers... I just go there and do what they want you to do, and that’s it.”

-Inés, a ninth grader who identified as Hispanic and Mexican

“Yeah, I told [my math teacher] that day, I said, ‘Wouldn’t it occur to you that the students that basically don’t know how to do this [need] the notes [to help them complete their exam versus] the students who know how to do this and get this?’ It basically makes sense because I feel the students [who] don’t get any of this at all should be able to use the notes. I mean, I think he looks at it like [you] get the notes if [you] work for it. Why would [you] use the notes if [you] already know what to do? He just looked at me and said, ‘You know, another smart remark and you’re going to get detention.’ I was like, ‘well, I’m just telling you the truth,’ and then I walked off”

-Lora, a ninth grader who identified as Hispanic

What are youth’s social critiques of their schooling process? How do they assert their agency in their sphere of influence? The quotes from the young Latino/as at Valdez High School highlight the ways in which they are exercising their agency and negotiating their school environment. Carlos says that he will “argue” his point and “fight” against those who try to limit his opportunities based on how he is racialized. Both Emily and Inés talk about doing “what I have to do” or “what they want you to do” as a strategy for survival. Lora

attempted to challenge her math's teacher policy that only students who turned in all their homework assignments could use class notes to take exams. She understood that being allowed to use class notes on the exam was an incentive for completing homework. However, she was critical of this class policy and the irony it employs in setting up poor performing students or students who may need the most assistance with their exam for failure. Whether her counter-logic resonated with her teacher did not matter, as any objection she made placed her in jeopardy of being sent to detention. Thus, instead of engaging her critique, Lora's teacher dismissed her. Perhaps, this teacher could have responded to Lora's objections differently such that she understood the importance of completing homework assignments as part of the process of preparing for exams. His pedagogical approach (i.e. not hearing her plea, calling it a "smart remark," and silencing further dissent), however, contributed to her disengagement as she "walked off." Thus, it is critical that teacher pedagogies be anchored in promoting student engagement.

This dissertation set out to understand the schooling experiences of Latino/a high school students in New Mexico to gain insight into the micro-level processes that shape the identities and schooling experiences of these youth. Specifically, this research addresses the following research questions: *How do Latino/a youth articulate their expressions of racial identity in the post-Civil Rights colorblind era? What discourses or nomenclatures do they employ? How are these discourses distinguished from one another? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What may their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement?* To address these research questions, this

study used participant observation in a New Mexico public high school, and in-depth life-history interviews with twenty-five young Latino/as at Valdez High School.

This final chapter concludes with a discussion of the empirical findings, theoretical and methodological contributions as well as policy implications. I also suggest areas for future research. Namely, this chapter challenges colorblind ideologies through school practice and anti-racism curriculum. In addition, suggestions are made for reconstituting the school curriculum such that it values and integrates the contributions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans and other socially marginalized groups. Schools have a role to play in the disruption of racial hierarchies, namely whiteness and white privilege. Students must be supported in the active rearticulation of identity in response to racial stigma. Finally, schools must examine how discipline practices are deeply raced and gender in an effort to address the overrepresentation of young Latino/as who are disciplined. Taken together, these processes can work to begin to address the educational inequalities that Latino/a high school students' experience.

Empirical Contributions

This research explores how Latino/a high school students in New Mexico constitute their racial identities in this particular historical moment, the post-Civil Rights colorblind era. I also explore what their chosen nomenclatures and employed discourses might suggest about the relationship between their racial identities and academic achievement. This study reveals that these young Latino/as are negotiating their racial identities in the context of racialization and gendering processes at school and that schools are sites where our understandings of race and gender are continuously contested and negotiated. As part of that process, this study sheds light on the ways in which phenotype influences the construction of race and the

process of assimilation. Specifically, for Latino/as, I found that phenotype played into their identity negotiation as they worked to traverse racial boundaries. Many of the young Latino/as employed discourses of “off-whiteness,” some embraced their ethnic heritage, many worked to deflect racial-stigma by distancing themselves from Mexicanness, while others “straddled” being “American, but still a little bit Mexican.” When examining the experiences of the multiracial Latino/as, I found that the multiracial white and Latino young men appeared to be assimilating into white society, as they easily passed as white and in the case of one young man, only identified as white. I also found that the multiracial Black and Latino/as youth were subjected to the one-drop rule in that they were often racialized as Black, which was a critical part of their identity.

I also found that understandings of race and gendered expectations worked together to create opportunity for some and barriers for others. That is, I found that the ways in which schools mete out discipline is influenced by perceptions of *hegemonic masculinities and ideal femininities*. Most of the young Latino/as had been disciplined at school. The young Latinos were subjected to harsher forms of discipline when engaging in disruptive behaviors similar to their female co-ethnics. However, when the young Latinas engaged in behavior that was in contrast to *ideal femininities*, they were subjected to discipline, as well.

These findings also suggest that there is no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement among these young Latinos.

Extending Theoretical Frames & Methodological Strategies: Negotiating Intersecting Race and Gender Hierarchies

This work draws on a number of guiding theoretical frames as a way to learn about the lives of New Mexican Latino/a youth. These include racial formation theory, segmented

assimilation theory, and intersectionality (Omi and Winant 1994, Bonilla Silva 2003, Anzaldúa 1987, Cuadraz 1993, Hill Collins 1990, Hurtado 1996, Lewis 2003, Lee 2005, Lopez 2003, Matute-Bianchi 1991, Morris 2005, Ogbu 1991, Pizarro 2005, Portes and Zhou 2003, Staiger 2005). Racial Formation Theory argues that race is the fundamental axis upon which society is organized (Omi and Winant, 1984). Racial formation is the social process whereby racial categories are continuously constructed, inhabited, and destroyed through a series of racial projects in which human bodies are categorized, classified, hierarchized, and imbued with meaning. Racial formation is also the production of racial meaning and racial ideologies such that social and economic resources are distributed along racial lines, which inherently engenders racial inequality. Omi and Winant argue that these racial categories are constantly in flux and continuously contested. As such, scholars who examine race and racism as critical components of education argue that race is significant in education processes and institutions (Fine 1991, Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, Lopez 2002, Lewis 2003). Ladson-Billings and Tate specifically argue that race must be considered and that class and gender based explanations are insufficient to explain education dynamics and inequality. Like Allen (2004), they argue that race, and white supremacy in particular, is fundamental to educational dynamics in the United States.

Segmented assimilation theory argues that the low academic achievement of minority students is a product of the adoption of an oppositional culture and oppositional identity that manifest in poor educational performance (Ogbu 1991). Inherent in this opposition are a rejection of school and a devaluation of academic success.

Intersectionality argues that race, gender, class, and sexuality are interconnected and intertwined dynamics that cannot be analyzed separately, but that change, evolve and emerge

in the context of the historical and social environment (Anzaldúa 1987, Hill Collins 1990, Cuadraz 1993, Hurtado 1997, Pyke and Johnson 2004). Hill Collins (1990) argues that black women are subjected to a matrix of domination in which the subordinating forces of race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect to create different forms of subjugation and dominance. The historical and social context, which endangers these forms, evolves and changes where at one time race may be more salient, while at another gender may move to the center.

This work makes several theoretical contributions to the extant literature. First, this study reveals that these young Latino/as are negotiating their identities in the context of racialization and gendering processes and that schools are sites where our understandings of race and gender are continuously contested and negotiated (Omi and Winant 1994). As part of that process, this study sheds light on the ways in which phenotype influences the construction of race and the process of assimilation. Specifically, for Latino/as, I found that phenotype played into their identity negotiation as they worked to traverse racial boundaries. Many of the young Latino/as employed discourses of off-whiteness, some embraced their ethnic heritage, while others worked to deflect racial-stigma. These findings points to the need to capture race in a variety of ways including self-identification, ascription and researcher assessment.

When examining the experiences of the multiracial Latino/as, I found that the multiracial white and Latino young men appeared to be assimilating into white society, as they easily passed as white (they reported that they were racialized as white) and in the case of one young man, only identified as white. I also found that the multiracial Black and Latino/as were subjected to the one-drop rule (Davis 2006), in that they were often racialized as Black, which was a crucial part of their identity.

I also found that understandings of race and gendered expectations work together to create opportunity for some and barriers for others. That is, I found that the way in which schools mete out discipline is influenced by “hegemonic masculinities and ideal femininities” (Lee 2005, Hill Collins 1990, Pyke and Johnson 2003). Overall, most of the young Latino/as had been disciplined at school. The Latino boys were subjected to harsher forms of discipline when engaging in disruptive behaviors similar to their female peers. However, when the young Latinas engaged in behavior that was in contrast to “ideal femininities,” they were subjected to discipline, as well.

Policy Implications: Challenging Colorblind Ideologies through School Practice and Anti-Racism Curriculum

During the year I spent at Valdez High School exploring the achievement gap and trying to come to some understanding about why Latino/a students were not doing as well as their white peers, I was constantly reminded by teachers and administrators that the “achievement gap” was dependent on the students and, thus, and I should look to them and their parents for some understanding.

By engaging in participant observation, I addressed the following research questions: What are the dominant racial ideologies at Valdez? How do teachers’ ideologies explain or justify the racial achievement gap? How do colorblind ideologies manifest themselves in school practices? How does colorblind ideology mask academic racial inequities? I found that many of the teachers and administrators at Valdez talked about the achievement gap, but the nature of these conversations took on one predominant form. That is, most of them suggested that the racial disparities in academic achievement were a product of the students’ individual efforts and relied on cultural racism to justify their response.

However, my analysis uncovered the systemic institutional and pedagogical practices that contribute to the opportunity gaps. Even the discourse of achievement gaps is premised on individual student failure as the key dynamic for the inequality experienced by entire categories of people. Specifically, I found that the dominant ideologies of colorblindness, individualism and individual achievement, the hidden curriculum and racial lessons of the classroom, as well as the silencing of race talk worked together to mask stark racial inequalities. Thus, as evident in chapter three, school context matters and can influence achievement.

How then can one begin to dismantle colorblind ideologies and practices? Bonilla-Silva (2003) advocates being anti-racist, which “begins with an understanding of the institutional nature of racial matters and accepting that all actors in a racially based society are affected *materially* (receive benefits/advantages) and *ideologically* by the racial structure” (15). In the context of schools, that would mean that must schools examine the practices and policies that work to disadvantage Latino/a students and privilege whiteness (Fine 1991, Valenzuela 1999, Staiger, 2005).

For example, we know that academic curriculum placements (i.e. tracking) are theoretically made on the basis of cognitive ability, the recommendations of teachers and counselors, and the input from students and parents. However, research shows that referrals for testing for gifted programs, as well as placements in honors or AP courses are often made based on ascribed factors such as ethnicity, race, and social class (Oakes, Gamaron, and Page 1992, Oaks and Guiton 1995, Wells and Serna 1996, Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna 2002). Cultural assumptions about the effects of race and class on school success, like “Latinos don’t value education,” can limit opportunities for minority students. Moreover, parents and

students are often not informed that they have a voice in this process and, thus, their lack of participation can have long-lasting consequences. These forces combine such that poor and minority students are overrepresented in lower curriculum tracks and underrepresented in gifted programs (Page 1991, Oakes et. al. 1992). In addition, as was demonstrated in chapter three, racialized tracking practices can convey subtle messages about one's placement in the racial hierarchy.

What then is an alternative to tracking? There is mounting evidence that mixed-ability tracking produces greater benefits than "homogeneous ability grouping" (Venkatakrishan and Wiliam 2003). That is, placing students of various ability levels into one class can produce benefits for all students, as student learn from each other and can work together. Moreover, high levels of achievement are expected from all students.

Venkatakrishan and Wiliam (ibid) argue that "unless a school can demonstrate that it is getting better than expected results through a different approach, the presumption [is] that mixed-ability grouping should be the norm in secondary schools" (2003: 202). In addition, Ireson and Hallam (1999) recommend a "structured ability grouping," where "a student's main point of identification should be with a mixed ability class and re-grouping by ability should occur only in subjects in which reducing the spread of attainment in the group is particularly important. Second, the grouping plan must reduce student variability in the specific skill being taught, not just in general ability or achievement. Third, grouping plans should frequently reassess pupils' group assignment and should be flexible enough to allow for easy movement between groups. Fourth, within the groups teachers must actually vary their pace and level of instructions to correspond to students levels of readiness and learning

rates” (352). This is certainly not the only way to conduct mixed-ability grouping, but this approach has shown promising results for all students (ibid).

In addition, schools must foster opportunities for students to talk about their lived experiences and issues of race need to be addressed. Chapter three demonstrated that there were several opportunities for teachers to engage students in conversations of race, power, and privilege, and challenge their essentialist understandings of race. There were also opportunities to locate and interrupt the systemic nature of institutional racism (Fine, Weis, and Powell 1997). However, as reported, teachers often sidestepped these conversations by ignoring racial discourse, changing the “subject,” or re-wording mid-sentence (See Bonilla-Silva’s discussion on rhetorical incoherence, 2003). Moreover, teachers felt unprepared to talk about race and received little or no training in strategies to address race in their teacher education programs, nor did the school administration provide guidance or support to address these issues. Lewis (2003) argues that racial understandings can be challenged, but not by the traditional multiculturalism curriculum, or tourism curriculum, which emphasizes culture rather than social stratification and power. This multicultural tourism masks racial inequality. She advocates for *critical multiculturalism* and *anti-racism curriculum* that focuses on racial justice. This can foster learning and understanding, as well as an opportunity to meaningfully address the racial achievement gap (Gillborn 1995).

Disrupting Whiteness as Unmarked

The fourth chapter examined how Latina high students were constructing their identities in the context of racializing and gendering practices. Specifically, this chapter addressed the following research questions: How do young Latinas in a predominantly white high school in New Mexico negotiate their racial identities in the school context? What do

their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What, if any, relationships exist between their racial identities and academic achievement?

Through careful analysis of fourteen in-depth, life history interviews with young Latinas at Valdez High School, I found that the young women's identities were informed by their understandings of their ancestry and their experiences in the school setting. I found that these young women situated their identities in response to *race-gender expectations* of them as a young and Latina. Also, unlike the Latino boys, the perceptions of their *race-gender presentations* were not seen as threatening (until they engaged in behaviors that crossed the boundaries of *race-gender expectations*, like fighting) and thus were not subjected to the same forms of control as the young men (again, unless they engaged in behaviors that crossed the boundaries of *race-gender expectations*). Also, these findings suggest that there is no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement among these young Latinas, additional research is needed.

While all the young women identified as Hispanic, this meant different things for each of them. Four major identity repertoires emerged: "Hispanic not Mexican," off-whiteness, Mexican, and "American, but still a little bit Mexican." I also found that phenotype, specifically skin color, did shape how these young women were racialized, and how, in turn they saw themselves. Moreover, in contrast to segmented assimilation theories, I found that the relationship between racial identity and school achievement is not as clear as segmented assimilation theories might suggest.

Matute-Bianchi (1991), in her analysis of academic achievement among Mexican American, proposed a five category typology reflective of the ethnic identities and behaviors

associated school performance of Mexican-descent student: (1) recent Mexican immigrants, (2) Mexican-oriented, (3) Mexican American, (4) Chicanos, and (5) Cholos. According to the Matute-Bianchi, what distinguishes the Mexicanos and Chicanos is their perception of their economic position in the US as a subordinated, stigmatized minority and their responses to the legitimating, racist ideologies directed against them. Both are victims of discrimination and prejudice, but use different strategies. Chicanos/Cholos and some Mexican Americans deemphasize striving for academic achievement as an essential component of their success, develop an oppositional identity, and generally do poorly in school. Mexicanos and Mexican oriented students on the other hand see academic success and school credentials as very important elements in their strategies to improve their employment status and access to material benefits, develop accommodationist identities, and generally do well in school.

Carter (2005) argues that students as “cultural straddlers” are able to “embrace the cultural codes of both school and home community... [and] vocally criticize the schools’ ideology while still achieving well academically” (30). Carter says that the “cultural straddlers” are similar to Gibson’s (1988) academically successful Punjabi Indian students who practice “accommodation without assimilation,” but that the “cultural straddlers” are well aware of their racial and social position.

In my analysis, I found that of the young women who distanced themselves from Mexicanness, they were high, middle, and low achievers. Of the young women who used discourses of off-whiteness, they were high and middle achievers. The young women who embraced their Mexican heritage were high, middle, and low achievers, and the young women who identified as “American, but still a little bit Mexican” were middle achievers.

Thus, equating specific identity orientations with achievement is more complicated than first predicted as many of these young women moved in and out of these identity repertoires in response to a racialized and gendered school context.

What was clear was that distancing from Mexicanness does little to disrupt the racial stigma associated with being Mexican and serves to reinforce it. I argued that positioning their racial identities in opposition to Mexicanness is related to their gendered experiences with racism at school and is a strategy for deflecting racial stigma. Furthermore, like Valenzuela (1999), I argued that differences between US-born Latinas of Mexican origin and Mexican immigrants were exacerbated by school practices. Turning to the psychology literature might further explain their distancing. Helms (1990) argues that the identity development for minorities involves the internalization of negative images of one's group. Steele (1990) argues that "the existence of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs means that in situation there the stereotype is applicable, one is a risk of confirming it as a self-characterization, both to one's self and to other show know the stereotype...and when the stereotype involved demeans something as important as intellectual ability, this threat can be disruptive enough to impair intellectual performance" (808). Thus, from a psychological perspective, these Latinas may be internalizing the negative images of Mexicans and projecting them outward.

This distancing creates an "us" versus "them" paradigm that limits potential alliances with co-ethnic peers. Like Valenzuela (1999), I argue that a school curriculum that equally values the contributions of all communities of color, and more specifically Mexicans and Mexican Americans, is absolutely necessary to combat the racial stigma associated with "things Mexican." Schools need to recruit and retain Latino/a teachers with shared cultural

backgrounds, who can be role models, and who actively counter racist stereotypes of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. This third piece is absolutely critical, as it was clear in chapter three that being a teacher of color does not necessarily mean one is culturally conscious and actively works to disrupt racist stereotypes or engage in honest conversations about race and privilege.

In addition, school practices (both informal and formal) must be reevaluated and reassessed. Specifically, while it is important to provide English as a Second Language Learners (ELL) with the academic support necessary to be successful, schools need to consider how this can be done without culturally segregating them from their co-ethnic peers. Moreover, schools need to draft clear policies that prohibit the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement presence on any school campus thus create a safe space for Mexican-origin students to learn without the fear of being asked for proof of citizenship or being deported.

Furthermore, given the educational context these young women must negotiate, it is no surprise that some of them employed discourses of off-whiteness to manage their surroundings. However, unlike the young black women in the work of Horvat and Lewis (2003) who developed strategies for “managing their academic success” by asserting strong racial identities as young black women, the use of discourses of off-whiteness did little to disrupt whiteness as a “celebrated and privileged” paradigm (Lee 2005), nor create identities as strong young Latinas. In fact, I would argue that their positioning serves to reinforce and sustain whiteness.

How does one, then, begin to disrupt whiteness? That is a much larger question than can be answered in the scope of this endeavor. However, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998)

suggest that schools engage the “pedagogy of whiteness” by examining “concepts and processes traditionally ignored in academic setting, including invisible power relations and the ways such social forces shape human consciousness” (16). Moreover, “They must develop creative and compelling ways of talking about racial identity, racial privilege, and racial discomfort that allow students and other individuals to name their previously unspeakable feelings and intuitions” (1998: 16-17). In addition, young Latinas must be provided with opportunities to develop strong identities as young Latinas. This can be done by fostering mentoring relationships with older Latinas with shared cultural backgrounds and experiences, in addition to promoting positive images of Latinas.

Active Rearticulation of Identity in Response to Racial Stigma

The discussion in chapter five clearly demonstrates that the identities of these young Latinos are shaped *vis-à-vis* their *race-gender experiences* in school (Lopez 2003), and, thus, it was analytically important to talk about the young men separate from the young women. Similar to chapter four, I posed the following research questions when analyzing the in-depth interviews with the young Latinos: How do young Latinos in a predominantly white high school in New Mexico negotiate their racial identities in the school context? What do their expressions of racial identity suggest about the relationship between racial identity and gender? What, if any, relationship exists between their racial/ethnic identities and achievement?

In this chapter, I found that the multiracial White and Latino young men were able to leverage their multiracial status and “choose” their whiteness over the Latinoness to access privilege and eschew the racial stigma associated with being Latino (Waters 1990). There is limited research that looks at the identities of multiracial white and Latino individuals

(Dowling 1999, Lewis 2003). Thus, this work makes an important contribution to that literature and suggests that these multiracial white and Latino young men appear to be assimilating into white society, similar to the “white ethnics” in Waters’ analysis of suburban whites who employ a symbolic ethnicity, which involves “choosing among elements in one’s ancestry and choosing when and if voluntarily to enjoy the traditions of that ancestry” (1990: 167).

For the Latinos, I found that they positioned their identities in response racial stigma associated with being male and being Latino. Like the young women who used discourses of off-whiteness, a few young men employed the discourses of off-whiteness, while another reluctantly claimed Hispanic heritage. Still another identified as White, but in name only. Two others embraced their ethnic identity one in response to negative experiences with school, while another was more ambivalent, but was moving toward a more assertive identity. Finally, the dark-skinned Latinos with a shared African American heritage identified as “African American” as a way to preserve their heritage of being “Hispanic” and “African American.” The documentation of these ways in which these two multiracial African American and Latino young men negotiate their identities makes an important contribution to the growing literature on identities of multiracial African American and Mexican-origin individuals (Reynoso 2008).

I found that all of these young men were active agents in negotiating their identities in relation to racialized ideals of masculinity that in some cases allowed them to access privilege, while others had to contend with being labeled as troublemakers, gangsters, thieves, and sexual predators (Lee 2005). Thus, unlike the girls, the perceptions of the boys’ race-gender presentations were seen as threatening, and thus they were subjected to more

control (i.e. discipline) than their female counterparts. The resultant terminology that these youth used to identify themselves is a manifestation of that process. Like the work of Pizarro (2005), I also found that the racially stigmatized experiences of these young men were a focal point of their identities, but unlike what Pizarro argues, they exist at the intersection of race *and* gender (Hill Collins 1990, Lopez 2003). Also, these findings suggest that there is no clear relationship between racial identity and school achievement among these young Latinos. Additional research is needed.

What are some strategies that these young men can employ to manage the racial stigma associated with being young, male, and brown such that those who are not as academically successful can enhance their educational outcomes? Datnow and Cooper (1998) found in their analysis of the schooling experiences of African American high school students in predominately White elite independent schools, that “black peer groups allowed for the development of an identity that was not oppositional [to school] and that promoted academic success” (69), thus it became “cool” to be academically successful. The strong bonds they had with one another allowed them to “reaffirm their racial identities and seek refuge from what could otherwise be difficult for them to fit in” (69). Moreover, student organizations which focused on Black culture and experiences provided a space for them where they could advocate for their own interests (i.e. increasing the number of books by black authors in the library, making the school aware of the accomplishments of African Americans) and dialogue about race.

Moreover, Pizarro (1999) describes an instance of active rearticulation of one’s identity in recognizing the role of race and racialization processes. In interviews with Chicana/o college students he found that many of them “saw themselves as Chicanas/os with

strong ties to their culture and community and with a clear understanding of the subjugated role of Chicana/os in the larger society” (200). Thus, he argues that student grounded in their cultural heritage and who aware of macro-level racial process in society can develop strategic adaptations to managing racial stigma.

However, this perspective alone was not enough to overcome the institutional forces that often relegate Chicana/o students to the bottom of the “school hierarchy.” It was when one student combined this perspective with a focus “on acquiring knowledge that is applicable to his interests” (207) and personal experiences that he was able to engage education. That is, combining the knowledge of one’s cultural background, an understanding of macro-level racial process with an understanding of the dynamics of educational institutions. This allowed the student to create a space for himself and his “racial identity” in the educational institution, while at the same time acquiring institutionally defined academic success and graduating from college.

Pizarro’s later concludes, “it seems clear that if Chicana/o students can be helped to understand the power dynamics that underlie the problems they identify in their schooling, and if this help is framed within the context of the development of a positive school identity, Chicana/o students can nurture the skills needed for optimally dealing with the forces that limit their schooling as they seek ways to overcome those forces and educationally empower themselves” (2005: 100).

Rethinking Discipline Practices

On Wednesday, city police will be cracking down on Centennial Middle School students for jaywalking, and the consequences could be severe. A lot of kids are crossing at the busy intersection of 32nd and Irving St. before and after school; authorities have noticed kids and cars are coming just feet from each other. The problem is, there is no crosswalk at the intersection. There is a crosswalk just down

the block, but some students say it's too far for them to walk. Wednesday, officers will write down the names of jaywalking students and give those names to the school principal. The lesson could be a painful one, says the police department commander. "It could be suspension from school. It could be an in-school suspension," the commander said. Police considered criminally citing students for jaywalking -- a petty misdemeanor -- but backed off, deciding to let the school hand out the punishment.

As I conclude this dissertation, the local news reported that the local school district is threatening to suspend middle school students for jaywalking. As the report above indicates, in an attempt to prevent students from getting hit by a car while jaywalking across a busy street, the local police department will be out taking down names and submitting them to school authorities. School authorities will consider suspension (i.e. in-school suspension or home suspension) as way to change this behavior. It is certainly understandable that the school and police authorities want to ensure student safety. However, suspending students (reduced from being charged with a petty misdemeanor) and taking them out of the classroom seems extreme and could have unintended consequences. Students may not see the potential punishment as a deterrent to continuing to walk across the street. Moreover, they might interpret their punishment as unfair and miss its intended consequence. It would be more productive, I would argue, to learn from students why they are not walking to the crosswalk and are choosing to cross against traffic. Is it reasonable to place an additional crosswalk were students seem to be congregating? Could the school enlist a parent volunteer to ensure that students walk to the crosswalk or safely cross the street? How can the school develop creative solutions to this problem to ensure the safety of these youth and that they do not miss class time?

Chapter six discusses the discipline practices at Valdez High School through the voices and experiences of the young Latino/as who participated in in-depth life history

interviews. I found that discipline practices at Valdez were deeply gendered and raced. I found that young Latino/as were often disciplined at school, as more than half (14 of 25) of them reported incidents of discipline. In addition, Latino boys were more likely to be disciplined and treated harshly for engaging in similar school infractions as their female peers (i.e. violating dress code, talking in class, failing to turn in homework assignments, etc). However, when the young Latinas engaged in behavior that was in contrast to “ideal femininities,” they were subjected to discipline, as well. Moreover, I found that disciplining students by removing them from the classroom and sending them to in-school suspension, home suspension, or an outside facility (i.e. youth detention center or treatment center) had negative consequences for academic performance, and left students feeling angry and mistrustful of school.

Recall that the literature on school discipline shows that young men (especially Black and Latinos) tend to be overrepresented at all stages of discipline (Noguera 2003, Monahan and Torres 2009). For example, as cited in Chapter six, a recent news article reported that in the neighboring state of Colorado “Eighteen of every 100 black students and eleven of 100 Latino student faced serious discipline, compared with 6.5 out of 100 white students and 8.5 of 100 students overall” (Hubbard, 2010).

How then can we begin to address the over disciplining of Latino/as? We can begin by examining the types of infractions that necessitate discipline. Given the lack of accurate data on school discipline (from classroom referrals to expulsion), it is critical that we begin to take stock of who is being disciplined and for what offenses. Schools districts must institute data collection practices that ensure accurate data on discipline.

We can then begin to examine how classroom challenges (i.e. “disruptions”) and school infractions (i.e. dress code violations, not completing homework) can be addressed without imposing severe sanctions, thereby compromising the academic performance of students. Thus, I would argue that we really need to rethink taking students out of class as a form of discipline and placing them in ineffective in-school-suspension environments or sending them to home or to other facilities (Noguera 2003). Students often do not get missed classroom work and if they, are expected to learn the material on their own. Moreover, by sending a student out of class as a consequence for classroom behavior ignores the source of their classroom disruption, which could stem from their confusion about current class material.

Creative solutions to classroom disruption need to be developed. Ban (1994) advocates a three pronged proactive approach to managing classroom behavior that involves the lesson plan, students, and the teacher. He states,

Instruction during the first week of school should center on conduct and its consequences...students should be involved in determining classroom rules...In classrooms there students have had a part in shaping the rule of behavior, the power of peer pressure will work to ensure student compliance with these rules...[Moreover,]substantial research has been done on teacher behaviors that hold down the incidence of student misbehavior...they include extensive planning for instruction, teaching classroom rules, helping students learn proper behavior in school, employing praise and positive reinforcement, sending out cues that the teacher cares, giving greater structure and focus to assignments, providing opportunities for student in on-task assignments, supplying continuous feedback to students regarding their work, and allowing a high degree of student participation in student affairs (257-259).

Teachers who have had success managing (not silencing as was the case with Mr. Rendon) classroom disruptions can share strategies with other teachers. It is also important that school personnel work with “disruptive” students to uncover the underlying causes of

their behavior. Lastly, while some school infractions (i.e. violence and bringing a weapon to school) may necessitate suspension, suspension should only be used as a last resort and each case should be assessed on its own merits.

Directions for Future Research Agendas on Latino/as, Identity & Schooling

The main findings of this work are that schools are sites where understandings of race and gender are continuously contested and negotiated. Latino/a students are negotiating their identities in the context of these racialization and gendering processes such that their identities are fluid and situational. Additionally, I found that understandings of race and gendered expectations work together to create opportunity for some and barriers for others and collude in the creation of educational inequalities for Latino/a students. Thus, it is critical that educators and policy makers alike exam the proposed suggestions in an effort to begin to address these educational disparities.

Toward this end, further research in varying demographic contexts is needed. Specifically, while most of the research on Latino/a schooling is conducted in predominantly Latino/a schools in urban settings (Valenzuela 1999, Lopez 2003, Carter 2005, Pizarro 2005), future research should consider other types of demographic contexts where Latino/a students attend schools, such as suburban, predominately white, or rural settings. My research sought to contribute to this by examining the schooling experiences of Latino/as in a school where historically Latino/as are a numerical minority in a large southwestern city and where immigration has been relatively low. Some important groundbreaking work has been done on Asian students' identity, and schooling in predominately white schools (see Gibson 1997, Lee 2005, Bankston and Zhou 1998, and Louie 2004). Given the continued growth of the

Latino/a community across the country more work is needed on Latino/a students in these unique settings.

Moreover, it is this author's hope that this work can be used to make a positive contribution to Latino/a education in New Mexico and throughout the United States, and that future research will continue to tackle the messiness of race and gender in education.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Profiles of the Young Latinas at Valdez High School

Dawn, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic.” Dawn, a medium skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “Hispanic.” Both of her parents were born in the US, with her father being born in New Mexico. Her mother completed 11th grade and her father has his high school diploma. Her mother, who she identified as “Hispanic,” is a manager of a check-cashing facility and her father, who she identified as “Hispanic,” was a supervisor, but is currently unemployed. She is a native Spanish speaker, although only her mother speaks Spanish. Her father does not speak Spanish well. At Valdez High School, Dawn is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, she is a middle achiever. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she would like to get a degree in Pharmacy.

Carolina, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in Nevada. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic.” Carolina, a medium skinned young woman, indicated that others see her sometimes as “White,” but most of the time Hispanic. Both of her parents were born in New Mexico. Her mother and father completed high school. Her mother, who she identified as “Hispanic,” worked in a retail store for many years, but is currently unemployed. Her father, who she identified as “Hispanic,” works in construction. Carolina does not speak Spanish, and neither does her mother. Her father does speak Spanish. At Valdez High School, she is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, she is at the lower end of the middle achievers. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college to be a veterinarian or investigate animal cruelty.

Christina, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic.” Christina, a medium skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “White.” When others learn her last name, however, she is seen as Hispanic. Both of her parents were born in the US, with her mother being born in New Mexico. Her mother, who she identified as “Hispanic,” completed high school and is currently working on her nursing degree at community college. Her step-father, who she identified as “Hispanic,” completed high school and one year of college. Her mother currently works as an operating room technician and her father is a fireman. She does not speak Spanish, but her mother does. Her step-father does not speak Spanish. At Valdez High School, Christina is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, she is a high achiever. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college and work in the medical field as a surgeon or doctor. She would even consider being a lawyer.

Consuelo, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a medium urban city in California. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Mexican.” Consuelo, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “Mexican.” Both of her parents were born in Mexico. Her mother completed 8th grade and her father completed 6th grade. Her mother, who she identified as “Mexican,” works at a fast food restaurant and her father, who she

identified as “Mexican,” works in construction. She is a native Spanish speaker, as are her parents. At Valdez High School, Consuelo is enrolled in regular classes and one honors class. In terms of academic achievement, she is a high achiever. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she would like to focus on completing high school. She would like to be a lawyer to defend people, specifically other Mexicans.

Paola, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Spanish and Hispanic.” Paola, a medium skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “White,” and on occasion “Japanese.” Both of her parents were born in the US, with her father being born in New Mexico. Her mother, who she identified as “Spanish,” completed her bachelor’s degree. Her father, who she identified as “Spanish,” completed his General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Her mother currently works as a court reporter and her father is a school bus driver. She knows a little Spanish and some Japanese. Her mother “understands” Spanish and her father speaks Spanish. At Valdez High School, Paola is enrolled in regular classes and one honors class. In terms of academic achievement, she is a high achiever. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to get a Master's degree and work in Animation.

Siomara, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in South American. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic and Spanish.” Siomara, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “Hispanic.” When she was younger she said that she was racialized as “White.” Both of her parents were born in South American. Her mother completed high school and her father has a bachelor’s degree from his home country. Her mother, who she identified as “Spanish,” works as a manager for an assisted living facility. Her father, who she identified as “Spanish,” teaches at a daycare center. Siomara and her parents speak fluent Spanish, as Spanish is her native language. At Valdez High School, she is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is at the lower end of the high achievers. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college and be a dance teacher, dentist, or veterinarian.

Kelly, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Mexican and Hispanic.” Kelly, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicated that she was racialized as “Half-Black and Half-Mexican.” Her biological mother and adoptive mother, who is her biological grandmother, were born in Mexico. Her adoptive father was born in New Mexico. Her mother completed her GED and her father attended an upper tier university for four year, but did not complete his degree. Her mother, who she identified as “Mexican,” works in customer service for a major retailer. Her father, who she identified as “Chicano,” works as a repairman for a major retailer. Kelly and her mother speak Spanish. Her father speaks some Spanish. At Valdez High School, she is enrolled in regular classes, ESL English, and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is at the lower end of the middle achievers. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to “try” college, but may not be

able to afford it. She wants to be a lawyer or a veterinarian. She would also consider the military.

Tiffany, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in Mexico. She came to the United States when she was three months old. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as "Mexican." Kelly, a medium skinned young woman, indicates that others see her as "American," meaning from the US, and "Mexican." Both of her parents were born in Mexico. Her mother completed high school and her father completed 9th grade. Her mother, who she identified as "Mexican," is a dishwasher at a local fast food restaurant. Her father, who she identified as "Mexican," works in construction. She is a native Spanish speaker, as are her parents. At Valdez High School, Tiffany is enrolled in regular classes, ESL English, and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is a low achiever. When asked the highest level of education she'd like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college to be a doctor, or "at least" a nurse. She believes that money for college could be an issue.

Tatiana, 16, is in 10th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as "Black." Her father is "Black" and Native American and her mother is "Hispanic" and "African American." Her step-father is "Black." Tatiana, a dark skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as "Black." Her mother was born in New Mexico and her dad was born in Arizona. Her step-father was born in California. Her mother completed her bachelor's degree and her step-father completed some college. Her mother currently works as a dental hygienist and her step-father is a producer. She and her mother speak Spanish, but her step-father does not. At Valdez High School, Tatiana is enrolled in honors and advanced placement classes. In terms of academic achievement, she is a high achiever. When asked the highest level of education she'd like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college to obtain a PhD, be a plastic surgeon, be a judge, or go into real estate.

Lora, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as "Hispanic." Lora, a light/medium skinned young woman, indicated that sometimes others see her as "White." Both of her parents were born in New Mexico. Her mother completed high school and her father is now finishing his GED. Her mother, who she identified as "Hispanic," is a cashier at a retail store. Her father, who she identified as "Hispanic," is disabled and doesn't work, but was previously in construction. Lora does not speak Spanish, but her mother "understands" Spanish and her father speaks Spanish. At Valdez High School, she is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is a middle achiever. When asked the highest level of education she'd like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college to be an animator or veterinarian.

Emily, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as "Hispanic/Chicano" and used them interchangeably. Emily, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicates that others see her as "Hispanic." She is being raised by her paternal grandmother who was born in New Mexico. Both of her parents were born in New Mexico. Her grandmother completed the 8th grade. Her mother completed

high school and her father finished his GED. Her grandmother, who she identified as “Hispanic,” does not work and is on disability. Her mother, who she identified as “Hispanic,” works as a cook in a restaurant. Her father, who she identified as “Hispanic,” is the supervisor of a kitchen cleaning staff. Emily speaks some Spanish, and her mother, her father, and her paternal grandmother speak Spanish. At Valdez High School, she is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is at the lower end of the middle achievers. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college, but doubted her ability to get to college. She wants to be a criminal investigator or pharmacist.

Tania, 16, is in 9th grade and was born in a small town in Northern New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic and Spanish,” and use them interchangeably. Tania, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “Hispanic.” Both of her parents were born in New Mexico. Her mother completed high school and is currently attending community college. Her father completed 10th grade.. Her mother, who she identified as “Hispanic,” is currently unemployed. Her father, who she identified as “Hispanic and Native American,” is in construction. Tania speaks a “little” Spanish and knew her father’s native language when she was a child. She has since lost the language. She was held back for a second year in 7th grade. At Valdez High School, she is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is a low achiever. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to attend college and believes she can get to college. She wants to be a doctor or a cosmetologist.

Inés, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban center in Southern California, but moved to Mexico shortly after she was born. She came to the United States when she was 10 years old. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic and Mexican,” and uses them as two distinct categories with an emphasis on “Hispanic.” Ines, a medium/dark skinned young woman, indicated that sometimes others see her as “Hispanic” or “White.” Both of her parents were born in Mexico. Her mother completed her junior year of high school and her father completed middle school. Her mother, who she identified as “Mexican,” cooks in a restaurant. Her father, who she identified as “Mexican,” works in construction. She is a native Spanish speaker, as are her parents. At Valdez High School, Inés is enrolled in regular classes, ESL English, and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, she is a middle achiever, but her grades have been declining and she is moving toward low achievement. When asked the highest level of education she’d like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to college, because “I think, I don’t know, I really want to, and I can do it!” She wants to be a clothing designer.

Stephanie, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as “Mexican.” Stephanie, a medium skinned young woman, indicated that others see her as “Mexican.” Both of her parents were born in Mexico. Her mother and father completed high school. Her mother, who she identified as “Mexican,” works as a movie theatre manager and her father, who she identified as “Mexican,” is a mechanic. She is a native Spanish speaker, as are her parents. At Valdez

High School, Stephanie is enrolled in regular classes, one remedial course and receives special education accommodations. She gets more time to take tests and has a special education teacher check in on her every two months. In terms of academic achievement, she is a middle achiever. When asked the highest level of education she'd like to reach, she indicated that she wants to go to community college and become a police officer or a crime scene investigator (CSI).

Note: A student's race/ethnicity was determined from their answers to two survey questions. One asked, "What race do you consider yourself to be?" The other asked, "What ethnicity or cultural background do you consider yourself to be?" In addition, during the interview, they were asked, "What race do you consider yourself to be?" Parent's racial/ethnic identity was provided by the young women on their survey or in their interview. Academic achievement is defined as High (mostly A's and B's), Middle (mostly C's), and Low (mostly D's and F's). Grades in core academic courses (i.e. science, English, and math) are weighted slightly higher.

Appendix B: Profiles of the Young Latinos at Valdez High School

Vincent, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “White.” Vincent, a light skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “White.” Both of his parents were born in the US, with his mother being born in New Mexico. His mother reached the 12th grade, but Vincent did not know if she completed high school. His father has his high school diploma. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is a waitress. His father, who he identified as “White,” is a construction supervisor. His mother has taught him some Spanish, as she speaks fluent Spanish. His father does not speak Spanish. At Valdez High School, Vincent is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, he is a middle achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach, he indicated that he would like to “finish college” and get a job that “pays good.”

Kevin, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in Central California. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “White and Hispanic.” Kevin, a light skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “White.” Both of his parents were born in California. His mother left school in 9th grade, but received her General Equivalency Diploma (GED). His father left high school as a junior, but received his GED. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” was a secretary and is now approaching management. His father, who he identified as “White,” is a framer for construction. His mother and father do not speak Spanish. At Valdez High School, Kevin is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, he is a middle achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, “I’d like to go to college and maybe get a PhD someday.” He would consider a career in the Air force or in biology.

Marty, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic and Anglo.” Marty, a light skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “Anglo.” Both of his parents were born in the US, with his mother being born in New Mexico. His mother has a master’s degree and his father two Master’s degrees. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is an economist at the local electric company. His father, who he identified as “White,” is a retired engineer and now sells real estate. His mother speaks some Spanish, but “her parents vowed not to teach [her] Spanish because they were spanked [at school] and all that because they spoke Spanish when they were little.” He has learned a “little bit” of Spanish. His father does not speak Spanish. At Valdez High School, Marty is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, he is at the lower end of the high achievers. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, he wants to get a PhD in ornithology or a master’s degree in Marine Biology.

Jeff, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in small town in Northern New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic.” Jeff, a light/medium skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “White.” Both of his parents were born in Northern New Mexico. His mother has her GED and his father went to college for three semesters. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is a caregiver for an elderly woman. His father, who he identified

as “Hispanic,” works as an administrator for the local department of motor vehicles. His mother and father speak Spanish. Jeff understands Spanish and can say the Morada prayers in Spanish. At Valdez High School, he is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, he is at the upper end of the middle achievers. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, he wants to attend college for two years and get a “good job.” He wants to be a computer technician or would consider going into construction because “most of my family is in construction.”

Abel, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic,” though he was reluctant to identify his racial/ethnic identity arguing, “It doesn't really matter what anybody else thinks what race you are as long as you're doing something to change your life...” Abel, a medium/dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “White.” His mother was born in New Mexico and his father is not present in his life. His mother has her high school diploma and a beautician’s license. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is a receptionist for a health service organization. Abel said he grew up speaking Spanish but, “once I started changing schools, I met fewer people who knew Spanish and I kind of forgot my whole Spanish background.” He was held back for a second year in 8th grade. At Valdez High School, Abel is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, he is a low achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, “I would like to reach a Masters in animal study...I think I could, but even if I don't, I wouldn't mind at least getting an Associate's Degree.” He wants to go to college, but “If I can't get a degree, I'll learn what I can. If I can use college as a way to get into the NFL and make enough money to buy [a house].”

Jonathan, 16, is in 9th grade and was born in small town in Southern New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “Italian and Spanish/Hispanic.” Jonathan, a medium/dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “Hispanic or Mexican.” Both of his parents were born in New Mexico. His mother has “dropped out” of high school, but went back to get her GED. His father “dropped out” in high school. His mother, who he identified as “Italian and Hispanic,” is a clerk at a bookstore. His father, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is a maintenance worker for the city. Jonathan’s paternal and maternal grandparents speak Spanish, but neither he nor his mother speaks Spanish. He was held back for a second year in 6th grade. At Valdez High School, he is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, he is a low achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, “I don’t know about that one. I just want to get there, to however I’ll get.” He would consider being a welder.

Carlos, 16, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic.” Carlos, a medium/dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “Mexican.” His mother was born in New Mexico and his father in Colorado. His mother and father completed high school. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is a special education assistant for the local school district. His father, who he identified as “Hispanic,” works in construction. Carlos’ father and paternal grandparents speak Spanish, but neither he nor his mother speaks Spanish. He was held back

for a second year in 9th grade. At Valdez High School, he is enrolled in regular classes and one remedial class. Though he is not in Special Education, he does qualify for supportive services because of his “learning disability.” In terms of academic achievement, he is a low achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said he wants to get a bachelor’s degree or at least two years of college. He wants to work with children as a teacher’s aide, like his mother, or a teacher.

Hector, 14, is in 9th grade and was born in Mexico. He came to the United States when he was 9 years old. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “Hispanic/Mexican.” Hector, a medium/dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “Mexican.” Both of his parents were born in Mexico. His mother completed 8th grade and his father completed 5th or 6th grade. His mother, who he identified as “Mexican,” works at an elementary school at the head cook. His father, who he identified as “Mexican,” repairs trucks and usually does construction. Hector is a native Spanish speaker, as are his parents. At Valdez High School, he is enrolled in regular classes, ESL English, and one remedial class. In terms of academic achievement, he is a low achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, “Like more than college.” He would like to do business or architecture.

Joaquin, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “White.” Joaquin, a medium/dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “White or Italian.” Both of his parents were born in Texas. His mother and father have master’s degrees. His mother, who he identified as “Mexican,” is a case worker for the mentally disabled. His father, who he identified as “Mexican,” is a “high level” engineer where he’s worked for twenty-two years. His mother speaks Spanish, but his father does not speak Spanish “well.” Joaquin does not speak Spanish and says, “It doesn’t matter how Mexican I look, I’m White [because] I don’t speak Spanish. Speaking Spanish is a big part of the culture.” At Valdez High School, he is enrolled in regular classes. In terms of academic achievement, he is at the lower end of the high achievers. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said he wants to get a master’s degree and sell real estate in San Francisco, California.

William, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “African American/Hispanic.” William, a dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “African American.” His father was born in New Mexico and his mother was born in Mississippi. His mother completed two years of college and his father has a master’s degree in financial management. His mother, who he identified as “African American,” is a Master Sergeant in the military. His father, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is a Chief Master Sergeant in the military. Neither his mother nor father speaks Spanish, though he is learning Spanish. At Valdez High School, William is enrolled in regular classes and one honors class. In terms of academic achievement, he is a high achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said he wants to get a master’s degree and live on the East Coast working as an environmental scientist or as an ambassador working for the State Department.

Michael, 15, is in 9th grade and was born in a large urban city in New Mexico. He identified his racial/ethnic identity as “African American.” Michael, a dark skinned young man, indicated that others see him as “Hispanic or Mexican.” His mother and father were born in New Mexico. His mother completed three years of college and is currently completing her bachelor’s degree. His father has a master’s degree. His mother, who he identified as “Hispanic,” is an administrator at a local company. His father, who he identified as “African American and Hispanic,” is a teacher. His mother used to speak Spanish, but she “stopped.” Neither his father nor he speaks Spanish, though he is learning Spanish. At Valdez High School, Michael is enrolled in regular classes and one honors class. In terms of academic achievement, he is a high achiever. When asked the highest level of education he’d like to reach he said, “I think I’d strive for a doctorate.” He would like to be a professional athlete or a teacher.

Note: A student’s race/ethnicity was determined from their answers to two survey questions. One asked, “What race do you consider yourself to be?” The other asked, “What ethnicity or cultural background do you consider yourself to be?” In addition, during the interview, they were asked, “What race do you consider yourself to be?” Parent’s racial/ethnic identity was provided by the young men on their survey or in their interview. Academic achievement is defined as High (mostly A’s and B’s), Middle (mostly C’s), and Low (mostly D’s and F’s). Grades in core academic courses (i.e. science, English, and math) are weighted slightly higher.

Appendix C: Contact Sheet

Contact Sheet

I am interested in participating in the study: “The Achievement Gap in the Southwest: Voices from Students, Parents & Teachers,” by Chalane Lechuga, PhD Candidate, Sociology Department, University of New Mexico, Tel: 505 277-8317, clechuga@unm.edu.

DATE: _____

STUDENT CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME OF STUDENT _____

GRADE: _____

AGE: _____

SEX: _____ Male _____ Female

RACE: _____

ETHNICITY: _____

HOME TEL: _____

MOBILE TEL: _____

EMAIL: _____

PARENT CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME OF PARENT: _____

HOME TEL: _____

MOBILE TEL: _____

EMAIL: _____

RACE: _____

ETHNICITY: _____

Appendix D: Student Survey Questionnaire

PARTICIPANT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER _____ Date: _____

Thank you for participating in this survey. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. This survey is about your opinions so don't be afraid to tell it like it is. If you don't know the answer to a question your best guess is fine. If you do not want to answer any question you may also leave it blank. All responses are confidential.

- 1. What grade are you currently in? _____ (This study is on 9th graders only).
- 2. What is your sex? Circle one: Male Female
- 3. What is your age? _____
- 4. What are your plans after high school? (For example: Work, Military, Community College, Trade School, Business School, 2-year college, 4-year college, Other)

Where? _____ (City, State, Name of Institution/Business)

- 5. What's the highest level of education you want to reach?

- 6. What's the highest level of education you expect to reach? _____
- 7. Ten years from now what career/job would you like to have? _____
- 8. If not possible, what other job/career would you consider? _____
- 9. a.) What is your current neighborhood called? _____
b.) What are the cross streets closest to your home?
_____ and _____
c.) What quadrant is your neighborhood in? (Circle one) SW NW NE SE Not Applicable
d.) What's the zip code for your neighborhood? _____
- 10. Do you have a phone at home? (Circle One) Yes No
- 11. Do you have a cell phone? (Circle One) Yes No
If yes, how much time do you spend on it daily? _____
- 12. How many hours a day do you spend watching television? (Circle One) None 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, More than 5
- 13. Do you have cable, direct TV or the dish? (Circle One) Yes No
- 14. How many hours do you spend on homework/studying per day? (Circle One) <1, 2, 3, 4, 5, More than 5

15. Are you currently enrolled in any special programs? Please write in response below.

- a.) Gifted (List specific subjects)_____
- b.) Honors (List specific subjects)_____
- c.) Advanced Placement (List Specific Subjects)_____
- d.) Special Education - Learning Disability (List specific subjects)_____
- e.) Special Education – Physical Disability (List specific subject)_____
- f.) Bilingual (List specific subjects)_____
- g.) Other:_____

16. Have you ever been held back a grade? (circle one) No Yes If Yes, How many times:_____ Don't Know

17. Are you two or more years behind grade level in reading? Yes___ No___ Don't Know

18. Do you have trouble with spelling? Yes___ No___

19. Did one of your biological parents also have trouble learning to read or spell? Yes___ No___

20. Are you really good at some other things such as chess, checkers, sports, art, or math? Yes___ No___

21. What kinds of things are you good at? _____

Please list all of the extracurricular activities that you participate in school, afterschool, and/or summer over the last year (example: sports, dance, music, art, clubs, summer program, camp, boy/girl scouts, religious group, science club, Explora, Museum of Natural History, student government, DECA, Ballet Folkorico, Black Student Union, Drama Club, Study Abroad, MESA, etc.)

a.)	b.)
c.)	d.)
e.)	f.)
g.)	h.)
i.)	j.)

22. List any other things/hobbies you do during your free time or after school:

23. Most of the time, how do you get to school? (Circle One)

School Bus Parents drop off ABQ public Bus Drive Walk

Other: _____

24. How many cars are there in your family's household? _____

25. What was your overall grade point average on the last six week report card?

Your best guess is fine. (Circle one)

A+ = 97-100 A = 94-96 A- = 90-93 B+ = 87-89 B = 84-86
B- = 80-83 C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76 C - = 70-73 D < 69 F < 59

26. What did you score in the New Mexico State Assessments in the following subjects (Circle One):

a) Reading: Advanced Proficiency Nearing Proficiency Beginning Steps
Don't Know

b) Mathematics: Advanced Proficiency Nearing Proficiency Beginning Steps
Don't Know

c) Science: Advanced Proficiency Nearing Proficiency Beginning Steps
Don't Know

d) What grade were you in when you got these scores? _____

e) Why do you think that you got these scores? _____

27. What's your favorite subject/class? _____

Why? _____

28. What's your least favorite subject/class? _____

Why? _____

29. What's the difference between classes you enjoy and those that you do not?

30. Number from 1 (top reason) to 3 (least important reason) what motivates you to work hard in school:

_____ Need for college admission	_____ Impress Parents
_____ Need for good paying job	_____ love and enjoy learning
_____ Parental Pressure	_____ Teacher encouragement
_____ Teacher demands	_____ Don't want to be embarrassed
_____ Friends Push Me	_____ Compete with peers

List any other reasons that motivate you to work hard in school:

31. What things would keep you from working hard in school? (List top 4 reasons)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

32. What race do you consider yourself to be? _____

33. What race do other people think you are? _____

34. What ethnicity or cultural background do you consider yourself to be?

35. What ethnicity or cultural background do other people think you are?

36. How many languages do you speak? _____ List

All: _____

37. List the first and last initial of up to four of your closest friends (Do not write their names):

First/Last Initial	Sex	Race or Ethnicity	Age

38. How many hours do you spend on the computer a day? (Circle one)

None

1-2

3-5

6 or more

39. Is this mostly at home, school, or other place? _____

40. How many computers are in your home? (Circle One)

None

1

2-3

4 or more

41. Do you have internet access at home? (Circle One) Yes No

42. Do you use email? (Circle One) Yes No If Yes, how many times a week?

43. What percent of the time do you understand your teachers' lessons? (Circle One)

0-25%

26-50%

51-70%

71% to 89%

90% or more

44. How much of the material you read do you understand very well? (Circle One)

Very little

a lot

almost all

45. Are you currently working for pay? (Circle One) Yes No
46. What kind of work (both paid and unpaid) are you doing right now? (Remember: you can list unpaid work like babysitting or other jobs) _____
47. What other types of jobs have you had in the past? _____
48. What's your current parent/guardian living arrangement: (Circle One)
- One parent One parent & Stepparent Two Parents Grandparent/Other
Relative
- Foster Care Group Home Live Alone
- Other: _____
49. Total number of brothers & sisters: (circle one) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 How many live with you? _____
50. Including yourself how many people live in your household? _____
- a. Including yourself, how many are children under 18? _____
- b. Of those age 19 or older, how many have high school diplomas/GED? _____
- c. How many people in your household have college degrees? _____
51. What is the highest grade/degree your mother reached? _____
52. What kinds of job has your mother had? Present job
- _____
- List up to three past jobs:
- _____
53. What is your mother's race? _____
54. What is your mother's ethnicity/cultural background? _____
55. What is your mother's place of birth (city, state, country)? _____
56. What is the highest grade/degree your father reached? _____
57. What kinds of jobs has your father had? Present job
- _____
- List up to three past jobs:
- _____
58. What is your father's race? _____
59. What is your father's ethnicity or cultural background? _____
60. What is your father's place of birth (city, state, country)? _____

61. How many times have your parents/legal guardians been to school to meet with teachers during the past two years? _____ For what reasons: _____
62. How long have you lived in this city in NM? _____
63. Where were you born (city, state, country)? _____
64. Including yourself, how many people in your household are working for pay? _____
65. If you combine the income from everybody who works in your household, what's your best guess of how much income your family earns in one year? (Circle one)
- a) \$5,000-10,000 b) \$10,000-20,000 c) \$20,000-30,000 d) \$30,000-40,000
e) \$40,000-50,000 f) \$50,000-60,000 g) \$60,000-70,000 h) \$70,000-80,000
i) \$80,000-90,000 j) \$ 90,000-100,000 k) 100-130,000 l) over \$130,000
66. How many books do you own? (circle one) <10 books 10-30 books 31-50 books
100 books or more
67. Do your parents/guardians rent your home/apartment? (circle one) Yes No
68. Do your parents/guardians own your home? (circle one) Yes No
69. Have you or your family participated in any of the following federal, state or city programs over the past year? (Please circle all that apply)
- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Free School Lunch | Reduced Lunch | Medicaid |
| Commodities | Food Stamps | Section 8 Housing |
| Public Housing | TANF (Welfare) | Social Security Insurance SSI) |
| Child Support | Other: _____ | |
70. Over the past year have you ever been involved in any of the following: (Circle all that apply)
- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Fights in School | How many times? _____ |
| Fights in Neighborhood/Street | How many times? _____ |
| In-School Suspension (ISS) | How many times? _____ |
| Out-of-School Suspension | How many times? _____ |
| Juvenile Court | How many times? _____ |
| Police Arrest | How many times? _____ |
| Other Problems with school or law: _____ | How many times? _____ |
71. Have you ever left New Mexico and traveled throughout the USA or abroad? Check all that apply.
- _____ No, Never

_____ Yes, I have visited other cities, states: _____

_____ Yes, I have traveled outside if the United States. List all Cities and Countries visited:

72. Have you ever been on a college campus? (circle one) Yes No

List all colleges visited:

73. How many times a year do you visit your local or school library? _____

74. Over the past year, how many books have you read for fun on your own time? _____

75. In your opinion, why do you think some students drop out of school?

a.) _____

b.) _____

c.) _____

76. In the Santos Public School district only half of students graduate high school within four years of starting high school. What are your ideas for improving graduation rates at your high school? Be specific.

a.) _____

b.) _____

c.) _____

77. Do you have any questions for me? If so list below.

a.) _____

b.) _____

c.) _____

78. May I contact you for a follow-up in-depth interview? (Please circle one) Yes No

Thank you for your participation. As a token of my appreciation I will give you a notebook and pen for completing this survey. If you would like a report of the results of the survey, you may call me at 505 277-8317 or email me at clechuga@unm.edu. I may invite some of the students who participated in the survey for a longer tape-recorded interview to discuss your opinions for a book I am writing about high school students in New Mexico. Of course, I will only use fake names in any written reports. There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. As a token of my appreciation I will give you a backpack. The life history interview may take up anywhere from 3-4 hours and it will ask your opinions about a variety of topics related to your personal experience. The life history interview will not interfere with your class time. I will schedule it at your convenience, either after school or in your home. Thanks again for all your help!

Appendix E: Follow-Up In-Depth Life History Interview Guide

Before we get started, let me just check I have your parental consent form. I will give you your own copy to keep. I also wanted to read the assent form out loud to you before you sign it so that you can ask me any questions that you have before we get started. This interview will ask many personal and family questions, such as immigration status, student relationships with teachers, grades in school and feelings about race, religion, and politics. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. You may stop the interview at any time for any reason. Now I just wanted to check some of the information you gave me before in the survey:

TURN ON TAPE

TODAY'S DATE IS _____

THIS IS PARTICIPANT # _____

BEFORE WE START I JUST WANTED TO CONFIRM THE INFORMATION YOU GAVE ME IN THE SURVEY

1. You are ____ years old, male/female
2. You are currently in _____ grade.
3. You are working as a _____.
4. You identify your RACE/ETHNICITY _____.

NEIGHBORHOOD

5. You currently live in _____ neighborhood?
6. Tell me about your neighborhood? How long have you lived there? What was it like growing up there?
7. What are the good/bad things about the neighborhood?
8. Tell me about the people who live there. Was it mostly one racial/ethnic group or were there different kinds of people? (Probe: Race, ethnicity, and class background)
9. How do the kids get along with each other? What did they do?
10. How do you get to school? Drive, Bus, Walk? Is that ever a problem for you?

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Now I want to talk about your experiences in school, beginning with ELEMENTARY school until the present.

11. Where did you go to elementary school? Was this private, public?
12. Were most of the students in that school also your ETHNIC GROUP?
13. Do you remember being tracked into "smart, remedial, special education, ESL, regular, bilingual, dual immersion classes? How did you feel about that?
14. What kind of grades did you get? How did you feel about that?
15. Were you ever skipped or left back?
16. Describe your relationship with teachers. Did you have good relationships/problems? Please describe.
17. Describe your relationship with classmates. Did you have good relationships/problems?
18. Did your parents have much contact with school? Why/Why not?
19. Were you active in any school or after school activities, activities such as sports, band, academic club, ENLACE, dance/language club, girls/boy scouts, or anything else. Tell me about it.
20. Now tell me about your transition to MIDDLE SCHOOL? Where did you go?
21. Was this private, public?
22. Were most of the students in that school also your RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP?
23. Do you remember being tracked into "smart, remedial, special education, regular, bilingual, ESL, dual immersion classes? How did you feel about that?
24. What kind of grades did you get? How did you feel? Your parents?
25. Were you ever skipped or left back?
26. Describe your relationship with teachers. Did you have good relationships/problems? Please describe.
27. Describe your relationship with classmates. Did you have good relationships/problems?

28. Did your parents have much contact with school? Why/Why not?
29. Were you ever involved in fights? Have you ever been suspended or expelled?
30. What did your parents think about your friends? Did they ever think you were with the wrong crowd?
31. Were you active in any school activities, such as sports, band, academic club, ENLACE, dance/language club, girl/boy scouts or anything else. Tell me about it.
32. What about your experiences here in HIGH SCHOOL, how did you end up here? Was this your first choice? If not where did you want to go? Why?
33. Do you remember being tracked into “smart, remedial, special education, regular, bilingual/ESL/dual immersion classes? How did you feel about that?
34. Are you active in any of the clubs at school, such as sports, band, academic club, ENLACE, dance/language club, girl/boy scouts, ROTC or anything else. Tell me about it. Why/not?
35. What kind of grades do you get? How did you feel about these grades? Your parents?
36. What did you score in the NM State Assessments Test? Probe: Reading, Math, Science. Why do you think you got those grades?
37. Did you every take the NM 10th grade competency exam, which is required for graduation? IF YES, How did you do?
38. Describe your relationship with teachers. Did you have good relationships/problems? Please describe.
39. Did your parents have much contact with school? Why/Why not?
40. What did your parents think about your friends? Did they ever think you were with the wrong crowd?
41. Describe your relationship with classmates. Did you have good relationships/problems?
42. Were you ever involved in fights? Have you ever been suspended or expelled?
43. What other interactions good/bad have you had with school officials? Probe: Principal, Security, Counselors, Police Officer, Other Staff?
44. Have you ever had any classes that talk about identity, culture, race, ethnicity, etc.? Tell me about that.
45. Is there anything else you want to add about your experience in HIGH SCHOOL that may help me to better understand your grades, scores on state assessments or feelings about school?
46. About half the students who start high school in ABQ in the 9th grade graduate four years later. Why do you think only half graduate? Why do you think students drop out? What can we do about it?
47. Have you ever considered dropping out? Why/Why not?
48. Have you ever heard of the achievement gap between students of different race/ethnic and class backgrounds? What have you heard? Why do you think there is an achievement gap? How do you think we can eliminate it?
49. Did you every feel you were treated differently from other students at the school?
50. Overall how do you feel about your high school experience so far? Is there anything you would like to change?

LEISURE/FREE TIME/WORK

51. What do you do during your free time? after school? On Weekends? Summers? Sports, Clubs, Hanging out? Where?
52. What do you do for money? Do you get an allowance?
53. Have you worked for pay? How did you find that job? Describe how many jobs, hours and pay.

Job Type	How did you find	Pay
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
54. Have you been treated differently from your co-workers, because of your race, ethnicity, culture, language, sex, class background?
55. Have you ever experienced unfair treatment from boss/supervisor/coworker/clients?
56. Was there ever a time when you wanted to find work but you couldn't find a job? Have you worked off the books doing odd jobs?
57. Did you ever work in a family business? (Probe: babysitting or unpaid work at home)
58. Have you every traveled outside of NM/US? Tell me about it.
59. Would you consider moving away from NM for work?

ACADEMIC ORIENTATIONS/FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

60. How would you define success for someone your age?
61. Some people say that an education will help you find a good job. Others say whether you have a high school diploma or college degree does not matter much these days? What do you think?
62. What's the highest level of education you would like to reach?
63. Do you think you will be able to reach this level?
64. Ten years from now what kind of job/career would you like to be doing?
65. Do think you will be able to get this job/career? PROBE: If not what other kind of work would you consider?
66. IF STUDENT IDENTIFIES AS WHITE ASK: Some people say that if people who do well in school are selling out? What do you think? Where have you heard this?
67. IF IDENTIFY AS NON-WHITE Some people say that if people who do well in school are "acting white"? What do you think? Where have you heard this?
68. What are your immediate plans after high school? Why?

POLITICAL VIEWS

69. Are you interested in NM/This City/US/International politics? Why/not? Describe.
70. As a young person, what are the issues that matter most to you?
71. AFTER RESPONSE Probe for opinions on a range of social issues. I will read a long list to you and you can just talk about the ones that are most important to you. Probe: jobs, school, affordable housing, education, police community relations, Lottery Scholarship, pro-life, pro-choice, feminism, health care for everyone, art, music, women's rights, immigrant rights, human rights, affordable college, welfare, crime and criminal justice system, armed security guards, gangs, cost of living, paying tuition, affirmative action, racism, sexism, poverty, same sex marriage, affordable daycare, immigration, undocumented immigrants, border patrol, elections, war in Iraq, bilingual education, denying citizenship to children born in US if their parents are undocumented, Democrats, Republicans, Green party, Environmental Racism, UNM Chicano Studies Name Change, Minutemen, etc.
72. Of all those issues I mentioned or any others I did not mention, which two-three are most important to you? Why?
73. IF NOT ALREADY MENTIONED, What about school or neighborhood issues?
74. Do your parents vote? Why/not?
75. Will you register to vote? Why/Not?
76. Have you ever participated in a demonstration, protest, march or strike?
77. What do you think about immigrants in New Mexico or US?

RACIAL ASCRIPTION/PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

I'm interested in learning more about how you see yourself in this world in relation to other groups of people. Remember there is no right or wrong answer.

78. What race do you consider yourself to be? Why?
79. In your opinion what is race?
80. What race do other people think you are? Probe: In your neighborhood? At school? Walking in the Street? At the Mall? In other parts of the country? Give examples.
81. How would you describe your physical appearance? By physical appearance I mean your skin color, facial features, hair texture and other physical characteristics? (Dark, light, brown, raza, fair complexion, etc.)
82. How important is what you look like to your definition of who you are?

ETHNIC IDENTITY/PERFORMANCE

83. Do you see a difference between ethnicity, culture and race?
84. Do you consider yourself to be an American? Why/Why Not?
85. Do other people think you are an American? Why/Why not?
86. Have you experienced any problems from being RACE/ETHNIC GROUP?
87. Has there ever been a time when you hid your Race/ethnicity?
88. How do you think your RACE/ETHNIC GROUP is seen in the US?
89. Is there any truth to it?
90. How do you think people get this idea?
91. When you were growing up did your parents, friends, family, school, teachers make a special effort to teach you about RACE/ETHNIC history, tradition, customs, language, values?

92. What about now do you think this is important? Why/not?

RACIAL SOLIDARITY/DISTANCING

93. Of all the racial groups in this country, which racial groups do you feel closest to? Most different from? Why do you consider yourself RACIAL GROUP/ETHNIC GROUP?

94. Are there times were your identity changes depending on where you are and who you are with? Give an example.

95. Do you see a connection between your racial/ethnic identity and your feelings about school, jobs, careers, future plans for work, neighborhood choice, future marriage plans, etc. ? How?

96. What race/ethnicity are your closest friends, boy/girlfriends?

Initials	Sex	Race/ethnicity	Grade
----------	-----	----------------	-------

97. Have you ever been friends with or dated anyone who was of a different race/ethnicity? What did your parents say?

LANGUAGE

98. How many languages do you speak?

99. How is language a part of your identity? Is it important, why or why not?

100. When you were growing up did you speak SPANISH/OTHER LANGUAGE at home?

101. How well did your parents speak it? Grandparents?

102. Was there a rule in your household about which language to speak?

103. Did you do any translating for family? IF YES, How did you feel about that?

104. Have you taken any language courses in school? Why/not?

105. Do you consider yourself bilingual?

106. Will you speak this language to your children? Why/not?

RELIGION

107. Were you raised in any particular religious faith?

108. How important was going to church when you were growing up?

109. What language services did you go to?

110. How often did you go?

111. What kinds of things did you do there?

112. Were most of your friends from this church?

113. What role would you say God/spirituality/religion played in your life while growing up? What about now? Do you still go regularly? Do you participate in any activities? Do you contribute money?

114. Do you see any connection between your cultural identity and religion?

SES & SOCIAL CAPITAL (PARENTAL BACKGROUD)

Now let's move on to your parent/guardians. Tell me about your Mother.

115. What kind of work did she do?

116. What is the highest level of education she reached?

117. Did she ever give you advice about how to be successful?

118. Did she ever tell you how far she wanted you to go in education?

119. Where was your mother born?

120. If not born in ABQ/US, what was the main reason for coming?

121. Who took care of you while your parents/guardians worked?

122. How much did your mother/father participate in raising you?

123. How much time did you spend together?

124. What kinds of things do you do together?

125. Repeat questions about father

EXTENDED FAMILY/SOCIAL NETWORKS

126. Are you close to any of the people in your extended family? Why/not?

127. Give examples of activities that bring your extended family together. How often do you see each other?

128. Is there anyone inside or outside of your family that has had a special influence in your life?

129. Other significant family members who took a special interest in your life? Explain.

FOLK THEORY OF SUCCESS

130. In your opinion, what do you now believe it takes to be successful? GIVE AN EXAMPLE.
131. Did anyone in your family or friendship circles tell you that people may try to limit how far you are because of your race/ethnicity/gender/class/religion, etc?
132. Do you believe any race, ethnicity, will have an impact on how far you go in life?
133. Did you feel your parents had to make personal sacrifices so that you and your brothers and sisters could get ahead?
134. What about your brothers and sisters, did any of them make sacrifices for you/others in your family?
135. Did you have to make sacrifices for them? How did you feel about it?
136. Do your parent/relatives help you out? In what ways?
137. In what ways do you feel obligated to help your parents at this point? In the future?

CLASS IDENTITY

138. Do you consider yourself upper class, middle class, lower class? Why?
139. Which group of people do you feel closest to?
140. You mentioned that your parent own their own home? Rent? How do you feel about that?
141. You also mentioned that you do/don't own a computer do/don't have Internet access from home? Why/not?
142. Why do you think there are so many poor people in this city?
143. Why do you think there are rich people in this city?

144. When you were growing up were there times when your family participated in government programs that help with food, housing, medical cost, and other income needs, such as welfare, Medicaid/CHIPS, section 8, public housing, unemployment/disability, SSI, Social Security, etc. Tell me about that.
145. You mentioned that your family's income is between ____ and there are ____ workers in your household. Do you think that 20 years from now your financial situation will be better/worse than your parents? Why/why not?

VIEWS ON GENDER

The last questions are about your views on the roles of men and women in society.

146. Did your parents express any expectations about whether you should have children, when and how many? Did you mother/father agree/disagree?
147. How do you feel about when to have children and how many?
148. IF PARENT, how did having a child affect your life? Who supports you?
149. Do you think your (future) children will be better off than you?
150. Did your parents apply same rules for boys and girls?
151. In a relationship, who do you think should be responsible for: Housecleaning? Cooking? Shopping? Childcare? Supporting the family? Why?
152. Are these views different from that of your parents/siblings/friends explain?
153. In general there are more girls graduating from high school and going to college than boys, why do you think this is so?

INTERVIEWER-INTERVIEWER DYNAMIC

154. What race do you consider me to be? Why?
155. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time. You have been a great help. Please feel free to call or email me if you have any questions. I can send you a copy of the final report when it is done. Just give me your mailing address, telephone number, email and I will send it to you.

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